



The Art
of the American
Snapshot
1888–1978

From the Collection of
Robert E. Jackson

Sarah Greenough and Diane Waggoner
with Sarah Kennel and Matthew S. Witkovsky

National Gallery of Art, Washington
in association with Princeton University Press

This exhibition was organized by the National Gallery of Art, Washington

The exhibition is made possible through the generous support of the Trellis Fund and The Ryna and Melvin Cohen Family Foundation

Exhibition dates

National Gallery of Art
October 7–December 31, 2007

Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth
February 16–April 27, 2008

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10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

*Library of Congress
Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Greenough, Sarah
The art of the American snapshot, 1888–1978: from the collection of Robert E. Jackson / Sarah Greenough and Diane Waggoner; with Sarah Kennel and Matthew S. Witkovsky.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 13: 978-0-691-13368-3

(hardcover: alk. paper)

ISBN 13: 978-0-89468-343-5

(softcover: alk. paper)

1. Photography—United States—History—19th century—Exhibitions. 2. Photography—United States—History—20th century—Exhibitions. I. Waggoner, Diane. II. Kennel, Sarah. III. Witkovsky, Matthew S. IV. National Gallery of Art (U.S.) V. Title.

TR23.G74 2007

770.973—dc22

2007015393

*Published with the assistance of
The Getty Foundation*

Produced by the Publishing Office,
National Gallery of Art, Washington
www.nga.gov

Judy Metro, Editor in chief
Chris Vogel, Production manager
Tam Curry Bryfogle, Senior editor

Designed by Margaret Bauer, Washington, DC
Separations in four-color process plus PMS
by Robert J. Hennessey

Typeset in Chapparel Pro and Univers by
Duke & Company, Devon, PA; printed on
Phoenixmotion Xantur by EuroGrafica,
SpA, Vicenza, Italy

Hardcover edition published in 2007 by
the National Gallery of Art, Washington, in
association with Princeton University Press

Princeton University Press, 41 William Street,
Princeton, New Jersey 08540

In the United Kingdom: Princeton
University Press, 3 Market Place,
Woodstock, Oxfordshire OX20 1SY
press.princeton.edu



7



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the late 1930s, most histories of photography have examined only a very narrow range of photographic practice, including those twentieth-century photographs made expressly as art and the nineteenth-century ones that were deemed to be their precedents and thus gave the later works a foundation of tradition and authority. Yet because of the immense appeal of snapshots, because they so clearly form a significant part of the rich visual tradition of their time, and because they have had such a profound impact on twentieth-century art and culture, historians have now begun to wrestle with the larger question of how to construct a new history of photography that addresses not only the fine art tradition but also all types of vernacular photographs, including snapshots. They have concluded, just as Alfred Stieglitz, the high priest of fine art photography, did after many years of tortuous twists and turns: "Art or not art. That is immaterial. There is photography."¹⁸

By some estimates, in 1977, the year before our examination ends, more than 8.9 billion snapshots were made annually in the United States, up from 3.9 billion in 1967.¹⁹ With such a truly staggering number of potential candidates for inclusion in our exhibition and publication, the question of selection becomes critical. We have based our presentation on a collection of more than 8,000 snapshots assembled in the last ten years by Robert E. Jackson of Seattle. If his collection represents one small drop in the vast sea of snapshot photographs, then our selection of approximately two hundred of those works is but a few nanoliters of that larger whole. Collectors of snapshots can approach the subject in many ways. Like stamp collectors, they can seek to acquire one representative illustration of each subject ever explored by amateurs, or like archivists, they can endeavor to preserve the origi-

nal contexts — the albums, drugstore processing envelopes, or shoeboxes — where the snapshots once resided. Those primarily interested in American history or even specific issues within that history — the depiction of marginalized aspects of society, for example — can focus exclusively on snapshots that illustrate those subjects. But taxonomy, recontextualization, and American history were not Mr. Jackson's primary objective, nor did he confine his collection to representing the felicitous gaffes that so commonly befell the hapless amateur. Instead, Mr. Jackson has focused on creativity, on those snapshots that break down the barriers of time, transcending their initial function as documents of a specific person or place, to speak with an energy that is raw, palpable, and genuine about the mysteries and delights of both American photography and American life. The snapshots presented in these pages exert an undeniable power. Honest, unpretentious, and deeply mesmerizing, they show us moments of simple truth. They tell us what it felt like to live, work, and most especially to love and have fun in the twentieth century; they remind us of our past and vividly demonstrate how much our past has in common with that of so many other Americans; and they show us, in a way that is both direct and profound, what a truly extraordinary thing photography is.



DIANE WAGGONER

Photographic Amusements

1888–1919



1
gelatin
silver print,
c. 1910

Within the first fifty years after its invention in the late 1830s, photography evolved from a wondrous curiosity to a part of everyday life. By the 1880s photographs already adorned the walls, mantelpieces, and tables in countless homes across America, displayed in every nook and cranny from the parlor to the bedroom (fig. 1.1). Portraits of famous people and views of native and exotic landscapes were inexpensive and plentiful. Burgeoning numbers of local photographers' studios, which produced *cartes-de-visite* or tintypes, made portrait photography accessible and affordable for most Americans. But the ability to *take* a photograph — to operate a camera, develop negatives, and make prints — remained the province of the professional or the skilled amateur with the requisite leisure, enthusiasm, and technical expertise to pursue the craft. It was not until the average person was able to take photographs that the history of the snapshot begins.

A series of landmark technological inventions transformed the practice of photography, making snapshots possible. The cumulative effect of these changes redefined what was considered feasible — and appropriate — for the medium. First, the introduction of commercially manufactured gelatin dry-plate glass negatives in the late 1870s reduced the need for unwieldy paraphernalia, and smaller, lighter, handheld cameras that accommodated these plates

began to replace large cameras mounted on tripods. Then the introduction of flexible film negatives and roll holders gradually made the heavy glass plate negatives obsolete, and cameras became even more portable. Although one had been able to take instantaneous photographs under certain conditions, most photographs required more than a second of exposure time, effectively limiting their subjects to carefully posed portraits, landscapes, and other static compositions. But improvements in lenses and in the light sensitivity of negative emulsions soon made instantaneous exposures increasingly viable: hence the advent of the "snapshot" — a term originally used in hunting to refer to a gunshot fired quickly and haphazardly. The business of photography, which had been almost exclusively an individualized craft, became an industrialized operation, in which the labor-intensive, time-consuming, and complicated tasks of developing and printing were

offered as a service product. Finally, as photography grew less expensive, it could be practiced by men and women of most ages and economic classes.

This transformation in photography during the last decades of the nineteenth century corresponded to the growth of other technological innovations that were changing the character of American life: the harnessing of electricity, the invention of the telephone and telegraph, the greater mobility brought about first by railroads, then by streetcars and bicycles, and ultimately by the automobile in the early twentieth century. Each of these leaps forward collapsed distances and accelerated the pace of life. Meanwhile, industrialization created a larger and more prosperous middle class. Responding to such dramatic developments, Americans embraced the idea of the family and domesticity as the greatest source of personal happiness, which led, in concrete terms, to the rise of the middle-class, single-



1.1

gelatin
silver print,
c. 1900

1.2

"Evolution
of a smile,"
gelatin
silver print,
c. 1910



family, detached home and the expansion of the suburbs — soon to be the site of so many snapshots.¹ The emphasis on family led in turn to a higher value placed on childhood as a time of innocence,² while the concept of adolescence as a separate stage of life, distinct from childhood and adulthood, also received new attention.³ The rise of a consumer society and the pursuit of leisure activities articulated a consequent division between work and play.

In shifting from the tripod to the hand, the camera tracked this evolution to a faster-paced society. It promoted the growing interest in leisure, recreation, and travel as well as the ideal of childhood and family life. When the hand camera placed new amateurs in charge of creating their own images, they immediately chose to photograph those people and things and places they held dear, recording their domestic and social lives and attempting to convey happiness, satisfaction, and confidence. Before this time the studio portrait, in which the sitter held a pose for several seconds in an unfamiliar setting, would have been the only kind of personal photograph that most Americans knew. The instantaneous exposure, as opposed to the timed one, encouraged subjects to relax more and even to smile, particularly when posing for someone close to them. One image titled "Evolution of a smile" plays with the idea of being asked to smile for a photographer

(fig. 1.2). In addition, adapting to the abundance of exposures in the new rolls of film, amateurs felt free to experiment visually and to explore new subject matter. Still, older models persisted, as seen in the staged qualities of much early snapshot photography. The choice of subjects was guided to some extent both by the photographic industry and by established amateurs. Unlike the earlier conventions of seriousness, however, both the experimentation and theatricality of the new snapshots were almost uniformly injected with humor: photography served as an amusement. To the first-time purchaser of the new hand camera, the initial glimpse of photographs of the family home, one's children and pets, a vacation vista, a picnic with friends, or the performance of a skit must have seemed marvelous indeed.

