



DAVID  
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## JUDGING THE AUTHENTICITY OF PHOTOGRAPHS



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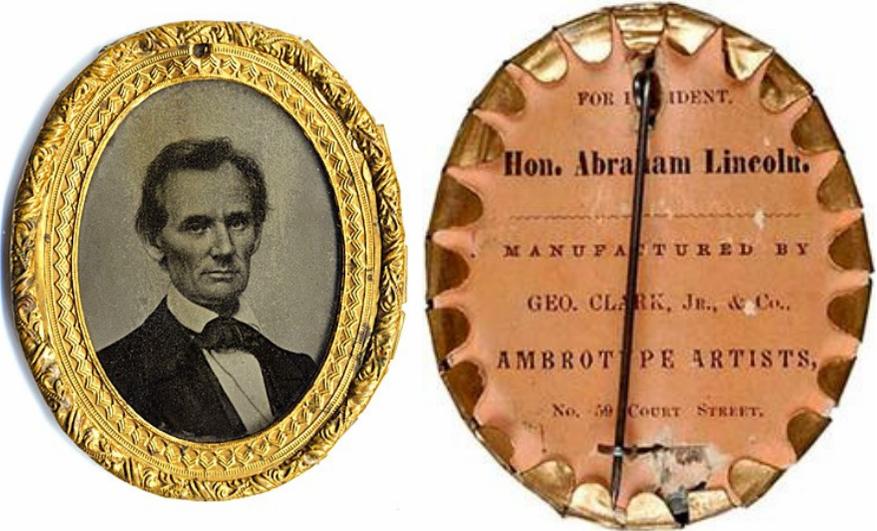
Judging the Authenticity of Photographs  
by David Rudd Cycleback  
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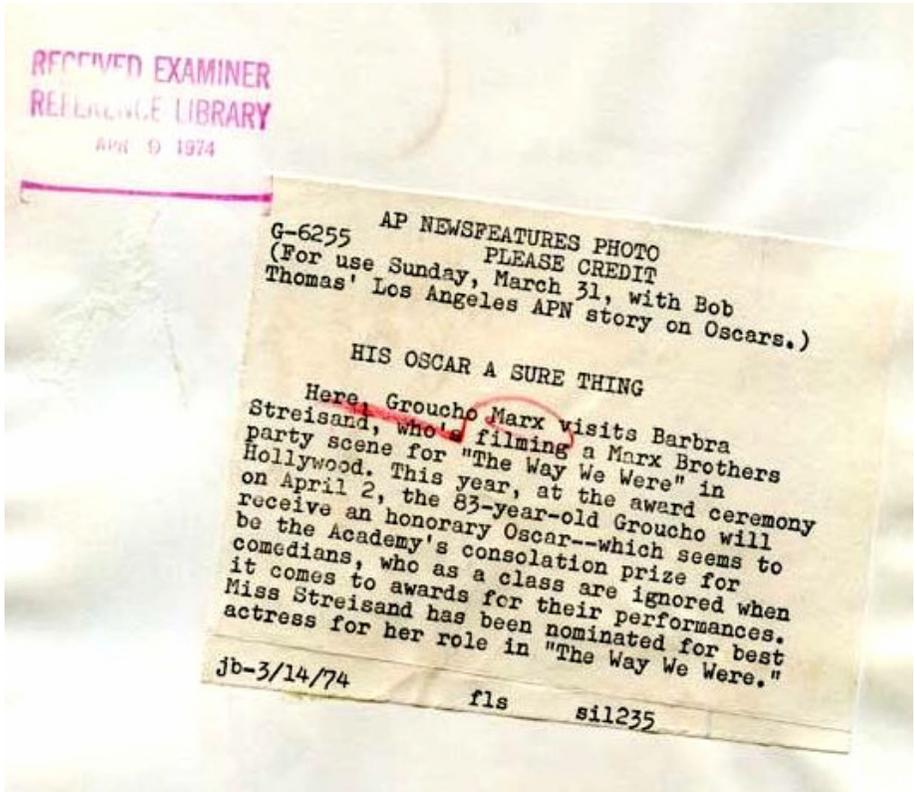
**Dedicated to Michaela A. Maranon**



1920s gelatin silver print of Clara Bow with Felix the Cat.



Front and back of an 1860 ambrotype (glass photo) campaign pin of Abraham Lincoln.



Associated Press paper caption and San Francisco Examiner stamp on the back of a 1974 news photo.

## CONTENTS

- 1) Introduction
- 2) A very brief overview of photographs and how they are identified
- 3) What is authenticity?
- 4) What is a photograph and what isn't and how to tell the difference
- 5) 'Original,' 'printed later' and a few other important concepts
- 6) Identifying standard photographic processes: introduction
- 7) Albumen prints: the most common 1800s photograph
- 8) Gelatin-silver prints: the most common 1900s black & white photograph
- 9) Chromogenic print: the most common true color photograph
- 10) Early mounted photographs : cartes de visite, cabinet cards, stereoviews, others
- 11) Real photo postcards
- 12) Daguerreotypes, ambrotypes and tintypes
- 13) Other metal and glass photographs
- 14) Rarer photographic processes and prints
- 15) Stamps
- 16) Judging if the image was made from the original negative

----- *Press & Publishing Photos* -----

- 17) Press and publishing photos
- 18) Identifying press and publishing photos
- 19) A brief historical overview
- 20) Stamps
- 21) Paper tags and caption sheets
- 22) Wirephotos
- 23) Production marks
- 24) Later generation and 'printed later' press photos
- 25) Assorted notes

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- 26) Miscellaneous photos
- 27) Blacklight
- 28) Provenance
- 29) Photomechanical (not photographs) prints
- 30) Final notes

*~ Quick Tip ~*

Most Polaroids are unique and original.

~ *Quick Tip* ~

**That plasticy photo paper is modern**

Vintage photo paper has a fibery, papery feel on the back. Check out the back of a 1920s or 1950s photo. In the late 1960s photo paper manufacturers introduced *resin coated* paper that is still widely used today. Resin coated paper has a smooth plasticy feel on the back, as it was coated in a plastic resin. Many of your 1970s to current family snapshots are resin coated. Check them out.

While modern photos can still have fibery papery backs, if a '1952 James Dean photo' is resin coated you can be confident it was made years after the image was shot.



Legendary magazine photographer Toni Frissell showing her camera to kids in 1945 Europe (courtesy of US Library of Congress)

## (1) INTRODUCTION

This book is an introduction and guide to identifying, dating and judging the authenticity, or lack thereof, of photographs from the 1800s to today. While a short book hardly intends to make the beginner into a museum curator or the next Sotheby's expert, it covers many of the basics and essentials to forming wise opinions.

This guide is a supplement to your personal experience and springboard to your continuing education. This experience and education includes handling and looking at a variety of photographs, reading books and articles and asking lots of questions of dealers, experts and fellow collectors. With time, the collector gains a feel for age, rarity, originality and authenticity.

Collectors should learn all they can about the genre where they collect, whether it is fashion photos, hockey photos or Victorian cabinet cards. This includes learning about current prices, hobby news, the history, styles, personalities and photographers

\* \* \* \*

### **An important tool: the microscope**

To make a correct identification of a photographic print, it is best to make a close examination of the image surface. This book not only describes a print's general but its microscopic characteristics. A microscope of 30X to 100X (30 times to 100 times) power is needed for advanced examination. The normal household magnifying glass is not strong enough. Many pocket sized microscopes are affordable, easy to use and can be

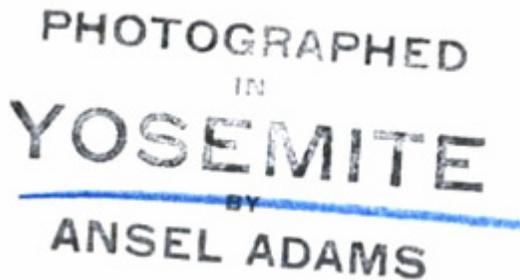
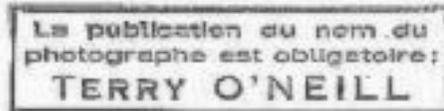
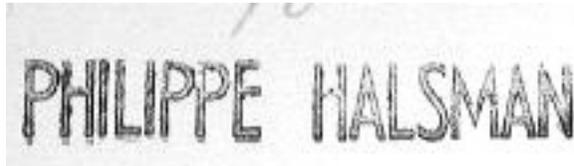
carried in a coat pocket or backpack. A hand held microscope can be bought for cheap at many hobby stores and at amazon.com and eBay. These microscopes are multi-use, as they are also helpful in authenticating trading cards, postcards art prints and other non-photographic memorabilia.



*~ Quick Tip ~*

### **Photographer's Stamp**

If a photograph has the stamp of a photographer, that's a strong sign that the photograph was made by or with the permission of the photographer. This explains why the presence of a famous photographer's stamp often dramatically increases the value of a photograph.



*~ Quick Tip ~*

**‘Silvering’ in the image helps  
prove the photograph old**

Many, though not all, black and white photos from before 1940 have a quality called ‘silvering’ or ‘silver mirroring’

Silvering is when it appears as if silver or silver tarnish has come to surface of the image. If it exists, it is most noticeable at the edges and in the dark areas of the image and when viewed at a nearing 180 degree angle to the light. If you change the angles of the photo to a light source the silvering will be become lighter and darker, sometimes disappearing. Silvering ranges in intensity from photo to photo. Sometimes it is only revealed under close examination. Other times it is obvious even in an online auction image.

Important for collectors, silvering is an aging process. In other words, the vast majority of photographs with natural silvering are old.

(2)  
**A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF PHOTOGRAPHS  
 AND HOW THEY ARE IDENTIFIED**

This chapter is a quick overview to the rest of the book.

\* \* \* \*

**Photographic process:** The way in which a photographic image is made. A particular process is distinguished by its unique use of chemicals, substances and methods.

**Photographic print:** The image created by the photographic process. A particular print is made by a particular process. For example, the albumen print is created by the albumen process, while the gelatin-silver process creates the gelatin-silver print.

**Photographic style or type:** The combination of the photographic print and the manner in which it is displayed. The cabinet card is a style of photograph that is comprised of a photographic print pasted to a larger cardboard mount measuring about 4-1/2" X 6-1/2". The panorama is a different style, with a long photographic print usually giving a sweeping view of a town, stadium or line of people.

\* \* \* \*

Photography is the process of creating an image on a chemically sensitized surface by interaction with light. The resulting image is usually called a photographic print.

Over history there have been many different photographic processes. Some processes were used long ago, some recently, some had a long duration, some short, some processes were widely used, while others were obscure. Each process

produces a unique photograph print that can be identified. Qualities such as color, surface texture and type of aging help us distinguish one type of print from another. For example, the cyanotype has a bright blue image on matte paper, while the cibachrome has a true color image on ultra glossy paper. The image can also be examined under a microscope in order to uncover tiny clues.

A particular process and its print share the same name. The gum bichromate print was produced by the gum bichromate process, the platinotype process produced the platinotype print.

Photographs come in various styles and types. The style or type is determined by many things, including size, shape, parts and use. For example, a real photo postcard (a postcard with a photographic image on the back) is a style obviously distinct from a 20 by 20 inches photo matted, framed and hung from the wall.

As with processes and prints, each style of photograph has its own history, usually influenced by a combination of fashion, necessity and technology.

Many prints and styles could be interchanged. For example the carte de visite (a style where a small photographic print was pasted to a card) usually used the albumen print, but it sometimes used different types of prints.

Many early photographs weren't made of paper, but glass and metal. Well known metal and glass photographs include the 1800s daguerreotype (image on silver coated copper), ambrotype (image on glass), tintype (image on iron resembling tin) and glass negative (negative image on glass). These are popular with collectors and, due to their non-paper material, easy to identify.

### **Identifying and dating photographs**

Photographs are identified and dated by looking at all the qualities of the photograph. This includes the image subject (US President, movie star, clothing style), photographic style,

photographic process and other indications of age like foxing (age spots).

Photographic processes and styles have distinct histories that help us to date a photograph. For example, almost all albumen prints are from the 1800s while the Polaroid was invented in 1963. The American real photo postcard was introduced in 1901, while the cabinet card was used in the 1800s and early 1900s. Knowledge of processes and styles is essential to identify and dating photographs.

If the subject of the photograph is from the 1880s, the style is from the 1880s and the photographic process is the kind used in the 1880s, it would appear the photograph is from the 1880s.

Particularly at sale or auction, the photograph will already be labeled and you will judge whether or not the label is accurate. If the seller says the photo is an American Civil War General photo from the 1860s, you look at the General's uniform and face and style of photo to determine if the subject and date is accurate. If the seller is a well known and respected photograph dealer, her opinion may hold great weight. You may feel that the seller is more of an expert on the Civil War than you. If the eBay seller has horrible feedback and no history of selling photographs, you will be skeptical of his word.

Fakes and reprints are identified because qualities of the photograph are in major conflict with each other. If the image is of Stan Laurel in the 1920s but the paper is modern, the photo is a reprint.

Many fakes are genuine photographs that are significantly misidentified. Many 'baseball tintypes' are genuine 1800s tintypes but do not picture a baseball player as advertised. It may picture an 1870s fireman, firemen of the time having similar uniforms as baseball players. Another seller with a case of wishful thinking may call a farmer's heavy work glove a baseball glove, with baseball photos being more valuable.

While an eBay photo may be an original cabinet card of a boxer, the seller may have misdated it. Considering an 1860s cabinet card is rarer than a 1910s cabinet card, the misdating may effect value.

Many photographs have stamps, tags and stickers that help in identification. These stamps can identify the photographer, the provenance (magazine, Government office, other) and help give a date. If the authentic stamp is from a photo agency that went out of business in 1940, that would show that the photograph was made in 1940 or earlier. If the photo's back has modern Kodak stamping, you can be sure the photo is modern.

As described in a later chapter, a blacklight is an easy to use tool to identify many reprints and forgeries, as it identifies modern photo paper.

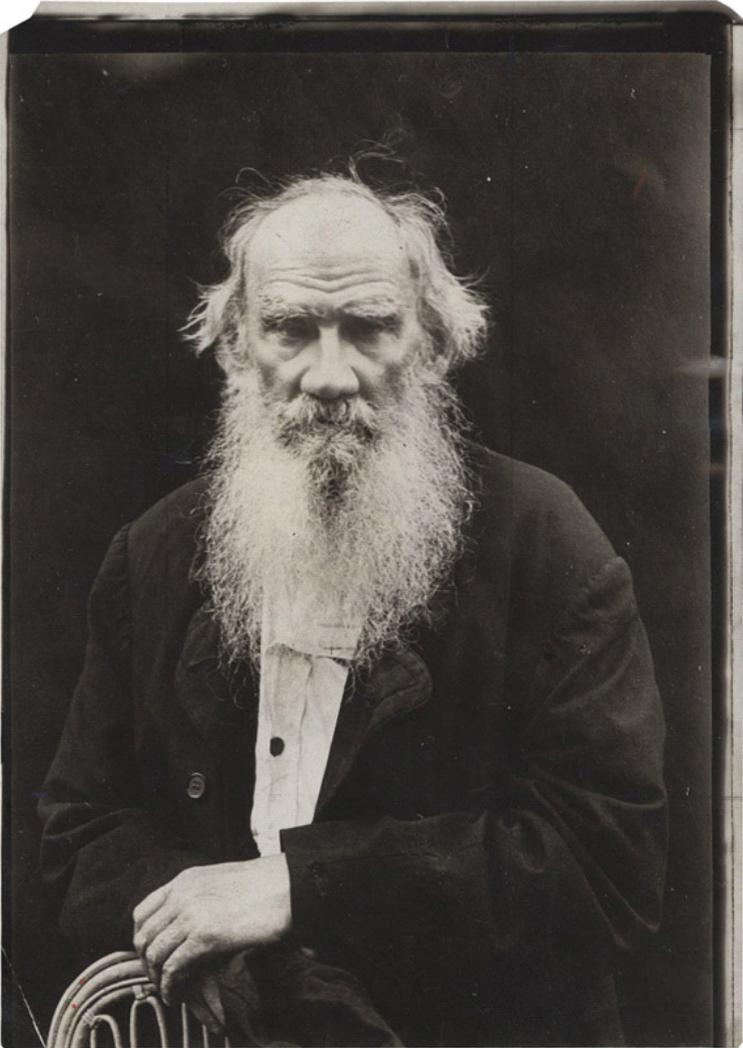


Gloss is helpful in identifying processes. The gelatin silver print on the right has a semi gloss, while the cibachrome is much glossier. The cibachrome is probably the glossiest of all photographs.

*~ Quick Tip ~*

**Get a second opinion and  
seek advice when you need it**

This can range from getting a formal opinion from a top expert, to asking a collecting friend what she knows about an eBay seller or thinks of the price tag. The collector who seeks out input is always better off than the collector who is too proud or embarrassed to ask questions.



Leo Tolstoy, 1913 gelatin silver print

### (3) WHAT IS AUTHENTICITY?

Something is authentic if its true identity is described accurately and sincerely.

If you pay good money for an “original 1930 Babe Ruth photo by the famous photographer Charles Conlon,” you expect to get an original 1930 Babe Ruth photo by the famous photographer Charles Conlon. You don’t expect a 1970 reprint of a Conlon photo or a 1930 photo taken by an unknown photographer.

A photo does not have to be rare or expensive or vintage or made by someone famous to be authentic. It just has to accurately described. A cheapo reprint can be authentic if described as a cheapo reprint.

Errors in the description of a photograph are considered significant when they significantly affect the financial value or reasonable non-financial expectations of the buyer. An example of the reasonable non-financial expectations would involve a collector who specializes in real photo post cards of her home state of Iowa and makes it clear to the seller that she only wants postcards depicting Iowa. Even if there is no financial issue, she would have reason to be disappointed if the purchased postcard turned out to show Oklahoma or Minnesota.

Many errors in description are minor and have little to no material effect. If that 1930 Babe Ruth photo turns out to be from 1933, it may not lower the value or make any difference to the buyer.

**It's about making sound judgments**

This guide isn't about becoming omniscient or gaining superhero powers of authentication. It's about forming sound opinions based on your knowledge, experience, tools, resources and common sense.

With many photographs you will be confident to certain of their identity. You will be certain one photograph is original, and another is a modern reprint. You will see when a dealer has misdated the photograph or misidentified the subject.

A percentage of photographs you won't be able to identify and date. Perhaps the photo is not stamped and you can't tell the age of the paper. Many photos will be outside your area of expertise. If you specialize in hockey, you may be ignorant about old time tennis uniforms and equipment. A track & field fan may not be able to recognize the famous faces of 1950s baseball.

Even Sotheby's experts and museum curators seek out the advice from others when looking at photos outside their area of experience.

**For collectors, judging authenticity is rarely done in a vacuum**

For the collector, making judgments is usually done within a context. Usually the context is deciding whether or not to purchase and how much to pay.

The degree of proof of authenticity needed to purchase a \$4,000 photo likely will be higher than needed for a \$20 photo. To some, a fake photo may still be worth the \$20 purchase price if it looks great hung from the wall. And the worst that can happen with a \$20 purchase is that the collector is out \$20.

An expert in 1930s political photos may be certain that the 1930 Greta Garbo photo is vintage, but hesitates to place an expensive bid as she doesn't know what are the going rates for Garbo photos.

You never have to buy a photograph. If you are uncomfortable with the looks of a photograph, the price or the reliability of the seller, you can choose not to bid or buy.

(4)  
**WHAT IS A PHOTOGRAPH, WHAT ISN'T  
 AND HOW TO TELL THE DIFFERENCE**



magazine cover with photomechanical image

Not all photo realistic images are photographs and the collector should know the difference between a photograph and non-photograph. The realistic images in a recent glossy magazine, on a modern trading card, cereal box or advertising poster are not photographs but *photomechanical* prints. While a photograph is made by the subtle interaction of light with photochemicals, most photomechanical prints involve a printing press pressing ink against paper.

Names for common types of photomechanical prints include *lithograph*, *colloTYPE*, *photoengraving*, *giclee*, *photogravure*, *computer print*, *halftone*, *laser print*, *half tone* and *digital print*.

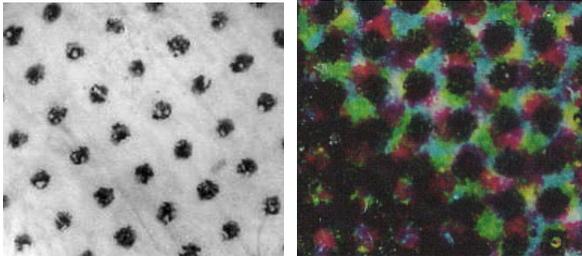
Even when they collect both, most photo collectors consider photographs and photomechanical prints different categories. This is due to collecting sensibility and taste as much as technical reasons. Typically a photograph will be more expensive than the equivalent photomechanical print. In the genre of photographs the seller should represent a photomechanical print as photomechanical and not as a real photograph.

### **Telling the Difference: “Dots Versus No Dots”**

A handheld microscope or strong magnifier will allow one to distinguish a photograph from a photomechanical print.

Close examination of a photograph will reveal great subtlety in tones and shades. The tones can be so subtle that it seems as if you can't get the microscope in focus.

Under magnification the photomechanical print will be made up of a distinct pattern of tiny dots or other printed ink patterns. The dots can be all one color or, for a color picture, a variety of colors. Check this out yourself. Take a microscope or strong magnifying glass and examine the pictures in the magazine on your coffee table.



microscopic view of the dot patterns  
on modern baseball card

Many cheap reprints are photomechanical reproductions of original photos. However, some photomechanical prints have financial value, such as a Scavullo silkscreen, Alfred Steiglitz photogravure, Richard Avedon giclee or a many sports cards.

While this book is about real photographs, a chapter near the end gives an overview of the different kinds of photomechanical prints.

**Guess What. You've just learned how to identify many modern reprints and fakes**

If you see an 'antique' photograph, like an 1860s Abe Lincoln cabinet card or 1910 Ty Cobb snapshot, where the image is made up of a multi color dot pattern like on a modern trading card or magazine cover, it's more than probably a modern reprint.



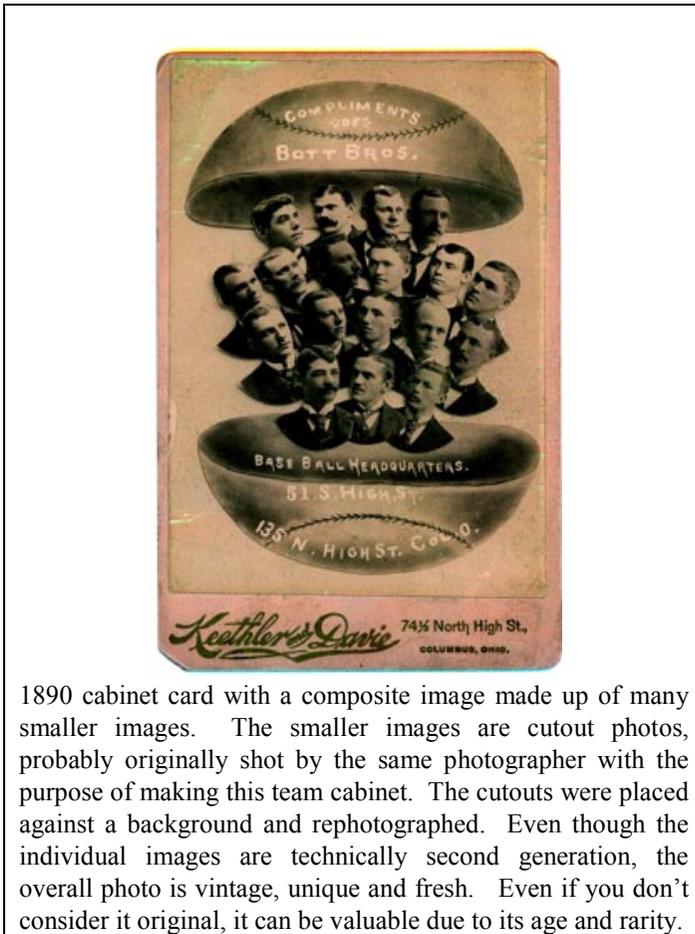
Enrico Caruso singing for Helen Keller, 1916

(5)  
**“ORIGINAL,” “PRINTED LATER” AND  
A FEW OTHER IMPORTANT CONCEPTS**

The following are some standard terms and concepts in the genre of art and collectable photographs. Even if using different terms, a seller’s description should communicate the nature of the photograph— when the photo was made, who made it, is the photo original or reprint, etc. It’s all about having the potential buyer know what is the item, so she can decide if it is something she desires and, if so, what is a reasonable price.

**Original:** A photo where the image was printed (made) directly from the original negative or transparency (a transparency is used just like a negative, but the image is positive instead of negative). Unless otherwise indicated, the term is interpreted to mean the photo was made soon after the image was shot (vintage). All other qualities equivalent, the original will be more valuable than a reprint or later generation photo.

While an original almost always involves the original negative or transparency, there are isolated circumstances where a photograph using second generation images can be considered original. An example is a photographer who uses both original and second generation images together to create an artistic collage or composite photograph (one photograph made up of more than one photographic image). If the overall photograph is unique and artistically brand new, the photograph might be considered an original.



1890 cabinet card with a composite image made up of many smaller images. The smaller images are cutout photos, probably originally shot by the same photographer with the purpose of making this team cabinet. The cutouts were placed against a background and rephotographed. Even though the individual images are technically second generation, the overall photo is vintage, unique and fresh. Even if you don't consider it original, it can be valuable due to its age and rarity.

**Original by photographer**, such as “Original 1905 baseball photograph by Carl Horner.” This means the photo is original and printed by or under the supervision/approval of the photographer.

An “original Carl Horner” can't be made after his death or otherwise without his knowledge.

Originals can be printed under different conditions. Some were directly printed by the photographers, with many collectors considering these the most desirable. In other cases, an assistant or outside lab printed the photograph under the photographer's watchful eye. As long as the printing was done

under the direction and approval of the photographer, the photographs will usually be considered originals.

