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“19th Century Paper Photographs: Discovering When the Picture Was Taken”

This was presented at the Family History Expo in Overland Park, KS on July 29, 2011 and provided as a courtesy to attending genealogist with the hope it helps them in their family research.

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19th Century Paper Photographs

Discovering When Your Picture was Taken



1866 Carte de Visite

presented by

Gary Clark

PhotoTree.com



1891 Cabinet Card

19th Century Paper Photographs: Discovering when the photo was taken



1899 Cabinet Card

Presenting a simple yet accurate set of guidelines that help the genealogist determine the date of undocumented photographs from the 1800s.

presented by

Gary Clark

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DISCOVERING YOUR IMAGES

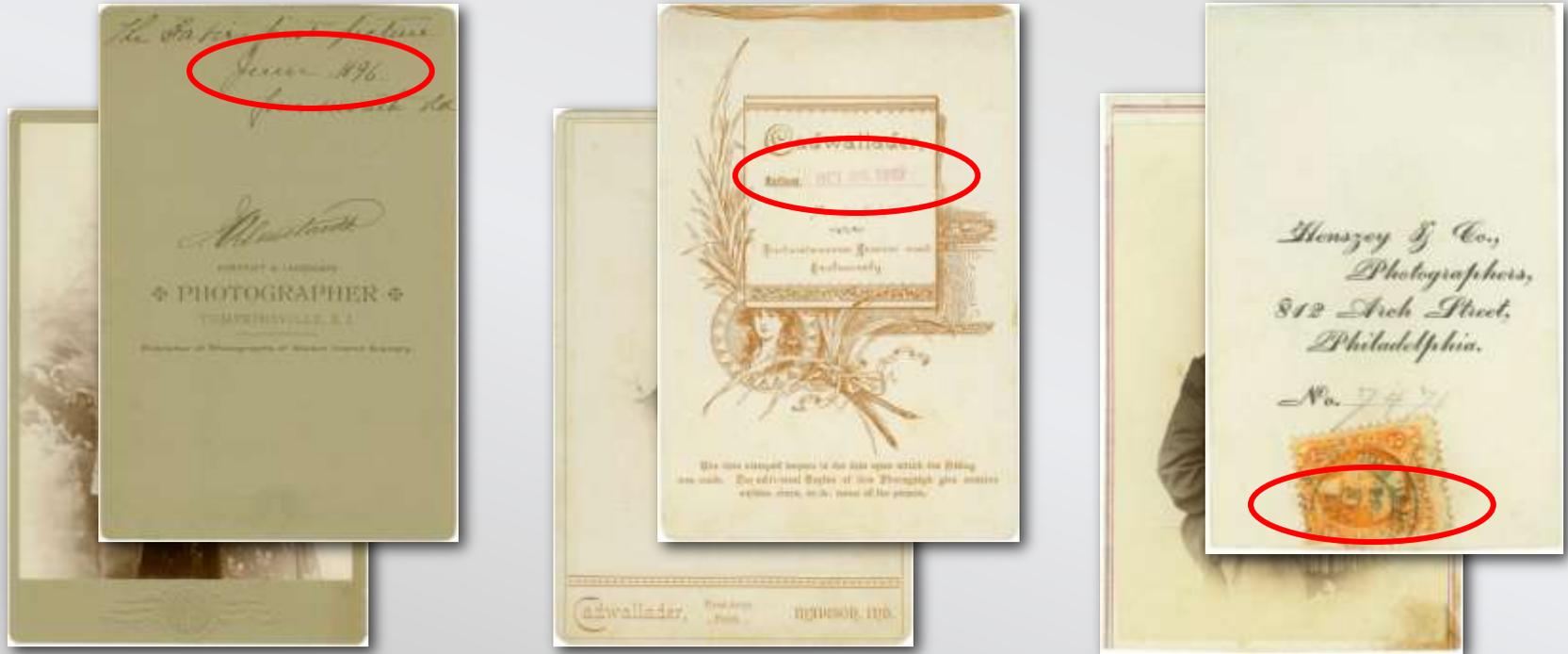
- ▣ **Dating your image is critical to historical accuracy**

- ▣ **Determining the date can:**
 - Help determine who is in the picture
 - Just as important – who the image is not

- ▣ **This helps develop the facts and stories of your ancestors . . . and is very rewarding.**

DATING YOUR IMAGES IS EASY

- ▣ Just look on the back!



