

Presentation By John Beaumont

# Genealogy

Your Photos - dating,  
storing, and improving



# Welcome

**In this session, we will talk about your family photographs:**

- **Types of Historical Photographs and Preservation Tips**
- **Detailed Analysis for Dating Photos**
- **Techniques for Research and Dating Photos**
- **Repair and Restoration**
- **Quick Case Study**
- **Q&A**

# Types of Historical Photographs and Preservation Tips

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# Daguerreotypes (1840s-1860s)



Daguerreotype dated 1 September 1849, (hand colored) Photos of the Past, Flickr 2023

Based on a technique developed by Frenchman Louis Daguerre (1787-1851). Small, very fragile photographs developed on a polished silver-plated sheet of copper.



Woman seated, holding full plate daguerreotype portrait of a man, George Eastman House Collection, Flickr 2023



Undated Daguerreotype of a Boy with a Book, Smallcurio, Flickr 2023

**Archival Challenges:** Susceptible to physical damage, tarnishing, and corrosion.

**Preservation Tips:** Store in airtight cases with protective glass to minimize exposure to air and pollutants.

# Ambrotypes (1855-1865)

Similar cases and frames as daguerreotypes but without their mirror-like reflective quality from the silver plate. In this case, the image is created on glass. Like the daguerreotype, very delicate and easily damaged.



6th Plate Ambrotype.,1857, inferno55, Flickr 2023  
Behind the photo (inside the case) is a handwritten note that reads "Taken on 8th Avenue N.Y. Aug. 14, 1857."

Undated Ambrotype, Photos of the Past, Flickr 2023



**Archival Challenges:** Fragility of glass, deterioration of backing material.

**Preservation Tips:** Handle with care, store upright in cushioned boxes, and keep in stable, controlled environments.

# Tintypes (1856-1900)



Tintype portrait of two women, undated, smallcurio, Flickr 2023



Tintype portrait of a seated woman with two young girls in identical plaid dresses, c. 1859-1869. Community Archives, Flickr 2023

*Archival Challenges: Prone to rust and bending; image can peel off the metal.*

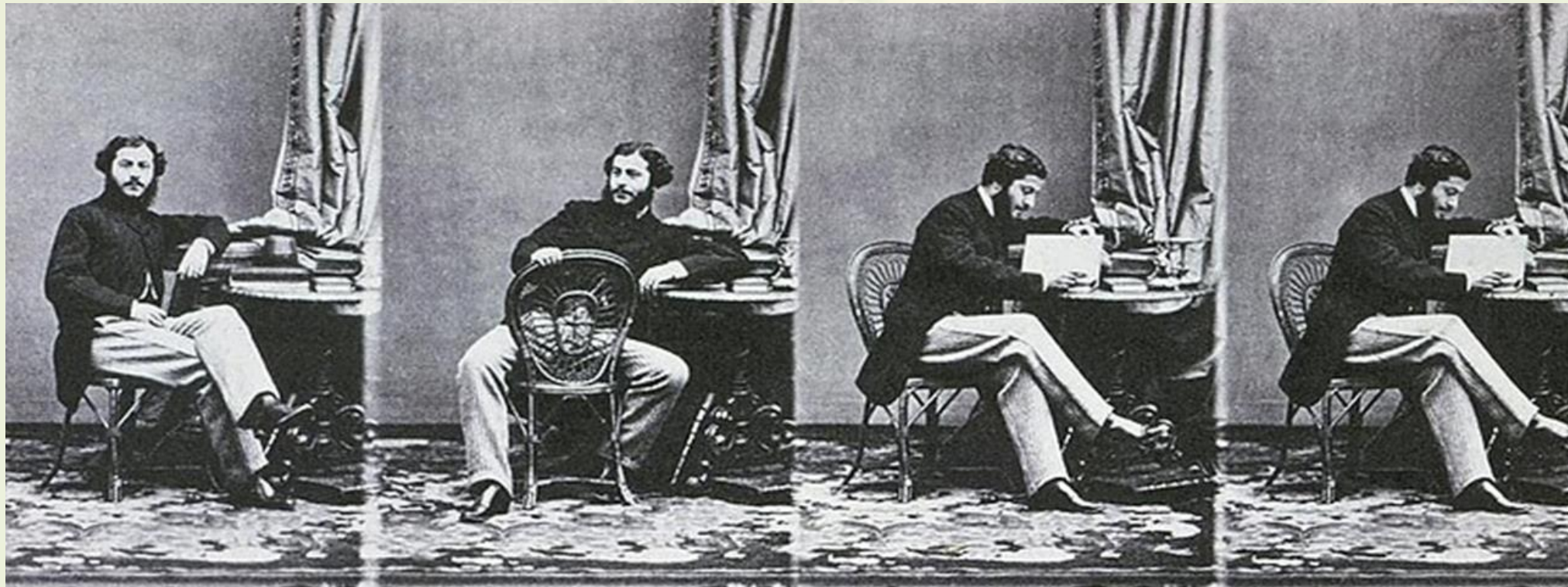
*Preservation Tips: Store flat in archival sleeves, avoid bending or scratching.*



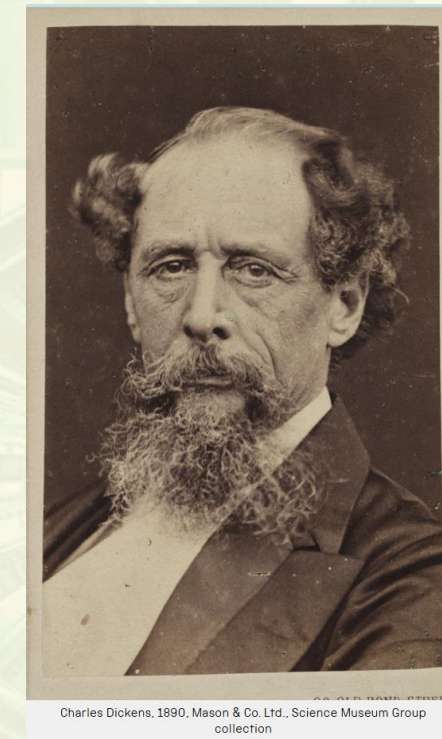
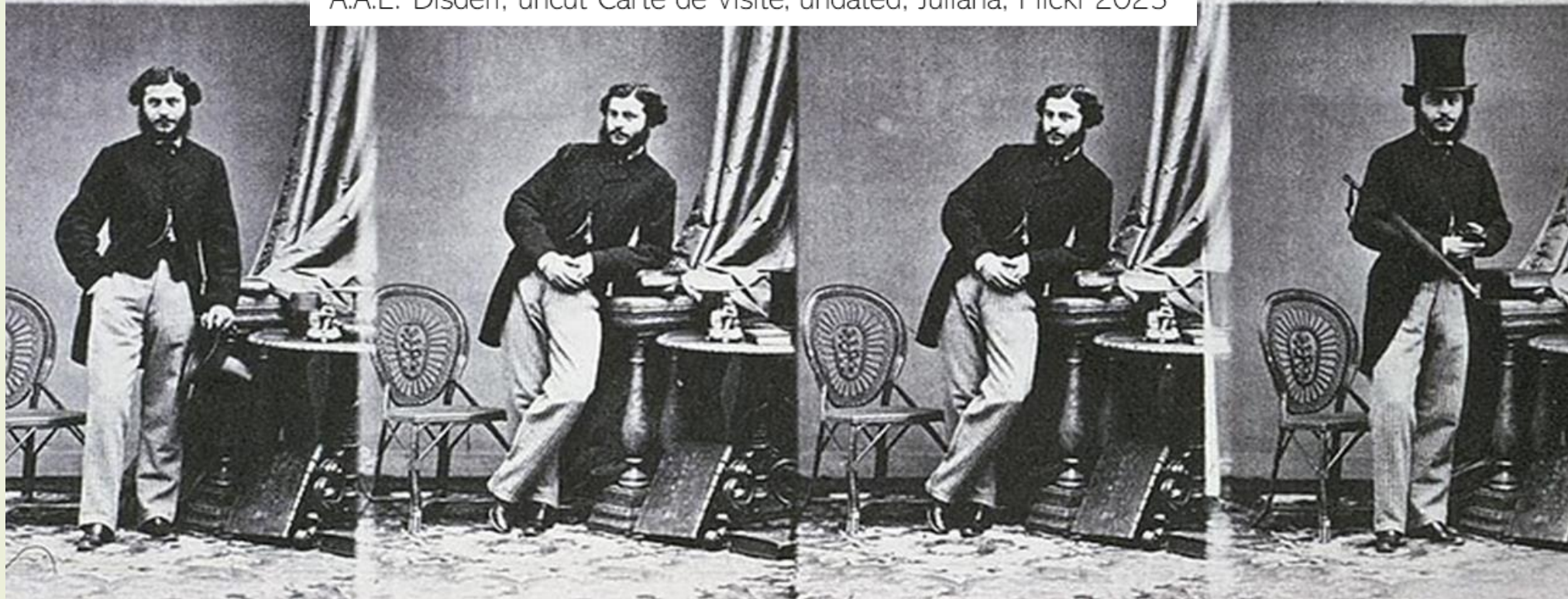
A tintype photograph of two men and four women dressed in fancy attire. Their names are: Jessie, Lillie, Em, Gert, Ab, and Jim (Hastings County Historical Society) Flickr 2023

**The first rapid and inexpensive photograph technique. It was most popular between the 1860s and 1900s but stayed in use long after. Made directly onto a thin sheet of metal, they can be found in frames, sleeves, or loose. Also known as a ferrotype.**

