



Charlotte Prosch:

New Jersey's First Female Daguerreotypist

by Gary D. Saretzky

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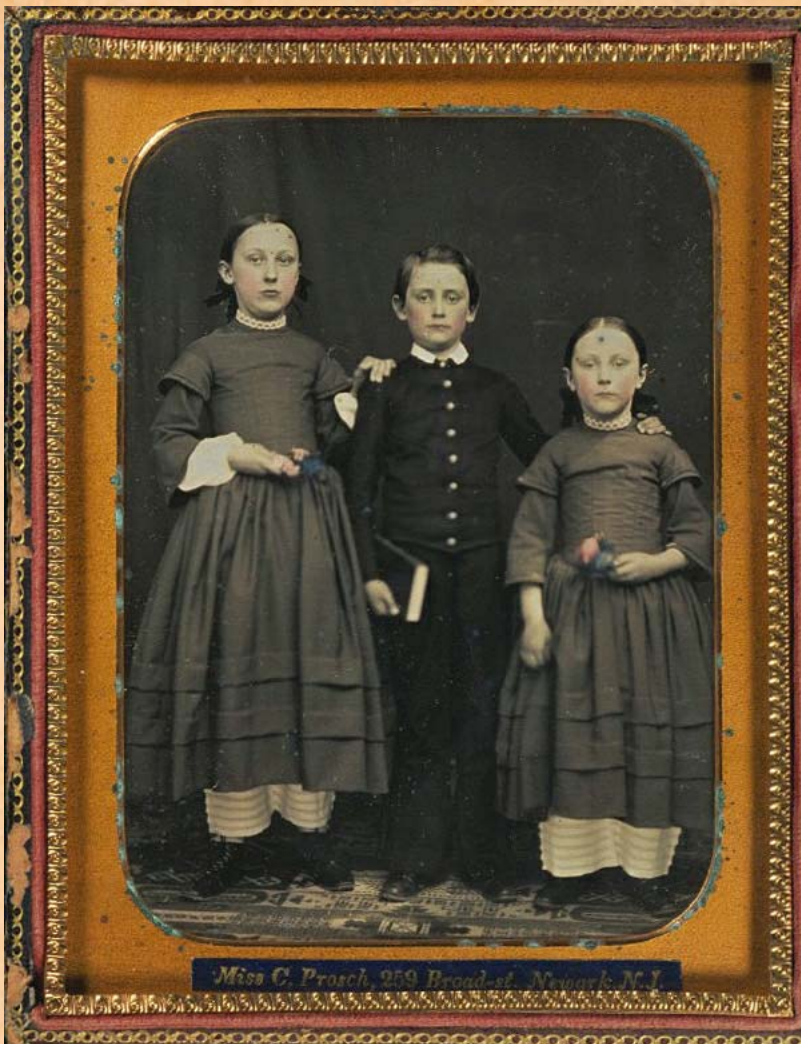
The decade of the 1840s, when Charlotte Prosch opened a daguerreotype portrait studio in Newark, was marked by significant political, social, and economic events, both worldwide and here in New Jersey. After conducting some of his research and development work near Morristown, Samuel B. Morse sent his first long distance telegraph message in 1844. In 1845, the Potato Famine began in Ireland, the United States annexed Texas, and the Mexican War began the following year. Gas street lighting began in Newark in 1846. The gold rush started after James Wilson Marshall, who grew up in Lambertville, reported the discovery at Sutter's Mill in January 1848, the same month that a revolt in Sicily initiated a series of revolutions across Europe that resulted in a wave of immigration of mostly Central European refugees to the United States.

Among the most remarkable technological achievements of the decade was the perfection of the daguerreotype process, the initial version of which had been publicly released in Paris by Daguerre in 1839.¹ By 1841, a minutely accurate transcription of a human face could be recorded in seconds on a silvered copper plate and taken home, at a price that the average American could afford, approximately the cost of dinner with two bottles of ale in a Jersey tavern.² The hunger for portraits led some to conclude that one was more likely to obtain gold selling portraits in New Jersey than to find it in California.

In the United States and Canada, only about 100 women are known to have made daguerreotypes during the decade after it was introduced.³ In New Jersey, only one female daguerreotypist operating in the 1840s has been positively identified: Charlotte Prosch, who offered portraits in Newark from 1847 to 1854. Prosch probably had the first gallery run by a woman in the state. Her business is also distinguished for lasting longer than most other New Jersey photographers, male or female, which opened to the public in the first decade of the medium. In those early days, the typical portrait studio lasted from one to three years.⁴

Born in about 1821 in Pennsylvania, Charlotte Prosch came from one of the "first families" of photography in the United States.⁵ One of ten children of German-born William Prosch and Christiana Dotter, Charlotte had two brothers, George and Andrew, who were pioneers in photography. Through marriages of her siblings, Charlotte also was related to other daguerreotypists.

Her oldest sibling, George W. Prosch, was born in 1812. On January 1, 1836, he married Catherine Insley, whose brother Henry E. Insley became one of the first daguerreotypists in New York. Henry E. Insley partnered with his brother-in-law George as early as July 28, 1840. With New York University Professor Samuel F.B. Morse as an investor, they briefly operated a daguerreotype portrait studio at



ABOVE: Charlotte Prosch, 3 children.
TypDAG3115, Houghton Library, Harvard
University, about 1849

BELOW: *Newark Daily Advertiser*, May
29, 1847, p.2

Broadway & Liberty in the summer and fall of 1840, but their process was insufficiently light sensitive to be practical for portraiture, requiring 10–20 minute exposures. In 1841, after improvements in technique and equipment enabled shorter exposures, Insley claimed to make the first daguerreotype of a

NOTICE.