Ok, - Most images were NOT documented

- Writing on early images was not easy
- Bad habits prevailed . . . that continue even today

HOW DO WE DATE THEM?

- ▣ **Physical characteristics of the photograph**
 - The photographic technology used
 - ▣ Evolution of processes - changed frequently - easily dated
 - The 'packaging' of the photograph
 - ▣ How the photograph was delivered to the customer
 - ▣ In cases, mounted on cards, paper sleeves, envelopes
- ▣ **Image Content**
 - Clothes and personal styles
 - Studio settings and props

ALL clues should be used together to arrive at the most accurate date possible.

PHOTO TREE METHODOLOGY

- ▣ **Collect as many dated pictures as possible**
 - Authentic notations
 - Printed studio dates
 - Tax stamp dating
- ▣ **Analyze historical documents**
 - Supply catalogs & period advertisements
 - Guides and books
- ▣ **Research of many fine academic works**
 - ▣ Usually focusing on single aspects photography

All this enabled the development of a framework of easy-to-use dating techniques for old photographs.

PHOTOGRAPH TYPES - A BRIEF HISTORY

Daguerreotype



c. 1848

Ambrotype



1858

Tintype



c. 1875

Carte de Visite



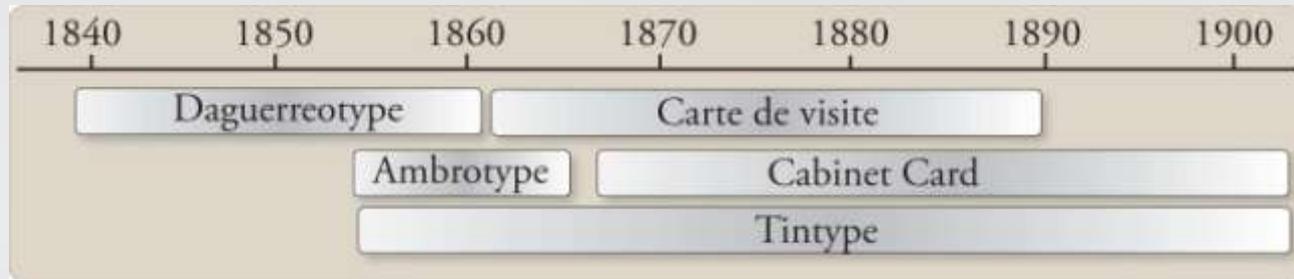
1862

Cabinet Card



1891

PHOTOGRAPH TYPES – COMMON USE

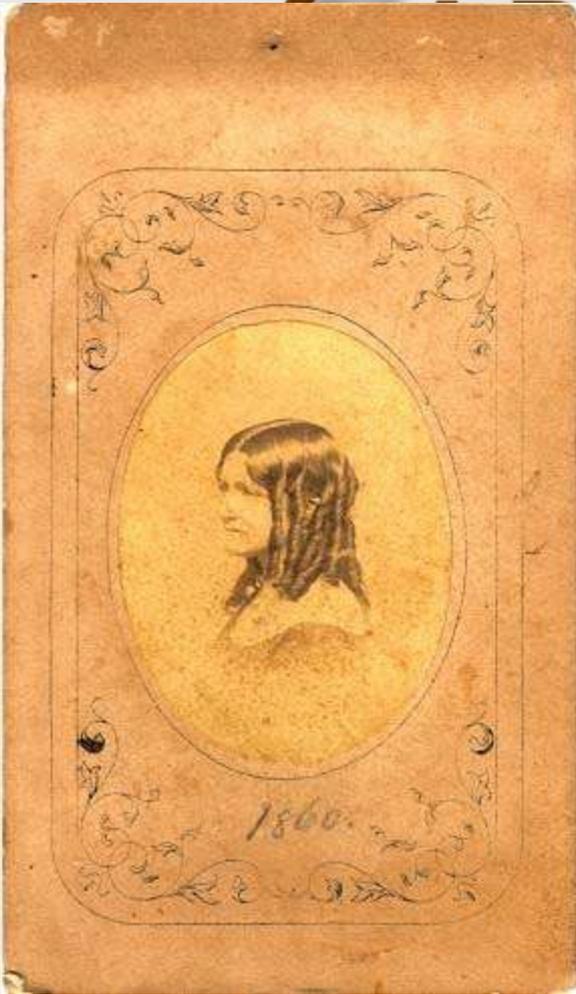


Photograph	Common Use	Found in Family Collections
Daguerreotype	1840 - 1862	Rare
Ambrotype	1854 - 1863	Seldom
Tintype	1856 - 1900	Limited
Carte de visite	1860 - 1888	Common
Cabinet Card	1870 - 1900	Very Common

