

CHAPTER 3 ~ 1900 – 1909

At first glance, the new century may seem chaotic for dating photographs. Yet, there are some clues and characteristics that bring order to the seemingly endless variety of photographic types.

When conducting date analysis, as many different clues as possible should be looked at to fine-tune an estimate. These include not only the photograph technology and format, but also a subject's personal fashion and style, background props or scenery, and even research into the photographer, if identified. Finding a photographer in a city directory can help establish a time frame when your picture was taken.

Evolution of Old Styles

Occasionally, a cabinet card or a similar format can be found after 1900, though these are most often found in mid-western states or rural areas. Still many of these old style cards have unique traits that places them around or after the turn of the century. Look for:

- Denser card material, many with dark colors.
- Embossed imprints not requiring color.
- Sharp, square corners on some.

The three photographs in Figures 3-1, 2, and 3 were all created after 1900, displaying new features that set them apart from earlier cabinet cards including the fact they were not albumen, but newer gelatin prints.



Figure 3-1. 1901 Cabinet card
Omaha, Nebraska
(Dark, dense card)



Figure 3-2. c. 1904 Cabinet card,
Blackwell, Oklahoma Territory
(Dense card with embossing)



Figure 3-3. 1906 Cabinet card
Kirksville, Missouri
(Dense card, sharp corners, embossed)

Simple Granite-Textured Cards

A smooth and inexpensive card was liberally used in the first part of the 20th century. These blank mounts took advantage of improved card manufacturing processes, incorporating a granite-looking surface that was usually dark green or gray, sometimes with a beveled edge. Available in many sizes, they could accommodate a wide range of prints that were simply glued onto the card.

Photographers were at the mercy of card manufacturers and the styles they produced. If a manufacturer decided to produce millions of a single style, the photographer would benefit from an inexpensive mount. So, popularity was sometimes a result of available products.



Figure 3-4. 1907 Alpha Kappa Phi fraternity photograph (5¾ x 3¾).



Figure 3-5. Notation reads *Agnes at sixteen, 1901* (3¾ x 7).



Figure 3-6. Country school picture in Drury, Kansas, c. 1901 (8 x 4¾).

Slightly More Elegant

The same granite-like card material was also used in slightly more decorative mounts adorned with embossed oval or square artwork that framed the print. Frequently found in the first decade of the 20th century, they seemed to fade away afterwards. It is easy to recognize that these cards evolved from cabinet cards.



Figure 3-7. 1901 Portrait of young girl (5 x 6½).



Figure 3-8. 1902 Fashionable lady (4½ x 6½).



Figure 3-9. 1904 Group photograph (7 x 5¾).

Note: the photo is an albumen print with sepia tone, still used occasionally.

Variations on Color

While the darker colors seemed to dominate the business up to about 1905, earth-tone colors of the same mounts were also available.



Figure 3-10. 1902 Portrait (5 x 7).



Figure 3-11. 1902 Baby photo (4½ x 6½).



Figure 3-12. 1902 Family photograph from Iowa (7¼ x 5¼).

Amateur Mounting

By 1900, amateur photography was in full swing, with Kodak promoting the ease of use and advantages of taking your own pictures. Many of these photographs were also mounted in the same manner as studio-produced photographs. Several years would pass before photographic paper would not need to be mounted onto stiffer cards.

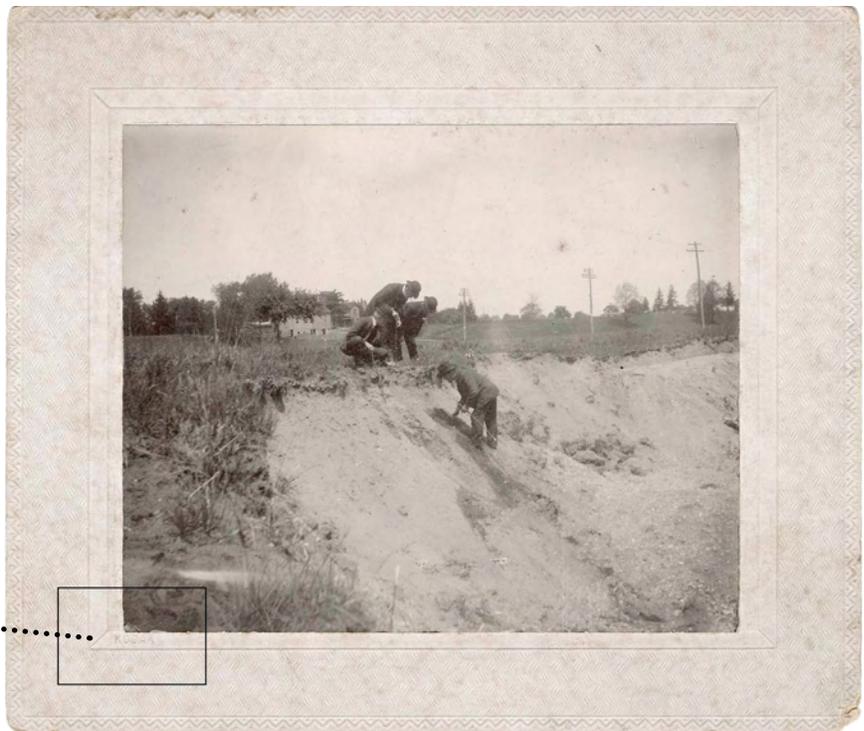


Figure 3-13. 1906 photograph processed and mounted by Kodak (6¾ x 5½).

