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VICTORIAN PHOTOGRAPHY AND CARTE DE VISITE ALBUMS, 1860-1880

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VICTORIAN PHOTOGRAPHY AND
CARTE DE VISITE ALBUMS, 1860-1880

By
Susan Ruth Finkel

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Early American Culture

June, 1984
VICTORIAN PHOTOGRAPHY AND
CARTE DE VISITE ALBUMS, 1860–1880

By
Susan Ruth Finkel

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Photographs in the Late Nineteenth Century

Photographs provide us with direct two-dimensional representations of the three-dimensional world. Photographic images are produced when light, reflected from an object, strikes a sensitized planar surface. These images, once developed and fixed, are then used as references to the three-dimensional world from which they were derived.

The gathering together of photographic images provides us with a means of organizing our experiences in the real world. As Susan Sontag wrote, "To collect photographs is to collect the world." The person who gathers together photographs appropriates bits of the world to create a microcosm which can be organized and controlled. The real world is not as easy to manipulate and rearrange to one's liking as is a group of photographic

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images. By compiling and arranging photographs and showing them to others, we reconfirm the values and structure of our society.

In the late nineteenth century assembling photographs of family members provided a means of regulating, organizing, and creating meaning in a rapidly changing and confusing society. At a time when social and physical mobility was being accelerated by the process of industrialization, photographs offered permanent and tangible reminders of family, home, and continuity with the past. In 1871 one British author suggested that photographs helped strengthen family bonds:

Any one who knows what the worth of family affection is among the lower classes, and who has seen the array of little portraits stuck over a laborer's fireplace, still gathering into one the 'Home' that life is always parting - the boy that has 'gone to Canada,' the 'girl out at service,' the little one with the golden hair that sleeps under the daisies, the old grandfather in the country - will perhaps feel with me that in counteracting the tendencies, social and industrial which every day are sapping the healthier family affections, the sixpenny photograph is doing more for the poor than all the philanthropists in the world.²

During the Victorian era organizing family photographic
portraits was one way for individuals to establish control and order in their personal world.

In the 1860s and '70s women acted as family album keepers. As an extension of her role as wife and mother the Victorian woman was expected to safeguard the sanctity of the home as a haven of peace and order. Maintaining a family portrait album enabled a woman to provide her family not only with a fashionable accessory for the parlor table, but also with a link to the rest of the clan. Albums offered the security that comes with the knowledge that one belongs to a family network that extends through time and space. By compiling an album a woman could provide her family with reassurance of their place within that network and thereby fulfill an important part of her duties as keeper of domestic order.

Photography and Portraiture

Prior to the invention of the photograph, people who desired to have likenesses made had to commission an artist to do the work. Having a large oil portrait
of a family member painted in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was a costly endeavor available only to the wealthy. Those of lesser means patronized itinerant artists who made small pastel, watercolor, and pencil portraits. Silhouette specialists made profile portraits from cut paper. Itinerant artists could supply a person's likeness at a lower rate than the more fashionable portrait painters.

Portraits small enough to be held in the hand had been fashionable in England and Europe since the Renaissance. Miniatures delicately painted on ivory were popular among the upper class who could afford them through much of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Toward the end of the eighteenth century rectangular cases, made with thin wooden frames covered in fine tooled leather and lined with plush satin or velvet, were used to house the fragile miniature portraits. The small hinged cases could stand open on a desk or table to display the picture inside.

The small case format of the miniature was employed to house the daguerreotype portraits of the
1840s and '50s. Daguerreotypes were unique positive photographic images made on sensitized silver-coated copper plates. They were covered with glass, sealed, and set into the small leather-wrapped plush-lined cases. The daguerreotype was an inexpensive form of portraiture which employed the trappings of the expensive painted miniature. With the introduction of the daguerreotype in 1839, miniature portraits in cases were made affordable to the lower and middle classes.

Improvements in photographic techniques came rapidly. Within twenty years of their introduction, daguerreotypes were replaced by photographic paper prints made from glass plate negatives. The paper print portraits were far less expensive than daguerreotypes because they could be produced in quantity and required less expensive materials. These small affordable photographs were the size of printed calling cards, approximately 2 in. x 4 in., and were appropriately called cartes de visite.
Carte de visite portraits were accumulated in large quantities and albums were needed to hold them. Albums containing photographs were assembled for the first time during the early 1860s when the carte de visite was beginning to gain popularity.

**Studying Photograph Albums**

The carte de visite albums of the 1860s and '70s offer important information about the culture in which they were made and used. Albums document the social relationships between people. Portraits of family members, friends and acquaintances were brought together, sorted, selected, put in order, and placed in the album. The person compiling the album did so with the purpose of showing the completed album to family and friends. The album keeper produced the photograph display with an awareness of the audience that would view the volume. People shared ideas about what was proper to reveal to others about family relationships and what was more appropriate to keep private. The selection, order and sequence of the photographs was reflective of not only the requirements and priorities of the album compiler, but also the larger social circle.
in which that person lived. Therefore, careful study of photograph albums reveals the social values in operation for the people who assembled and viewed them.

In order to study photograph albums within their social context two conditions must be met. First, the identities of the album owner and the subjects of the photographs must be available. This information is crucial in determining the relationships between the people whose photographs are displayed there. Secondly, all the photographs that were placed in the album, or at least the vast majority of them, must still be present and in their original arrangement. If the collection is not complete it is difficult to get a clear picture of the album as a whole. An album missing many of its photographs is like a puzzle missing many important pieces. While it is possible to get an overall impression of what the whole was like, one can never be certain of the details. It is the details of an album that contain valuable information about social relationships.

