

Carriage Museum of America-Library

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

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VISITING CARDS and CARD CASES.

Closed carriages: Rockaways, Landaus, and Broughams have small pockets for holding cards. This seems like fine detailing to have a special pocket to hold cards, so while at the Winterthur Library, I looked through their collection of books on etiquette from 1829-1900. From *Sensible Etiquette of Best Society* (1878) we found "To the unrefined or the underbred person the visiting card is but a trifling and insignificant bit of paper; but to the cultured disciple of social law it conveys a subtle and unmistakable intelligence. Its texture, style of engraving, and even the hour of leaving it, combine to place the stranger whose name it bears in a pleasant or a disagreeable attitude, even before his manners, conversation and face have been able to explain his social position....It is quite as easy to express a perfect breeding in the fashionable formalities of cards as by any other method, and perhaps, indeed, it is the safest herald of an introduction for a stranger. Its texture should be fine, its engraving a plain script, its size neither too small, so that its recipients shall say to themselves, "A whimsical person," nor too large, to suggest ostentation. Refinement seldom touches extremes in anything.--Home Journal."

In order to maximize our time we did not pursue how old the custom is but it seems to be an established custom in the United States by the 1800. When visiting the first step might be to have a coach man that is able to deliver his passenger to the correct door. We found the following amusing story of Thomas Jefferson in *Laws of Etiquette or, Short Rules & Reflections* (1839). Mr. Jefferson sometime around [1789-1792] was invited to a dance at the house of distinguished military officer in Philadelphia. At about eight o'clock he got into his carriage and gave the coachman what he thought was an accurate direction as to place where he was to be driven. By mistake, he was set down at the door of the house directly opposite, which happened to be the residence of a member of Congress, whom he had never visited and who was very warmly opposed to him in politics. It was not until the Secretary of State was in the middle of the drawing-room that he discovered that he was, as it has lately been expressed, quite "in the wrong box." The lady of the house chanced to be sitting there alone, the gentleman being ill. The person Mr. Jefferson was, of course, known; and under that assurance, he presented himself with admirable ease and self-possession, and sat down. He conversed, making himself very agreeable, drank tea and staid till half-past nine o'clock, when he took leave. Inquiring from the servant at the door, where he should find the house to which he had been invited, he made his way thither, and communicated to the ladies the error into which, through the stupidity of his coachman, he had been led; and they, the next day, informed their neighbors."

The books of etiquette are well versed in all the proper procedures and good manners for visiting, some of which seem to fit right into 2002.

Getting back to the visiting card, there seems to be some very fine points of etiquette and changes that were made from 1829-1900.

From 1829 *Description of the Etiquette at Washington City*. "The cards that are made use of at Washington, are like the visiting cards that

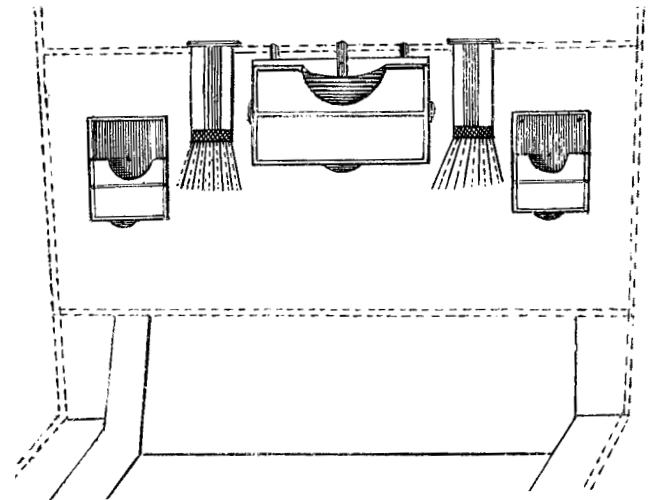


Fig. 1. Card cases on the interior front of a brougham. Hub Jan. 1883.

most of the fashionable Europeans, and those of our large towns and cities, carry almost constantly about them; they are about three inches long, and two broad, some are larger, and some smaller; a pretty large size are now most in fashion, generally white, some with gilt edges, others not, and most of the gentlemen and ladies have their names struck on them with copper plates, thus: Mr. Clay; but if they have a title, it is generally coupled with their names: General Brown; if a European nobleman, he prefaces his name with his title, and if a medical gentleman, thus: Doctor Rush; the heads of departments, and members of congress, make use only of the word Mr., thus: Mr. Benton, Mr. Burges, &c.; but when it so happens that there are two members of the same name, one of them has the name of his state struck on his card, thus: Mr. Johnston, Louisiana; because there is another senator of the same name, from Kentucky. Most of the stationers in Washington and the large towns and cities in the United States, keep blank visiting cards for sale; they are sometimes to be found of different colours, such are only made use of to write the names on with a pen, and not for copper plates. Most of the fashionable people carry them in a little fanciful case, to keep them bright.

