

The great and scary Myth of the Peeling Plate: *If you simply allow your fixed and washed plates to air dry on their own in a plate rack, you run the risk of the collodion peeling up off the plate in various degrees, running from just a little around the edges, to well into the image.*

What, I ask you, could be more frightening than that! The solicitors of this horror film recommend that you always force dry your wet plates over a heat source like a (gulp) Spirit Lamp, hand held hair dryer, catalytic heater unit, or some such heat gadget, and there will be no danger of peeling. Sounds insane doesn't it? Well, it is. **The fact is, you have nothing to fear about collodion peeling by just letting your plates open air dry on their own in a plate rack or laid out in the sun to dry.** This whole silly peeling fear thing did not spring out of a vacuum, or any old 19th century manual, but rather from a couple of people who in the early days of the current wet-plate revival were intent on using collodion formulas that were extra high in ether. Anybody remember the pathetic collodion formula with the cute name "Same Day Extra Dry"? One, well worth forgetting! This resulted in a much thinner, less flexible coating of collodion that indeed was prone to peeling on the edges or worse. Usually, only on glass plates that had no subbing did this happen. These great wizards of wet-plate would coach you to have on hand a small vial of varnish and fine artists brush to quickly "paint down" the curling collodion to try and save the image. That might have sorta worked sometimes and wowed the neophytes surrounding them. But, with the proper 50/50 ether alcohol ratio formulas we use today, which were the norm in the 19th century, there's no curling problem to start with. But, once a crazy fear gets going it can be near impossible to stamp out. As a result of this, more than just a few current wet-plate artists will not risk open air drying any plates in the field, or anywhere for that matter, glass or metal, for fear of peeling. They keep and transport the plates wet in ginky little Tupperware containers partially filled with water, or big super heavy slotted plexi tanks filled with water, or they glycerinize the plates to keep them wet till such time as they chose to force dry the plates using a hair dryer, or whatever, and perhaps then varnish them. This peeling fear is all a lot of bizarre, over the top, totally unnecessary mumbo jumbo.