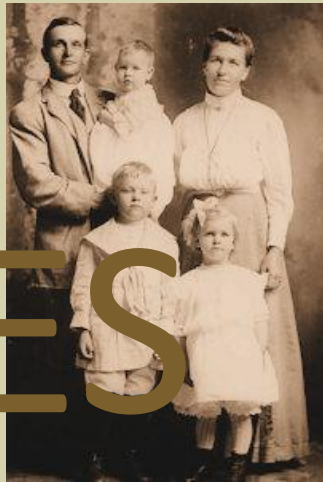


# PHOTOGRAPHY IN MID 19<sup>th</sup> EARLY 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY



:

# DISCOVERING THE NARRATIVE BEHIND THE PICTURES





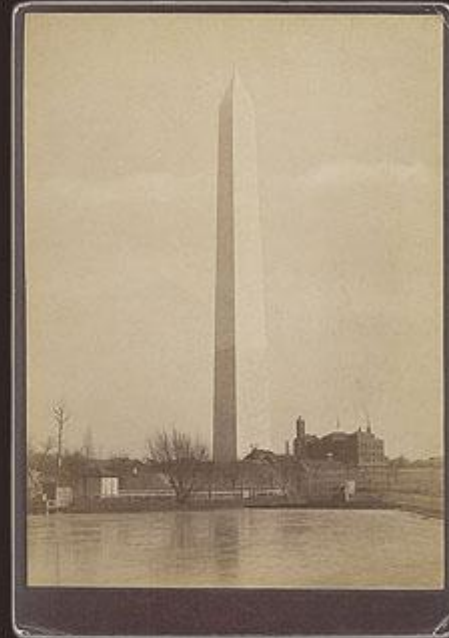
CDV



Cabinet



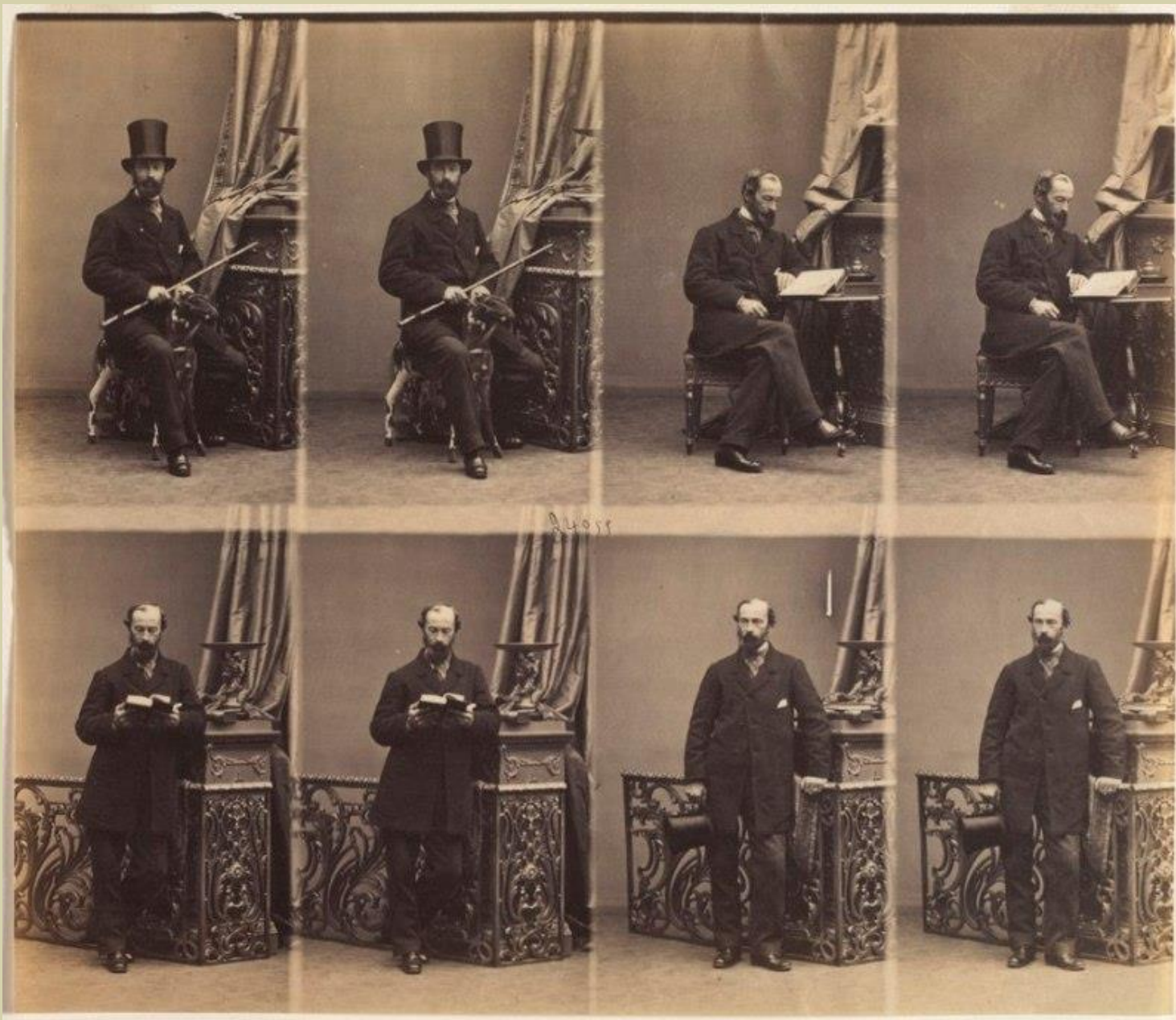
Boudoir



"Imperial"

