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The Branded Hand

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 00:00

[Music fades in] There's a level of intimacy that's missing then with the paper, right? This, the plate, the glass plate, that's it. That's the shadow that's captured.

Katherine Fein 00:14

Yes, light literally bounced off of Walker's hand and onto this plate that I'm now looking and holding.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 00:28

[Intro music fades in] This is Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai.

Cassie Cloutier 00:31

This is Cassie Cloutier.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 00:33

And this is The Object of History, the podcast of the Massachusetts Historical Society. Since 1791, the MHS has sought to collect, preserve, and communicate the building blocks of history. Each episode examines an object, document or set of items from the society's millions of manuscript pieces and artifacts. We take you on a behind the scenes tour of our stacks to explore the incredible stories held within our collections.

Cassie Cloutier 00:59

On this episode, we sit down with Peter Drummey, Chief Historian and Stephen T. Riley Librarian, Hannah Elder, the Associate Reference Librarian for Rights and Reproductions and Katherine Fein, a PhD candidate in the Department of Art History and Archaeology at Columbia University to learn more about abolitionist Jonathan Walker, known as the Branded Hand because of a

punishment he received for attempting to rescue seven enslaved laborers in 1844. We also learn more about how abolitionists harnessed the new technology of photography to showcase the brutality of the system of slavery.

Cassie Cloutier 01:40

We first sat down with Katherine Fein, PhD candidate at Columbia University, to discuss first impressions of the object.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 01:48

Let me start by telling you about how I first experienced and reacted to this object. I think it was 10 years ago. I came back to the MHS. I was an assistant professor of history at that point, and I came back to the MHS to participate in the Civil War conference. I think this object was on display at that time. I think there was a blow-up image of it. So, it was much larger, and I could not figure out what it was. And I was drawn to it because as a 19th century historian, I'm fascinated by images of the time period, and so I looked at it and then I looked closer, and I read the description, and I was just so mesmerized by it. There's some quality, some haunting quality to it, when you think about what it represents, and then what it's trying to communicate. I went to the MHS website. I got a picture of it. I incorporated it into my lectures. I told my students about it. And this was in the second decade of the 21st century. And you can correct me if I'm wrong, Katherine, but I think that that is exactly the experience that Henry Bowditch wanted people to have to this object and how he wanted it to be experienced and portrayed to the world.

Katherine Fein 03:11

I think that's absolutely right. I've looked at this object a lot, including in reproduction, when I'm not fortunate enough to be sitting here with the object and returning to it now, looking at it as we record. I too am mesmerized, and I am remembering my first encounter with it in person as well. And I think you're absolutely right that in 1845 when Bowditch commissioned this object from Southworth and Hawes, he intended for people to be mesmerized by it and to have impactful intimate personal encounters, to pick it up, to hold it against their own hands, to imagine Walker's

hand physically present in the room with them. This incredible medium of the daguerreotype makes that possible because it is so highly detailed.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 03:56

How did you encounter this image for the first time?

Katherine Fein 04:00

I was early in my PhD coursework, and I was studying the history of photography in the 19th century United States, and I went page by page through the somewhat recent monograph on Southworth and Hawes, which includes, at the point it was published every known photograph by them. When you flip through those pages, almost every photograph follows a similar formula, a three quarter or half-length view of an individual face and torso. And then all of a sudden, you turn the page, and you see a disembodied hand floating against black space. And so, I immediately needed to learn more and to understand why this particular object deviated from the photographic customs of portraiture in the early years of the medium.

Cassie Cloutier 04:45

Peter Drummey, Chief Historian and Stephen T. Riley Librarian joined Katherine in telling us more about Captain Jonathan Walker.

Peter Drummey 04:52

Jonathan Walker is a sailor, ship captain, boat builder, born in 1789 in Harwich, a town on Cape Cod. Grows up by the ocean, not in a family long settled on Cape Cod. But he has a life at sea and then a life on shore and like many people, he had to travel to find employment as a sailor and a ship captain and boat builder and he spent much of his life in the south and lived in the territory of Florida. Florida didn't become a state until I think 1845. Spent a long time there and was a person who from a young age was motivated by strong anti-slavery beliefs, abolitionist beliefs. Slavery had ended in Massachusetts, essentially by the time of his birth, and so he found himself living in a slave society in the federal territory of Florida and that brought him into confrontation with territorial

laws of Florida, when he helped seven enslaved people escape by what was planned to be a long open boat voyage along the coast of Florida from the west coast of Florida, all the way around, Capes, the channel between southern Florida and Cuba and then across to the Bahamas, which being a British possession, slavery had ended there in the 1830s. So, this was an escape to freedom for that he was making in this boat voyage on behalf of seven black men who had fled from slavery.

