

Create Your Own Historic Cabinet Card

A brief history of cabinet cards

Cabinet cards were a style of photography that was primarily used for portrait photography after 1870, reaching the height of their popularity from the 1880s through the 1890s. You may have seen these types of cards in museums or maybe even in your family photo collection. Typically, a photo was printed and glued to a 4.5x6.5 inch cardboard/cardstock card. The photo would be smaller than the card (usually about 3.5x5.5 inches). The bottom inch of the card often had the name of the photography studio where the photo was taken and printed. Sometimes, on the back, there would be a larger ad for the studio. The cards themselves could be black, brown, cream colored, green, and even pink. Prior to the cabinet card people would have *carte de visite* photos made. These were typically smaller and only saw popular use for about a decade between 1859 and 1870. You might have seen these of Civil War soldiers – when they were very popular. Cabinet cards were used until the early 1900s. Cabinet cards were frequently mailed to friends or family living far away.

Paris Photography Studios

There were numerous photo studios in Paris during the late 19th Century that offered cabinet card services. Paris Art Company was located at 907 Main Street (the original building no longer exists and was replaced with the YMCA building). Grinnan's was operated by L. Grinnan and he had a studio in a variety of places in Paris, including out of his home on Henderson Street. The People's Gallery was a studio on the top floor of the Bourbon Agricultural Bank (now Kentucky Bank) branch on Main Street.

Special Prices.
 — FOR —
CABINET PHOTOS
 — BY —
L. GRINNAN,
Photographer.

From this date (May 14) until June 1st, I will make one dozen cabinet photos for \$3.00.

I will also make one 16x20 crayon portrait (from any negative I have) for \$2.50.

I have all the negatives made since I have been in Paris and will make duplicate photos from same at extremely low prices.

To those who are not now prepared to take advantage of these low prices I will sell a contract which will be good until September 1st, 1897.

The above prices are for CASH—when sitting is made or order placed.

L. GRINNAN,
 PARIS, KY.

Photograph Gallery Opened.

The photograph gallery in the Agricultural Bank Building is now open for business and a cordial invitation to call is extended to the people of Bourbon and surrounding counties. The gallery equipment is second to none in the State, the furnishings being new and up-to-date, and the dressing rooms having every convenience. The gallery is in charge of an experienced photographer and the work will be guaranteed to be satisfactory in every respect. The elevator at the Main street entrance takes you to the door of the gallery. Call and inspect the finished work on display.

Ad from The Bourbon News, 1897

The Bourbon News, 1900

Activity

Using the provided supplies create your own cabinet card to share with family or friends. For this activity you can use a personal photo (make sure it's a portrait!) or an example from the Hopewell Museum (provided). You have three different card templates, so you can create three different cabinet cards.

Step 1

Print your cabinet card and selected photo. You can print on regular printer paper or cardstock. Use scissors to cut out your template cards and your selected photo or photos.



Step 2

Glue your two template cards together using your glue stick. If you printed your template on regular printer paper it is best to glue a thin piece of cardboard between the two pieces for added thickness (something like a cereal box would work). Try to make them match up evenly.



Step 3

Glue your photo to the front of the card. The front of the card is the side that has a bottom border with the photographer studio name.



Step 4

Write your name and date on the back of the card.