

**One-of-a-kind Images Expert Group:**  
**Tintypes, Ambrotypes, Collodian Negatives**

A **tintype** is a non-reflective, one-of-a-kind photograph on a sheet of iron coated with a dark enamel. Its most common use was for portrait photography. Like ambrotypes, tintypes rely on the principle that underexposed collodion negatives appear as positive images when viewed against a dark background. Less expensive and more durable than either ambrotypes or daguerreotypes, tintypes did not require protective cases and were often kept in simple paper frames or folders. Tintypes first appeared in the United States in 1856, and remained popular well into the 20th century.

**Ambrotypes** are sharply detailed, one-of-a-kind photographs on glass, packaged in protective cases similar to those used for daguerreotypes. An ambrotype is essentially a collodion on glass negative that is intentionally underexposed so that the negative image appears as a positive image when viewed against a dark background.

**Collodion negatives**, usually on glass (ambrotypes) or on metal (tintypes) were made by coating the surface with collodion, a sticky substance to which light-sensitive silver salts could adhere. The sensitized plates were exposed in a camera, then developed in chemical baths.