

Picture Stories 3

John M. and Nadine A. Hoenig describe the stories revealed by photographs

Why's the Photo Red?

In a box of family photos from Belgium, we found this dark red photo of Nadine's uncles. What's going on here? This was a way photographers distributed proofs. The customer could look at a collection of photos for a few days to make their selection. But if they were tempted to just keep the proofs and not purchase prints, they'd wind up with darkened red pictures. The photographers never imagined that 70 years later Nadine could adjust the color and contrast using a computer program such as PhotoShop to salvage a decent image of her uncles. One interesting



This proof was designed to turn dark red after a few days. It gave customers a chance to look at photographers' proofs — but not on a permanent basis.



Blow-up of the picture reveals an interesting detail: the thumb is resting on a brass plate mounted in the corner of the cover.



Same photo as before, but Nadine has computer-enhanced the image.

detail is revealed by blowing up a portion of the photo. The corner of the book under the thumb has a brass plate suggesting this is an important book, like a prayer book. In fact, Nadine found her uncles' prayer books with the brass tabs. This photo was probably taken on the occasion of their First Communion.

Crumpled Photos

Occasionally, we come across a photo that is badly worn with wrinkles and even tears.

Experience tells us these photos are worth a second look. Consider the photo of John's grandfather. He gave it to his fiancée, John's grandmother, when he went into the Austro-Hungarian Army to fight in WWI. She apparently carried it with her everywhere, thus leading to its ragged condition.



John's grandfather (right), on the eve of WWI. John's grandmother carried her fiancé's picture everywhere, thus explaining the wrinkled photo.

In general, well worn photos are a sign that it was treasured by the bearer. This can be an important clue when trying to identify people in photos.

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