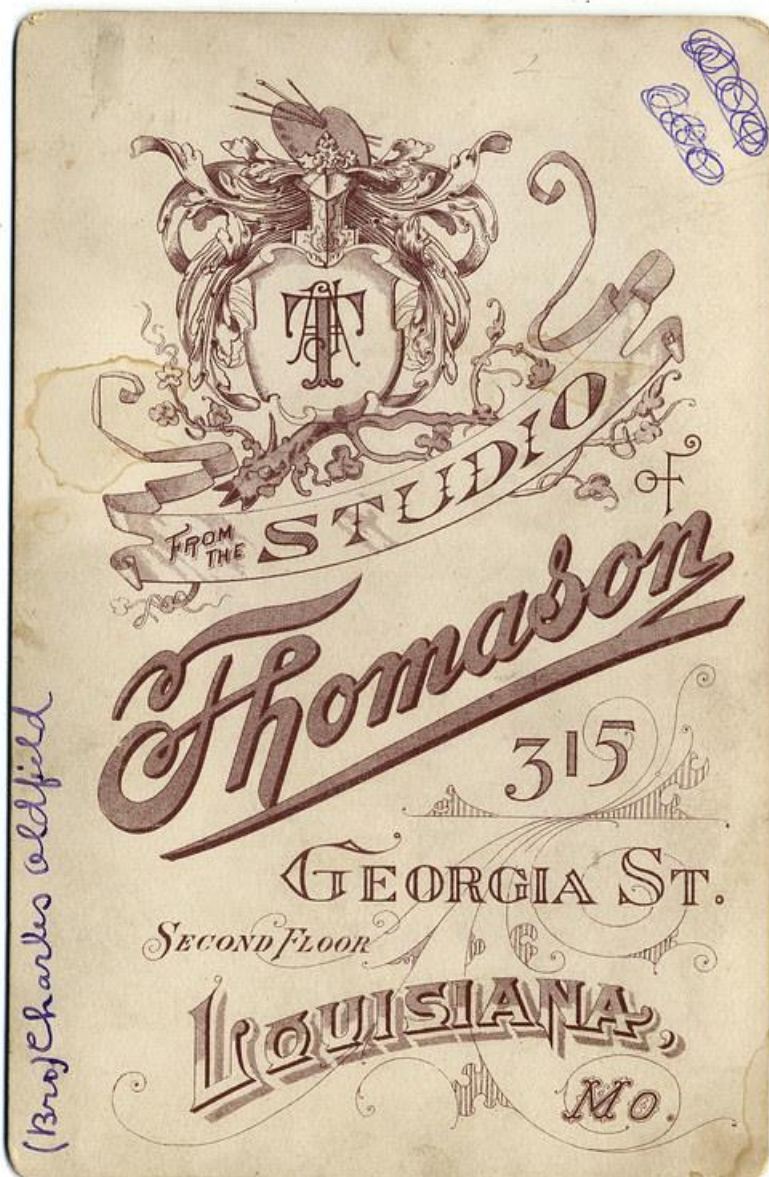
Beginning in the late 1850s, the studio photograph was an early form of social media in America that provided an easy and affordable way to obtain pictures of individuals and families in several formats.





- ❖ The carte de visite- CDV- was the size of a formal visiting card (2.5 X 4.5 inches).
- ❖ The development process made it possible to make multiple copies.
- ❖ CDVs were collected and displayed in the parlor where guests were entertained.
- ❖ Significant family events such as births, deaths, and marriages were common subjects.





*(Bro) Charles Oldfield*

- ❖ The cabinet card was larger than the CDV (4.5 X 6.5 inches).
- ❖ The photograph was mounted on card stock.
- ❖ The photographer name and address appeared in ornate text on the back of the card.
- ❖ Cabinet cards were often kept in special albums.

**I got the idea** for this project after visiting a graveyard near Peterborough, NH. Many of the people there were buried together as a family. One of these family plots was especially interesting because the names and dates told a story. It seems that things began well enough. The parents began having children in their early 20's, but the mother died soon after the third child was born. The husband remarried in his 40's to a woman who was some 20 years younger. I concluded that the new wife was probably a woman who in her late teens came in to take care of the infant whose mother had died and helped to raise the older siblings as well.

The marriage happened around the time when the eldest child would have been old enough to leave home and assume an independent life. By then, the second wife had been around long enough to seem like part of the family, and the father, anticipating the eventuality of an empty nest, became motivated to make her family status official. The second marriage produced a fourth child. The idea of creating an implied narrative based on names and dates alone seemed like an interesting project, so I put together family albums for several fictitious families to see if I could construct a narrative using just names and dates.