

## Myth of the "HOT FINGERTIPS"

### **Addendum to this very controversial Myth Buster:**

No, No, No, don't get me wrong, wet-plate fraternity, it can be done and has been done. That is, dark spots on your plate image due to finger tip heat. I have in my possession a black and white print made from an 8x10 glass negative by a certain well known pro in the wet-plate world, about the first year or two of his collodion career and one of his first 8x10's. If you look at what was a solid white background behind the figure, you can see five faint dark spots. He had to circle them or I wouldn't have noticed them. He washed his hands of the Waiter Tray method of pouring a plate from that plate, more or less, on. Just too risky he felt. When I commented back that I'd never experienced the same problem in all my years of doing wet-plate, his inane response was, "I must have bony long cold fingers". Also, that I likely did get the dark spots but I just didn't notice them in busy backgrounds my images often have. I didn't buy it but after thinking on it a good many years, I've come to the conclusion that if you work at it you can indeed produce dark spots on your plate's image by finger tip heat. Here's how: For starters, you use a very high ether to alcohol content in your collodion formula. Like twice as much ether as to alcohol volume added. My Old Workhorse formula (the real Old Workhorse) is just the opposite. The bogus stuff is, as a result of the extra high ether content, much more volatile and given to drying quicker, yielding a thinner coat on the plate. Then on top of this poor collodion choice, you must execute the Waiter Tray method of pouring a plate in such a way that you linger way, way too long with your fingers in one place on the back of the plate before you get it up right perpendicularly, held by its edges, as you drain the excess collodion back into the collodion bottle. I know from my many years of watching my students pour their first plates that they tend to linger much too long before they get their fingers off the back of the plate and it stood straight up to drain. This is especially so with an 8x10 size plate, which is very intimidating to a beginner or someone who has never done a plate that big before. This is why we do a lot of practice pouring of plates till everybody has it down pat before we go on to shooting the real deal plates. Your pouring technique is that important to get right! But, once you got it and it becomes routine it is almost automatic. So, that's it, I think.

Oh, but, no, there's the white spots others claim they get on their glass plates in extra cool weather due to finger tip heat. This also, I believe, has a lot to do with too high an ether ratio in their collodion formula and also faulty pouring technique. This school that holds to the white spots fear, simply does not pour their plates like I do. If they did it would never have become an issue for them. The proper way, and the way the old manuals describe to pour a plate by any hold method, is to flow it once over and then drain off the excess collodion off a corner. You should never run the fluid collodion wave back over the already coated surface and then off. There is a popular YouTube video that shows this being done as the proper way to flow a plate, unfortunately. Do it like this and you can end up with too thick a coat of collodion on your plate unless you are really quick, which most beginners are not. They often get images with a lot of blue color at least towards one end due to extra thick collodion there. O.K., with that in mind, visualize the heat of your lingering finger tips causing the collodion to jell ever so slightly more at those spots on the surface and then you roll the wave of fluid collodion back across the plate and over them and bingo!, mini reefs of thicker collodion have built up at the warm points which could result in a greater silver deposit on them when the plate is then sensitized. This would cause lighter spots on the image corresponding to where your finger tips had lingered on the back of the plate after the plate is developed and fixed. That's all I can figure at this time on the subject. I'd be glad to hear any other serious ideas on it from anyone else.

But, still we have not addressed why dark or white spots seem to be only an issue on glass plate images. Could it be some people are in more of a panic handling heavier more fragile glass and therefore are more apt to linger with their fingers on the back of the glass before they get it stood up to drain and their fingers off the back? Seems plausible to me.

But, again, I for one have never noticed any dark or light spots on any of my plates or any of my hundreds of students images, over the many years I've been shooting and giving workshops, on account of the Waiter Tray method of pouring our plates in all ranges of temperatures. And, I am sure at least a couple of the workshop students had short fat hot fingers! Clearly this perfect record must have something to do with the collodion formulas we use here at Camp Tintype and the way we pour our plates, properly, by the Waiter Tray method and not some sort of self deluded blindness on our part.