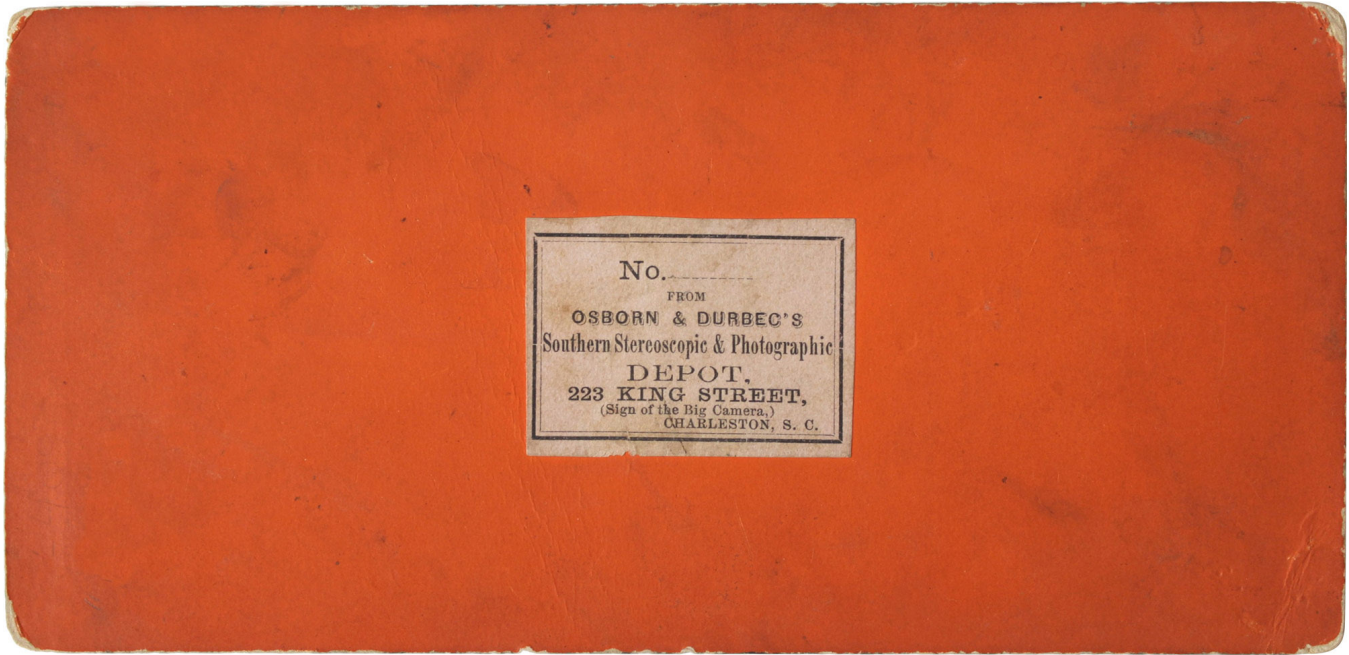




Osborn & Durbec Photographic Studio, Gamble's Hotel, Florence, SC, photographic print, c. 1861

In 1858, veteran Charleston daguerreian artist James M. Osborn joined forces with Frederick. E. Durbec and opened a multifaceted photographic establishment that offered just about any type of image available, as is made plain by their 1860 advertisement in the Charleston business directory. Shortly after the Florence Hotel (commonly referred to as Gamble's Hotel) opened on Thursday, March 22, 1860, under the oversight of J. W. Gamble on behalf of the North Eastern Railroad, representatives from Osborn & Durbec traveled to Florence to photograph the fledgling town at the intersection of the railroads. The photographs taken during this trip are the earliest known images of Florence. At the time this photograph was taken, the Florence Hotel was located at the southeastern quadrant of the intersection of Coit and Front streets in Florence.



Back of a stereoscopic view produced by Osborn & Durbec Southern Stereoscopic & Photographic Depot of Charleston, South Carolina. c. 1860

PHOTOGRAPHERS OSBORN & DURBEC

The daguerreotype, the first photographic process, was invented by Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre (1787-1851) and spread rapidly around the world after its presentation to the public in Paris in 1839. Exposed in a camera obscura and developed in mercury vapors, each highly polished silvered copper plate is a unique photograph that, when viewed in proper light, exhibits extraordinary detail and three-dimensionality. Although born in Europe, the daguerreotype was extremely popular in the United States. During the 1840s and 1850s, Samuel F. B. Morse (1791-1872), who had learned about photography from Daguerre himself, was largely responsible for disseminating the daguerreotype process throughout the United States. By the onset of the Civil War, the paper print had replaced the daguerreotype altogether as the means by which artists distributed their images.

By the late 1840s, skilled photographers had already begun working in South Carolina, most notably in the city of Charleston. In November of 1858 James M. Osborn and Frederick E. Durbec opened a gallery at 233 King Street, the location of S.C. Mouzon's Gallery in 1856 and of the firms

previously listed at that address. From 1858 to 1861 Osborn & Durbec operated from that location.

In April of 1861 Osborn & Durbec were among the first photographers to document the start of the Civil War when their company photographed the aftermath of the bombardments at Fort Sumter and Fort Moultrie. Their stereoscopic views from these historical battles are in the collection of the Library of Congress.

In the summer and fall of 1860, Osborn & Durbec were the first to document, with their cameras and to this degree, many sites in and around Charleston such as Sullivan's Island, Goose Creek, Mt. Pleasant, and Rockville. During this four month period they probably also journeyed on the Northeastern Railroad to Florence. Here they produced several images of local buildings such as Gamble's Hotel (aka The Florence Hotel), views of the railroad and an engine, and a street scene that included their portable tent "studio." Since Osborn & Durbec were not in business together after the Civil War, these photographs must have been produced in late 1860.

TRY IT!

Materials:

Camera (Any type of camera will work, including mobile device cameras)

Things to Think About:

- By the mid 1800's cameras were widely available for purchase. How do you think people were using cameras at that time? What do you think they photographed? How are the things they photographed different from what you might photograph? How are they the same?
- How are the digital cameras that we use today different from cameras, like the Camera Obscura used during the 1800's?
- Why is it important to document the people and places in your life through photographs?
- How do photographs help us remember certain events or time periods?

Document Your Time:

Use the following prompts to guide you as you document your time through photographs.

- What does your daily routine look like? When do you wake up? Where do you do your schoolwork? What do you eat for lunch? What do you do for fun? Photograph each part of your daily routine.
- Take a walk through your neighborhood. What do you notice? What animals do you see? Are flowers blooming? Photograph the things that your notice.

Save your photographs in a folder on your computer or mobile device, or print them and paste them into a journal. Write about the photographs you have taken and the things that you have noticed.