

Early 20th c. Hand-Colored Photography Grading System

Each picture listed in this auction has been assigned a grading of 1.0 – 5.0, with 5.0 being the best, 1.0 being the worst. In order to arrive at the appropriate numerical grading, we have developed the following guidelines:

5.0 - Excellent Condition: Recognizing that they are nearly 100 years old, these are pictures with no visible flaws. The picture has great color and detail, the mat is in excellent condition with proper size and aging, and the frame should be in near perfect condition and appropriate for the period. Very few pictures will ever achieve this grading. Only titled pictures can receive a "5". Smaller untitled pictures will generally not be graded a "5" because they are so typical and common.

4.5 - Near-Excellent Condition: These are pictures with practically no visible flaws whatsoever. To reach this grading, the picture must have great color and detail, and the mat must be in excellent condition with proper aging. The frame must be attractive, appropriate for the period, but may not be quite perfect. Perhaps there may be a little dirt that needs to be cleaned from the mat or inside glass. At this grading it might be possible to upgrade it to a "5" with a better frame, but it can never be upgraded to a "5" if the picture and mat are not nearly perfect.

4.0 - Above-Average Condition: These are pictures that, although they may not have any visible flaws, just don't rate a "4.5 or 5". The picture has very good color and detail (but not excellent color and detail), the mat is nice and clean (but showing a certain amount of aging), and the frame is totally acceptable. Occasionally, a "4" can be upgraded to a "4.5" with a better frame, or with a good cleaning on the inside of the glass. The highest grading an untitled picture can receive is a "4".

3.5 - Slightly Above-Average Condition: These are pictures that have minor damage, but not as extensive as a picture graded "3". Minor blemishes might include a small and barely visible stain, very minor foxing or dirt, a very minor mat reduction (no more than .5"-.75"), or any other minor blemish. Minor picture blemishes could also cause a picture to be graded a "3.5". An example of a minor picture blemish would be a few small, white spots on the picture. Or a slightly damaged frame could cause a picture to be graded a "3.5". A "3.5" picture whose only blemish is a slightly damaged frame or cleanable dirt or film on the glass can be upgraded to a "4" with a new frame or a good cleaning. However, once the mat has a water stain, foxing, or has been reduced, it can never be upgraded to a "4".

3.0 - Average Condition: Although the picture must be in good condition, there will usually be some major visible mat damage. This damage could include water stains that are large and clearly visible, over-mats, foxing, major dirt under the glass, mat creases or tears, or other significant blemishes. Re-Mounted or Re-Signed pictures would also fall into this category. A "3" picture that is very dirty or that has an unsightly frame can easily be upgraded to a "3.5 or 4" with a cleaning or a new frame. Any mat blemish that can be completely covered with an overmat would be considered a "3". A nicely overmatted

picture can never be rated higher than "3". Pictures that have been either re-mounted or re-signed can never be rated higher than a "3".

2.5 - Less Than Average Condition: These pictures have some major picture and/or mat blemishes. For example, a water stain that extends through the title or signature, some fairly major white spots on the picture, or an overmat that is in very poor condition. We will not include pictures with this grading in our auctions unless we deem it extremely rare.

2.0 - Poor Condition: Pictures falling within this category generally have some very significant flaws or blemishes. Damage to the picture would include faded picture coloring, noticeable tears or corner chips, or highly visible white spots. Mat damage would include things like large tears or creases, a very dark mat, water stains that cover all or a portion of the title or signature, or other major damage that cannot be entirely covered with an overmat. Other examples of flaws that could cause a picture to be graded a "2" would be broken glass or a frame that is so damaged or unsightly that someone would probably not be interested in hanging a picture with such a frame. Pictures that have broken glass or a horrible frame can be upgraded with the appropriate corrective action. Even an attractive picture with major mat damage might be upgraded to a "3" by re-mounting the picture. However, there is little that can be done to upgrade pictures with major picture damage. We will not include pictures with this grading in our auctions unless we deem it extremely rare.

1.0-1.5 - Very Poor Condition: Quite frankly you very rarely see pictures with this grading because by the time they have reached this level, most have been trashed or thrown away. However, occasionally they do turn up. Specifically, pictures that are rated "1 or 1.5" have irreparable damage to the picture itself. Specific examples would include pictures with major tears, pictures with unsightly spotting, pictures with ink spots, or other major damage making the picture unrepairable. I can't think of any instance where a picture graded a "1" could be upgraded to a "2". In order to be graded a "1", the picture must be so bad that it is basically beyond repair. We will not include pictures with this grading in our auctions unless we deem it extremely rare.