# Cartes des Visites (1860s-1870s)



A.A.E. Disderi, uncut Carte de Visite, undated, Juliana, Flickr 2023



Charles Dickens, 1890, Mason & Co. Ltd., Science Museum Group collection



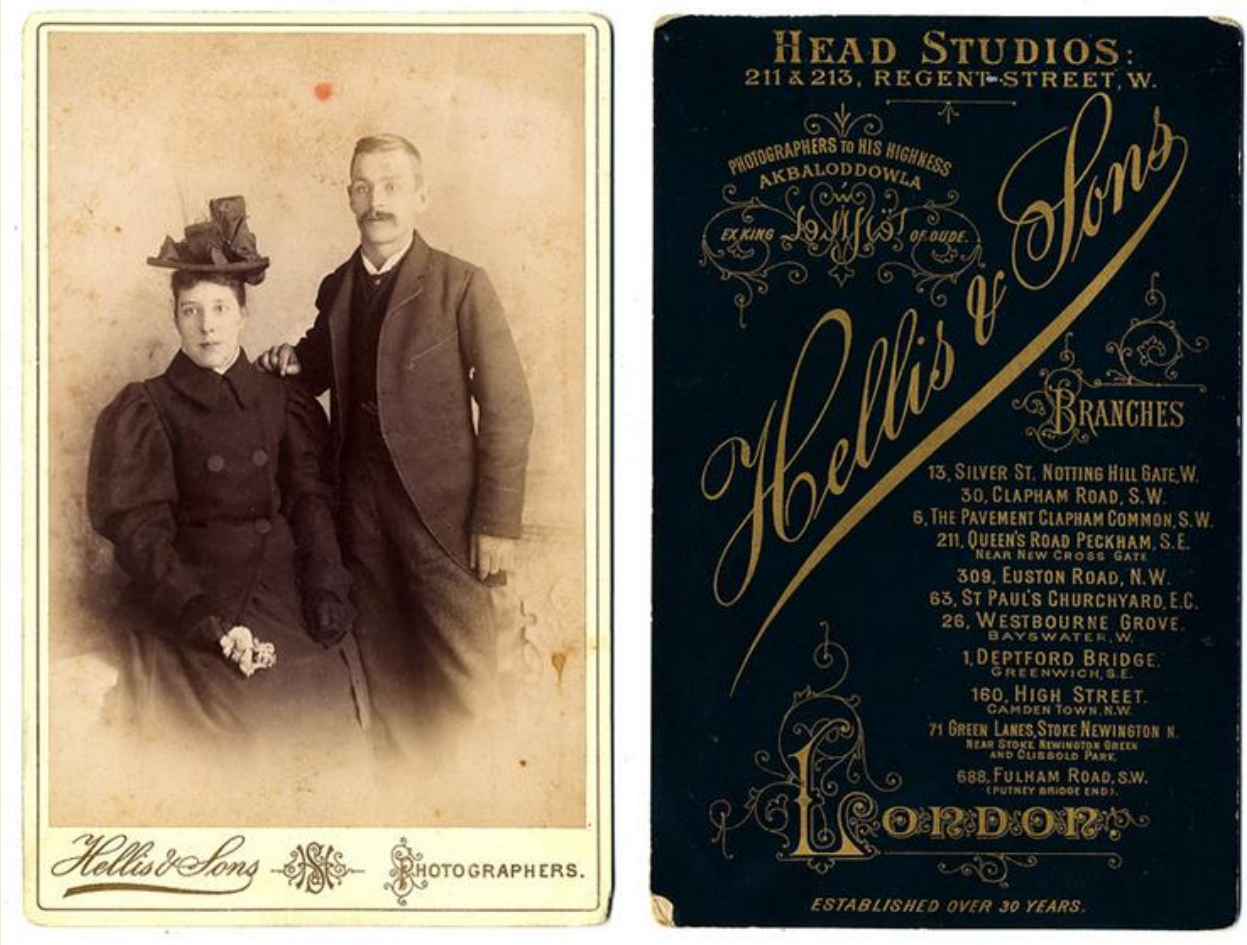
Carte-de-visite, John Henry Foley, 1863, National Library of Ireland, Flickr 2023

*Archival Challenges: Paper and photographic chemicals can deteriorate*

*Preservation Tips: Store in archival-quality photo albums or acid-free boxes.*

**Visiting Cards - Small photographs (slightly larger than a modern business card) mounted on a thin card intended to pass to friends and family.**

# Cabinet Cards (1860s-1900s)



Cabinet Card, Published by Hellis and Sons, London, England, c1890s Flickr 2023

*Archival Challenges: Similar to cartes de visites with additional risk due to larger size causing more bending and damage.*

*Preservation Tips: Store flat, ideally in custom-sized archival boxes.*



Cabinet Card, Published by A.E. Rinehart, Denver, Colorado, Flickr 2023

**Using larger and thicker card stock than a Cartes des Visites with the intention of the photo being openly displayed in a cabinet, hence the name. Typically, the photography studio was prominently shown on the front and back of the card.**

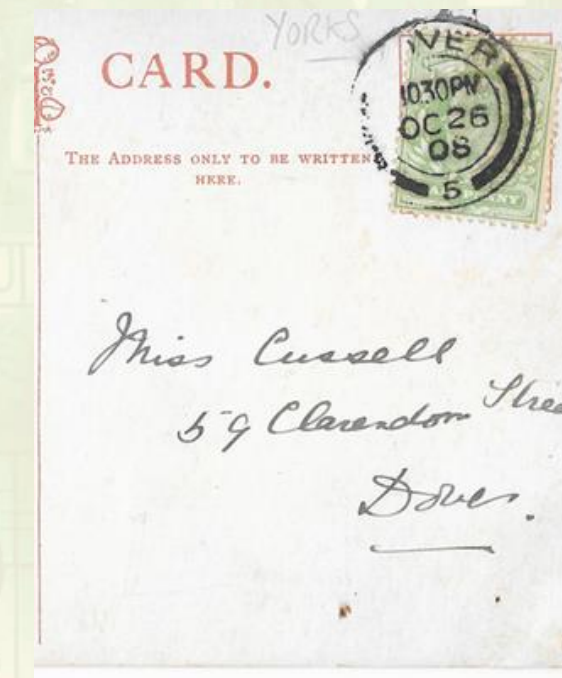


# Personalized Post Cards (1900s-1940s)



*Archival Challenges: Ink and photo degradation, paper becoming brittle.*

*Preservation Tips: Store in acid-free sleeves, avoid light exposure, and maintain low humidity.*



**Studios could use their photographs, or customers could bring in their own to be put onto a postcard format for mailing to friends and relatives.**



# Popular Photography (1900s-2000)



Kodak introduced the Box Brownie in 1900 for one dollar, making it simple and inexpensive for anyone to take photographs. Advances came over the years, color, zoom, disposable, and digital.

*Archival Challenges:* Film degradation (e.g., color fading, vinegar syndrome, cellulose acetate degradation).

*Preservation Tips:* Keep negatives in a cool, dry place; use archival sleeves for prints; digitize for long-term preservation.

# Digital (Phone) (2000-Present)



*Image produced with AI*

Digital phone cameras, equipped with advanced sensors and multi-lens systems, offer high-resolution imaging that rivals traditional cameras, featuring innovations like night mode, optical zoom, and AI-enhanced scene detection.

*Archival Challenges: Data corruption, media obsolescence, and data loss. Too many to manage.*

*Preservation Tips: Regular backups, use reliable and multiple storage formats, and cloud storage.*

# Preserving Photos Digitally

**Digitize Your Photographs:** Either self-scan or use a professional scanning service.

**Organize Your Digital Files:** Establish a consistent file and folder naming system.

**Secure Storage Solutions:** Store your photographs both locally and on the cloud.

**Protect Your Images:** Ensure you take regular backups and have version control.

**Control Your Images:** Consider creating watermarked versions for public use.

# Detailed Analysis for Dating Photos

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# Note Every Detail

Use computer zoom or a magnifying glass

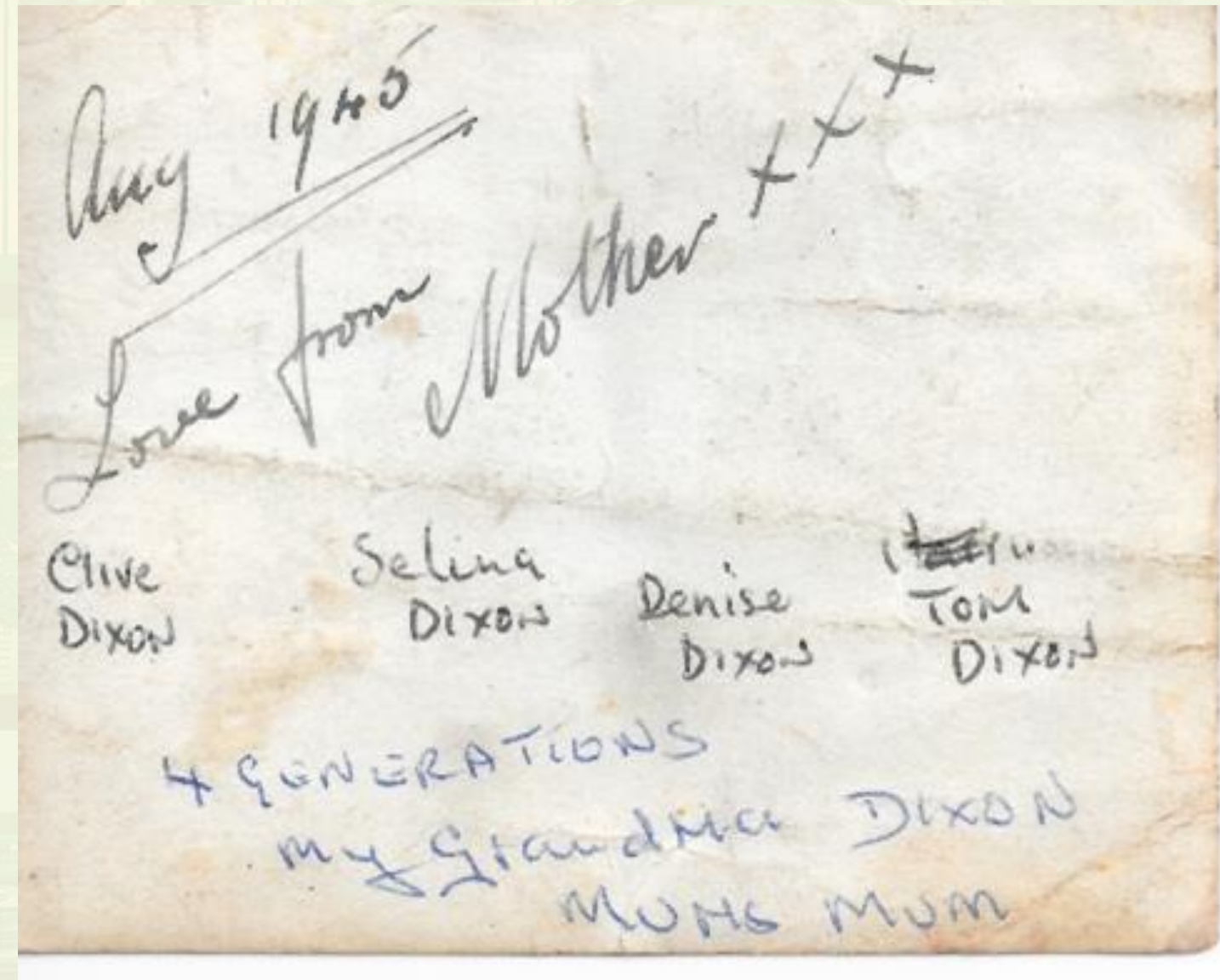


The WW1 Silver War Badge was given to wounded veterans

Wedding ring?  
Note the man's affectionate pose (father or husband?)  
Also, note the type of furniture.