When they go in their own carriages to make morning calls, they send their out-rider (or footman) to ring the door bell of the house where they

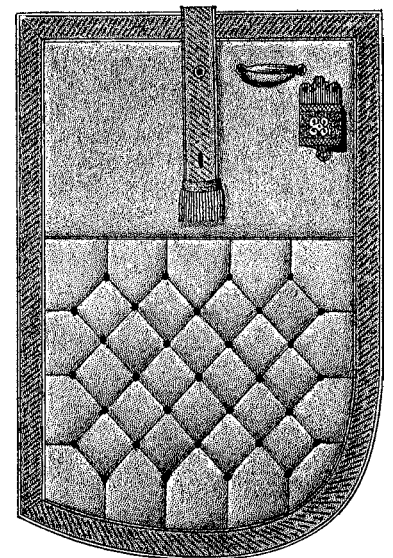


Fig. 2. Octagon-front brougham door with card case. Hub Jan. 1891.

are about to call, to inquire if the lady of the house is in or not. If she sends word that she is, they go in; if not, they send in their cards, which goes current amongst all fashionable people for a visit. ...and they not unfrequently send their cards by the coachman, and it is often unknown whether the mistress is in the carriage or not. And where there is more pomp and ceremony than real friendship, and such a great number of daily calls to make, visiting by such a fashionable mode of proxy, gives great relief and much despatch in such an arduous undertaking as a fashionable live.

From **1839** *Laws of Etiquette or, Short Rules and Reflections for Conduct in Society*. When a lady intends to give a large party or a dance, she leaves visiting cards at the houses of all whom she intends to invite, about a week before the cards of invitation are sent.

In leaving a card for a stranger, do not forget to add your address; and, do not omit it, if you leave a card for another in a city where you are a stranger.

The name upon a card should be legible at a glance.

The card of a man should be small, plain, unglazed, and ungilt. A gilded and glazed card is agreeable, only, as belonging to a woman.

There is a cheap mode of printing cards with types, which should be shunned as mean in the extreme. If a man cannot afford the expense of an engraved card, he should employ a written one.

In paying a visit under ordinary circumstances, you leave a single card. If there be residing in the house more than one person that you wish to visit you leave two cards, one for each party.

Ladies have a fashion of pinching down one corner of a card to denote that the visit is to only one of two parties in house, and two corners, or one side of the card, when the visit is to both; but this is a transient mode, and of dubious respectability.

From **1843** *Etiquette: or, a Guide to the Usage of Society*.

The names of the daughters who have been presented are to be inscribed on the cards of their mothers.

One card is sufficient for a mother and daughters to leave, and should there be daughters or sisters residing with the lady called on, the corner or corners of the card may be turned down, to signify that the visit is meant for them also.

When a married lady makes a call, she may leave her husband's card.

When cards are left for married people who reside with their parents or relatives, their names should be written on the cards left for them to preclude mistakes.

In society, verbal invitations are often given...it is proper to leave a card beforehand on the lady at whose house the soiree is to take place, that she may be made acquainted with your name and intention. (In case her husband forgot to tell her she was invited.)

From **1857** *Chesterfield's Letter Writing Simplified*. In making a call, if the lady called upon is not at home, leave your card, if you have one; and if there are several ladies there who you wish to see, desire the servant to present your compliments to them severally.

From **1860** *Gentleman's Book of Etiquette, and Manual of Politeness*. A Gentleman in society must calculate to give a certain portion of his time to making calls upon his friends, both ladies and gentlemen. He may extend his visiting list to as large a number as his inclination and time will permit him to attend to, but he cannot contract it after passing certain limits. His position as a man in society obliges him to call.

Always, when making a friendly call, send up your card, by the servant who opens the door.

There are many times when a card may be left, even if the family upon which you call is at home.