Although cartes de visite proliferated during the 1860s and '70s finding surviving albums from this
period that are intact is rare. Many cartes have been removed by owners or dealers more interested in individual images than in the collection as a whole. Even when complete albums are found the identity of the album owner and the subjects of the photographs are often unknown. Putting a puzzle together from such albums can be almost impossible. What incomplete albums can offer are hints and clues about family relationships and isolated information about specific images. This data can be useful in conjunction with more complete albums and other types of records.

It is unusual to find carte de visite albums from the 1860s and '70s that still contain their entire collections and about which the history of the owner is known. It is through the study of such albums that the relationships between the person who compiled the photographs and the people in the portraits are made clear. The researcher can make use of such information in assessing the albums within their social contexts.

For the purposes of this study several carte de visite albums from Wilmington, Delaware will be
used as examples. These albums were selected because they were substantially complete, the photographs were still in their original order, and their provenance was well documented. Two fully identified albums in particular will be referred to in detail. The first is an album assembled by Mary Van Dyke du Pont in the late 1870s\(^5\). Miss du Pont was about fifty years old when she organized her album containing photographs of her many nieces and nephews. This album will be referred to hereafter as the Mary Van Dyke du Pont Album.

The second album that will be discussed in detail is not a family album, but a collection of military portraits assembled by Henry Algernon du Pont just after the Civil War\(^6\). Henry A. du Pont was a colonel in the Union Army during the war. The album he compiled contains portraits of fellow officers, soldiers, and views of military posts. This album will be discussed in comparison with family albums and will be referred to as the Henry A. du Pont Album.
Other albums will also be discussed, although less extensively. Several partially complete albums from the pictorial collections of the Hagley Museum and Library provide examples of individual portraits of various kinds. When cartes from these albums are cited the reference will appear in a footnote. Another source of photographs is a carte de visite album assembled by Elizabeth S. Bringhurst of Wilmington in the late 1860s. Elizabeth, a six or seven year old child at that time, probably had some adult help in assembling the album of family portraits. This album will be called the Bringhurst Album for the purposes of this study.

Grateful appreciation is due the staffs of the Hagley Museum and Library, the Rockwood Museum, the Historical Society of Delaware Library, and the H. F. du Pont Winterthur Museum Library and Archives, all located in Wilmington, Delaware, for their help in locating and identifying the albums and photographs used here.
CHAPTER TWO
DEVELOPMENT OF PHOTOGRAPHY AND ALBUMS
IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

New Photographic Forms

The introduction and development of photography was rapid during the last half of the nineteenth century. The first commercially successful photographic form was the daguerreotype, introduced in 1839. A silver-coated copper plate was chemically sensitized, exposed in a camera, washed, and fixed. The resulting photograph was a unique direct positive image on a silvered plate. To protect the fragile image, the plate was covered with a brass mat and a piece of glass and then sealed with a thin brass edging. This framed and sealed package was mounted into a hinged case with a cloth-lined cover like those used for miniature painted portraits. Daguerreotypes in their cases ranged in size from 1 5/8 in. x 2 1/8 in. to 6 1/2 in. x 8 1/2 in. and were 1/4 to 1/2 in. thick (Figure 1).
Figure 1. Daguerreotypes
In the 1850s the introduction of glass plate negatives allowed for the production of multiple copies of positive prints on sensitized paper. The photographic paper prints were mounted on cardboard and measured 2 1/2 in. x 4 1/4 in. (Figure 2). In 1854 the French photographer A. A. Disderi introduced a process for making multiple images from a single glass plate negative. Large quantities of prints were made quickly and inexpensively using Disderi's process. By the early 1860s photographers in America charged from $1.50 to $3.50 per dozen for the small prints.

Low prices encouraged people to order extra copies of their portraits to share with friends and relatives. Photographers usually pencilled the negative number on the back of the photograph so that patrons could order more copies at a later time. In addition to making photographic portraits of their patrons, photographers also made copy photographs of older daguerreotypes, paintings, or other forms of portraiture. Portraits of living family members as well as ancient ancestors could be copied and printed in quantity. Thus photography was able to forge new links to a family's past by including
Figure 2. Carte de Visite
in its purview unique images produced prior to its invention.

The new card-mounted photographs were called cartes de visite because they were about the same size as the cards which fashionable people left at the homes they visited while paying social calls. Although the cartes de visite were not used as calling cards, the name for the format became internationally accepted. The novelty of the new photographic form attracted the notice of wealthy patrons who created a fashion of exchanging and accumulating cartes de visite. Those of moderate means could also afford to have their likenesses made and reproduced for distribution. Soon cartes became fashionable throughout America and around the world.

**Popularization of the Carte de Visite**

Popular acceptance of the carte de visite portrait did not begin when it was first introduced by Disdéri in 1854. More than five years later Napoleon III had his portrait made by Disdéri in Paris. In the summer
of 1860 Queen Victoria and Prince Albert had their carte de visite portraits made by J. E. Mayall in London. It was about this time that many heads of state in Europe began to have carte de visite portraits made by photographers who printed copies to sell to the public. It soon became fashionable to collect the small images of royalty, military heroes, religious and political leaders, and beautiful society women (Figure 3).

Queen Victoria was among the early photograph collectors. With the assistance of one of her ladies in waiting, Eleanor Stanley, she collected portraits of the fine ladies of London and their husbands. Eleanor Stanley commented in her diary "...I believe Miss Skerett is right when she says, 'the Queen could be bought and sold for a Photograph'!" Following the lead of Queen Victoria and other famous collectors, people in Europe and America became eager to collect the cartes of well known personalities.

