

## Clues for Identifying Photograph Details

There are Five Factors in proving the identity of each individual.

1. At least one family relationship
2. Gender
3. The approximate **Date** of an Event
4. The approximate **Place** of an Event
5. Hopefully the **Name** or partial name of one person in the photo.

**Family Relationships are the most important way to prove the unique identity of each person.**

Entering everything you know about the person and their relatives in FamilySearch will help you to match up relevant information.

Learning each piece of their identity can lead to information and bits of story pieces about their life you can put together. Collect all the information you can about your family. Eventually the pieces may fit together.

## PHOTOS

When we are trying to identify an individual in a photograph it is helpful to have additional people in the photograph which could be a family member or close friend. If you can identify one person, and you have a good knowledge of the family information, you may be able to identify others.

### Questions to Ask about a Photo:

Hint: A magnifying glass can be a great aid to picking out details in photos.

Is there anyone else in the family that can identify these photos? (Don't wait too long to check.)

Is there a calendar in the background anywhere? What about newspapers, magazines or advertisements to help establish a timeframe.

Are there other people, such as babies or grandparents in the background?  
Are there pets included in the picture? Pets usually don't live as long as people so it may narrow the time frame.

Are there holiday decorations in the background? Can you tell the season of the year? Is there snow or are there leaves on the trees? How big are the trees in the picture? How big are the current trees in that location? Did certain family members “always come” for a certain holiday or birthday?

What kind of clothing is the person wearing? Coat? Summer clothes? What style is the clothing? Can you identify the time period of the clothing by checking online or in books? Is the person wearing a work, military or school uniform?

What home was the picture taken in? Are there family heirlooms or paintings on the wall that others remember which would help identify more details of time and place?

What home decorations or furnishings are in the picture? Is there wallpaper on the walls? Are there baby items or children’s toys in the background?

Are there other photos in the background? Are there photos of in-laws? Frequently descendants may resemble the other side of the family. Are there distant cousins (submitters on FamilySearch) you could chat with in their message feature?

Is there a family picture included in the background? Who is the “baby” in the picture? Are grandparents included in the picture?

Who in the photo is wearing wedding rings?

Are there other photos with similar processing color or paper that have been dated so you know the timeframe?

How many birthday candles are on the cake?

What model of cars are in the picture? Can you read a date on the license plates?

Are there other relatives with similar pictures that have been dated?

Are there buildings, billboards or other community landmarks in the picture?

Are there identifying marks or dates made by the photographer?

Have you looked up the photographer online to see when they were in business? Have you looked up what photographers were in the area during the time period you think may apply?

Remember these generalities:

- 1) Most photos mounted on cardboard were taken in the early 1900's or before.
- 2) Postcard photos were popular around 1910.
- 3) Children in dresses before 1920 may be male or female.
- 4) Color photos were not taken until the 1950's and were not common until the 1960's.