

Dating Old Family Photographs



Photograph Dating Methods

- Identifying different Photographic Formats
- Researching Photographers & their Studios
- Recognising Card-Mount Characteristics
- Scrutinising the visual elements of the image; Composition & Setting
- Looking for fashion clues; clothing, hairstyles & accessories

Photographic Timeline

1839 Starts

1840-1865
Daguerreotypes

1852-1890s
Ambrotypes

1855-1940s
Ferrotypes

1858-1919
Cartes de Visite

1866-1919
Cabinet Prints

1894 ⇔
Postcards



Daguerreotype Image



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Ambrotype Example c1860



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Tintype Example 9th July 1876





T. TAYLOR,
AMERICAN
G E M
PHOTOGRAPHER

72, Market Street,
Opposite Town Hall,
BRADFORD.

Photos taken by Electric Light
every Evening.

T. T. is now exhibiting
Superior Cartes-de-Visite,
4/6 per Dozen.

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Cartes de Visite 1858-1919

- Most common 1861-1908
- On card measuring 10cms by 6.5cms
- Size of a visiting card!
- Often known as CDVs for short
- Unlike Daguerreotypes & Ambrotypes, could get several prints of a CDV for cheap bulk purchase
- Image could be 'coloured' for a small price
- Dominated Victorian photo albums
- Different colours of card can help with dating



Carte De Visite



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B. J. Edwards

*6, The Grove,
Hackney.*

- Cabinet Card
- Three brothers 1884
- Photographer B J Edwards



50. HERMIT ROAD,
GANNING TOWN,

J. C. Reeves

Mounts – Physical Design

- 1860s Mounts were thin & flexible with square corners
- By mid 1870s most mounts had rounded corners
- In 1880s/90s mounts were thicker & sturdier
- Bevelled edges appeared on Cabinet Cards
- Fly Leaf used to protect the photograph

Mount Colours

- Early 1860s: ivory, white, cream and champagne.
- Late 1860s to 1890s: Sugar Pink
- 1870s & 1880s: Bright Golden Yellow
- 1880s & 1890s: Black, chocolate brown, green or Maroon.
- 1890s to early 1900s Shades of Grey

Mounts – Graphic Design 1860s

- 1859 to the early 1860s photographer's name and address in small lettering, usually in the centre of the mount.
- Mid 1860s the text began to expand outwards across the card.
- Availability of copies/duplicates mentioned
- Mid to late 1860s filigree scrollwork and ribbon-like banners



SCHNADHORST,
Late Hughes
Portrait Studio,
433 Strand
LONDON W.C.

LEAH F. FOSTER

Cartes De Visit Example 2



Carte de visite (cdv)

c.1869-73



Mounts Graphic Designs

1870s- 1880s

- 1870s: different text fonts a common feature
- heraldic style crests and coats of arms
- Medals or Medallions
- From the late 1870s & throughout the 1880s the studio name was sprawled diagonally across the mount, bordered by ornate filigree work and the text embellished with a large capital letter.

Cartes De Visit Example 3




A. & G. Taylor
PHOTOGRAPHERS TO THE QUEEN
and their Royal Highnesses
THE PRINCE & PRINCESS OF WALES.
MINIATURE & PORTRAIT PAINTERS.
129, FENCHURCH STREET,
LONDON, E.C.
70, QUEEN VICTORIA ST. LONDON.
Opposite Mansion House Station
153, REGENT STREET, W.
34, CHURCH ST. LIVERPOOL.
60, MARKET ST. MANCHESTER.
NEW BRIGGATE, LEEDS.
13, ST. VINCENT'S PLACE, GLASGOW.
— — — — —
AND AT
FOREST LODGE, LONDON ROAD.
FOREST HILL.
NEGATIVES KEPT. COPIES MAY BE HAD.
Cartes enlarged to life size and
finished in Oil or Water.

Carte de visite (cdv)

c.1871-75



PHOTOGRAPHED
BY

G. Beales

NEW ROAD,
SPALDING.