# Note Every Detail

Is there a publisher or Studio? Is anything written on the photo?



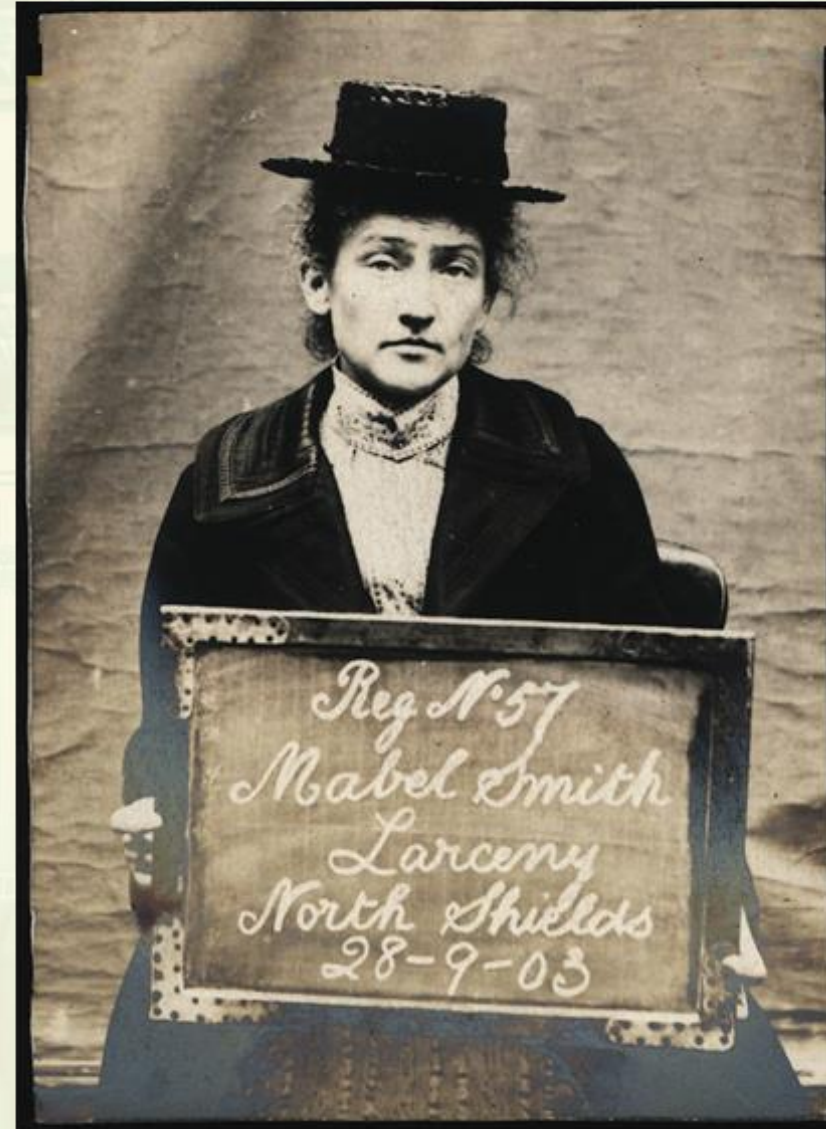
The date and subjects of this photo are written on the reverse. However, take care; annotations are not always correct

# Clothing

Fashion is an excellent indicator of the date of the photograph



June 17, 1909. 20th Century Stall at a Bazaar, National Library of Ireland. Flickr 2023



Sept 28, 1903.. Mabel Smith, Arrested for: Larceny. Tyne & Wear Archives, Flickr 2023



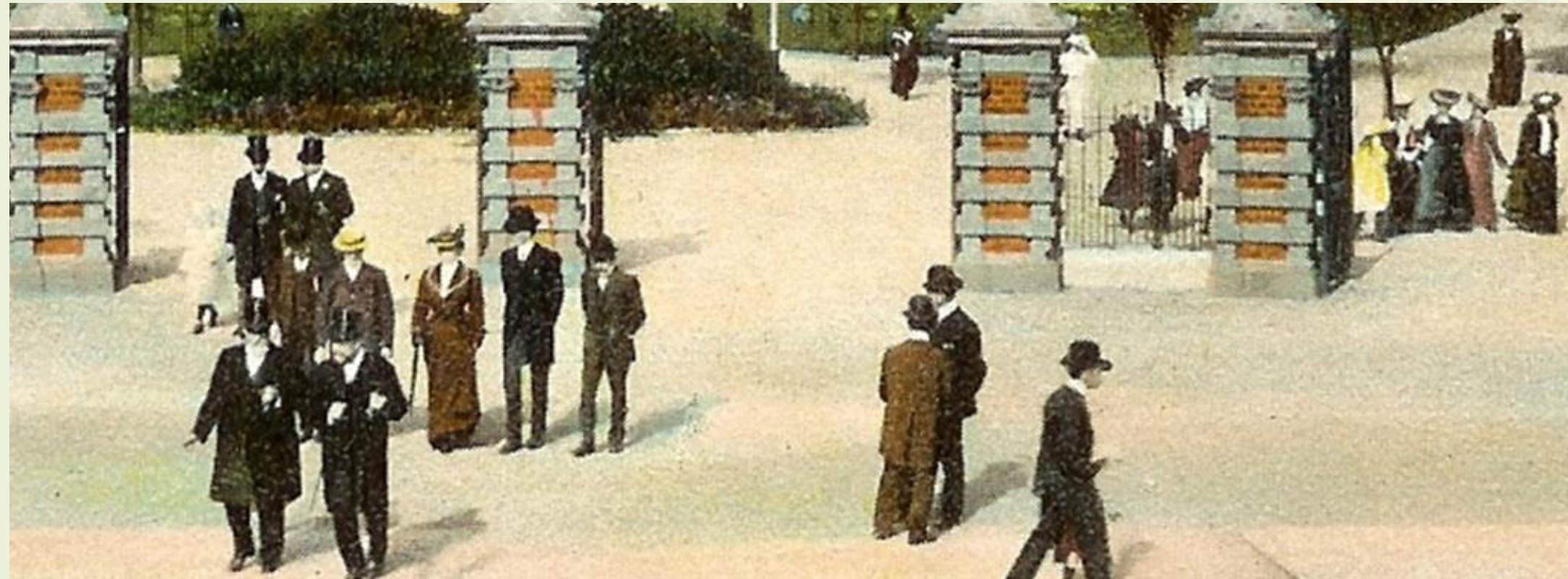
ca. 1860 Charles S. Dicken and colleagues. State Library of Queensland, Flickr 2023

Take into account the context, social class, location and occasion.



# Hats

In the past, fashionable hats were an excellent indicator of date.



Both men's and women's hat fashions undertook significant changes throughout the Victorian (1837 – 1901) to Edwardian (1901-1910) eras.



# Hair

Like clothes and hats women's hair can help determine a period



ChatGPT Image



Hop picking in Kent – the short WW2 hairstyle can still be recognized.



ChatGPT Image

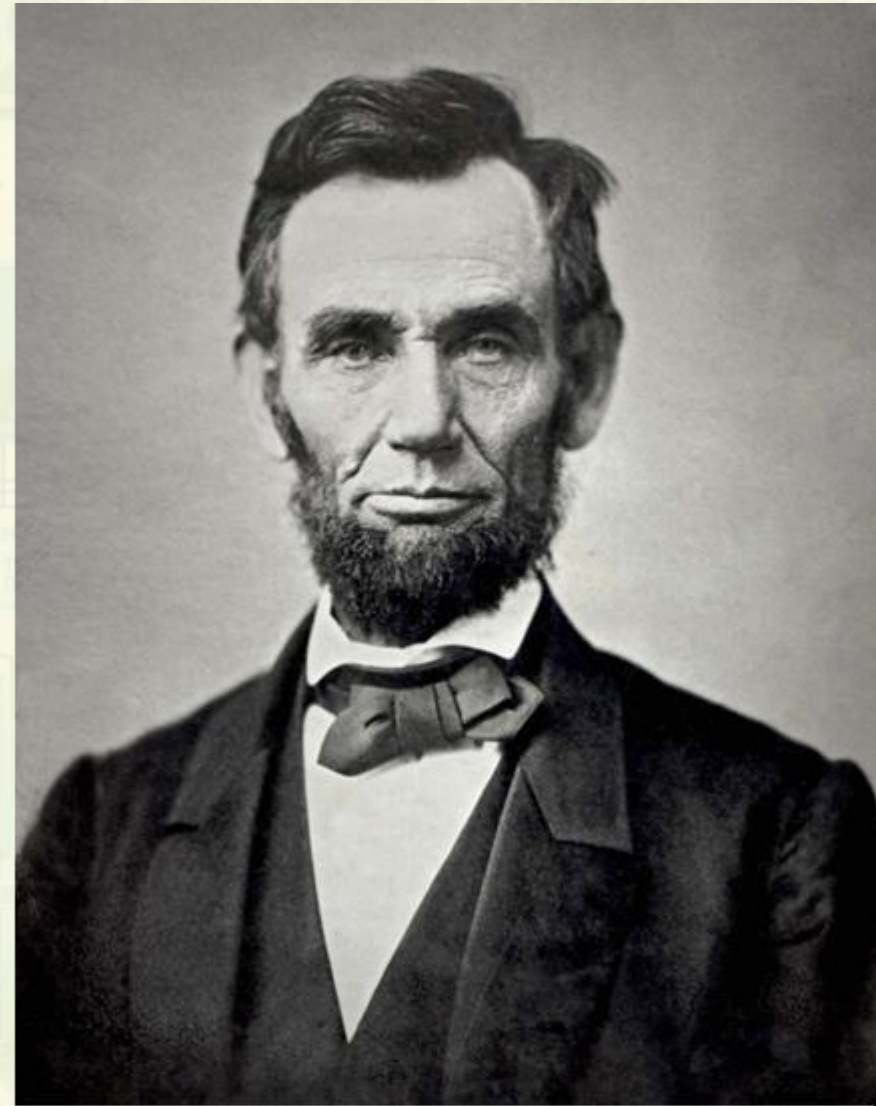
There are still some clues in men's hairstyles, but compared to women, men's hairstyles are very similar throughout the period as can be seen from this period photo.

