



Cyanotype Socks

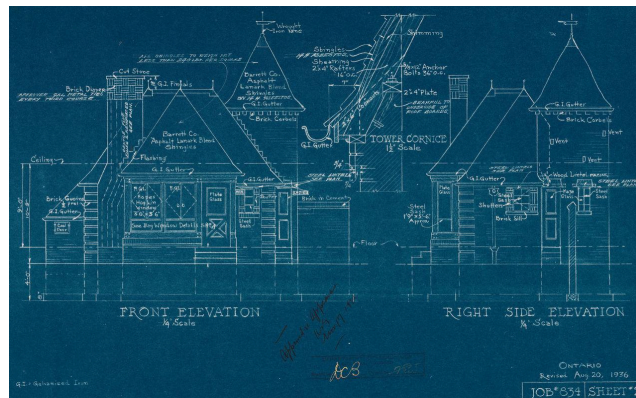
A Brief History of Cyanotype

Cyanotype is a photographic printing process invented in 1842 by scientist Sir John Herschel. By coating paper or fabric with light-sensitive chemicals and exposing it to ultraviolet (UV) light, the process creates the iconic deep cyan-blue images we know today.

The process gained popularity thanks to Anna Atkins, a botanist who used it to document botanical specimens. In 1843, she published *Photographs of British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions*—the very first book illustrated with photographs.



A cyanotype of algae
19th century botanist Anna Atkins



Architectural drawing blueprint
Canada, 1936

Cyanotype also had a long and practical life outside the art and science world. For decades, architects and engineers relied on it to reproduce technical drawings, giving rise to the term “blueprints.” These were made by placing translucent plans over cyanotype-coated paper and exposing them to light, producing fast, reliable, and affordable copies of designs.

Cyanotype Chemistry

Let's get a little nerdy and break down the science behind cyanotype!

The process relies on two special chemicals mixed with water:

- Part A: Potassium Ferricyanide – a red iron salt
- Part B: Ferric Ammonium Citrate – a light-sensitive iron salt

When combined, they create a UV-reactive solution. Once this solution (also called sanitizer) is brushed onto paper or fabric and exposed to sunlight (or other UV sources), a chemical reaction occurs. The iron compounds bond to the surface and transform into the deep, signature Prussian blue color that makes cyanotypes so magical.

Sock Care Instructions

The UV-reactive cyanotype solution bonds to the fibers during the sun-dyeing process, creating that signature blue. Like a pair of dark indigo jeans, the color may soften over time, but with the right care, you can keep them vibrant for years.

First Wash

- The first wash will release any unbonded cyanotype that wasn't fully rinsed during development.
- You may notice the wash water turns light blue and the socks appear slightly lighter—this is completely normal.

Laundering Tips

- Wash in cold water only.
- Use non-phosphate detergent (look for “Free & Clear” or hypoallergenic soaps).
 - *Fun Fact:* Since 1993, laundry detergents in the U.S. have been required to be phosphate-free—so your usual detergent likely be phosphate-free!
- Wash socks inside-out.
- Do not use bleach, OxiClean, or stain remover sprays/sticks.
- Wash with like-colored clothes (avoid tossing them in with white dress shirts!).
- Dryer-safe: it's fine to dry your socks in the dryer.

Handwashing vs. Washing Machine

- Handwashing is the best way to extend color vibrancy over time.
- Machine washing is fine too—just keep these tips in mind:
 - Use a normal or gentle cycle.
 - Skip fabric softener.
 - Turn off any “extra rinse” or “second rinse” settings.

Fading & Refreshing the Color

Over time, your socks may naturally fade. To revive their brilliance, give them a quick hydrogen peroxide bath:

1. Mix 6 tablespoons hydrogen peroxide into 4 cups of water.
2. Soak socks for about 10 minutes.
3. Wring out gently and let air dry completely.