February 9, 2001

School
School Address

Dear Educator,

In the mid-19th century, Mathew Brady captured illustrious Americans and pivotal historic events in the unflinching gaze of a technological wonder of the time---the daguerreotype. Today, his daguerreotypes and others of the era provide a window on the events, society, and culture of a growing young nation.

A signed daguerreotype of Colonel James Duncan, an officer in the Mexican-American War, is the centerpiece of an exhibition now at Penn State’s Palmer Museum of Art. The exhibition is titled, *History Past, History Present: The Daguerreotype Portrait in America*.

Your students are invited to follow in Mathew Brady’s footsteps by participating in “Developing History,” a special program sponsored by a partnership made up of the Palmer Museum, the University Libraries, the Pennsylvania Center for the Book, and Penn State Public Broadcasting.

This project will encourage students to explore their own roots while traveling pathways that will lead them through history, art, and technology. The activity is geared particularly toward social studies, art, and technology education students in grades 4 through 8, but all students and adults are welcome to participate.

Using the enclosed lesson plans and references, each participating classroom is asked to take up to 24 photographs of the people, places, or events in the community. The students will then select the three photographs that best define, portray, or illuminate the spirit of their hometown. A short description (100-word maximum) should accompany each photograph to identify the subject and explain its significance to the community.

The three photographs and captions will then be submitted to:

Partners in Public Service
115A Wagner Building
University Park, PA 16802
The photographs will become exhibits in an on-line art gallery at the History Past, History Present web site (http://www.pips.psu.edu). In addition to the virtual exhibit, some submissions will be displayed in April at a national conference on children’s literature featuring best-selling and award-winning authors and illustrators of children’s books. Some of the submissions will also be featured on WPSX-TV.

The postmark deadline for submitting three 4 X 6 inch photos (either color or black and white) or three digital photos and captions is Friday, March 16, 2001. Fill out one of the enclosed forms for each submission. Please feel free to duplicate the submission form and distribute to any teachers who may want to participate.

Classes are invited to the Palmer Museum for a docent-guided tour of the History Past/History Present exhibition to examine individual daguerreotypes and to learn what these unique pictures can tell us about a bygone era. The “Developing History” web site provides a rich source of material on the lives and society chronicled by Mathew Brady. The site also features activities that promote analytical thinking skills as students “deconstruct” photographs and select their own material for inclusion in a virtual exhibit. By using the modern technology of cameras to explore their own world in pictures, students will make meaningful connections to Mathew Brady’s America.

To schedule a tour call 814-865-7672. For more information on the “Developing History” project call Katie O’Toole at 814-865-3333.

Sincerely,

Steven Herb
Director
Pennsylvania Center for the Book and Education Librarian
University Libraries

Dana Carlisle Kletchka
Museum Educator
Palmer Museum of Art

Katie O’Toole
Children’s Programming
Penn State Public Broadcasting