These dates and useage are most common to individual and group photographs in family collections. Other rare examples may exist in private collections, museums, or libraries.

TE DE VISITE

Successful Commercial Paper Print



1860 CDV



1891 CDV

THE CARTE DE VISITE: AKA CDV



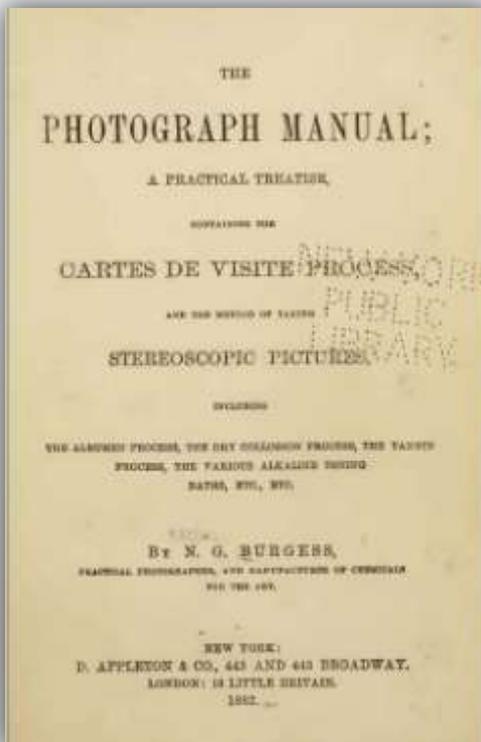
c. 1865 Carte de visite

Use	Date
Introduced	1860
Most Popular	1863- 1879
Waned	1880 - 1892

- Recognized By
 - Paper print mounted on card
 - Often in albums
 - Most Common Size
 - 2 -3/8" x 4-1/4"

CARTE DE VISITE: RISE TO POPULARITY

▣ Seldom made prior to 1862



“The Art of Photography is constantly making changes and new demands upon its votaries, and lately a new feature has developed itself in this country in the call for the portraits known as Cartes de Visite, or visiting portraits. Their origin as we all know, was in Paris, where indeed it may be said they have been produced there for several months, if not years, they have never until very recently, been much in use in the United States.”

N. G. Burges
1862

The PHOTOTRAPH MANUAL, A Practical Treatise Containing the Cartes de Visite Process

CARTE DE VISITE: PRONOUNCE IT

▣ Apologies to the grammarians

- ▣ Carte de visite: *carta de veesit*

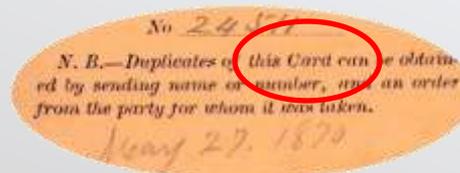
▣ Early useage revealed trouble with pronunciation. Common use included

- ▣ 'Carte', 'Card photograph' or just 'card'

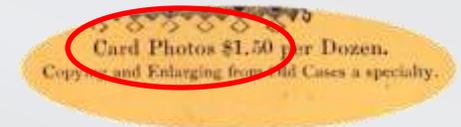
The acronym 'CDV' is a recent term, not seen in the 19th century.



1862



1870



1876



1863



1874

CDV: MANY DATABLE TRAITS

▣ The CDV contains an abundance of information

- The card stock
 - ▣ Thickness
 - ▣ Shape – square or rounded corners
 - ▣ Printed outlines artwork on front
 - ▣ Card color and edge treatment
 - ▣ Studio imprint on the back
- Props and Backgrounds
 - ▣ Backgrounds: Blank walls, painted scenes
 - ▣ Props: Chairs, columns, drapes, floor covering, fake rocks, . .
- The Subjects
 - ▣ Clothes and accessories
 - ▣ Hair styles
 - ▣ Men's facial hair.