Katherine Fein 06:44

He spent most of his life in New England where he was exposed quite early on to the abolitionist movement. And he had reason to travel to Florida separate from any abolitionist activities, for professional reasons. And then while he was in Pensacola, he encountered seven enslaved men who were seeking their freedom, Anthony Catlett, the Johnson brothers, Charles, Leonard, Moses and Phillip, and the Scott brothers, Harry, and Silas. Now, we only know their names from the advertisements placed hoping for their capture and return by their enslavers. There is no other mention in the historical record of the seven enslaved men. So, we take that information with a grain of salt, but we also treasure it as a trace of their presence. So, Walker met these seven enslaved men, and he had a boat at this point, so he and the seven enslaved men departed from Pensacola on either the 22nd or 23rd of June, 1844, with the intention of sailing toward the British colony of the Bahamas. If they had reached Nassau, Anthony Catlett, the Johnson brothers and Scott brothers would have been manumitted, but they did not reach Nassau. They were captured in early July. The seven enslaved men no longer appear in the historical record after that. We don't know what happened to them, but Walker as a white abolitionist as a figure who would immediately gain acclaim in northeastern circles. His ordeal was chronicled in detail.

Peter Drummey 08:07

Jonathan Walker's imprisoned in Pensacola, waiting for trial, and then serving his sentence. It's shocking how many enslaved people are brought there to be punished. And this is usually whippings or paddling with a wooden paddle. But there are people who scar, disfigure sometimes in extreme cases, amputate limbs or parts of limbs, as a punishment for people who have tried to escape from slavery, this sort of private punishment. But it's carried as a punishment on the books

in state jurisdictions. Still exist in various jurisdictions. It's my impression it's used by the Confederacy as a punishment during the Civil War, would be sort of a tradition of it almost. It's used by the federal government; this isn't a territorial court. But the most famous instance I can think of it comes in federal punishment comes from a few years later, where there are soldiers from the U.S. Army that during the Mexican War, who desert to the Mexican Army. These are often recent Irish immigrants, and in fact, a very famous unit of the Mexican Army made up of Irish immigrants, many of whom had served in the U.S. Army, and many are punished by death. They deserted during wartime, towards the end of the war when they're captured, but others are punished who had deserted before war was declared. So, they had deserted from the army but not during wartime. Their punishment includes in the case at least John Riley, whom is an officer and perhaps most famous of the San Patricio Battalion members unit made up of American deserters. He is branded on his face with "D" for desertion. Under the territorial laws of Florida, if you aided a slave in attempting to escape from slavery, you are a slave stealer. That is the law was grounded in the idea that no one would be attempting to aid someone for altruistic purposes. They were essentially kidnapping someone's enslaved person to resell them or for some nefarious purpose. So, the law gave a menu of punishments. You could be fined, imprisoned, made to stand in the pillory, or branded, branded with "SS" for slave stealer. This was a tradition that went back long in history. People would be branded with the initial that stood for a felony they had committed in order so that they would be detected as someone who had committed a previous crime. It's not common, but not completely unknown. What happened in the case of Jonathan Walker is having aided several people escape from slavery, he was convicted of four counts of this crime. So, he received all the punishments. He was imprisoned. He was in the pillory. He was fined and he was branded. The entire menu of possibilities sort of inflicted upon him. And people were shocked that someone had received a branding. As I say, not something entirely unknown in the United States. But this was, especially in the abolitionist press in the north, it was seen as someone was marked for having made this effort. It was considered cruel in a way that was sort of propaganda for the anti-slavery cause.

Katherine Fein 12:00

He went on to join the anti-slavery lecture circuit. He in addition to his hand circulating in as a photograph, and in print, he held his hand up before eager audiences across New England and New York and Pennsylvania. There is archival evidence, newspapers suggest, that he let people touch his brand that people wanted to touch his hand and therefore, feel proof of the brutality of slavery. He joined the circuit for a period of years. He appeared alongside many other very well-known abolitionists, including Frederick Douglass, including John Jacobs, and then he retired from public life more or less in 1853. And he moved with his family to Wisconsin and Michigan.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 12:40

Do we know if he'd actually freed other people before or was this his first attempt?