# Beards and Mustaches

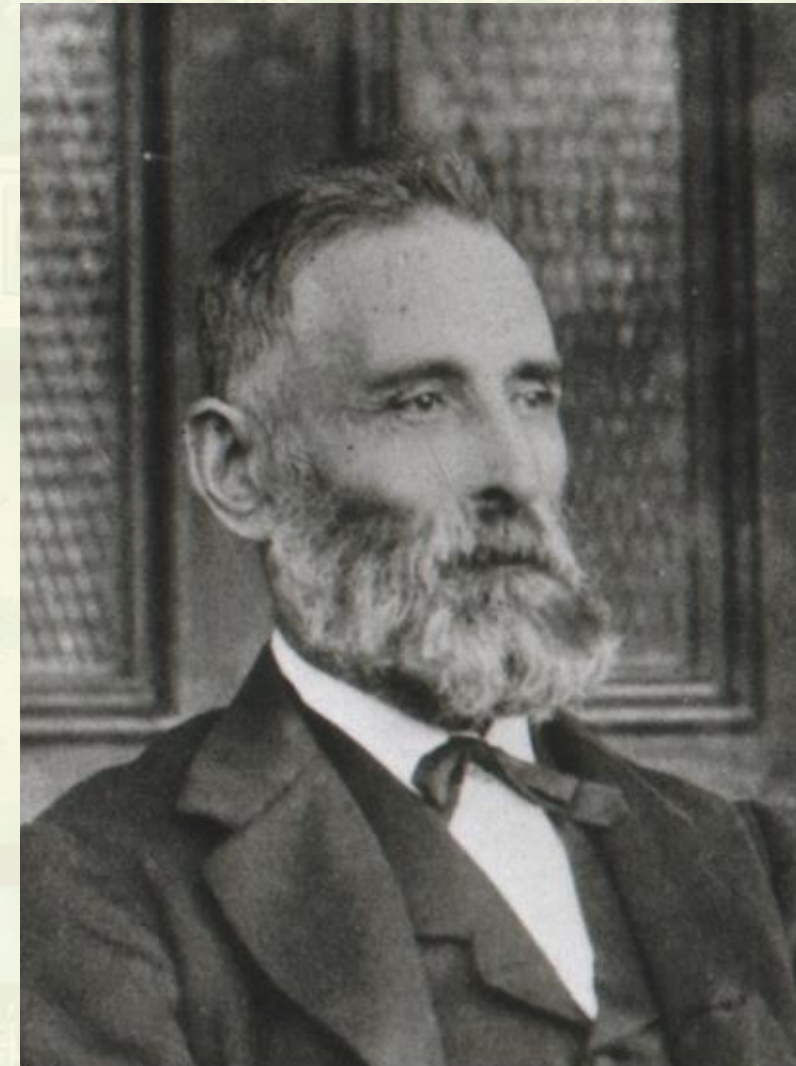
Like women's hair men's beards and mustaches follow trends.



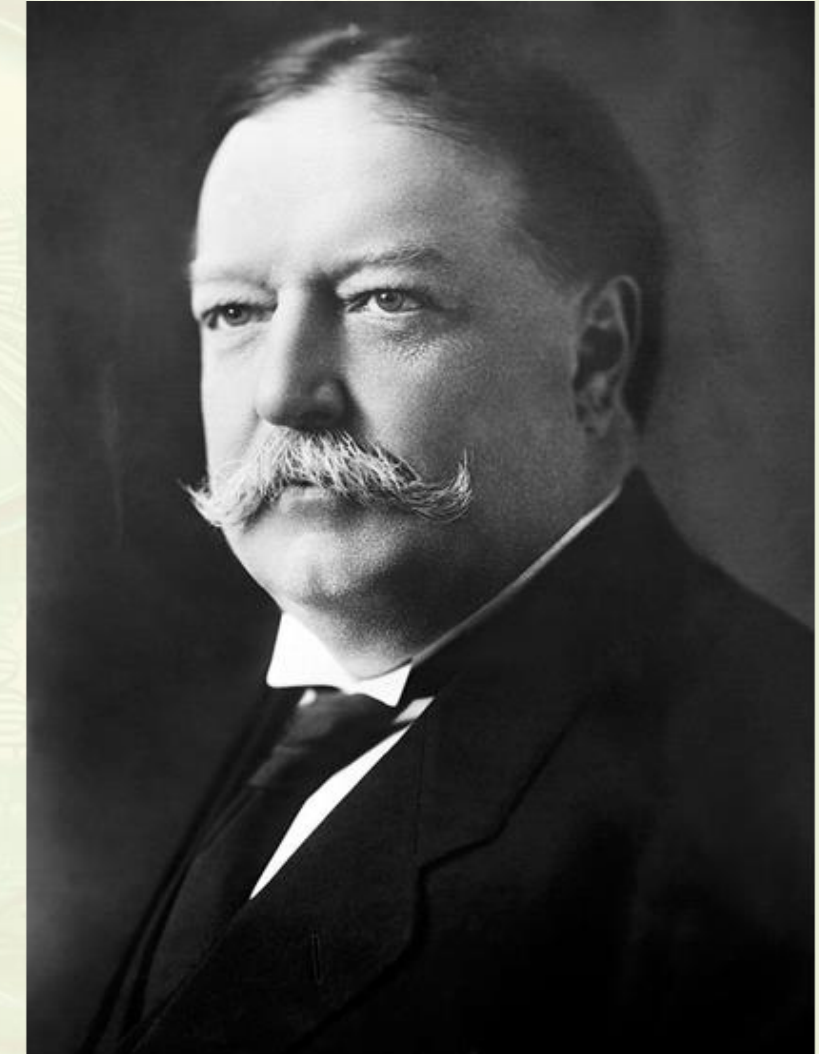
Portrait of Wilhelm Siemens (1823-1883), Engineer, Smithsonian Institution. Flickr 2023



Portrait of President Abraham Lincoln (1809 -1863), USDA. Flickr 2023



Portrait of Christopher Robert Leadley (1823 – 1910) – probably taken in New Zealand (3<sup>rd</sup> G-Granduncle).



Portrait of President William Howard Taft (1857 -1930), US Department of State. Flickr 2023

According to official portraits, William Taft (pictured above in 1908) was the last US president to have facial hair.

# Uniforms, badges and insignia

Many groups, in addition the visits military have uniforms



This is a group of volunteer firemen who were employed by a large flour mill.

# Background

What else is in the picture that will help with dating?



USA Tintype, C1860-70s. John Toohey. Flickr 2023

Can we date the furniture used as a prop in this studio?



When were these cigarettes sold?



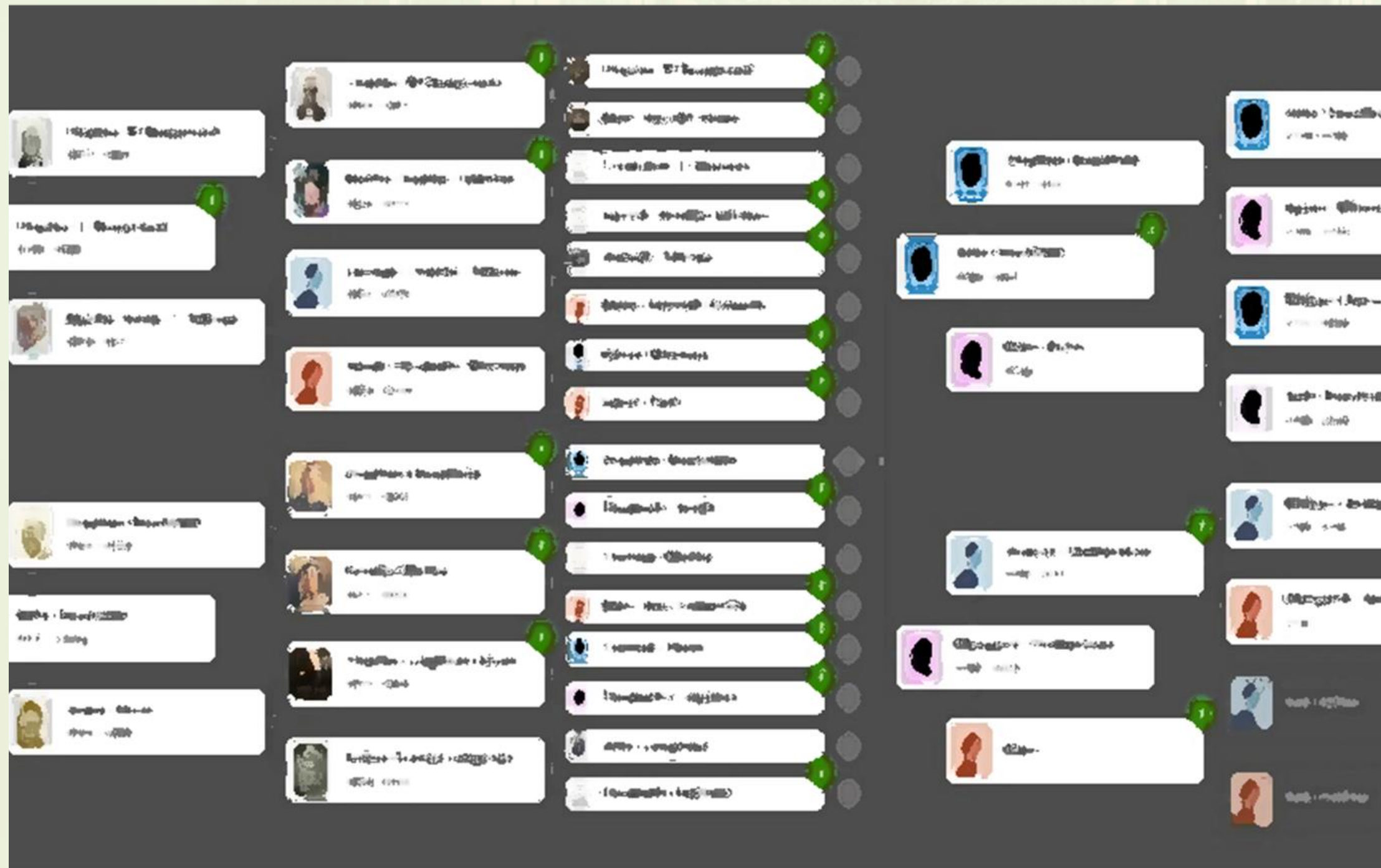
What do we know about this pub?  
*(Changing color sometimes enhances details)*



Can we identify and date this car?