THE CDV: CARD STOCK

- ▣ **The actual photograph was on very thin paper. It required mounting onto a stiffer card for durability.**
 - **Size and Shape**
 - ▣ Early cards – up to about 1862 – were thin, sometimes uneven hand cut by the photographer from large sheets
 - ▣ Slightly thicker, Pre-cut cards with printed outlines were available in 1862
 - ▣ Cards had square corners until 1870.
 - ▣ About 1870 cards became noticeably thicker and with rounded corners
 - Don't mistake worn or trimmed cards as factory-trimmed round corners
 - ▣ Also, pastels, and coated cards were introduced about 1870

THE CDV: CARD STOCK



Hand-cut Card - 1862

Very thin stock
Square Corned
Plain card



Manufactured Card- 1863

Thicker stock
Square Corners
Adorned with frames



Rounded Corners - 1873

Thicker yet
Rounded corners
Pastels Introduced

THE EARLY CARTES DE VISITE

- ▣ 1860 - 1862 card stock was mostly 'home made'
 - Sides may be trimmed irregularly
 - Card size may vary, usually in height
 - Plain card, maybe a stamp on the back



1861



1862



1862

CDV: FRONT ARTWORK

▣ First Trait to Look At – Border Style Changes



1862 – 1863
Two thin lines



1864 – 1870
One thick, one thin



1870 – 1882
Very thick, to edge

CIVIL WAR TAX STAMPS

▣ The Union levied a tax on photographs from August 1864 to August 1866 to help pay for the war

- **Extra Dating Tips**

- Blue 2-cent 'Playing Card' only used in summer of '66
- 1-cent stamp not in use until March '65

- **Miscellaneous Information**

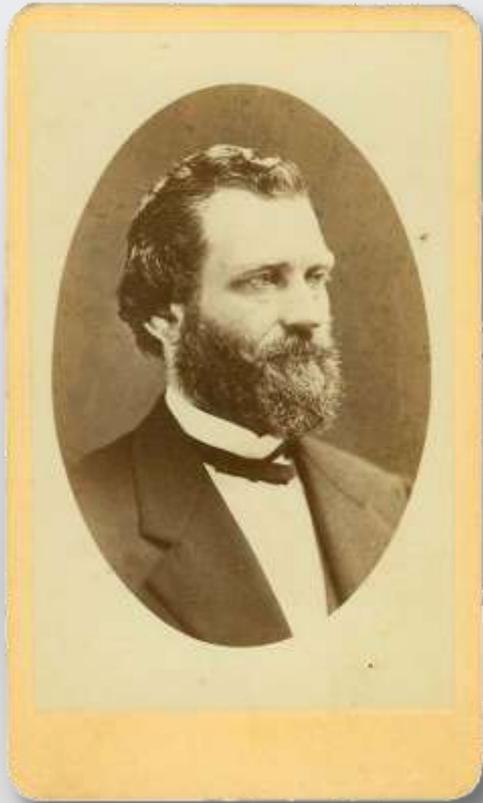
- Various stamps already in circulation were used
- 1-cent tax for pictures: < \$0.10
- 2-cent tax for pictures: < .25
- 3-cent tax for pictures: .25 - .50
- 4-cent tax for pictures: > .50



This is applicable to Tintype photographs also.

