

As you begin collecting pictures, you may discover some kinds that look really strange. You might find:

*tintypes* — positive photographs made on a thin iron plate enameled with a sensitized coating.

*silhouettes* — profile portraits cut out of black paper and pasted on a white or colored card.

*ambrotypes* — negative transparencies backed with black cloth or paint to make them look like positives.

*oil paintings* — usually done on canvas stretched on a wooden frame. Small paintings were often done on wood or board.

*pen and ink sketches*

*glass plates* — these are a wonder to look through and even more of a wonder if they've survived. Glass was used to make photographic negatives until flexible materials like celluloid and acetate were manufactured so that negatives could be made on sheets or rolls of film.

*tinted photographs* — photographs painted by hand in soft, pastel colors.

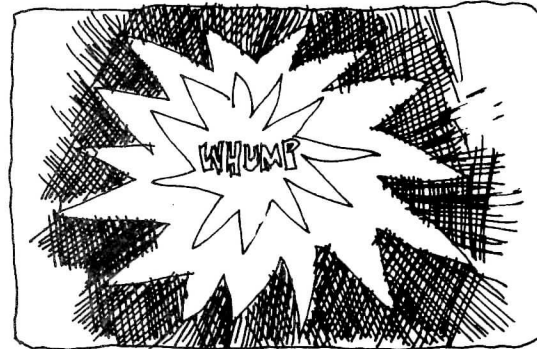
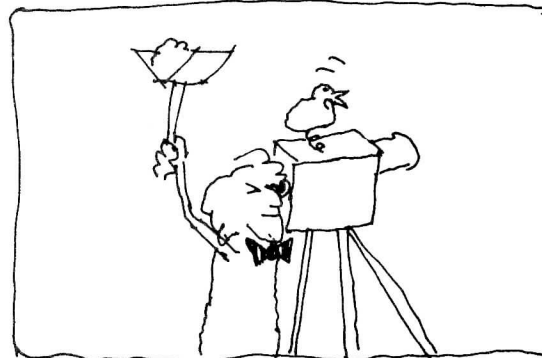
*daguerreotypes* — photographs made on a light-sensitive silver-coated metal plate. When you look straight at it you see a dim negative image, but turning it at an angle to the light a bright positive image suddenly appears.

*calotypes* — fuzzy, soft images printed from paper negatives.

Besides telling you something about the history of cameras and films, learning

about the different kinds of early photographs also helps to date them. As each new process was invented it flourished for a while and then declined, being replaced by a newer, simpler, or better way. So if there is a picture with no date and disagreement among your family as to whether it's great-granddaddy or great-great-granddaddy, you'll be able to make a rough guess if you can identify the kind of picture it is.

Of course, several photographic processes were in use at any one time, so you can't be perfectly accurate. But you may be able to tell at least what generation the person's from.



Some other clues:

Look for an embossed date in the paper or on the little folder with the photograph.

Compare clothing styles and hair styles with displays and mannequins in local museums, or with pictures in books.

If you know the birthdate of the person in the picture, try to guess their age at the time the picture was taken (anything goes).

Pass a copy of the picture around to older members of your family and ask them to guess at the date and write it on the back.

Some places where old pictures hide:

Unmarked boxes in attics and basements (all the more fun because you'll have to go through each box).

Tucked in old books, diaries, old school yearbooks, family Bibles (where you'll also find birth certificates).

Photo albums, and those yellow envelopes in which processed film and prints come back from the drugstore.

In the bottom of seldom used dresser or desk drawers.