Enterprising photographers realized there was a growing market for photographs of celebrities and
Figure 3. Published Carte de Visite of Queen Victoria, Taken by J.E. Mayall, July 1, 1860
began publishing cartes de visite of famous people on a large scale. They copied the cartes made by other photographers and sold them in their own shops. The pirating of popular images was commonplace and copyright laws offered almost no protection to the original photographer. The demand for the published cartes was great and the potential profit enormous. Millions of cartes were sold annually in the 1860s through booksellers, magazine stands and photograph galleries at a cost of a few cents each.

As the interest in photography spread, more and more people sought to have their own portraits made. Cartes de visite were relatively inexpensive and were fashionable. Anyone could go to studios in the major cities or in smaller towns to have their portrait made in the latest style. For an investment of a few dollars a dozen copies of a portrait could be purchased to exchange with friends and relatives. As cartes de visite were exchanged and saved, the photograph album offered a means of organizing the mounting numbers of photographs in a tidy format.
The Origin of the Album

"Album" is derived from the Latin word *albus* meaning white. In ancient Rome an album was a pair of wooden tablets, laced together with cord or thongs, on which edicts and public notices were recorded.\(^10\)

By the medieval period books with vellum pages were used instead of tablets. These books were bound with wooden boards and had clasps to keep the covers from warping.\(^11\) Blank books with paper pages came to be used as account books, ledgers, and devices in which to preserve souvenirs. In the seventeenth century people were asked to sign their autographs in the albums of their friends. By the last quarter of the eighteenth century blank albums were commonly used as guestbooks in public places.\(^12\) In 1840, the second edition of *Webster's Dictionary* defined "album" as "A book, originally blank, in which foreigners or strangers insert autographs of celebrated persons, or in which friends insert pieces as memorials for each other."\(^13\) The memorial might be a verse, a lock of hair, a drawing or other personal keepsake.
The photograph album introduced in the 1860s was developed from the memorial album tradition (Figure 4). The early photograph albums designed to hold cartes de visite had leather bindings and brass clasps that served a decorative rather than a structural function. Such bindings with clasps were also commonly used on Bibles and prayer books of the late nineteenth century.¹⁴ The designs used on album covers were often made in a medieval revival style in reference to the bindings found on old and rare manuscripts.

The leaves of the albums were made from cardboard with a thin paper frame pasted on each side to hold the photographs. The cartes were slid into place behind the paper frame on each side of the leaf (Figure 5). Because of the way the pages holding the photographs were arranged, the albums were rather thick, 1 1/4 in. to 2 3/4 in., and contained fifteen to twenty-five of the two-sided cardboard leaves. Some albums displayed only one photograph per page while larger albums could accommodate four to a page. Albums in the smaller format measured approximately 4 in. x 5 in.
Figure 4. Carte de Visite Album, Rockwood Museum
Figure 5. Pages from a Carte de Visite Album, Rockwood Museum
The album was well designed to hold the small paper cartes de visite. Standardization in the size of the paper prints enabled blank book manufacturers to produce albums to accommodate growing carte de visite collections. While the earlier daguerreotypes were housed in individual cases, cartes could be brought together in an album and arranged as a cohesive group. Although some albums were made to house the thick glass covered metal photographs, daguerreotype albums never became popular. It was not until the early 1860s and the popularization of the carte de visite that the photograph album became the common format in which to arrange and organize large numbers of photographs.

The growing popularity of photograph albums was evident to enterprising photographers. F. R. Grumel took out the first U. S. patent for a photograph album in 1861. Grumel's design called for the leaves to hold "photographic or lithographic proofs, engravings or other drawings with an opening or frame on each side, so that two proofs, engravings or drawings may be inserted back to back..." Other inventors designed improvements of various kinds that made inserting the
photograph into the leaf easier, or made the album binding more sturdy. H. T. Anthony and F. Phoebus of New York were quick to patent their album leaf design just two weeks after Grumel. Within the period from 1861 to 1870 there were nineteen patents awarded in the U. S. for albums or album-related devices. Clever photographic materials producers were eager to make products for every aspect of the trade. The major manufacturers of photographic supplies like Anthony and Scoville sold albums along with chemicals, glass plates and darkroom equipment.

The Cost of Album Making

A wide selection of albums was available to the public at prices ranging from $1.50 to $40.00. The size of the page, the material used for the binding, and the degree of ornamentation on the clasps all contributed to the cost of the album. The simplest albums held one photograph per page, were bound in leather over heavy cardboard covers, and had simple brass clasps. They commonly held thirty to fifty cartes. More expensive albums had carved wood, plush velvet, or mother-of-pearl
covers and/or had a larger page format to hold more cartes.

In the mid 1860s, perhaps to add a new element of novelty to the album fashion, musical albums were introduced. The musical movement, which accounted for over half the thickness of the book, played such favorite tunes as "Home Sweet Home" or "The Last Rose of Summer" when viewers paged through the album leaves. The musical versions were undoubtedly among the most costly of albums.

The investment of the photograph collector in an album was only one of the expenses involved in maintaining the collection. While the cost of purchasing a single carte de visite was relatively low, on the average less than 20¢, having copies of a portrait made to give to friends required a proportionally greater outlay.