MISS PROSCH, an experienced Daguerrian Artist, from New York, has by request of her patrons of Newark, opened a Gallery in this City, and respectfully invites the Ladies and Gentlemen of Newark and vicinity to give her an opportunity of displaying her skill. Accuracy of likeness is guaranteed to every sitter.

Pictures taken in various styles, and at the lowest rates at which good pictures can be offered. Please call and examine specimens.

N. B. Those having imperfect Likenesses can have them re taken in Miss Prosch's superior style, at trifling cost.

my26-1w* **Room 259 Broad St.**

moving object, a man walking on the Bowery, and later operated a portrait studio in Jersey City from 1856 to the 1880s.⁶ He was married to Sarah Babb, the sister of New York daguerreotypist William G. Babb.⁷

In addition to her brother Henry, Catherine Insley Prosch had a sister, Sarah A. Insley, who married daguerreotypist Nathaniel C. Jacquith (also known as Jaquith). Jacquith also photographed in New York and Jersey City during the 1850s and 1860s.

George W. Prosch was an instrument maker who supplied Samuel B. Morse with telegraph equipment.⁸ He became the first camera manufacturer in the United States, when he made one for Morse in the fall of 1839, immediately after news of the discovery of the daguerreotype reached American shores.⁹ Prosch was active as a daguerreotypist from 1840 to 1856, in both New York City and New Jersey. His first documented visit to the Garden State was when he came to Princeton to make portraits in 1846.¹⁰ On January 28, 1852, his brother-in-law Henry E. Insley assigned the rights to his patented "Illuminated Daguerreotype" to Prosch, stating, "Having long known Mr. Prosch as one of the earliest and most skillful artizans [sic] and artists in the country, I feel confident that my beautiful improvement will not suffer in

his hands, nor the confidence of the public be misplaced by their patronage."¹¹

Given that George was Charlotte's oldest sibling and that he was active among the daguerreotype pioneers from its inception in the United States, it seems plausible that she learned the process from him. Meanwhile, her brother Andrew in New York became a



ABOVE: Charlotte Prosch, *Portrait of a Standing Child*, ca. 1851, Daguerrotype, sixth plate, 3.25x2.75 inches (8.3x7cm). The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri. Gift of the Hall Family Foundation, 2005.37.80. © Nelson Gallery Foundation. Photo: Thomas Palmer

BELOW: *Newark Daily Advertiser*, May 12, 1849, p.3

DAGUERREOTYPE NOTICE.

MISS PROSCH'S old established Gallery having been enlarged and improved by the addition of a large Sky-Light now possesses facilities unequalled in Newark and not surpassed elsewhere, for producing Daguerreotype of every size, single or in groupes, with the greatest despatch and perfection. Miss P. still retains her side light for the accommodation of those who may prefer side light pictures.

N. B. Miss Prosch having engaged the assistance of her brother, Mr. G. W. Prosch, long known as a Daguerrian Artist in New York, feels much confidence in again calling the attention of the citizens of Newark and vicinity, to her establishment, and embraces the present opportunity of tendering her acknowledgements for the very handsome patronage and kind attentions shown her in times past.

my12-1mD&1ts

manufacturer of "philosophical instruments" and a distributor of daguerreian supplies, from 1842 to at least 1852.¹² Possibly, Charlotte ordered some of her chemicals and equipment from him.

While it is not known when Charlotte acquired the requisite knowledge to perform the complicated and health hazardous steps involved in making a daguerreotype, by no later than 1845, she opened her own portrait studio at 235 Broadway, New York.¹³ The following year, she moved to 179 Broadway, and changed her residence from 64 Gouverneur Street to 26 Dey Street, the same home address as her brother Andrew Prosch, whose business was then at 187 Broadway.¹⁴

Some of Charlotte Prosch's customers from Newark encouraged her to relocate. Another factor may have been the competition on Broadway that included Mathew Brady near the corner of Fulton, over a saloon with a large model of a camera hanging on the front of the five story building. Many other daguerreotypists, some with very little ability, were opening up locations in the city. By 1850, there were more than seventy.¹⁵ By comparison, Newark offered a better opportunity to capture a substantial market since it was then in a period of industrialization and growth.

Seth Boyden, whose mechanical shop was near where his statue now stands in Washington Park, perfected the process of making patent leather, invented malleable iron, and made other discoveries that helped make Newark an important industrial center.¹⁶ The city's transportation system, including the Morris Canal, completed to Newark in 1831, and the railroad which connected in 1834, enabled raw materials to be brought to its factories and finished products to ship out. When Charlotte arrived in Newark, she found a bustling city which would become even more densely populated with the



ABOVE: Charlotte Prosch, unidentified seated woman, 1848
TypDAG861, Houghton Library, Harvard University

BELOW: *Newark Daily Advertiser*, January 3, 1850, p.1

DAGUERREOTYPE NOTICE.
MISS PROSCH'S old established Gallery, 259 Broad st., Newark, having been enlarged and improved by the addition of a large SKY-LIGHT, possesses superior facilities for producing the most perfect Daguerreotypes, and of every size and style, single or in groupes. To PARENTS, to CHILDREN, to FRIENDS, it is respectfully advised to "secure the shadow ere the substance perish."
 N. B. The earlier part of the day is most favorable for good pictures—the light is never so good late in the afternoon, and children especially should be taken in the middle of the day.
 Je22-tf

influx of German immigrants after the failed revolutions of 1848, joining the many Irish who were crossing the Atlantic as a result of the Potato Famine that began in 1845.

The earliest mention of Charlotte Prosch in New Jersey was on April 7, 1847, when *The Newark Daily Advertiser* carried her ad, "Miss Prosch, an experienced Daguerrian Artist, from New York,

has by request of her patrons of Newark, opened a Gallery in this City." Prosch's gallery was at 259 Broad Street and she would remain there with only a brief interruption until 1854.

