

# John Bernaski:

## *Wet Collodian Plate Photography*



John Bernaski made this Tintype portrait at the Asbury Village Farm Plowing Frolic in 2009. He returned in 2010 and we were able to follow and document John's process as it was practiced by itinerant photographers from the time of the Civil War through the 1920's.

The Tintype starts as a piece of black japanned metal. John was shooting 3 ¼" x 4 ¼" quarter plates, although half and full plates are used for larger prints. The tin plate is coated in daylight with the collodian emulsion and then sensitized in the dark (or red-light) of John's portable darkroom. The photo must be taken while the plate is still wet.



Coating the plate



Portable darkroom



Preparing to sensitize

John works with a classic view camera that is configured with a back for holding the sensitized plate. He controls the length of his exposure (1-4 seconds) with the lens cap.



The plate is developed in the darkroom and rinsed, revealing the image. It is really a negative image which would appear so if the emulsion were coated on glass, just like a black and white film negative. However, the black surface of the plate shows through the shadow areas, making them dark and the developed silver metallic image which is light gray, creates the midtone and highlight values, hence it appears as a positive and has delighted hundreds of thousands of subjects within a few minutes of the photo being taken.



John has made a specialty of photographing special events and reenactments. He can be contacted at 908-246-9108.

Appointments can be made for portrait sittings. The tintype is an extraordinarily unique record that makes a wonderful gift or keepsake. Prices start at \$40.

The dried tintype is varnished and presented in a handsome folder.



Here is a selection of images that John made.