# Family Tree

The photo should align with your genealogical research.



One of the most important parts of dating a family photo is collating it with your family tree.

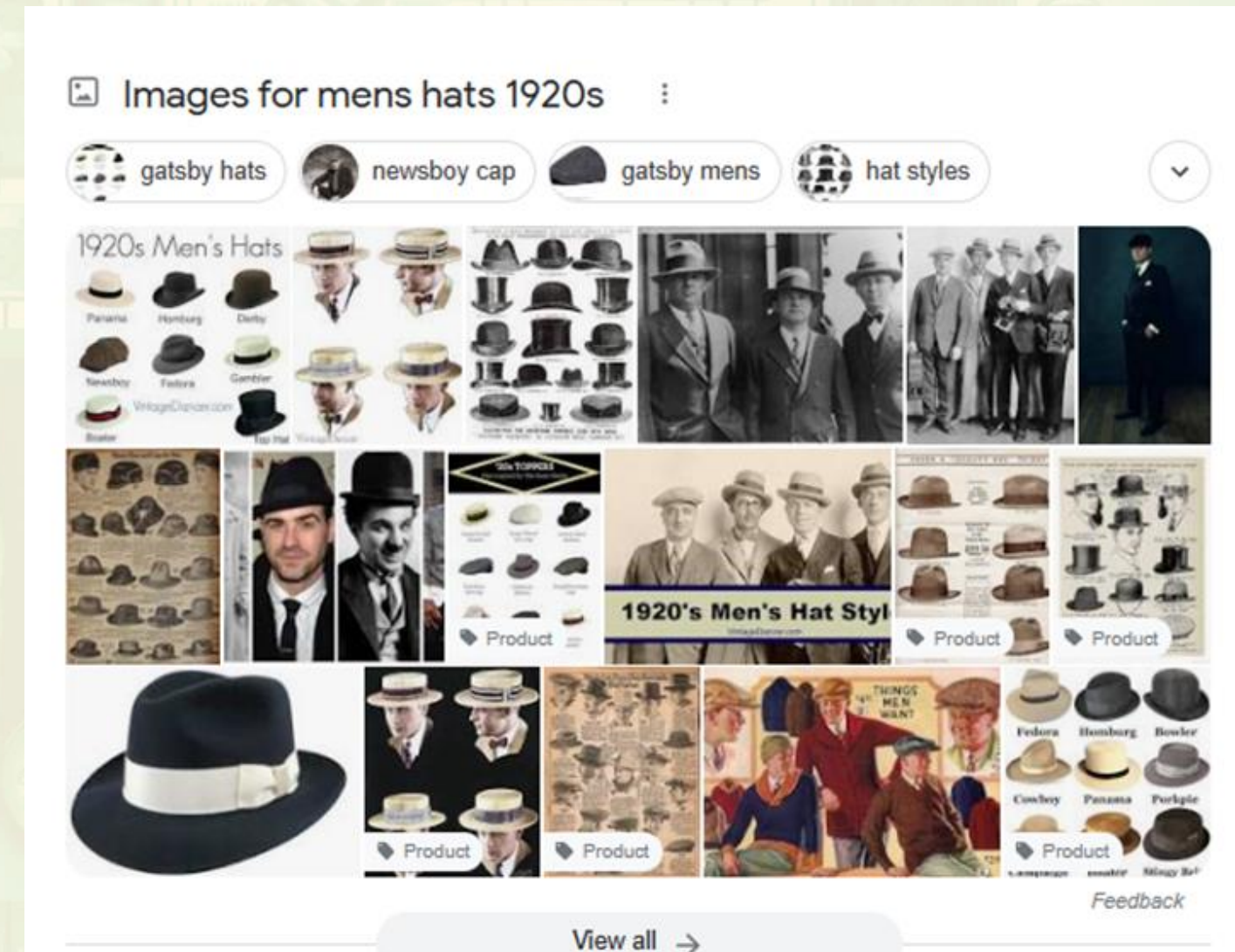
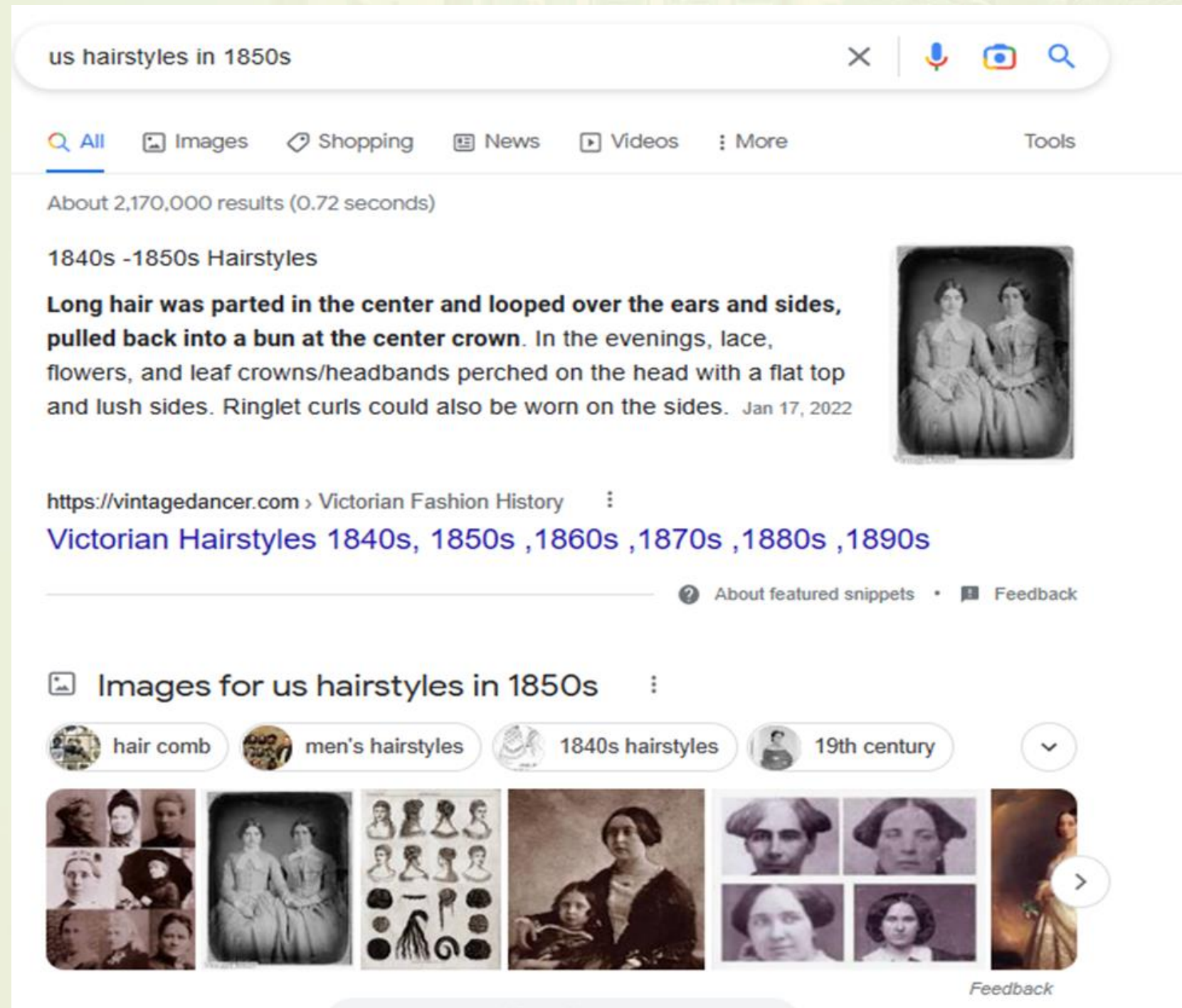
What date range does your family tree give you for the photo's subjects? Do these data points align?