A card should have nothing written upon it, but your name and address. To leave a card with your business address, or the nature of your profession written upon it, shows a shocking ignorance of polite society.

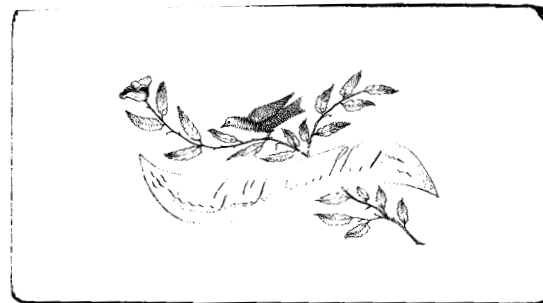


Fig. 3. Visiting card only 2.75 x 1.5 inches hand decorated with a hand written signature, circa 1860.



Fig. 4. Richly embossed visiting card with oak tree & acorns, eagle's head, swords, arrows, deer, lyre, shield, Success to Commerce & Peace to the World, plus the name of the card company in Boston, circa 1860



Fig. 5. Colored visiting card with a verse and hand written name, circa 1860.



Fig. 6. Colored visiting card with printed name.

Business cards are never to be used excepting when you make a business call.

Never use a card that is ornamented in any way, whether by a fancy border, painted corners, or embossing. Let it be perfectly plain, tinted, if you like, in color, but without ornament, and have your name written or printed in the middle, your address, in smaller characters, in the lower left hand corner.



Fig. 7. Visiting card with photo.

Many gentlemen omit the Mr. upon their cards, writing merely their Christian and surname; this is a matter of taste, you may follow your own inclination. Let your card be written thus:-- Henry C. Pratt.

No. 217 L. street.

A physician will put Dr. before or M. D. after the name, and an officer in the army or navy may add his title; but for militia officers to do so is absurd.

From **1887 Social Customs**. Visiting cards should be engraved in script, fine rather than large, and should be of unglazed cardboard. They should be perfectly plain, that is, without ornamentation of any sort; a fine, rather thin pasteboard is usually preferred for them. Indeed, very little room for individual taste is allowed in the matter of cards, which resemble

each other much as one dress-suit resembles the next. German text is sometimes used for engraving the names, but it is more apt to go out of style than plain script. Very fine lettering like any other singularity, is in bad taste. Gentlemen's cards are smaller than ladies', and are also narrower in proportion to their length. It was formerly a mooted point whether a gentleman's visiting card looked better with or without "Mr." prefixed to his name. Almost all young men of fashion now use the "Mr.," which is considered to be in better form.

For a lady there is no room for choice in the matter. She must always use "Miss" or "Mrs." on her visiting card. If a young lady, she may use either her initials or her full name, but never a nickname,...as a visiting card is a formal matter. It is now the fashion for young ladies to have their names printed in full, thus:--Miss Mary Stuart Phelps.

An army or navy officer, a physician, a judge, or a minister may use his title on his card. For a physician, "M.D." is preferable.

Husband and wife do not often now have their names engraved on the same card, except for wedding cards.

Every one's card should have the address of the owner engraved in the right-hand corner; that is to say, the street and the number where he lives, but not the name of the city. If a lady has a reception day, it is engraved usually in the left-hand corner. The address is often omitted from the cards of very young ladies, and sometimes from those of married ladies, in which case the card of the husband, with the address, must always be left. Young men belonging to a fashionable or well-known club often put its name, instead of their residence, on their cards.

A married lady should have her husband's full name or his initials on her card, and not her own. Where the last name is not a very common one, a lady sometimes compromises the matter by using no initials, and calling herself simply "Mrs. Dunbar." But she has not, strictly speaking, a right to put "Mrs. Dunbar" on her card, unless her husband is the eldest married man of his family, or belongs to the eldest branch of it...The same rule holds good for unmarried ladies. The eldest single daughter of the eldest brother, and she alone, has a right to use "Miss Cavendish" on her card...

The custom of having the names of the daughter or daughters engraved below that of their mother is growing in favor. Indeed, those who are strict in the matter of etiquette say that a young lady should not leave her own card without that of her mother or chaperone during her first year in society.

When must one call personally, and when will it suffice to send cards by a servant or through the post? [This is changing as cities grow].

