

Myth: You need to check your Silver Bath's pH often to make sure it is in the range of 6 to 4 for nice clean images.

This one is a fine mix of truth and fiction in order to justify the unnecessary. Yes, it is quite true your bath must be slightly acidic for best results. What isn't true is you need to check the pH all the time or any time, for that matter. The fact is, when you mix up a new Silver Bath it will start out in the 6 to 4 pH range. Use it and maintain it from here to eternity and it will remain in that range for eternity. A zillion plates diving in and out of it will not cause it to go basic or become too acidic, either. The only way it can get out of the proper pH range is if you intentionally add acid to it in the form of Nitric or Acetic Acid, or a base in the form of bi-carbonate of soda (baking soda), or you contaminate the bath unintentionally. It is possible to raise the pH to a detrimental level by getting calcium carbonate in it. This can happen when whitening glass cleaner isn't thoroughly and completely removed from a glass plate in the cleaning process. Sometimes beginners, when cleaning their plates, get in a hurry and overlook the back or edges of a glass plate where the white powdery residue might still be present and would dissolve into the bath when the collodion coated plate is placed in it. But even then, it would take a lot of sloppy cleaning jobs to make a real difference. Some do intentionally add acid to their Silver Bath on a forlorn hope it might help to give them snappier images and they end up acidifying it to death. Then there's the ones who add baking soda to the bath to supposedly take the bad Iodides out of it prior to sunning and boiling the bath. And boys and girls, if that isn't one of the biggest **fool's errands** in the wet-plate world today!!!! The root of much of this nonsense lies with beginners and not-so-beginners trying desperately to make nice bright crisp images instead of flat contrast with smoked up blacks and shadows. God forbid that it might just be a light leak in their camera, darkroom/box/tent, lens issue, overexposure, poor developing technique, or a whole lot of other things that have nothing to do with the Silver Bath.

Do yourself a favor. Ditch those hard to read pH papers and never waist any money on expensive digital pH meters unless, of course, you crave the air of sophistication the use of such might give you when demonstrating the process before an awestruck audience.