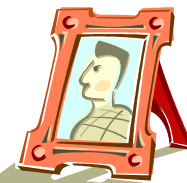




Without Words

Finding the Stories in Family Photographs

by Karen Wallace Steely



How to Uncover Photograph Stories

- 1) **How** was it created? (e.g., tintype, CDV, etc.)
 - Is this the original or is it a copy?
 - If it is a copy, what method was used to create the original?
- 2) **When** was the original image created?
 - If you have a copy, when was the copy created?
- 3) **Who** is in the photograph?
 - Who took the photo?
 - Who owned the photo?
 - If you have a copy, who had the copy made?
- 4) **Where** was the original image captured?
 - If you have a copy, where was it made?
- 5) **Why** was the original photo taken?
 - Why were any props included in the photo?
 - If you have a copy, why were copies made?
- 6) **What** occasion or event was being commemorated?
 - What other photos were taken at the same time?
 - What related records may have been created?

Photograph Analysis Basics

Determine Photographic Method Used

- **One-of-a-Kind - Reversed Image**
 - Daguerreotype – 1840-1860
 - Ambrotype – 1854-1881
 - Tintype – 1855-1930
- **Created from Negative - Positive Image**
 - Carte de Visite (CDV) – 1859-1900
 - Cabinet Card – 1869-1915
 - Crayon Portraits - 1890-1920
 - Real Photo Post Card (RPPC) 1901-1960
 - Candid Photos – 1888 - present (rare before 1900)

Date Photo's Physical Characteristics

- Date the case and the brass mat (plain = earlier date, fancy = later date)
- For paper photos, date the paper, including thickness, color, borders, and imprints
- For RPPCs, date the style and font of the mailing info and the stamp

Date the Photographer

- **Use City or County Directories**
 - When was the photographer at that address?
- **Use Census Records**
 - Is photographer listed as his profession?

Date the Photograph Setting

- **CDV Settings:**
 - Subject full-length– more likely to be early
 - Cropped or close up – more likely later date
- **Cabinet Card Settings:**
 - Velvet chairs common in 1870s and 1880s
 - Wicker chairs common after 1890

Date the Hairstyles and Clothing

- **Hairstyles:**
 - More likely to be current than clothing
- **Clothing:**
 - Young women more likely to be current
 - Women's clothing is easiest to date

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