Katherine Fein 12:46

Yeah, it's kind of interesting that white abolitionist call him a slave savior, right, because this was not a successful attempt at self-emancipation, half of the seven enslaved men. We don't know for sure his memoirs should not necessarily be taken as historical truth. And I actually don't recall off the top of my head, if you see if he recounts any particular episodes, other than this one. He actually doesn't even name the seven enslaved men in this particular story in his memoir, possibly in order to protect them from you know, repercussions. After this, though, he became an anti-slavery advocate on the lecture circuit.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 13:21

There are portraits of Mr. Walker and yet, before today, until Hannah showed me what Mr. Walker looks like, I had no idea what he looked like. All I know him from is the hand.

Katherine Fein 13:34

I don't think you're alone in that. And I think the fact that at the time, his image circulated as only his hand indicates that this was a period trend as well, not it's not only contemporary viewers who don't know what he looks like. I will say although several people historically including Frederick Douglass talk about how significant this branded hand and his whole saga was for catalyzing

abolitionist sentiment in the north. He did not occupy a particularly public presence for that long time. His contribution to abolition was somewhat bounded in time. He was also not thought to be a particularly good speaker. And so, in particular, there are accounts that when he appeared alongside Frederick Douglass, Frederick Douglass, who was an incredible orator and performer, made Walker look quite insignificant in comparison in terms of his speaking skills. So, I think he really was there as to show this physical proof of his treatment in Pensacola and the brutality of slavery. As Walker was lecturing and joining other abolitionists on the anti-slavery lecture circuit, many newspapers covered his lectures and offer us some insight into how people engaged with him and his branded hand. There's a fantastic quote from December 11th, 1845, in the National Anti-Slavery Standard that says, quote, "Everybody will be there who can if it were for nothing else than to put their fingers on the marks of the branding iron made on Jonathan Walker's hand in which have made so many people believe that slavery is something more than a mere abstraction."

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 15:08

You say that he on occasion would hold up his hand at these meetings. And I was thinking of one image from that time period of John Brown, clean shaven holding up his hand, like swearing an oath. And there is the other time that I can think of that's the only other image I can think of where someone is holding up their palm forward in an image and never an attempt to do this again, right to take another picture of the hand, I guess the "SS" or to the two letters are too small for them to show up if that was the pose that he was asked to take.

Katherine Fein 15:48

It's an interesting comparison for sure. And I think the idea of swearing allegiance or potentially offering into a contract. Walker's hand looks a bit like he's extending his hand in a gesture of a handshake, is not only related to the power of these images, but actually the reason for the brand in the first place. It's drawing on a much older English custom branding the hands of convicted forgers. The idea being that you leave a scar on someone's very visible appendage, right? Something that you sign your name with your hand, you handshake, you secure a deal with a handshake, right? You can't hide a scar like this on a hand. And it is that that right hand in particular, right, that you

would hold up to take an oath, to offer the handshake. And so I think in this image, we see that both in terms of its echoes with Brown, that gesture of taking an oath or extending a handshake, but we also see that that's why they branded his hand, right? That was the theory behind the punishment.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 16:47

And you say in your article that it is not clear if this was inflicted on anyone else.

Katherine Fein 16:53

The records are somewhat scant. It was on the books in Florida law that this would be a punishment for folks found helping enslaved people seek their freedom, but it's not clear how often or if ever it was applied to anyone else.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 17:07

So maybe that's why it captured Bowditch's imagination so much that this was just so stunning.

Katherine Fein 17:13

Yes, and I think what's lurking behind this is that branding, as a practice was not uncommon in the United States. This particular instance was an unusual example. But much more commonly, branding was used by enslavers to dehumanize, to torture, to claim enslave people as property. And so, I think when we see a white man's hand branded, that elicited sympathy and reaction among white abolitionists, in a way that reveals, of course, that although this was a radical social movement, for many white abolitionists, they maintained a very strong commitment to racial hierarchy. So, when it when we see one white man scars, just about three centimeters long, very small, right, that attests to 11 months of imprisonment versus decades or a lifetime of enslavement. It's no surprise, perhaps that and it's unfortunate, of course, that that those scars cause much more excitement among white abolitionists than perhaps the scars on someone who experienced enslavement firsthand.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 18:14

And I think that goes along with what we see with northern soldiers during the Civil War when they go down and see slavery for the first time, but also among abolitionist communities in the north, that they seem to be drawn to, or are most horrified by enslaved people who have very light skin. And they can imagine as being white, and it's this image of white slavery that shocks them, that that drives their repulsion against this whole system.