THE CDV: 1870S GIVEAWAY

- ▣ Almost exclusive to the 70s was the 'cameo' window



1870 CDV



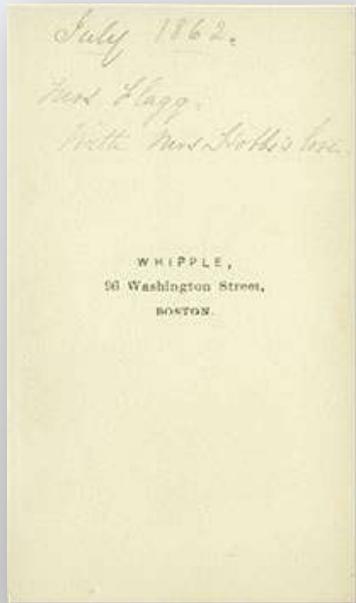
1874 CDV



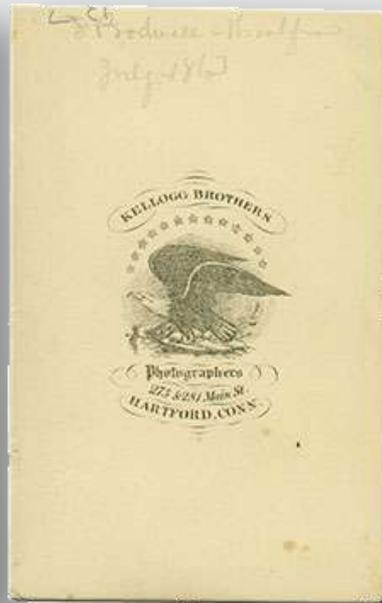
1877 CDV

THE CDV: BACK IMPRINTS

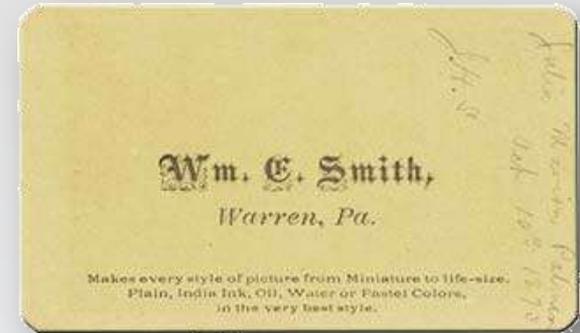
▣ From Simple to Complex



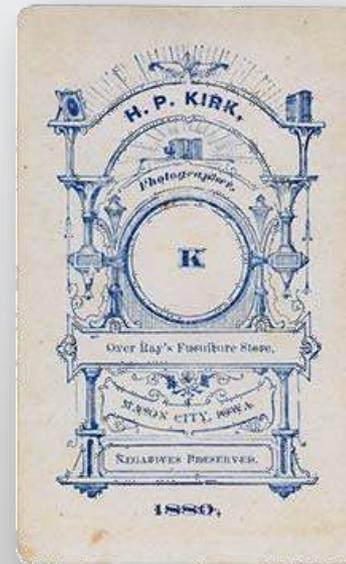
1860 - 1862/3
Small, Simple Text



1863 -
More Complex
Patriotic during Civil
War



Early 1870s - Horizontal Imprints



1880s
Intricate Artwork
Covers Back

CDV: TINTED IMAGES

- ▣ **Almost Exclusive to the 1860s**
 - Peaked in mid-60s, very rare after 1870



1862



1864



1867

THE CDV: STUDIO SETTINGS

- Full length portraits dominated much of the 1860s
 - This required some treatment of the surrounding space
 - Walls, chairs, drapes, and floor covering are easily dated



Early 1860s
Ornate Chairs
Blank walls
Patterned floors



c. 1863
With painted background



1877
Full bust photographs
dominated, reduced need for
background

THE CDV: PERSONAL STYLE

- ▣ **The CDV spanned numerous style changes**
 - Hoop dresses (60s) *to* the bustle (70s, 80s)
 - Bottle curls again (late 60s) *to* piled buns and curls (70s)
 - The era of *military* chevrons and insignia (60s)



1865 CDV



c. 1869 CDV



c. 1876 CDV

CDV: RECAP

▣ Most Obvious and Easiest Dating Traits

■ Type of Card

- ▣ 1860 – 1863: No borders, very thin, hand cut, slightly taller
- ▣ 1862 – 1863: Two thin borders, slightly thicker card production cards, square corners
- ▣ 1864 – 1868: One thick border, one thin, square corners
- ▣ 1870 – 1880: Rounded corners, increased thickness, pastels
- ▣ 1880 – 1888: Dark card colors, beveled edges, elaborate back

■ Back Stamp General Rule: Smaller and simpler = earlier

- ▣ Early 1860s: Small, single or dual line of studio
- ▣ Mid 60s: Patriotic: Eagles, Flags, Shields, etc
- ▣ 1870s: Full back, horizontal or angled
- ▣ 1880s: Elaborate artwork.