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George Eastman and the Kodak

Although many practitioners and institutions in Europe and America contributed to the development of snapshot technology, George Eastman (1854–1932) and his company's Kodak camera had the greatest impact. Eastman dramatically altered the business and thus the art of photography, creating an ever-widening market of amateur photographers. In 1881 he founded the Eastman Dry Plate Company in Rochester, New York, to produce gelatin dry-plate glass negatives in mass quantities. In 1884, to simplify photography and eliminate cumbersome glass plates, he invented paper negatives spooled onto a roll holder that fit into most standard plate cameras of the time. Building on this innovation, he launched the "Kodak" hand camera, preloaded with a roll of paper negatives in 1888, coining the name because it was unique and could not be mispronounced. He advertised the camera with the slogan "You press the button, we do the rest," neatly encapsulating his strategy for tapping into a new market of photographers (fig. 1.3).⁴

The design of the Kodak camera did not differ significantly from earlier hand cameras that held gelatin dry-plate negatives. The Kodak and its quick successor, the No. 1 Kodak, were simple boxes weighing about 1.3 pounds. They had a string mechanism to cock the shutter and a button to release it, and they made exposures at a shutter speed of 1/25 second.⁵ A key turned the roll holder to advance the film. Because the inexpensive lens projected onto the film a circular image with soft-focused edges, a mask was inserted into the camera to obscure the distortions at the perimeter and create images with sharply defined borders. The earliest Kodaks therefore made images that were distinctively round, 2½ inches in diameter (see pl. 39).

Printed by direct contact with the negatives, these snapshots had essentially the same size and format as the negatives. In some cases the prints were masked to create a white border or trimmed to the edges before being mounted on individual cards or album pages. The cost of the first Kodak was \$25, comparable to the price of other hand cameras on the market, but nevertheless a large sum for Americans of middle-class income. Eastman produced 3,250 Kodaks in the first two years. The No. 2 Kodak, which made circular negatives (and corresponding prints) 3½ inches in diameter, followed in 1889, with 7,000 manufactured by the next year.⁶

The first Kodaks did not include a viewfinder, so the earliest "Kodaker" could not see exactly what would be captured in the photographic frame as he or she exposed the film. The No. 2 Kodak and subsequent models did include small viewfinders, placed so that the photographer held the camera at waist or chest level and looked down into it (fig. 1.4). Yet it was difficult to see clearly with the tiny viewfinder. One photographer characterized it as a "dimly lit one-inch square," and another listed some of the mistakes easily caused by it: "Groups are taken with the marginal figures left out, and central figures off to one side apparently looking for them. It is in vain that one strains one's eyes looking out into the finder in the blaze of a noonday sun."⁷

The service aspect of the Kodak system ("we do the rest") was the Eastman company's greatest success. Customers sent the entire camera to the Rochester factory when the exposures on the preloaded film were ready for developing and printing. Initially, Eastman's American Film, as it was called, was made of paper coated with an emulsion. To make transparent negatives, the emulsion was transferred from the paper to a glass plate and subsequently to a thin, flexible gelatin support. The

Kodak factory would make prints from these negatives, then send the prints and the camera, loaded with a new roll of film, back to the customer for a cost of \$10. This freed the individual photographer from having to set up a darkroom and learn how to load negative film and develop prints. As a Kodak sample album proclaimed, "Reader! You, Anyone, can make photographs . . . without study, trouble, experiment, chemicals, dark room, and even without soiling the fingers."⁸

The amateur could still undertake the labor-intensive darkroom processes on his or her own: the slogan "You press the button, we do the rest" was sometimes accompanied by the parenthetical "(Or you can do it yourself)." Manuals for the first Kodaks gave detailed instructions on how to develop and print from roll film. Eastman thus reassured experienced photographers that the Kodak did not require changing established practices and at the same time appealed to new clients who might find photography intimidating under the old system but would delight in taking pictures. Other innovations further simplified darkroom activities, and many surviving snapshots make it clear that amateurs in these decades often did their own printing.

In 1889 Eastman introduced negatives on transparent, flexible film made of cellulose nitrate, which eliminated the complicated transfer from paper to glass to gelatin support. Such transparent plastic supports would dominate the field until the appearance of the digital photograph at the end of the twentieth century. Also in 1889 Eastman released the No. 3 and No. 4 Kodak box cameras, followed in 1890 by the No. 4 and No. 5 Kodak folding cameras, each with a small viewfinder. These models were bigger, heavier, more expensive, and produced larger rectangular negatives. The No. 1 and No. 2 Kodak cameras, which had made circular

1.3

"New Kodak Cameras," advertisement, c. 1890. Hartman Center, Duke University

1.4

"Brownie Camera," advertisement, 1902. Hartman Center, Duke University

negatives, were discontinued by the mid-1890s, and rectangular prints became the most common shape for snapshots thereafter.

By continually making photography more accessible through technological innovations, Eastman Kodak (as the company came to be known in 1892) attracted an ever-expanding consumer base. In 1891 Eastman marketed cameras that allowed amateur photographers to load their own film in daylight rather than sending the entire camera back to the Kodak factory for processing. By 1902 the company had introduced the Kodak Developing Machine, which enabled customers to develop film without a darkroom. Kodak brought out non-curling film in 1903 and safety film in 1908, replacing the flammable cellulose nitrate base with a more stable cellulose acetate base. Flash technology, which made it possible to take photographs in dimly lit interiors, had relied on magnesium powders since the 1860s. In 1915 Kodak made flash photography even easier by producing "flash sheets," which no longer required powders and a lamp.

Kodak also began to sell cameras through pharmacies and department stores in addition to specialty photography shops. It was lower prices, however, that ultimately led to the explosion in the hand camera market. In 1895 the Pocket Kodak, which produced tiny negatives of $1\frac{1}{2} \times 2$ inches, was offered at a price of \$5. Other models were also available for under \$10, and by 1898 Kodak reported that it had sold 100,000 cameras. But the major turning point was the 1900 introduction of the Brownie camera, which sold for \$1, with rolls of film costing 15 cents. Eastman sold more than 150,000 Brownies in the first year alone.⁹ The Brownie was similar to the Kodak but constructed of cheaper materials. Like the original Kodak, the first Brownie produced a distinctive image format: a $2\frac{1}{2}$ -inch

square. The No. 2 Brownie made rectangular negatives, $2\frac{1}{4} \times 3\frac{1}{4}$ inches, as did subsequent models. Again like the original Kodak, the Brownie did not automatically come with a viewfinder, though one was available as an option. The shutter speed was $1/50$ second.¹⁰ The name of the Brownie came from folklore characters popularized by Palmer Cox in magazine illustrations and a series of children's books, thereby evoking ease of operation and magical results, as if the helpful though mischievous little creatures took the pictures themselves and produced the prints.¹¹ Thus Eastman promoted the Brownie primarily, but not exclusively, to children, cultivating a previously untapped market for photography (see fig. 1.4).

Although Kodak was the industry leader, it was not the only American manufacturer of cameras and film. In 1891 the Blair Camera Company, one prominent competitor, introduced the Kamaret, a handheld camera with roll film, its name echoing the catchy name of the Kodak. Blair also sold the Hawk-Eye Camera, which could accommodate either glass plates or roll film, and it advertised developing and finishing services. The Blair Company did not last long, however, as Kodak bought it outright in 1899. In fact, Kodak purchased many of its competitors, including the American Camera Company in 1898, the Folmer and Schwing Manufacturing Company in 1905, and Century Camera Company in 1907. Other firms, such as Seneca Camera Company, Anthony and Scovill Company (renamed Ansco in 1907), and Sears, Roebuck, and Company, challenged Kodak with their own photographic products.¹² But only Kodak became a household name for cameras.

The Serious Amateur and Photographic Instruction

When the Kodak camera entered the market in 1888, the community of amateur photographers was already flourishing. The availability of the gelatin dry plate beginning in 1878 had attracted thousands of new hobbyists to the practice of photography, and enthusiasts from New York to San Francisco began to organize local camera clubs, which continued to multiply through the turn of the century. These clubs fostered social exchanges, discussion of scientific and artistic issues, lantern-slide presentations, and group exhibitions.¹³ The launching of specialized periodicals — including *The American Amateur Photographer*, *The American Journal of Photography*, and *Camera Craft* to name just a few — addressed the expanding market.¹⁴ *The American Amateur Photographer*, for example, reported on the activities of camera clubs across the country and catered to the more experienced amateurs while seeking to educate the newer class of photographers to traditional artistic and technical standards.