Usually the servant who opens the door on these occasions has a little silver salver in his hand for the cards of guests; otherwise, guests leave

their cards on the hall table, as a reminder to their hostess.

As many servants in this country cannot reconcile it to their consciences to say a lady is "not at home" when she is in the house, it is often a wise precaution for the visitor to ask if the ladies are receiving on that day.

After checking the books on etiquette for the rules of visiting cards for the "Well Bred," "Well Mannered," we decided to do some research on e-bay into what the visiting cards of "Regular Folks" looked liked. (Visiting cards are now called calling cards). We found as early as the Civil War (1860s) period people had visiting cards with a little picture of themselves in the corner and their name or a full size picture of themselves on one side and their name on the other--hand colored floral designs with names hand written on them--commercially made colored lithograph cards that you could either write your name on the front or the back or inside depending on whether it was a single card or hinged--and embossed cards with hand written names or printed names.

As early as 1800 large pockets seemed to be used on the doors of coaches, in which a multitude of small items could be kept. The first instance of a small pocket or container being applied to the interior of carriages for holding small objects such as cards seems to be July 1863 when the *New York coach-Maker's Magazine* illustrated the interior of coupé with small containers fastened to the front interior, and by 1872 it seems to be the fashion for carriages of good taste. Card holders have been seen fasten either on the door or to the front interior. The *Hub* of July 1874 mentions the new fashion for card holders as being "two card-cases, about 14 inches high, being made out of tin covered with fine dark leather, of black or a color to match the rest of the trimming. These cases are fastened to the carriage by two screws. See illustration Figure 8.

We have also noticed large willow baskets of a shell form, which take the place of the ordinary card-case, and as both of these novelties are decidedly cheaper than those used previously."

The previous fashion before 1874 was mentioned to be ivory fixtures, which were expensive, difficult to procure, didn't always match the inside trimmings, and turn yellow and crack.

William Fitz-Gerald in his 1881 book *Carriage Trimmers' Manual and Guide Book* gives the following information.

"Card case.--A long thin box open at one end; used as a receptacle for visiting cards. They are made of hard rubber, ivory, or metal; the latter are generally covered with leather. The card boxes are generally attached to the doors; they are of ivory, celluloid and rubber, in colors, metal or leather covered, with morocco to match the trimming. The latest style of box is made in two parts; the back, which contains the cards, is securely attached to the door, and the front is hinged at the bottom to the back, and secured at the top by a spring. This contains a silicate slate, with three or four leaves, and a pencil, making a convenient memorandum book. Small willow baskets are also used as card cases."

The *Hub* of March 1875 page 359 gives some additional illustrations of card pockets which are "single pockets, with a novelty in the place of the cords generally used for raising the cards out of the case, narrow strips of leather of prominent color taking the place of

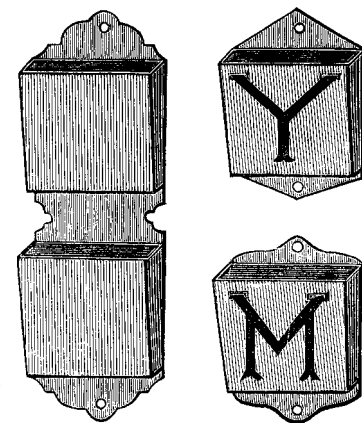


Fig. 8. Double card case (left) and card cases with monograms (right). *Hub* March 1875.

these strings; they may be cut in the shape of initials or monograms. In this manner almost any letter of the alphabet may be cut, and as the face-side of the case is inclining, and the straps hang perpendicular, they can be easily grasped. They will also be quite visible, being of a brighter color than the covering of the case, which is of a dark material." see illustration figure 8.

The *Carriage Monthly* July 1890, page 127: "If something extra special was wanted in inside carriage fixtures they were usually imported." However American manufactures were coming well equipped for manufacturing such inside fixtures for carriage trimming. Some of the companies that made, imported or did both were: White Manufacturing Co., Bridgeport, Connecticut--English & Mersick Co., New Haven, Connecticut--William Perpente, New Haven, Connecticut--C. N. Lockwood & Co., Newark, New Jersey--New Haven Car Trimming Co., New Haven, Connecticut.

Card Cases from the *Carriage Monthly* November 1889, page 224-225.