CDV: RECAP (CONTINUED)

▣ Studios and Backgrounds

- Early 1860s: Simple setting, classic chairs, columns, bannister, simple walls
- Mid 1860s: Beginning painted backgrounds, 'studio chairs', full standing portraits, colorized images, patterned floors
- 1870s: 'Bust' photographs. Fewer studio props. Oval matted images
- 1880s: Elaborate studio settings with exotic painted backgrounds, and fake rocks, fences, and other items. Few 1880 CDVs

CABINET CARD

The Beginning of Modern Portraiture



c. 1880

THE CABINET CARD



1893 Cabinet Card

Use	Date
Introduced	1866
Most Popular	1875- 1899
Waned	1898 - 1900

- Recognized By
 - Paper print mounted on card
 - Larger than CDV
 - Many very high quality
 - Most Common Size
 - 4 1/2" x 6 1/2"

CABINET CARD: DATABLE TRAITS

▣ The Mounting Card

- Color – Pastels gave way to black, maroon, green
- Edges – Variety of beveled and scalloped edges
- Imprints – both front inscriptions and back artwork

▣ Photographic print itself

- New papers and processes introduced in mid 1880s

▣ Personal Styles

- Very obvious women's styles in dress and hair
- Men facial hair and 'styled' hair

CABINET CARD: CARD COLORS

▣ Card Colors

- Natural > Coated > Pastels > Dark Colors > Finished



1883 Natural
60s – early 80s



Pastels 1888
Late 80s – Mid 90s



1888 Dark Cards
Mid 80s – Early 90s



1894 Highly Finished
Late 80s - 1900

CABINET CARD: CARD EDGES

- ▣ **Card edges: Straight Cut > Beveled > Scalloped**
 - Mid 1890s – style went back to straight cuts



1890 Straight Cut
Throughout



1888 Beveled Edges
1880s to Early 90s



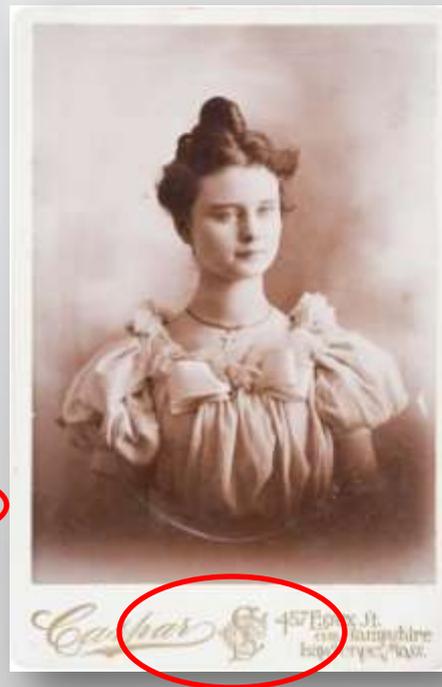
1891 Scalloped
Mid 1880s - 1900

CABINET CARDS: MISCELLANEOUS

- ▣ A few neat tips for fine tuning cards.



1885/1894 Single Artistic Line
Late 1880s - Mid-90s



1895 Monogram Signature
Early - Mid 1890s



Before 1895 Scallops were
uneven- not symmetrical

CABINET CARDS: MORE MISC

▣ Imprinted Words - Bragging Rights

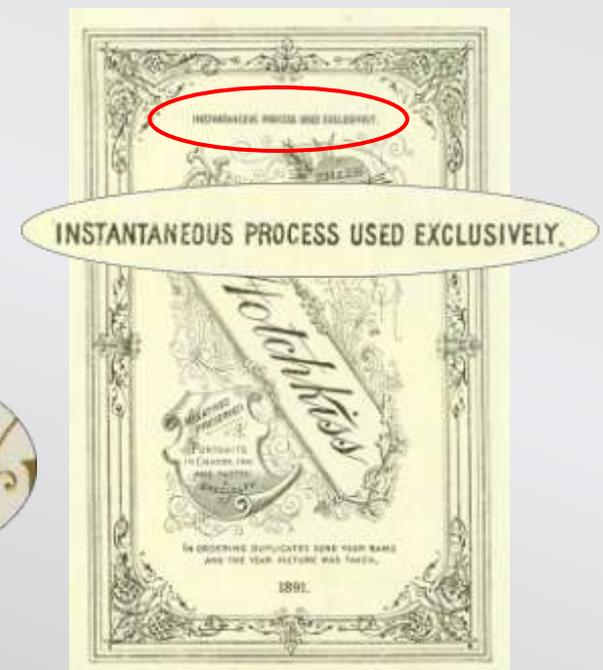
- ☞ ■ Extra Finish - Late 80s to mid 90s (87,94)
- ☞ ■ Superior Finish - Early 90s to late 90s (91,98)
- ☞ ■ Instantaneous Process- Late 80s - Early 90 (87,95)



c. 1891



c. 1893



c. 1891

CABINET CARDS: STYLES GONE WILD

- ▣ **Women's fashion went through many looks**
 - Busy 1870s > Elegant 80s > Gay Nineties



