

## GUIDE TO THE OCTOBER 29 AUCTION OF CABINET CARDS

There are almost 1000 items in this auction, in over 600 Lots. Aside from the Civil War material that opens the sale, these are mostly cabinet cards. There are also cartes de visite, tintypes, and some photo postcards that relate to the cabinet cards. They have been selected from a much larger collection. This is the material of greatest general interest. I hope this guide will be helpful as you look through the material and decide what is of most interest to you.

### THE NATURE OF THE MATERIAL.

There were three major formats of card mounted photographs in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. They were notable for allowing designs and printed material to appear on the borders and the backs of the mounts. These were cartes de visite, stereo views, and cabinet cards. Cabinet Cards, that began to succeed CDV's around 1870, offered the largest area (6 ½ x 4 ½ = inches) for the photographic print as well as the largest surface for texts and designs. They were popular into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In the period they were put in albums alongside family photographs that would often be taken by the same photographers. This collection includes photographs by major studios that had widespread distribution as well as a fine representation of work by photographers in small communities that were made in small quantities for local collection.

Like any collection it is subject to the particular interests of the collector. There are several important areas that were covered in the cabinet card era that are not represented or only lightly represented. The greatest depth is in those directly related to photography, not only including photographers with their cameras in their studios but also many wonderful examples of various kinds of photographic manipulation. Another very strong area is occupational images. Most are exciting and unusual occupations, in artful poses and settings. There are very many images of circus freaks and other performers, including theatrical subjects. There are subjects related to sports, bicycles, and pets. An [index](#) gives a more particular listing of some of the material. However the lots have very much more to offer than just images of certain subjects.

### THE SCANS AND DESCRIPTIONS

Many people will go through the listings only paying attention to particular subjects. We welcome such participation. But I have prepared the organization and presentation from a different perspective. When **Be·hold** began, it focussed on small photographic images that could be held in the hand or viewed by turning album pages, as opposed to those that would be hung on the wall. This was one of the meanings of "hold" in "Be·hold." Most of our offerings were daguerreotypes, stereo views, tintypes, CDV's, and of course

cabinet cards. In recent years I have been paying more attention to larger forms of photography, including modern and recent photographs. In the months that I have immersed myself in this collection, I have been able to see it from a modern and even contemporary viewpoint, and see the cabinet card era as an evolution from the daguerreian period to the rise of modernism.

To best appreciate the material you will have to spend the time looking at the images carefully, using the descriptions only as a first point of departure. I am assuming you can use Google and other resources to find more information about the subjects, if needed. I also trust you to be able to see things in the images that do not need to be pointed out in the text.

These offerings are rich with examples that have to do with photography and with much later photography, for example the use of the studio as a “setting” for the images. Don’t skip over a section because it does not seem to be in your collecting interest. There may be things that you will find very interesting. I will be sending out a Newsletter dealing with some of the issues. (You can sign up on the website to receive these Newsletters.)

## **CONDITION**

The first 29 lots of Civil War material come from another collection. While the collector may have thought he was protecting the material, the plastic holders in which he stored the items caused various kinds of deterioration to many of the photographs. The condition is always conservatively described and the scans will give a good idea of how they look.

The cabinet cards that make up most of the auction lots are in excellent condition. Of the thousand or so examples there are only a handful that have “condition problems” and these are visible in the scans and pointed out in the text and the condition codes. The condition [4] is for material that is rich and flawless. There are a few examples that jump out as the very strongest. There are codes like [4-], [3+] and “clean [3]” that are also without flaws. I might have just passed a blazingly rich one, and if the tones on the next one might be just a hair less, I might put it in one of these slightly lower categories when on another day I would grade it higher. They are all without flaws. There are only a very few with a condition [2], Any actual damage to the photograph [not the mount] is indicated by the “D” prefix and there are very few of those in the entire collection. I do not fudge by saying these are ‘Good for their age’ or “good except for some problem that you can only see in raking light.” I have looked at them in raking light.

## **ESTIMATES AND BIDDING**

The starting bids are at a low enough level to generate competitive bidding on almost all of the lots. It will be a shame if many of them only sell at that level. The range of

estimates is intended to be a conservative guide to your bidding. For many of these, I believe the true “value” is higher than the high estimate. Many photographs sell for vary much more that don’t have the aesthetic value of some of these cabinet cards.

The collection includes work by many otherwise obscure photographers whose photographs are more inventive than some of the work of some canonic or currently fashionable artists. Don’t be afraid to be guided by your feeling about a certain lot. You may not easily find a comparable photograph for anywhere near the high estimate.

I just checked the listings on eBay for “cabinet cards” under “photographic” and ordered it by “highest first.” For many pages there are cabinet cards listed at much higher levels than the auction estimates. Some of these seem deservedly high, but they are still a lot higher than comparable material in this auction, and many are in inferior condition.

With over 600 lots in this long 2-session auction, things will have to proceed quickly. The best procedure is to leave maximum bids well before the auction date. You can do this on the **be·hold** website, or on one of the auction platforms “Invaluable” or “Live Auctioneers.” You can also leave bids directly with us and save the additional premium those platforms charge for winning lots.

You can arrange to bid by phone during the auction, but please set this up well in advance. Because of the large number of lots we hope to keep these phone bids quick and efficient. If you need more information about a lot you should request it long before the auction.

There may be a large number of lots throughout the auction that interest you. A good plan is to leave your bids on most of them, and then arrange to bid “live” on the internet or bid by phone only on those lots that are especially important and that you don’t want to lose. You can also just follow the auction as it goes along. If you are registered you can put in a bid if you are surprised that something is at a level lower that what you want to pay.

## **PAYMENT AND SHIPPING**

For bidders in the U.S. and Canada, please send a check (on U.S. funds on a U.S. bank) or Money Order within 3 – 5 days after you receive the Invoice, Make sure you have the final Invoice that includes the shipping charge.

We do not accept credit cards. If you can not send a check, you may use Paypal with prior authorization. This will result in an additional fee of 3%.

Invoices from other countries must pay by wire transfer. Bank information will be provided.

# Be·hold

Larry Gottheim

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## **AFTER THE AUCTION**

We will have the full results on our web page a day or so after the auction. The “Invaluable” and “Live Auctioneers” platforms will only show the results for lots that sold on their platforms.

For 10 days after the auction unsold lots will be available for direct sale under the same arrangements as the auction. That is, the price will be the opening bid and the 15% Buyer’s Premium will be charged. After that, please contact us for prices of material that is still available. It will generally be within the range of the estimates.

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