

## CHAPTER 5 ~ UNIQUE PHOTO FORMATS

### Unique Sizes & Formats of the 19th Century

Photographers offered a wide range of new card formats in the 1890s. For the previous 30 years, two formats, the carte de visite and the cabinet card, dominated the look of portrait photographs. They were not alone now.

The U.S. economy boomed at unprecedented rates during the 1880s and into the nineties, which spurred new ideas and innovation in just about every aspect of American life. The automobile was evolving from the buggy, and in 1888 George Eastman introduced his first Kodak camera for the consumer. Though an economic setback occurred with the *Panic of 1893* when several railroads and banks collapsed, the desire for all things new had taken hold.

By 1890 the carte de visite had all but disappeared and the cabinet card was the preferred choice for family or individual portraits. In addition, many new photo formats were introduced, though the technology and fashion did not change just because the card changed.

The actual photographic print glued to a unique card would have been the same type of print mounted on a standard cabinet card during the same era.



### New Card Look and Feel

Most newer cards were made with the same processes and received similar treatments as the standard cabinet card in use at the time. The cards may have come in colors such as dark maroon and black, and have beveled and gilt edges. However, one new addition in the mid-1890s that was different was the introduction of a finely textured card surface, accompanied sometimes with very small saw-tooth edges.

The diamond shaped card in Figure 5-1 is an example of this new card, though it came in a different shapes also. Found as early as 1893, most examples date from late in the decade.

### Wide Variety of Card Names

With such names as Boudoir, Imperial, Promenade, Victoria and others, the suppliers of these specialty cards tried to separate their new cards from the rest of the pack, and establish market presence by using illustrious names. Each of the named cards were a specific size, yet the field of choices was so crowded that none of them became a clear leader. The varieties became so numerous, names were not even given to many of them.

Figure 5-1. Diamond c. 1896 card photo above. (Actual size.)

The 1898 *Illustrated Catalog of Photographic Equipment and Materials* from E.& H. T. Anthony & Co. listed a wide range of card types and sizes.

Advertised Card Formats		
Name	Size (In.)	Cost
Carte de visite	2½ x 4	\$ .70
Cabinet	4¼ x 6½	1.20
Boudoir	5¼ x 8	2.40
Carré	3 x 3	.70
No name	3½ x 4¼	1.10
No name	4½ x 5½	1.15
No name	5 x 7	2.00
No name	6½ x 8½	3.60
No name	8 x 10	5.50

Table 5-1. 1898 card catalog listing.

The costs listed are per hundred for blank cards. These cards included gold beveled edges, and were available in primrose, pearl, and dark colors.

### Card Size Variations

Even though the above list was from a leading supplier, many cards have been found with slight variations in dimensions. In addition there were numerous other cards with eye-catching names.

Additional Named Formats	
Name	Size (In.)
Victoria	3½ x 5
Trilby	3 x 3¾
Boudoir	5¼ x 8
Promenade	4 x 7
Panel	4 x 8¼
Imperial	7 x 10

Table 5-2. Photograph card names of the 19th century.

Most of the new cards were only different in size from the cabinet card. The photographic technology and fashions were usually the same as if it was a cabinet card.

Therefore it should be noted that if you have an odd sized card, it is most likely from the 1890s.



Figure 5-2. This 1895 card measures 5¼ inches wide by 4¼ inches tall. (Actual size.)