When friends and relatives presented their carte de visite one was expected to reciprocate in kind. To fill an album with the portraits of friends
and relatives one had to obtain copies of one's own portrait to give in exchange. A simple album that held thirty photographs might cost $1.50 to $2.50 for the album and from $4.50 to $6.00 for the cartes exchanged to fill it; a total outlay of from $6.00 to $8.50. Purchasing individual portraits of family members was within the means of all but the very poor. Owning albums full of such portraits, however, was restricted to the middle and upper classes. Only people of means could afford to take part in the fashionable activity of exchanging photographs and arranging them in albums for display in the home.

The Album in the Home

Photographs were often given a place of high visibility within the Victorian home. Painted portraits of family members had appeared on parlor walls in the homes of the wealthy throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. With the introduction of the daguerreotype and the succeeding popularity of other photographic forms in the mid-nineteenth century, photographs were given a central place in Victorian
parlors. Center tables and mantles were sometimes treated as family shrines, filled almost to overflowing with images of family members (Figure 6). Parlors were considered appropriate places for the prominent display of the family album as well. Even a pioneer family in Montana in 1864 could claim its cabin was complete when the Bible and album were placed prominently in their home:

Our cabin measured 16 x 20 feet in the clear. The logs were chinked and painted with clay. The floor was of earth, beaten hard and smooth,—a box cupboard held our stock of dishes and cooking utensils. Beside it stood the churn. The flour barrel was converted into a center-table whereon reposed the family Bible and photograph album with their white lace covers.

Albums were used privately by family members within the home. The pages of family photographs served as a genealogy in which deceased ancestors and those currently alive appeared together in an unbroken narrative. Albums were used to tell the story of the family through accounts of the lives of the individuals in the photographs. The albums offered the family a sense of continuity with their past and a feeling of belonging to a larger group.
Figure 6. Parlor of John Little House, San Francisco, California, late 1860s.
Albums were also used by the family in a more public way when company came to call. Showing guests the family photograph album was a form of entertainment which put guests at their ease and provided topics of conversation. An 1860 etiquette book recommended that when holding a party in one's home:

> It is a good plan, if your receptions are usually largely attended, to have books and pictures on the center table and scattered about your parlors. You must, of course, converse with each caller, but many will remain in the room for a long time and these trifles are excellent pastime, and serve as subjects for conversation.20

Photograph albums were used in much the same way, but with some important restrictions.

Unlike the photographs propped up on mantles or portraits hung on walls, photograph albums were not available for viewing by guests without the sanction of a family member. Albums had clasps which kept the volume unquestionably closed. The presence of the clasps informed the visitor that he or she was not allowed to open the album and that the family controlled
access to the private material within. Albums were to be opened at the invitation of a family member. Looking at the photographs was an activity guided and supervised by the family.

A humorous book, The Fotygraft Album, written in 1915, was based on the experience of a child showing a family album to a stranger. This book offers insights into what was considered the proper way to show a private photograph album to outsiders. Looking at the albums was such a popular phenomenon that most persons would have experiences that they could relate to those of the narrator, eleven year old Rebecca Sparks Peters. The story is humorous because the child breaks all the social rules and confuses appropriate public and private behavior for album viewing.

Rebecca showed her family's album to a new neighbor, a virtual stranger who came to call while Mrs. Sparks was out. Just as her mother had shown other visitors the family album, Rebecca paged through the album relating stories about each person in the portraits to entertain this guest until her mother
returned. The stories the child told were not those meant for the public. She repeated derogatory comments made by her father about his in-laws within the immediate family circle. The private stories presented to a stranger were humorous because the child had stepped innocently beyond the bounds of proper public behavior.20

Public narratives for album viewing were meant to cast each person in the family in a positive light. Instead, Rebecca told unflattering stories which presented an image of a not-so-perfect family to the public. This humorous book makes clear the social constructs surrounding the activity of looking at a family album both privately and publically. While private comments within the family could be candid, albums were supposed to be used to present positive images of the family to the public.
CHAPTER THREE
TAking Photographs AND USING ALBUMs

Portraiture at a Photographer's Studio

Carte de visite portraits were made at a photographer's studio. Usually photographers were located in business districts on the top floors of commercial buildings. There the skylights in the ceiling brought in sunlight throughout the day. After climbing the stairs to the photographer's studio, customers were greeted in a salesroom where business transactions took place. Patrons were shown examples of the photographer's work and portrait prices were agreed upon. Photograph albums, photographic supplies and accessories were also available for sale in this room.

A separate studio with adjoining darkroom was used to take the photographs. The studio was furnished with painted backdrops to provide visual interest to the portraits. Photographers had a supply of tables

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and chairs around which the sitter was posed. Papier-mâché columns, fences and rocks were used as scenery by some photographers. Small props such as books or ladies' fans were employed to add variety to the portraits.

Many devices were used to keep the sitter still during the exposure. Special chairs with headclamps or clamps on stands placed behind the sitter helped to immobilize the subject's head. Chair arms and tables were used as resting places for the sitter's arms and small props held in his hands kept them from moving. Keeping the subject perfectly still during the several seconds required for the exposure was critical because any movement would be recorded on the photographic plate as a blur.

The camera used to take carte de visite portraits was a large rectangular wooden box which sat on a tripod. Four lenses protruded from the front of the camera and there was a fitting at the back to hold the sensitized photographic plate in place (Figure 7). Four images could be made simultaneously across half of the plate by opening all four lenses at once. Four different
Figure 7. Carte de Visite Camera
poses could be taken by opening the lenses individually. By adjusting the plate position at the back of the camera four more images could be made on the other half of the plate. After all eight exposures were made the patron left the studio and the glass plate was taken to the darkroom to be developed.