Many famous photographers were employees of magazines, newspapers or news services, and the employer had much influence in the printing, size and style. Perhaps the photographer shot the images in a magazine's studio, and an art director had final say over the print's size and style. One could rightly call these originals as collaborations between photographer and publisher, or between photographer and editor. One of these photos might be labeled as "Original Sports Illustrated photograph by Herbie Scharfman" or "Original Herbie Scharfman Sports Illustrated Photo."



**Photo stamp lists both the Evening Telegram newspaper and the photographer Charles Conlon**

Many collectors specialize in photographs from famous organizations, so the fact that a photograph was made by Time magazine or for a favorite sports team may be as, if not more, significant than the name of the photographer.

In many cases it won't be clear under what exact condition and by whom the photograph was printed, as the information was lost in time or never revealed to the general public. However, the presence of the photographer's stamp usually indicates he or she was sufficiently involved and gave approval to the making of the photo. The photographer's hand signature, initial and/or notes (usually on back) are always desirable and bring a premium, in part because they prove he was involved.

Originals by famous photographers can be unstamped and unsigned, but significant provenance or expert opinion is needed to authenticate the photograph as by the photographer. Examples of significant provenance is when a photo is known

to have come from the photographer's estate or the archives of a magazine the worked for.

**Vintage:** Made soon after the image was shot. Vintage is also used as a general term indicating something that is old, but that is not the meaning used in this book. With early photographs, say from the 1870s and 1880s, the photograph can still have value even if the image is later generation. Many 1880s Old Judge baseball and boxing cards have second generation images but still have high value as 19<sup>th</sup> century trading cards.

**Printed Later:** A photograph that was made a lengthy time after the image was shot, e.g. "The image was shot in 1930 and printed in the 1970s." Printed later photos include unauthorized home computer printer reprints and high quality examples made by the photographer or significant organization.

As when the image was printed often affects the value and desirability, the seller should always make clear when a photo is printed later. In some cases, an exact print date can be given ("Shot in 1955. Printed in 1975"). In many cases, only a general time period can be given ("I'm not sure when this photo was made, but it appears to be printed some time later.")

Most printed later photos are identified quickly by the experienced collector. The photo may have a modern stamp, or be made with a modern process or is on obviously modern paper. Many printed later photos simply look too new to be vintage or have poor images that are obviously later generation.

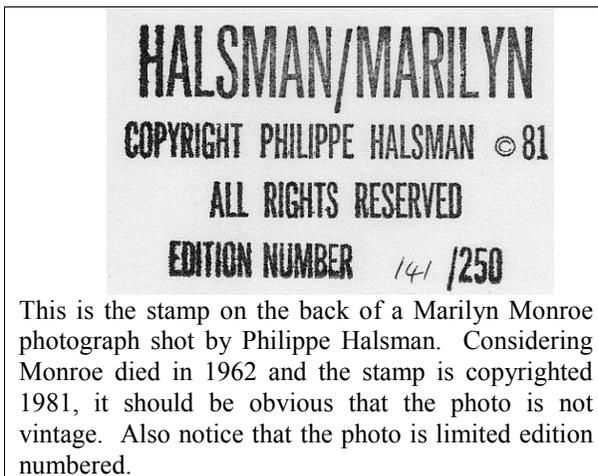
**Original Printed Later** means the image was printed from the original negative, but a period after the image was shot.

**Original printed later photographs by famous photographers.** Many famous photographers made high quality 'printed later' photographs. This includes George Hurrell, Ansel Adams, Richard Avedon, Clarence Sinclair Bull and Horst P. Horst. Some of these photographs were made in limited editions and are signed and/or stamped by the

photographer. These photos can fetch high prices in auction. However, some collectors are only interested in the vintage photos. A specialist in Silent Era Hollywood memorabilia may only be interested in artifacts from the 1910s-20s. Many collectors are only interested in vintage photos. It's a matter of personal taste.

These high end printed later photographs are usually easy to identify as modern by the experienced collector. Many photos are generally known to be printed later. Quality dealers and auctioneers will accurately describe the photo. Often times the modern date is printed or written on the photo or accompanying certificate of authenticity. A 1920s image printed many years later will usually be clearly modern by the modern appearance, including modern paper.

Instead of, or in conjunction with, the photographer, an organization with rights to the image sometimes produced original printed later images. These organizations include magazines and photo services like Associated Press and United Press International. These organizations keep archives of the original negatives and often held or shared exclusive rights to the images.



**Later Generation, Second Generation.** This means the photograph is not original and usually not vintage. A photograph of a photograph, or a photograph made from a copy

negative is later generation. The images won't be as clear as the original and often are of obviously inferior quality. Later generation photos include illegal cheapo reprints, along with legitimate photos issued by news services, magazines, movie studios and photo services. All other things equivalent, a later generation photograph will be worth less than the original.

**Official.** In particular with modern photos and photos shot by famous photographers, it's best for the collector to stick to 'official' photographs, or photographs that were 'officially printed.'

A photograph is official if it was made in legitimate circumstances by or under authorization of the copyrights holder. An original photograph from a magazine's archives with the magazine's copyright stamp is official. A United Press International photo with the UPI stamp and tag is official. A 30 years later reprint authorized by the photographer or her estate is official. The snapshot you shot at the company picnic and had developed at the drug store is official.

An official photo doesn't mean it has to be rare or original or expensive or the photographer is famous, but that it's legitimate.

If someone without permission downloads a scan from a website, prints out 1,000 copies on her computer printer, these reprints are not official. If someone owns no reproduction rights to the David Bailey negative he bought on eBay, any prints he makes are not only unofficial but possibly illegal if sold.

In most cases unofficial photos have little to no long term value or standing within the hobby.

A portion of the photos on eBay are unauthorized, with many being home computer prints. If you spend \$5 on one of these reprints of a movie star so you can tape it to your refrigerator, that's one thing. If you spend thousands of dollars on them as investments, you will likely be in for an unpleasant surprise.

Officialness is less of a concern with antique photographs by lesser known photographers. These photos have an inherent

degree of legitimacy as their populations are set. Whether it was official or unofficial at the time of making, no one can make anymore of those 1890s cabinet cards or 1935 real photo postcards. Also, the age itself of a photograph is a key to many collectors. For the collector of American Civil War photographs, that a photo was made in the 1860s is a key to its desirability. The collector is collecting the photos as historical artifacts.

With time and experience, the collector will get a good feel for what is legitimate and what is not. The photographer or organization's stamp or tag or knowing where it came from (provenance) will identify the photo as legitimate. Dealing with quality sellers and getting second opinions are also important. Quality sellers avoid illegal items and communicate the nature of the item being offered. Contact the seller if you need clarification.

*~ Quick Tip ~*

### **Glass Negatives Are Old**

Almost all early negatives used to make photographic prints were glass. Glass negatives were slowly discontinued in the 1920s-30s. In more modern times, including today, photographic negatives are made of a thin plastic film, easily distinguishable from glass.

Due to their physical appearance and feel, it is not difficult to differentiate the later glass negatives from the early ones. The later negatives (say 1920s) are thinner, machine cut and with a smooth surface. The early glass negatives (say 1860s-70s) are thicker, hand cut and have a rougher surface.

*~ Quick Tip ~*

### **Open Edition versus Limited Edition**

Usually found with modern art and collectibles, if a photo or art lithograph or porcelain figurine is described as being from an ‘open edition,’ this means there is no limit to how many can be made. This is as opposed to a ‘limited edition’ where a specific maximum limit exists. Some limited editions are numbered on the photo indicating the limit (1/10 or 20/50).

*~ Quick Focus ~*

### **Giclee in Fine Art Photography**

Giclee (a French word pronounced *zhee-clay*), also known as iris print, is a fancy form of inkjet printing that prints digital images. It can make quality reproductions of fine art prints, photographs and posters. A photographer can digitally scan the original negative or transparency and make a high quality giclee. Under the microscope, the giclee image will be made up of a fine pattern of multi colored dots.

Traditionally, fine art prints have been black and white. This was in part because the most common form of color photograph (chromogenic) has a tendency to fade and discolor. The dye-transfer color photo, while permanent and of high quality, is expensive and difficult to make. The similar high quality and permanent cibachrome color photo has an ultra-glossy surface and bold colors that not all photographers and collectors like.

The giclee is used by many photographers due to the versatility, image quality and permanence of the colors. Notable photographers who have made giclee prints include Richard Avedon, William Weldman, Walter Chen and David Hockney.

For some collectors and critics, there is a stigma attached to giclees. Giclee is a mechanical print and not a photograph, and there is a common stigma to computer prints.

(6)  
**IDENTIFYING STANDARD PHOTOGRAPHIC  
 PROCESSES & PRINTS : INTROUDCTION**

While there have been many different photographic processes and prints, you will be glad to know that well over ninety nine percent of all of history's paper photographs belong to three types of prints:

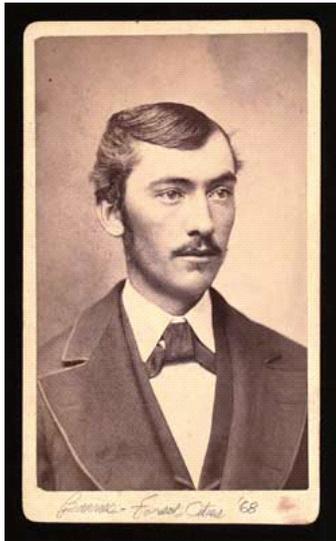
**Albumen prints**, the most popular photograph of the 1800s. Almost all those 1800s CDVs and cabinet cards have albumen prints.

**Gelatin-silver prints**, the most popular 1900s black and white photograph. Almost all those wirephotos, old b/w family snapshots, real photo postcards and Hollywood press photos are gelatin-silver.

**C-prints or chromogenic prints**, the most popular true color photograph. Almost all of your pre-digital camera family color snapshots, 8"x10" graduation and wedding photos are c-prints.

The next three chapters will focus on these three processes. Later chapters will cover other, rarer processes.

(7)  
**ALBUMEN PRINTS:  
 THE MOST COMMON 1800s PHOTOGRAPHS**



1800s Carte de visite with an albumen photographic print pasted on a larger cardboard mount.

**Popularly used:** 1850s-1890s, though a few examples are found from the early 1900s.

While there were other photographic processes in the 1800s, the albumen print was by far the most common form of paper photograph. Most 1860s-90s paper photographs are albumen. Even non-collectors associate horse-and-buggy and Old West images with the soft, sentimental tones that were produced by the albumen process.

Except for modernized versions used by a few advanced art photographers, the albumen process is as obsolete as the Model T car. It hasn't been used commercially for nearly a century, having long ago been replaced by more advanced technology.

During its 1800s century heyday, the albumen process was used by a wide range of photographers and for a wide range of photos. It was used by famous photographers and unknown small town studios. It was used to make the priceless photo hung today in a Paris or New York museum and many of the photos in you or your neighbor's family collection. This means that by studying the cabinet card of your great great uncle or that \$2 cabinet you bought at a flea market, you are also studying the qualities of the thousands dollar 1880s Joseph Hall baseball cabinet card and the Robert E. Lee Civil War portrait.

The albumen process was time-consuming and difficult compared to modern photography. Most practitioners were well-trained professionals with a practical knowledge of chemistry. Except for a few technically gifted and wealthy hobbyists, there were no amateur photographers as in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The process required a unique kind of chemically treated paper that was mostly imported from France and Germany. Photography is a chemical process and the photographer couldn't use any old writing paper he got at the local dime store. Only a few factories in the world made albumen paper. This is lucky for us today, because this albumen paper has distinct qualities that are usually straightforward to identify.

One of the distinct qualities of 1800s albumen prints is that they are on super thin paper. The paper was so thin and delicate that the prints had to be mounted. Mounted means that the photographic print was pasted to a heavy backing. Usually the backing is a sheet of cardboard, but albumen prints can also be found mounted in or on books, programs, pins and other items. The mount is typically larger than the albumen print. The picture at the beginning of this chapter clearly shows how the albumen print was affixed to a larger cardboard mount.

Albumen photographs were made in a wide range of sizes and styles, often related to the era that they were made. The

mount can range from 1x1 inches to over 20 x 20 inches. The typical sizes are the carte de visite or CDV (a bit bigger than a driver's license) and the cabinet card (a larger version of the CDV). It was more expensive and difficult to make large albumen photos. The largest sizes, say around 15x15" and larger, were usually made for special occasions. A mammoth sports team photo may have been displayed in the club house, town hall or been given to a player or manager.

For all sizes, the mount is typically rectangular, but can come in other shapes. The mounts come in a variety of colors and with different text and designs. The color and design help the historian assign a general date, as different styles typically came from specific eras.

The albumen images are usually well aged. This includes the common sepia or yellowish tone, often along with fading of the image details in areas and foxing (brown or reddish age spots). Particularly due to different storage, the severity and type of aging will vary. For collectors, albumen photos are best stored away from light, excessive heat and humidity. An example of excessive heat is storing them next to a radiator. When originally made, albumen images were not sepia but closer to a grey. You will sometimes find examples that were well stored and retain these colors. Albumen images are usually glossy.

Many albumen images have very fine web-like pattern of cracking. This is often seen up close with the naked eye. Sometimes a normal magnifying glass or loupe is needed. The cracking, which does not appear on all albumen prints, can be throughout the entire image or in sections.

One of the keys to authenticating albumen prints is examining the image area under a microscope, preferably of 50x or better power. Unlike with the later gelatin silver prints or common modern color photos, the paper fibers can be seen on the albumen print. It takes some practice, but with experience it's not difficult to view the paper fibers with a microscope of 50 or more power. When judging the authenticity of an expensive albumen photograph I always take my magnifying glass and look for paper fibers in the image.

There are some other scarcer types of photographic prints where the fibers can be seen. These don't have the same colors or other image qualities of albumen prints. Further, all of these are antique or high end processes. The salt print, where the fibers can be seen, was used before the albumen prints. The scarce platinotype, where the fibers can be seen, was largely discontinued before WWII. So, one way or the other, if you see the paper fibers on your 19<sup>th</sup> century photograph, it's a good sign.

Though rare, it is possible to find 1880s albumen prints that are pink (by far the most common), blue, green, yellow and other bright colors. The process to add dye to the albumen paper was invented at this time. This dye process often left underdeveloped images.

Some albumen prints have a distinct effect called 'silvering.' Silvering is when it appears as if the silver has come to surface of the image. If it exists, it is more noticeable at the edges and in the dark areas of the image, and when viewed at a specific angle to the light. If you change the angle of the photo to a light source, the silvering will become stronger and darker, sometimes disappearing. It can range in intensity. Sometimes it is only revealed under close examination when holding the photo nearing a 180 degree to a light. Silvering appears on some other types of photographs, most notable the gelatin silver. Important for collectors, silvering is an aging process. In simple words, a photograph with natural silvering is old.



**Albumen paper, pasted here to the larger mount, is extremely thin. The above image also shows a close-up example of foxing.**

Early 1900s gelatin-silver prints (see next chapter) are often mistaken for albumen prints. Early gelatin silver prints often have an albumen-like sepia tone and can be mounted to a cardboard backing. Except for some early circa 1890s examples, the gelatin-silver print is identified as the paper fibers in the image cannot be seen under the microscope.

If the photograph is dated to the early 1900s by the image subject or mount style, the photograph probably is gelatin-silver, not albumen.

In the 1890s, albumen prints and gelatin prints were roughly about equal in popularity. For a photo you are certain is from this period, it is not a big deal if you cannot tell if the print is albumen or gelatin silver, as there will likely be no difference in value.

Albumen prints are also sometimes mistaken for the earlier and much rarer salt print, which is described in a later chapter.



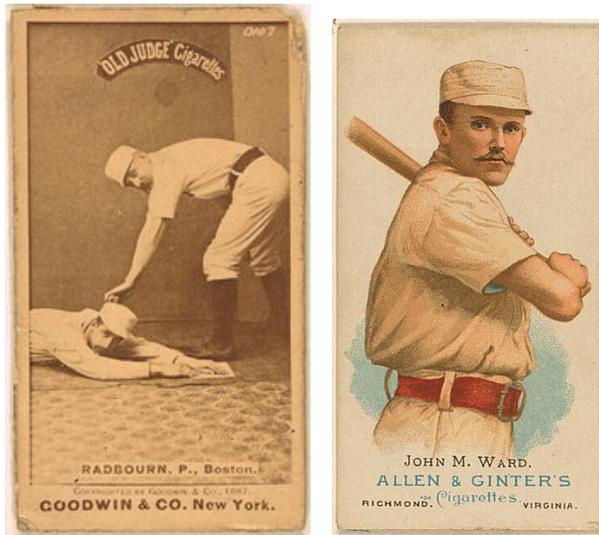
1880s Albumen print at 100X magnification, showing the paper fibers.

### **Modern Albumen Prints**

Today, a few artists and hobbyists make modernized versions of the albumen print. These are easy to distinguish from 1800s version. Since the photos are made recently and often sold by the proud photographer, the photos are usually correctly dated. The modern albumen prints are on much thicker paper, lack the aging of the old versions, are usually not mounted and will often fluoresce brightly under a blacklight (see chapter 25). The photographer's purpose usually is to duplicate the aesthetic tones of the albumen print, but not the foxing, fading and discoloration. Modern albumen prints are much rarer than the 1800s.

## **Summary of Important Qualities of the Early Albumen Print**

- \* Almost all were produced in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A few examples can be found in the early 1900s. Most 1800 paper photographs are albumen prints.
- \* Due to the delicate nature of the paper, albumen prints had to be mounted, meaning the albumen print had to be pasted to a heavy backing like a sheet of cardboard.
- \* Examples larger than the cabinet card are scarce, the larger the more limited in number. Examples around 20x20” exist but are rare.
- \* Albumen paper is very thin, thinner than modern photo paper..
- \* Images can be found in grey, but are typically sepia in tone, often with foxing, areas of fading and other wear.
- \* Images are often glossy
- \* Many have a very fine web like pattern of cracks in the image surface. Can often be viewed with naked eye, but sometimes a normal magnifying glass is needed.
- \* Some images have silvering
- \* Under microscope, paper fibers can be seen in image. If the paper fibers can be seen, that is one of the strongest signs that the 19<sup>th</sup> century photograph is genuine.



**1880s cigarette cards.** Distributed in cigarette packs, the small 1880s American cigarette cards came in two types: real photo and color lithograph. The card on the left has an albumen print pasted to a sturdy cardboard backing. The card on the right has a high quality lithograph resembling a little color painting. The cards depicted sports stars, actors, dancers and other popular subjects, and were used to boost tobacco sales. They remain popular with collectors today.

(8)  
**GELATIN-SILVER PRINTS:  
 THE MOST COMMON 1900s BLACK & WHITE PHOTOS**



1950s gelatin silver Italian postcard of actress Sophia Loren

**Commonly used late 1890s to today**

Gelatin silver prints were by far the most common form of black and white photograph from the late 1890s to today. If you own a 1930s movie still photo or a 1950s wirephoto, you own a gelatin silver photograph. If you go to a museum exhibit of photographs by famous early 20<sup>th</sup> century photographers, many to most will likely be gelatin silver prints. Those 1940s black and white snapshots and real photo postcards in your family albums are more than likely gelatin silver.

### **Early gelatin silver prints**

While gelatin silver photographs were commonly used for many years and are made today, early examples have distinct qualities that help the collector to identify their old age. With hands on experience the collector will rarely be fooled by a modern reprint of a turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century subject. The early photos have a distinct, antique look and feel. In a pile of antique photos, the recently made photo will usually stand out like a sore thumb.

Many gelatin silver photographs have stark black and white images, distinct to the sepia tones of an albumen print. However, many vintage gelatin silver images are found with sepia tones, sometimes closely resembling 1800s albumen prints. This sepia tinge is most often caused by the toning of the paper, but was sometimes intentionally created by the photographer.

Many original vintage gelatin silver images have rich and subtle tones, sometimes with hints of blue or green. Many modern reprints stand out like sore thumbs, because the image is too starkly black and white.

Though not as thin as albumen paper, early gelatin silver paper is thin. The earlier, the thinner. Gelatin silver paper from the late 1890s is nearly as thin as albumen paper. The modern 'double weight' paper was not popularly introduced until around the 1930s. An example of double weight paper is the typical modern autographed 8x10 photo.

Most vintage gelatin silver paper (as seen on the back of the photo) will be off white and often with toning and foxing. Counter to intuition, however, the earliest examples typically have bright white paper, though still with occasional foxing, soiling and other discoloration. The earliest paper was handmade without wood pulp. Wood pulp, introduced to later photo paper production, is what makes later photos and newspapers turn brown. The earliest handmade gelatin silver paper was naturally white and, since there was no wood pulp, did not tone with age. This means that you should not be distressed if the paper on your 1903 or 1905 photo is so much brighter than on your 1920s photos.

Many early gelatin silver prints are mounted in similar fashion to albumen prints. Many to most are unmounted (plain paper photograph with no cardboard backing). This means it is possible to find a 1908 gelatin silver photo either mounted as a cabinet card and unmounted like a modern snapshot.

Unlike albumen prints, the paper fibers in the gelatin silver print cannot be seen under a microscope. The gelatin silver photos have a thin layer of gelatin on the front image area. The gelatin was used to hold the necessary photographic chemicals to the paper. While transparent, the gelatin obscures the paper fibers from view (On some early, circa 1890s examples, the fibers can barely be seen). When viewing under a microscope, you may see the uneven surface of the gelatin. With experience this surface is easily distinguished from paper fibers.

When judging the age of a gelatin silver print, one of the key and straight forward things to look for is silvering. Most, though not all, early gelatin silver prints have some degree of silvering. Silvering can sometimes be found on photos from as late as the 1950s (these of course are many decades old themselves), but silvering is most commonly and distinctly found on early gelatin silver photographs. Silvering is less likely to appear on photos with light, underexposed images.

If you are considering buying a \$500 1915 photograph and the image has silvering, that's a very good sign.

Gelatin silver prints with white borders usually date from the 1910s and later. Before, the photo mostly, though not always, always have full bleed images. Duly note that modern photos can be full bleed, so full bleed is not proof of old age.



Baseball star Satchell Paige in 1941

### **Summary of Early Gelatin Silver Prints**

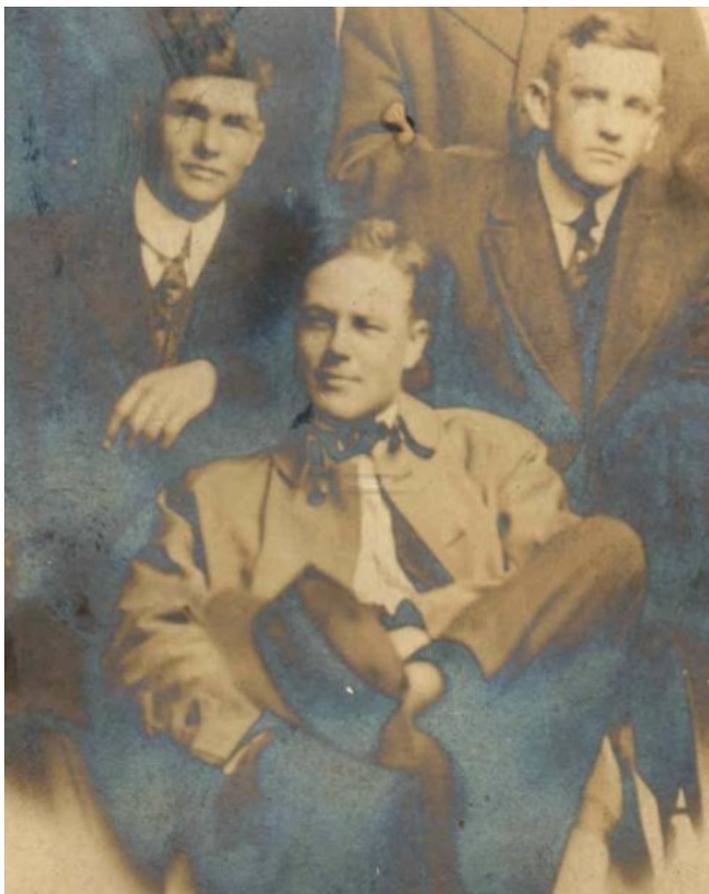
- \* Most 1900s black & white photos are gelatin silver prints.
- \* Gelatin silver prints could be mounted (like a cabinet card) or unmounted. Most are unmounted.
- \* It was easier to make larger sizes than with the albumen process, so oversized gelatin silver prints are more common. Extremely large sizes still receive a premium in price.
- \* The paper is thin, though not as thin as albumen paper
- \* The images can be black and white or with a sepia tone. The images are often rich and subtle in tone.
- \* The turn of the century gelatin silver paper can be bright white, in later years it is usually off white to heavily toned.

- \* The images commonly have silvering. Silvering is an aging process, which means a photo with silvering is old.
- \* Many unmounted photos have the photographer's stamp, which helps date and authenticate the photograph.
- \* White borders strongly suggest that the photo is from the 1910s or after.
- \* Unlike with the albumen print, the paper fibers cannot be seen in the image area under a microscope.

### **Later to Recent Gelatin Silver Prints**

By the 1930s-40s, gelatin silver prints were often on much thicker paper. Almost all modern photos are on substantially thicker and sturdier paper than the first gelatin silver prints. Gelatin silver prints from the 1930s-40s, and once in a while even into the 1950s, can have light silvering that shows they're old. Starting in the late 1960s, resin coated paper was introduced. Resin coating gives the front and back of the photo paper a smooth and plastic feel. Though the resin coating proves a photograph is modern, some modern photos still have the traditional fibery/papery back. Older gelatin silver prints will often have light to heavy toning showing its age. Recent photos are often distinctly bright white.

Within the Post World War II era it is not always easy to judge the exact age of the paper and image. The difference between 1950s and early 1960s photo paper, for example, is minor at best. The stamps, tags or other marks on the photo's back are often necessary to date a modern photo. Also, photos can be judged as later generation by their image quality and photobranding. As shown in a later chapter, blacklights can be used identify many modern photos.



**Silvering.** This circa 1920 gelatin silver print has heavy silvering in the dark areas. Silvering like this is strong evidence of old age.



