

## Why Didn't People Smile in Old Photos, or Did They?

Lecture by Gary Saretzky

Back in the early days of photography in the 1840s, photographers said, “Say Prunes,” instead of “Say Cheese” to get a serious facial expression considered appropriate for a portrait. Most sitters continued to display solemn faces until the 20th century. Yet a small percentage of extant 19th century portraits show people smiling. Illustrated with numerous examples, including some celebrity portraits, this lecture explores the smiling/not smiling continuum in 19th century photographic portraiture.

### Bio

Gary D. Saretzky, archivist, educator, and photographer, worked as an archivist for more than fifty years at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Educational Testing Service, and the Monmouth County Archives, from which he retired in 2019. Saretzky taught the history of photography at Mercer County Community College, 1977–2012, and served as coordinator of the Public History Internship Program for the Rutgers University History Department, 1994–2016. He has published more than 100 articles and reviews on the history of photography, photographic conservation, and other topics, including “New Jersey’s First Female Daguerreotypist: Charlotte Prosch and Her Family,” *The Daguerreian Annual 2023*. He lectures regularly throughout New Jersey. Saretzky’s website at <http://saretzky.com> includes his photographs, lecture schedule, online photo bookstore, and history of photography resources.