

## Using Photographs in Historical Investigations

Photographs are primary sources about a person, or people or an event. They may give valuable information about a topic as well as provide a visual impact of the event. These firsthand accounts enable us to view history as something other than a series of dates, facts and generalizations. From the analyses of the photograph, historians and social scientist are able to place individual events into a broader context, developing generalizations and providing meaning and significance to basic facts. Like a historian, analyze the photograph for its content and the credibility of the author. In examining photographs, consider the time and place, and most importantly, who is the intended audience for this photograph?

### *Identify the Photograph*

1. Who took the picture and when?
2. Why was the photograph taken? (keepsake, historical record, etc.)
3. Who is the intended audience? (family, friends, general public)

### *Examine the Photograph*

1. Describe the action or the subject of the photograph.
2. Divide the photograph into several parts and make a list of objects pictured. Examine the background, individuals or groups or objects.
3. What details in the photograph yield the most information?

### *Evaluate the Photograph*

1. How is the photograph useful in making inferences, deductions or generalizations about its subject?
2. Is the photograph a valid historical representation? Do the objects, people, and background all fit?
3. What questions do you have about this photograph?
4. What is the photographer's perspective on this picture?

