

# 5 Steps to Identify a Family Photograph

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## Social Media Contacts

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## Provenance

- Who owned this picture before you (and before them)?
- Why is this picture in your collection?
- Who do you think the people are?
- Are there stories associated with the image?
- How did it end up in your collection?

## Identify the Photographic Method

Daguerreotype	Ambrotype	Tintypes	Carte des Visite
Mirror-like surface	Negative on glass; appears as a positive image	Negative on iron; appears as a positive image	Albumen or carbon prints—photo chemicals on paper
Must be held at an angle to be seen	Backed with a dark background	Fixed on a black metal background	Mounted on thin card stock
Usually cased	Usually cased	Paper mat or case	Occasionally found in a case
Image is reversed*	Not reversed*	Image is reversed*	Not reversed
1839	1854	1856	Process introduced to United States in 1859

## Types of Twentieth Century Images

### **Digital Imaging**

The first commercially successful digital cameras debuted in 1990.

### **Home Movie Film**

Color film for 16mm cameras was available as early as 1928

### **Paper Prints**

Kodak introduced its black-and-white roll film 1012 in 1895 and didn't discontinue it until 1956. Color negative film was introduced in 1941.

### **Postcards**

Real photo" postcards produced from film or glass plate negatives with postcard-style backs, appeared around 1900 and remained available for decades.

### **Polaroids**

In 1947, Edwin Land patented his process for instant gratification in a camera, and Polaroid <[www.polaroid.com/us](http://www.polaroid.com/us)> still makes film and cameras in a variety of formats.

### **Stereographs**

From 1854 to 1938, a few commercial companies produced "stereos" of travel, war, religious and other scenes—rarely do they depict people up close

## **Research The Photographer**

Photographer's placed imprints in different places, depending on the type of image. Since the majority of photographs are paper prints, look on the front of the cardboard mount, the back of the image or their name embossed in the lower right corner of some images. Imprints include the photographer's surname and sometimes where they operated their business. Try these resources for additional help researching photographers.

- Search the photographer's name on Google.com to discover collections of their images and new information.
- Use newspaper databases such as GenealogyBank.com to track them through articles and advertisements
- Use city directories to establish work dates.
- Treat them like family—explore databases, census records and find documentation for their lives.

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- Share what you've learned on the web.

### **Follow the Fashion Facts**

**1840s** Amanda Bloomer and Elizabeth Cady Stanton introduce a new style-- bloomers, loose ankle-gathered pants under a knee length skirt.

**1850s** Isaac Singer developed the foot treadle sewing machine

**1850s** Levi Straus makes a pair of pants from heavy duty fabric.

**1856:** Synthetic aniline dyes introduce new colors--mauve in 1856 and magentas, fuchsia in 1858.

**1859** Madame Demorest of New York City began selling paper clothes patterns

**1869** The Cincinnati Red Stockings wear the first baseball caps.

**1873** Rubber soled canvas shoes became known as "sneakers"

**1885** Sunglasses first appear but don't become popular until the 1930s.

**1896** Bostonians establish the Massachusetts Audubon Society outraged over killing birds for hat plumes.

**1900** International Ladies Garment Workers Union and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America seek higher pay and better working conditions.

**1920s** Women cut off their hair to emulate Clara Bow's short bobbed hair.

**1940s** Nylon stockings were introduced.

**1946** The bikini becomes popular beach attire.

### **Find Fashion Online**

Historic Catalogs of Sears Roebuck on Ancestry.com

<http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=1670>

Search for nineteenth century fashion magazines on the Internet Archive

[www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org) (Peterson's Magazine, Demorest's.)

Accessible Archives <http://www.accessible.com/accessible/preLog> has a full run of Godey's Lady's Book

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***Add up the facts and double check your assumptions:***

- Who in your family lived in that area in those years?
- How old were they then?
- Does that information agree with the information in the picture?
- Use a spreadsheet to diagram your information.
- Add columns for census years and city directories, rows are the names of the people. In each box is their age in those years. It's a quick guide.



**Sample Questions For This Photo:**

- Where was Rostock? *It's in Germany, but given changing political boundaries, at the time the picture was taken it may have been in another area. Look at historical atlases.*
- Who lived there and when?  
*There are six children in this family only two are boys.*
- Estimate the date based on photograph type, clothing and photographer. *This style of dress was worn circa 1876.*
- Estimate their ages
- Compare the details to family information