There was a natural tension between amateurs who considered themselves not only artists but also technically proficient and the flood of newcomers purchasing hand cameras that required only the push of a button. Indeed, the instantaneous pressing of the button became emblematic of the new breed of photographer: Edward Steichen once referred to them as "ye jabbering button-pushers."¹⁵ In 1890 Catherine Weed Barnes, a prominent amateur and writer on photography, wrote: "Snap cameras to the uninitiated seem almost miraculous in their workings, while the skilled eye and hand needful to make a properly timed exposure is too often undervalued in comparison."¹⁶ In "Hints for Kodak Workers" Howard Park Dawson urged

novices "never to make an instantaneous exposure when you can possibly make a timed one. If the users of kodaks will follow [this] . . . simple [rule] they will be surprised at the decrease of their failures."¹⁷

These attitudes were typical of the educated amateur, who insisted that the only way to learn true photography was by placing the camera on a tripod and making a timed exposure rather than snapping quick pictures at random. They also maintained that composing and focusing the photograph on the camera's ground-glass (a matte glass surface placed at the focal plane of the camera, which shows the image that will be projected onto the emulsion) was superior to looking into the tiny viewfinder of the hand camera. Although the popular literature recognized these two modes of picture taking, the photographic establishment privileged the older model and the composed and still images it produced.

Fine art photography's champion Alfred Stieglitz supported the adoption of the hand camera for artistic work but criticized "every Tom, Dick and Harry . . . [who] without trouble, learn how to get something or other on a sensitive plate." Stieglitz opined that "thanks to the efforts of these persons [the] hand camera and bad work became synonymous."¹⁸ Even camera companies maintained these distinctions. As a Seneca manual asserted, "the photographer whose knowledge has been confined to pressing the button can never hope to make good pictures."¹⁹ To the photographic community of serious amateurs, good pictures had to adhere to the compositional rules of traditional art forms such as painting, drawing, and printmaking.

The American Amateur Photographer published feature after feature on travel photography that advocated pretty landscapes as suitable subjects. Other new periodicals provided illustrations and detailed instructions for the new photographer. Although it is impossible to measure the impact, the sheer number of guides and manuals catering to photographers suggest that many snapshotters would have been aware of at least some of these examples.

Serious amateurs pursued different avenues to achieve good pictures, though all strove for artistic effects. Debates were common regarding the nature of photography and of art as well as the relationship between the two. Some amateurs sought to capture fine detail, while others embraced more subjective and evocative qualities. Following trends in painting, photographers adopted naturalistic, impressionistic, or aesthetic styles. What would later come to be known as pictorialism arose in reaction to the button-pushing snapshotter, and it emphasized carefully composed subjects and sophisticated craft in printmaking, with soft gradations of light and shadow.

Another style practiced by the serious amateur was the narrative or genre photograph. The British photographer H. P. Robinson, who exhibited from the 1860s until his death in 1901, argued for this aesthetic in publications such as *Pictorial Effect in Photography*. American photography periodicals in the 1880s and 1890s often reproduced Robinson's photographs, which largely depicted country people in rural or seaside landscapes. At one point the Photographers' Association of America even spon-

sored a competition for photographs that illustrated poems by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, which was won by Catherine Weed Barnes (fig. 1.5). Even the Seneca manual for the amateur photographer recommended adding an anecdotal element to a nature scene — “the figure of an old man sitting on a log, lost in reverie” — to make the photograph “pleasing and suggestive.”²⁰

This approach had its roots in the narrative photographs of the British tradition, such as works by Julia Margaret Cameron and O. G. Rejlander as well as H. P. Robinson. Those images in turn reflected the conventions of the theater and the *tableau vivant* (or living picture, a popular pastime in the nineteenth century, which American vaudeville began to incorporate in the 1890s).²¹ *Tableaux vivants* presented literary or historical situations, both dramatic and comic, using elaborate costumes, props, facial expressions, and gestures. Barnes's prize-winning photograph featured all of these characteristics. Even Stieglitz often included some narrative or genre aspects in his early work before he turned more toward pictorialism.

Genre photographs appeared side by side with pictorial landscapes at amateur photography exhibitions from 1890 through 1920, and both kinds of photographs influenced snapshotters. As more novices joined local camera clubs, they sought to emulate these models and submitted their attempts to local exhibitions. Thus the serious amateurs' reaction to what they perceived as “the snapshotter run amok” was to create an artistic elite, ultimately establishing photography as a legitimate fine art in America.²²

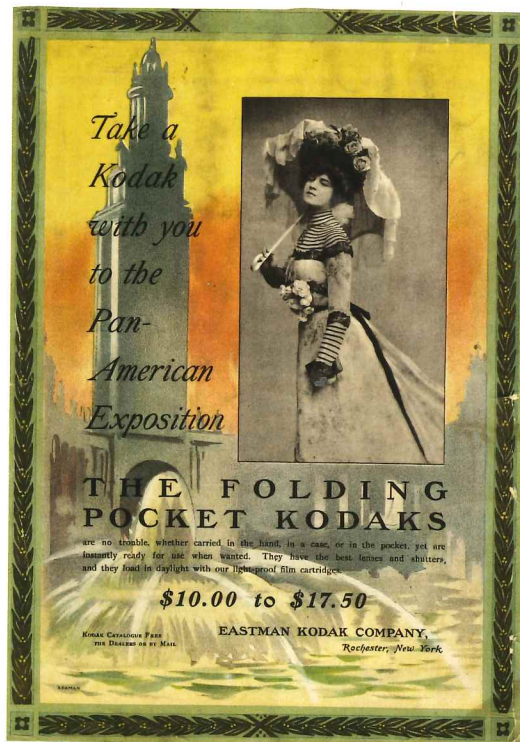
At the same time a whole category of literature sprang up to give advice to the everyday photographer. In addition to camera manuals, Kodak published guides such as *Picture Making and Picture*



Taking (c. 1900), *The Modern Way in Picture Making* (1905), *How to Make Good Pictures* (from 1912), and *Kodakery: A Journal for Amateur Photographers* (from September 1913). Each of these publications provided examples of “good” photographs, which emphasized images of innocent, carefree, and pretty children as well as leisure pursuits, attractive landscapes, and portraits (see fig. 1.8). They described and illustrated good vantage points, good and bad lighting for portraiture, good subjects (children, women, pets, and so on), and how to photograph tricky subjects like snow or moonlight. *Kodakery* included two-page spreads in each issue that showed photographs of these preferred subjects. These Kodak publications, including *The Modern Way of Picture Making* and various camera manuals, also recommended photographs by prominent art photographers such as Alfred Stieglitz, Rudolf Eickemeyer Jr., and H. P. Robinson as exemplars.

Other photographic firms, of course, also provided manuals with their cameras. Scovill & Adams produced a voluminous series of publications, ranging from books by H. P. Robinson to those on specific topics such as studio or landscape photography. This firm also published *Photographic Amusements* (1898) by Walter E. Woodbury, editor of *The Photographic Times*. Independent publishers issued *The Amateur Photographer's Hand Book* (1891) by Arthur Hope, *Amateur Photography: A Practical Guide for the Beginner* (1893) by W. I. Lincoln Adams, and *Why My Photographs Are Bad* (1902) by Charles M. Taylor Jr. Although some of these books were mostly technical in nature, others struck a different tone from the Kodak publications. Woodbury's book detailed several amusing and novel effects that could be obtained by experimenting with the camera: how to create silhouettes, plays on perspective, and double exposures that made ghostly forms appear. Taylor's book, asserting the difficulty of learning to use the camera properly by trial and error or by reading instruction books, listed

common mistakes and how to avoid them: portraits with heads cut off, images blurred by a subject moving, problems with foreshortening, lack of focus, unintended double exposures, shadows cast by the photographer, too much foreground or too much sky. At the end of the book Taylor furnished examples of “good” photographs, including portraits in interiors, boats on the water, views of waterfalls, carriages pulling up to a train station, a rural laborer, and a racetrack. With the exception of the laborer, these were all subjects frequently found in snapshots. All of the advice, discussion, and models available to the new amateur clearly defined what constituted a suitable photograph.



Kodak Advertising

Alongside practical guides, Kodak advertisements played a vital role in shaping how the camera was perceived and used. Just as Eastman Kodak proved the most successful in introducing and exploiting technological advances that created the amateur photography market, its savvy promotional strategy also distinguished it from its competitors and assured its dominance. “To Kodak” became a verb, and “Kodaker” a noun. The company moved beyond trade journals to establish a presence in popular magazines such as *Harper’s Bazaar*, *Ladies’ Home Journal*, and *Youth’s Companion*, which were growing in circulation. As a Kodak employee of 1918 explained, “Mr. Eastman realized fully that it was the *charm of photography*, not merely his little twenty-five dollar black box, that must be sold to the public.”²³ Kodak’s emphasis on advertising is consistent with the emerging commodity culture at the turn of the century, when corporate advertising in general surged in an effort to depict products as objects not only of need but of desire.

