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## Lesson 1: Photography and the History of Greater Cincinnati

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### Background

Greater Cincinnati was a major center for the development of early American photography. The region's national importance in the field of photography reflects its position as a commercial center in the heartland of America. In 1800, Cincinnati was home to 750 people inhabiting just 30 buildings. By 1850, it was the sixth largest city in the United States with a population of over 115,000. Greater Cincinnati was a gateway to the west with the Ohio River serving as a boundary between slave and free states. The region attracted German, Irish, British, and Jewish immigrants looking for a better life in America. Greater Cincinnati also became a cultural center with wealthy patrons supporting advances in science, art and education.

### Prompt

How does photography help us understand the history and development of Greater Cincinnati and/or other urban centers in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century?

### Reference Image



*Daguerreotype View of Cincinnati, 1848*, is an eight-plate panorama of the Cincinnati riverfront made by Charles Fontayne and William Porter, on September 24, 1848. Voyageur's educational website has several versions of this daguerreotype for educators and students: A) the full panorama as seen in its exhibit in the Rare Books Room, Main Branch, Cincinnati Public Library. B) Each of the eight daguerreotype plates as separate image files. Photo: Plate 4, *Daguerreotype View of Cincinnati, 1848*, Cincinnati Public Library

Link: <https://1848.cincinnati.library.org/>

### Academic Fields

Social Studies:

- The variability in the distribution of productive resources in the various regions of the world contributed to specialization, trade, and interdependence.
- The movement of people, products and ideas resulted in new patterns of settlement and land use that influenced the political and economic development of the United States
- The Industrial Revolution fundamentally changed the means of production as a result of improvements in technology, use of new power resources, the advent of interchangeable parts and the shift from craftwork to factory work.

#### American History:

- Historians analyze cause, effect, sequence, and correlation in historical events, including multiple causation and long- and short-term causal relations.
- Immigration, internal migration, and urbanization transformed American life.

#### World Geography:

- The characteristics of regions change over time and there are consequences related to those changes (e.g., industrial belt to rust belt, pristine locations to tourist attractions, colony to independent state).
- Patterns of settlement change over time in terms of functions, sizes, and spatial patterns (e.g., a canal town becomes an industrial city, a rural area becomes a transportation hub, cities merge into a megalopolis).

### Documentary Reference Clips

Clip 1: Tease/Title, 0:11 – 2:20

Clip 2: The Dawn of Photography, 3:20 - 8:05

Clip 3: The Rise of Daguerreian Studios, 8:05 – 09:47

Clip 4: Fontayne and Porter, 14:22 – 17:12

Clip 5: Photography Goes to War, 30:44 – 38:40

### Discussion Questions

- How were goods moved?
- Where were goods sold--can you read the signs to tell?
- What industries were important in Cincinnati in the 1840s?
- What kinds of labor are the people in this image performing?
- Does the city look like it will grow? If so, where?
- How many people do you think lived in the city at the time?

### Activities

- Using the Fontayne and Porter panorama on one end and later city views on the other, create a timeline showing the growth and development of Cincinnati over the course of the 1800s. Show growth from the river out, the influence of different forms of transportation, cultural changes, etc.
- Take a panoramic photo that informs viewers of life in Cincinnati today.

## Online Resources

- The Cincinnati Public Library has an interactive, on-line website, Panorama of Progress, with details of the history found within this remarkable photograph. Link: <https://1848.cincinnati.library.org/>
- The Preservation Lab. An article about the preservation of the panorama. Link: <https://blog.thepreservationlab.org/tag/1848-panorama>
- Codex 99: An article about the history of the panorama. Link: <http://codex99.com/photography/5.html>
- Ellis Island, National Immigration Museum. The museum features the Cincinnati Panorama of 1848 in its exhibit, "Building a Nation." The museum's website also has educational resources, including a searchable database to research immigration passengers. Link: <https://www.statueofliberty.org/discover/educational-resources/>

## Bibliography

**Vitz, Carl.** A Cincinnati Daguerreotype, Paper Read by Carl Vitz at the Literary Club, October 20, 1947, Cincinnati Public Library.

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