THE NEGATIVE OF THIS CARTE IS PRESERVED,
& COPIES CAN BE HAD ON ENLARGED TO LIFE SIZE,
& FINISHED IN COLOURS.

Obverse, Sep 2/75

Mounts 1880s – 1890s

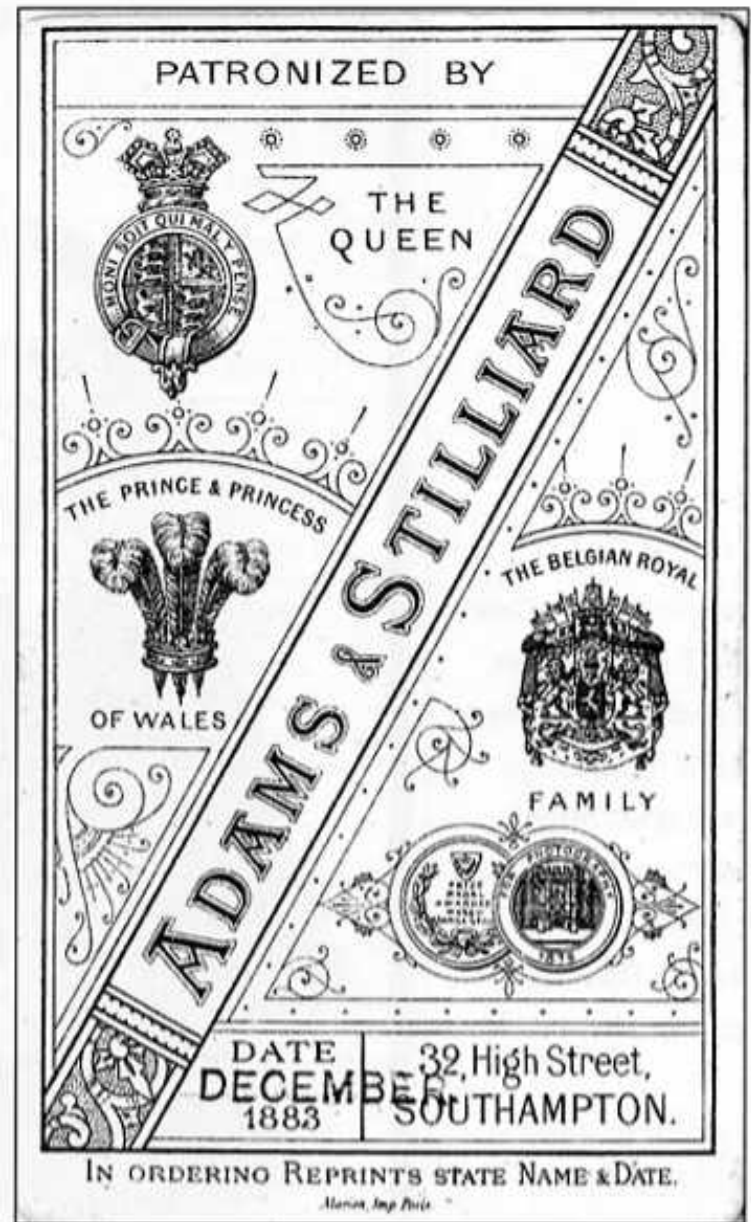
- Featured a border – plain or ornate
- Text and other design features filled the back of the card
- Artistic skills, 'Artist' or 'Art Photographer'
- Pictures of easels, paint pallets and camera equipment.
- Swimming or flying water birds or bamboo
- Exotic/oriental designs of blossom-laden branches, fans and parasols.
- Classically draped female figures, cherubs and fairies

Carte de Visite

Back completely filled
and bordered

Combined printed
date and John Bull
Date December 1883

Three Royal Patrons
and an award medal
dated 1876







Nº 7769

DUTY & MURDER

Photographers

20. FRONT STREET

March 1921

7969
Rudd & Co.
Photographers
Front Street
New York

These are
the stones
of the
White City
House.

