

The Myth of the heated varnish bottle:

It is not hard to find a modern-day manual or on-line video that tells and shows how to varnish a plate. They nearly all prescribe that you heat up the bottle of varnish, be it sandarac or shellac, before you pour the varnish over your preheated plate. O.K. fine, and you can get a lovely glossy finish if you do that. But, and here's the rub, if you don't heat up your varnish, you can still get just as fine and glossy a finish. Why do something totally unnecessary? The great ones in wet-plate today would have you put your varnish bottle in a hot water bath to heat it up before you begin to varnish. The really *hip* great ones have high tech little water bath units with thermostat knobs and digital read outs. Coool! Then there are those who love playing with fire and wave their bottle or test tube full of highly volatile and super flammable varnish over a spirit lamp flame to heat the varnish up just before they pour it on a plate. Like I said, those who like playing with fire love this one. Trouble is, it might be a lot more fire than they bargained for, a lot more! But, what an act if you can pull it off! Meanwhile, we mere mortals just heat our plate up well by safe means (not over a super dangerous Spirit Lamp) and then varnish, followed by another heating to set the varnish and give it a nice gloss. That's it, simple and just as effective.