Gelatin Silver under the microscope. You can see the blips and surface of the gelatin, but not the fibers of the paper.. Compare to the earlier microscopic image of an albumen print where the fibers were visible.

(9)  
**CHROMOGENIC PRINT (C-PRINT):  
THE MOST COMMON TRUE COLOR PHOTO**



**Introduced in the 1930s. Popularly used 1950s to today**

Though you may never have heard of the name before, you are familiar with chromogenic prints, commonly known as *c-prints*, and have owned many. Well over ninety nine percent of color photographs are chromogenic. This includes 8x10" glossies that celebrities autograph, your family snapshots, high school, graduation and wedding photos. When in doubt it's safest to assume a color photo is chromogenic. Chromogenic photos were introduced in the 1930s, though didn't become widely popular until later. Color photos from the 1940s, for example, are limited on the market. Chromogenic photographs

are made today, though increasingly photographers are turning to digital photography.

### **Identifying and judging the age of chromogenic prints**

As already noted, when in doubt a color photo is probably chromogenic. Chromogenic images often fade and discolor with age, sometimes gaining a magenta tone. Vintage examples are on fiber based paper. This means that the back of the photo has a papery, fibery feel, as opposed to the plasticity feel of recent color photos you own. The front (where the image is) of these vintage chromogenic photos are usually glossy. This fibery back with glossy front combination is unique in color photos to the chromogenic photos.

In 1968 Kodak introduced resin coated paper for color photos. Resin coated paper has that glossy, plasticity feel on back. This means that if a photo with a 1950s image subject (James Dean, Korean War) is on resin coated paper, it is not vintage. Many modern reprints of both black & white and color photos are identified as the paper is resin-coated. A quick and simple ways to identify many reprints.

The photo paper branding on back often helps date the paper. Paper branding is discussed in chapter 14. Many photo labs that developed the photos printed the date on back, and many snapshots have the date on front or back..

Many reprints will lack the detail and quality of the original. Using a blacklight will help identify many modern photos. Experience handling and enjoying chromogenic photos will help the collector judge age and originality. This includes handling your family photos.

Chromogenic/c-prints prints are most likely to be mistaken for the rarer and more expensive cibachrome color prints, as both have glossy fronts and are often on resin coated paper. The cibachromes almost always have much, much glossier fronts than chromogenics. Cibachromes often have black borders, while chromogenics rarely do. Chromogenics typically have photo paper printing on the back (“Kodak Professional Paper.” “Fujicolor Crystal Archives Paper”, other), while Cibachromes do not.

Digital prints or color lithographs on photo paper are sometimes mistaken for chromogenic prints. However, the digital and lithographic prints will usually be quickly identified with a strong magnifying glass or microscope, as they will have the fine multi-color dot pattern in the image.

**(10)**  
**EARLY MOUNTED PHOTOGRAPHS**



1800s cabinet card of two boys, with the albumen print glued to a larger cardboard mount.

Nearly all 1800s paper photographic prints are mounted. A percentage of early 1900s photographs are also mounted. Mounted means the print is affixed to a heavier backing, usually larger than the photographic print. The backing is usually a sheet of cardboard, but 1800s photographic prints can be found mounted in books, on scorecards and other items. These mounted photographs come in various sizes and shapes. .

Some sizes of mounted photographs have names, like the *cabinet card* and *carte de visite*. Some sizes aren't named, and are represented by their size— ala, '1880s 13x7 inches mounted photograph.' As size effects desirability and value, a seller should always list the height and width of the mount.

Within the different types and sizes of mounted photographs there are differences in style of the mounts. This difference includes the colors, text and printed graphics. As

with cars and clothes, the style of the mounts changed over the years. Just as a 1960 Ford car driving down the road looks different than a 1980 Ford, an 1860 carte de visite looks different than an 1890 carte.

Each mounted photograph was made in limited numbers. If you find an 1892 cabinet card of the Harvard baseball team or 1910 imperial cabinet card of a high school student there will be no more than a handful of other original copies and it is often unique.

The following pages of this chapter look at the different kinds of mounted photographs, including how to judge their age.



### CARTE DE VISITE (also known as CDV)



Standard American Civil War era CDV

**Carte de Visite Definition:** a paper photographic print pasted to a larger card, the card measuring about 2-1/2” by 4.” Most cartes de visite used albumen prints, though other prints, including the gelatin-silver print, were used later on. Carte de visite is the singular. Cartes de visite is the plural. Also popularly referred to as *CDV* and *carte*.

**Carte de Visite Duration:** 1850s to early 1900s. Popular 1860s-70s

Cartes de visite, often nicknamed *cartes* and *CDVs*, is French for *visiting card*, as this was a popular early use of these small picture cards. A woman might hand out or mail a carte with her picture on it to friends and relatives. In the United States cartes became popular at the beginning of the Civil War. They were used for many purposes, including as identification cards for soldiers, trade cards for businesses and as family photos. Cartes of popular subjects could be bought at local stores. Queen Victoria, Abraham Lincoln and Broadway theatre actors were popular subjects. Collecting cartes and putting them into specially made albums was a popular hobby, and many of these albums exist today.

Cartes come in many photographic and mount styles. Some are plain, while others are ornate. Most have the photograph studio's stamp or embossment on front and/or back, making it easy to identify cartes by famous photographers

### **Dating the Carte de Visite**

Along with the subject in the image (style of clothes, identifiable person, etc), cartes can be dated by the style of the mount, as this changed over time. The following describes the general trends. Exceptions to these trends will be found.

Albumen prints were regularly used until the early to mid 1890s. Most 1900s cartes will have gelatin-silver prints with more black and white images. Examples with carbon prints and cyanotypes (bright blue images) are rare but can be found.

1850s-60s cartes usually had the albumen print pasted to a thin mount that is white, off white or light cream. The mount corners are square. A square cornered CDV is reliably dated the 1850s or 1860s. While often there is the studio name printed on back, there usually is no printed text on the front. 1860s cartes often had one or two thin red or blue lines around albumen print. Unusually small vignettted images (oval images) date to this period.

Starting in the early 1870s the mounts had rounded corners and came in more colors. By the mid 1870s gold gilded, beveled edges were used. By the 1880s dark colors were common and the mount often had scalloped edges.

The mount thickness changed over time, with the earlier ones being thinner than the later ones. The 1860s mounts are typically thinner than the 1870s mounts which are typically thinner than the 1880s and later mounts. Having inexpensive examples from different years on hand will help judge thickness.

The photography studio's logo on the back of the mount changed in size over time. In the 1860s the logo was relatively small and with conservative font. As the years went by the design became larger and more ornate, sometimes taking up the entire back. Note that 1860s and early 1870s CDVs that were used as trade cards (give away cards advertising a product or service) can have larger advertisements on back.

Large ornate studio names on the bottom front of the mount are typical of late 1800s cartes.

The early studio backgrounds in the images were typically plain. By the late 1800s backgrounds were often busy and garish.

Tax stamps on the back of CDVs help give a date. From August 1<sup>st</sup> 1864 to August 1<sup>st</sup> 1866 the US government required that tax stamps be put on photographs. A later amendment allowed for 1 cent stamps to be used. CDVs with a 1 cent stamp date between March 1864 and August 1866. Blue stamps are from the summer of 1866. The stamps often have a cancellation date. Tax stamps can be faked, so the collector shouldn't rely alone on stamps. However, if everything else looks consistent with the era, a tax stamp is a great bonus and will usually raise the value as it pinpoints the age.

In the 1890s, the image can be sepia, black and white (from the start of the use of gelatin-silver prints) and can sometimes have a light green tinge. The green tinge in particular is distinct to the 1890s, due to the process used. In the 1890s, photography was changing from albumen to gelatin silver and

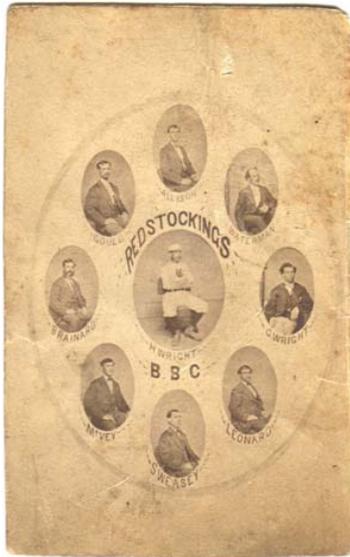
there were different processes being used—thus the different possible colors.



American Civil War CDV front and back. Typical to the era, the front has square corners and plain white borders. The back has a small photography studio text and a 2 cent tax stamp. Also notice that there is little in the background behind the young soldier.



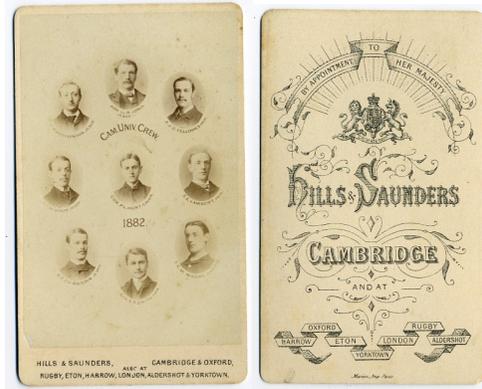
1860s carte with white mount, square corners and small vignette image.



1869 carte de viste with composite image.



**CDV backs:** On the left is a 1860s CDV with a small, conservative photography text. On the right is a late 1800s example with a large, busy text and design.



front and back of an 1882 CDV of the Cambridge University (UK) rowing team



## CABINET CARD



**Cabinet Card Definition.** A photographic print pasted to a larger card, the card measuring about 4-1/2" X 6-1/2"

**Duration:** 1860s-1920s. Most popular 1880s-1890s.

The cabinet card is a larger version of the carte de visite, which it replaced in popularity. It received its name because it was popular to display the mounted photograph in a cabinet. Cabinets depict a wide variety of subjects, including normal families, Presidents and celebrities, animals, buildings, nature and school classes.

### **Dating the Cabinet Card**

Along with the subject in the image, the mount style is helpful in giving an approximate date. The following are the general style trends. Exceptions to these trends will be found.

Cabinet cards with albumen prints usually date 1890s and before. Most 1900s cabinets are gelatin-silver. Later 1890s cabinets can be either albumen or gelatin. Cabinets with cyanotypes, carbon prints and photomechanical prints can be found from both centuries.

The earliest cabinet card mounts were thin, light in weight and light cream, sepia, white or off white. While these light colors were used for many years after, in the 1880s and later various colors were used. If a cabinet has a black, red, green or dark grey mount, for examples, the cabinet more than probably dates to the 1880s or after.

During the 1860s and 70s the photographer's name and address was often printed neatly and small below the image. If the photographer's name is large and stylish, especially if the photographer's name is in an ornate cursive style, the cabinet probably dates from the 1880s or after.

In the 1860s and 70s, the photographer often had his or his studio's name printed conservatively and rather small on back. If the name and design on back is ornate and takes up the entire back, the cabinet dates 1880s or later.

Cards with gold beveled edges date to the mid 1880s to just after 1890. Jet black mounts with gold text mostly date to the late 1880s-90s. Cabinets from the 1890s often have scalloped edges. Cabinet cards with an very embossed studio name and

other embossed designs on the front of the mount date to the 1890s or later.

In the 1890s, the image can be sepia, black and white (from the start of the use of gelatin-silver prints) and can sometimes have a light green tinge. The green tinge in particular is distinct to the 1890s, due to the process used.

In the early 1900s mounts often came in different shapes and designs, including square. 1890s and later cabinets often have intricate designs or embossed patterns on the mounts, often with an embossed faux frame around the gelatin-silver print.

The earlier the cabinet the rarer. Cabinets from the 1860s are rarer than from 1870s and so on. When in doubt, a cabinet is more likely to be from the 1880s than the 1860s.



1890s albumen cabinet with scalloped edges and large stylized studio design/text common to the era. Elaborate, multi-colored and ‘modern’ mounts like this usually date to the 1890s and after.



This cabinet card has a jet black mount, genuine gold text and sepia (albumen) image. This style was made in the late 1880s-90s.



1890s cabinet card with large and ornate studio text on front. Though you can't see in this black & white image, the image is not sepia, which helps date it to the 1890s. The 1890s was when albumen was transitioning to gelatin silver and black & white, green and other colors were more common.



1890s cabinet card with a green tinted image. In the 1890s, the image colors could be sepia, black and white, greenish and a few other tings. This is as the process was slowly changing from albumen print to gelatin silver and there were various experiments. Some early 1900s photos also have a green tint.



Early 1900s cabinet card with charcoal grey mount, oval image and ornate embossed 'frame' around the photo. This was a popular style of the time.



early 1900s cabinet with non-sepia image, a distinct brown/orange mount with different than traditional shaped mount. The mount also has lots of embossment, including pattern throughout.



The edge of this 1904 cabinet has the embossed photographer's name and design next to a gelatin silver print. The intricate embossing throughout the mount and its dark grey color show that it was made after the 1890s. This was a well documented family photo of mine, which is how I was able to date it to the specific year of 1904.



## STEREOVIEWS



**Stereoview Definition:** Two mounted photographs shot by a special camera to give a 3-Dimensional effect when viewed through a special viewer.

**Duration:** 1850s-1930s

Stereoview, stereograph and stereoscopic photograph are names for a form of entertainment long before television and radio. A family would own a box full of stereoviews, each stereoview depicting an entertaining subject. Subjects included far away places and interesting people.

Stereoviews with ambrotypes and Daguerreotypes are rare. Albumen stereoviews were produced from the 1860s to the 1890s. The earliest albumen mounts were lightweight, flat and with square corners. They were usually cream or white. Starting in the later 1860s a heavier mount with rounded corners was used. The color was pale yellow, changing to bright yellow and orange in the 1870s. From the late 1870s on, mounts were warped. Most stereoviews from the 1900s are gelatin silver, and often have heavily warped, dark charcoal grey mounts.



early 1860s stereoview on light cream mount



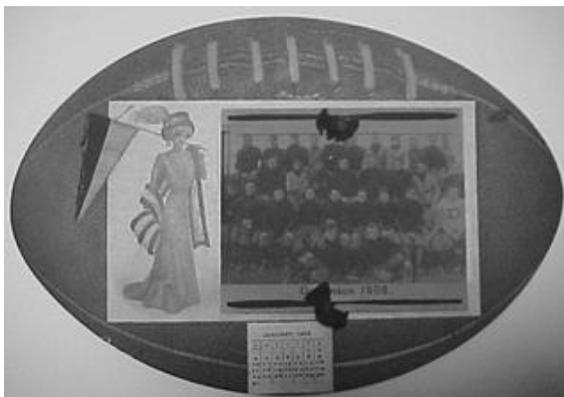
circa 1870 stereoview with albumen



Two views of a tissue stereoview. Tissue behind the albumen print gave the image color when light was shined through. They are delicate and scarce.



## OTHER MOUNTED PHOTOGRAPHS



Unusual 1908 Dickenson College football team photographic calendar. Consists of a postcard sized team photo tied with red ribbon to a football shaped cardboard mount. The mount includes a small calendar and a woman holding a real cloth pennant.

While most mounted photographs were cabinet cards, stereoviews and cartes de visite, examples can be found in many other sizes.

Mounted photographs with multi color mounts and/or embossed designs, particularly an embossed faux frame and photographer's name, date from after 1890 and usually after 1900. 1860s-1870s mounts were usually white, cream, sepia or very light grey. While these color mounts were used in later years, other colors usually date after 1880. For example, a black, green or dark grey mount more than likely dates to the 1880s or later. Very large mounted photographs sometimes do not have the photographer's name and address on the front, and the photographic print is sometimes the same size as the mount.

### Standard Commercial Sizes : 'Card Photographs'

The following lists other standard sizes/names of mounted photographs made from the 1800s to early 1900s. This list comes from the U.S. Library of Congress. Amongst photograph historians, these photos are called **card photographs** (e.g. cabinet *card*, imperial cabinet *card*). These

sizes and names were commercial standards, not unlike the AA battery or size 9 shoe. Some of the more obscure examples, including ones not listed here, were made up simply as a marketing ploys ('New for 1890—the boudoir card!').

Do not worry, it is not necessary to memorize or worry about all the different sizes and names listed below. If you are selling a mounted photograph and don't know whether it's a cabinet card, boudoir card or other, call it a 'card photograph' or 'mounted photograph' and give the dimensions of the mount. Most potential buyers haven't heard of a boudoir or Swiss card anyway.

- \* Kodak card — 4-1/4 x 5-1/4in.; 10.8 x 13.3 cm; 1880's (photographic print is circular). These were the first Kodak 'snapshots'
- \* Boudoir — 5-1/2 x 8-1/2in.; 14 x 21.06 cm; 1890's-
- \* Swiss card — 6-1/2 x 2.85in.; 16.5 x 7.3 cm
- \* Imperial (aka imperial cabinet card)- 7 x 10in.; 17.8 x 25.4 cm; 1890's-
- \* Promenade card — 7-1/2 x 4in.; 19 x 10.2 cm
- \* Paris card — 9-3/4 x 6-3/4in.; 24.8 x 17.1 cm
- \* Panel card — 13 x 7-1/2in.; 33 x 19 cm

Large oval photographs held in frames with bubble (concave) glass were popular in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

The largest 19<sup>th</sup> century photographs are called *mammoth* photographs and are typically rectangular. There is no specific size requirement, but those around 17x17 inches and larger can be called mammoths. Nineteenth century mammoth photographs are rare and worth significantly more than similar photos in small sizes.

Large, framed and often highly attractive 'crayon portraits' were made in the 1800s and early 1900s, typically as family portraits. These were artistic photographs that resemble a cross between photographs and charcoal or crayon sketches. They can be monochrome or with charcoal coloring. The photographer started with a light photograph and embellished it with chalk and crayons. This image was either the final

product or rephotographed. Most common are albumen crayon portraits from the late 1800s with attractive and bright colors.



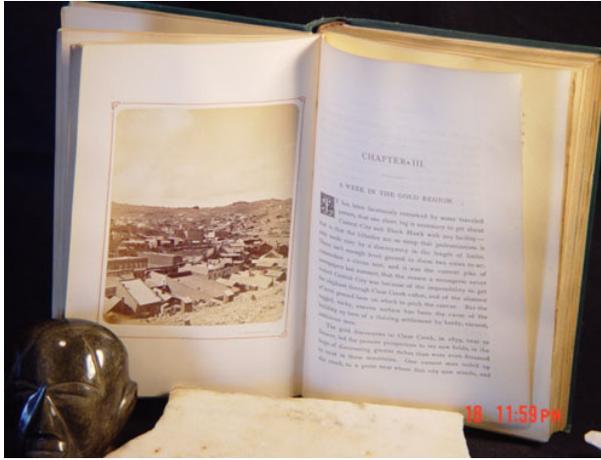
**Late 1890s Kodak card**, with a circular albumen image on an off white cabinet-like mount. Kodak cards can be found with other types of prints, including cyanotype and gelatin silver. Kodak cards are scarce, and will usually have the Kodak name prominently printed on back.



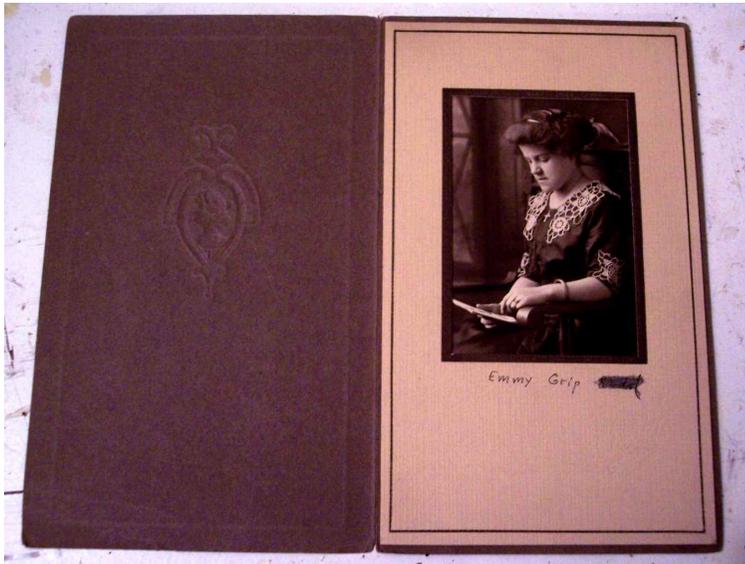
21" x 16" framed 'crayon portrait.' The crayon portrait photo and frame is often oval with bubble glass, and, when large, can make a striking display piece. This example is colored, while others are monotone.



In the late 1800s and early 1900s, oval frames with bubble glass (concave) were sometimes used for large family portraits, including crayon portraits.



You will occasionally see 1800s books with albumen prints glued, or tipped in, to the pages.



Popular in the early 1900s were folder photos with the photo placed behind a matte and inside a folder. These were common for family photos and superficially resemble cabinet cards.



Example of the various styles and shapes possible with 1900s cabinets and cabinet-like photos

(11)  
**REAL PHOTO POSTCARDS**



**Duration:** 1901 –

**Popular use:** Early 1900s-1920s

A real photo postcard is a postcard with a genuine photographic image on one side. Real photo postcards were used for a variety of purposes. Most were the equivalent of family photographs intended to be given to relatives or friends or to be put in the family album. These will show standard family poses, including little Jimmy in his school uniform, the family picnicking, a wedding photo. Some real photo postcards were used for advertising or sold to the public at

stores. Many of these show celebrities like movie stars and sports stars.

Most real photo postcards are gelatin-silver, with many to most of the early Pre-WWI examples having silvering in the images and thin stock. A few early vintage examples are cyanotypes, easily identified by the bright blue, matte images. Despite being rarer, cyanotypes usually sell for less than the gelatin silver, as most collectors prefer the black-and-white tones. Note that cyanotypes do not get silvering, even if old.

In the United States real photo postcards originated in 1901. Many vintage postcards have photomechanical (ink and printing press) images. These are distinguished under magnification by the dot or other printing pattern. Most ink and printing press postcards can also be identified by the naked eye as the images are not as clear and deep as the photographic image. Many early photomechanical postcards are collotypes and photoengravings, described in a later chapter. If an old postcard has ‘Albertype’ printed on the back, it’s an antique collotype.

The American design of postcards was regulated by United States law. Below is a brief description of the vintage designs.

**Post Card Era (1901-1907)** The use of the word “POST CARD” was granted by the government to private printers on December 24 1901. Earlier cards were called ‘Private Mailing Cards.’ Only the address was allowed to be written on the back of the card during Post Card Era. A blank panel was put on the front for messages.

**Divided Back Era (1907- )** Postcards with a divided back began March 1 1907. The address was to be written on the right side and the left side was for writing messages. This is the same style used today. The early images were ‘full bleed,’ meaning that they went all the way to the edge of the card. White borders were popularly introduced in around 1915. In more modern time, both full bleed and white borders were made, but the white borders almost always date mid 1910s and after.

## **Giving an Approximate to a Real Photo Postcard Date by Stampbox Markings**

Many real photo postcards have marks identifying the brand of paper. If these marks exist, they will be found on the stampbox. The stampbox is the little square in the upper right hand corner.

If a real photo postcard has the stampbox markings, the below chart can help determine the general period in which the postcard was made. (Chart courtesy of the2Buds.com).

Mailed postcards will often have a dated stamp.

### **Stampbox Markings → Dates**

AGFA ANCO → 1930s — 1940s

ANSCO (2 stars at top and bottom) → 1940s — 1960

ARGO → 1905 — 1920

ARTURA → 1910 — 1924

AZO (Squares in each corner) → 1925 — 1940s

AZO (4 triangles pointing upward) → 1904 — 1918

AZO (2 triangles up, 2 triangles down) → 1918-1930

AZO (diamonds in corners) → 1907 — 1909

AZO (nothing in corners) → 1922 — 1926

CYKO → 1904 — 1920s

DEFENDER (diamond above & below stampbox) 1910 — 1920

DEFENDER (diamond inside stampbox) → 1920 - 1940

Devolite Peerless → 1950 and later

DOPS → 1925 — 1942

EKC → 1940 — 1950

EKKP → 1904 — 1950

EKO → 1942 — 1970

KODAK → 1950 — present

KRUXO (nothing in corners) → 1907 — 1920s

KRUXO (Xs in corners) → 1910 — 1920s

NOKO → 1907 — 1920s

PMO → 1907 — 1915

SAILBOAT → 1905 — 1908

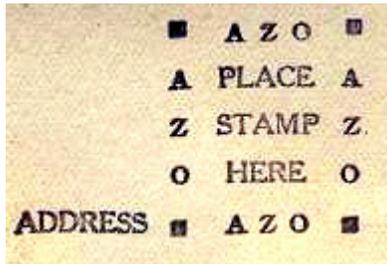
SOLIO (diamonds in corners) → 1903 — 1920s

VELOX (diamonds in corners) → 1907 — 1914

VELOX (squares in corners) → 1901 — 1914

VELOX (4 triangles pointing up) → 1909 — 1914

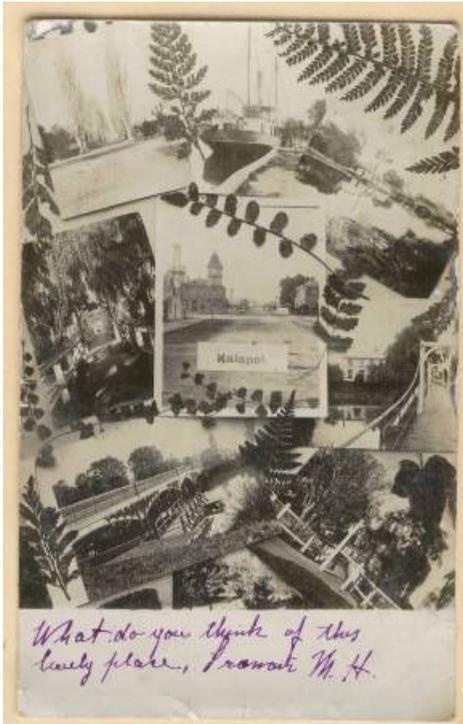
VITAVA → 1925 — 1934



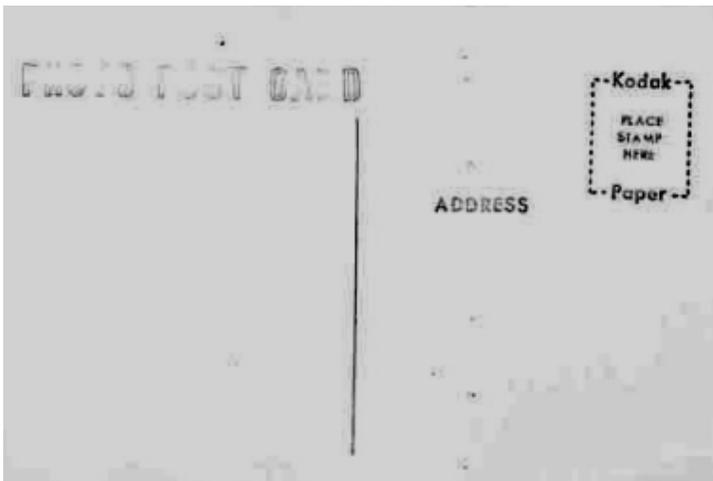
AZO stampbox in the upper right of a postcard



This 1907 post mark makes the post card easy to date.