The photographer's assistants developed and air-dried the negative plate. The plate was then clamped to a piece of pre-sensitized albumen paper and was taken onto the roof of the studio to be placed in direct sunlight. The light passed through the negative glass plate and struck the paper beneath, creating a positive print. After sufficient sunlight had fallen on the paper it was taken to the darkroom and placed in a stop bath to prevent further development. The negative was numbered and stored away in anticipation of future reuse. The paper print was fixed and washed. After drying, the eight separate images were cut apart from the paper sheet and glued onto pre-cut rectangles of cardboard slightly larger than each image (Figure 8). The cards already had been printed with the photographer's logo on the back. Some portraits were tinted to add color to the facial features. The finished cartes
Figure 8. Uncut Sheet of Eight Carte de Visite Prints
de visite were usually ready for the patron within forty-eight hours of the sitting.23

Because the cost was low and the results were available quickly, many parents took their children to the photographer at regular intervals. The resulting photographs provided a record of the child's growth. One series of photographs (Figure 9) shows the growth of one little girl, Victorine A. du Pont, from infancy to age eight.

Victorine's earliest portrait (a in Figure 9) was taken in 1865 when she was less than a year old. An adult hand appears at her waist attempting to hold her still during the exposure. Taking children's portraits offered a challenge to photographers because it was often difficult to keep youngsters from getting restless during the photography session. Several devices were employed to keep five year old Victorine still in 1870. She appears (b in Figure 9) with one hand on the back of a nearby chair. Her other hand clutches a book. Visible behind Victorine's feet is the base of a headclamp stand. The sash at her waist anchors
Figure 9. Three Portraits of Victorine du Pont, from left to right, (a) As an Infant, (b) At Age Five, and (c) At Age Eight, from Mary Van Dyke du Pont Album, Hagley Museum and Library
her to the stand. Victorine's hands, head, and torso are securely placed and she is rendered practically immobile before the camera. A more mature eight year old Victorine is pictured in the last carte in the series (c in Figure 9). She stands with only one arm resting on the back of a chair. The headclamp stand is once again visible behind her feet. The older child was expected to exert more self-control in standing still for a portrait.

This series, which contains nine cartes in all, provided a document for the family of the growth and development of its child. It was not uncommon to take all of one's children to the photographer at regular intervals. Three of Victorine's cousins, Greta, Sophie, and Renée du Pont, were taken to the photographer together in 1877 to have bust portraits made (Figure 10). Notice the use of the same pleated jacket and collar in the portraits of the two oldest girls. This clothing was probably lent by the photographer and placed over the children's own clothes because the color and style of the jacket and collar were better suited for portraiture.
Figure 10. Three Portraits of, from left to right, Greta, Sophie, and Renée du Pont from Mary Van Dyke du Pont Album, Hagley Museum and Library
Wearing the right clothing for portrait photography was an important factor in having a successful picture made. Some photographers gave information pamphlets to their patrons which offered suggestions on how to dress and style one's hair for the portrait session.²⁴ Simplicity in clothing and hair style was recommended. Patrons were warned not to wear lavender or light blue clothing because the blue-sensitive glass plate negatives of the period would record a pale, washed-out image. Parents were advised to dress their children in light colors which would allow the photographers to shorten the exposure time. Stripes, plaids, and shiny fabrics sometimes caused strange lighting effects on the photographic plate and were discouraged.²⁵ Photographers often provided shawls, collars, and jackets to their customers in order to create photographs with the proper tonality.

Occasions for Portrait Making

In addition to portraits of children made at regular intervals to record their growth, there were special occasions which were documented by the taking
of a photograph. Important rites of passage were recorded on the photographic plate. Photographs taken during visits from family members brought the group together formally before the camera. Group portraits of parents and their very young children documented the entrance into the family of new members. These photographs enabled the family to recall these experiences and relive their memories at a later time.26

The wearing of the first long pants for a boy in the 1860s marked a change in his status from child to young adult. The boy in "a" of Figure 11 stood for his full length portrait to display the fact that he was not wearing knickers any longer but was dressed in his first pair of long pants.27 There is a pencilled inscription on the back of the portrait that reads, "the first pants". Without the inscription the photograph would appear to be just another portrait of a child. The inscription gives insight into the context of the photograph and identifies it as an especially meaningful portrait for the boy and his family.
Figure 11. From left to right, (a) "The First Pants" from Hagley Museum and Library Album # 71.2015.595.1 Box 1 and (b) Portrait of a Young Soldier from Hagley Museum and Library Album # 69.12.1 Box 1
The Civil War forced many young men to take on adult responsibilities. The war changed sons into soldiers and the wearing of a new uniform was recorded with a photograph. Portrait "b" in Figure 11 shows a young man proudly wearing his new military garb. Such a photograph would serve as a memorial to the young man while he was separated from his family. The photograph provided testimony that a member of the family was fighting in the war.

Visits from family members were occasions for portrait making. In the Bringhurst family a photograph of Frank T. Webb with his nieces Mary and Elizabeth (a in Figure 12) was a record of the stay of a favorite maternal uncle with the family. The presence of the family dog beneath the chair in which Frank Webb sits added an impression of family harmony; even the dog likes Uncle Frank. This photograph not only records the presence of a family member who lived a distance away, but documents a genealogical relationship between the children and their mother's brother. This group portrait served as a reminder of the visit of Uncle Frank long after he had departed.
Figure 12. Two Portraits from Bringhurst Album, from left to right, (a) Mary and Elizabeth Bringhurst with Uncle Frank T. Webb and Family Dog and (b) Mrs. A. J. Bringhurst and Daughter Elizabeth, Rockwood Museum
Other family relationships were documented in cartes de visite. The most common "group" photograph was that of a mother and her infant or very young child. Mrs. Bringhurst and her first child Elizabeth were photographed together when the child was very young. The carte (b in Figure 12) records the entrance of a new member into the family and pictures the young Mrs. Bringhurst in her role as a mother. The photograph of a young woman and her first child may have helped to ease the transition into the parenting role. The photograph provides a visual reinforcement for the bond between mother and child.