# Techniques for Research and Dating Photos

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# Dating : Search Engines

## First Stop: Google search, just an incredible tool



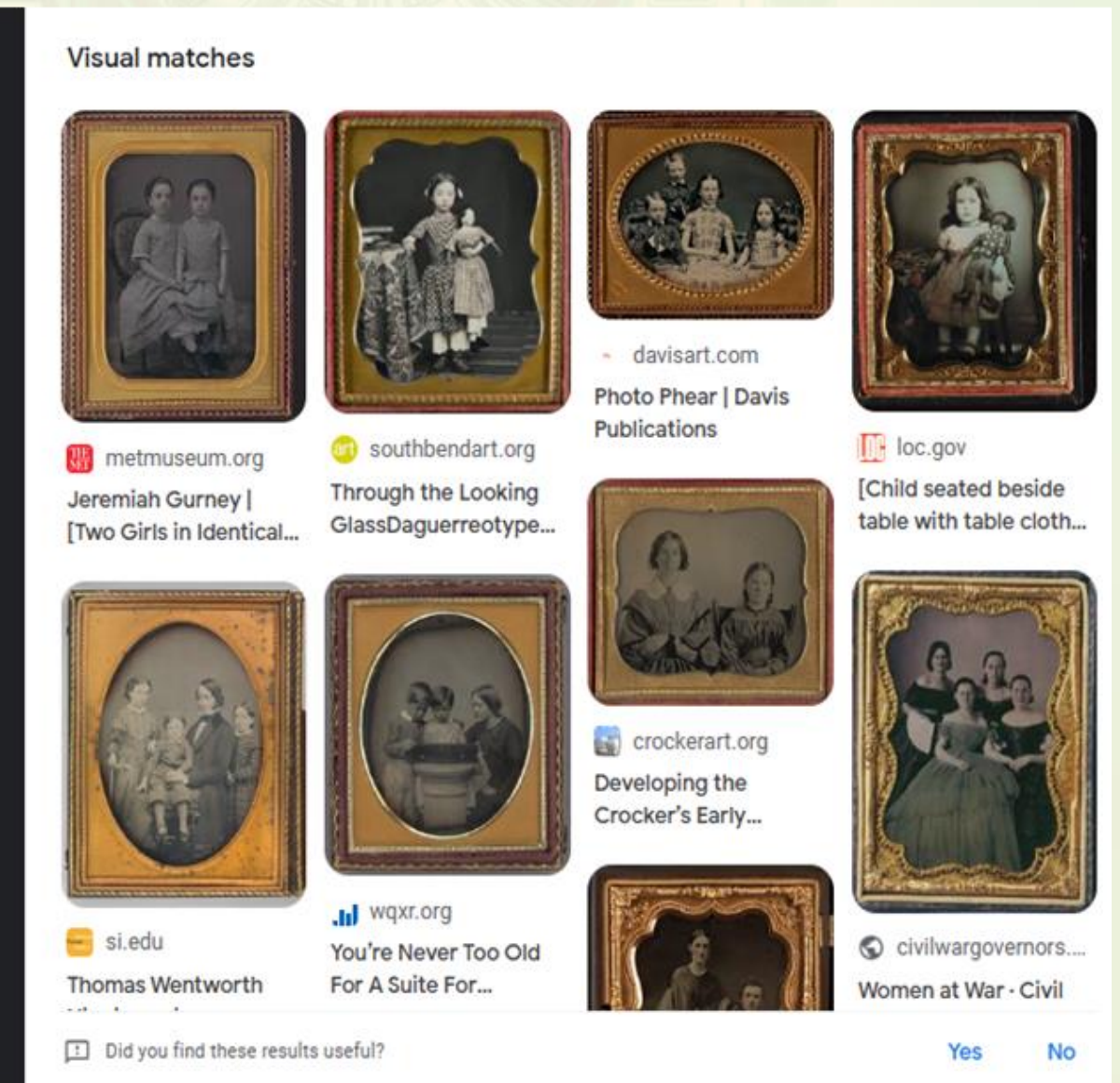
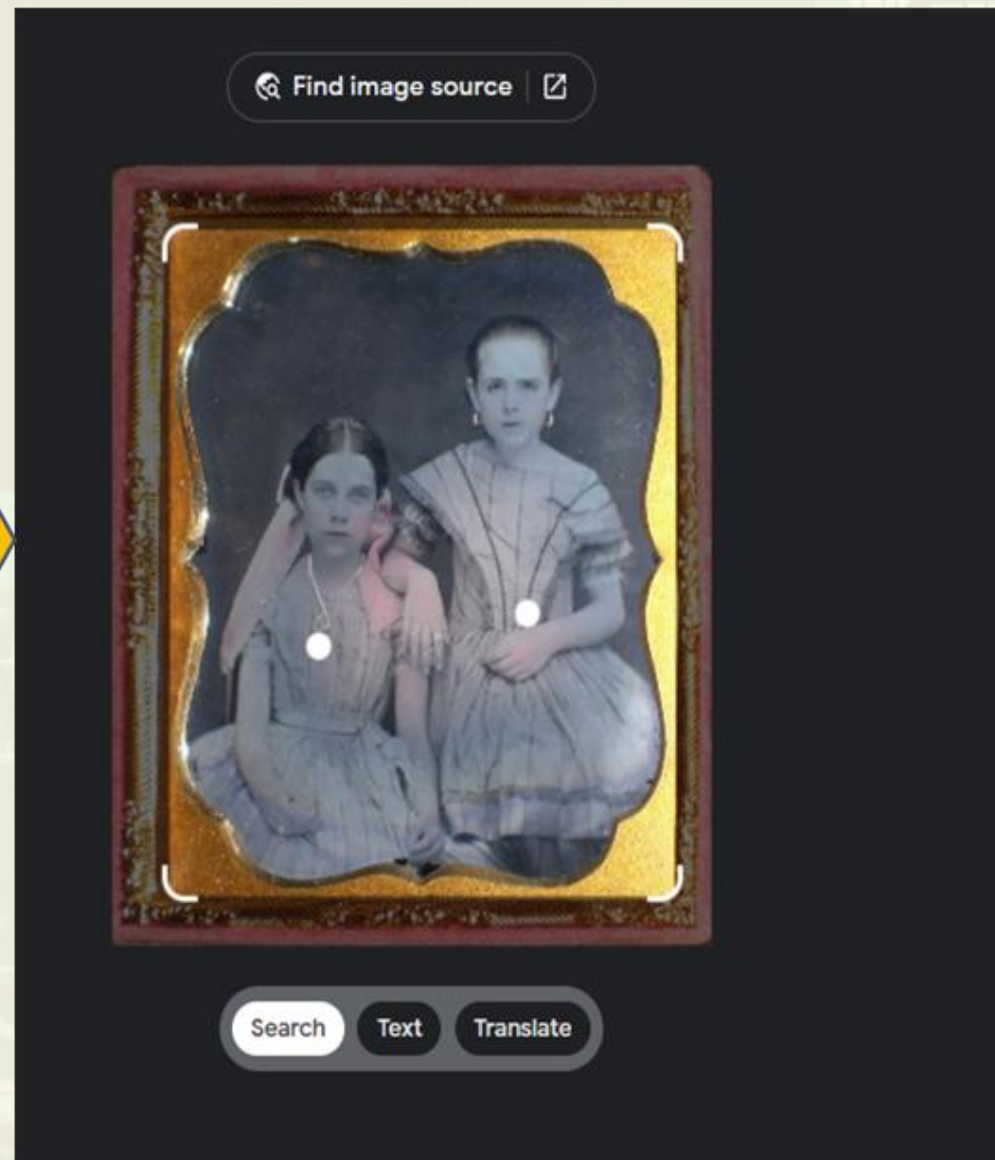
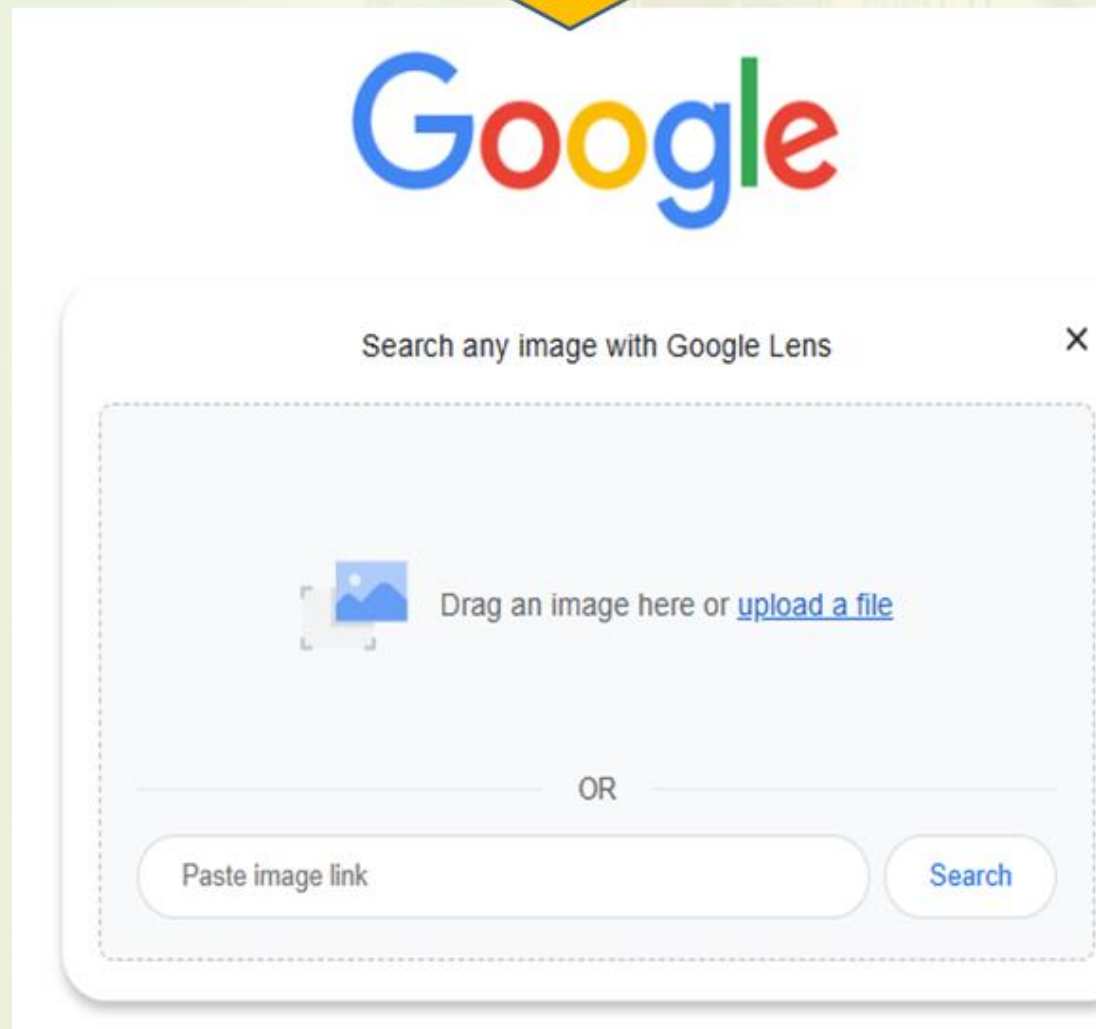
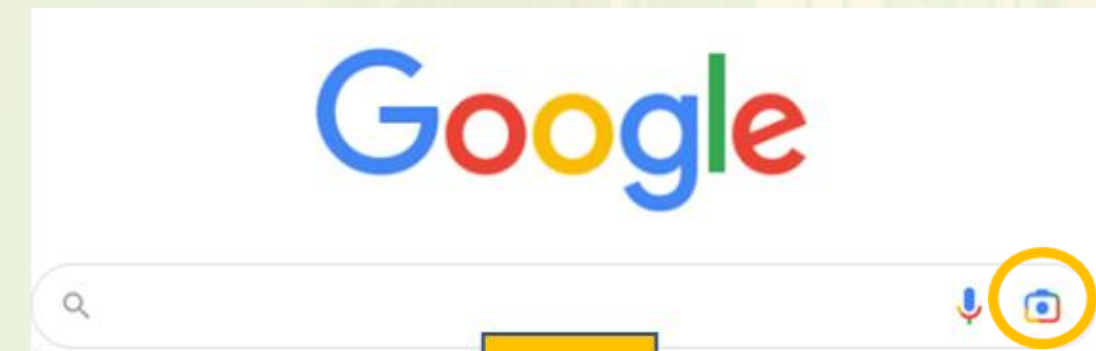
Google will point you to information that will help you date your photograph or link to specialist websites (there are hundreds) to further your research.