Before 1847, when Charlotte Prosch opened her studio, there had been at least thirteen portrait daguerreotypists in Newark, all men, and all for brief periods. For example, her brother-in-law Henry E. Insley operated there in June 1843. Other notable predecessors included George S. Cook (1845–1846), who during the Civil War would become "the Mathew Brady of the South" with a base in Charleston, South Carolina. In September 1844, George N. Barnard, later a famous Civil War photographer for the Union army, could be found making portraits at 346 Broad Street when he was just starting his lengthy career. But at the time Prosch opened in Newark, there were only one or two competitors, John Ford and possibly Joseph Pirsson, who also established his portrait gallery in



ABOVE: Charlotte Prosch, Emma J. and Charlotte W. Ford, sisters, 1847 Bob Goller collection

BELOW: *Newark Daily Advertiser*, May 24, 1853, p.3

1847. By the end of the century, after a substantial population increase, more than two dozen photographers could be found on Broad Street.¹⁷

MR. & MRS. DAY, (Lato Miss PROSCH.)
DAGUERRIAN ARTISTS. NO. 274 BROAD ST.
MRS. DAY respectfully informs her former customers and the public generally, that on account of the increase of her business, she has removed her Gallery, to No. 274 Broad st., (upper story) which is now
THE LARGEST GALLERY IN NEWARK.
 Mr. & Mrs. Day respectfully solicit a call from all who wish good pictures for themselves or friends. Having kept pace with all the recent improvements in the art they will be able to please those who favor them with their patronage. mylo

The nature of Charlotte Prosch's business is documented by an ad in 1848: "... Pictures are usually taken in five to ten seconds. particular attention paid to taking Family groups; also portraits of deceased persons. Price of Pictures, One Dollar, and upwards according to size of plate and richness of case or frame."¹⁸ Taking post-mortem photos at home was not at all unusual at this time.

The family would seek out a daguerreotypist to come to the front parlor where the deceased would be laid out for relatives and friends to visit for the last time. In the case of small children, the mother often sat and held the baby in her arms.¹⁹

In addition to ads, Prosch sought to market her services through publicity achieved at Essex County fairs. At the Essex County Fair in 1848, she was awarded a discretionary premium and diploma for Daguerreotype Portraits. At the 1849 Fair, she was awarded a diploma for "largest display."²⁰ Apparently, Prosch was successful in growing her business and took steps in 1849 to bring it to a higher level. On May 12, 1849, she made two important announcements in the *Newark Daily Advertiser*. First, she stated that her gallery, with the "addition of a large Sky-Light now possesses facilities unequalled in Newark and not surpassed elsewhere, for producing Daguerreotypes of every size, single or in groups, with the greatest despatch and perfection."

Previously, she had only used a window or "side light," which she retained "for the accommodation of those whom [sic] may prefer side light pictures." In the era when daguerreotypists used natural lighting almost exclusively, the manipulation of large "lights" (windows) with shades for best effect was critical to success. But getting the sitters to visit at the right time of day was also important. As Prosch advised her clients, "To



ABOVE: Charlotte Prosch
Julia Driver Collection

BELOW: *Newark Daily Advertiser*, June 9, 1853, p.3

MRS. DAY,
(formerly Miss Prosch.)

WOULD most respectfully inform her customers and friends, that she has returned to her old rooms,
259 BROAD STREET,
and will be happy to wait upon all that wish pictures of themselves or friends. and will do all she can to please.
Pictures taken from 75 cents up to \$10.
189 259 Broad st., Sign of the American Flag.

PARENTS, to CHILDREN, to FRIENDS, it is respectfully advised to 'secure the shadow ere the substance perish.' N.B. The earlier part of the day is most favorable for good pictures—the light is never so good late in the afternoon, and children especially should be taken in the middle of the day."²¹ Stronger light meant shorter exposure times, necessary to freeze the wriggles of fidgety small fry and

EXCELSIOR DAGUERRIAN GALLERY.

MRS DAY, (formerly Miss C. Prosch,) would most respectfully inform her friends and customers, that she has returned to her old place, No. 259 BROAD St., and would be happy to wait upon all who wish a good Daguerreotype of themselves or friends. Pictures taken at this Gallery are warranted to give perfect satisfaction, if not, no charge is made. Pictures taken with all the latest improvements, colored in all their natural colors equal to any in the city, at the lowest prices. at the

EXCELSIOR DAGUERREOTYPE GALLERY.

259 Broad st., (east side,) between Commerce and Clinton sts.

A large assortment of Fancy Cases, Frames, &c., constantly on hand. Pictures inserted in Locketts, Breastpins, Bracelets, &c. 524

Newark Daily Advertiser, October 3, 1853, p.3

prevent blur, particularly important for larger plates because exposures had to be longer. Also, more time was needed in the cooler months when the sun was weaker. Charlotte would have used an immobilizer, a clamp behind the sitter's head. Exposures were controlled by taking the lens cap off and putting it back on; timing was determined by the photographer's experience.

Prosch's second announcement on May 12, 1849, was the addition of an important member to her staff: "Miss Prosch having engaged the assistance of her brother, Mr. G.W. Prosch, long known as a Daguerrian Artist in New York, feels much more confidence in again calling the attention of the citizens of Newark and vicinity, to her establishment. . . ." ²² Although her daguerreotypes included a label, "Miss C. Prosch," with the address at the bottom of the brass mat that framed the image, it was common practice for daguerreotype gallery owners to take credit for photographs made by hired lensmen, so after bringing George on board, she may not have taken all the daguerreotypes with her name on them. ²³

While the reasons why George W. Prosch would agree to work for his younger sister Charlotte are unknown, his joining the firm suggests that her business had developed to the point where she could not handle it by herself. George worked for Charlotte until no later than May 1850, when he opened a new gallery just down the street at 250 Broad.²⁴ There he lowered the price for "a good colored Daguerreotype Likeness" to seventy-five cents (a dollar previously was typical).²⁵ A year later, he would move again to a larger space at 244 Broad, which he called "The New Jersey Daguerreotype Gallery . . . the largest and best arranged establishment of the kind in Newark. . . ." ²⁶ This studio was next to the Morris Canal, which

extended from Phillipsburg through Newark to Jersey City.