ALL NEGATIVES KEPT COPIES OF THIS PHOTOGRAPH
I HAVE HAD AT ANY TIME.
THIS PHOTOGRAPH CAN BE ENLARGED TO ANY SIZE
AND FINISHED IN MONOCHROME OIL OR WATER COLORS



Carte de visite (cdv)

c.1887-89

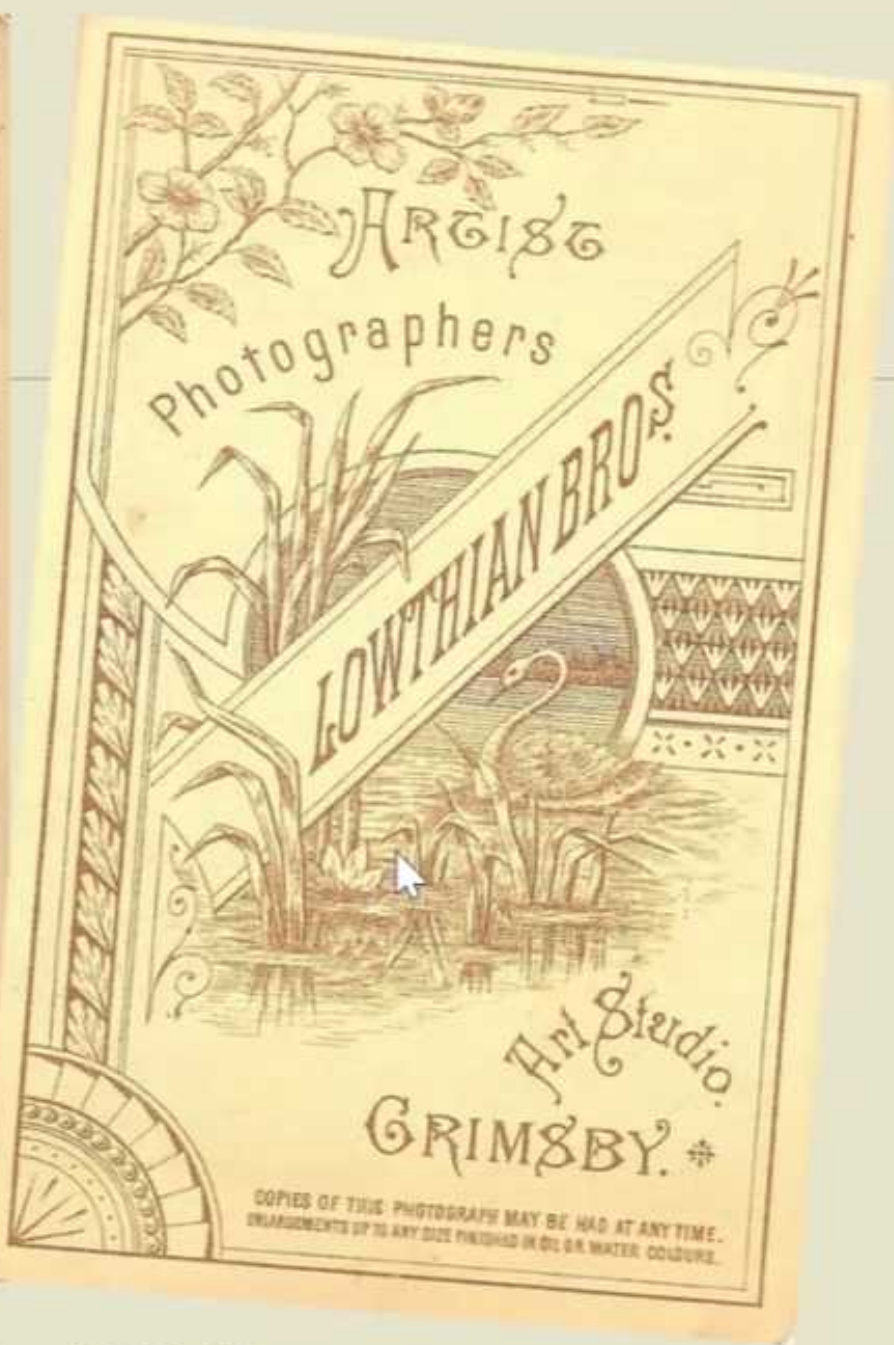
Mounts: late 1890s to early 1900s

- Modern/Streamlined
- Plainer font styles, with shaded affect
- Small bunches of flowers and other botanical motifs
- By the 1900s simple designs focussing on the photographer's studio details – slanting fonts
- A monogram common during this period



Lowthian Bros.

