



William Henry Fox Talbot

1800-1877

William H. F. Talbot was a British inventor who developed the negative/positive photographic process, the predominant photographic development process throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.

Beginning in 1834, Talbot experimented with a process which he called photogenic drawing which involved coating paper with salt solution and after it had dried, adding a solution of silver nitrate. In 1835 he made the earliest known photographic negative using a camera. Continued experimentation led Talbot to a breakthrough in 1840 when he discovered that paper treated with a coating of silver iodine, exposed in a camera and then developed in gallic acid mixed with silver nitrate and acetic acid would bring out a latent image. His discoveries earned him the Rumford Medal in 1842, an award given by the Royal Society in recognition of an important discovery in the field of thermal or optical properties of matter.

Talbot was also a noted photographer. His landscapes, architectural studies, still lifes, and portraits defined the early art of photography. In 1847 Talbot published "The Pencil of Nature," the first book to be illustrated entirely with photographs.