Once George opened his own gallery, he was in direct competition with Charlotte. In his *Newark Daily Advertiser* ad of January 2, 1852, he concluded, "N.B. In consequence of their being another Gallery in Newark, whose proprietor is of the same name, please take particular notice of my address. . ." At 244 Broad,

EXCELSIOR DAGUERREIAN GALLERY.
MR S DAY, (formerly Miss C Prosch,) would most respectfully inform her friends and customers, that she has returned to her old place, No. 259 BROAD ST., and would be happy to wait upon all who wish a good Daguerreotype of themselves or friends. Pictures taken at this Gallery are warranted to give perfect satisfaction. If not, no charge is made. Pictures taken with all the latest improvements, colored in all their natural colors equal to any in the city, at the lowest prices, at the
EXCELSIOR DAGUERREOTYPE GALLERY,
259 Broad st., (east side,) between Commerce and Clinton sts.
A large assortment of Fancy Cases, Frames, &c., constantly on hand. Pictures inserted in Locketts, Breastpins, Bracelets, &c. s24
MUSICAL.
Singing Class for Misses and Young Ladies

Newark Daily Advertiser, October 13, 1853, p.3

George's gallery was still very close to Charlotte's at 259. Was it a friendly competition or did they have a sibling rivalry? Evidence is lacking but they must have been on good terms by 1857, when Charlotte named her only son with the same name as her brother. Both galleries continued in business for several years. By 1850, Newark featured about a dozen daguerreotypists vying for the public's patronage, as well as a daguerreotype case maker, Ebenezer Larwill, and daguerreotype plate makers to supply them.²⁷ In that year, Charlotte had other family members in Newark to keep her company. Her parents, her brother William Jr. (possibly a widower), his four young children, and Maria Prosch (age 19, likely a sister) had relocated to Newark and Charlotte moved in with them.²⁸ The paterfamilias, William Prosch, was then in the oyster trade.

In November 1851, Charlotte Prosch advertised that she had hired a "Gentlemanly operator, seldom surpassed in a knowledge of the art."²⁹ This cameraman has not been identified. That year, she was charging a dollar for daguerreotypes with hand applied color.³⁰

A fine example from the Prosch studio is the daguerreotype of three children, now in the collection of the Houghton Library at Harvard University. We will assume Charlotte made this one herself. The two girls and a boy stand facing the camera, with the

tallest girl on the left (Charlotte placed her on the right side knowing that the daguerreotype, being a mirror image, would reverse the order). Each of the children has red tinting on the cheeks and the two girls, wearing identical outfits, hold flowers that have been colored red and a bluish green. The boy holds a tome, suggesting studiousness. A soft, even light illuminates the siblings. The two

**LARGE BREAD,
AT DAY'S EXCELSIOR BAKERY.**

THE subscriber having returned to Newark, has taken taken the Bakery No. 36 Academy st., and is now scaling his Bread 3 lbs. for 13 cts. per loaf, which is the largest and best Bread for the money in Newark. The public is invited to call and see for themselves. They will find all kinds of **CAKES** usually found in a first class bakery.

BREAD, Wheat, Rye, Graham, fresh every afternoon at 4 o'clock. Tea Biscuit and Rusk at the same time. Hot Milk Rolls every morning at 6 o'clock, (something new, not bread-dough as others.)

The subscriber would recommend his home-made Bread—something new—try it and judge for yourselves.

Mrs. DAY (formerly Miss O. Prosch) has opened an ICE-CREAM SALOON in connection with the Bakery, and would respectfully invite her old friends and the public in general to call and give it a trial.

Bread left at the houses if desired.

A. DAY.

Newark Daily Advertiser, August 13, 1857, p.4

older children each have a hand on the shoulder of the one next to them, creating a dignified, yet close-knit familial group. In another daguerreotype, Emma J. and Charlotte W. Ford sit closely together. The older sister also rests her hand on the shoulder of the younger one, but as her palm is partially visible, there is a less definite impression of sibling harmony.³¹

Another daguerreotype that likely was made by Charlotte Prosch personally is the portrait of an unidentified woman wearing a bonnet. The woman's posture and gaze at the camera lens is very relaxed and serene.³² All of the five portrait daguerreotypes by Charlotte that I have seen are of women or children, a small sample, but suggestive that men in Newark may have tended to go elsewhere for their portraits.

By the early 1850s, Charlotte's was the longest running daguerreotype studio in the city of Newark and she pointed to that fact with pride in her ads. For example, on March 18, 1852, she stated that hers was the "oldest in the city [and offered] a greater variety of Daguerreotypes than in any other Gallery in this State. Her pictures cannot be excelled in deepness of tone or richness of finish even in New York."³³ She continued at 259 Broad Street until 1853, when she briefly operated a second location at 274 Broad, then returned to "her old rooms" "at the sign of the American Flag."³⁴

Charlotte's expansion to two locations may have been related to her marriage in Newark on March 9, 1853, to Alfred Day, who was a

few years younger than his bride.³⁵ That year, both Mr. and Mrs. Day were listed in the city directory as daguerreotypists. Evidence that Alfred had any previous photographic experience has not been found. Possibly, he was the "gentlemanly operator" Prosch had hired in 1851. In subsequent references, he is usually listed as a baker but he did do some photography later as will be discussed below.