As Nancy Martha West has investigated in depth, while Kodak’s most famous ad campaign, “You press the button, we do the rest,” touted the technical distinctions of its camera, its other advertisements advocated the potential pleasures of photography.²⁴ Employing slogans such as “Kodak as You Go,” “Every trip that is worth taking is worth a Kodak story,” “The companion of every outing—the friend of all lovers of the open—the Kodak,” and “A vacation without a Kodak is a vacation wasted,” Eastman encouraged picture taking as an accompaniment to—and even the essence of—leisure and travel activity. Indeed, one vacationer described a trip to Switzerland: “I saw a great many amateurs, mostly Americans. . . . The Kodak



was the instrument used by the majority of the Americans, very few of whom were willing or able to develop their exposures.”²⁵

Other slogans such as “At home with a Kodak” and “Let Kodak keep the story” put forward picture taking not only as an integral part of domestic and family life but as an important means of memorializing and recording personal history.²⁶ Its advertisements intimated that women had a knack for taking photographs that captured family life, particularly children.²⁷ Ads for the Brownie featured children as Kodakers, suggesting that these cameras could be “operated by any school boy or girl” and promoting the camera as a toy. Kodak thus fully exploited the increasing importance placed on the family, the role of motherhood, and the distinct culture and rituals of childhood.

In addition to slogans, Kodak employed pictures in its advertisements. The company’s most visible emblem was the “Kodak Girl,” who first appeared in 1893 in the context of two women photographing sights at the Chicago World’s Fair.²⁸ Throughout the decades around the turn of the cen-

tury, the Kodak Girl would be represented in both drawn illustrations and photographs. In some she was shown as a stylish, poised woman, carrying her Kodak camera as a fashionable accessory (fig. 1.6). In others she appeared as a fresh-faced young woman, active, self-sufficient, and on the go, shown holding her camera in position to snap a picture or traveling with her camera on trains and automobiles, on a boat, or in the countryside (fig. 1.7). The Kodak Girl embodied various aspects of the contemporary “American Girl” figure, tapping into widespread use of women as symbolic of cultural ideals.²⁹

Kodak found other ingenious ways of steering people to take certain subjects, sponsoring many photograph competitions that were divided into various categories.³⁰ The inaugural contest in 1897 drew 25,000 entries, and an exhibition of the winners, presented first in London and then in New York, drew large audiences.³¹ Other exhibitions followed over the years. In 1914 in *Kodakery* the company offered prize money for photographs illustrating their various slogans, doubly ensuring that particular subjects would be featured. The award-winning image for “Kodak the Children” in 1916 showed an attractive young woman and companion photographing an adorable pair of children on the beach (fig. 1.8). This image perfectly combined the idea of the snapshot as a vehicle for recreation and for capturing pleasant memories. In all of these advertisements Kodak simultaneously promoted two types of picture taking: as a form of action and as an embodiment of positive emotions. Thus it established photography as both an essential part of daily life and as a necessary means of remembering happy moments.

1.6

“The Folding Pocket Kodaks,” advertisement, 1901. Hartman Center, Duke University

1.7

“The Kodak,” advertisement, 1906. Hartman Center, Duke University

Keeping the Story

While photograph albums in previous decades were readily available with slots that fit standard-size *cartes-de-visite*, those with blank pages allowed customers to paste their photographs down in whatever arrangement they chose (see pls. 16a-b, 17a-b, and 18a-b).³² The latter option easily accommodated the new abundance of snapshots and gave people the ability to chronicle their lives through pictures. Two family albums testify to the newfound importance of recreation and leisure as well as domestic relationships as the aspects of life most worthy of recording. The families that compiled the volumes were, as evident from the photographs, relatively wealthy and able to afford the \$25 No. 1 Kodak and the \$32.50 No. 2 Kodak when they first appeared.

The album assembled by the family of Charles Walter Amory and Elizabeth Gardner of Boston features circular photographs taken with a No. 1 Kodak from 1888 to 1893 and several rectangular prints taken with a larger camera from 1895 to 1897. The Amorys summured on the coast, and the assemblage of photographs primarily chronicles the activities of their four children (and later grandchildren). Most of the people in the pictures, the spirited younger members of the family and their friends in the out-of-doors, readily adopt individualized behaviors in front of the camera. They seldom strike a formal pose, though they are centered in the frame. Instead, they look to one side, turn their backs, or walk away. Indeed "Marie" holds her hand out to block the view of her face, not wanting to be photographed (fig. 1.9) — an entirely new theme in photography originated by the snapshot camera: the unwilling subject. In a series of photographs of a picnic outing (see pl. 16a) "Annie Bowditch" smiles and leans toward the camera, which makes her head



"Kodak the Children"—The Winning Picture

WHY THIS PICTURE WON A PRIZE

THE illustration on this page represents one of the photographs that was entered in the 1915 Kodak Advertising Contest, for illustrating the slogan, KODAK THE CHILDREN. This picture proved a prize-winner. Do you wonder why?

Let us briefly analyze it: It contains human interest and suggests action—and the action it suggests is that which the slogan implies.

Note the simplicity of the composition. The eye goes directly to

the objects of interest. There is nothing within the picture to divert the attention from the figures. There is no divided interest. You are compelled to look at the group, which, by the way is a story-telling group, and the story this group tells is well and briefly told. It is the story of the slogan. That is why it won a prize.



When in doubt take your Kodak with you.



Marie



Bessie, Marie & Clara

Clara

Judy

Myrtle

Emma

Marie

Clara

appear out of proportion to her body; and "Judy" turns to look at the camera, while her companions seem oblivious to its presence. Other subjects clown for the camera, with "Bessie, Marie, and Clara" in bathing suits and forming a kick line on a dock (fig. 1.10), while other images depict people in action: rowing boats, swimming, or playing tennis.

Motion, in fact, is a subtext throughout the album. Some photographs of the picnic show participants seated on the grass, but others catch the billowing skirts of women alighting from a carriage or climbing over a fence (see pl. 16a). Likewise, the

dozens of snapshots of sailboats on the water echo the pictorialist fascination with the picturesque effects of full sails and rippling water. Travel also plays a part in the album, as the family took photographs while touring in Europe and visiting friends' houses in Massachusetts.

Almost all of the circular prints center the subjects, which include boats, dogs, cats, horses, and people. Despite the uniform framing, however, the photographs are seldom close-ups because of the fixed focal length of the No. 1 Kodak lens: subjects are usually at least several feet from the

1.8

"Kodak the Children"—The Winning Picture," *Kodakery* 4, no. 2 (October 1916): 14. Library of Congress

1.9

"Marie," albumen print, detail from Charles Walter Amory family album, 1889

1.10

Page of albumen prints from Charles Walter Amory family album, 1889



Freddy & Jockey.



George & Tubby.



Tom Training Sambo -

1.11a and b
"Freddy & Jockey" and "George & Tubby," albumen prints, details from Charles Walter Amory family album, 1888

1.12
"Tom Training Sambo," albumen print, detail from Charles Walter Amory family album, 1895

1.13
"Dorothy," albumen print, detail from Charles Walter Amory family album, 1890

1.14
"Lena & Dorothy," albumen print, detail from Charles Walter Amory family album, 1897



Dorothy.



Lena & Dorothy.

photographer, making the lower vantage point of the camera held at waist level particularly clear. The photographer, skilled at using the hand camera without the viewfinder, would have calculated his or her position according to diagonal lines projecting outward from the camera. Yet at the perimeter of the image the visual information is cut off, as seen in two frames that focus on young men with dogs. The captions "Freddy & Jockey" and "George & Tubby" signal that the men are as important as the dogs, but the dogs are successfully centered whereas only partial glimpses of the men's bodies appear (fig. 1.11a and b).

The technical challenges and limitations of the earliest Kodak eased considerably with the Amorys' purchase of a newer and larger camera in 1895. The later images are rectangular, and most measure approximately 3 3/4 x 4 3/4 inches, expanding the amount of information captured in each photograph. Whereas the circular Kodak prints had not given the photographer any freedom to experiment with cropping, the larger rectangular prints could be trimmed. "Tom Training Sambo" has the same composition as one of the earlier circular prints, for example — a leaping dog and a man to the right — but the rectangular format includes the full figure of the man with a view of road and trees behind (compare figs. 1.11a and 1.12). The types of subjects remained the same: boats, dogs, portraits, and group outings. But because of the span of time covered by the album, the children in the earlier pictures have grown into young adults. Dorothy Amory appears as a girl in a field of flowers in 1890, then with a friend in the same field in 1897 (compare figs. 1.13 and 1.14). Flowers fill almost the full frame of the rectangular photograph, and although Dorothy is shown at the same distance in both images, the later composition no longer has to rely on the relentless centering necessary in the circular format.