There are many different kinds of card cases that are in use in carriage work; in fact, the carriage is not finished without one of the unique and tasty combination card cases. Fig. 9, shows a neat case, all ivory, with apartments for various articles, cards, &c. This case adds to the inside finish of the job, and can be fastened to the inside, on front of lining board, with two ivory-capped screws.

Fig. 10, another beautiful case, composed of morocco and ivory, with apartments for cigars and other small articles, cards, &c.; and fastened in the same manner on the inside of the carriage, the morocco part being neatly creased.

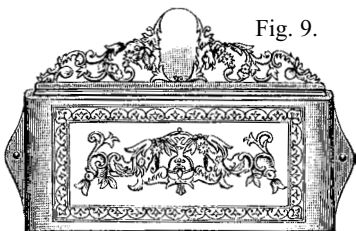


Fig. 9.

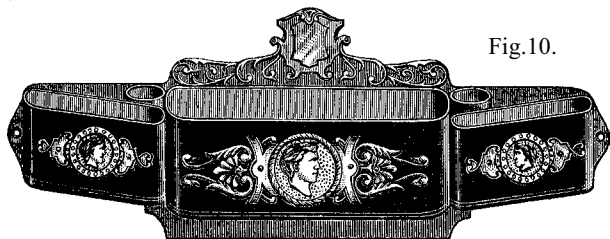


Fig. 10.

Fig. 11, a smaller size, made on a metallic foundation and covered with leather, with a raised diamond in the front center, and neatly creased and fastened on the right hand of window front, in small coupé rockaway. Fig. 12, also made on metallic foundation, covered with leather, with glass in front, the leather part neatly creased with a silver molding finish on the outer edges-can be used for cards, &c. Fig. 13, made from japanned tin, with ivory finish in neat design, with silver molding finish on the outer edge.

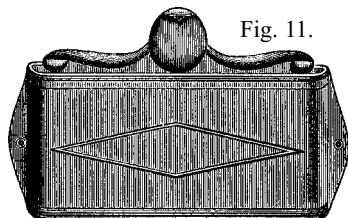


Fig. 11.

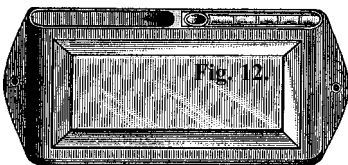


Fig. 12.

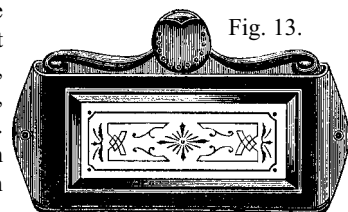


Fig. 13.

Fig. 14, another neat card case, made entirely from ivory, and artistically carved, and makes one of the neatest finishes in the way of cases that can be used in the carriage work; and, when attached to the proper place, makes a unique and beautiful finish. Fig. 15, combination card case, made on a metallic foundation and covered with

leather, artistically creased in some neat design, with raised work on lower part and a neat circle made from leather 1/2 inch wide, and run through the rounder. This will make it half-round, and will form the place for the clock face. This case is composed of several different apartments, one section to admit the hand mirror, the back part also covered with leather and creased; the other sections are to carry scissors, perfume-bottles, cigars, cards and other small articles. This case and other designs similar are intended for broughams and other work of this class. This case is mounted with a neat silver molding, and when completed makes a very beautiful and convenient part of the vehicle.

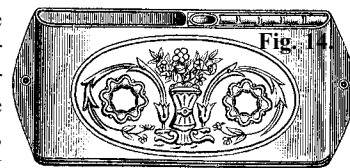


Fig. 14.

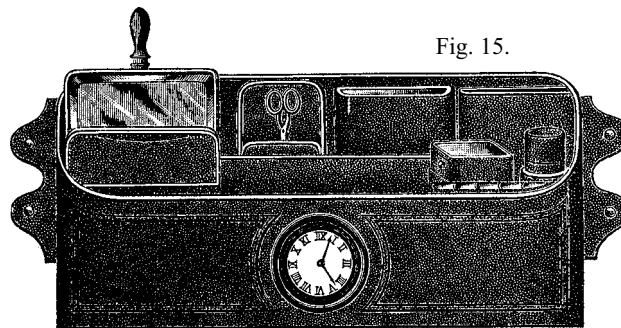


Fig. 15.