The marriage of Charlotte Day has been erroneously reported in previous publications, including my own. In "Nineteenth-Century New Jersey Photographers" (*New Jersey History*, Fall/Winter 2004), I relied on *Craig's Daguerreian Registry* (1996, 1997), which stated that Charlotte Prosch married a Moses Day. That, it turns out, was a reference to another Charlotte. Charlotte Prosch's marriage to Alfred Day is clearly documented by an Essex County Marriage Record, available at the New Jersey State Archives, as well as by subsequent references.³⁶

As Mrs. Day, Charlotte continued to operate her gallery for about a year after her marriage. In her ads, as late as October 1853, she offered daguerreotypes from .75 up to \$10. She began calling her studio the Excelsior Daguerreotype Gallery. In addition to standard cased portraits, she offered a

large assortment of frames and cases and insertion of pictures into lockets, breast pins, and bracelets. Daguerreian jewelry is highly prized by collectors today although it is rare to find the maker identified.³⁷

By May 1854, Charles Brewster had taken over Mrs. Day's gallery; he would remain there until 1857. The reason for Charlotte giving up her business in Newark probably resulted from the birth of her first child, Mary L. Day, in March 1854.³⁸ Soon thereafter, Charlotte, Alfred, and Mary relocated to Michigan, where the Days' second child Ada was born in 1855 and where Charlotte's last known daguerreotype was made in Paw Paw on March 12, 1856, showing storefronts, including the printing office of a newspaper, *The Free Press*. This extraordinary sixth plate image, made while there was still snow on the ground, shows the signs on the building and in the windows reading correctly, so a mirror must have been used to reverse it during exposure. She presented it to the newspaper's editor.³⁹ This is the only known daguerreotype Charlotte made in Michigan, her only known outdoor view, and her last photograph of any kind that has come to my attention.

Upon their return to New Jersey, Alfred opened "Day's Excelsior Bakery" at 36 Academy Street where he sold "the largest and best bread in Newark," a three-pound loaf for 12 cents. An ad in the *Newark Daily Register* on June 26, 1857, added, "Mrs. Day



Charlotte Prosch Day, Paw Paw, Michigan taken March 12, 1856 and presented to the editor of the *Free Press*, Paw Paw

Sixth plate, Greg French collection

(formerly Miss C. Prosch) has opened an ICE CREAM SALOON in connection with the bakery, and would respectfully invite her old friends and the public in general to call and give it a trial.”⁴⁰ Charlotte’s next child, George W., named after her older brother, was born October 20 and their fourth and last, Sarah Amelia, in March 1860.

Charlotte’s subsequent life is by and large undocumented, as not much information about her has been found. In the 1860 census, the family was still in Newark, with Charlotte listed as a homemaker. Alfred gave his personal worth as a modest \$300, when a dollar was worth almost \$28 in 2015 currency.⁴¹ He is listed in directories as a baker in Newark at 61 Market Street from 1861 to 1864, then in 1866 at 190 Broad in Elizabeth, with his home at the same address.

The family then moved to Rhode Island by 1869, where Alfred was a baker that year in Warren, Bristol County. He had a bakery in Providence in 1870. In that year’s census, the family was living in Warren. Alfred, baker, was 46; Charlotte, homemaker, 48 (she was probably closer to 52); and their four children ranged in age from 10 to 16. Also with them was a 20-year-old female servant and a 19-year-old baker from England. In 1871, still listed as residing in Warren, Alfred worked as both a photographer in Newport and a confectioner in Lincoln, north of Providence.⁴² Alfred’s frequent job changes suggests at best a certain restlessness; at worst, a series of career disappointments that may have caused stress in his family.

In 1872, Alfred and Charlotte bought a store for \$3,500 at 243 Purchase Street, New Bedford, Massachusetts.⁴³ Their timing couldn’t have been worse, for The Panic of 1873 initiated an economic depression that lasted for years and caused thousands of bankruptcies. Alfred and Charlotte sold the property on November 2, 1876, for only \$1,300, a very substantial loss.⁴⁴ A possible indication that the store was not viable is that in 1873, Alfred was listed in the New Bedford directory as a baker and confectioner in the same building where he lived, not at the store, but at 52 Third, corner Walnut. After that he no longer appears in New Bedford directories. His teenage son George, who had become a photographer, lived on his own in New Bedford and was listed in the directories in 1873 and 1875.⁴⁵

By 1880, Charlotte and her three younger children, including George, resided in Dartmouth, Massachusetts, just a few miles from New Bedford, with a sister-in-law, Mary E. Day, 38. Recorded in the 1880 census, Charlotte, 60, was a homemaker and head of household as her husband was not present. In the 1880 census, Alfred, age 52, was a baker in Girard, Kansas, a new town on a surveyed railroad line running south on the plains from Kansas City.⁴⁶ It became the Crawford County seat, with a population of 1,289 in 1880. He lived with his older brother Samuel W. Day, 55, also a baker from New York; Sam’s second wife, Mary E. Day, 38 (thus listed twice in the census); and Sam’s son, Francis W., 26.

Alfred’s frequent job changes suggests at best a certain restlessness; at worst, a series of career disappointments that may have caused stress in his family.



Day Family Grave, South Dartmouth
Cemetery, Dartmouth, Massachusetts
Credit: Find-A-Grave

Back in Dartmouth, on April 14, 1881, Charlotte's daughter Ada married young Charles Howland, a next door neighbor according to the 1880 census. Unfortunately, on December 14, 1883, she died of "phthisis," one of the terms then used for consumption, more commonly known today as tuberculosis. She was only 26 years old, and left a daughter Lucy, born in 1882. It is likely that Lucy was the only grandchild of Charlotte's to reach maturity; she died in 1960 and was probably her last living descendant.⁴⁷

Charlotte's daughter Sarah was the next to marry; in 1882, she wed Captain Thomas H. Jenkins, a master mariner who was older by 14 years. The Dartmouth couple had two children, neither of whom survived to 1900.⁴⁸

With one exception noted below, where Charlotte lived between 1880 and her death almost twenty years later in Dartmouth has not been found. Census records are lacking and Dartmouth directories are not available for that era. In all likelihood, she stayed most of the time in Dartmouth, where her surviving two daughters were still living in 1900.

