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The World's First Photograph

John Bailey · Wednesday, June 8th, 2011

He took his middle name from the ninth century Patriarch of Constantinople. He and his brother, Claude, invented the world's first combustion engine, receiving a patent from Napoleon Bonaparte in July of 1807. A lunar crater is named after him. He was an independently wealthy farmer who raised a plebian crop of sugar beets. He coined the term *velocipede* for a wheeled cycle he engineered. But, most significantly, he made the world's first photograph — in September of 1826, more than a decade before L.J. Daguerre presented his monotype, silver iodide coated, copper plate process to the public, and also before Henry Fox-Talbot's paper negative process, the Calotype.

Both Daguerre and Fox-Talbot are generally credited as co-inventors of photography. But it was the French ex-Army officer and civil administrator from Saône-et-Loire who photographed the first non-fugitive image from nature. It was a view from the second floor studio window of his family estate at Saint-Loup-de-Varennes, *Le Gras*. The highly reflective pewter plate made for challenging viewing...

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