1901-7 real photo postcard with the white bar on the front for the letter.



This Kodak stampbox dates the postcard to 1950 or later.



Postcard back with letter dated 1914 and with stamp box markings



The EKC stampbox is from 1940s-50.

(12)  
**DAGUERREOTYPES, TINTYPES  
AND AMBROTYPES:  
EARLY METAL AND GLASS PHOTOGRPHS**



1800s tintype

**Tintype:** Early image on a thin iron plate resembling tin. By far the most common of the three photographs in this chapter.

**Daguerreotype:** Early image on a silver-coated copper plate. The rarest and most valuable.

**Ambrotype:** Early image on a transparent glass plate with a black backing.

People are surprised to find out that many 1800s photographs were not paper but glass and metal. The standard metal and glass photographs are the daguerreotypes, ambrotypes and tintypes. These are popular with collectors and come in different sizes and presentations. Daguerreotypes and ambrotypes were originally housed in special cases discussed later in this chapter. The tintype can be found *au natural*, in cases, frames and paper envelopes with openings for viewing.

These metal and glass photographs were the dominant form of photography until albumen prints. The daguerreotype was the first practical photograph and proved popular with the public. It was replaced by the cheaper ambrotype, which was replaced in popular use by the tintype and albumen carte de visite. The tintype waned in popularity by about 1890, but was produced into the early 1900s.

Unlike most of the other photographs discussed in this book, daguerreotypes, ambrotypes and tintypes (for the rest of this chapter referred to as ‘D/A/T’ shortness’ sake) are not photographic prints. They were made with a different photographic process than photographic prints on paper. With modern paper photography a glass or plastic film negative is first made, and this negative is used to ‘print’ the image on paper. With the D/A/T process, a negative image is made on a solid plate of metal or glass, and that is the final product. Due to a special black backing, the image appears to the viewer to be positive tonally (dark to light), though is reverse laterally (left to right) as with a negative. Any letters on an athlete’s uniform will be backwards.

While countless paper prints could be made with a negative, almost every D/A/T you find is unique. The photographic process produced one and only one photo. There was a process for making copies, but it was rarely used.

Amongst today's collectors, daguerreotypes are considered the most desirable and attractive, the ambrotype the next most desirable and the tintype third.

### **Sizes**

D/A/T photographs come in many sizes. Metal and glass plates were manufactured then sold to the photographer or photography studio. The photographer could use the entire plate to make a large photograph, or, as was more common, cut up the plate to make multiple smaller photographs. As a result, most tintypes have irregular cuts including crooked edges and clipped corners.

The listing following this paragraph is a general size range for these photos. Variations are to be expected. Size is often described as a fraction of the plate: 'full plate,' 'half plate,' and so on. The full plate is the rarest and most desirable size with collectors. The half plate is the next rarest. There are rare and highly desirable examples of double full plate, about twice the size of a full plate. There are differences of opinions on the exact sizes, with the below listing coming from the California Historical Society.

- \* Full plate - 6-1/2 x 8-1/2 inches
- \* 1/2 plate - 4-1/4 X 5-1/2 inches
- \* 1/4 plate - 3-1/4 x 4-1/4 inches
- \* 1/6 plate - 2-3/4 x 3-1/4 inches
- \* 1/9 plate - 2 x 2-1/2 inches
- \* Gem tintypes: 1" X 1" or smaller. Gem tintypes were most popular in the 1860s and are often found in small card-like envelopes.

## **IDENTIFICATION**

With hands on experience it is usually easy to tell if a photograph is a daguerreotype, ambrotype or tintype. Daguerreotypes in particular have a unique image quality. The only thing that causes a challenge is that daguerreotypes, ambrotypes and sometimes tintypes are held in cases, which means you can't turn the image itself over in your hand and identify what material it is.

Daguerreotype: 1839-60. Rarest

Ambrotype: 1854-1860s. Next rarest

Tintype: 1860-1900s. Most common.

The above rarity comparison and dates should give you a start at identification, especially if you are looking an online auction where you don't have the item in front of you. If a photo shows a baseball player in 1880s uniform, it could not be an ambrotype or daguerreotype. As basketball was invented in 1891, there can only be basketball tintypes. Percentage wise, the random D/A/T is most likely to be a tintype.

### **Distinguishing between the three**

If a photo is held in a case you can't examine the front and back of the photo, making it harder to identify (cases are pictured and described later in this chapter). When the photo is removed from the case, or isn't in a case, you can simply identify the material (glass = ambrotype, etc). As it is often not desirable to remove the photo from the case, identification must often be made by looking at the photo's front.

When held in a case, the tintype and rarer ambrotype have similar and sometimes indistinguishable images, especially when the ambrotype has a dark colored glass. In some cases the only way to identify is to examine the material and see if it glass or iron. The ambrotype's image often has a 3-dimensional effect when examined closely, as the shadows and highlights are on different levels of the glass (image on front of glass, black backing behind the glass). The tintype image, on the other hand, is flat and has a 2-D image. Tintypes are

attracted to a magnet, while ambrotypes and daguerreotypes are not.

The daguerreotype image has a magical, mirror-like quality. The image can only be seen at certain angles. When looked at head on the image is seen, but when looked at from the side the image can be in negative (dark areas appear as light and visa versa) or disappeared. A piece of paper with writing will be reflected in the image, just as with a mirror. If well developed and preserved, the images are of highest quality, crystal clear and with great detail. Many collectors consider the image quality better than modern photos.

**When can the photo be taken from its case?** For closer examination, the photo can be removed from its case. For some people, if the photo is in its original case and has the original and unbroken paper seal on back, it's best to keep the photo and case as is. They prefer the photo and case to be in its original and untampered state. If the seal is broken or the photo is not in its original case (which is not uncommon as cases were sometimes switched over the years, even in the 1800s), the case can be taken apart for examination. It's easy to put the case and photo back together when you're done.

The following is a closer look at each type:



## TINTYPE (aka ferrotype)

The tintype process was especially popular in the United States. Unlike daguerreotypes and ambrotypes, tintypes were usually not held in cases (cases described later). Some are sold in metal frames, with the frame often not original to the tintype.

Early tintypes were thick and heavy and usually bear the imprint of the manufacturer. Chocolate colored tintypes were produced after the 1870s. While large sizes were produced for

many years, tiny 'gem' tintypes (about 1" X 1") were made starting in 1863. These were often sold in bunches and put in albums or special cards or envelopes that look like cartes de visite. These tintypes in cartes often have the photographer's price list on the back. Later on, tintypes were given a protective coat of varnish and were sold with out case or other holder. Tintypes from the turn of the century were usually small and of lesser image quality, sometimes held in envelopes.



earlier shown 1870s tintype of tennis players held in CDV-style paper envelope



## DAGUERRETYPE

The daguerreotype is considered to be the most desirable of the three types. It is historically significant as the first practical photograph, depicts early subjects and the image quality is

superior. Some collectors consider the daguerreotype to be even superior in image quality to modern processes.

The manufacturer's symbol was stamped on full plates before the plates were sold to the photographer. This stamp is sometimes used to give a date to daguerreotypes. However as the photographer often cut the plate into smaller parts, the symbol won't appear on all daguerreotypes.

In America most daguerreotypes were held in cases.



## AMBROTYPE

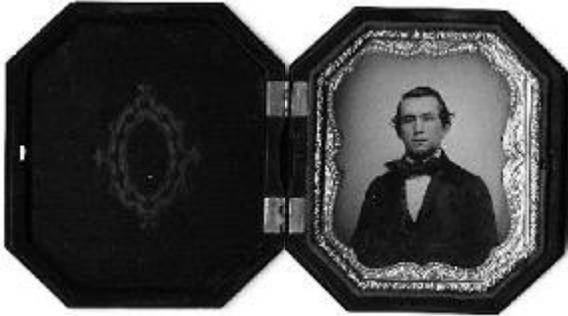
The ambrotype was the popular successor to the daguerreotype. While the image was inferior to the daguerreotypes, it was cheaper and easier to produce. It is generally considered to have an image quality between daguerreotypes and tintypes.

The glass plates do not bear dating marks as with the daguerreotype plates. Early ambrotypes had a second plate of glass sealed to the image. This process was discontinued in the 1850s. The use of the darker colored *coral* glass began in the late 1850s. As noted, these often resemble tintypes when held in cases.

Ambrotypes needed a black backing behind the glass to make the image positive in tone. Early ambrotypes had the black backing in the case, while later ones had the black directly applied to the glass.

Ambrotypes were usually held in cases.

## CASES



**Duration:** 1839- 1860s

Most daguerreotypes and ambrotypes, and a minority of tintypes, were held in custom made, elaborate cases. They resemble a framed photo in a little book.

The cased photograph is made of several parts, and the totality was meant to beautify and protect the delicate image. The parts include the photo itself, a brass mat (like a mat for a modern photo), a pane of glass, a preserver (also called a frame—not used with the earliest cases) and the case (a book-

like box with a hinged lid). The pane of glass protects the image from the outside elements. The mat frames and aesthetically enhances the image. The preserver, which can also be ornamentally designed, holds the previous parts together. These parts are usually held together with varying types of paper or tape on the back, often containing text from the photography studio. If you think about it, these parts are much like the parts to a modern framed and matted photograph or art print.

Lastly, these parts put together were placed inside the case. The most common style of case is ornamental and folds together like a box, often with a small latch on the side. The earlier cases were paper mache or embossed leather. Later cases were molded and often ornately embossed thermoplastic. These plastic cases are called Union Cases.

The earliest mattes had plain surfaces and were oval, octagonal or other simple shapes. These early cases didn't have a metal preserver but were held in case by velvet covered cardboard around the edges. Later mattes were intricately patterned and had a metal preserver around the edges instead of the velvet. Later mattes often had more complex shapes, but could also be the old time oval.

Over the years photos and the case parts have often been mixed and matched, so one should not automatically assume the photo and case are original to each other. This mixing and matching has been done in recent years, but also in the 1800s as a way to make the photo look nicer, just as people today will put a family photo in a different frame to go with the newly painted walls. If the paper seal is intact on the back of the photo, the encased photograph is in its original state. If the seal is broken, the collector must determine if the parts and photograph are from the same period. If the oxidation or wear pattern on the photo is the same shape as the brass mat, the case is either original or one from the same period. The oxidation pattern is a bit like when you move a painting from the wall and you can see the different color of wall paint where the painting was all

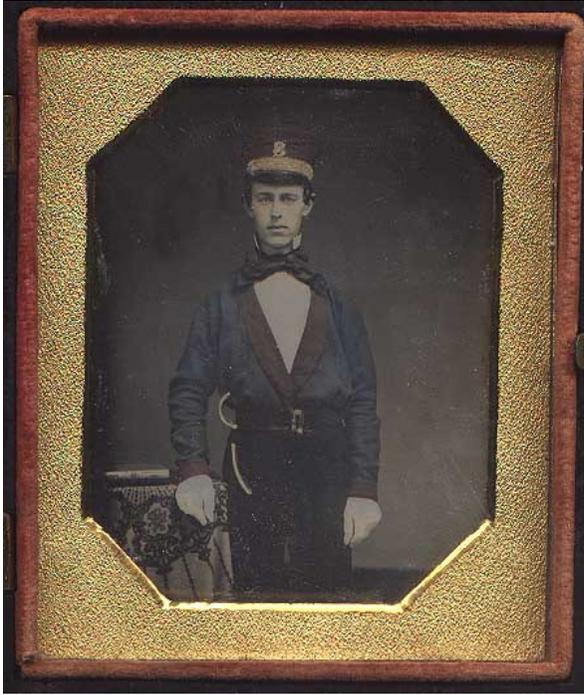
those years. The photo being in contact with the mat for many years, there often is a similar discolor pattern when the mat is removed.



The above shows the parts to a cased photograph: case (top), matte (lower left), tintype, glass and preserver.



This shows the part to an early ambrotype, including the black backing that would be placed behind the glass image. Notice that the ambrotype was underdeveloped compared to a glass negative or slide, and this early case includes no preserver. The preserver was introduced later.



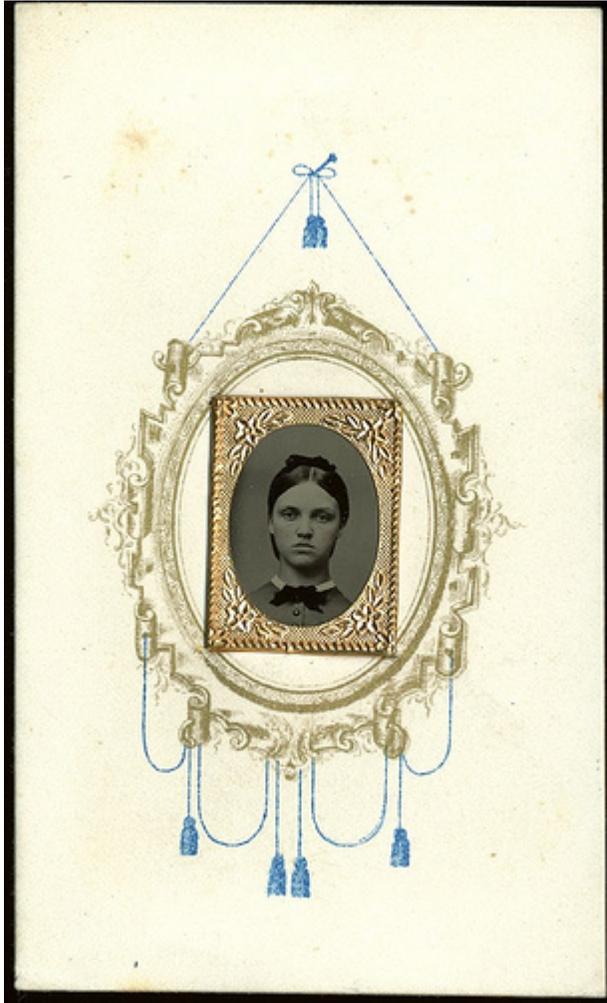
early 1840s daguerreotype with octagonal mat and velvet covered cardboard surrounding the mat.



A years later Daguerreotype with intricately patterned and shaped matte and a metal preserver around the edges.



outside of an open thermoplastic case with embossed scene



1870s tintype CDV, with a gem tintype held inside the CDV-style envelope.

(13)  
**OTHER EARLY METAL, GLASS  
AND PLASTIC PHOTOGRAPHS**

This chapter lists other kinds of 'hard' photographs. The collector will come across a fair number glass negatives, slides, and orotones, while the others rare. The photographs are presented in alphabetical order.



**AUTOCHROME**



Quick keys to identification: True color image on a pane of glass. Early 1900s subjects.

The autochrome was the first true color photograph, with the image on a pane of glass. If you project the image large or look very closely you can see a mosaic pattern of multi color grains. Autochromes are scarce but can be found with some regularity.

Autochrome was introduced in 1907 and existed, with closely related glass color photos, until the 1930s. The image can be lush and beautiful, though usually darker than today's color photos. The images are often faded. There were different brands of color glass photos that existed around the same time. The different brand names will have the same general appearance, age and scarcity, though the tiny color grains in the image are in different patterns.



early 1910 autochrome with the color image on glass. The colors are usually more pastel and often darker than modern color images.



## GLASS NEGATIVES

Quick identification Keys: negative black and white image on glass. Used 1800s to early 1900s.

Almost all early negatives used to make photographic prints were glass. Glass negatives were slowly discontinued around the 1930s. In modern times photographic negatives are made out of plastic film, easily distinguishable from glass. If you find a glass negative with an old time image, it almost always is antique. They quit using glass a long time ago.

Due to the physical appearance and feel it is not difficult to differentiate the later glass negatives from the early ones. The later negatives (say 1920s) are thinner, machine cut and with a smooth surface. The early glass negatives (say 1860s-70s) are thicker, hand cut and have a rougher surface.



## IVORYTYPE



framed ivorytype

Quick keys to identification: 1800s photograph on fake ivory, and sometimes real ivory, hand colored and framed to look like a small painting.

The ivorytype was a photographic image made on fake ivory and typically framed. It usually was hand painted to have the appearance of a miniature painting, and sometimes very closely resembles a painting. It was invented in London in 1855 and was most popular in the mid to late 1800s century. Examples are rare but can be found.



## MAGIC LANTERN & GLASS SLIDES

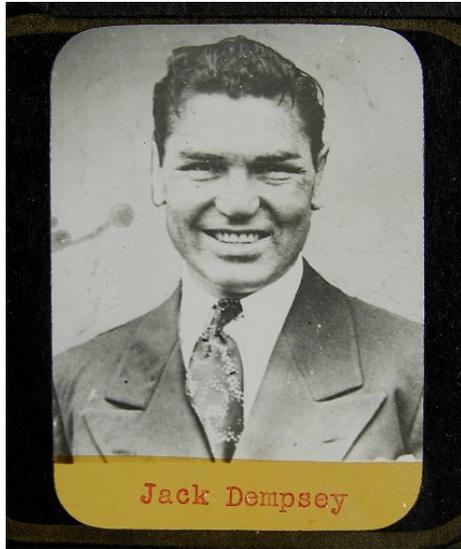


Silent era glass movie slide

Key to identification: Early slides made out of glass. Used in 1800s and early 1900s.

Originating in the late 1800s glass photographic slides are like modern vacation slides, except the image is on a pane of glass instead of plastic film. The glass is held in a frame usually made of cardboard or heavy tape. The images were projected onto a screen or wall. The black and white photographic images are sometimes brightly hand colored. During the silent movie era, colorful movie slides were used in the theatres to

advertise products including upcoming movies. Slide images were projected on the screen for group sing alongs during intermissions. Some news services owned glass slides. Glass slides are easy to identify as antique, as only old photographic slides were made of glass. Modern slides use a thin plastic film instead.



1930s glass slide of boxer Jack Dempsey



## OPALTYPE



1800s opaltype with chip to glass

Quick key to identification: Black and white image on white 'milk' glass.

The opaltype was most popular in the 1800s and is similar in appearance to the ambrotype, as both are made of glass. The difference is that the opaltype is on opaque white glass, often called *milk glass*. The opaltype can be much larger than an ambrotype and is often framed. The opaltype image is a stark black and white, though often with light hand coloring. Unlike an ambrotype, which is unique, there can be original copies of a particular opaltype. This is because there the opaltype has a photographic image printed on the glass. Still, opalatypes are scarce, in fact rarer than ambrotypes



Opaltype in frame. The frame is thin foil wrapped around the edges.



## OROTONE, AKA GOLD-TONE



Modern made orotone in frame, The modern versions tend to be much bright gold than the vintage ones.

Quick key to identification: Glass photograph with distinct gold tone.

Popular in the 1800s and early 1900s, the orotone— also known as goldtone and Curtistone— is similar in appearance to the ambrotype, with the image on a pane of glass. The eye catching difference is that the orotone is backed in real gold.

Oro is Spanish for gold. This gives the image a unique and often beautiful golden appearance. Some collectors rank orotones as the most beautiful photograph. Orotones can be much larger than the ambrotype and are usually housed in special frames or cases. The back of the frame will often have a paper seal with the photographer's information.

Orotones in general are limited but not rare. As they had the image printed onto glass, multiple copies could be made.

Orotones have been made in modern times, including of old Edward Curtis images. These modern versions are usually advertised as modern and have a much brighter golden tone than the vintage versions. As the modern ones are of high quality, they can good financial value, but at sale must be distinguished from the old versions.



## OTHERS

There are examples of other, even more obscure 'hard' photographs. This includes images on steel, wood, cloth and leather. Most of these are from the 1800s and are rarely seen.

**(14)**  
**RARE PAPER PHOTOGRAPHIC  
 PROCESSES AND PRINTS**

The following is a short list of other standard photographic processes/prints. These prints are rarer, often substantially rarer, than albumen prints, gelatin-silver prints and c-prints. Several are considered high-end by photograph collectors due to the high quality image quality and rarity.

The processes and prints are listed in alphabetical order. The true color processes are cibachrome, dye-transfer and Polaroid (can also be black and white). The others are monochrome.



**CARBON PRINT**



**Carbon Print Key:** High quality antique process and print, often mounted.

**Duration:** Invented in 1864, though popular in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Modernized versions made today.

**Population:** Scarce.

Carbon prints are known for images superior to the contemporary albumen and gelatin-silver prints. They come in a variety of colors, often having deep maroonish browns. The image surfaces have a subtle relief effect seen when held at a near 180 degree angle and under the correct light. Parts of the surface are slightly higher than other parts. If the carbon print is held at a certain angle to the light, the shadows of the image should appear shinier than the highlights. If there is cracking in the surface, large cracks appear in the dark areas only. The prints are not susceptible to the severity of deterioration of albumens, gelatin-silvers and salt prints, and will not have silvering. In the 1800s the prints were often mounted, including as cabinet cards and cartes de visite. Sometimes the mount will have text saying it is a carbon print.

Under the microscope the fibers of the paper are visible in the image. Tiny flecks of dark pigment are often visible. The image should appear to lie on the surface of the paper, instead of being imbedded in it.

The carbon print's image is difficult to distinguish from the photomechanical print *Woodburytype* (see chapter 28). The Woodbury-type was only made in the late 1800s, and, luckily, often has 'Woodbury-type' printed below the image. The *Woodbury-Gravure* is a closely related photomechanical print also from the 1800s, and will often have the name printed beneath the print. Whether or not it is a carbon print, Woodbury-type or Woodbury-gravure, you know the photo is antique.

The carbon print was invented in 1864 and used until the 1930s. Along with the platinum print, the carbon print is considered by collectors and historians to be the pinnacle of early black and white color paper photography, with an image of highest quality and lacking the typical aging problems of more common prints.

A few artists and hobbyists make moderns version of the carbon print today. These will often have modern subjects and will usually be sold as modern, often by the photographer. The paper can often be identified as modern with a blacklight (see later chapter). The modern carbon prints themselves are scarce and considered high quality.



### CIBACHROME / ILFACHROME (COLOR)



The glossy black border on a recently made cibachrome. Unlike many c-prints, this photo has no manufacturer's branding printed on back.

**Cibachrome Key:** Modern high quality, ultra glossy color photos

**Duration:** 1960s to today

**Population:** Scarce but can be found.

Cibachromes are known for their high quality images and are often used by fine art photographers including for public

exhibition. They are cheaper to make than the rarer dye transfer. The colors have a depth that gives them a magical, almost three-dimensional quality. The colors are bold, some think too bold.

Cibachromes were introduced in 1963 and are still used today. They are on resin-coated paper (plasticity feel both back and front). Though there is matte-style cibachrome, the cibachrome images usually have ultra-glossy, liquid-like surfaces unlike any other photograph. If there is a border, it is often jet black. Avoid touching the image, as fingerprints show up easily. The paper is much stiffer than other most other photo paper. As with the dye transfers, the images are resistant to fading. This makes them suited for display. The high quality image and super glossy image makes the cibachrome easy to identify.

Due to their relative scarcity, high quality images and durability, cibachromes are desirable and can add to the value of a modern photograph.

The common c-print photo is sometimes mistaken for a cibachrome. However, the c-print usually has photo branding printed on the back (ala “Kodak Paper,” “Fujicolor Paper”), while cibachromes have no such printing. If there is a border, the cibachrome’s border is often black while the c-print’s is usually white. Note that there are cibachromes with white borders. Most cibachromes are much, much glossier than the average c-print.



## CYANOTYPE

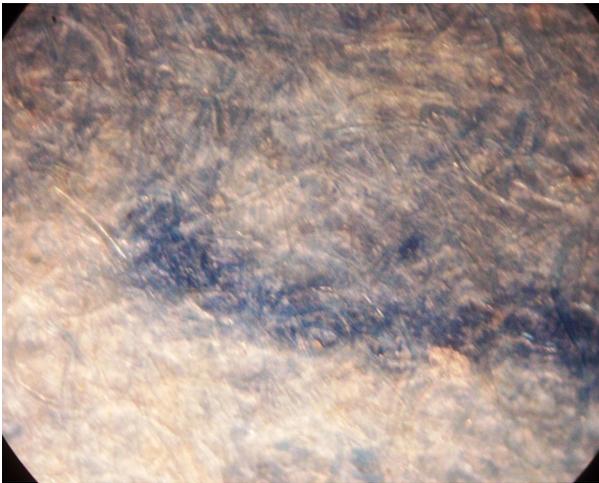
**Cyanotype Keys:** Old photo with a blue image on matte paper.  
**Duration:** Invented in 1840, though popular in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Examples made today.

**Population:** Not common, but examples are found regularly.

There is no mistaking the cyanotype or ‘blueprint’ processes, due to the brilliant blue image. Architectural blueprints are cyanotypes. The images are on matte paper, back and front. Under the microscope, the paper fibers can be seen in the image area. The images usually do not fade or age as with the more popular gelatin-silver and albumen prints. Vintage cyanotypes come in a variety of styles, including real photo postcards and cabinet cards. Though rarer than gelatin-silver prints, many collectors do not place a premium on the process as the find they blue unappealing.