All of these photographs recorded important occasions in the life of the family. The entrance into young adulthood was an important rite of passage marked by the wearing of the first long pants or the donning of a military uniform in times of war. Visits from relatives recorded by the camera were occasions that reinforced family ties and kinship connections. Group photographs of parents and their young children provided documentation of the change in size of the family with the addition of a new member. Photographs
enabled people to see themselves both as individuals and in relationship to one another. The taking of cartes de visite in the 1860s and '70s formalized important periods and events in the lives of families.

Arranging Cartes de Visite in Albums

When family photographs were brought together in an album many decisions were made by the compiler about the selection and arrangement of the images. Not all of the photographs ever taken of family members were placed in the album. Editing of the collection was necessary to select the best likenesses or the most meaningful images. The arrangement of the portraits was often based on family genealogy; sub-grouping branches of the clan and placing them in order by generation. Other arrangements of the photographs selected by the album organizer reflected her perceptions about the structure of the group and her place within it. These photograph albums were planned presentations interpreted by the people organizing the images, with an awareness that the album would be shown to others.
The careful selection and editing process involved in the compilation of an album will be discussed here using two examples from the 1870s. Some cartes from the first album were mentioned earlier in this paper. The portraits of Victorine A. du Pont and her cousins Greta, Sophie, and Renée du Pont (Figures 9 & 10) were placed in an album assembled by their aunt, Mary Van Dyke du Pont. As mentioned earlier, Mary Van Dyke du Pont, a spinster, collected portraits of her family, especially of her nieces and nephews, and arranged them in an album. It is important to understand a little of Mary's personal history to better interpret the album she organized.

Mary was the first of five children born to Charles I. du Pont and his first wife Dorcas Van Dyke. Mary, unlike her brothers and sister, did not marry, although it has been suggested that she would have married her cousin Thomas du Pont had he not died during the Mexican War. Mary's married brothers and sister had a total of seventeen children, giving her plenty of nieces and nephews in whom she could take interest. The du Pont family was large and rather close. There
were dozens of cousins living in Wilmington with children of their own. This extended family provided Mary with a large social network as did her membership in Christ Church. This Episcopalian church had been the place of worship of the du Pont family for generations and Mary was an active member of the congregation. Thus Mary Van Dyke du Pont was surrounded by family in all aspects of her life.

The carte de visite photograph album Mary assembled in the late 1870s reflected her interests in family and church. The first photograph in the album is a portrait of her father as an elderly man of sixty-two years (a in Figure 13). Charles I. du Pont had died in 1869 but was presented as the patriarch of the family in the premier position in the album. Next in the album were two photographs of Christ Church (b in Figure 13). The theme of family and church first stated by the first three cartes was to be repeated throughout the album.

After several portraits of pastors of Christ Church and a few of her siblings, Mary Van Dyke du
Figure 13. Two Photographs from Mary Van Dyke du Pont Album, from left to right, (a) Portrait of Charles I. du Pont, (b) Exterior of Christ Church, Wilmington, Delaware, Hagley Museum and Library
Pont devoted the largest part of her album to portraits of her nephews, nieces, and the children of cousins. At least twenty-nine of the fifty cartes in the album are portraits of these young relatives arranged in groups in order of their birth within their nuclear families. Of special interest is the series of nine photographs of Victorine A. du Pont, first born child of Mary's brother Charles and his wife. This series has been described previously (Figure 9). It is curious that Victorine should be represented in this album by nine photographs when each of the other youngsters are shown in only one photograph. The answer lies in the fact that Victorine died in 1876 at age eleven, within a year of the completion of the album. The death of the child was felt deeply by her Aunt Mary who compiled the portraits recording the brief life of the child as a memorial to her.

One unusual carte de visite, placed two-thirds of the way into the album was a copy photograph of a painted portrait of the Dutch artist Van Dyke (a in Figure 14). This published carte had been given to Mary by her father, as is noted in an inscription
Figure 14. Four Published Cartes from Mary Van Dyke du Pont Album, from left to right, (a) Portrait of Van Dyke, (b) Mother and Child, (c) Woman with Cross, and (d) Embellished Motto, "Victory Through Our Lord Jesus Christ", Hagley Museum and Library
on the back. The portrait of Van Dyke was an obvious reference to Mary's maternal family and her own middle name. Whether or not there was an actual genealogical link between the artist and her maternal family, Mary felt it was important enough reference to place the carte in the album amidst all her du Pont relatives.

The last three cartes in the album were also published commercially. They were copies of drawings or paintings with religious or sentimental themes (b, c & d in Figure 14). The mother and child carte suggests a contemporary madonna and infant Jesus. The woman with a cross is an image which suggests pietà and spirituality. The embellished motto, "Victory Through Our Lord Jesus Christ" is the last image in the collection and ends the album on a note of religious devotion.