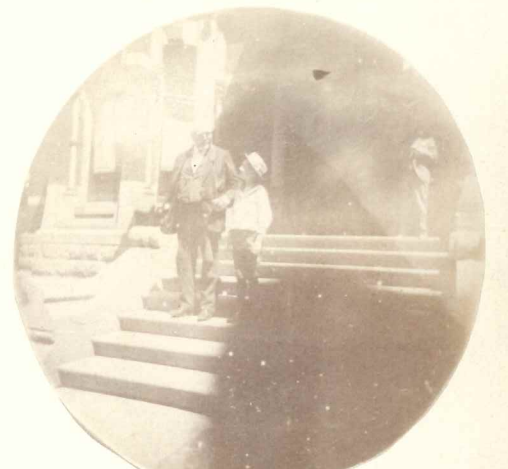
Our Bedroom. 1892.



Freddie's Room.

The anonymous No. 2 Kodak album, dating from 1890 to 1894, is more consistently arranged, with four prints to a page, each trimmed to the circular image area, suggesting that they may have been professionally mounted. Whereas the Amory volume focused primarily on summer leisure activities, the unidentified subjects in this album represent a wider range of places and possessions. The first pages present photographs of the family home (fig. 1.15) — the parlor, library, “our bedroom,” the bedrooms of the children, the exterior of the house — and of such treasures as the linen closet, a bookcase, and a china cabinet. Subsequent pages

include portraits of pet dogs and of various family members on the lawn or steps of the house as well as photographs of their street and their carriage. The portraits almost inevitably include the photographer’s shadow in the foreground (fig. 1.16). Most of the subjects are successfully centered but are usually so far away from the camera that their faces are barely distinguishable in the bright daylight. No one is snapped by the photographer unawares or in motion. Most are consistently standing and looking at the camera.



Summer 1891.



1.15
“Our Bedroom,”
page of albumen
and gelatin
silver prints from
an anonymous
family album,
1892

1.16
“Summer,”
page of albumen
prints from
an anonymous
family album,
1891

"Park-Views,"
page of albumen
prints from
an anonymous
family album,
1891



The remainder of the album contains mainly photographs of summer vacations and travel to areas around Buffalo, New York, on Lake Erie. As in the Amory album, these pictures are less formal than those taken at the family home. They record groups picnicking, boating on the lake, posing in front of carriages, riding or standing next to bicycles (fig. 1.17). People at the lake appear in bathing suits, wading in the water, standing on the beach, or swimming. In a calculated pair of contrasts, two boys in bathing suits stand on a rock in the water, once facing away and once facing toward the camera (see pl. 17a). Despite the evident visual anomalies that the earliest Kodaks caused, acquiring the Kodak camera allowed each of these families to accumulate and assemble concrete memories of people, places, and events across time. Each album highlights the familiar themes of leisure, travel, recreation, as well as enjoyable socializing and domestic happiness, thus bearing witness to the preoccupations of middle-class and upper-class Americans.

At Home

Prepared by Kodak and the photographic establishment, new amateurs immediately wanted to take portraits of their own, and they naturally had the conventions of the posed studio portrait in mind, though the settings now transferred to the home. One photograph of a child posed with the family dog and cat clearly aspires to look like a formal studio portrait, but an adult peeks through the slats of the chair while trying to keep the child and two animals in line for the duration of the exposure (pl. 2). Similarly, in a cyanotype of a woman seated against a clapboard house (see pl. 34), the subject has assumed a careful pose, but her blank expression, relaxed



2

"This is our boy,
dog and cat
and I am stick-
ing my nose
through the back
of the chair.
Burns just woke
up so he looks
kind of mussed
up," gelatin
silver print,
c. 1910



posture, and closeness to the camera give a sense of informality quite different from traditional portraiture. Both of these snapshots illustrate common “mistakes” defined by Kodak and other arbiters of “good” photography. Though the inscription on the verso of the first print indicates that the boy’s mother viewed the image as a record of her loved ones rather than as an unsuccessful portrait, the child is clearly ruffled and the cat’s movement has created a blur. In the second example the photographer allowed too much emphasis on the grass in the foreground and ignored Kodak’s warning that “there is no uglier . . . background than the clapboard side of a house.”³³

Sometimes inexperience produced other unintended effects. An outdoor photograph of a baby in white being held by a woman in a dark hat and dress turns a domestic subject into a menacing combination of darks and lights (pl. 3), with the shadows of the photographer and another figure intruding so far into the space of the picture that they touch and even overlap the silhouette of the woman. In another photograph a baby, “Bess,” is held on the lap of a person entirely covered in fabric (pl. 4). This may reflect a desire to position the infant against a neutral, studio-style backdrop, meant to be cropped later, but the result is disconcerting.

Camera manuals encouraged this staging of studio conventions at home. Seneca suggested using a rug, erecting a screen for the background, and placing a plant to one side in the out-of-doors to give the illusion of an interior setting for a portrait; it also advocated posing subjects against a blank wall or window shade indoors to provide a studioliike backdrop.³⁴ Despite the “failures” seen in these examples, such compositions and subjects appeared again and again in snapshots, and the centered baby, the child posed with pets, and individual portraits, whether from close up or far away, became trademarks of the genre.

Photographers also experimented with reflections as a way of creating portraits. One woman created a self-portrait showing herself standing in front of a mirror, then inscribed it “The Artist” (see pl. 20). With her camera mounted on a tripod, she sets herself up here as a serious amateur photographer (this cyanotype, one of the easiest printing processes to master, was probably made by the photographer herself), yet smiles at her reflection in the mirror. Another photograph shows two women in identical dresses posing in front of a mirror so that both their faces and the backs of their heads are visible (see pl. 19). The male photographer taking the portrait is himself visible in the mirror with his camera mounted on a tripod. While one woman holds a hand mirror reflecting her face at yet another angle, the other cracks a slight smile.

Significantly, the snapshot not only made smiling possible in photography but made it desirable.³⁵ Previously considered vulgar in portraiture, the smile evolved into a means of expression. Although both of these photographs were probably consciously composed and made using a timed exposure, their setting in the home must have put the subjects at ease, which they expressed through their smiles.

Taken in the bedroom, both of the above portraits also show the camera entering an intimate space once considered off limits. Some photographers stole into bedrooms to take surreptitious snapshots of others sleeping (see pl. 33). A related subject, unique to this period but not uncommon, is the portrayal of women in the outdoors with their long hair hanging loose. In one such image a woman has her back to the camera, her hidden face creating an aura of mystery (pl. 5). The porch of the house and the distant wall suggest that she is in a backyard, anchoring her in the domestic space of the home. Only someone acquainted with her would



3
gelatin silver
print,
c. 1900–1910

4
“Bess,”
gelatin silver
print,
c. 1900–1910

likely have liberty to photograph her in this situation. In another picture labeled "Caught in the Act!" a young woman appears outside a backdoor to air dry her hair after washing it (fig. 1.18), a common ritual before the twentieth-century invention of electric hairdryers. The hand camera gave access to such subjects of greater intimacy and domestic routine.

Placing the simple and affordable camera into the hands of more Americans thus brought new subject matter and new environments into photography. The camera portrayed people in various spaces that were being invented or reinvented in the middle-class home: the bedroom, library, dining room, and nursery as well as the porch, front lawn, and backyard.³⁶ Professional and work life did not appear often, as snapshot photographers preferred celebrations like weddings, birthdays, and holidays. Although the previous practice of taking postmortem photographs had produced treasured family heirlooms, themes of death (including funerals) largely disappeared with the arrival of the snapshot.³⁷ At Kodak's urging, Americans were beginning to favor positive, happy events as subjects for their photographs.