134, FREEMAN ST.
GRIMSBY.



Art Studio.
GRIMSBY. *

COPIES OF THIS PHOTOGRAPH MAY BE HAD AT ANY TIME.
ENLARGEMENTS UP TO ANY SIZE FINISHED IN OIL OR WATER COLOURS.

Carte de visite (cdv) c.1889-92

Postcards Sept 1894 onwards

- Earliest examples are often small - 11.5cm x 9cm. By Nov 1899 the standard was 14cm x 9cm, but some variations
- Commercial portraiture on postcards from early 20thC
- Known as Real Photo Postcards (abbreviated RPPC)
- Postmarks can help – but may not represent the date the image was taken
- A 'Stamp Box', and/or the look of the postcard back will help identifier the paper manufacturer and give dating clues
- After 1902 divided by a line down the middle
- Amateur postcard from 1903 when Kodak introduced a camera to take postcard-sized prints



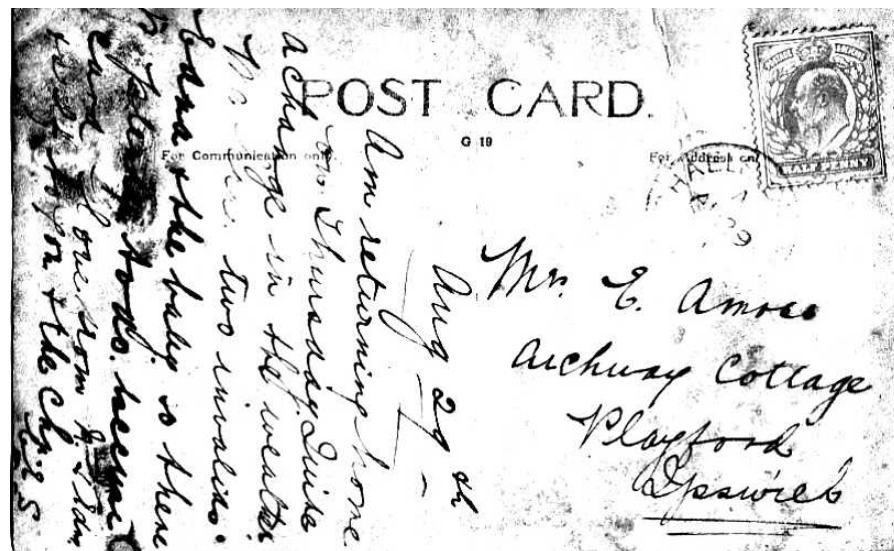
Stamps on Postcards

<http://www.edinphoto.org.uk/>

- 1890-1900 Victoria, ½d, vermillion
- 1900-1901 Victoria, ½d, blue-green
- 1902-1904 Edward VII, ½d, blue-green
- 1904-1910 Edward VII, ½d, yellow-green
- 1911-1912 George V, ½d, green (¾ head)
- 1912-1918 George V, ½d, green
- 1918-1921 George V, 1d, red
- 1921-1922 George V, 1½d, red
- 1922-1934 George V, 1d, red
- 1934-1936 George V, 1d, red



Post Card with
undivided back and
stamp of Edward VII.
Dated 1901-1902?





POST CARD.

