

19th Century Paper Photographs

A Genealogist's Guide to Cartes de visite and Cabinet Cards

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Clue #6 - Federal Tax Stamps

Clues: Thickness, Corners, Size, Clothes, Borders, Imprint, Stamps, Studio




Figure 2-12. Tax stamps from August 1864 - August 1866. One cent stamp began use in March, 1865, blue playing card 2-cent stamp was only used in the summer of 1866. A variety of other stamps were used throughout the time period.

The photographer selling the taxed images was supposed to cancel the stamp with his initials and the date. Although this can be a benefit to today's researcher, investigation has shown that less than 25% of stamps have a date recorded on them. Cancellations may include an 'X', initials, a name, or some illegible scribble.

Tax Stamp Usage	
Stamp	Date Used
All stamps*	Aug 1864 - Aug 1866
1-Cent stamp	Mar 1865 - Aug 1866
2-Cent Playing Card	Summer 1866

* Except 1-Cent & 2-Cent blue playing card stamp

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There are many ways to establish a picture as a Civil War era photograph, many are covered.

One of the more common, and easy ones, is finding a tax stamp on the photo. This is explained in detail.