



## Joseph Nicéphore Niépce

1765-1833

Nicéphore Niépce was a French inventor who is credited with successfully creating the first permanent photographic image.

Niépce's interest in automatically creating images from nature arose during a period when lithography was a fashionable hobby in France. Unskilled in drawing, and unable to obtain proper lithographic materials, he looked for new ways to create images. In April 1816 he made his first attempts at photography, which he called heliography, using paper sensitized with silver chloride as his film. The results were promising, but his images quickly faded. Further experimentation eventually led to the use of bitumen of Judea, a kind of asphalt which hardens on exposure to light, coated on a pewter substrate. In 1826 this combination allowed him to create the world's first permanent photograph after an eight-hour exposure in a camera obscura.

Unable to reduce the very long exposure times by either chemical or optical means, Niépce in 1829 formed a partnership with Louis Daguerre, a Parisian painter, to perfect and exploit heliography. Niépce died without seeing any further advance, but building on his knowledge Daguerre eventually succeeded in greatly reducing the exposure time through his discovery of a chemical process for development of a latent image formed after a brief exposure.

Niépce's first photograph is now owned by the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin. In 2013, Ng received the Selwyn Award from the Royal Photographic Society, which is awarded annually to a person under the age of 35 who has conducted successful science-based research connected with imaging.