"Ludicrous or Uncomely Positions"

Snapshot photographers also captured the staged or out-of-the-ordinary moments of life, turning their lenses on favorite American pastimes: groups presenting amateur theatricals, dressing up to perform skits or play parlor games, or attending costume parties. The popularity of these amusements was consonant with growing interest in dramatic formats like vaudeville. Notably, while Kodak emphasized childhood, family, and leisure activities in its advertising, it rarely promoted humor in the taking of photographs. Nor did the photographic establishment: W. H. Burbank cautioned against the "dangers of hand camera work," in which photography might be "degraded into a means of caricaturing one's friends by securing them in various ludicrous or uncomely positions, than which nothing can be more contrary to the spirit of our gentle art."³⁸

Yet humor fascinated snapshot photographers, who produced countless trick photographs, deliberate double exposures, silhouettes, records of high jinks, funny captions, and doctored photographs, particularly in relation to groups of adolescents. This playfulness went hand in hand with a growing youth culture and increasing freedom for young men and women to congregate and socialize. The rise of social clubs and other leisure organizations, the greater number of girls and boys continuing on to secondary and higher education, and the popularity of extracurricular activities hosted by high schools and colleges all had an impact on the social lives of American youth. Thus snapshots show groups of young people involved in various amusements, both spontaneous and organized.³⁹



5

gelatin
silver print,
c. 1900

1.18

"Caught in
the Act!"
gelatin
silver print,
c. 1900



6
toned
gelatin
silver print,
c. 1910

7
gelatin
silver print,
c. 1910

1.19

"Bette, Nell,
and Leah,"
cyanotype,
c. 1900–1910



1.20

"Breaking
the News,"
New York:
Rotograph Co.,
1905. Private
collection



In one photograph several young adults poke their heads through holes in a sheet, with an open umbrella in the middle and the American flag at the top (see pl. 1). The exact circumstances are now lost (was this part of a skit or just a silly picture snapped at a Fourth of July picnic?), but the exuberance of the event is still plainly visible. In another photograph a woman's head inserted through a sheet has her long hair pinned up above it, as if a severed head were hanging by the hair (pl. 6). This may record an amateur theatrical of the tale of Bluebeard, who kept a room in his castle with the bodies of his dead wives strung up on the wall. In another image four young men and women wear paper headdresses and have pushed their hands through newspaper (pl. 7). A recurring motif of this period shows people placing their heads through torn newspaper, as in the cyanotype "Bette, Nell, and Leah" (taken by "The Artist" in pl. 20) (fig. 1.19). This motif was a favorite joke, a visual pun on the phrase "breaking the news," as spelled out in a commercial photographic postcard of kittens (fig. 1.20). It was also commonly employed in trade cards, showing a "breaking news" placard with business information.⁴⁰ Such visual wordplay was similar to the popular game of charades.



Costumes and masks of all kinds also appear frequently. One image shows two people posing in old-fashioned women's dresses, their faces covered with a stocking and a mask (see pl. 30). A contemporary book on parlor games advised holding a costume party in which guests should raid their grandparents' trunks for outfits, and this snapshot might preserve just such an occasion.⁴¹ Cross-dressing for skits and amateur theatricals was also common, and one photograph shows the staging of a mock wedding with a cross-dressed pair pretending to be a bride and groom (see pl. 31).⁴² In "Flash Light" two young men don dresses and flirt with each other in the corner of a room (pl. 8). This interior shot was taken at night, probably with the use of flash powder, as the caption suggests. Written around the photograph, more details of the spontaneous tableau are provided: "This idea was conceived about 8 PM one Sept night. The picture was taken, developed and printed by 10 PM the same evening. Our gowns are dreamy and are the property of Mama and sister. The picture does not express all because we had to dress you know and that is not shown in the picture tho you can imagine ~? Hasn't Justin Weddell got a dainty foot? I guess nature did not want him to tumble over whilst goo-gooing at me." The inscription highlights not only the camera's absorption into the theatrical aspects of American social life but its role in inciting such light-hearted activities.⁴³

Children's book author Maud Hart Lovelace gives an evocative glimpse into the active life of American young people and the camera's part in their antics during this era of confidence and prosperity. In her Betsy-Tacy books she fictionally details her own childhood, high school, and college years in the small midwestern town of Mankato, Minnesota, in the first two decades of the twentieth cen-

tury. In one passage her fictional alter ego, seventeen-year-old Betsy Ray, takes her Brownie camera on a picnic in 1909 with her two closest friends, Tacy Kelly and Tib Muller:

Betsy focused her camera. "Get set now!" Tacy jumped up and put one hand behind her head, the other on her hip. "No! No!" cried Betsy. "You're not Carmen. You're the Irish Colleen. Remember?" "Be jabbers, that's right!" said Tacy, and put both hands on her waist, arms akimbo. Tib pushed her down. Tacy's long red braids came loose. Around her face little tendrils of hair curled like vines. She looked up at Betsy, her eyes full of laughter, the skirts of her sailor suit cascading about her. Betsy snapped. "Tacy Kelly at her silliest!" she said. She snapped Tib on a rock, holding out her skirts. Tacy snapped Betsy tilting the jug of lemonade. Tib snapped Betsy and Tacy feeding each other sandwiches. When the film was used up, they collapsed in laughter.⁴⁴

The photograph plays a role later in the story when a young man attending an informal gathering at Betsy's parents' house peruses her Kodak album:

After a while when the music gave way to general conversation, Mr. Kerr brought up the subject of cameras. "Anybody interested in photography?" he asked. "I just bought a new Eastman." Lloyd had received an Eastman for Christmas, and he and Mr. Kerr plunged into a technical discussion. Betsy said she used a square box Brownie. "I'm so dumb I can't take pictures with any other kind." "Why, you take good pictures, Betsy," Tacy said. Mr. Kerr turned away from Lloyd abruptly. "I'll bet you take mighty good ones," he said, smiling persuasively at Betsy. "Won't you show me some?" Betsy brought out her bulging Kodak book, filled with pictures of the Rays [her family], of the Crowd [her group of friends], of winter and summer excursions. "Someone will have to explain this to me," Mr. Kerr said, and presently he and Tacy were sitting on the couch while she told him who was who, laughing as she turned the pages. "Betsy says this is me at my silliest," Betsy heard her remark and remembered the picnic up on the Big Hill when she had snapped Tacy acting like an Irish Colleen.⁴⁵





1.21
gelatin
silver print,
c. 1910

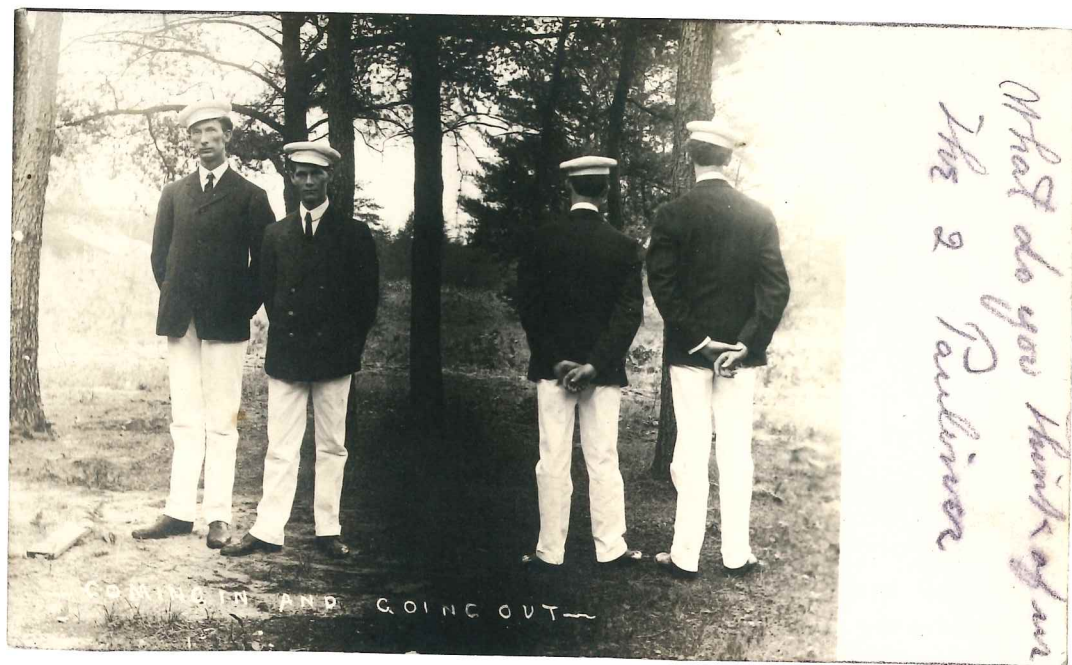
Lovelace's story reflects several aspects of photography at this period: the high spirits and joking around that are common in surviving snapshots; the distinction between Betsy, who snaps photographs for fun with her easy-to-use Brownie camera, and the sophisticated amateur such as Lloyd and Mr. Kerr; the album "bulging" with snapshots of family, friends, and outings; and the need for someone with intimate knowledge of the subjects to explain the snapshots to the outsider, as Tacy does for Mr. Kerr.

