



Stephanie Snyder, Barbara Levine, Matthew Stadler  
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## Snapshot Chronicles: Inventing the American Photo Album

**Stephanie Snyder, Barbara Levine, Matthew Stadler : Snapshot Chronicles: Inventing the American Photo Album** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Snapshot Chronicles: Inventing the American Photo Album:

1 of 9 people found the following review helpful. dumbBy Myrna JacobsI was extremely disappointed in this book. It's not worth ever a little bit and doesn't really show much of anything. I have better snapshots in my collection, both personal and ones I've picked up. It was hastily done and poorly done. The quality of the book is also bad, but cheap paper and very poor photographic reproduction.5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. History Your Imagination Will AppreciateBy G. L. LugarThis is a most interesting book, at least for people such as myself who have an interest in late 19th and early 20th century photography. Actually, I suspect it would also intrigue people who lack that enthusiasm but who have an interest in general social history of this period. A premise of the book is that photographs in albums are often times given added historical or literary meaning and visual interest by being placed into a personalized context by an arranger, compiler, and/or photographer. This context provides the photographs with an enhanced ability to create an historical account of a life, a portion of a life, an event, etc. - without being subservient to a text. Most of the albums presented do not have any substantial written commentary (and many have no written text other than labels for individual photographs), and rely on the images alone to provide the larger insights. The book is extensively and richly illustrated with examples drawn from the large and thoughtfully acquired collection of Barbara Levine. These examples illuminate and extend the clear and insightful commentary in the book. The book also contains a very fine essay by the novelist Matthew Stadler discussing his ideas concerning the value of such albums that I was grateful to see, as these were ideas that would not likely have occurred to me, but were most insightful. This is a most pleasing inclusion. The historical component of a picture is obviously improved by being placed in context. One of the most interesting features of this book then, is its visual demonstration of the wide

variety of historical narrative styles that can be illustrated by albums, and even the way historical events can be illustrated without a "narrative" per se. Definitely a valuable book for people who are interested in historical photographs. A small criticism, from my stand point is that I would have liked to have seen more albums filled with tintypes, but this is a \_very\_ trivial point when compared with the strengths of the book. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. If your interest is in albums and their setup then ...By Bibliophile If your interest is in albums and their setup then this book may be of interest to you. If it is in photography then there is not much here. One of the few photography related books I have put in my give away pile.

Today, the photo album is something we practically take for granted, and "scrapbooking" is a billion dollar industry with its own television network. It was not always so. Before the camera, ordinary families had little more than the family Bible, a portrait of grandpa, and a drawer full of documents. Then Eastman Kodak introduced the Brownie, giving Americans the means to document and record their daily lives. Hundreds of thousands of these cameras were produced, and as a result small collections of photographs were assembled and preserved in an astonishing assortment of albums, with photographs as the raw material for collages, constructions, and text experiments. *Snapshot Chronicles* is a visual exploration of the creative outpouring made possible by the camera. Friends, family, travel, domestic life, special occasions, the workplace, farm and city life these were all intermingled in early albums in surprising and dynamic forms. Men, women, and even children became the creators of their own visual biographies, and documenters of previously unprecedented aspects of American life. Four essayists weave together the history of the photo album, making them not just a part of our past but a significant aspect of Americana. *Snapshot Chronicles* is designed by noted graphic designer Martin Venezky (*It Is Beautiful...Then Gone*). Copublished with the Douglas F. Cooley Memorial Art Gallery, Reed College.

From Publishers Weekly Curator and photo album collector Levine feels that whenever she opens an album she is "activating a story" the annals of a family, the tale of middle-class striving, the story of Americans developing visual literacy and gaining fluency with photography's new idiom. Levine and fellow curator Snyder have produced far more than a catalogue to a San Francisco exhibition opening in April or a coffee-table book they have made a beautiful, quirky history of photo albums. The green, velvety cover itself has the aura of an old-time album, and the scads of reproduced photographs are a visual feast. One album the editors highlight features the young Al Capone; others showcase anonymous happy families, college students, even the occasional chicken. The images are enriched by the editors' argument that photo albums embody the same impulse as quilts and embroidered samplers: all are narratives in pictures. Largely responsible for the creation of the photo album was George Eastman, whose company, Kodak, not only hawked the Brownie camera, but also created the cultural icon of the elegant matriarch who preserved family memories through the camera and album. Unfortunately, the print is small and difficult to read, making it likely that readers will simply flip through this fascinating and informative cultural history. (Feb. 23) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. A handsome volume covered in the green suede-like fabric reminiscent of many of the old albums. -- Copley News Service, March 2006 About the Author Stephanie Snyder is Director and Chief Curator of the Douglas F. Colley Memorial Art Gallery, Reed College, Portland, Oregon. Barbara Levine runs Project b, a curatorial services and project management company, and is an avid photo album collector.