Photograph's roots reach back more than 150 years, with the unveiling of the Daguerreotype in France. While people had for centuries understood the principle behind the camera lens, and for many decades knew that certain chemicals were sensitive to light, they were not combined into photography until much later.Niepce in France did come up with a permanent picture (he called it a "helotograph") in the 1820s, but the first practical photography was Daguerre's highly detailed image on a silver-coated copper plate.Daguerreotypes became the rage in Europe, and in America only a year later, introduced by Samuel Morse. He also invented the telegraph. Artists worried that this process designed originally as an aid to painting would destroy their livelihood. In response they turned away from realism into impressionism and other approaches—realism had been won by a picture-taking machine.

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