Katherine Fein 18:43

I also think about sculptures and marble of enslaved people, as an art historian and specialized in the United States, I think, first and foremost of one that looms so large in our consciousness, which is 'The Greek Slave' by Hiram Powers of a white woman enslaved at the hands of the Ottomans, but which came to take on this abolitionist sentiment. And there's wonderful literature on that, including from Caitlin Beach, a recent book, which is a fantastic contribution to the history of slavery in the United States, but it also makes me think a little bit about something that Frederick Douglass said, well, actually, two things Frederick Douglass said one thing in before Walker's story and one thing after. So, in 1841, when Frederick Douglass first emerged on the scene as an orator and lecturer, he had successfully escaped slavery in just a few years prior, he spoke in his first ever speech that white abolitionists, quote, "Cannot speak as I can from experience. They cannot refer you to a back covered with scars as I can for I have felt these wounds." So, I think here he sets up exactly what we're talking about, which is that of course, his body bears the scars of enslavement in a way that no white abolitionist could, and yet when Walker came along, to have to offer a branded white body for inspection to show the brutality of slavery in these small marks on a white person's skin, it, of course was a very powerful political moment and much later Douglass then reflected that Walker's branded hand was, quote, "One of the few atrocities of slavery that roused the justice and humanity of the north to a death struggle with slavery." So, I think between those two statements, we can really see the scope or see the limits of the abolitionist movement, at least among white abolitionists, and the power that Walker's hand held in that context.

Cassie Cloutier 20:31

We then asked Hannah Elder, Associate Reference Librarian for Rights and Reproductions to tell us more about daguerreotypes in general and describe the daguerreotype of Walker's branded hand itself.

Hannah Elder 20:43

Today, we're looking at a daguerreotype known as the Branded Hand of Captain Jonathan Walker. It depicts a white man's right hand, displayed sideways thumb up with a mirror image of a brand "SS" on his palm. The image is about six and a half by five and a half centimeters. And the case that it's in is eight by nine and a half centimeters. The daguerreotype is made of a copper plate coated in silver. And the case is wooden with glass covering the daguerreotype.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 21:17

How heavy is it?

Hannah Elder 21:19

It's quite light. It's lighter than my cell phone. That's a good modern comparison. I'd probably even say like half the weight of my cell phone. It's very easy to hold in your hand. And it's kind of surprising how light it is. You expect this to be a substantial object, but it's really quite comfortable on my hand here.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 21:39

Maybe that gives us some idea of what its intention was or how it was supposed to be used or displayed.

Hannah Elder 21:48

It's a very personally sized object. You have to get quite close to it to see it. And you really have to be holding it to see it properly. Because of the nature of the daguerreotype where it's metal, it's very reflective. So, you either have to move yourself or move the object to be able to properly see it.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 22:10

Is a daguerreotype a photograph? Can we use those terms interchangeably?

Hannah Elder 22:15

It's a type of photograph. Though it's the first technology that's really considered a photograph. There were earlier attempts, like cyanotypes where you would get a silhouette of something. But the daguerreotype was really the first popular commercially available photograph, and it was introduced in France in 1839. By the end of that year had already reached America. The studio that created this photograph was founded in 1841 in Boston, by Albert Sands Southworth, and his partner Josiah Johnson Hawes joined around 1844. This image was created in 1845.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 22:56

Is there anything like this in the MHS collections or is this strange and unique?

Hannah Elder 23:02

So, both. It's both typical in form, but the thing is depicting is very unusual. American daguerreotypes were most often portraits, either of public figures or family members. So, it's very unusual to see something that is depicting a singular body part that it's just kind of floating in there, and it seems disembodied somehow, whereas almost all the rest of our other daguerreotypes, which are in the hundreds, they depict either a full person or more commonly their torso and head kind of like a portrait or a portrait bust.

Hannah Elder 23:40

Have you shown this to other folks? Is there interest in seeing the Branded Hand?

Hannah Elder 23:47

There is. I most often get to interact with it through image orders. So, I provide high resolution images for publications. It's one of our most commonly ordered items. It's really common in

exhibitions on abolition, on slavery, and it's been published a few times over the past few years, including Katherine's article. On the back of the daguerreotype there's a handwritten inscription that says, "This daguerreotype was taken by Southworth August 1845. This is a copy of Captain Jonathan Walker's hand as branded by the U.S. Marshal of the district in Florida for helping seven men to obtain quote, 'life, liberty and happiness,'" end quote. The inscription also includes the note "SS" for slave savior in the northern dialect, or slave stealer in the southern dialect.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 24:39

How are these stored? I take it in a dark place.