# Dating : Image Search

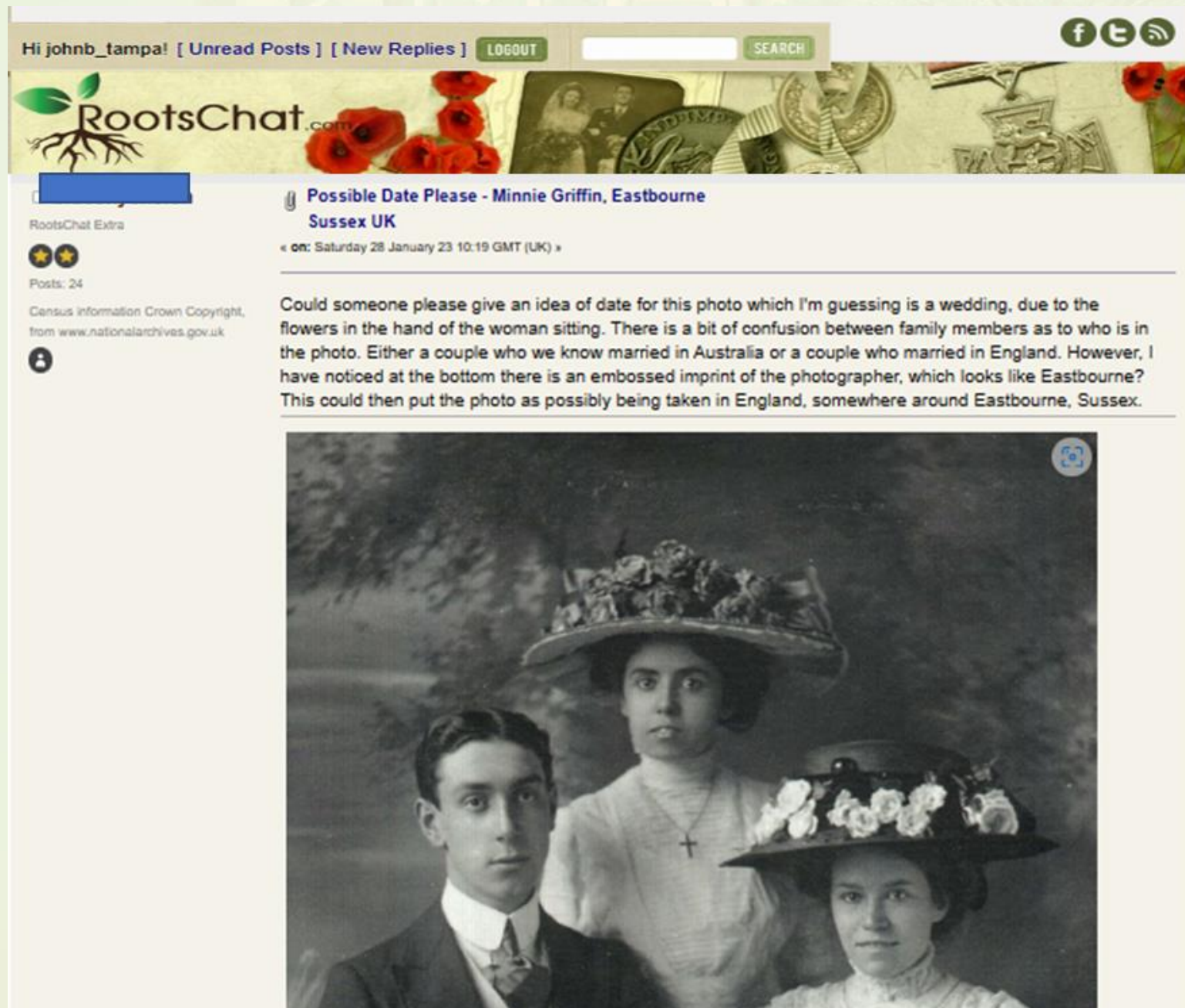
## Next: Google Images: Search by Image

By using “Search by Image” you will be shown similar images that may have already been dated. You can use an image search by image on the whole or part of the photograph.



# Dating : Genealogy Sites

Pose the dating question on a Genealogy site or Facebook Page.




Hi johnb\_tampa! [ Unread Posts ] [ New Replies ] LOGOUT SEARCH

RootsChat.com

Possible Date Please - Minnie Griffin, Eastbourne  
Sussex UK  
on: Saturday 28 January 23 10:19 GMT (UK)

Could someone please give an idea of date for this photo which I'm guessing is a wedding, due to the flowers in the hand of the woman sitting. There is a bit of confusion between family members as to who is in the photo. Either a couple who we know married in Australia or a couple who married in England. However, I have noticed at the bottom there is an embossed imprint of the photographer, which looks like Eastbourne? This could then put the photo as possibly being taken in England, somewhere around Eastbourne, Sussex.



Ancestry.com Users Group

PM -

Please help me with dating this family photo! And the age of this woman!

This tintype was recently passed down to me. It belonged to one of my great grandmothers' parents but I don't know which one. I suspect it could be a direct ancestor of mine; and while I have suspicion of who it might be, I may also be way off. My guess would be that this is from between 1850-1890, but I need help with the decade. I am suspecting 1870s... but then if it is who I think it is she would ha... See more



 **MyHeritage** Has a good photo estimating tool (paid site)

# Dating : Artificial Intelligence (AI) Sites

## Start a Conversation With an AI System.

ChatGPT



**You**  
show me images of common women's hats in the USA between 1840 and 1860

**ChatGPT**



Here is an image showcasing a variety of women's hats commonly worn in the USA between 1840 and 1860. The collection includes styles such as bonnets, decorative caps, and hats adorned with ribbons and flowers.

**You**  
show me images of common womens hats in the USA between 1840 and 1860



**Copilot**  
During the period between 1840 and 1860 in the USA, women's hats were an essential part of fashion and social status. Here are some common styles from that era:

- **Bonnets:** These were the most prevalent form of headwear for women. They featured a wide brim that framed the face and often included elaborate decorations such as ribbons, flowers, and lace <sup>[1]</sup>.
- **Straw Hats:** Leghorn bonnets made of finely plaited Tuscan straw were fashionable during the summer months. They were often plainly trimmed and worn with walking dresses <sup>[1]</sup>.
- **Caps:** Caps covered the crown of the head and were worn indoors by older women. They could be plain or decorative, with lace, eyelet, ribbons, or ruffles <sup>[2]</sup>.
- **Mobcaps:** Worn by working women and domestic servants, mobcaps were easily handmade and typically white, sometimes edged in lace or eyelet <sup>[2]</sup>.

These hats not only served a practical purpose by protecting women from the sun but also indicated a woman's social standing and fashion sensibility. The styles evolved over the years, with the size of the brim and the height of the crown changing to match the fashion trends of the time. For a visual representation, you can find images and more detailed descriptions through historical fashion websites and archives.



[See all images >](#)

# Dating : Artificial Intelligence (AI) Sites

## You can ask AI to date your photograph

Please examine this family photograph and attempt to date when it was taken. Please give me all the rationale and items that lead you to a conclusion. The photograph was taken in London, England.



To estimate the date when this photograph was taken, several elements can be analyzed: the clothing style, the photograph type, and the background or setting. Here is a detailed breakdown:

### Clothing and Fashion:

#### 1. Woman's Dress:

- The high collar and fitted bodice with puffed sleeves suggest a style popular in the late Victorian era.
- The puffed sleeves, in particular, are characteristic of the 1890s. This style was known as the "leg-of-mutton" sleeve, which was prevalent from about 1890 to 1900.

#### 2. Man's Suit:

- The man's suit is three-piece with a waistcoat, which was common during the late 19th century.
- The lapels and the overall cut of the suit, along with the necktie style, are consistent with men's fashion from the 1890s to early 1900s.

### Photography Type and Background:

- The photograph appears to be a cabinet card, a popular photographic format from the 1870s to the early 1900s. Cabinet cards typically measured about 4.25 x 6.5 inches and were often used for portrait photography.
- The studio backdrop, with its painted interior scene, is typical of the late Victorian era.

### Additional Context:

- Given that the photograph was taken in London, England, and considering the typical delay in fashion trends reaching different regions, it is consistent with the styles seen in major European cities around the 1890s.

### Conclusion:

Based on the fashion details, particularly the woman's dress with leg-of-mutton sleeves, and the style of the man's suit, it is most likely that this photograph was taken in the 1890s, specifically around 1890-1900.

If you have any additional context or details that could help refine this estimate, please let me know!



ChatGPT



The man in the photograph was born in 1853 and died in 1918. The woman was born in 1854 and died in 1932. Would that lead you to change your conclusions?



Given the birth and death dates of the individuals in the photograph, the estimated timeframe of the 1890s to early 1900s remains consistent with the ages they appear to be in the photograph. Here's a revised analysis incorporating their ages:

### Ages of the Individuals:

- **Man (born 1853, died 1918):**
  - If the photograph was taken in the 1890s, he would be in his late 30s to mid-40s.
- **Woman (born 1854, died 1932):**
  - In the 1890s, she would be in her late 30s to mid-40s.