1878
Busy Accessories
& Bustle



1888
Clean lines, lots of
buttons



1897
Puff Shoulders
Mid 1890s - 1900

CABINET CARDS: SHOULDERS

- ▣ **First item I look at – Women’s Shoulders**
 - ‘80s – Rounded, smooth
 - ‘89 > Points rising from outside edge, small the larger
 - ‘03 > Puffy or Leg o’ Mutton Sleeves

1888

1889

1891

1893

1895

1898



CABINET CARDS: MEN'S STYLE

- ▣ Mustaches went from Wyatt Earp to Handlebar



1876
Wild West Look
Typical 70s and early 80s



1883
Various Beards
More Creative



c. 1896
Trimmed Mustache and
Slicked Hair

CABINET CARD: RECAP



CABINET CARD: EASIEST DATING TRAITS

- Card Characteristics

- 1877 - 1890 Pastel colors and coated stock
- 1885 - 1895 Single artistic line below image
- 1885 - 1890 Maroon, Black, Dark Green Cards
- 1884 - 1900 Scalloped edges - symmetrical after 1894

- Personal Styles - Women

- 1870 - 1882 Very busy accessories
- 1882 - 1890 Elegant, simple lines, rows of buttons
- 1889 - 1892 Ever-growing points at shoulder seam
- 1892 - 1900 Puff shoulders and sleeves
- 1895 - 1900 Top Knot hair style

- Personal Styles - Men

- 1870s *Wyatt Earp* western mustaches
- 1880s Cleaner cut - top button of coat buttoned
- 1890s Slicked hair and waxed mustaches

POSTCARD PHOTO

RPPC – Real Picture Post Cards



1919

POST CARDS: DATABLE FEATURES

▣ **Allowed Formats**

- Private Cards vs Government Only
- Split Backs – Correspondence & Address
- No correspondence on back

▣ **Size or Format of Image**

- Round, Square, Full Card
- White border era

▣ **Stamp Box**

- Card Manufacturers Used Artwork & Codes
- Identified the paper, which identifies use

POST CARDS: ALLOWABLE FORMATS

▣ **Private Mailing Cards**

- Authorized by U.S. Government: 1888
- Preprinted travel, exposition, and souvenir cards

▣ **First Real Photo Postcards began in mid 1900s**

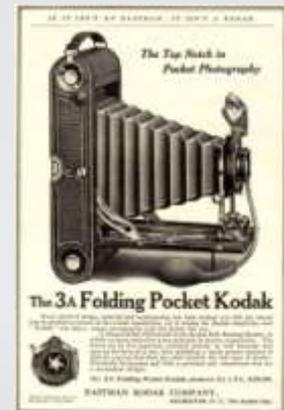
- Kodak introduced pre-printed paper and inexpensive cameras with negatives the same size
- Took off in 1906 after heavy promotion by Kodak

▣ **Split Backs: March 1, 1907**

- Allowed back to contain address & correspondence
- Previously message written on image on front.

POST CARDS: IMAGE FORMATS

- ▣ **Round Photographs - Before 1910**
 - From older Kodak #1 (1889) & #2 Cameras
- ▣ **Square Pictures - Kodak 3A Folding Camera**
 - Intro 1903, postcard format negative
- ▣ **Full Coverage Pictures - About 1908**
- ▣ **White Border Era - 1915 - 1930**