Fig. 16. The foundation of this combination toilet case is made on japanned tin, decorated in artistic designs, in white metal, with two apartments for perfume bottles, and three larger ones for cards and other small articles, and will admit small size comb and brush; this case can be used

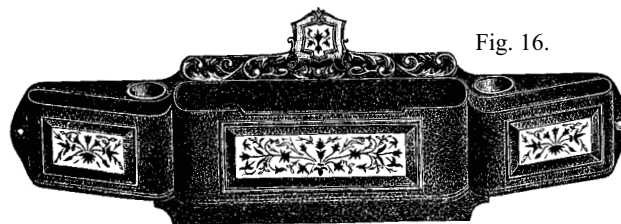


Fig. 16.

for brougham and other work of this class where there is but one cushion on the inside, and must be fastened secure with neat silver top screws in the center of front deck board, so as to permit two small persons to set on each side of the case, if there should be a small seat attached to the inside front.

Fig. 17. This is a small case made up on a metallic foundation, covered with leather, mounted with silver molding, and some neat design creased on the face of the case and fastened on with four small screws, two on each side of the case. This size case like Figs. 11, 12, and 14, are sometimes used on octagon-front broughams, as they are more apt to have a front folding seat, and this card case can be attached to the front quarter on the right hand side. All of the cases that are covered with leather, always should be backed with some kind of material, cloth or leather, so that the front covering will be more secure and not so apt to give way, as the finish of the front extends to the under side, and the under covering will make the other secure. It will require some skill by the workman to finish the leather cases so as to make them have a light appearance, and the raising and creasing must not be too heavy looking, or it will spoil your work; better be the plain leather than spoil the job with heavy creasing. I throw out the hint, as I am aware that a great many carriage-builders have their own cases covered on metallic foundation.

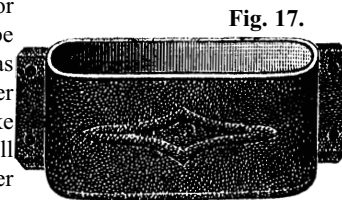
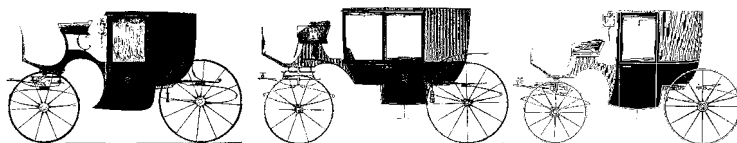


Fig. 17.



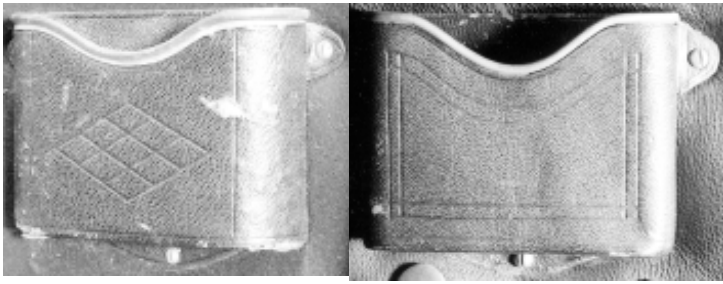


Fig. 18 & 19 show the same style of a small metallic case, covered with leather, but creased differently by the trimmer. Martin Auction May 2002.

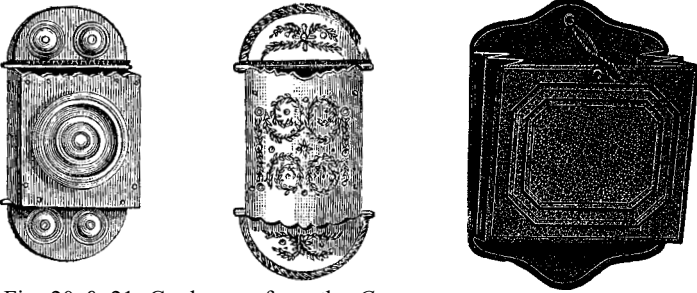


Fig. 20 & 21. Card cases from the *Carriage Trimmers' Manual & Guild Book & Illustrated Technical Dictionary*. 1881.

Fig. 22. Card case sold by C. N. Lockwood & Co., Newark, NJ. *Carriage Monthly* Oct. 1887.