In recent years there has been a revival of the process amongst artists and hobbyists. These modern versions are usually sold as modern, fluoresce brightly under blacklight (see chapter 25) and can have modern image subjects.

The image on the cover of this book is a microscopic view of an early 1900s cyanotype showing the paper fibers and blue color.



Microscopic view of a cyanotype, showing paper fibers.



## DYE TRANSFER (COLOR)

**Dye Transfer Key:** Highest quality modern color photograph on matte paper.

**Duration:** 1940s to today

**Population:** Rare.

Many consider the modern dye transfer to be the highest form of color photograph. The images of unparalleled quality and depth and do not fade. Photographs you will find in Sotheby's and Christies auctions and in museums can be dry transfers. This includes Bert Stern's famous portraits of Marilyn Monroe and Harold Edgerton's super high speed photos. Introduced in 1945, dye-transfers are only made by a handful of people today. The process takes great skill, is time consuming and expensive. You will not find a dye transfer by a famous photographer for or subject for \$2 on eBay.

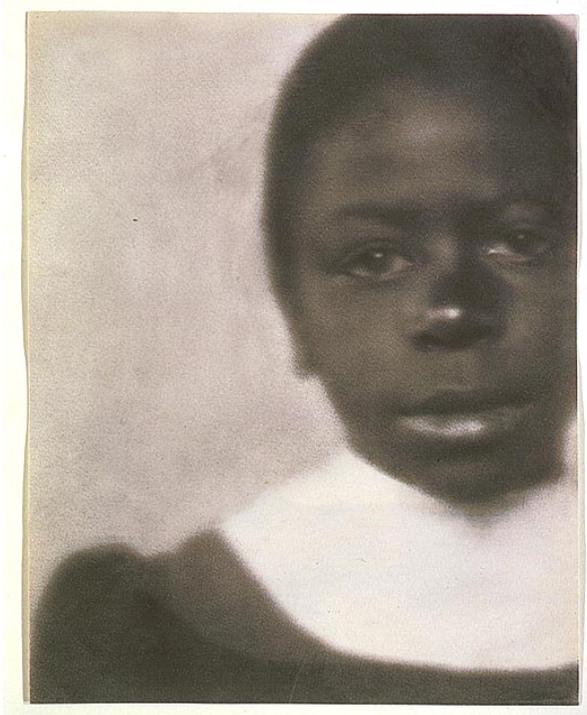
The photos are fiber based (matte surface instead of glossy) both on front and back, which is unlike the other color photos. Chromogenic photos are usually glossy on one or both sides, while Cibachrome and Polaroids are glossy on both sides. The super high quality images, matte back and front and high price make dye transfers easy to identify. Their resistance to fading makes them great for displaying at home or in public.

Giclees can sometimes resemble dye-transfers as giclees can be on matte paper. However, the giclees are quickly identified due to the fine dot pattern in the image.

The dye-transfer is a close relation to the earlier **cabro print**, which also offers quality and long lasting true color images.



## GUM BICHROMATE / BROMOIL / OIL PRINTS



Gum bichromate with charcoal/painted-like quality

**Gum Bichromate Key:** Artistic, charcoal sketch or painting-like images

**Popular use** 1900-40s

**Population:** Rare.

The gum bichromate, bromoil and oil pigment prints are closely related with a distinct artistic look. These processes gave the photographer unique control over the image. Due to artistic manipulation, these prints do not have the detail of most photographs and often resemble charcoal drawings or watercolor sketches. Brush strokes can sometimes be seen on

the surface. They can come in various colors, and the image lacks the aging problems of many other processes.

Early gum bichromate prints are rare, highly desirable and usually expensive. The process was replaced by the bromoil process. The earliest examples, 1800s to turn of the century, are bichromate prints. Examples after the 1930s are most likely bromoil or other oil pigment prints. A few modern hobbyists and artists make modernized versions of these prints. At sale, these modern versions are usually clearly advertised as modern and can fluoresce brightly under a blacklight.



### PLATINUM PRINTS, PLATINOTYPES, PALLADIUM PRINTS

**Key:** High quality black and white photograph on matte paper  
**Duration:** 1880 to 1930s, Popular Use: 1900-1910s. Revived in recent years.

**Population:** Scarce but not impossible to find.

The platinum print, also known as platinotype, is a premium process that produces high quality images. They are usually used in fine art photography and not for things like snapshots or press photos. The images are a soft grey/black/white, sometimes with a bluish tinge. A few examples have browns. The blacks are usually pitch black and the greys silvery. The whites can be snow white. The images do not fade as with the plentiful albumen and gelatin-silver prints. The paper is matte/fiber-based back and front. Under the microscope, the paper fibers can be seen in the image. A transfer image may rub off on any paper that has been in contact with the image over time.

After decades of hibernation, a new version of the platinum print was invented in recent years and used in the fine arts.

The modern paper will often fluoresce brightly under a blacklight (see chapter 25). Most modern platinum prints are clearly represented as modern and often have clearly modern subjects.

*Palladium* is a closely related print, and is often lumped together with platinum prints. Palladiums resemble platinum prints but are a bit more susceptible to aging deterioration. For the collector, there's rarely a pressing need to differentiate from palladium and platinum prints.

Gelatin silver prints are sometimes mistaken for platinum prints, as they can have similar black and white tones. Gelatin silver prints typically, though not always, have glossy images, while platinum prints are matte. The paper fibers cannot be seen in the image gelatin silver print, while they can be seen in the platinum print. Gelatin silver prints are much more plentiful and, when in doubt, it's safe to guess it's a gelatin silver.

Salt prints and platinum prints are also sometimes confused, as they can have similar image tones and microscopic paper fibers can be seen in both images. However, the salt prints are from an earlier time with earlier subjects, and usually have significant wear and image deterioration.

The commonly found giclee prints (see chapter 28) are sometimes mistaken for platinum prints, as the giclee can mimic the platinum tones and can be on matte paper. As a digital/computer print, a giclee is quickly identified due to the fine dot pattern in the image.



## POLAROIDS

**Polaroid Key:** Usually small instant developing photographs that look physically distinct to other photos.

**Duration:** 1963 to today

**Population:** Common



Polaroid

Polaroids are those instant self developing photographs, and usually have an appearance distinct from the other photos. Though there were other brands of instant self-developing photos, the brand name Polaroid has always constituted most of the market. Polaroid was bought out by Fuji. The photo backs can be have printed the name Polaroid, Fuji, Fuji Polaroid or initials FP printed on the back.

Polaroids were introduced in 1963 and are still used today. Polaroids have been used in daily life (family picnics), professionally use (dentists, police work, test photos for magazine shoots) and in the fine arts. They are usually small, but can be large. At their best Polaroids have beautiful colors and sharp images. Polaroids come in color and black and white.

The photos are thick and resin-coated, with a plasticity feel on back. Polaroids have a distinct white border, many with a wider bottom edge. The photo image will have a different gloss than the surrounding white border. The image will have a gloss, while the border will be closer to matte.

To a large degree Polaroids are self authenticating. This is due to their one-of-one, on the spot development. Though

there are methods to make Polaroid copies, most Polaroids are vintage, original and unique.

The *Polaroid transfer* and *emulsion transfer* are experimental, fine art manipulations of the Polaroid that produce distorted, artistic images. Each of these is usually original and unique, and can be on non photographic paper.



### SALTED PAPER PRINTS / SALT PRINTS

**Key:** The first type of paper photograph

**Duration:** 1841-1860. Revived in late 1890s and late 1900s.

**Population:** Rare.

Salted paper prints, also known as salt prints, were made either with a paper negative (called a Collotype negative) or a glass negative. The image printed from a paper negative lacks detail and has a romantic, fuzzy quality. The grain of the paper negative often appears in the image. Salt prints made from a glass negative have a clearer image, without the grain of the paper negative. The earliest salt prints were made from a paper negative. These prints are held in high esteem today as extremely rare and historically significant. Even poor grade examples are expensive.

Salt prints usually have matte surfaces and are on very thin paper, similar to albumen paper. The images are brownish-red, purple or brownish-yellow. The images usually show heavy signs of age. This includes fading, often around the edges in a halo effect, foxing and soiling. Salt prints sometimes have light hand coloring.

Under the microscope, the fibers of the paper are visible. Unlike the more common albumen print in which the image seems to float on the paper surface, the salt print image is imbedded in the fibers.

Salt prints are sometimes mistaken for platinum prints, in part as both have matte surfaces. The platinum prints, however, have superior image detail and lack of image fading and other deterioration. Also, the platinum print was used much later, which means the photographic subjects and fashion are from a later era.

The plentiful albumen print is sometimes mistaken for the salt print as they both existed in the 1800s. The image surface of the albumen is usually, though not always, glossy which distinguishes itself from the common matte surfaces of the salt prints. Though uncommon, there are matte albumen prints that are hard to distinguish from salt prints. The albumen prints mostly come from a later era and can be identified by the modern dress of the subjects in the image and style of mounts.

Salt prints from glass negatives were also made for a period in the late 1800s and modernized versions are made today. Today's versions lack the aging problems, have clearer images and are usually clearly represented as modern. The modern paper is often thicker than from the 1800s and will often be identified as modern with a blacklight (chapter 25).

## (15) STAMPS



A stamp can be one of the most significant parts of a photograph. The stamping can help tell us much, who was the photographer, the company the photo was made for (magazine, Associated Press), why and when it was made. Sometimes a stamp tells us the age of the photo.

While a stamp or tag does not in and of itself authenticate a photo (stamps are rarely forged), it helps the collector in making a judgment. While a new collector might not know a platinum print from a hole in the wall, the rubber stamp on the photo's back is something she can get a handle on. The stamp of George Burke with his Belmont Avenue Chicago address will rightly communicate to this new collector that the photograph was made or otherwise authorized by the famous baseball photographer. In general, a photographer's rubber or dry stamp (embossed with no ink) is a reliable sign that the photo was either made or otherwise authorized by the photographer. It also shows that the photograph was official, recognized by the photographer as legitimate. Photographers often included their stamp as a copyright, essentially and sometimes literally saying "This is my photo and you can't copy it without my permission."

All things equivalent, a photo with a good stamp from the photographer or company, the photographer's signature or similar identification marker will be worth more than a photo without such easy identifiers.

A stamp is often from the photographer, but can also be from an organization (Sports Illustrated, Associated Press, the photographer's agency) or other owner (university library, historical archives). Some photos will have the stamp of both the photographer and a company. A stamp from a magazine, newspaper or news service tells the collector that the photo is legitimate and was made or owned by that organization. Stamps from famous organizations can increase value ('Property of The White House').

Many 1800s and early 1900s cabinet cards, cartes de visite and other mounted photographs have the name and address of the photographer or photography studio on the front and/or back of the mount. This makes identifying photos by famous photographers simple. A Joseph Hall cabinet is easy to identify, because his name will be on the mount.

Realize that many photographers and companies made printed later and later generation photos. This means that the presence of a photographer's or magazine's stamp does not in and of itself indicate the photo is vintage or original. Looking at other qualities, including paper, image and getting a second opinion will help determine if the photo is original.

The collector should study and keep record (if just mental) of the various stamps in his or her collecting area. Following the auctions and sales is great way to see a variety of stamps. Asking fellow photograph aficionados for their input on a stamp is good.

Study the history of companies and biographies of photographers. Learned baseball photo collectors look for the stamp of the New York photographer George Grantham Bain. Not only is Bain famous for his images of Ty Cobb, Christy Mathewson and other baseball legends, but he died in 1941. This means his stamp proves a photo is old. For Hollywood movie fans, the great MGM studio photographer Ruth Harriett

Louise died in 1944. If you find a sharp Greta Garbo photo with Louise's stamp on back, you can be confident the photo is old.

A later chapter covers in more details stamping on news service photographs.

### **Photo Paper Branding**

Some photographic paper has the manufacturer's brand name printed on the back. Knowledge and study of the different brandings is useful in dating photo paper.

The manufacturer's branding is that wallpaper-like printing across the back of a photo. If you turn over the modern color snapshots on your refrigerator you will see branding. It might say "Fuji color Crystal Archives Paper" or "Kodak Professional Endura Paper" or "Kodak Perfect Touch Paper." There have been hundreds of different brands on paper over the years.

Photo paper with branding can be dated to a general or specific time as the text and graphic design was changed regularly by the manufacturers. This is particularly important when you are looking at a modern photo, where the image and paper difference between a 1975 photo and a 1995 reprint may not be obvious.

There are way too many brandings to be listed and discussed here. It would take a book to catalog and date all the brandings ever used. You should keep a notebook or digital image file of the different brandings you come across. This includes brandings on all the recent photos you have. You can be assured that the branding on the back of last year's wedding photo will not appear on a vintage 1965 photo. By observing today's brandings, you will be able to quickly identify many modern reprints.



Kodak and AGFA branding on the back of modern snapshots.

### Four Common Kodak Brandings

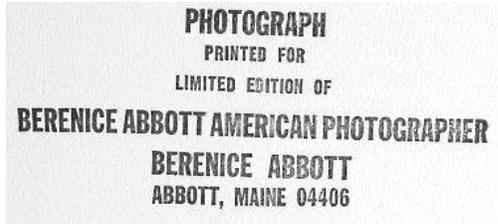
- \* If the back of a photo has the printing **‘Velox,’** the photo dates circa 1940s-50s.
- \* If the back of the photo has the three line printing **‘Kodak/Velox/Paper,’** the photo dates circa 1950s-60s.
- \* The printing **‘A Kodak Paper’** was commonly used in the 1960s and early 1970s.
- \* The three lined printing **“THIS PAPER / MANUFACTURED / BY KODAK”** was commonly used in the 1970s-80s. If you have a photo that is advertised as being from 1979, the presence of this branding doesn’t prove the specific year of 1979 but is consistent with the date.

### Count the digits in the zip code

The zip code in the photo stamp can identify many photos printed years after the image was shot. Many photographers and publishers included their mailing address in the photo

stamp. If a stamp has an address with a 5 digit United States zip code, the stamp dates to 1962 or later. The United States changed the zip code from 2 to 5 digits in 1962.

The stamp shown below is on a photo showing the Irish writer James Joyce in 1929. The five digit US zip code clearly shows that the photo was printed many years after the image was shot.





Stamping on the back of an original Vogue magazine photograph. The stamping includes the date (1942), photographer (Horst P. Horst) and Vogue's publisher, Conde Nast. If all photos had this kind of stamping, life would be easy.

**(16)**  
**JUDGING IF THE IMAGE WAS MADE  
FROM THE ORIGINAL NEGATIVE**

One of the keys to judging the originality of a photograph is being able to make a reasonable judgment as to whether or not the image was printed from the original negative or transparency (a transparency is used to make photographic prints just as a with negative, except the transparency on the transparency is positive rather than negative). By definition, an original is made from the original negative (or transparency).

The key is that only the original negative can produce the crystal clearest photographic image. Later generation negatives can produce good but not as good of images. If the image is crystal clear and with tremendous detail, it is fair to say the image was printed from the original negative.

An original image is not always perfect. It could have been shot out of focus or poorly developed. If an original image is blown up (photo is much larger than the negative) or if it is a distant shot, there may be a graininess or blurred detail. Images from the 1800s often have fading.

Remember that an ‘original printed later’ photograph is made from the original negative. The presence of a crystal clear image doesn’t automatically mean the photograph is vintage, though it is a good sign. ‘Original printed later’ photos are usually identified as such by the modern paper, stamp, photographic process or other qualities.

Many images are obviously second generation as the images are rough, the detail faded out or having other problems.

Some second generation photos are photographs of photographs. Often times you can see the picture of a scratch or scrape or wrinkle that was on the original. You can see the damage, but you can't feel it with your finger because it's only a photograph of the damage.

When a collector is looking at a photograph that is supposed to be original, he should ask himself if the image is consistent with the photo being original. In cases the image will be so clear and detailed that you will be certain it is first generation. In other cases, the image may not be perfect but can still be considered consistent with the image being original.

If a photograph is vintage and the image is crystal clear with great detail, the photo is most probably an original. If a photograph is vintage, has the stamp and/or signature of a famous photographer and the image is crystal clear with great detail, it is most probably an original by that photographer.

( 17 )  
**PRESS AND PUBLISHING PHOTOGRAPHS**



(For the sake of saving space, ‘press photos’ will be used instead of ‘press and publishing photos.’)

Press (and publishing) photographs are photographs made by, for or otherwise used by the press and publishing industries. These photos include wirephotos made by wire services like Associated Press and UPI, original photos shot by magazine and newspaper photographers and photos made by Hollywood movie studios and rock music labels to promote their upcoming products to the press.

Press photos are popularly collected, as the images encompass most every popular subject, including sports,

movies, music, politics, celebrities, history, space exploration, art, nature and everyday life. Many of the world's most famous photographers have shot press photos, including Ansel Adams, Mathew Brady, Charles Conlon, Richard Avedon, Alfred Stieglitz, Francesco Scavullo, Carl Horner, Harold Edgerton and Napoleon Sarony.

The photos come in a wide range of quality, prices, sizes and styles. Some are large originals with crystal clear and artistic images, while others are small, later generation photos with lesser to poor images.

The vast majority of press photos are gelatin-silver prints (black and white) and chromogenic (color). Some press photos from recent years are photomechanical, including digital/computer prints.

**(18)**  
**press and publishing photos**  
**IDENTIFYING PHOTOS AS PRESS PHOTOS**

D-4		<b>CHICAGO TRIBUNE</b>	
		PHOTOGRAPHIC DEPARTMENT	
		Date <u>3-24-68</u>	
Assignment	Hawks- Ca nadiens		
Photographer	Gora	Plate Number	

This paper tag taped on back makes this Chicago Tribune newspaper photograph easy to identify. It includes the date and name of the photographer (Ray Gora).

Most press photos are easily identified due to text on the photo. This text can include a magazine's stamp, a news service's paper tag or a movie studio's terms of use printed below the image of a movie star.

Some photos have an editor's handwritten notes detailing how it was to be used ('Two column picture in Tuesday's Sports Section.') Some photos have production marks showing that it was used in publishing or advertising.

Some photos don't have such identifiers, but are known to have come from a newspaper's archives, editor or reporter. You may some day buy press photos from a photographer who worked for a famous magazine or photo service.



**(19)**  
**press and publishing photos**  
**A BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW**

For centuries newspapers and magazines were illustrated with etchings, engravings and woodcuts. These ‘handmade’ prints required great time and effort to make. For example an engraving printing plate was created by the craftsman using handheld metal tools to carve the design into a steel plate.

With the invention of photography in the early 1800s, publishers wanted to translate the great detail of a photograph onto the printed page. The practical technology to do this would not exist for many decades. For most of the 1800s, major newspapers and magazines still employed professional artists and craftsmen who made woodcuts and wood- engravings (a form of woodcut) to make printed pictures. The hand carved printing plates often took weeks to make. The prints were based on artist’s sketches or photographs, but lacked photographic detail. If you look at an 1870’s Harper’s Weekly, a popular New York magazine, you will see that the images are attractive but resemble pen and ink sketches.



Detail of a woodcut from a  
1874 Harper's Weekly

### **Halftone printing and the beginning of photo-realistic images in print**

As early printed pictures used lines and similar hand carved marks to make images, they did not have the fine detail needed to resemble photographs. The invention of the *halftone* printing process, often aptly called the *dot process*, replaced lines with dots, allowing for greater detail. In the process, a photographic image is projected through a special screen, resembling a screen door, and onto a photochemically sensitized printing plate. The screen transforms the image into a series of tiny dots on the printing plate, which then appear in the resulting print. These tiny dots allow for a much finer detail than engravings, etchings and woodcuts. While halftone can't produce the quality and detail of a real photograph it can make a realistic representation. This process is used today to illustrate newspapers, magazines and books, but also trading cards, advertising signs, postcards, cereal boxes and more. If you take a strong magnifying glass or microscope and look closely at a picture in a magazine on your coffee table you will see that it is made up of tiny dots.

The first newspaper halftone pictures appeared in the early 1880s. Halftone pictures were slowly adopted by newspapers, magazines and books across the world. By the early 1900s, the

vast majority of major newspapers and magazines used the process.

### **The Rise of News Service Photos**

While magazines and newspapers have always had their own photographers on staff, the twentieth century saw the dramatic rise of professional news and photo services. These services, like Associated Press and ACME Newspictures, made, gathered and supplied photographs to magazines, newspapers, books and advertising across the country and around the world. While the big news services had their own photographers, they also distributed images shot by newspapers, smaller photo services and independent photographers. These photo services were massive, full time photo gatherers and distributors.

If you were a small daily newspaper in Oklahoma or Maine, your own staff photographers might shoot the local events— Friday's high school football game or the county Expo. But you would need one of the big news services to get the national and international images and news for your paper. Even the big newspapers like The New York Times and the Chicago Tribune used the services of the big news services. If you look at a newspaper from 1960 or today, you will see that many of the local pictures were shot by local staff photographers, while many of the other images are credited to Associated Press, UPI and similar. Newspapers and magazines also regularly received publicity or press photos from movie studios, music companies, fashion labels and even sports teams promoting the latest product.

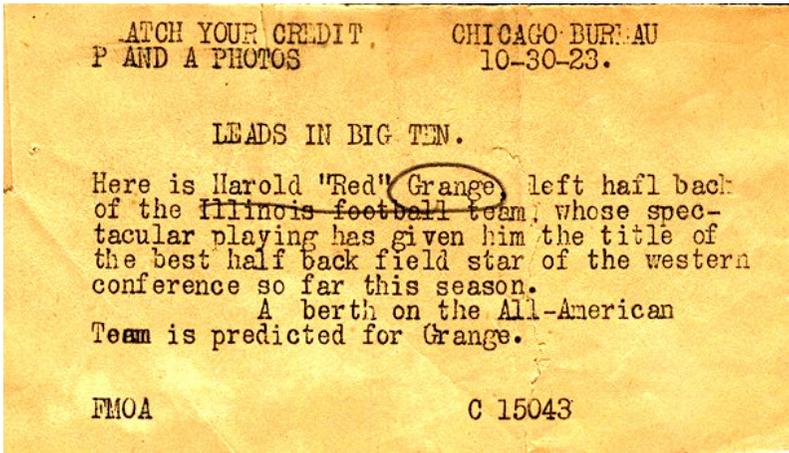
As the makers of the press photos ordinarily stamped or tagged their name on the back, a photograph's source is usually easy to identify. As some news services had brief histories, the presence of their stamps help date the photograph. For this reason, some early news service's stamps will receive a higher price at auction or sale than others. The collector will find

press photos with stamps from two or more companies, showing how the photo was distributed. For example, an Associated Press photo may also have the stamp of the newspaper that bought it from AP.



Stamping on the back of an original Vogue magazine photo shows who made the photo, where and when.

The big news services often glued a paper caption tag or sheet to the photo's back. The caption allowed the receiver to know the who's who and what's what of the image.



Paper caption placed on the back of a 1923 photograph

### Wirephotos: “overnight photos”

In the early 1900s, there was no overnight national distribution of images. Photographs were shipped by plane, train and even boat. While this was okay for the many popular monthly magazines, most early daily newspapers had relatively few and dated images

While turn of the century news services could send the printed text of a story via telephone lines ('wire') to subscribing newspapers, they also wanted to be able send photographs in a similar way. Originally, this was just a pipe dream. Even today the idea of sending photographs over the telephone sounds incredible. The invention of the wirephoto process eventually led to overnight photograph distribution.

The wirephoto process allowed photographs to be transferred through telephone lines. The process required a large, expensive wirephoto machine both at the source and at the receiving end. The original photograph was placed inside the wirephoto machine. Much like with today's computer scanner, an electronic eye scanned the photograph and translated it into electrical impulses. These impulses were sent through the telephone wire to the identical wirephoto machine at the receiving end. At the receiving machine the impulses were translated to light that was used to develop the image onto photographic paper. The development would take minutes to over an hour, as the photographic paper was slowly exposed line by line. In fact, the ultimate way to identify the wirephoto (the received image) is to look for the tiny horizontal or vertical lines in the image.

The result was that that the receiving newspaper had a copy of the original photograph that it could use to make prints for the newspaper. This wirephoto had an identical image to the original photograph, but of lesser quality.

A wirephoto could be sent simultaneously to many receivers. The Associated Press could put the original photograph into the wirephoto machine and send copies to the Seattle Times, New York Times, San Francisco Chronicle and Green Bay Press-Gazette all at once. The Associated Press' main office in New York City could send wirephotos to its regional office in Atlanta, and the Atlanta office could send wirephotos to the New York City office. As you can imagine, this made photograph distribution quicker and more efficient than transporting a box of photos by train.

While the wirephoto process was invented in 1921, and AT & T had it's first commercial wirephoto service in 1925, it took

at least a decade for the process to be used widely. The early machines were large, overly expensive and the process unreliable. The early wirephotos were usually of poor quality and hostage to the fickleness and breaks of the telephone lines. When someone sent a wirephoto across the telephone lines, it often took more than an hour and the sender had no idea if a recognizable image would be received at the other end. Before 1935, wirephotos were only used for especially important, breaking news.

In 1934 Associated Press (AP), the world's largest news service, installed an advanced and effective wirephoto system. Starting the following year, the wirephoto system became practical. Soon after other major news services installed their own wirephoto systems. This included AP's rivals International News Photos, United Press Association and ACME Newspictures.

Though press photos were still distributed the old fashioned way, and a newspaper and magazine still hired its own photographers, the wirephoto system was a dominant form of international photo distribution from 1935 until the mid 1970s.

### **Beyond wirephotos: laserphotos, digital, computers**

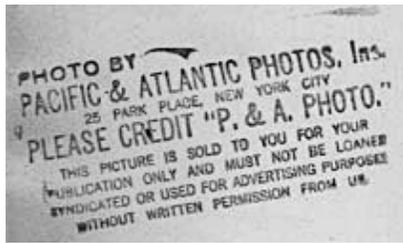
While the wirephoto process was a revolution, it still was not perfect. It was only a matter of time for the system to be replaced by modern technology.