Both amateur and cost-conscious professional photographers could buy the popular Mantello card mount from the Sears catalog as early as 1897.

These textured mounts were popular in late 19th century through about 1910.

488 SEARS, ROEBUCK & CO.
MANTELLO CARD MOUNTS.
 No. 6860. Mantello Card Mounts are the latest and most stylish mount on the market. We furnish them in both gray and white. They have raised centers with an embossed or matted border, are heavy and of fine quality and improve very largely the appearance of the pictures. This style card mount is now being almost exclusively used by the leading professional photographers. We recommend the gray as being most desirable, as it is not easily soiled and the tint seems to harmonize with the picture much better than the white. Try the gray and we believe you will be well pleased.

Size of card.	Size of picture.	Per pkg.	Per 100
1 1/2 x 2 1/4	1 1/4 x 2 1/4	\$0.10	\$0.40
2 x 2 1/2	1 3/4 x 2 1/4	.12	.45
2 1/2 x 3 1/2	2 x 2 1/2	.15	.55
2 3/4 x 4 1/4 (white only)	1 3/4 x 2 1/4	.20	.70
3 1/4 x 3 1/2	2 x 2 1/2	.20	.70
3 1/2 x 3 1/2	2 1/2 x 2 1/2	.24	.85
3 3/4 x 3 1/2	2 1/4 x 2 1/4	.25	.90
4 x 3 1/2	2 3/4 x 2 1/4	.30	1.05
4 1/4 x 3 1/2	2 3/4 x 2 1/4	.30	1.05
4 1/4 x 3 1/2	2 3/4 x 2 1/4 (horizontal)	.35	1.20
4 1/4 x 3 1/2	4 x 2 1/4	.35	1.50
4 1/4 x 3 1/2	4 x 3	.45	1.25
4 1/4 x 3 1/2	4 x 3	.45	1.40
4 1/4 x 3 1/2 (very heavy)	4 x 3 1/4	.60	2.20
5 x 3 1/2	4 x 3	.70	2.65
5 x 3 1/2	5 x 2 1/4	.70	2.65

Nine More Pages in This Chapter

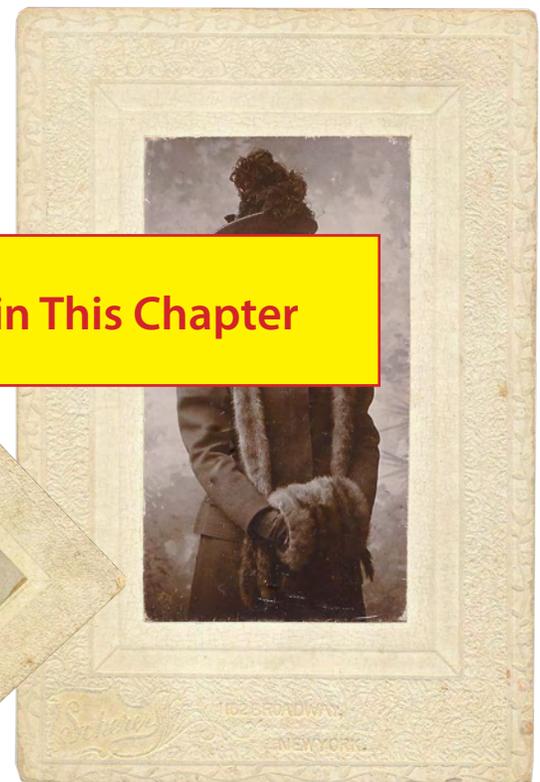
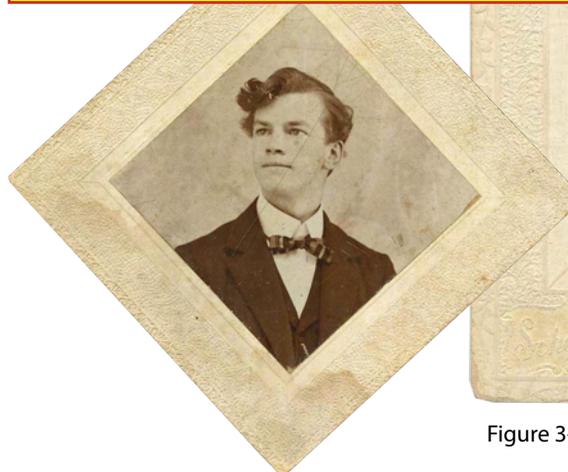


Figure 3-15. 1899 Mantello card mount (6¾ x 5½).

Figure 3-14. 1898 Mantello card mount (3 x 3).