

Individual Photograph Research Report No. 2011-P0201



Client: Fiona Wilson <fiona.h.wilson@gmail.com>

Date Received: 2 February 2011

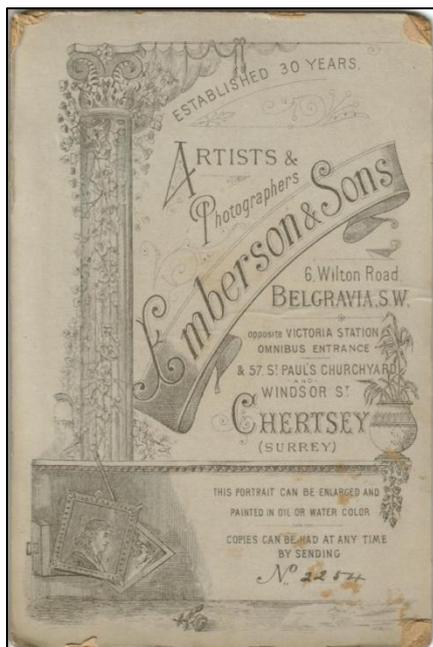
Date Completed: 3 February 2011

Photograph Type: Cabinet card portrait

Measurements (supplied): Nil

Image Details: 96dpi, 24-bit full-colour scans of front and reverse emailed as JPG files

Assignment: The subject of the photograph is identified in family album as Amelia, the wife of John Faithfull GARLICK. Was it, in fact, his wife Emily Elizabeth GARLICK née HOLLAND (1827-1903) or could it have been his mother Amelia GARLICK née QUELCH (1793-1868)? A date estimate for the portrait would help in identifying which ancestor it is.



Provenance: A snapshot of the cabinet card as it is situated within album pages, and in relation to the caption, provided context. A carte de visite depicting a head-and-shoulders view of the same person has a similar design on the reverse.

Other Information: "My uncle labelled the photo probably on my grandmother's advice. Emily was my grandmother's grandmother who died when she was aged 4. At first I was therefore confused as to why my grandmother wouldn't have been more sure about the subject of the photo as she did remember that grandmother, but by then Emily would have been about 20 years older and no doubt, as my grandma probably just called Emily 'grandma' or similar, she may not have been sure of her first name. As you'll see the Amelia has a question mark after it."



ANALYSIS

Photographer & Card Design

This cabinet card is from the firm of George Emberson & Sons, and the reverse lists branch studios at 6 Wilton Road (Belgravia), 57 St Paul's Churchyard and Windsor St (Chertsey). The design on the reverse of the card mount is typical of those first introduced in the very late 1880s, and more commonly used in the early to mid-1890s (Roger Vaughan's web site has some examples [here](#)). From [photoLondon](#), the *Database of 19th Century London Photographers*, it appears that Emberson was at 6 Wilton Road from c. 1885 onwards, and at 57 St Paul's Churchyard from c. 1889. Elsewhere I found a note, of unknown reliability, that the firm was styled "Emberson & Sons" from 1891 onwards. This suggests to me that the cabinet card was produced in the early 1890s, say between 1891 and 1893. The negative number 2254 is handwritten in black ink on the reverse, but on its own this information is not very helpful in dating the photo or mount.

Portrait

Portrait Style: I also note that the portrait is rather unevenly vignetted around the edges, in a manner commonly used in an attempt to disguise the fact that a photograph was being copied from an earlier portrait. I'm not suggesting in any way that all vignetted portraits are copies, merely that vignetting was often employed to hide both the edges of the old print and perhaps to obscure somewhat old-fashioned studio props.

Clothing & Hair Styles: The severely drawn back hair, narrow lace collar, rounded shoulders, narrow straight sleeves and plain unornamented style of the bodice, with relatively plain and, I think, not very full skirt suggest to me a date of the very late 1870s or early 1880s.

Subject: Since the subject is obviously an older woman - I would say that she is at least in her late fifties, and more likely in her sixties - she might therefore be expected to wear clothes that weren't quite up with the latest Paris fashions. However, I think it would be stretching it a little to expect a woman of that age (not that old, even in the late Victorian era) to be wearing those clothes in the early 1890s, since they would so obviously have been at least ten years behind the times.

Studio Furniture & Accessories: The fringed table and the turned and carved high-backed chair are typical of those commonly used in studios from the very late 1860s until the late 1870s. Emberson's first studio was established in the early 1860s, and it is quite possible that he held onto studio furniture some years after its "Use By" date had expired - many studios did, for various reasons, not necessarily just economy. However, I think it unlikely that those items would still be in use in the early 1890s, perhaps 15-25 years after they were purchased.

Date Estimate

There is clearly some difference between the date estimates suggested by the card mount and those indicated by the fashions displayed in the portrait itself. My considered opinion is therefore that this is a copy made in the early 1890s (c.1891-1893) of an earlier portrait for which the subject sat in the late 1870s or very early 1880s, say between 1877 and 1882. In other words, the copy was probably made some 10 to 15 years after the original portrait was taken.

Conclusions

If the woman was aged, say, between 55 and 70 at the time she visited the studio, then she would have been born somewhere between c.1807 and 1827. This date range, unfortunately, lies between

the birth dates of your two potential candidates, and only you can really decide which of the two it is more likely to be, or indeed whether the subject has been mis-identified altogether, and is some other family member. However, perhaps the following additional points may be of some use in arriving at some conclusion.

- I believe the portrait very unlikely to have been taken before 1868. The fringed table, hair style, clothing and pose must, I think, all date from later than that.
- Ill health, including various arthritic complaints, could easily render someone a good deal older-looking than their actual age and, if she was arthritic, I would not be surprised to discover that the subject was, say, in her early to mid-50s.

References

[photoLondon](#): The Database of 19th Century Photographers and Allied Trades in London: 1841-1901

Vaughan, Roger F. (2004) [Date an Old UK Photograph](#).

Posting on topic "[Re: A date if possible...](#)" by "Old Rowley" on Rootschat.com Forum, dated 16 Mar 2008