In 1814 August-Louis Cauchy commenced the serious study of problems in analysis involving complex variables. The subject would engage him for the next forty years. During the 1820s a theory of functions of a complex variable began to come together in his extensive work on analysis. The paper examines Cauchy’s evolving understanding of complex analysis during this period, paying particular attention to how he presented the subject material in his didactic treatises of 1821, 1823 and 1829. Topics to be explored include the identity of the theory of complex variables as a distinct part of analysis, and the role that geometric conceptions played in Cauchy’s investigation. (Received September 17, 2015)