Sam and Alfred returned from Kansas in the early 1880s, but if Alfred came back to Dartmouth, he didn't stay long, for he is listed in Brooklyn directories for most years from 1882 to 1894. Since the directories didn't list wives domiciled with husbands, we don't know if Charlotte lived with him or not. Alfred and Sam continued

to be bakers, shared homes, and worked together some of the time. Sam's son Francis also became a baker and was in the firm of Samuel W. Day & Son beginning in 1885.

Alfred's son George W. Day resided with him in 1883 and worked as a baker, but does not appear again in Brooklyn directories until 1889–1891, when he was listed as a photographer and lived separately from his father. In a remarkable reference regarding his mother, in the 1890 Brooklyn directory, published in 1889 for the year ending May 1, 1890, Charlotte is with her son at 451 Classon Avenue. It is plausible that she was helping him with his photography business. Hopefully, that was a bright spot in Charlotte's life after losing her daughter Ada in 1883 and two grandchildren in 1885 and 1890.⁴⁹

Curiously, in that 1890 Brooklyn directory, Charlotte is listed as the widow of George W. Day. George, of course, was her son, not her husband. In that era, women living apart from their husbands were sometimes referred to as "widows," perhaps to try to avoid embarrassment. While the evidence is scanty and directories are not very reliable, it seems plausible that Charlotte and Alfred were separated by 1880.⁵⁰

Alfred is not listed in the Brooklyn directories after 1894 but he died there on March 24, 1896, and was buried in the South Dartmouth Cemetery. Charlotte succumbed to "apoplexy," most likely a sudden cerebral or other hemorrhage, on November 5, 1899, and was interred in the South Dartmouth Cemetery with her husband. Also listed on the family tombstone are the names and death dates of her children who remained single, Mary L. Day, Oct. 5, 1907, and George W. Day, Sept. 29, 1921.⁵¹

It is tempting to aver that Charlotte Prosch's career as a daguerreotypist, from 1845 to the mid-1850s was important merely because she was a woman when most daguerreotypists were men. But she is also memorable as one of New Jersey's first photographers, male or female, whose studio lasted longer than most at that time and whose work was comparable to the best of her competitors. Americans, perhaps more than citizens of other countries, had an insatiable desire for portraits of themselves. Charlotte Prosch satisfied their "picture hunger."⁵² The meager facts that have been found about her life suggest that while she had professional success until her marriage, her subsequent life as a homemaker was punctuated by financial straits, premature death of family members, and possibly marital problems—all issues that many 19th century women had to face. In those respects, her experience was probably typical of her time.



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NOTES

1. The most significant improvements in 1840 and 1841 were increased sensitization of the plate through fuming with bromine and chlorine vapors in 1840; the Petzval portrait lens which passed much more light; and gold chloride toning to improve contrast. For the early history of daguerreotype portraiture, see William F. Stapp, *Robert Cornelius: Portraits from the Dawn of Photography* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1983).
2. In 1849, according to tavern rates set by the Court of Common Pleas in New Jersey, dinner and two bottles of ale cost a maximum of \$1.11, compared to \$1 for a typical daguerreotype portrait. Rates for Inn Keepers, 1849, Sussex County, New Jersey:
https://mobile.njstatelib.org/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10929/34765/Tavern_Rates_5.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
3. Naomi Rosenblum, *A History of Women Photographers* (NY: Abbeville, 1994), p. 43. Rosenblum only mentions a handful of these women by name and suggests that there were about fifty times more men than women who tried to earn a living by photography in the 1840s.
4. See my New Jersey Photographers List at <http://gary.saretzky.com/photohistory/njphotographers.html>. Compared to professional women photographers later in the century, only a few were in business longer than Prosch. Among other notable women photographers active in the 1800s were Jessie Carhart Weller of Phillipsburg, Hannah H. Flanagin of Woodstown, and Mary Sunderlin of Flemington. Sunderlin worked with her father, John Sunderlin, then took over the business. Flanagin also remained single and on her retirement, turned her gallery over to Julia Elton. Jessie Carhart began her studio before her marriage, then her husband Robert Weller joined her in the business for a few years before his death at age 30. For a list of more than one hundred female photographers active in New Jersey in the nineteenth century, see my New Jersey Women Photographers List:
<http://gary.saretzky.com/photohistory/NJWomenPhotographers.html>
5. According to her Dartmouth, Massachusetts, death record, Charlotte Prosch was born in June 1821. Census records give varying ages for her, indicating a birth between 1818 and 1822.
6. Insley moved his family to New Jersey by 1845, while working in New York. His son, Henry A. Insley, also became a photographer.
7. Julia Driver, *Women Photographers at the Dawn of Photography*, Ch. 4, draft, 2005 (unpublished).
8. Robert Taft, *Photography and the American Scene* (NY: Macmillan, 1938), p. 15.
9. 1882 memoir of Andrew Prosch, reprinted in William Welling, *Photography in America, 1839–1900* (NY: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1978), p. 9.
10. *Princeton Whig*, April 20, 21 and June 2, 1848. George W. Prosch was operating in a house next to "the Bank" (clippings on file at Mudd Library, Princeton University). Due to his wife's poor health, George W. Prosch spent the last 20 years of his life in seclusion in Coytesville, Bergen Co., NJ, where he had a shop. His son Frederick became a school teacher. Another son, Cyrus, was in the photography equipment business and had a store in New York City; he was mentioned in the *New York Times* on Jan. 15, 1893, for making improvements to the camera shutter. George W. Prosch died Aug. 29, 1876, and was buried in the Coytesville Cemetery (also known as Woodland Cemetery). In 1880, his widow, Catherine Prosch, 67, was living in Coytesville with her son Cyrus, 27, a brass worker. In addition to George, other Prosches—Catherine J., Catherine A., and Peter—were buried in the Coytesville cemetery between 1882 and 1895. Dave Coyte, email message to author, May 5, 2005; Thomas W. Prosch, *The Conkling-Prosch Family* (Seattle: General Lithographic and Printing Co., 1909).
11. *Newark Daily Advertiser*, Mar. 18, 1852, p. 3 (ad placed Jan. 28). Insley's Illuminated Daguerreotype was a vignette achieved by differential fuming with mercury development. For a description, see Floyd and Mary Rinhart, "The Illuminated Daguerreotype Process," *The New Daguerreian Journal*, 1:5 (April 1972), pp. 4–6, available at http://www.cdags.org/cdags_resources/ndj_01_05.pdf
12. John Craig, ed., *Craig's Daguerreian Registry*, Vol. 3 (Torrington, CT: Craig, 1996), p. 466. The term "philosophical instruments" encompassed a wide variety of optical devices, including the camera obscura.
13. Craig, p. 466. To make a daguerreotype, Charlotte would have first polished a rectangular piece of silver plated copper to a mirror finish. The plate was then placed in a fuming box and exposed to iodine vapors, to create a light sensitive surface of silver iodide. Additional fuming with bromine and/or chlorine gas made the plate sufficiently sensitive for portraiture. After exposure in the camera, the plate was placed in a development container and exposed to mercury vapors. Fixation in sodium thiosulfate and toning in a bath of gold chloride solution followed to give the image stability and more contrast. The plate was then sealed in a case with a brass mat and cover glass to protect the very fragile surface from the air and physical damage. Hand applied color was an option at extra cost. Standard daguerreotype sizes included whole plate, 6.5 x 8.5 inches; half plate, 4.25 x 5.5 inches; quarter plate, 3.35 x 4.25 inches; sixth plate, 2.75 x