Hannah Elder 24:40

So, they're stored in our secure stacks. It is usually dark. We have motion sensor lights for when people need to be in them accessing materials. They are stored in an area that is stable in temperature and in humidity. It's usually around 70 degrees and between 40 and 50% humidity. The daguerreotypes are stored in a space that has all sorts of materials in it. It has manuscripts, so paper, books, paper, and leather and then the daguerreotypes, which are metal and glass.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 25:18

Would they decay if they were exposed to sunlight for too long?

Hannah Elder 25:22

So, not the daguerreotypes. Part of the process of creating a daguerreotype is after it has been exposed to light, it gets put in a chamber with mercury vapor.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 25:35

Does not sound healthy.

Hannah Elder 25:36

No, no. I wouldn't want to do this process myself. Yeah, so it gets exposed to mercury vapor, which stabilizes the image and then after that it gets dunked in a saltwater bath and that further stabilizes it. The one way that daguerreotypes are sensitive, could be destroyed is if you were to touch it. So, they aren't light sensitive. But, if you were to touch a bear daguerreotype, you could rub away the image. So, almost all of them are stored under glass. The inventor of the medium [Louis] Daguerre, experimented with putting varnishes on top of the image. But he found that that degraded the image over time, and glass is really the best way to save the image.

Cassie Cloutier 26:21

Peter then told us more about this innovation and how it contributed to the abolitionist cause.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 26:27

So, this has to be one of the first examples of using a new technology to promote a message.

Peter Drummey 26:34

I think that using technology to promote messages, I think it's existed over course of time, as some are very different from others. You could argue that the invention of printing for movable type in the 15th century had a powerful influence on the spread of information on what the range of information and number of copies available. Certainly photography, which introduced in France in the late 1830s and in the United States, right at the beginning of the 1840s. The Branded Hand is this remarkable symbol, but it's not alone. There are very famous photographs of enslaved people who bear the welts of whippings and scars of whipping. There's also images of enslaved people of mixed race ancestry, of something that's a complicated image, but it's really important at this time, is the image of what are essentially children who appear to be white, who are enslaved. So, that this is a sort of message that people like you seeing this image could understand themselves in this circumstance, and how could any image of a small child not be powerful in terms of it, but especially children, who had the physical appearance of whiteness, and the sort of protection that seems to offer, but in fact, we're enslaved. The power of the images and the idea that photography

was drawing or painting with light, it was authentic in a way that I think there was the idea that it couldn't be manipulated. Of course, it was, but it was seen as being in some respects more authentic than someone's drawing or engraving after an event.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 28:35

Who was Henry Bowditch? Why was he interested in this and how did he to the extent that we know come up with the idea of focusing on just the hand?

Katherine Fein 28:46

Bowditch was a physician, Professor of Medicine at Harvard College, and a passionate abolitionist. So, he had been involved before Walker returned to Massachusetts where this photograph was taken. He had been involved in helping publicize Walker's case and securing his release from prison and his return to Massachusetts. He helped pay for that. And so, when Walker returned to Massachusetts in the summer of 1845, within just a few weeks, not only had Bowditch commissioned this photograph, but he had also lent it to local newspapers so that they could produce a wood engraving and circulate this image widely. We see in those articles that they captioned their wood engravings. This is a copy from the daguerreotype lent by Bowditch for this purpose. So, it's likely that Bowditch commissioned this photograph specifically with the intention of circulating the image more widely through print. And in terms of the unusual composition, I think it's befitting the unusual punishment and the unusual subject which is the branded hand the branded letters "SS" on Walker's palm. Even in this quite cropped image, they're a bit difficult to make out unless you know to look for them. I think any bigger we wouldn't know that they were there. And this is the only known photograph of Walker's hand. There are other photographs of him, but you can't see the brand unless you zoom in closely like this.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 30:08

So, you brought up Frederick Douglass and he comes up again and again. So, let's talk about him and his use of technology because he is, I think, as David Blight has pointed out the most

photographed person in the 19th century. So, let's talk about how the abolitionists embraced this new technology of photography for their own purposes.