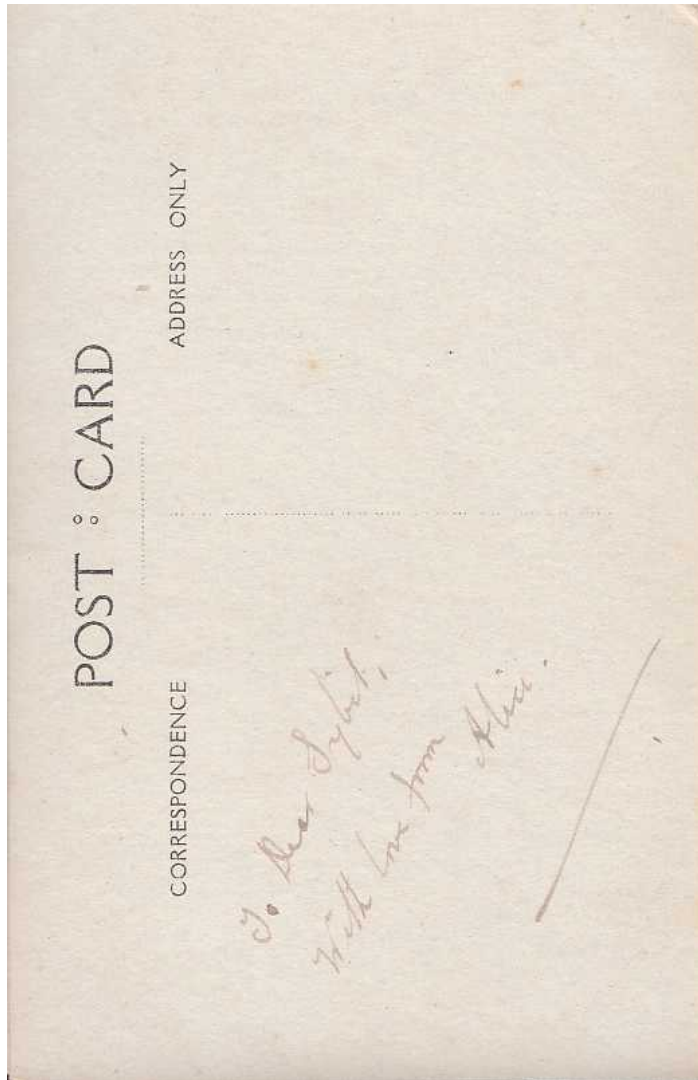
For International Communication only this Space
may be used.

For Address only

Professional
postcard
photograph
c.1902-05

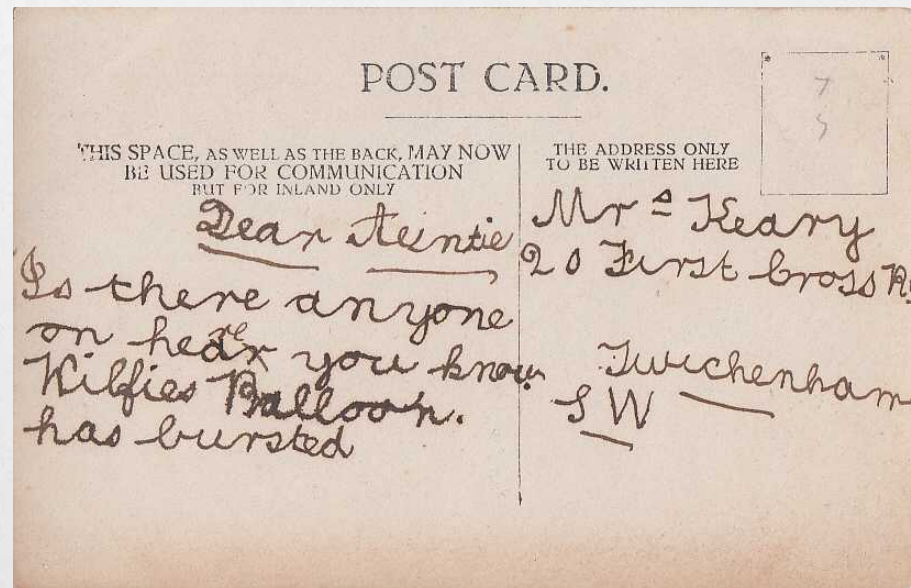


Divide back Post Card c1902





Post card dated c1910
Divided Back
No stamp



Large format Card Mounted Studio Portraits

Stout matt card in soft colours such as cream, beige, grey, brown or dusty green

Borders or decorative surround pressed into the card, outlining the picture.