### Cross-Checking with Fashion and Styles:

- The fashion styles and the type of photograph are still consistent with the late Victorian era, particularly the 1890s.
- The man and woman in the photograph do appear to be in their late 30s or 40s, which aligns with the timeline suggested by the fashion analysis.

### Final Conclusion:

The additional information about their birth and death dates supports the initial conclusion. The photograph was most likely taken in the 1890s to early 1900s, when both individuals were in their late 30s to mid-40s.

This estimate is reinforced by:

- The leg-of-mutton sleeves on the woman's dress, popular in the 1890s.
- The man's suit style, typical of the same period.
- The ages of the individuals fitting the visual appearance and fashion trends of that era.

ChatGPT can make mistakes. Check important info.

# Repair and Restoration



# Repair and Restoration

Many sites offer photo colorization and repair (using AI)



Always ensure you keep your original safe and sound.

# Repair and Restoration

No expertise needed and the results are very impressive



Restored using  MyHeritage

# The Future With AI

Now you can bring photos to life - literally



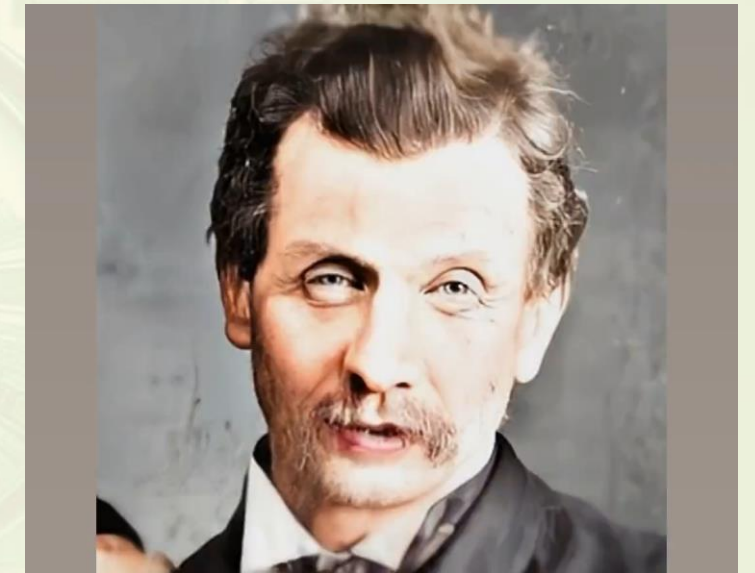
Original



Restored and  
Colorized



Cropped and  
Brightened



Brought to Life



# A Case Study

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# Case Study: Tom, Sidney, George & Harry

MY MUMS + BROTHERS  
TOM, HARRY, GEORGE AND SIDNEY



This is a photo of  
my great-uncles,  
all born in the  
1890s.

*P. J. Walson*  
10, ANGLY ST.  
HULL.

# Case Study: Examine in Detail

Names on the Front

MY MUMS + BROTHERS  
TOM, HARRY, GEORGE AND SIDNEY

L-R  
SIDNEY - GEO - HARRY - TOM

But also, on the back in a different order



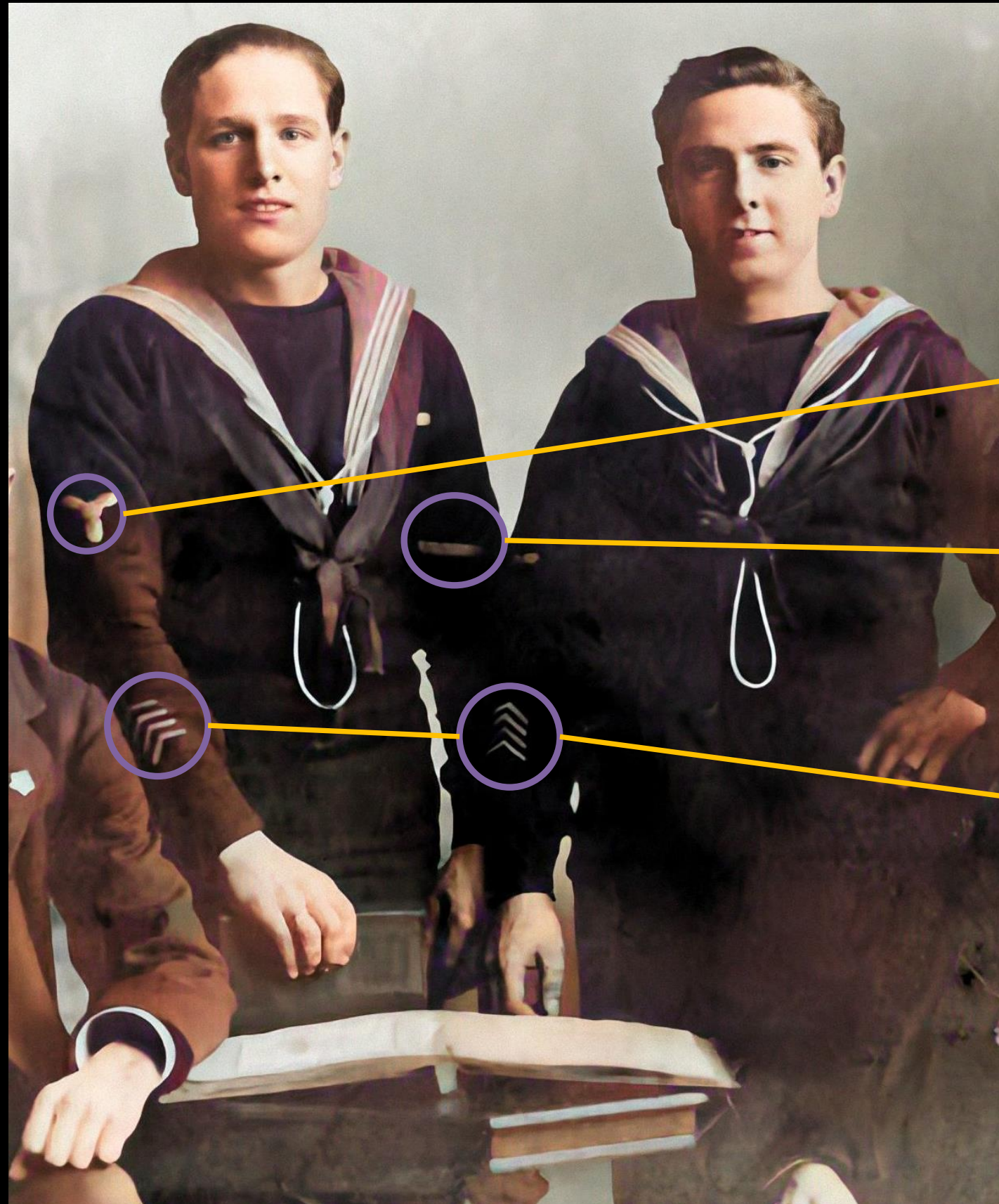
This book is possibly BEN HUR published in 1880. Most likely an old studio prop

Studio name:  
R J Watson 70,  
Anlaby Road, Hull  
(active from the  
1890s to 1920s)

R. J. Watson  
70 ANLABY RD  
HULL

# Case Study: Uniforms

In this case, colorization has helped with the details



From genealogical investigation. Harry and George Dixon were in the Navy. Harry was demobbed on 21 Jan 1920, and George was demobbed on 13 May 1919. So, the photograph must have been taken before 13 May 1919.

Trade Badge – Stoker, he worked in the engine room

Good Conduct Stripe. Awarded after three years of good service, a second stripe was awarded after eight years. Both Harry and George enlisted in 1913, so the photo is after 1916.

World War One service stripes. One stripe for each year of active service during the war. Both have four stripes, WW1 started in July 1914 so the photo must be from July 1918 or later.

From the uniforms alone, we can date the photograph between July 1918 and May 1919.

# Case Study: Identifying People



I have uploaded my family history photographs to Google Photos, which has a person identification algorithm. Luckily, I have a known photograph of George Dixon that matches the sailor on the left.



So, we now know that George is on the left and Harry is on the right.

# Case Study: Family History



Silver War badge for wounded veterans.

The Germans captured Sidney on the Western Front in November 1916. Records show he was repatriated on the 14th of January 1919 (just in time to get married on the 25th of January). He is not known to have been wounded. It was the case that many British prisoners held by the Germans complained that they did not get enough to eat and came home very thin.

Tom was badly wounded in Gallipoli (possibly at the battle of Sulva in August) in the summer of 1915, and by 1917 he was shown as a military pensioner. I don't have the exact discharge date, but I expect it was as early as 1915 with his wounds.

# Case Study: Family History



Sidney, on the left, is very thin. Thomas, on the right, is wearing his Silver War Badge.

Sidney and Thomas are in civilian clothes. It appears that the picture was taken after 14th January 1919 (Sidney's return to England.)

Now looking at Sidney's left hand, there does not appear to be a wedding ring. Assuming he wore a wedding ring, then there is a possibility that this picture was taken at or before his wedding, between the 14th and 25th of January 1919.

As neither Sidney nor Thomas are wearing a boutonnière, perhaps this is not his wedding day.



The open book on the desk is likely to have some relevance, but impossible to say what it is.

# Case Study: Conclusion



We can now say that the men in the photo (left to right) are Sidney, George, Harry, and Thomas.

The photo was taken at R. J. Watson's studio, 70 Anlaby Road, Hull, between 14 January 1919 and 13 May 1919. It is likely to be closer to the earlier date.

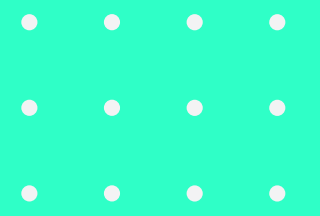
It is possible that the photo coincides with Sidney's return to England prior to his marriage on January 25, 1919.



It was incredibly lucky that all four brothers who served and saw action during World War One came home safely.



# Thank You For Attending



**Good Luck With Your Research**



*John.Beaumont@Outlook.com*

*<https://www.beaumont-genealogy.com>*

*[www.youtube.com/@Beaumont-Genealogy/videos](http://www.youtube.com/@Beaumont-Genealogy/videos)*