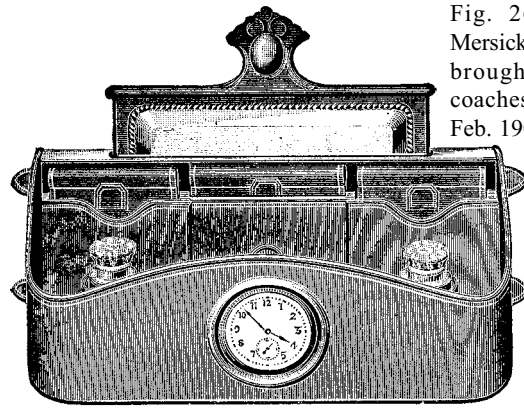


Fig. 26. The English & Mersick Co.'s Toilet Case, for broughams, Landaus and coaches. *Carriage Monthly* Feb. 1903.

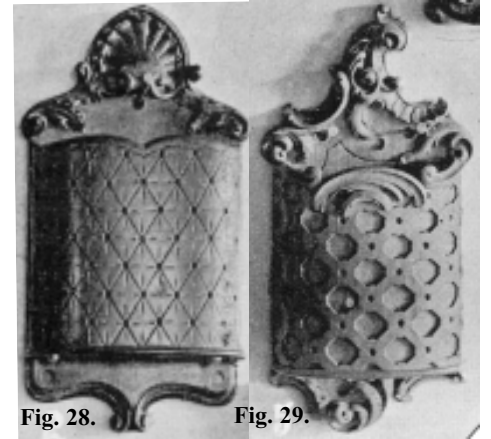


Fig. 28.

Fig. 29.

Figures 28 & 29 are card cases of original design and finish, and are splendidly carved to correspond with the carving on the body of the vehicle to which each belongs, exhibited by the James Cunningham, Son & Co., Rochester, NY, at the World's Fair. *Carriage Monthly* Aug. 1893.

WILLIAM PERPENTE,
NEW HAVEN, CONN.,
FINE IVORY, BLACK, MOTTLED, RUBBER AND HORN

Coach and Carriage Inside Mountings,
MOROCCO COVERED AND
EBONY CASES. *HORN TRIMMINGS A
SPECIALTY.*

SEND FOR ILLUSTRATED CATALOGUE.

Fig. 23. *Carriage Monthly* August 1888.



Fig. 30. Card Pocket sold by C. Cowles & Co., New Haven, CT. *Carriage Monthly* August 1903.

**BREWSTER & CO., SALES ORDER & SPECIFICATION
RECORDS.**
For serial numbers 17450-25903

Copies of the Brewster & Company records can be obtained from the Carriage Museum America. Thanks to a group of volunteers: Dan Bussey, Kathi Davis, Linda Freeman, Angela Hohenbrink, Pat Kimura, Mary Moore, Roger & Sue Murray, Jill Ryder, Katie Whaley, & Mike Zaetta, who have gone through the data files and edited the records. The records were first microfilmed at the New York Public Library and through the efforts of Stewart Morris, Jr., and Richard Lambert of Houston, Texas the microfilm was scanned into a computer system. The records can now be printed out from the computer system and sent out at \$30.00 charge, rush orders are \$60.00. Please send the serial number you wish to have looked up and a check for \$30.00, plus your address. For people who use Pay/Pal they can go to our web-site at www.carriagemuseumlibrary.org. Please no credit cards over the phone or in the mail.

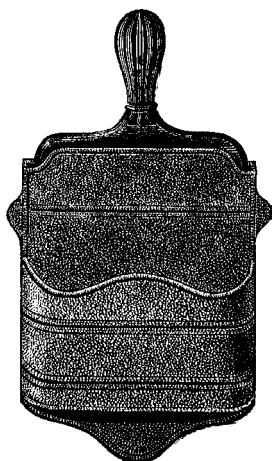


Fig. 24. Card case sold by C. N. Lockwood & Co., Newark, NJ. *Carriage Monthly* May 1885.

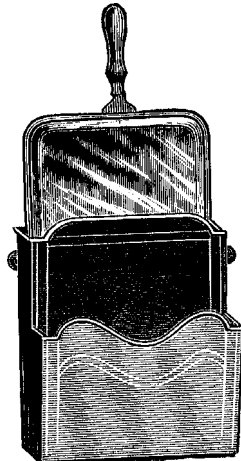


Fig. 25. Card case sold by New Haven Car Trimming Co., New Haven, CT. *Carriage Monthly* May 1888.