

## A Day in the Life: Carvalho's Photo Studio

**“A Day in the Life”** is a project developed by Shari Davis and Benny Ferdman of Creative Ways to encourage students to put themselves “in the shoes” of historical personas—both ordinary and well known. Over the years students and campers have been photographed as Yiddish speaking New York immigrants, Jews from the Middle Ages, and more. In Carvalho’s Photo Studio, WBT students will step into the lives of pioneer Jews of Los Angeles.

### TIPS ON PHOTOGRAPHING

- **CAMERAS:** Have two digital cameras available with fresh batteries. Consider setting up lighting if possible
- **BACKDROP:** Create a backdrop using a fabric or curtains or an simple wall. Use a table and other props and rearrange as needed to imitate the setting of each old photo.
- Consider photographing in a black and white setting. Take a test shot to make sure the setting on the camera is optimal.
- **ENCOURAGE THE STUDENTS TO “GET INTO CHARACTER”** and not be distracted. Have the actual old photo and a mirror nearby to practice the expression in and body language in the photo. Work with student to “take on” the gesture and facial expression of the character fully before you shoot the camera.
- **YOU ARE THE DIRECTOR.** Briefly discuss the character with the student before you shoot. Ask: who are you? What kind of work do you do? What is your mood? Ask them to show this with their gesture and facial expression. Look into the viewfinder and give feedback and cues, ie. “You look pret ty tough!” “You just arrived you must be pretty scared. “ “You are totally in control of your world. Show me with your face how smart you are.” When they become that person, SNAP!

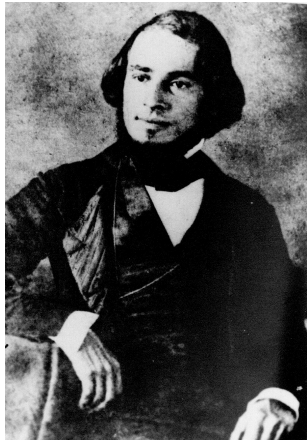


A student as Yiddish Actress Celia Adler

## TIPS ON COSTUMES & MAKEUP

- Consider having a few parent volunteers to help with the photo shoot. Ask students to bring in costumes, ie. suit jackets, hats, dresses, shawls, etc. If possible budget some funds for purchasing some basic items from a thrift store, such as men's vests, bow ties, a vintage blouses or dresses. Look at the photos the students are using and try to match the items.
- During the photo shoot, have costumes easily displayed and assign helpers for the costumes, makeup and hair. Campers can make additional items, such as banners or signs. Try to emulate the photo as much as possible.
- Bring basic makeup, applicators, hair items and a few hand held mirrors from the dollar store. For sanitary purposes use applicators for lipstick. Liner pencils can be used for mustaches and beards and eye makeup. Have a few boxes of tissues handy. Use Ponds cold cream to quickly remove makeup.
- A great technique for a full beard is to use burnt wine cork. Use matches to blacken the end of a cork. Let cool. Rub on face for beard and mustache and heavy eyebrows.
- Bring hair elastics and bobby pins and hair gel and have students help each other do their hair to imitate the photos.

## ABOUT SOLOMON CARVALHO



**Solomon Nunez Carvalho** was an artist, portrait photographer and the first Sephardic Jew to venture to Los Angeles. He traveled west as the official photographer and artist for the explorer John C. Fremont on his difficult 1853-54 mapping expedition to the Rocky Mountains. Upon arriving in the frontier city of Los Angeles in 1854, Carvalho connected with the Jewish community, set up a portrait photography studio and is credited with instigating the official formation of the organized Jewish community. Based on his leadership experiences in the Jewish community back east, he pushed the L.A. newcomers to buy land for a Jewish cemetery and formally set up a Hebrew Benevolent Society to support their members.

Over two sessions the class will recreate Carvalho's "photo studio" for the Day in the Life program:

- Students will chose a portrait of one of the founders of B'nai B'rith/Wilshire Boulevard Temple in the online Jewish Museum of the American West and do web research to learn about that person's life.
- Students will print out at home a copy of the photograph they are posing as and bring in clothing and props that are needed to recreate the image.
- On "photo day" they will dress up and be photographed portraying the person in the photograph.
- In following sessions they will write a letter or diary entry or create an artifact that expresses that person's life and work.
- This can culminate in a L.A. Jewish History community exhibit or family day presentation.