



De's Dazzles – Developing in the Darkroom

People are fascinated to learn under the original Corning Opera House stage were two dressing rooms, one for female and one for males. In the center of the stage was a trap door that led to either room. When the Adams County Free Press purchased the building in 1935, the dressing rooms were painted entirely black and became the Darkroom. It was used for developing negatives, a tedious process to see what the film captured.

A rule of thumb to manipulate the film was to increase or decrease the developer dilution and to always experiment with test strips. First you started your timer, immersed your print, and agitated by gently rocking the developing tray. Then, grab the print with tongs and flip it over and over. (Which can result in damaged paper.) Just keep it moving! An image appeared in about 15 seconds and grew darker until it was "ready" in about 90 seconds. Lift the paper with the tongs and drain for a few seconds. Then came the tray of fixer, followed by washing and drying the print. The process of developing a negative is about 30 minutes for a picture!

The opera house has been in a funky place, a darkroom of sorts. A first for us - our September concert was cancelled due to the band breaking up and rentals cancelled due to covid! But Darkrooms aren't a bad thing - the process of developing takes place there and amazing results are achieved! To outsiders, it may appear as though we are disengaged because we have been dipped into the developing tray and the "tongs" are flipping us over and over. But we just keep moving!

As the darkroom timer controls the light, the calendar controls our schedule. Flip the calendar page to October, a time to audition and rehearse the Christmas play, Trial of Ebenezer Scrooge, prepare for the Holiday Boutique Vendors, and plan the Holiday decorating of Christmas Trees. In photography, a negative is an image where the light areas appear the darkest and the darkest appear the lightest. So, the past month was dark, but our 90 seconds (or 30 days) of being flipped over and over, just means our future is looking brighter! Character, like a photograph, is developed in the darkroom! See you at the Corning Opera House!

Sincerely,

De Heaton, Executive Director

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