Although her portrait does not appear in the collection a clear impression of Mary Van Dyke du Pont is offered by her album. Her family relationships and religious interests are made clear through the selection and arrangement of images. Mary was devoted to her nieces and nephews and proudly displayed their
portraits. She saw her father as the head of the family and presented the genealogy on both sides of her family as being important. Her church was central to her life because of her family's longstanding membership in the congregation and because of the social ties it represented. These factors place Mary Van Dyke du Pont within specific time, place, social and familial contexts. Mary presented herself through the album as living within the domestic and religious scenes which provided her with socially acceptable outlets for her energies. Mary Van Dyke du Pont's album is that of an unmarried woman who lived within the shelter of her family and her church.

Family albums, while undoubtedly the most common variety, were not the only type kept in the 1860s and '70s. During the Civil War the likenesses of military figures were also collected in albums. One very special Civil War album was assembled by Henry Algernon du Pont. Henry A. du Pont graduated from West Point in 1861 and served in the Union Army during the war. He was promoted to the rank of colonel before he retired from the army in 1875. The album Henry A. du Pont
assembled in the late 1860s contains the portraits of classmates at West Point, fellow officers in the Fifth Artillery of the Army, and other people with whom he was acquainted during the period of the war. Inscriptions on the album pages added at a later date identify the subjects of the portraits and give information as to their relationship to Henry A. du Pont.

The album begins with photographs of classmates at West Point (Figure 15). They are portraits of young men, some in civilian clothing and some in military uniform. These early cartes de visite were taken while they were students at the military academy. The captions under their portraits sometimes indicate that they were killed in battle during the war after their days at West Point. The inscriptions were added years later by Henry A. du Pont when he was reminiscing about his student days and recalling the loss of friends in battle. The portraits collected during a peaceful happy time took on a changed meaning with the addition of the inscriptions telling of the death and personal loss that came later. The album's significance was changed by the retrospective vision offered through the captions.
Figure 15. Two Portraits of Student Friends from West Point from Henry A. du Pont Album, Hagley Museum and Library
After graduating from West Point, Henry A. du Pont served for two years at Fort Hamilton in the New York Harbor (Figure 16). Scenes of the fort in the album suggest a life of repetitive drills, too much free time, and boredom. The men in the pictures posed in front of their barracks or on the parade ground. The very fact that there were opportunities for photographers to come and take pictures for the soldiers to buy indicates that life at the fort was not spent entirely in military drill.

In 1863 Henry A. du Pont was transferred to more active duty with the Fifth Artillery in the Shenandoah Valley. There he participated in many battles including those at New Market and Cedar Creek in which many fellow officers and soldiers were killed. This part of his career is represented in the album by a number of published cartes of the commanding officers of his unit and by a commercial carte; a copy of a drawing showing the bravery of soldiers amidst the chaos of the Battle of Cedar Creek (Figure 17). The action and violence of battle could not be conveyed through the still portraits of the military leaders. In fact photography in general
Figure 16. Two Photographs of Fort Hamilton, New York from Henry A. du Pont Album, Hagley Museum and Library
Figure 17. Two Photographs from Henry A. du Pont Album, from left to right (a) Portrait of General Crook and (b) Published Carte Showing Battle of Cedar Creek, Hagley Museum and Library
was technically incapable of recording the action of a battle at this time. Only in the copy of the drawing is the experience of being in battle incorporated into the album. Henry A. du Pont purchased this published carte and chose to include it in his album to represent a part of his military experience that the photographs could not.

Among the last few cartes in the album are portraits of two soldiers (Figure 18). One is labeled "Stafford, one of my old soldiers" and the other, showing a soldier standing beside a horse, "Bugler Richard Warde 5th Arty., my orderly." These two men were not officers and had not attended West Point. They were ordinary rank and file soldiers that served under Henry A. du Pont. Their low status entitled them to a place only at the end of the album. The placement of these two portraits suggests that Henry du Pont led such men in the army and considered them faithful servants, not equals.

Henry A. du Pont's Civil War album organizes his experience in several ways. First, the photographs
Figure 18. Two Portraits of Soldiers from Henry A. du Pont Album, Hagley Museum and Library.

[Image of two portraits]
are arranged in roughly chronological order to tell the story of a military career from West Point to Fort Hamilton and then to active duty in battles such as Cedar Creek. Second, it organizes the people that Henry associated with by status; first his fellow classmates, then his commanding officers, and at the end the soldiers who served under him. Third, it conveys the nature of his experience at peaceful Fort Hamilton and during active duty. Finally, Henry A. du Pont arranged his album with a retrospective vision. He looked back on a dramatic period in his life from a distance of several years. The passage of time allowed him to organize his experiences and present them through a planned series of images.

What the Mary Van Dyke du Pont album and the Henry A. du Pont album have in common is their organization. Both albums were planned presentations of photographs arranged in a way related to the experience of the owner of the album. The worlds of Mary's family and church and Henry's military experience are explained through an organized series of photographs.
The element of time is used to organize both albums. Mary Van Dyke du Pont's album shows the members of her family by generation from the oldest to the youngest in each branch of the clan. Henry A. Du Pont's album arranges the people and scenes in his collection very closely to the order in which he had encountered them during his early career.