In the 1970s, Associated Press instituted the Laserphoto system. This system sent images to subscribers more quickly and with higher resolution images. Associated Press updated this system in 1989. Full color images were transmitted at the speed of seconds per photograph. These images were displayed on monitors and distributed in digital form. The result was newspaper and magazine pictures of much higher quality and the more common use of color pictures.

For collectors, laserphotos are easily identified because of their modern period (mid 1970s-90s) and because they typically have 'laserphoto' printed on the front.

Today, a variety of news service photos are still made, many in full color. As with old news service photos, they often have identifying stamps or tags on the back, or the information is printed as part of the image on the front. Many photographs are distributed digitally, from computer to computer, and a hard copy is never made. For example, if you are a magazine editor and your magazine is a subscriber to Corbis, a photo service founded by Bill Gates, you can get your images online. You log on at the Corbis website, go through the online image libraries and select which images you want. Corbis gives you the high quality versions in digital form and charges you for their use. Corbis owns many of the images, but also represents thousands of photographers, magazines, newspapers and other organizations. For a particular photo, part of your payment will go to Corbis and part will go to the photographer or magazine that owns the copyright. Just as with Associated Press or United Press in 1935, Corbis and other modern photo services are giant clearinghouses of images for the publishing and advertising industries.

**(20)**  
**press and publishing photos**  
**STAMPS**



Many press photos have stamping or similar identification marks on the back and occasionally on the front. Most stamps identify the maker or issuer of the photograph. This can include the news service, newspaper, photographer, music label, fashion company or television studio. The stamp often includes a variety of information, such as address, copyright information and terms of use (“To be used in magazine or newspaper only. Not for advertising”). The vast majority of stamps are in ink, but dry stamps (embossed/pressed in without ink) are occasionally found.

A company’s stamp can help date a photograph to a general era, but usually won’t give a precise date. For example, if a photograph has the old time ‘Bain News Service’ stamp, this won’t by itself say the photograph was from 1915 or 1923, but it will prove that the photograph is old, as the company went out of business decades ago. If other information, such as the physical qualities of the paper and image and the caption tag suggests the photograph is from 1949, the vintage ACME stamp won’t prove that particular date but is consistent with a photograph from that time.

Especially in the early years there were many news services, large and small, including countless local newspapers. On an old photograph you will occasionally find a stamp for a photo service or other company that you have never heard of before and that went out of business many decades ago.

Below are some most common US news and photo services.

ACME, ACME Newspictures, ACME Photos: 1923 to 1952.

Early on known as United Newspictures. Was bought out by United Press in the 1950s.

Associated Press Photos (AP). 1926-93. AP wirephotos existed 1935-1970s. AP Laserphotos 1970s-90.

Bain News Service, 1898-1930s. One of the earlier news services. Founded by famous photographer George Grantham Bain. Many of Bain's photos are snapshot sized. They can have either the Bain News Service stamp or Bain's full name. All of his photos are old, and most are originals with sharp and clear images. Many of his photos have image titles and other notes in the image in white writing (written on negative, printed as part of image).

Central Press Association, of Cleveland, existed for many years starting in the early 1900s. Their stamp often includes the date, which makes for easy dating of their photos.

Culver Pictures Inc., of New York City, was formed in the early 1900s and exists today. This means the Culver stamp can appear on both an early and a modern photo. Culver bought out much of the Bain News Service archives, so many Bain photos can also have a Culver stamp.

Harris and Ewing: 1905-45. Famous Washington D.C. photo service. Can find their photos of sports to politicians.

International News 1909-1957. Major news service, with many International News stamped photos on market. It made both originals and wirephotos. Also made a small number printed later images—ala 1950s photo of Bronco Nagurski in 1930s. These printed later photos usually don't have the image clarity of the originals. As the International News name ceased to exist after 1957, all International News stamped photos are old. Below are the specific International News stamps used and their specific dates.

International News Service 1909-15

International Film Service 1915-20

International 1915-1922

International Newsreel 1922-28

International News Photo 1928-57

Keystone View Company, New York. Existed in the early 1900s. Also famous for their commercially sold stereoview photographs.

N.A.E. 1923-52. Synonymous with ACME Newspictures. An ACME photo will often also have an N.A.E. stamp. The N.A.E. stamp exists on vintage photos.

Pacific & Atlantic Photos: 1921-31.

Underwood & Underwood, aka Underwood. 1910s-30s.

United Newspictures 1923-25

United Press (UP). United Press issued news photos from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century through the 1950s, when it was renamed United Press International (UPI).

United Press Association (UPA). Another name for United Press, the United Press Association stamp is believed to only have been used only during the 1950s.

Universal Press International (UPI), 1958 – Today. UPI made originals and modern photos of modern subjects. However, UPI also made ‘printed later’ photos of 1910s-30s subjects, noted as modern by the UPI stamp on back. These reprints can have high quality images, as UPI had a huge archive of new and old negatives. These UPI reprints of folks like Ty Cobb and Walter Johnson in their playing days have fooled many collectors, who don’t realize UPI is a modern company.

World Wide Photos, 1919 to Present. The vast majority of World Wide photos I’ve seen are vintage to the image subject. They made originals and wirephotos.

Looking at the just listed news services and their dates of existence, you can see why some stamps will give a boost in price. While AP existed for a long time, collectors know that a Keystone View or International News Photos stamp assures that the photograph is old.

Some photos will not have stamps, either because they faded away or were never placed on the back. This can make it difficult to identify their source and even whether or not they press photographs.

Sometimes a photograph has different stamps. For example, there can be a stamp for the photographer and a stamp for the news service he worked for. If a news service obtained the archives of an out of business news service or photographic archives, a photograph can have stamps from two different time periods.

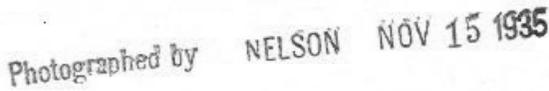
With some exceptions, if there is a UPI stamp on the photograph without an earlier stamp or original caption tag (see next chapter), it is safest to assume the photograph was made 1958 or after.

If an address in the stamp has a 5 digit zip code, the stamp itself is from 1962 or after. The 5 digit zip code was introduced in the US in 1962.

If there are two stamps on a photograph and one conflicts in date with the other, the earlier date is the most reliable. For example, if a photograph was both a new UPI and an old ACME stamp, it can be assumed that the photo is from the ACME era. In fact, UPI and ACME stamps or UPI stamps and ACME original caption tags on a photograph are not uncommon. It appears that, after ACME and UP combined to form UPI, UPI placed their news stamps on many of the old photos.

If the stamp conflicts in date with an original and unaltered lunch bag brown paper tag, the paper tag should be considered more reliable. This is particularly true if the photograph's general appearance is vintage.

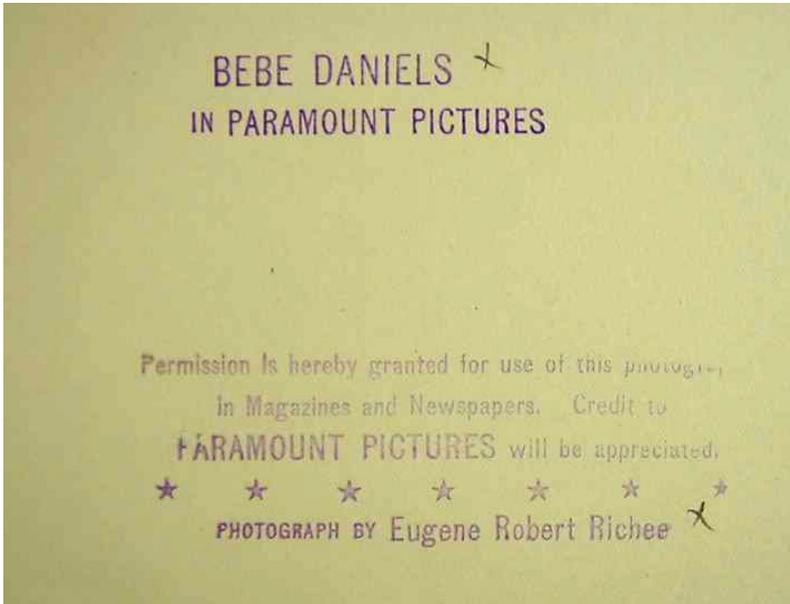
## Date stamps



Photographed by NELSON NOV 15 1935

The date and time was sometimes stamped on the back of the photo. A photograph can be much older than the date, but can't be newer. A stamped date of, for example, July 7th 1920 means the photograph is at least that old. If there are different date stamps (which will happen, as photographs were occasionally reused for printing or recataloged over the years), the photograph is at least as old as the earliest stamp.

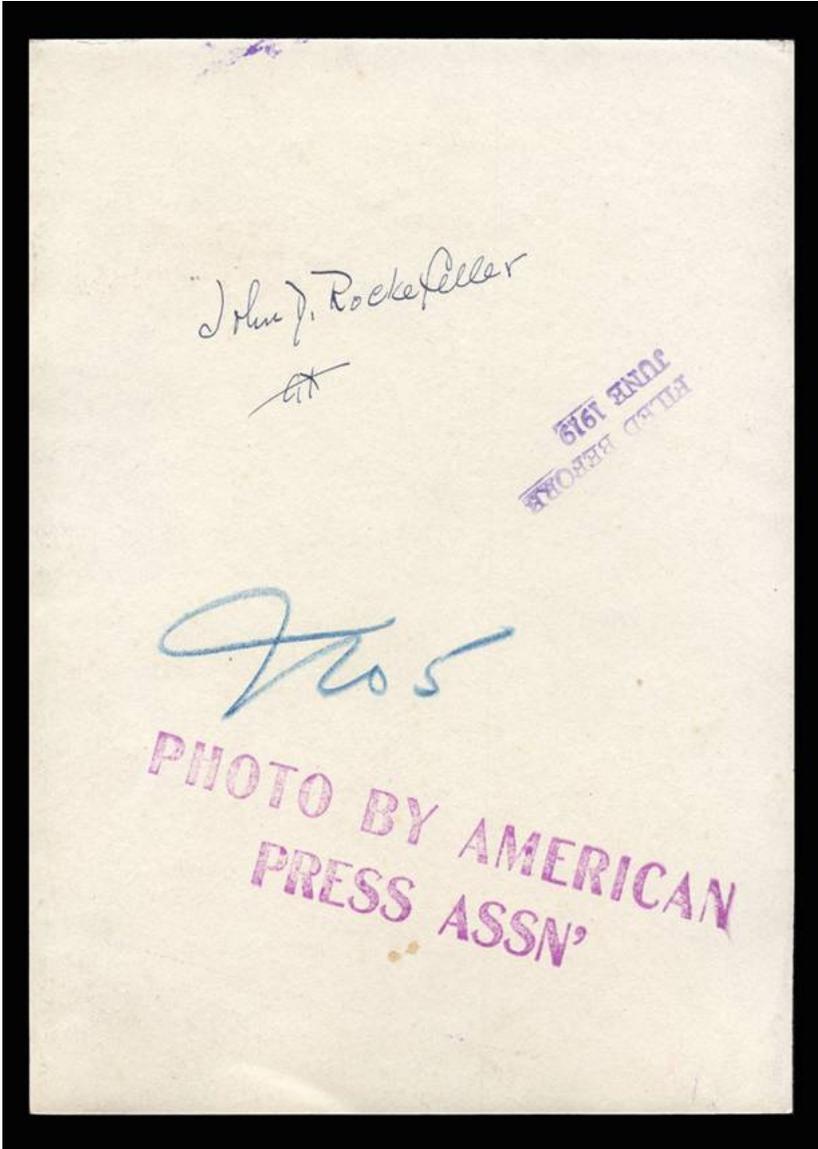
A vintage date stamp on a photograph is highly desirable as it is strong evidence the photo is old.



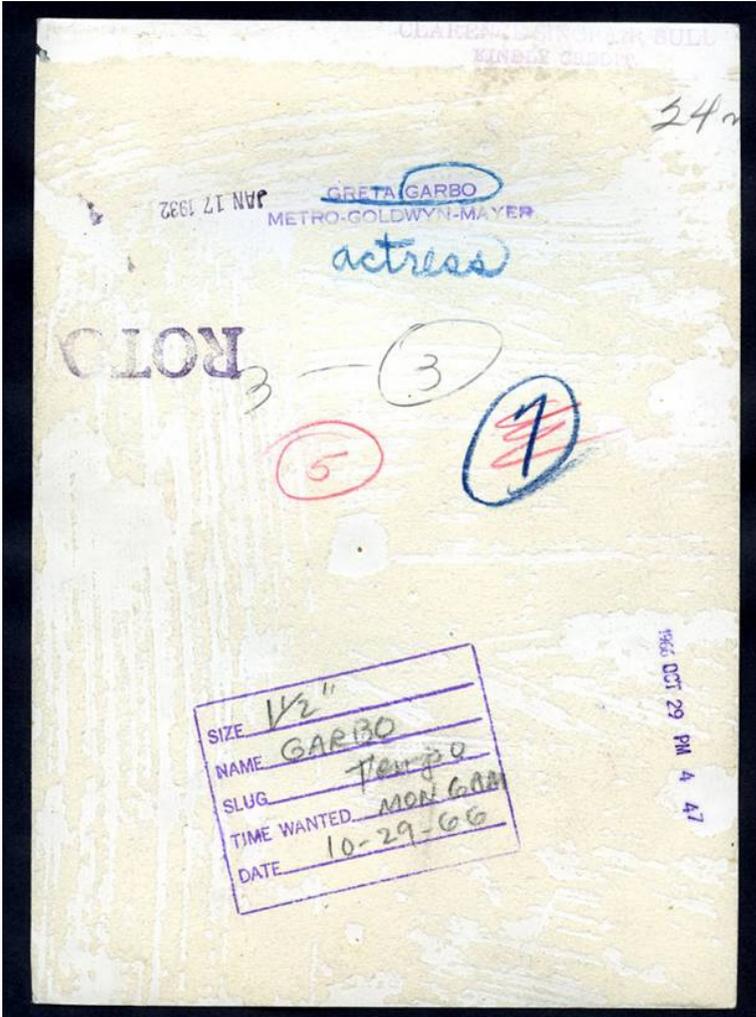
The stamps on this Hollywood press photo lists the studio (Paramount Pictures), photographer and image subject (actress Daniels). Eugene Richee is a popular photographer and his name raises the value of the photo.



This bottom of this 1937 movie press photo for 'Heidi' starring Shirley Temple lists much information including the year, studio and caption.



The 1919 stamp on the back of this photo substantiates the old age. The American Press Association was an old time photo service, with its stamp also helping show the old age.



The front of this photo shows actress Greta Garbo in the 1930s. The back has an MGM movie studio stamp a number of different dates. The earliest date substantiates the photo is from the 1930s.

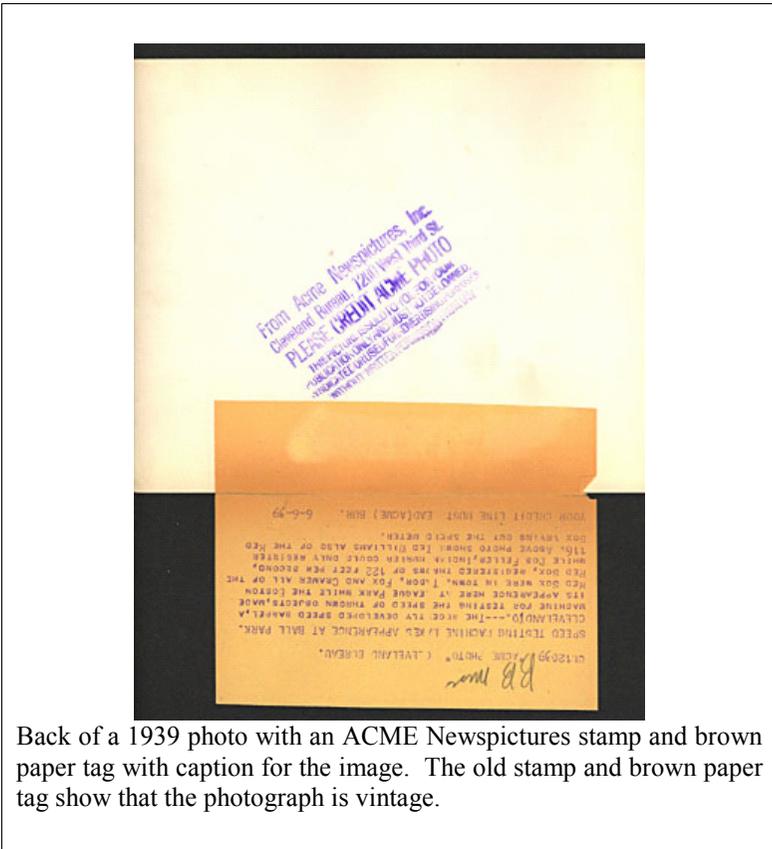
*~ Quick Tip ~*

### **Stamps that Prove a Press Photo is Old**

Authentic ACME Newspictures, International News Photos, Bain News Service, Underwood, International Newsreel, Underwood & Underwood, Pacific and Atlantic and Keystone View are all old-time stamps that only exist on old photos.

If you see a Babe Ruth photo with an Underwood stamp, or a Ingrid Bergman photo with an ACME stamp, you can be assured that it is not a modern reprint.

(21)  
**press and publishing photos**  
**PAPER TAGS AND SHEETS**



Back of a 1939 photo with an ACME Newspictures stamp and brown paper tag with caption for the image. The old stamp and brown paper tag show that the photograph is vintage.

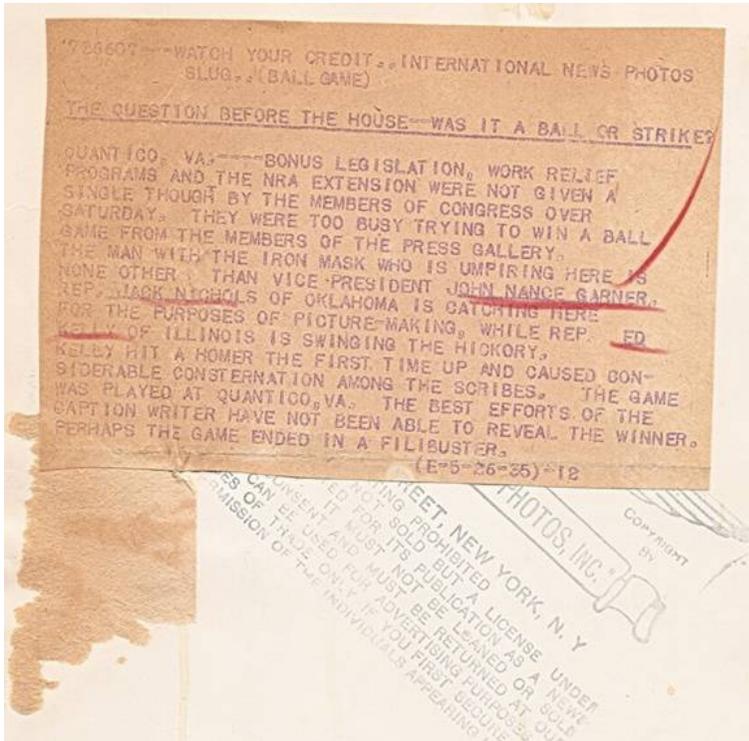
Some press photos have paper tags, often called paper captions or bio sheets. The tags are usually affixed to the back, but can be found on the front. These tags are helpful as they can help identify and date the photograph. They contain a variety of information including the name of the photo service, the date

and a detailed description of the image. Many press photos have both a paper tag and a stamp.

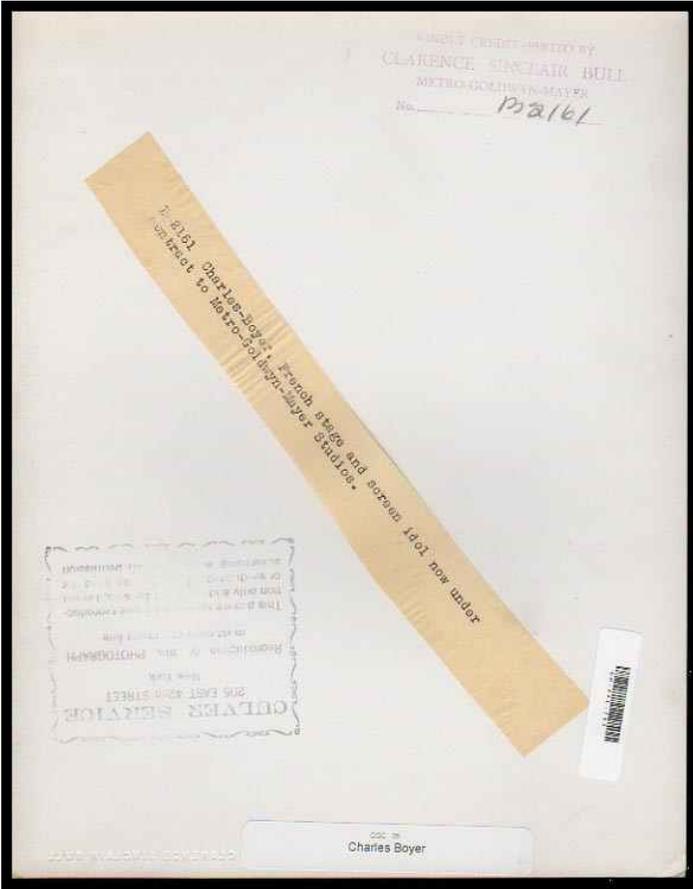
The original old tags on news service photos and many other old press photos usually are lunch bag brown paper, having turned that color with age. The older, the darker and more brittle. The text was typed or teletyped. Teletyping looks much like typing but has a slightly different font. In either case, the printing is usually black, but also can be dark blue or purple. The tags were flimsy and easily removed and it is common to see the brown paper remnants from where the tag was glued. In more modern times, tags are typically made of white paper, but can be found in yellow and other colors. A few tags from as early as the 1950s can be the modern bright yellow, though companion stamps from ACME or other news services will confirm that the photo is old.

As the paper tags can easily be removed, and sometimes placed on other photographs, the tag cannot be considered totally reliable. However, for vintage news service photos (UP, AP, etc) if the tag appears to be original (typed or teletyped on brown paper) and unaltered, the photograph's appearance and any stamping is consistent with the period, the paper caption can be considered an exact dating (+ or - a few days) of the photograph. For any press photo, a brown paper tag is evidence of old age.

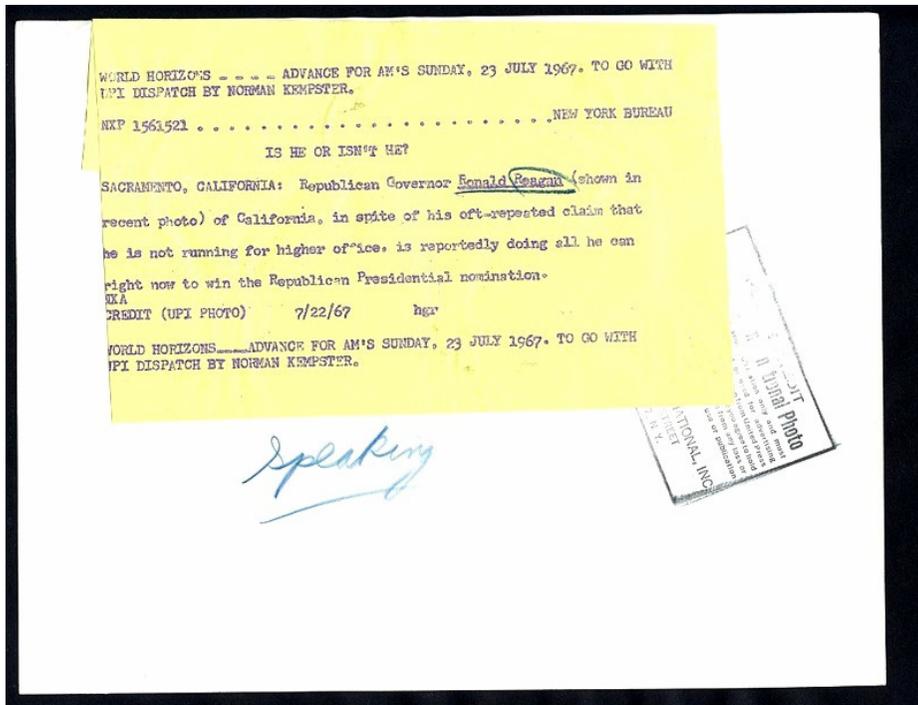
If there are the brown paper remnants still stuck to the back of a news service photograph, this is evidence the photo is old.



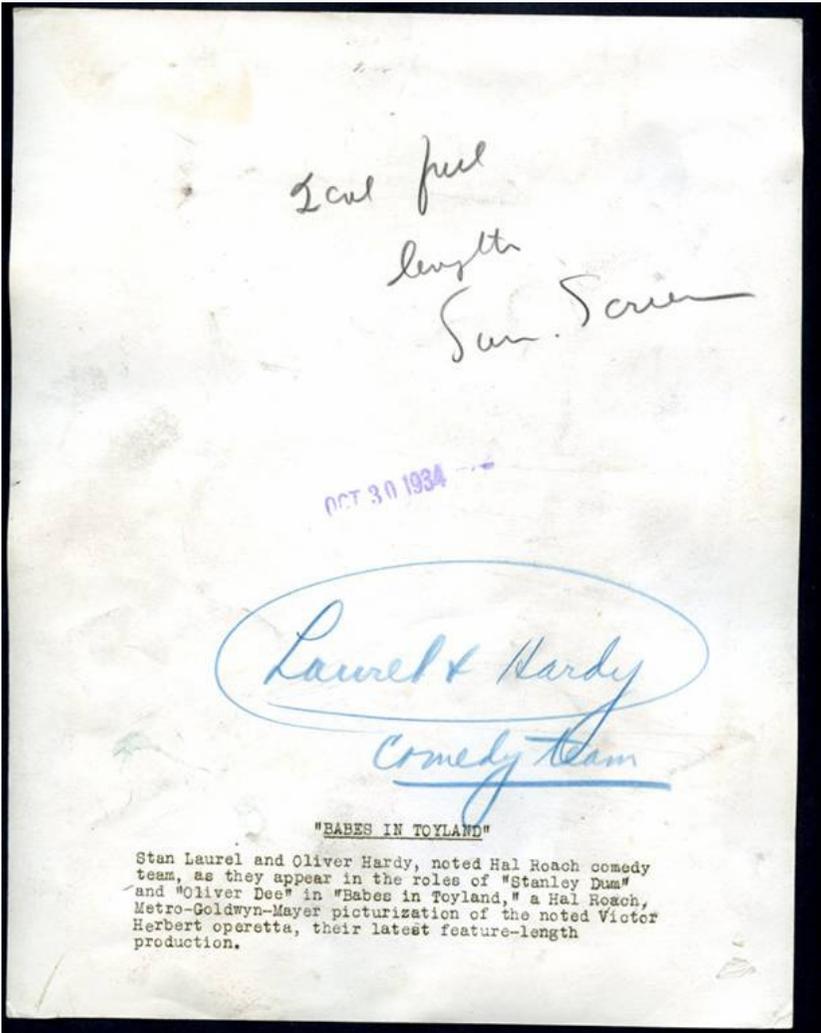
1935 photo with brown paper tag and International New Photos stamp. The newspaper editors and printers sometimes removed the paper captions during the production process. Thus news photos can be found with paper brown remnants where the caption once was, or with the caption hastily re-glued or taped back on.



