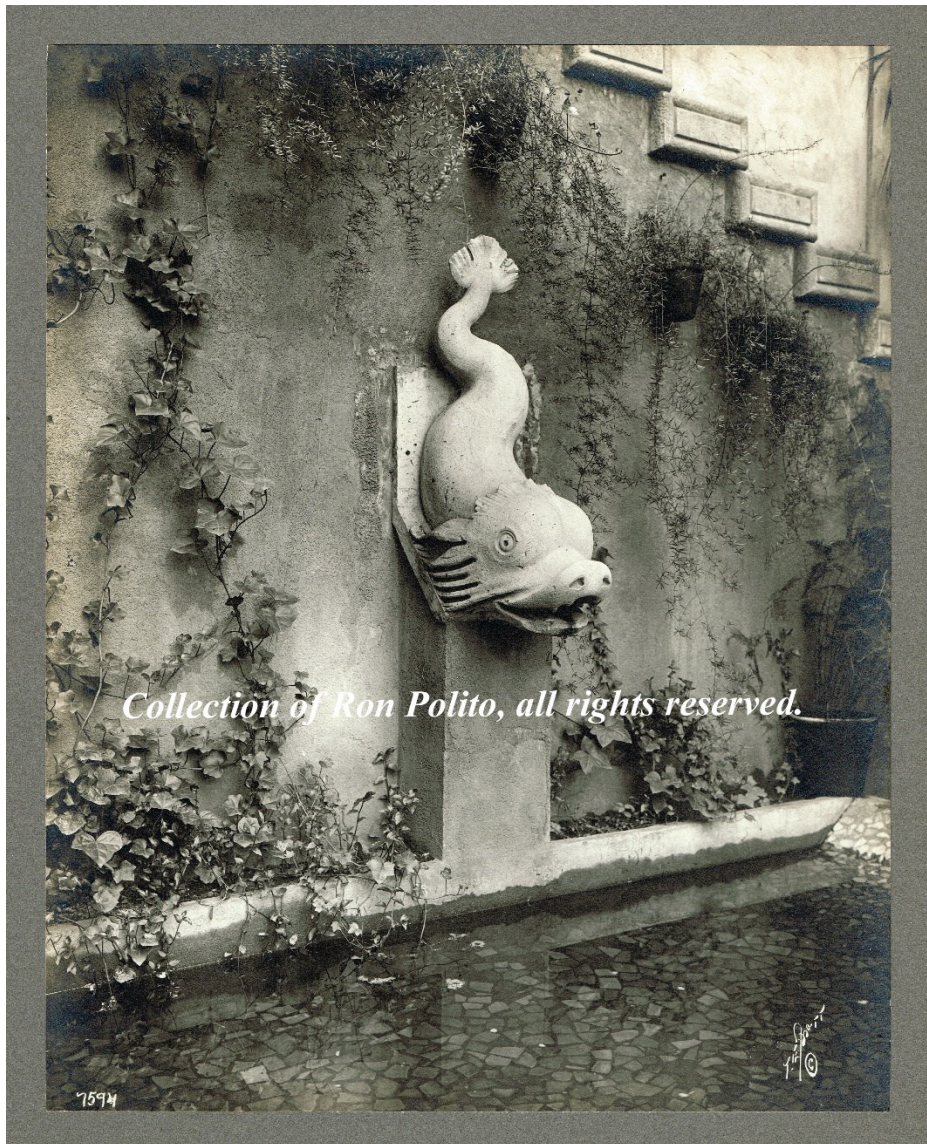


Boston Photographers, Thomas E. and Arthur E. Marr: Using Negative Numbers To Date Their Photographs (1898-1932)

The Boston photographic firm, T. E. Marr, founded by Thomas Edgar Marr and later operated by his son, Arthur Edgar, as T. E. Marr & Son, is best known today for its exquisite photographs of Boston's Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum and its holdings. The Marrs, however, engaged in wide range of commercial photography, including estate, landscape, and architectural projects for notable clients throughout New England, and in illustrative photography for publication in magazines and newspapers.

The Marrs were prolific photographers and many of their images can be found online, however, the dates provided there are sometimes in error, conflict, or offer an overly wide range of possible creation. Fortunately, between 1898 and 1932, the firm was consistent in chronologically numbering its negatives, and almost always including them in their prints (see figure). Based on over 800 photographs with confirmed dates, the table which follows is a tool to correct some inaccuracies and narrow the range of dates for numbered Marr images.



T. E. Marr, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, courtyard fountain.
Negative #7594 copyright, circa 1903.

This guide is maintained by Ron Polito, © 2021, ron.polito@umb.edu, and will be updated as additional information emerges. It first appeared in the monograph, "T. E. Marr (& Son) Isabella Stewart Gardner's Photographers – And More," available at <https://www.magcloud.com/browse/issue/1966356>, and published by the Photographic Historical Society of New England, a member supported 501 (c) (3) organization which seeks to preserve and promote the heritage of photography, <https://PHSNE.org>.

Marr Negative Numbers & Dates (ver. 2; 2023) © ron politico 2021

List of Marr negatives with confirmed dates of creation. For non-Gardner Museum items, the year is from a blind stamp, copyright, title, or text appearing on a print. Dates for the Gardner negatives are drawn from the museum's glass-plate inventory and three albums of prints, many with copyright dates. For example: line 1901 begins, "3383 : 4496," this in the range of identified negative numbers for 1901. There are fifteen non-Gardner examples, the lowest number was 3383, the highest 4496, with thirteen in between. Dates in the "Non-Gardner, Specific Dates" column indicate precisely dated negatives. In the Gardner Museum section, there is one Gardner negative within the range for 1901, #4474.

