



## Make Your Own Silhouettes

A silhouette is a great way to capture a loved one's image.

The earliest silhouettes were likely done in the late 1600s. The term "silhouette" comes from the name of a French finance minister in the 1750s, who was known for being stingy with money. His name was used to refer to anything considered cheap. As profiles were the cheapest way to have a portrait done, they came to be known as silhouettes.

Silhouettes were so popular because they were quick for artists to make – often only taking minutes to cut - and inexpensive for customers to buy. For many people, a silhouette was their first and only portrait.

When you think about silhouettes, you probably think of a profile picture in one solid dark color against a light background. There are a few different ways that silhouette artists achieved that effect.



- **Silhouettes** - images drawn or painted onto a surface such as paper, usually in black ink
- **Hollow-cut Silhouettes** – images cut from a piece of light-colored paper, with the area cut out forming the profile when laid over a dark piece of paper or fabric. The silhouette to the right of Julia Canfield Flewelling is an example of a hollow-cut silhouette.
- **Cutout Silhouettes** – images cut from a dark-colored material, usually black paper, and then mounted onto a lighter background

**Follow the instructions on the next page to make your own cutout silhouette.**

Silhouette - Julia Canfield Flewelling (1791-1868)  
ca. 1820  
1918-03-15

Try making your own silhouettes by follow the instructions below.

## Print, Trace, and Cut Method

**Materials: Camera, printer, pen, tape scissors, black paper**

1. Take a picture of the subject in profile (facing sideways) against a plain, light-colored background.  
TIP: Take the photos straight on and from eye level so as not to distort the features.
2. Print the photo  
TIP: Make sure the subject is the size you would like the silhouette to be
3. Using a pen, carefully trace the outline of the profile
4. Tape the picture onto black paper, to make sure it does not move when cutting.
5. Cut both the picture and the black paper along the traced outline
6. Silhouettes can be mounted on light background and framed

## Print, Cut, and Paint Method

**Materials: Camera, printer, scissors, black paint, paint brush**

1. Take a picture of the subject in profile (facing sideways) against a plain, light-colored background.  
TIP: Take the photos straight on and from eye level so as not to distort the features.
2. Print the photo  
TIP: Make sure the subject is the size you would like the silhouette to be
3. Carefully cut the outline of the profile
4. Paint the cut photo black
5. Silhouettes can be mounted on light background and framed.

Share your work with us!

Show us your silhouettes by tagging us on social media with #litchfieldhistory