Katherine Fein 30:32

Frederick Douglass is thought to be the most photographed person in the 19th century United States, which is revealing in a couple of ways. I think, on one level, it shows that he arrived on the scene at exactly the right moment, because in 1838, he escaped slavery in 1839 the daguerreotype was announced in Paris. And so right at the moment, when the new technology emerged, he was ready to take it up. The first photograph of him, it's all it's quite rough, you know, we don't know the dates in particular, but it's thought to be from 1841. So right, you know, right away, the medium is brand new, he's already posing for the camera. But then he went on to pose at least 160 times. There were multiple prints produced from those different sittings. So, there are more than 160 photographs of him, but at least 160 different sittings, which is a huge number. He also lived quite a long life. So, you know, someone like Abraham Lincoln, who did pose a lot to lived a much shorter life. Douglass also wrote a lot about photography. He talked about how it was amazing that it brought images into people's hands that just 50 years prior, a king could not have purchased, right? It was so remarkable that now these images were available, and were not that expensive, right, that people could have an image of themselves or their loved ones in an affordable way. He also talked about how previously at the hands of a white artist, a black person could never expect an impartial portrait, and photography offered recourse to that intractable problem. Of course, today, we think a lot about how the technology of photography is biased against black skin. And that was somewhat true of daguerreotypes too right from the beginning. But I think we can see that it was more salient for Douglass that we could have an image of a person a likeness that was not tainted by an individual's bias because it did not involve an artist's hand.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 32:19

There's a level of intimacy that's missing then with the paper, right? This the plate, the glass plate, that's it. That's the shadow that's captured.

Katherine Fein 32:29

Yes, light literally bounced off of Walker's hand and onto this plate that I'm now looking at and holding.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 32:35

Bowditch has this in his home, and people can come look at it. How is it supposed to be experienced? How is the plate itself supposed to be held, touched?

Katherine Fein 32:47

Bowditch, it seems, displayed on his mantel. It's a very small object. So, I think you can imagine, even if it's displayed on a mantel, it's not meant to rest there. You're meant to pick it up, handle it. It probably once had a lid to this case, that would have been wooden and attached with a leather hinge. And it's not uncommon with daguerreotype that these lids hinged in leather would have separated over time due to use. I think the fact that we no longer have a lid speaks probably to the very repeated gesture of people picking up the daguerreotype, opening the hinged lid and encountering this at very close proximity. So, I'm picking up the daguerreotype right now too. I hold it in my hand and it fits comfortably in my palm on my thumb and my fingers grip the outsides of it. And then depending on the angle on which I hold it, I actually see my own face reflected in the metal plate. It's a very reflective surface. If you tilt the daguerreotype in certain ways you actually see the inverse image that's a signature element of daguerreotypes. The later photograph on metal called the tintype doesn't have that. So that's one way to check if you're looking at a daguerreotype or tintype. But all that means that I really have to have a intimate experience looking at this object because I need to be tilting it ever so slightly moving it around in my hands, gripping it carefully between my fingers. Bowditch did not only display it in his home. He also lent it to a public anti-slavery bazaar at least once. That would have been a kind of temporary fair gathering objects for sale, books for sale but also hosting lectures, and also just displaying things like this photograph in order to raise funds and support for the abolitionist's cause and we know from newspaper accounts that this daguerreotype was displayed next to a to daguerreotype of Douglass. We don't know which daguerreotype of Douglass in particular we can, we can guess, or it might be

an daguerreotype that's no longer extant. But these were displayed for a much wider audience in that more public setting.

Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai 34:42

[Outro music fades in] Last season, we had an episode about wax seals and about how those were used for people to identify themselves. The more of these episodes we do we seem to be getting at how people have expressed themselves and left a mark in whatever form.

Katherine Fein 35:03

I think Walker to some degree and Bowditch certainly, Frederick Douglass certainly were thinking about the future when they wrote and when they spoke, but also when they made photographs and when they collected things into a memorial cabinet and requested that it be donated to the Massachusetts Historical Society where it remains today. He was thinking ahead toward people like us who are looking at these objects today and in a very, you know, lucky turn of events with our rubber gloves protecting the images, actually handling these photographs today.

Cassie Cloutier 35:31

[Outro music fades in] To look at the object discussed in today's episode, visit our show website at www.masshist.org/podcast. The Object of History was produced by the Research Department at the Massachusetts Historical Society. We would like to thank Katherine Fein, a PhD candidate at Columbia University, Hannah Elder, Associate Reference Librarian for Rights and Reproductions, Peter Drummey, Chief Historian and Stephen T. Riley Librarian and Sam Hurwitz, Podcast Producer at the MHS. Music in this episode is by Dominic Giam of Ketsa Music and Chad Crouch. See our show notes for details. Thank you for listening.