Year	All Negatives	Non-Gardner			Gardner Museum	
	Lowest to Highest Identified	Lowest to Highest Identified	Count of Negatives	Negatives with Specific Monthly Dates	Lowest to Highest Identified	Count of Negatives
1898	1071	1071	1	1071 (2/1/1898)	—	—
1899 ¹	717 : 717a	717 : 717a	1	717 & 717a (4/18/1899)	—	—
1900	2036 : 3078	2155 : 3078	12		2036 : 2070 ²	17
1901	3383 : 4496	3383 : 4496	17	4496 (11/27/1901)	4474 ³	1
1902	4732 : 6057	4732 : 6057	18	5189 (2/24/1902) 5664 (5/26/1902) 5711, 5712 & 6057 (6/1902)	5384 : 5404	15
1903	7412 : 9011	7820 : 8054	8	8048 & 8054 (6/17/1903)	7412 : 9011	61
1904	9087 : 10772	9227 : 10772	8	9227 (2/1904) 9973 (6/17/1904)	9087 : 9406	15
1905	10944 : 11482	10944 : 11482	16	11064 & 11066 (5/1905) 11342 (6/1905)	—	—
1906	12657 : 13410	12657	1		12665 : 13410	16
1907	13521 : 14450	13521 : 13973	3	13970 & 13973 (6/28/1907)	13637 : 14450	4
1908	14466 : 15904	14570 : 15904	21	14638 (5/1908) 14694, 14700 & 14701 (6/1908) 14717, 14723, 14735, 14749, 14750, 14753 & 14761 (6/6/1908) 15094 (8/19/1908)	14466 : 14479	8
1909 ⁴	16045 : 16354	16267	1		16045 : 16354 ⁵	9
1910	16535 : 17131	16718 : 17131	6	16718 & 16728 (6/1910) 17131 (10/6/1910)	16535 : 16548	8
1911	17324 : 17794	17410 : 17470	3	17460 & 17470 (6/1911)	17324 : 17794	3
1912	17865 : 17920	—	—		17865 : 17920	4
1913	18807 : 18810	18807 : 18810	4		—	—
1914	19304 : 19544	—	—		19304 : 19544	11
1915	19888 : 20068	—	—		19888 : 20068	46
1916	20382 : 20737	20728	1	20728 (10/27/1916)	20382 : 20737	14
1917	20881 : 21409	—	—		20881 : 21409	10
1918	21443 : 21456	—	—		21443 : 21456	13
1919	21970 : 22194	22031	1	22031 (5/23/1919)	21970 : 22194	5
1920	22275 : 22641	22275 : 22379	2	22275 (5/5/1920)	22373 : 22641	2
1921	22662 : 22888	—	—		22662 : 22888	10
1922	22924 : 23131	23089	1	23089 (11/6/1922)	22924 : 23131	6
1923	—	—	—		—	—
1925	23890 : 24126	—	—		23890 : 24126	21
1926	24191 : 24525	—	—		24191 : 24525	187
1927	24528 : 24823	24762 : 24768	4	24762 (10/28/1927) 24767 & 24768 (10/31/1927)	24528 : 24823	128
1928	24824 : 25304	24873	1		24824 : 25304	64
1929	—	—	—		—	—
1930	25648 : 25713	—	—		25648 : 25713	13
1931 ⁶	—	—	—		—	—
1932	25843	25843	1		B505 : B519 ⁷	15
Post-1932 ⁸	26324 : 26429	26324 : 26429	—		—	—
Total			131			706

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- ¹ A two-section panorama; negative numbers out of chronological order.
 - ² The Gardner Museum website shows 17 photographs of the Gardner home at 152 Beacon Street, Boston. There are no dates on the print surface, but the negative numbers are in close proximity and the back of one print is also shown. It contains a note in Isabella Stewart Gardner's hand with the date of 1900. This table makes the assumption that all negatives from 2036 to 2070 were made in 1900. The Gardner glass-plate inventory contains an additional five negatives in the 2000 range: #2044 is marked "pre-1903"; #2061 is not dated; #2054, #2059, and #2072 are dated "1903," possibly in error
 - ³ Negative #4474 falls in the range of 1901 numbers, however, the number appears on a print in the Gardner collection, marked copyright 1901.
 - ⁴ Thomas Marr is ailing; he died in 1910. Most negatives carry the T. E. Marr signature through 1910, thereafter, T. E. Marr & Son. However, it is likely most 1909 and 1910 negatives were made by Thomas's son, Arthur. A few negatives in this two-year period are marked T. E. Marr & Son.
 - ⁵ There is a print of negative #16345 with a copyright date of 1910, but the Gardner glass-plate database carries a date of 1909.
 - ⁶ A. E. Marr renumbered all Gardner Museum negatives at their request. The last 8x10, no. 25713 dated 1930, becomes # B503. The last 11x14, # 25303 dated 1928, becomes # A50.
 - ⁷ A. E. Marr invoices the Gardner Museum for 15 new negatives, B505–B519.
 - ⁸ Negative numbers 26324 : 26429 are found on two sets of undated estate photographs placing them above 25834, the last "hard dated" number. It is likely they were created post-1932, but they are signed simply "Marr," which is occasionally found on negatives known to be created pre- and post-1910. There is no indication Arthur Marr did work for the Isabella Stewart Museum after 1932.