Old movie studio press photos sometime had the caption on a thin paper strip like this. The strip is light brown similar to other old caption sheets. The upper right corner has a hard to see stamp of M-G-M studio and photographer Clarence Sinclair Bull. The lower left has a stamp from the photo service, Culver Service.

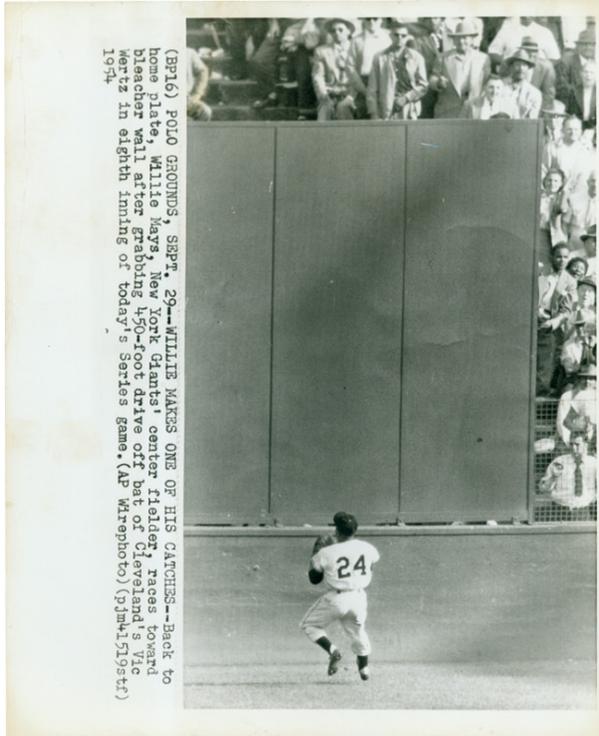


1967 UPI photo with a yellow caption tag. Most caption tags were originally yellow (though sometimes white and even blue), but turned brown over the years.



The movie press photo has a caption that promotes the 1934 movie "Babes in Toyland" and has a 1934 stamp date.

( 22 )  
 press and publishing photos  
 WIREPHOTOS



1954 AP wirephoto of Willie Mays' famous over the shoulder World Series catch. The photo has the in-the-image caption and oversized left border .

Wirephotos, sometimes called telephotos, were made by major news services, also known as wire services, like Associated Press, ACME Newspictures and United Press. Despite common misuse of the term, a wirephoto is only the photograph created by the wirephoto process/machine. If the Associated Press put an original photograph in its wirephoto machine and sent a copy via wire to the San Francisco

Chronicle, only the Chronicle's received copy is a wirephoto. The AP's original is not a wirephoto.

Some wirephotos were re-sent, which means that both the source and the received photos can be wirephotos. For example, AP's New York office may have received a wirephoto from its Los Angeles office, then forwarded that image via wirephoto to San Francisco. This can make things complicated. Luckily, as the following described qualities show, wirephotos are easily identified and dated.

The original photograph will be more desirable than the wirephoto copy. Originality is itself a prized quality and the original will have better image clarity. However, wirephotos are popularly collected and examples of significant events can be valuable.

Wirephotos often, but don't always, have the news service's stamp on back. They sometimes have paper tags.

### **Qualities that identify wirephotos**

\* Tiny horizontal or vertical lines in the image. The wirephotos were developed in lines, much like a computer print or television image. In fact, the wirephoto machine was the father of the television. In the receiving wirephoto machine, the emitted light was slowly passed over the photographic paper line by line. Under close inspection the wirephoto will often have a line pattern. Sometimes it can be seen up close with the naked eye. Sometimes a magnifying glass is needed. It often appears as jaggedness to a person or car's edge in the image. If there was an interruption in the telephone line during transmission, there sometimes is an obvious 'break' line, squiggles or similar marks in the image. The line pattern is the ultimate way to identify wirephotos.

\* A photograph of the caption, rather than the physical caption. During the making of many wirephotos, they would place the paper caption strip at the bottom of the source photograph, and that would be part of the scanned image sent through the telephone wires. The resulting wirephoto will have

the caption as part of the photographic image. If you run your fingers across the caption you won't feel it.

Wirephotos that have the caption in the front image are almost always vintage to the date given to the caption ('AP Wirephoto, 12-1-1962: John F. Kennedy visits with...'). This means it's easy to date most wirephotos.

\* Oversized, irregular borders. If you've ever put a document in a Xerox machine or computer scanner you know that if the document is smaller than the scanning bed you will end up with a Xerox or scan showing the document surrounded by a background. If you are making a digital image for an auction, you will often crop out the background clutter. This is often the case with wirephotos. The wirephoto machine's bed was often bigger than the source photo, and the resulting wirephoto can have a 'picture within a picture' effect or white borders with irregular dimensions (e.g., one edge much wider than the others). Some wirephotos have normal borders.

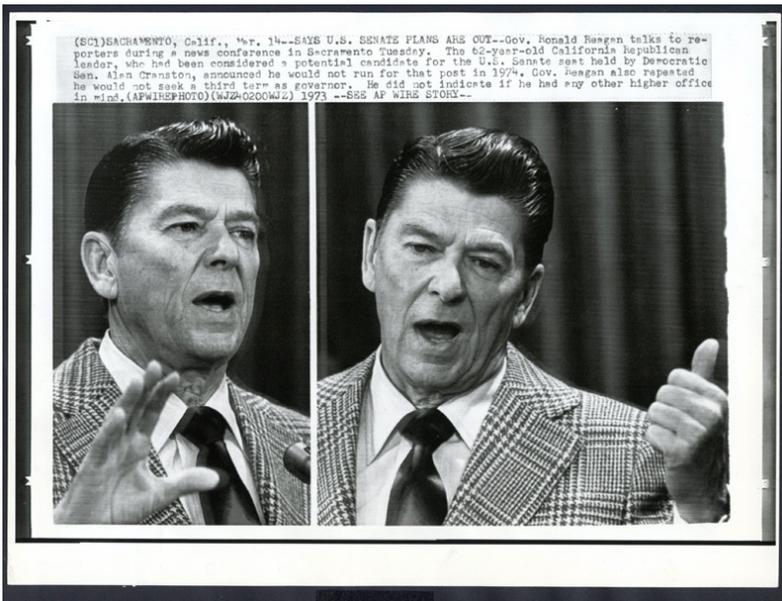
\* Lesser quality than the source. Wirephotos often have nice and presentable images, but many wirephotos have faded or muddy images. At first glance, they will usually appear less crisp and rich than an original image. This in part explains why the original photo is more desirable than the wirephoto made from it. If a vintage ACME or AP photo has a crystal clear image, it is an original photograph. If the photo has a less clear image, with blemishes and little squiggles or marks and less image detail, it probably is a wirephoto.

**Laserphotos**, which were the replacement to wirephotos, existed from the 1970s-90s. They have the same general appearance as wirephotos. They will ordinarily have in-the-image captions that state they are laserphotos, along with the irregular white borders.

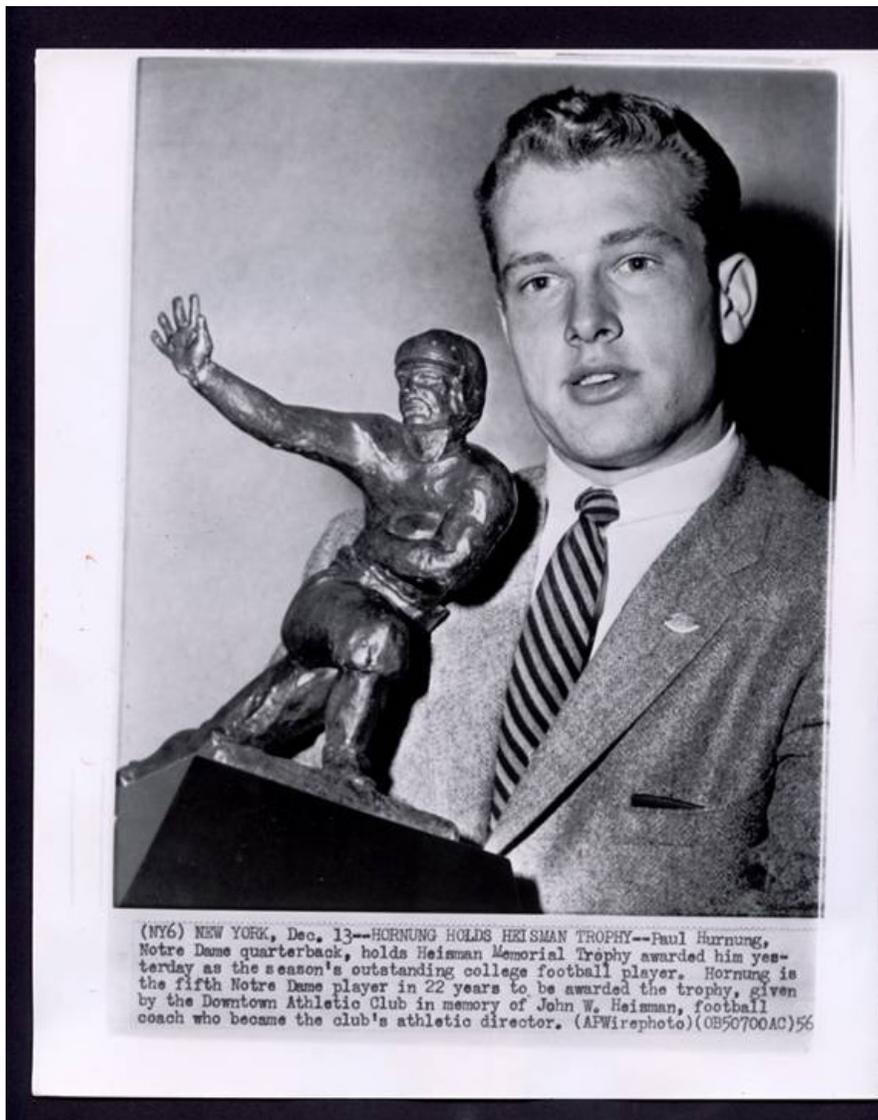
## **Be Warned**

Few buyers and sellers correctly use the term ‘wirephoto.’ They usually use the term to describe all sorts of photos, including true wirephotos, original photos, newspaper photos and other press photos. I have seen sellers offer ‘1910s wirephotos.’ The problem being that the wirephoto process wasn’t invented until the 1920s.

This means that when an online seller is offering a ‘1955 Mickey Mantle original wirephoto,’ you can’t always be sure what is being offered. Does the seller mean it’s a wirephoto? Does the seller mean by ‘original’ it was the original photo the wirephoto was made from (and of better image quality and desirability)? It can be a guessing game for the potential bidder.



This 1974 AP Wirephoto has a caption within the image, weird ‘picture within a picture’ border (the original photo was smaller than the scanning bed) and the caption refers to itself as a ‘wirephoto.’



This 1956 wirephoto has the odd borders, caption within the image and says “APWirephoto.”

(23)  
**press and publishing photos**  
**PRODUCTION MARKS**



Detail of a 1950s boxing photo with silver ink surrounding the boxer's head. This ink was to block out distracting background visual clutter.

Whether out of curiosity or because they believe that it affects desirability and value, many collectors want to know if their photo was the actual 'original art' used to make a picture in a magazine or newspaper.

The majority of press photos were not used to make a picture in a newspaper or magazine. On a given day a newspaper may have developed one hundred different photographs and decided to only use ten of them. The newspaper may have made up three copies of an image and only used one of the three to make the picture in the next day's

paper. Big news services often kept copies for their own files, never intending them to be used for printing.

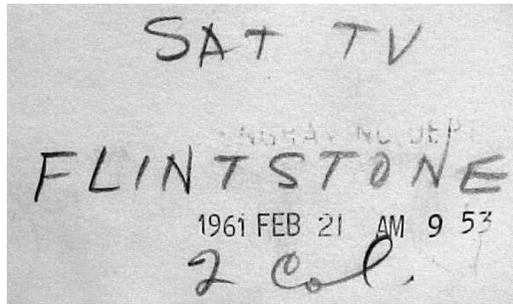
Photographs that were used to make the printed pictures, or at least intended to be published, can be identified by a combination of production marks and writing, including the following.

**Silver, black or other color marking on the image.** This can include cropping marks, which are usually lines and often arrows indicating how the image was to be resized. The cropping marks are sometimes in red, orange, black ink or similar color crayon or in pencil.

Markings can also include silver ink highlights of the central image (person, car, etc) or silvering out of background images. The silver areas would appear as solid in the printed picture, so the ink was used to remove unwanted clutter and give detail. In cases the silvering and other markings will be obvious from first glance. In other cases, it will be subtle, and you will have to examine the image carefully, including looking at the photo at a nearing 180 degree angle to a light source in order to see the difference in gloss made by the markings. In some cases, you can feel the markings by lightly running your fingertip across the surface.

**Production writing, marks and stamps on the back.** The writing can be in pen, pencil or crayon. It can include relevant text about how and when the image will appear in publication. '1 col' means it will be a width of one newspaper column, '2 col' will mean it will be two columns wide. Writing can include something like 'Monday Sports Page.' Realize that many photos not used for printing may have different writing on the back, such as a date or description of the image.

Often times, there will be a date stamp. If you are lucky, there will be a clipping of the actual newspaper or magazine picture on the back. In some cases, different clippings with different date stamps will be present, meaning the same picture was used several times.



**General Wear and Tear.** As these photos were part of the printing process, they will ordinarily have wear and tear, including wrinkling, border damage, stains and other signs of handling. In some cases the photograph has irregular, hand cut edges and clipped corners. Usually the paper caption tag was pulled off the photograph before printing, sometimes hastily taped on later. This means the collector can find a photograph she knows was used to make a printed picture, but, since the tag was removed, has no clue where the photograph came from.

If a photograph has a strong combination of the just mentioned signs, especially back and front markings, it can be reasonably assumed that it was the 'original art' for a printed picture. This is true even if you can't locate the publication. If a photograph is in high grade, has no such markings and has an intact paper caption on the back, it was not used to make a printed picture.

### **The Desirability of Production Marks**

Some people dislike production marks on their photographs, others find them appealing. Many collectors like to know that the photograph they own was used as the original art for a publication. Many collectors also feel that the marking is evidence of authenticity.

The irony is that the markings that make the photograph appealing to many collectors can also make the photograph less attractive. While some light silver highlights to the image or background may be attractive, sometimes the clipped borders

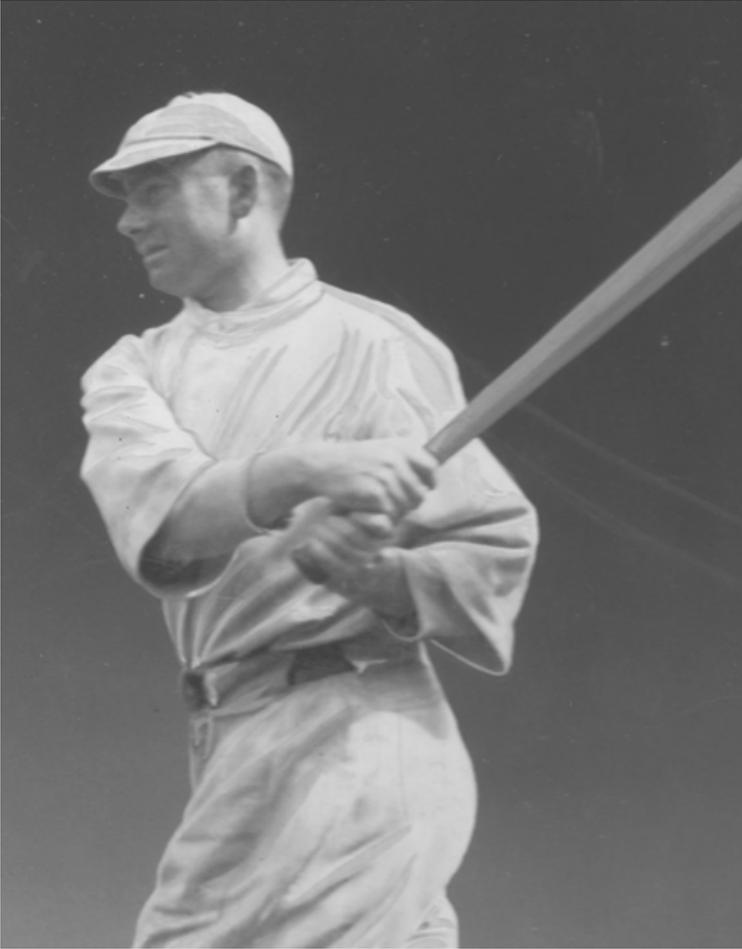
and too heavily applied markings can be distracting. Some collectors prefer photographs that were unpublished and feel any markings are detrimental. It's a matter of individual taste.



1961 ABC Television press photo used to promote the upcoming season of The Flintstones. The photo was used to make a picture in the Chicago Tribune. The borders show the cropping marks. These worked as guides, showing the printer how the image was to be resized for the paper.



In this 1930s press photo the crop marks surround Oliver Hardy's face and Stan Laurel's is crossed out. Only Hardy's picture was to be used in the newspaper photo. Crop and similar marks are commonly in black, grey, red or orange grease pen. Grease pen marks resemble crayon.



In this magazine photo, the background was covered in metallic grey ink to blot out unwanted detail, and the wrinkles in his shirt were highlighted. Even the baseball bat was recolored in silver ink.



The back of this news photo has a clipping from the newspaper showing the final in-print picture and a date stamp. Clippings were sometimes added to the back of the corresponding photo for records purposes, and demonstrate that the photo was used to make a picture in the newspaper.

**(24)**  
**press and publishing photos**  
**LATER GENERATION AND**  
**‘PRINTED LATER’ PHOTOGRAPHS**

It was not uncommon for a news service, newspaper or magazine to reuse an image over the years. Upon Babe Ruth's death in 1948, Associated Press may have reproduced a 1922 photo of the baseball star hitting a famous homerun so newspapers across the country could show him in his heyday. Associated Press may have reproduced it again in 1970. If *Gone With the Wind* was re-issued for movie theatres decades later, the studio would make new press photos and stills.

With other qualities equivalent the vintage original photograph will always have financial value greater than the later generation or printed later versions. This is why collectors go to great lengths to identify the originals.

Though of lesser value, later generation press photographs should not be idly dismissed. They were official photographs, usually with stamping on the back. While some images are poor, many that were made from the original negatives can have beautiful crystal clear images. Just like their older counterparts, only a handful of each was made and distributed.

Many collectors can't afford that original 1922 Babe Ruth photograph, but they can the 1960 version. For collectors who are looking for nice photographs to matt with autographs or to display in the office or den, later generations are a great way to go.

As age is important to collectors, the age difference between the original and the later generation photo affects value. A 1980 photo with a 1920 subject will usually be worth less than a 1950 photo with the same image. The average

collector will look at the two and give extra value to the 1950 version as it is the older.

### **Identifying Later Generation Press Photos**

A later generation press photo photograph is identified by examining all the qualities of the photograph, including stamping, captions and overall appearance.

Especially with old subjects, later generation photos are usually clearly inconsistent with a vintage photograph. This can include modern stamping or text (a UPI stamp or a 1995 copyright date on a photo with a 1910 image), modern appearing paper and images with signs of reproduction. Signs of reproduction can include cracks from the negative, tears or scratches that are in the photographic image rather than actually on the photograph (a photo of a tear rather than the damage physically on the photo) and a general sense that the photograph was copied. A blacklight will quickly identify many modern made photos. Remember that some later generation photographs were made from the original negatives and can have crystal clear images.

With experience, the collector will find that many later generation photos in their area of collecting will stand out like sore thumbs.

There will be cases that are hard to determine. A photo may not have clear stamping. The photo paper may appear to be from the right time, but you aren't a hundred percent sure. In the end, there's nothing wrong with giving an honest but inexact answer. There's nothing wrong with offering for sale a photograph, describing it as "Appears to be from the 1930-50s, but can't give a specific date. Does not look like an original, but appears to be old none the less."

### **Identifying Original Press Photos**

All other qualities equivalent, the original photograph is the most desirable.

Originals are identified as they are vintage and have images with detail and clarity consistent with being original.

If a photo has vintage stamping, the original paper caption and the images appears to be first generation, it's most likely an original. If the photograph has no markings, but the paper and image are vintage and the image is crystal clear, it's likely an original. Remember, only the original negative can create the image with the highest quality. Later generation negatives and wirephotos will produce lesser images.

**(25)**  
**press and publishing photos**  
**ASSORTED TIPS AND NOTES FOR**  
**PRESS & PUBLISHING PHOTOS**

**1800s Press Photos**

Press Photographs from the 1800s exist but are rare. They are typically cabinet cards or similar mounted photographs. Many were bought by the magazine or photo service from independent photographers and the photos will have the stamp of the photographer along with the photo service or magazine. As with 1900s press photos, the 1800s examples will often have handwritten notes and production marks, including inked highlights to the image. Many famous 1800s photographers worked for or sold their photos to the press, including Mathew Brady, Joseph Hall, Benjamin J. Falk and Napoleon Sarony.

\* \* \* \*

Pre-War news service photos are rarely to never found in mint condition. I've never owned a mint example. They were usually well handled, shipped, stored, aged and often cropped for publication purposes. If you find a vintage 1930 Lou Gehrig news service photo with mint corners and edges, there's a darn good chance the photo was trimmed in recent times.

This also shows that, while condition and overall appearance are important, the collector shouldn't obsess over the razor sharpness of the corners or edges.

\* \* \* \*

Photo services weren't always trying to make works of art. Sometimes they were in a hurry to create a photo to be published right away. These in-a-rush photos could be crude and often bizarre. I have seen photographs of magazine pictures (the photographer literally took a photograph of a magazine picture), images made from heavily cracked negatives, images greatly out of focus or underdeveloped.

\* \* \* \*

### **Baseball Fans, look for the *Baseball Magazine Archives / Christie's Hologram***

Collectors can find old baseball photos with a circular hologram including the text 'Baseball Magazine Archives / Christies.' This hologram, placed on back, indicates the photo came from the archives of the famed old magazine, 'Baseball Magazine.' Christies auctioned off the archives in 1996, and affixed a hologram to each photo in the auction. For baseball collectors, this hologram will bring a premium, as it helps show the photo is genuine and has famous provenance.

\* \* \* \*

There will always be mysterious photos; photos whose maker you can't identify and photos you can't be certain of the date. Don't fret about it. Even experts and top dealers will find photos they can't identify.

\* \* \* \*

Common sizes for press photos are 8x10, 7x5 and 9x7 inches. All other things equivalent, the larger the photo the more expensive. Photos 11x14 inches or larger are scarce.

\* \* \* \*

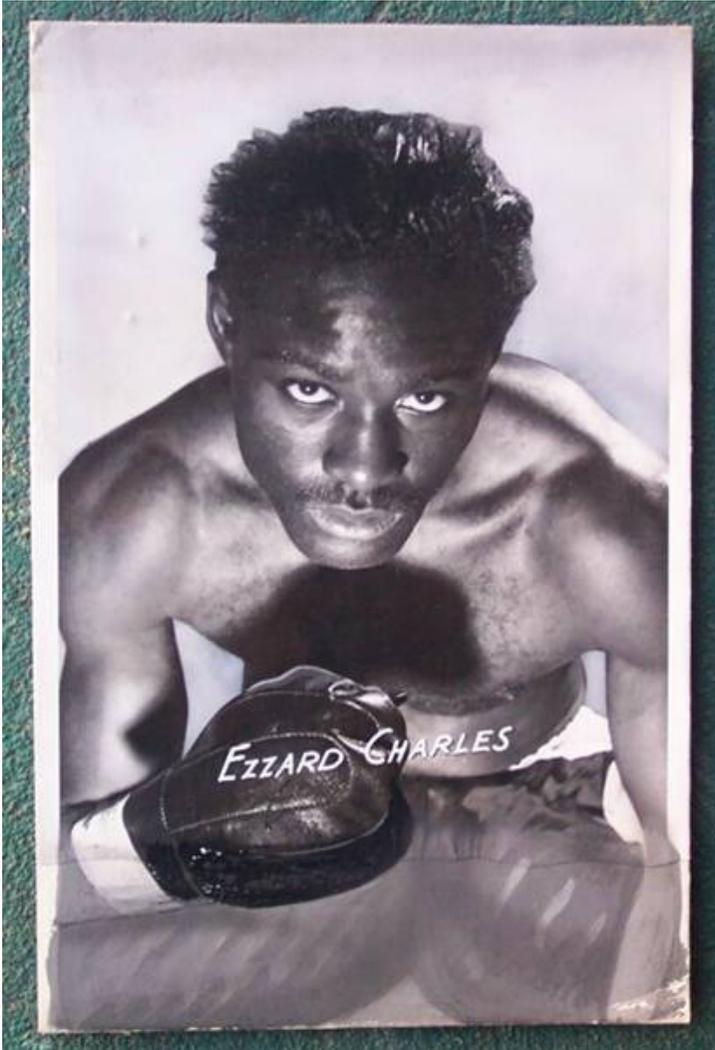
Remember that UPI and UP (aka UPA) are not the same. United Press/United Press Association existed from the 1800s to the 1950s, when it was replaced United Press International. This difference is important for dating many photos.