2.5 inches; ninth plate, 2 x 2.5 inches; and sixteenth plate, 1.375 x 1.625 inches.

14. Craig, p. 466.
15. <http://www.phototree.com/history.htm>
16. Boyden was probably the first in New Jersey to make a daguerreotype. Examples made with a camera he built himself were mentioned in *Centinel of Freedom* (Newark), April 21, 1840, p. 2. Boyden's camera is now at the Newark Museum.
17. Although there were but few daguerreotypists in Newark in 1847, the city was a nationally important center for daguerreotype plate manufacturing, with Edward White's Phenix [a.k.a Phoenix] Works, as well as John Stanley's factory.
18. *Newark Daily Advertiser*, April 8, 1848, p. 3.
19. In San Francisco in the early 1850s, post-mortem photographer Silas Selleck took daguerreotypes of corpses in their caskets at a small building in a cemetery. Edward Ball, *The Inventor and the Tycoon*, (NY: Anchor Books, 2013), p. 227.
20. *Newark Daily Advertiser*, September 21, 1848, p. 2 and October 1, 1849, p. 2.
21. *Newark Daily Advertiser*, ad placed June 22, 1849, and still appearing as late as Jan. 3, 1850.
22. *Newark Daily Advertiser*, May 12, 1849, p. 3.
23. Since examples of daguerreotypes with this label are uncommonly seen today, it is possible that Prosch did not use the label during all the years she was at 259 Broad Street. Examples I have seen have estimated dates of from about 1847 to about 1850.
24. *Newark Daily Advertiser*, Apr. 25, 1850, p. 3.
25. *Newark Daily Advertiser*, May 29, 1850, p. 3.
26. *Newark Daily Advertiser*, May 30, 1851, p. 3; December 31, 1851, p. 3.
27. Larwill introduced the "double door" case, which opened in the middle instead of the side as in conventional cases. For an illustration, see *The Daguerreian Annual 2013*, p. 216. See note above re Newark plate makers.
28. William Prosch, William Prosch Jr., and Charlotte Prosch are listed at 24 Market Street in the 1850 Newark City Directory. In the 1850 Census, they are found with the surname Prush. William Prosch Jr. had a son named George W. Prosch, not to be confused with his uncle of the same name.
29. *Newark Daily Advertiser*, November 26, 1851, p. 3.
30. *Newark Daily Advertiser*, December 31, 1851, p. 3.
31. From the collection of Bob Goller, who believes that the sisters attended Mount Holyoke Female Seminary in Massachusetts.
32. This daguerreotype, now in the collection of Julia Driver, was found in an antiques shop in Reno by Paul Thompson and published with a story of its discovery in *Daguerreian Society News* (15:4, July-Aug 2003), p. 8.
33. *Newark Daily Advertiser*, March 18, 1852, p. 2.
34. *Newark Daily Advertiser*, June 9, 1853, p. 3.
35. Newark Marriage Record, Volume K, p. 32, New Jersey State Archives. According to later census records, Day was a native of New York. His father was born in New York and his mother was from England. The 1850 census lists an Alfred Day in Newark, 22 years old, born in New Jersey, and living with a baker, Andrew Johnston, 34, born in Scotland, Johnston's family, and five other young adults, none of whose professions are listed. No better match for Charlotte's husband has been found in that census.
36. Professor Julia L. Driver, then at Dartmouth University, was the first to draw my attention to the error concerning Charlotte Prosch's marriage. In his *Daguerreian Registry* (<http://craigcamera.com/dag/>) the late John Craig mentioned Alfred Day as having the "same business address used by Charlotte Prosch Day, after her marriage to Moses Day." Craig seems to have been misled by references to another Mrs. Charlotte Day, listed in Newark city directories as the widow of Moses Day for many years beginning in 1854. A corrected and revised version of my *New Jersey History* article, without illustrations, is available at http://gary.saretzky.com/photohistory/resources/photo_in_nj_July_2010.pdf Another published error about Charlotte Prosch, that I did not repeat, was that she was African American, in Robert Hirsch, *Seizing the Light: A Social History of Photography* (NY: McGraw Hill) 2000, 1st edition; this reference was removed in the 2nd edition in 2009.
37. *Newark Daily Advertiser*, October 13, 1853, and earlier. See Larry J. West and Patricia A. Abbott, *Antique Photographic Jewelry: Tokens of Affection and Regard* (Nevada City, CA: Carl Mautz), 2005.
38. Mary's birth month and year, 1900 U.S. Census, Dartmouth, Bristol, Massachusetts. She was unmarried and living with