Both albums tell a story with a beginning, a climax, and a conclusion. Mary's album tells the story of her family and begins with a portrait of her father, the patriarch. The climax in Mary's album is the series of portraits of Victorine, the niece who died at age eleven, and the conclusion comes with the series of published cartes that end the album on a sentimental and religious note. Henry A. du Pont's album is the story of a military career beginning with portraits of classmates, climaxed by the published carte showing heroism during the Battle of Cedar Creek and concluding with the portraits of his faithful soldiers. Even though the stories are different, both albums share a planned arrangement of photographs that convey the experience of the organizer in a controlled manner.
An Anniversary Album

Another du Pont Family album, compiled at the end of the nineteenth century, provides an example of the continuation of formal photographic portrait album making practices first begun with the carte de visite earlier in the century. The commemorative album was an enormous two volume work compiled in late 1899 in anticipation of the 100th anniversary of the arrival of the du Ponts in America on January 1, 1800. Louisa d'Andelot du Pont and her brother Pierre S. du Pont were responsible for the large task of gathering the family portraits and overseeing the production of the album. Louisa arranged to have ancestral portraits belonging to her cousin Henry A. du Pont copied by a Philadelphia photographer. The copy photographs, measuring 4 in. x 5 1/2 in. were pasted two to a page in two large volumes, each one measuring 15 in. x 9 1/4 in. x 3 1/2 in., with the family crest embossed and gilded on the leather covers (Figure 19). Sufficient numbers of albums were produced to present sets to all the branches of the family attending the anniversary party.
Figure 19. Cover of du Pont Family Anniversary Album, 1900, H. F. du Pont Winterthur Museum Archives
The approximately two hundred and seventy photographs in the two volumes were arranged genealogically to present the history of the family over time from ancestors in France prior to the revolution to the current rising generation. A list at the front of each album identified the people in the portraits in the order of their placement in the album. This list served as a genealogy identifying the major branches of the clan and describing the organizational structure of the group.

The placement of the portraits relative to one another denoted the prominence or dominance of particular family members and the absence of a relative from the album was a sign of social excommunication. Take, for example, the case of Willie du Pont, Henry A. du Pont's younger brother. Eight years prior to the anniversary celebration Willie had divorced his wife, and cousin, Mary Lammot du Pont, to marry recently divorced Annie Rodgers Zinn from New Castle, Delaware. This had been the first divorce in the family and it shocked the relatives. Upon returning from his
honeymoon, Willie was informed by family members that he must withdraw from his position with the du Pont Company and would no longer be welcomed by the family. Henry A. du Pont had nothing more to do with his younger brother and threatened to withdraw his cooperation from the family album project if Willie's portrait was to be included. Louisa du Pont acquiesced to his demand and Willie's portrait was not presented in the family portrait album. Inclusion in the album was a symbolic acknowledgement of the status of family members, while exclusion from the album reinforced formal censure by the family.

The du Pont commemorative album is an extreme example of the formal and self-conscious presentation of a family to its members and to a semipublic audience witnessing their actions. The large and imposing volumes, complete with the full family crest, name and motto embossed in gold across the brown leather covers, stand as a testimonial to family stability, unity, and self-consciousness. The act of holding an event to commemorate the arrival of the family in America is a semipublic behavior meant to convey to the larger community the
importance of the group. The du Pont commemorative album uses a compilation of portraits for the display of the family in a formal and positive light. The anniversary album, like other family albums, was used to reinforce internal family ties and to present to the public a picture of family propriety and importance.
CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

The person in a family who compiled an album took on the role of genealogist and storyteller. As people assembled their photographs they organized stories that they could present orally when showing the albums to others. The photograph album was, therefore, a kind of family tree arranged for presentation to family members and friends.

Assembling albums was not just a matter of collecting photographs and slipping them indiscriminately into the pages. As discussed in this paper, cartes de visite were carefully selected and placed in the album in a preplanned order devised by the compiler. Photographs were organized to reflect some aspect of her experience. Portraits were often arranged chronologically according to order of birth or in the order the compiler came to know the people in the photographs.
Other kinds of arrangements relied on a knowledge of the social organization of the group, for example, arranging family portraits like a family tree according to its branches of members. Often several systems of organization were employed in a single album.

The carte de visite album symbolized the extended family and continuity with past generations. The album organizer exchanged portraits with family members living far away. The portraits sent such relatives and placed in their albums insured that one's own family would be included in the pictorial genealogies of other branches of the clan. One could be sure of being remembered for posterity if his portrait was widely broadcast among friends and family. The portraits received in exchange and placed in one's own album served to document the membership of one's family within a larger social group. The making of copy photographs of painted portraits and daguerreotypes permitted the representation of past generations within the pictorial family tree. The further back the portraits went the more weight they carried in anchoring the history of the family in the past.
Family albums compiled today are part of a tradition that began over a century ago when small paper prints mounted on cardboard were first introduced. Cartes de visite provided a cheap, plentiful, and reproducible form of portraiture that people could exchange, send through the mail, save, and accumulate. When placed in an album with a planned order and sequence, cartes de visite were used to tell family histories and to relate the experiences of individuals in their society. Although the oral narratives that the nineteenth-century compilers used when showing their albums to others are irrevocably lost, carte de visite albums offer important insights into life in the Victorian era.
FOOTNOTES


5Hagley Museum and Library, album # 71.MSS872 Box 1.

6Hagley Museum and Library, album Longwood Collection.


8Ibid., pp. 19 and 181.

9Hon. Eleanor Stanley, *Twenty Years at Court, 1842-1862*, p. 377, as quoted in Darrah, p. 6.

11Middleton, p. 127.

12Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "album."


14Middleton, p. 129.


16Taft, p. 143.


Hagley Museum and Library, album #71.2015.595.1
Box 1.

Hagley Museum and Library, album #69.12.1
Box 1.

Rockwood Museum, Brinthurst Album.


Hagley Museum and Library, album #71.MSS.872.

34 Hagley Museum and Library, album Longwood Collection.

35 Carr, pp. 173-177.


38 Sontag, pp. 8-9.
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HISTORY OF PHOTOGRAPHY


PHOTOGRAPHIC INTERPRETATION


HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION


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