

Checklist

IDENTIFY MYSTERY PHOTOGRAPHS

- **Look for the date.**
It's common to find a date printed in the margin on the back of a photograph. You may need to hold it up to the light, use a magnifying glass or scan the back of the photo and enhance the image to see the date.
- **Study the clothing and setting in the photograph. Take note of military uniform.**
Many websites and reference books provide examples of traditional dress and styles for different time periods. Do a web search using key words such as "18th century clothing" and "photodating," or visit your local library for books that date historical costume.
- **Research the type of photo.**
Each photo (daguerreotypes, ambrotypes, carte-de-visites [cdvs] cabinets, tintypes, stereotypes, snapshots, postcards, etc.) were taken in a certain time period in which that photographic method was most likely used. You'll find many books with extensive information on this subject at your local library or historical center.
- **Take note of automobiles in the photo.**
A vehicle's license plate will not only tell you the location, but may also help you trace the owner of the vehicle. (Check with a historical society or library.)
- **Send a photocopied version of the photograph to or visit people who might know something about the individual(s) in the photograph.**
If it's a group photo, ask the individuals to write the names of the people they know on the photocopied version and mail it back to you. Be sure to include a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Note:

Don't make photocopies of daguerreotypes, tintypes, glass-plate negatives and some older photographs because they are light sensitive and can be damaged. Check with your local library for books about handling older photographs.