Photographic amusements did not always derive from "snapping" a boisterous social life. Prints themselves were often manipulated. They were cut and pasted into albums in collages, surrounded by watercolor borders, or given different meaning by captions or inscriptions on the images. The amateur photographer experimented freely with his or her prints to create hybrid objects that held personal meaning and could also be funny. This intricate framing of snapshots had a precedent not only in the elaborate collages of earlier photograph albums but also in the practice of assembling

"commonplace books" (scrapbooks of meaningful quotations, jokes, meditations, and verses). As in the two intact Kodak albums in this exhibition (pls. 16a-b, 17a-b), many of the snapshots shown here once resided in albums or were part of larger collections of loose snapshots.

In addition, heavy, colored card stock was available for individual mounting, and arrangements of mounted photographs were displayed in people's homes (fig. 1.21). One handmade compilation of trimmed photographs, titled "Snap Shots" and probably dating from around 1910 has the heading, borders, and captions all created freehand (see pl. 24). On either side of the title are drawings of a box camera and a folding camera. Among the snapshots of the diversions and camaraderie of college life, several are portraits, captioned with the subject's name. Others are group photographs, in many cases showing students clowning around. In "Cack" two men hold another man upside down, while in "(?)" a man crouches inside a barrel, and in "Skool Daz, Skool Daz" the photograph is drawn on with pen and ink to include music notes and blackened mouths so as to suggest that the men are singing the song.

Drawings and captions like those on the "Snap Shots" compilation were often used to add humor to photographs. Another example now orphaned from its original album is surrounded by a hand-drawn decorative border with ornate photo corners and two captions: "Some of the Goofs at Camp Phantom Wood" and "We will make a good beginning" (see pl. 26). The photographed faces have been obscured with cartoonish embellishments. Two flying birds are drawn in the blank sky, as are the bottoms of two feet above the water in front of the face at the far left, adding an extra layer of humor to a photograph of an excursion to a lake. Meanwhile, "Cold Modesty" is inscribed on the negative of a picture of four primly dressed adults seen from behind, seated in a row looking out at a lake (see pl. 15). And in "???" numerous handwritten phrases crisscross the photograph of a couple embracing (see pl. 25). The teasing inscriptions suggest "sweet nothings" that a couple might share in a moment of intimacy, but "Please go away and let us spoon" pokes fun at the intruding photographer.



9
 "Coming In and
 Going Out,
 What do you
 think of us,
 The 2 Paulines,"
 gelatin
 silver print,
 c. 1900-1910

Addressed:
 Frank P. Harmer,
 Greenville,
 Mich.

10
 gelatin
 silver print,
 c. 1900

11
 gelatin
 silver print,
 c. 1900

Exploring the possibilities of the camera led to some curious effects, as in a double exposure—vertical and horizontal—from the 1890s of an indoor gathering (see pl. 23). Many illusions were deliberately and humorously staged for the camera. Trick photography, as encouraged in *Photographic Amusements*, was the impetus for "Coming In and Going Out," which placed the same two men on either side within a single photograph, once facing the camera, once facing away (pl. 9). An intriguing pair of double exposures depicts a man and a woman in a parlor, each appearing in the same spots—seated at the piano and a neighboring chair—but with each taking turns as "ghosts" haunting the other (pls. 10 and 11). In this case the man's ghost was not as successful an apparition as the woman's. A different kind of trick photograph shows a couple from the back, snuggling on a boat, while behind them and gazing out at the viewer are added five smaller "passengers" (pl. 12). Another favorite motif in this period was the play on perspective achieved by placing the bottoms of a man's shoes in the extreme foreground of the photograph. This "wide-angle study," as it was called in *Photographic Amusements*, was illustrated in a line drawing with the punning caption "A Photographic Feat" to show the desired effect (fig. 1.22). A similar composition appears in a snapshot from around 1900, mounted on gray card stock with a decorative border (pl. 13), which attests to the photographer's pride in its realization. Most of these trick photographs would have required a carefully controlled exposure, with the camera mounted on a tripod, placed on a table or chair, or held in a very steady hand.





12
 "Margaret,"
 gelatin
 silver print,
 c. 1910

13
 gelatin
 silver print,
 c. 1900

1.22

"A Photographic
 Feat," in Walter E.
 Woodbury, *Photo-
 graphic Amuse-
 ments* (New York:
 The Scovill &
 Adams Company,
 1898), 85. National
 Gallery of Art
 Library





1.23

"Take a Kodak with you," advertisement, June 16, 1910. Hartman Center, Duke University

Get Action

In contrast to the timed exposure, the instantaneous snapshot satisfied the ambition to capture motion, particularly as the pace of life accelerated. When Stieglitz began his essay on the hand camera by claiming that photography "as a fad is well-nigh on its last legs, thanks principally to the bicycle craze," he identified a key correlation between the bicycle and the camera, both of which changed the way Americans traveled and spent their leisure time. When middle-class America increasingly enjoyed time at play and time on the go, the camera went along for the ride—quite literally, as cameras designed to hang on the bicycle were sold for convenience of travel. The safety bicycle (equipped with a chain and with tires of equal size) was introduced in the late 1880s, and by the middle to late 1890s it, like the camera, was in wide use by the middle and upper classes. One contemporary noted that amateur photographers were "as plentiful as bicyclists."⁴⁶ The bicycle took the photographer farther afield—and in turn provided a subject for the snaphooter (see fig. 1.17). Indeed, many camera clubs functioned primarily as groups to organize excursions. The Washington Camera Club, for example, was an arm of the Capital Bicycling Club.⁴⁷

This synergy may explain the Outing Company's takeover of *The American Amateur Photographer* magazine, which it began to publish and market together with *Outing* magazine and other periodicals devoted to outdoor life. Bicycles were the first product besides photographic equipment to be advertised in *The American Amateur Photographer*. Then in the first decade of the twentieth century the magazine began to carry ads for automobiles. The same reciprocal relationship developed between the camera and the car as car ownership increased steadily dur-

ing the second decade of the twentieth century. By 1910 Kodak was promoting the pamphlet "Motoring with a Kodak" with an image of a couple seated in a car, the man at the wheel and the woman snapping a photograph (fig. 1.23).

With the rise of what has come to be called the condition of modernity, Americans experienced distances shrinking and ever-faster speeds—through the railroad, streetcar, bicycle, automobile, and airplane—and photography too became faster. Photography itself, of course, led to the moving picture, or cinema. Thomas Edison introduced the kinoscope in the early 1890s, and motion picture film became commercially viable and available in 1896 from Eastman Kodak (which would become the major supplier for decades). Nickelodeons and movie theaters began to spring up across the country. Motion pictures even made their way into vaudeville, which showed short film programs between acts. As in early snapshots, the earliest movies were an extension of conventions drawn from the theater, with narratives told as a series of silent, serial vignettes, both comic and dramatic, that relied on gesture and expression.

Motion in early snapshots naturally registered as a blur. "The Slide for Life" depicts not only childish playfulness but also spirited movement, rendered as a blur from some distance away (see pl. 37). Likewise, in a photograph of several adults scattering on a beach, the dark forms of the men and the light forms of the women blur together in a mass of movement (see pl. 36). As camera technology improved, it became possible to record motion without blur, and more and more true "action shots" began to appear by the second decade of the twentieth century. In 1909 Kodak introduced the Speed Kodak, with exposure times of 1/1000 second. Advertising the new camera with the

slogan "Get Action," Kodak claimed that "the aeroplane in flight, the racing motorcar, the thoroughbred taking a fence, the ballplayer stealing second" were not too fast for the Speed Kodak. Processing sped up with the marketing of the Kodak Developing Machine (1902) and Tank Developer (1905), which allowed customers to print their own photographs on the spot and in daylight. The emphasis on speed, and on the speed of modern technology, existed side by side with the carefully staged tableaux of the period.

Kodakery from its first issue in 1913 included dozens of action shots taken with the Graflex (a more expensive high-speed camera, mostly used by professionals but touted by *Kodakery* to its amateur readership). They showed gymnastic feats, people leaping into the air, flying birds, jumping dogs, and sports competitions. *Kodakery* explained in a 1915 article that the Graflex could take "snapshots from moving automobiles" going twenty miles per hour. Another *Kodakery* article, "Musings of the Kodak Philosopher," drew attention to the speed of both modern life and the camera and described the capturing of motion as analogous to the condition of cinema:

Modern life crowds the moment with new opportunity, but also makes it more fleeting. The motor car, for instance, whirls us out into the great out-of-doors, where charms of landscape unfold in panoramic profusion, and scenes dissolve as quickly as they form. The aeroplane takes us aloft, where our perspective is changed entirely. The eye is unequal to the new demands and the mind can store but a fraction of its impressions. The eye of the Kodak, opening on these things, however, pictures them instantaneously on indestructible film, in lines that time cannot efface, nor the passing years dim. The Kodak makes the present ours, and preserves the past to us and to our descendants for all the future.⁴⁸



Kodak in Camp.