\* \* \* \*

Some modern press photos are not real photos but lithographs or computer/digital prints. These are identified by the fine dot pattern in the image viewed under a strong magnifying glass or microscope. The lithograph and computer press photos are considered less desirable than the real photo versions, and often have lesser quality images.

\* \* \* \*

Many of the pictures in publications aren't reproductions of photos but of original sketches, paintings and mixed media art. These works of art are also collectable.



Original hand painted photograph on board used to make the 1950s Exhibit Supply Company boxing card of Ezzard Charles.

## (26) **BLACKLIGHT: A TOOL FOR IDENTIFYING MANY REPRINTS & FAKES**

For collectors of Pre World War II paper material—whether it's sports photographs, theatre programs, movie posters, trading cards, scorecards or postcards— there is a sophisticated yet inexpensive and easy to use tool for quickly many modern reprints and fakes. This tool is called a blacklight. While there are many uses for blacklight in collecting and beyond, this chapter introduces how it can be used to identify modern paper.

### **How Blacklight Work**

A blacklight allows the collector to see things not seen under normal daylight. Blacklight is outside the human's visible spectrum, meaning that it cannot be seen by human eyes. However, in a dark room different materials can fluoresce (give off light) under blacklight. Most of us have experienced blacklights that make the whites on our shirts or shoes glow brightly. Some materials fluoresce brightly, some not at all and the rest somewhere in between. Fluorescence can differ in color. Some minerals fluoresce yellow, some red and some blue. This quality of fluorescence happens at the atomic level of the material.

### **Identification of Modern Papers Using Blacklight**

A blacklight is effective in identifying many, though not all, modern paper stocks.

Starting in the late 1940s (**early to mid 1950s for photographic paper**), manufacturers of many products began adding *optical brighteners* and other new chemicals to their products. Optical brighteners are invisible dyes that fluoresce

brightly under ultraviolet light. They were used to make products appear brighter in normal daylight, which contains some ultraviolet light. Optical brighteners were added to laundry detergent and clothes to help drown out stains and to give the often advertised 'whiter than white whites.' Optical brighteners were added to plastic toys to make them brighter and more colorful. Today's tooth whiteners contain optical brighteners. Paper manufacturers joined the act as well, adding optical brighteners to many, though not all of their white papers stocks.

A blacklight can identify many trading cards, posters, photos and other paper items that contain optical brighteners. In a dark room and under blacklight optical brighteners will usually fluoresce a very bright light blue or bright white. To find out what this looks like shine a recently made white trading card, snapshot or most types of today's printing paper under a blacklight. Your powder laundry detergent probably will fluoresce brightly.

If paper stock fluoresces very bright as just described, it almost certainly was made after the mid 1940s and after 1950 if it's a photograph. It is important to note that not all modern papers will fluoresce this way, as optical brighteners were not added to all modern paper. For example, many modern wirephotos have no optical brighteners. This means that if a paper doesn't fluoresce brightly this does not mean it is necessarily old. However, with few exceptions, if a paper object fluoresces very brightly, it could not have been made before World War II. Using this test, the collector can weed out many modern reprints.

It is important that the collector gain practical experience. This means using a blacklight to examine and compare the fluorescence of a variety of items. With photographs, make sure you shine the blacklight on all sides and edges. This is because the gelatin or other coating on the front of the paper sometimes prevents or dulls the front from fluorescing.

The collector should follow the safety rules. If used correctly, longwave blacklights are safe, and can even be used by kids. Factory boxed blacklights will come with directions.

### **Where to buy a longwave blacklight**

Blacklights are widely available and have a wide variety of uses. Geologists use them to identify rocks, collectors of glass uses them for authentication, theatres uses them to create special stage lighting. They are even used to find scorpions at night. Blacklights are sold by many science, hobby or rock stores. I bought mine and tested it out at a hobby store in my home town. They can also be purchased online. I have seen hand-held models regularly offered for under \$20 each on eBay and at amazon.com.

Be sure to purchase a longwave blacklight as opposed to a shortwave blacklight. Shortwave is important in certain specialty areas, like stamps and gem identification, but longwave is the safest and all you need for photos and most paper collectables like posters and photos. Make sure to double check, but most of the cheaper blacklights offered on eBay will be the correct longwave versions.

The following are three popular styles of black, each that will serve your purpose.



The above little flashlight is good for authenticating photos, art, currency and such. They take batteries and can be carried around most anywhere. This is the most popular style for collectors.



The above pocket sized LED and other high powered black lights are good for rock hunting and general inspection, and are also good for examining art, collectibles and currency. It uses batteries, so you can take it anywhere.



Curly-cue design screw in blacklight bulbs like the above are especially good for art and crafts displays like posters, paintings and clothes. This type of light can also work well for inspecting art, but is not as portable as the above flashlights. As you can see, they look a regular screw in visible light fluorescent light bulb except the bulb is black not white.

**(27)**  
**PROVENANCE**

Provenance is where an item came from. Who made it, who were the owners, who else significant handled it along the way.

Though not needed for most photos, documentation of provenance can be important for expensive photos or photos where ownership is an integral part of its value. Important provenance can raise the value of a photo. Many collectors would pay a premium if document showed a photo was displayed in the Museum of Modern Art, Pro Football Hall of Fame or Albert Einstein's living room.

Documentation of provenance can include sales receipts, letters about ownership and history, magazine and newspaper articles, auction catalogs and similar documents. Provenance can include an expert's letter of authenticity or other testimony about the item's identity. If you purchase a photo from the photographer, keep the mailing envelope with the photographer's return address. There's no better provenance than that.

Authentic stamping on the photo's back helps document provenance. If a photo has a United Press International stamp and caption tag, it would seem more than likely that the photo came from the famed news and photo service.

Provenance does not in and of itself authenticate a photograph, but can be an integral part of authentication. It is a piece in the puzzle. If a photo looks authentic (appears to be the right age, has correct stamping, your collecting friends agree it looks good), that it was sold by a top dealer or appeared in a reputable auction may seal the deal.

If there is no stamping or other identification marks, provenance might be essential for identification of the photo's issuer and photographer. For example, you may purchase an unstamped photo knowing it originated from a magazine editor's estate or a newspaper's archives.

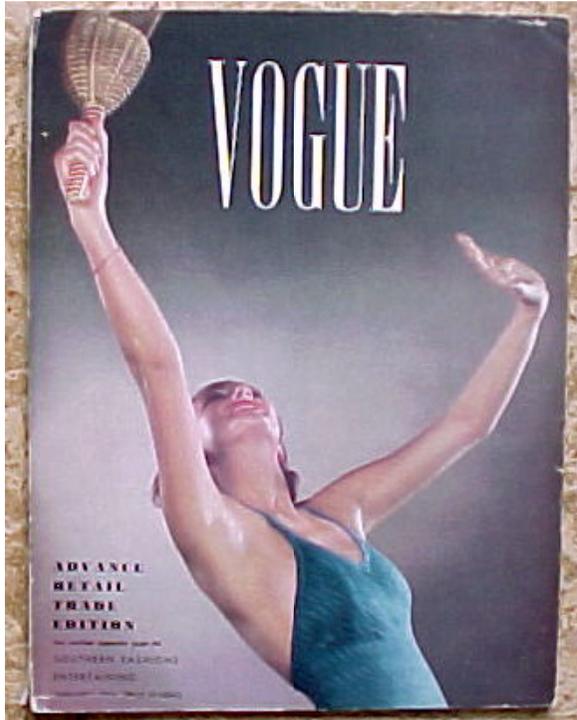
A practical example of good provenance is buying a rare or esoteric photo from a respected and well known dealer. This is making your own good provenance. The fact that a top dealer believes the photo to be genuine is significant— especially if you, as an experienced collector, agree with her verdict. Save the receipt or other documentation of sale. When you turn to resell the photo, you will have documentation that it came from a reliable source.

Beware that provenance can be embellished and forged. For every forged Babe Ruth autographed baseball there is an accompanying bogus history. The collector should use a critical eye. One reason to buy from sellers who you know to be honest is that the history they give is reliable.

TEL. GRACELAND 7469		PHOTOGRAPHER 219	
BB	<b>GEO. BURKE</b>		6-26-38
	847 BELMONT AVENUE CHICAGO		
Mickey Cochrane Navin Field, TIGERS Detroit, Michigan.			
50	post cards	4	00
<i>OK MB</i>			

1938 bill for fifty real photo postcards from the famous baseball photographer George Burke to Detroit Tigers Hall of Fame baseball player Mickey Cochrane. Many baseball stars, including Cochrane, ordered from Burke photos of themselves to fulfill fan autograph requests. (bill courtesy of Leon Luckey).

(29)  
**PHOTOMECHANICAL PRINTS  
 (NOT REAL PHOTOGRAPHS)**



1936 Vogue magazine with a photoengraving cover shot by Steichen

As discussed earlier, photomechanical prints are not genuine photographs but ink and printing press prints. This chapter looks at some standard photomechanical processes used from the 1800s to today.

## **PHOTOLITHOGRAPH /HALF-TONE LITHOGRAPH**

Photolithography, or half-tone lithography, is a form of lithography used to make a wide variety of photorealistic images. You have owned thousands of photolithographs. For decades photolithography has been used to make the images for posters, postcards, books, magazines, cereal boxes, brochures, maps and countless other commercial products.

Photolithographs are made up of a fine pattern of printed dots. These dots are visible under a strong magnifying glass or microscope. For black and white prints the dots are black. For color prints there will be a variety of color dots. Under microscopic magnification, the dots appear like splotches of paint or color glue. Digital computer prints, including giclees, closely resemble half-tone lithographs.

Photolithography is a commercial form of printing and is typically used for large print runs. If you find a photolithograph, it is safe to assume many identical prints were made.

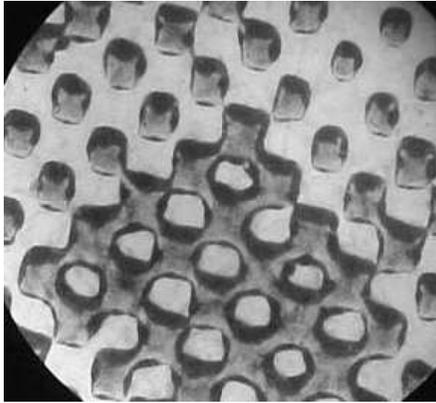
## **PHOTOENGRAVING**

Photoengraving, or half-tone relief, was an old time commercial printing method. In the early to mid 1900s, photoengraving was used to make the images for magazines, newspapers, advertising posters and many trading cards and postcards.

As with photolithography, a photoengraving produces a realistic image that is made up of a fine series of dots. These

dots are visible with a strong magnifying glass. The dots can be one color or, for color prints, a variety of colors

Under a microscope of 50x or more power, photoengraving is easily distinguished from photolithography. The ink pattern has a distinct dark rim or edge. In areas the ink pattern will resemble a waffle.



Microscopic view of photoengraving with the dark edge and waffle-like pattern

If you see the distinct microscopic photoengraving ink pattern on a commercial print, like a poster or calendar, this is strong evidence that the print is old. Photoengraving was discontinued for commercial uses many years ago.

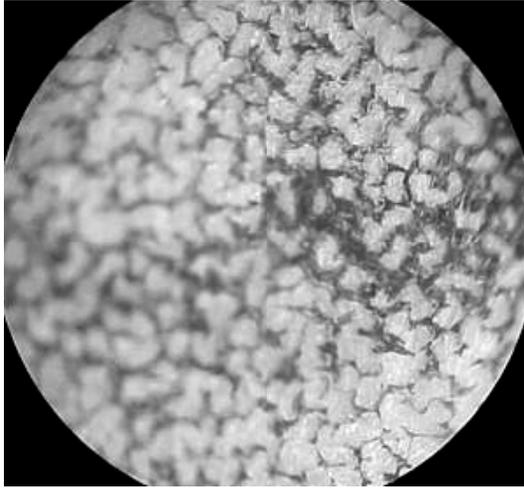
## COLLOTYPE

Collotype was a photomechanical process popular in the early 1900s. It was versatile and produced high quality images on many types of paper. Some examples can be difficult to distinguish from photographs.

The images can be in any color and usually have a matte surface. Under the microscope, the ink pattern in the image is reticulated, meaning that it appears like a mosaic with similar size pieces of irregular shapes. Sometimes it resembles a bowl

of macaroni noodles. Some collotypes were varnished, making it difficult to see the reticulation even under magnification.

Many early 1900s postcards and movie lobby cards were collotypes. Postcards with 'Albertype' printed on back are collotypes and usually date to the earlier 1900s. The process is sometimes used in the fine arts.



Microscopic view of a 1920s collotype movie lobby card showing the distinct reticulated pattern

### **SCREEN PRINTING, SERIOGRAPHY, SILK SCREEN**

Screen printing, also known as serigraphy and silk-screen, is a relatively recent form of printing popular in the fine arts. Based on an ancient form of printing called stenciling, screen printing was developed about 1890 and popularly adopted by artists in the 1960s.

Screen prints are known for their bright 'pop art' colors and designs, and can incorporate photo realistic images, called *photo-stencils*. A mesh is used in the process, and this mesh

does not allow for the fineness of other prints. Screen prints can be difficult to distinguish from lithographs. A print can often be identified as a screen print when the pattern of the mesh appears in the printed ink.

Screen prints won't be mistaken for real photographs as screen prints don't produce photographic detail and commonly have bright comic-book colors.

Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol were two of the most famous screen printers.

### **PHOTOGRAUVE (GRAVURE, ROTOGRAVURE)**

Photogravure, also known as gravure and rotogravure, is a process known for its excellent image quality and detail. It was invented in the late 1800s and is still used today by fine artists. The surface is matte and the image can come in any color. The print was created by using heavier ink to create the dark image areas and less ink to create the light areas. Great pressure was used to squeeze the ink onto the paper, and a *plate mark* may exist on the paper. A plate mark appears as a pressed in area just larger than the printed image, and is created by the printing pressure. Sometimes this mark was trimmed off. Antique photogravures sometimes have images that are faded and with foxing.

Under the microscope, an irregular, often speckled ink pattern exists. A variation of the photogravure called the rotary photogravure (rotogravure) was produced on a cylinder. The ink on the photogravure image is set up in an even grid with dots of ink surrounded by intersecting white lines. This pattern is similar to that in photoengraving and photolithography.

Gravure was most commonly used in the old days, so gravure printing is consistent with a print being old. Many old newspapers had special rotogravure picture sections.

## WOODBURYTYPE

The Woodburytype, called photglyphie by the French, was a 1800s process capable of highest quality images. They are nearly identical in visual appearance to the carbon print photograph described in an earlier chapter. Unlike other photomechanical processes, the Woodburytype has no printed ink pattern.

Most Woodburytypes were used as book illustrations, and cannot be larger than 11" by 14." Some can be mounted, including as cabinet cards. 'Woodburytype' is commonly printed just below the image.

If you find a Woodburytype, you know it's old, as the process was only used in the later 1800s.

*Woodbury-Gravure* is a similar process also only used in the 1800s. It usually has the name printed beneath the image.



Cabinet Card with a Woodburytype print of Buffalo Bill Cody. As is typical 'Woodburytype' is printed below the print, making the process simple to identify.

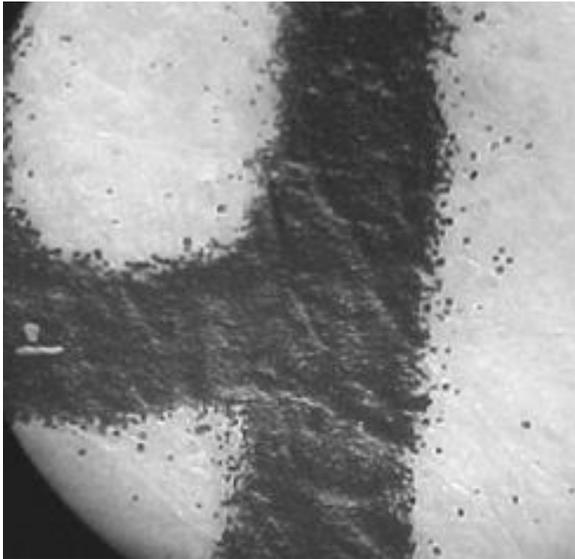
## COMPUTER PRINTS

Computer printing is used today in both our normal lives and in the fine arts. While there have been numerous processes used in the past several decades, this section focuses on the two most commonly used: *electrostatic* printing and *ink jet* printing. The popular giclee process is a type of ink jet printing.

### *Electrographic Printing:*

#### *Laser Printer, Photocopier and Xerox*

Large numbers of reproductions have been made using these printers, all of which use electrostatic or electrographic printing. Under the microscope, the resulting prints are easily identified. The lines are made up of many tiny dust-like grains of pigment that have been fused to the electrostatically charged area. However, not all the grains make it to the intended area, so the print is identified by the many stragglers outside the lines. It looks like it needs a dusting.



Microscopic view of a laser computer print, showing the unique 'dusty' ink pattern

Judging the Authenticity of Photos \* David Cycleback

*Inkjet , including Giclee*

Today's inkjet printer can produce attractive color and black and white reproductions, and can be printed on many surfaces. There are a variety of types, all squirting the ink onto paper surface. Under the microscope, the image is made up of a fine dot pattern closely resembling a photolithograph.

The **giclee, or iris print**, is a fancy type of inkjet printing often used in the fine arts. High quality reproductions of paintings, photographs and prints can be made. It can print on a variety of papers, from matte to glossy to canvas. As the images are resistant to fading and deterioration, the process is used to make many limited edition display photographs. Famous photographers who have made giclees include Richard Avedon, William Weldman, Walter Chin and David Hockney.

**(30)**  
**FINAL NOTES**

This final chapter consists of assorted notes, restating of important points and helpful hints.

\* \* \* \*

**Identifying and dating image subjects**

An important area not covered in depth by this book is the identification and dating of subjects in the image. This is an important part of dating and authenticating photographs.

Images are often dated by clothing fashion and other objects. For example, baseball history experts can identify and date a baseball player by the style of uniform and type of equipment. 1860s-70s baseball players usually wore white shoes, while 1890s wore dark shoes; the catcher's shin guards were introduced in the early 1900s. Collectors with a knowledge of Victorian fashion can better date daguerreotypes and ambrotypes.

It's up to collectors and dealers to familiarize themselves with the history, fashion and inventions in their photographic area of interest. Most people are subject specialists. For example, while I'm familiar with vintage baseball, I'd be the first to admit I'm no expert of military uniforms or Ivy League cap and gowns.

The reader should also take due care in verifying the identities of famous people, as misidentification is not uncommon. Often due to a seller's wishful thinking, an anonymous face with a minor to fair resemblance are misidentified as celebrities. It can't be a valuable Abraham

Lincoln photo if it turns out the person in the photo isn't Abraham Lincoln.

Realize that if you go through enough antique picnic snapshots, cabinet cards and tintypes, or enough high school year books, you will see images of nobodies who resemble, if only slightly, celebrities. There was probably one or two people in your high school who had a resemblance to some singer, actor or sports star.

\* \* \* \*

In person observation and general knowledge of photos is essential to identifying photos. If you've collected lots of 1910s real photo postcards or 1940s wirephotos, the average modern reprint will stand out like a sore thumb. The experienced human eye is a sophisticated tool.

\* \* \* \*

I have seen few sophisticated forgeries of cabinet cards, cartes de visite or similar mounted photographs. A digital print or thick Kodak snapshot pasted to a sheet of cardboard shouldn't be hard to identify as fake.

\* \* \* \*

With many old original photos you won't be able to date the photograph to a year. You might describe it as a "circa 1920s snapshot" or "19<sup>th</sup> century tintype." Circa translates to "about," "around" or "plus or minus."

\* \* \* \*

Mounted photographs with dark colored mounts typically date to the 1880s and after. A few 1870s CDVs have dark mounts, but these are unusual.

\* \* \* \*

Old real photo postcards were sometimes hand colored or otherwise colorized. Commercially sold European postcards are often found with bright colors. Other photographs can be found with hand coloring, including cabinet cards, CDVs and salt prints. CDVs were most commonly colored in the 1860s.

\* \* \* \*

Many early 1900s gelatin silver prints have rich tones, with touches of grey or brown or even hints of blue or green. Many modern reprints have much starker black and white images, without the richness and subtlety in tone. This makes these reprints obviously reprints.

\* \* \* \*

One will occasionally see genuine 1800s cabinet cards, CDVs and 1880s trading cards that are ‘skinned.’ This means the photographic print, and often the entire front surface of the cabinet card and cdv, has been peeled, or skinned, from the mount. These are grade poor and will be priced accordingly. Some were pasted into Victorian scrapbooks and damaged upon removal

\* \* \* \*

Many fakes are genuine photographs that are badly misrepresented. For example many ‘baseball tintypes’ are genuine tintypes but do not show real baseball players. The image may show 1870s firemen whose uniforms closely resembled baseball uniforms.

Some genuine photographs are misdated. A 1910 cabinet card with period embossment and color may be advertised as from the 1860s. Knowledge of mount styles and uniforms and clothes will usually assign a more accurate date.

\* \* \* \*

1850s-60s CDVs are easy to identify as the mounts are light colored and the corners are square. Most later CDV mounts had rounded corners.

\* \* \* \*

Mounted photographs with the photographer's name embossed typically date 1890s to 1900s. Other embossed designs, like faux frames and textured surface, also date to the 1890s and after, and usually after 1900.

\* \* \* \*

### **Should I call it photograph or photographic print?**

'Photographic print' is the term for a photo made/developed/printed from a negative or transparency. Most photographs, including virtually all paper photos, are photographic prints. The problem is the term print can confuse lay people, as they associate the word print with ink and printing press prints like lithographs, engravings and magazine pictures. If you wish to avoid confusion or personally prefer the term, it's acceptable to call a photographic print a photograph. After all a photographic print is a type of photograph.

I will use 'photographic print' when talking about a photo to photography people, but elsewhere will often call it a photograph to avoid any confusion.

While the majority of photographs are photographic prints, not all photographs are photographic prints. Negatives aren't prints, and neither are tintypes, daguerreotypes and ambrotypes.

If you can't remember if an obscure photo is or is not a photographic print (ivorytype?), it's best to play it safe and call it a photograph.

\* \* \* \*

All other qualities equivalent (subject, year, etc), the larger the photograph usually the more expensive. The larger versions often were rarer and have more popular eye appeal.

\* \* \* \*

Fake ambrotypes are often plastic instead of glass, and usually depict high end subjects like General Custer.

\* \* \* \*

Post World War II gelatin silver paper can be difficult to date to a specific year by just looking at it. 1940s can resemble 1950s paper, 1950s can resemble 1960s paper.

\* \* \* \*

Some original photos can have off quality images, if the image was intentionally or unintentionally shot out of focus, poorly aged or developed. Original 1800s albumen photographic prints can have fading or washing out due to aging. If an original photograph is a blow up (photographic print is much larger than the negative) the image can have a grain.

\* \* \* \*

Many images are obviously second generation due to the lesser quality of the image.

\* \* \* \*

Foxing is a good sign of age.

\* \* \* \*

A rule of thumb (usually true, with a few exceptions) is that if any photograph made out of glass it is antique, as glass is an old time material for photographs.

\* \* \* \*

The 8x10 inches photograph with white borders is a relatively modern convention, probably popularized in the 1920s-30s. It's not impossible for an unmounted 1905 photograph to be in this style, but it would be unusual. In other words, if you see a 8x10 white bordered photo showing a US Senator in 1903, it was probably made years after the image was shot.

\* \* \* \*

If a photograph has a vintage stamp or tag, the image is crystal clear and overall the photograph looks constant with the age (toning, foxing, silvering, thinness of paper, other), the photo is probably original.

If you find an ACME Newspictures stamped photo of Mickey Mantle in his rookie year and the image is crystal clear, the photo is probably an original.

\* \* \* \*

Many news service photos on the market have vintage stamps (ACME, United Press, etc) and brown paper captions. So it is not difficult for collectors to find photos they know to be vintage.

\* \* \* \*

Many photographs can quickly be identified as authentic or fake by a single quality. Silvering in the image or an ACME Newspictures on the back helps prove a photograph old.

\* \* \* \*

If the photograph looks great hung from your wall and cost you \$20, it's probably worth \$20 even if it turns out to be later generation. There's no reason to lose sleep over a \$10 or \$20 purchase.

\* \* \* \*

Cabinet and CDV mounts are more difficult to forge than the photographic print, especially if there are gold gilded edges, die-cut edges, embossed photographer's name or foxing on back. Stuff like embossing, uniform edges and gilding would be tough for a forger to make.

Remember than the original cabinet, CDV and similar mounts were factory made. The photographer didn't cut his own, but bought in bulk them from a factory.

\* \* \* \*

### Contact Sheets



Contact sheets—sometimes contact proofs—are proofs made by the photographer to get a look at all the images on the film without having to make a big photo of each. He laid out the strips of film negatives and made one photo of

all the images. The images are small, the size on the negative and, if original, crystal clear. Using a magnifying glass to view each image, the photographer picked which image or images were to be made into large photos. The picked photos are often checked or circled in grease pen. Most contact sheets are gelatin silver (black and white) or chromogenic (color). They often have the standard paper manufacturer's branding on back and sometimes the photographer's stamp. Common sizes are 8x10" and 11x14."



David Rudd Cycleback is an art historian specializing in the issues of authenticity and cognition. He was the photograph authentication advisor for Beckett Media, has advised and examined material for major auction houses and was a contributing writer for the Encyclopedia of Nineteenth Century Photography. His other books include *Judging the Authenticity of Prints by the Masters*; *Forensic Light: A Beginner's Guide*; *Judging the Authenticity of Early Baseball Cards*; and *Conceits: Human Cognition and Perception*.