This style continued after WW1 and throughout the inter-war era.

This one dates from 1907-09



Home Photography

- The size of prints and types of cameras are less useful for dating for home photography as people kept cameras for a long time.
- But they can help give an earliest date:
 - 1889: No. 1 Kodak – 2" Circular photographs
 - 1900: Brownie No. 1 prints were 2¼" square pictures
 - 1902: Brownie No. 2 prints were 2¼" x 3¼"
 - 1912: various models prints were 2½" x 1⅝"
- Early Kodak photographs taken outside for light
- 1920s & 1930s more walking and cycling shots
- Between the wars, can get more "jokey" shots
- 1950s posed by family car
- Some early colour photography – but didn't become norm until 1960s



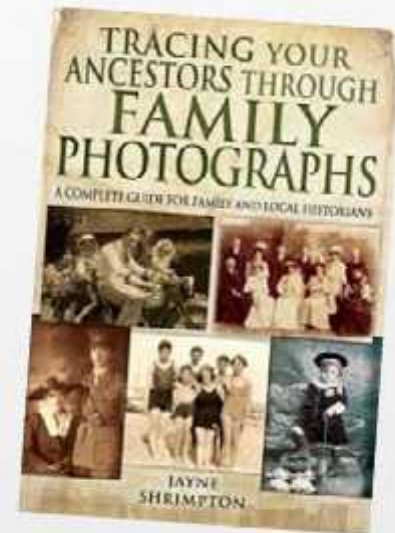
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Useful Books

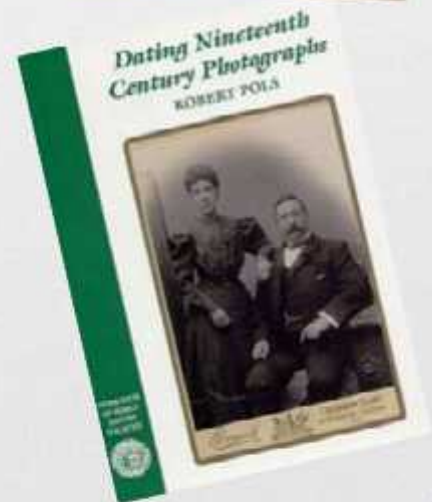
Jayne Shrimpton:

- How to get the most from Family Pictures
- Tracing your Ancestors through Family Photographs
- Family Photographs & How to date them
- Fashion & Family History



Robert Pols:

- Family Photographs 1860-1945
- Dating Nineteenth Century Photographs
- Dating Twentieth Century Photographs
- Dating Old Photographs



Photographer Websites

<http://www.cartedevsite.co.uk>

a growing database of 33,000 UK photographers, 57,000 studio dates and 61,000 addresses based on trade directories, plus an image collection of over 200,000 Victorian photographs. A Photo Dating 'Wizard' tool (£) and free advice downloads.

<http://www.isle-of-man.com/manxnotebook/tourism/pgrphrs/pgrhrs.htm>

Isle of Man photographic studios, particularly strong on Douglas, IoM

Photographer Websites Cont.

<http://www.photolondon.org.uk>

The best source on London photographers 1841-1901, includes an extensive and detailed database of around 9000 London photographers (and allied trades) with plenty of biographical information. No longer updated but remains useful and plenty of references to more sources.

<http://www.earlyphotographers.org.uk/>

lists of photographers for various places, plus some useful dating aids

<http://www.photohistory-sussex.co.uk/>

Sussex photographers and studios active between 1841 and 1910

More Useful Websites

<http://www.rogerco.freemove.co.uk/>

A collection of Victorian and Edwardian photographs. Some photographer data and links

<http://www.edinphoto.org.uk>

Edinburgh Photographic Society and photographers.

[Researching Historical Photographers \(rps.org\)](http://www.researchinghistoricalphotographers.org/)

Links to various on-line Resources. There are also links to website about digital restoration of photos.

The End!

