

Images:

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Text:

Keeping in touch with Carte De Visite

Do you find yourself sending more photos to friends and family recently? Even before we had Instagram and high-quality cameras in our back pockets, sending photos of yourself was still considered a great way to keep in touch. In 1850 the Albumen print was invented by Louis-Desire Blanquart-Evard. This print-out photographic technique used eggs to fix the positive image to thick cardstock like paper. This technique allowed for postcard and business card size and style images to begin circulating widely and fairly inexpensively. They became so popular that a single company went through “more than six million eggs per year.”

Often, Carte de Visite images such as these would be sent in the mail along with letters. The photos were sometimes birth, wedding, or death announcements for family members who could not attend the family proceedings. It was equally likely for someone to receive a carte de visite from someone who simply missed them and wanted to know how they were doing and be seen by them. It was customary that if one received a photo in a letter they would reciprocate with one of their own.

Sources:

- Bertrand Lavedrine *Photographs of the Past: Process and Preservation* (Getty Publications Los Angeles 2009) 112
James M. Reilley, *The Albumen and Salted Paper Book* (Rochester 1980) 4

Note: Devany, Since I'm not talking about the images in any particular order, please feel free to rearrange their order if you find any particularly compelling, if not that's fine too.