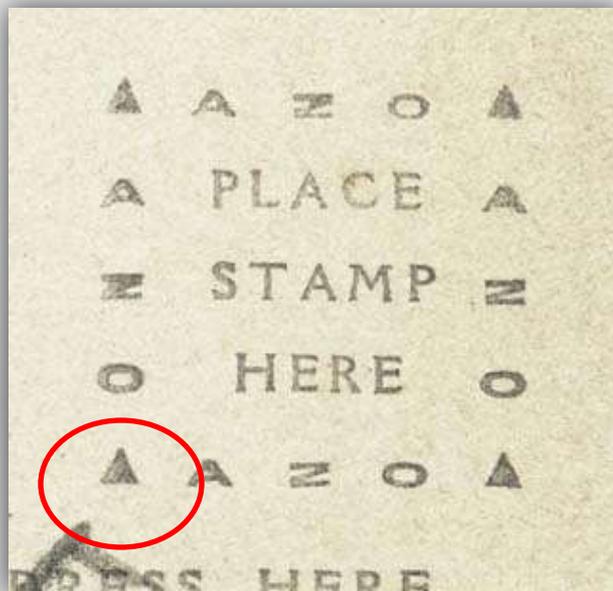
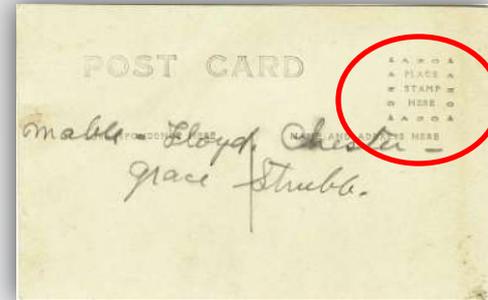
POSTCARDS: STAMP BOXES

- ▣ Card Manufacturers Codes
 - Defined the card stock - codes became date milestones

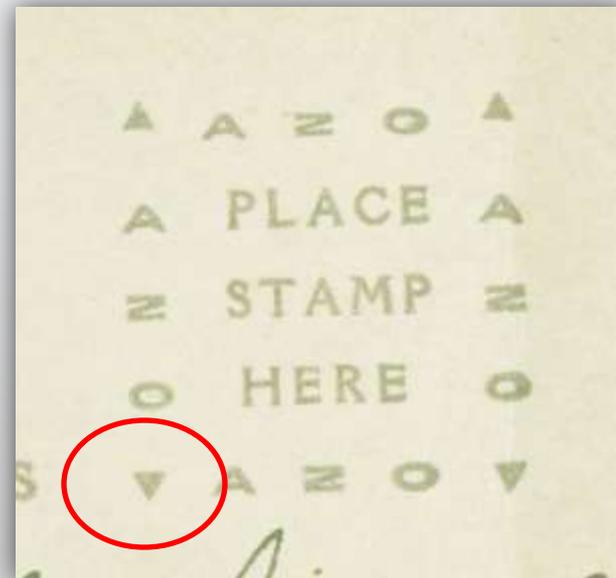


POST CARDS: STAMP BOXES INFO

- ▣ 100's of Different Boxes
- ▣ Dominated by a few
 - Kodak, Arturo, CYKO
- ▣ Look Closely



1904 - 1918



1918 - 1930

SELECTED STAMP BOX CODES

ARTURA	1910-1924	
AZO	1926-1940s	Squares in corners
AZO	1904-1918	4 triangles pointed up
AZO	1918-1930	Triangles 2 up, 2 down
AZO	1907-1909	Diamonds in corners
AZO	1922-1926	Empty Corners
CYKO	1904-1920s	
EKO	1942-1970	
KODAK	1950-NOW	
VELOX	1907-1914	Diamonds in corners
VELOX	1901-1914	Squares in corners
VELOX	1909-1914	Triangles: 4 pointed Up

Good Web Site: <http://www.playle.com/realphoto/>

POST CARD CHALLENGE

- ▣ Postcards can have a greater margin of error
 - Though these did have different Kodak stamps

1913



1919



ONE FINAL EXERCISE

- ▣ Use all the information available to you – there are no silver bullets

- ▣ Clues from this photo
 - Card said mid/late 1880s
 - Her dress said late 1880s
 - His hair said 1890s, mustache said 1880s

 - Kids clothes said 1890s



1894 – My Grandfather
and Great-Grandparents
- Rural Kansas -

THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST

- ▣ Happy research with your photographs
- ▣ If I can be of help:
gary@phototree.com
www.PhotoTree.com



1894 - My Grandfather
and Great-Grandparents
- Rural Kansas -