From reveille to taps, each hour will bring something new into the life of every young soldier. New surroundings, new habits, new faces, and new friendships will make for him a new world—a world full of interest to him *to-day* and a world upon which he will often dwell in memory when peace has come again.

And this new world of his offers Kodak opportunities that will relieve the tedium of camp routine at the time and will afterward provide what will be to him and his friends the most interesting of all books—his Kodak album.

The parting gift, a Kodak. Wherever he goes the world over, he will find Kodak film to fit his Kodak.

EASTMAN KODAK COMPANY, ROCHESTER, N. Y., *The Kodak City.*

As the “Kodak Philosopher” mused, the photograph caught the instantaneous and made it timeless. Whereas the distinction between timed and instantaneous exposures was always explicitly spelled out in manuals and literature at the turn of the nineteenth century, gradually the two terms dropped out of common use, as instantaneity became the dominant mode of picture taking.

In 1917, when America entered World War I, the landscape of photography shifted yet again. Humor endured as a theme, but Nancy Martha West asserts that the idea of the snapshot as a way of preserving memory came increasingly to the fore during the upheavals of the war.⁴⁹ The Autographic cameras Kodak introduced in 1914 allowed the user to write notes on the film after an exposure, underscoring the photograph’s memorial function, and Kodak devised new advertising slogans and images to encourage use of the photograph to share memories of home or tell stories to absent loved ones.

“Kodak in Camp” depicts a soldier perusing an album of photographs in his tent with his folding Kodak camera on the table nearby (fig. 1.24). Kodak also urged the exchange of photographs between camp and home, suggesting: “The nation has a big job on its hands. It’s only a little part, perhaps, but a genuine part of that job [is] to keep up the cheerfulness of camp life, to keep tight the bonds between camp and home. Pictures from home to the camp and from camp to the home can do their part.”⁵⁰ Although not permitted to take cameras to the front (and subject to military censorship), soldiers shipped out overseas with Kodak Vest Pocket cameras and took snapshots of camp and other noncombat subjects. Photographs from home were plentiful, with patriotic themes like that of the two women draped in an American flag or a train car of soldiers preparing to depart (pl. 14 and fig. 1.25).⁵¹

The close of World War I marked the end of this first wave of snapshot photography. By the 1920s and 1930s ever greater numbers of Americans were purchasing faster and faster cameras, and snapshot photographers, while continuing to prefer domestic and leisure pursuits, would shift away from the experimental and staged to the “quick, casual, modern way.”



1.24

“Kodak in Camp,” advertisement, c. 1917. George Eastman House

14

gelatin silver print, late 1910s

1.25

gelatin silver print, c. 1917



15

"Cold Modesty,"
toned
gelatin silver
print,
September 6,
1909



16a-b
"Mr. & M. Weld's picnic to Monument Club House," pages of albumen prints from Charles Walter Amory family album, 1889



Wanakah. 1892.



Wanakah. 1892.



17a-b
"Wanakah,"
pages of
gelatin silver
prints from
an anonymous
family album,
1892



19
gelatin silver
print,
c. 1900-1910

20
"The Artist,"
cyanotype,
c. 1900-1910

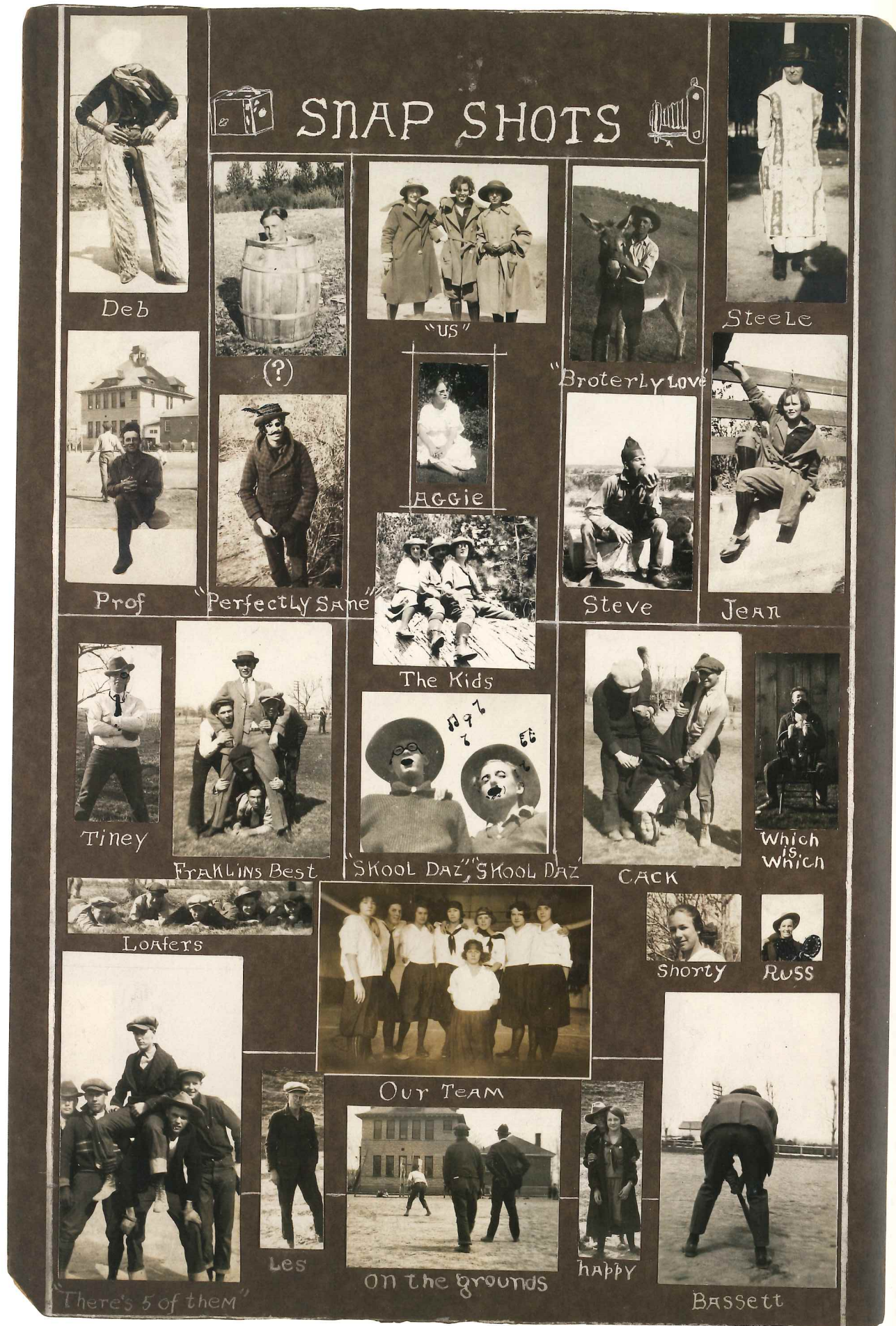




21
 —
 gelatin
 silver print,
 c. 1910

22
 —
 "Poor Major,"
 gelatin
 silver print,
 late 1910s

23
 —
 cyanotype,
 1890s



24

"Snap Shots," gelatin silver prints, 1910s

25

"??" gelatin silver print, c. 1900-1910



28
—
gelatin
silver print,
c. 1910

29
—
"Shirley
Holmes,"
cyanotype,
1910s



30
—
gelatin
silver print,
1913

Addressed:
*Mrs. Clara
Jackson,
412 Euclid Street,
Dayton, Ohio*





31

gelatin
silver print,
c. 1910

32

toned
gelatin
silver print,
c. 1910





33
 —
 gelatin
 silver print,
 c. 1900-1910

34
 —
 cyanotype,
 c. 1900



Accusation

35

"Accusation,"
gelatin
silver print,
c. 1910

36

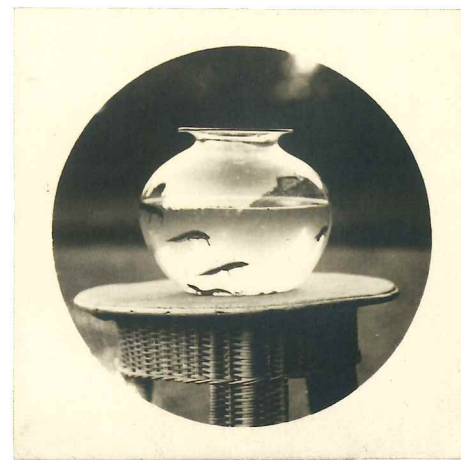
gelatin
silver print,
1910s

37

"The Slide
for Life,"
gelatin
silver print,
1910s



The Slide For Life



38
"Ellen Fullerton,
Feb. 1916—
age 18 mo.,"
gelatin
silver print,
February
1916

39
gelatin
silver print,
after 1888