her sister younger Sarah and Sarah's husband, Thomas Jenkins. For Charlotte Prosch Day in Michigan, see also David V. Tinder, *Directory of Early Michigan Photographers* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2013), http://clements.umich.edu/eadadd/tinder_directory.pdf.

39. Information provided by the current owner, Greg French, from a slip of paper found with the daguerreotype. The *Paw Paw Free Press*, depicted on the left of the image, changed its name in 1855, according to a history of the press of Van Buren County, Michigan, at <http://history.rays-place.com/mi/vb-press.htm>.
40. This ad ran at least until September 16, 1857. Birth record, male child of Alfred Day, baker, Book L, p. 490A, New Jersey State Archives.
41. <http://www.in2013dollars.com/1860-dollars-in-2015?amount=1>
42. Providence city directories, 1870–1871; Newport city directory, 1871. By 1871, Alfred would have been using the collodion wet plate process, which superseded the daguerreotype, to make either glass plate negatives for printing on albumen paper or tintypes.
43. *Rhode Island Press* (Providence, RI), May 11, 1872, p. 2. The article clearly states that the store was purchased by both Alfred and Charlotte Day but doesn't indicate what kind of store it was. It included about 13 rods of land, equivalent to about 214 feet, presumably extending behind the building. Due to renumbering, the current address of the lot is 1367–1369 Purchase Street. Deed, Edward Milliken and Lucia Ann Milliken of New Bedford to Alfred Day and Charlotte Day of Warren, Rhode Island, consideration of \$3,500, April 19, 1872, recorded May 6, 1872, Book 71, p. 307. Emails, Sue Morris to author, February 22–23, 2016.
44. Deed, Alfred Day and Charlotte Day to Nathan Chase, consideration of \$1,300, November 2, 1876, recorded November 2, 1876, Book 84, p. 173, Bristol South Registry of Deeds. The lot is currently Parcel 66, Lot 9 in City of New Bedford Assessor's records available online. Alfred and Charlotte Day took out two mortgages on the property in 1872, totaling \$3,500. Recently, the building has been the site of a friendly neighborhood pub, The Dipper Cafe.
45. In 1873, George W. Day, at the age of 16, had his own photography business in New Bedford and lived independently until at least 1875. George's business in 1873 was at 134 1/2 Union St., and in 1875 at 64 1/2 Purchase Street. With the daguerreotype long out of fashion by 1873, George would have been using the collodion wet plate process for negatives or tintypes. In 1873, Alfred Day was a baker at 52 Third corner Walnut, with the same home address. *New Bedford (MA) City Directories, 1873–1875*.
46. Note that Alfred had aged only six years over the past decade according to the 1880 census.
47. Death record, Dartmouth, Massachusetts, for Ada Howland, ancestry.com. Her precise age at death was 26 years, 3 months, 17 days. According to this record, she was born in Michigan to Alfred and Charlotte Day, which means Charlotte gave birth at the end of August 1857 before returning to Newark. See also Ada's record, which mentions Lucy, in Find-A-Grave, <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=113680019>.
48. Marriage date from 1900 Census, Dartmouth, MA. Sarah's older sister Mary lived with her. Captain Jenkins (1846–1916) had a son, Horace Gray Jenkins (1868–1944), from a previous marriage that ended in divorce.
49. Sarah Amelia Jenkins had two children: Arthur S. Jenkins, 1885–1885, and Thomas Herbert Jenkins, 1887–1890, who was born in Brooklyn and died at sea, suggesting that Sarah sailed with her husband, Captain Jenkins. Find-A-Grave <http://www.findagrave.com/>. In the 1900 census, Sarah is listed as having had two children, none living.
50. The 1891 Brooklyn directory, which showed George W. Day at 451 Classon Avenue, listed a Charlotte Day, widow, who could have been Charlotte Prosch Day, at 211 Gates. Brooklyn directories in this period also list another Charlotte Day, widow of Thomas Day, who was an electrician; she lived at 120 Suydam around the time Charlotte Prosch Day lived in Brooklyn. I have not found a relation between Alfred Day and Thomas Day. Alfred Day is not listed in the Brooklyn directories between 1891 and 1893, then appears again for the last time in 1894. From 1896 to 1898, George W. Day had a photography studio at 628 Washington, Hoboken, and by 1920, had returned to Dartmouth, where according to the census, he lived with his widowed sister, Sarah Amelia Jenkins. Between these dates, no trace of him has been found. He could have been one of several George W. Days in the metropolitan area and elsewhere. One mentioned in New York newspapers around 1900 was an entertainer who gave comedic monologues in blackface at vaudeville shows.
51. Death records, ancestry.com. Also, death notice for Alfred Day, *New York Herald*, March 26, 1896, p. 1. For tombstone, see Find-A-Grave, <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GSIn=Prosch&GSIman=1&GRid=113376276&>
52. I first came across this expression in *John Raeburn, A Staggering Revolution: A Cultural History of Thirties Photography* (University of Illinois Press, 2006). Although Raeburn used it in connection with the 1930s, it seems apt for the entire history of photography.