RECORD, COMMUNICATION, ENTERTAINMENT: A FUNCTIONAL STUDY OF TWO FAMILY PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTIONS IN ST. JOHN'S, NEWFOUNDLAND

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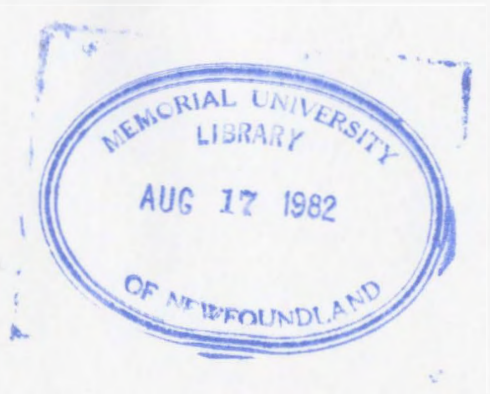

RECORD, COMMUNICATION, ENTERTAINMENT: A FUNCTIONAL STUDY OF TWO FAMILY PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTIONS IN ST. JOHN'S, NEWFOUNDLAND

by

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A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Department of Folklore
Memorial University of Newfoundland
May 1980

St. John's Newfoundland

Abstract

This thesis deals with the family photography collection, an aspect of visual and verbal folklore which allows families to record their activities, to communicate within the family and with outsiders, and to entertain themselves and others. This threefold function is exemplified, as is the form of the family photograph collection, primarily in a detailed study of the collections of two St. John's, Newfoundland families, the Kellys and the Cousens. These are used to illustrate the concept of roles in the creation and use of family photograph collections: the photographer, who records the events, the subject, who allows himself to be recorded, the archivist, who organizes the results, the interpreter, who describes them, and the audience, who observes them. The Kelly and Cousens collections are also the source of most specific examples of photographs and associated narratives. An historical depth is established for family photograph collections and it is related to their present form and function. The continuity seen with earlier forms of photography, family portraiture and photographic display is explained by the flexibility allowed by the roles; that different individuals may take them, that responsibility for them can be divided in the family, and that each individual may weigh his role according to his interests. The connection between family photograph collection roles and individual personalities, as well as the collection's general importance to family life, are seen.

Acknowledgments

This thesis would not have been possible without the assistance of several individuals and institutions. The Department of Folklore, and Graduate Studies of Memorial University of Newfoundland provided me with a graduate fellowship and assistantship, and the facilities with which I worked. Paul Mercer, and later Phillip Hiscock, helped considerably with my work in the Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive, and they certainly always made it more entertaining. The people at ETV Photography at MUN gave many suggestions and printed the photographs included in the thesis.

Dr. Kenneth S. Goldstein always encouraged my studies of Folklore. My thesis supervisor, Dr. Gerald L. Pocius, accepted messy drafts, and his criticisms were never unduly harsh. Dr. Neil V. Rosenberg convinced me to continue pursuing family photograph collections as a topic when I thought of abandoning the project. Dr. Herbert Halpert gave me several references on family folklore, and I was given both references and encouragement by my fellow students David Taylor and Peter Gard. I can never adequately acknowledge the debt I owe to all my fellow students, especially Jane Burns, Catherine Schwoeffermann, Ingrid Fraser, Penny Houlden, Diane Tye and Chris Carton.

Dr. Terry Goldie of the English department at MUN introduced me to Aly O'Brian, who helped me to locate several informants. I would like to thank him, Mac Swackhammer, Cheryl Ray, Mrs. Greta Hussey, and Mrs. Florence Murrin for showing me their collections. Also, I am indebted to Lynn Burns of Cameramun, Mr. Garland of Garland Studio, Don Lane of Lane Photographics, and Manny Buchheit for sharing with me their insights as professional photographers. My greatest debt is to

Mrs. Bride Kelly, Mr. Gerald Kelly, Mr. Charles Cousens, and Mrs. Elizabeth Cousens, who cheerfully endured a great deal of what must at times have seemed like pestering. I thank all of the above individuals for their help.

Finally, I would like to thank my father, Ralph Greenhill, whose photography and writing have always been an inspiration to me.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Every day we must deal with a variety of objects, the material products of our culture. Some of these, such as clothing and housing, are instrumental, necessary to the maintenance of life in any climate and others, like books and musical instruments, are part of the more expressive aspects of existence. However, no object is entirely one or the other; all are profoundly affected by the culture which produces them.[1] This thesis is an attempt to understand one aspect of material culture, the family photograph collection, in its social milieu.

Based primarily on material from the collections of two families in St. John's, Newfoundland, three aspects of family photography will be considered: the photographs themselves, the narratives and verbalisations about them, and the context in which they are presented. These three sources of information will at various times be combined or isolated; for instance, the interpretation of the content is informed by an understanding of the family and by comments made about photographs in conversation.

Although a survey of a number of family photograph collections would certainly be a valuable addition to folklore scholarship, it would have been too time consuming for my purposes. The two collections chosen adequately express and illuminate the functional questions addressed. The Kelly collection is a large one, a particularly good example of style and content, and has considerable time depth. The Cousens collection is also large, and also includes pre-twentieth century material, but seems unconventional. Although there are many collections which resemble that of the Kellys, it was not until I looked

at the Cousens collection that I was able to see the characteristics of this aspect of material culture in general, the variation and elaboration possible, and the essential and more important similarities between all the collections. They illustrate, in contrast and comparison, what is significant in family photograph collections.

I first encountered family photographs as a folkloric form in the winter of 1978, while visiting two fellow graduate students. As we sat talking and drinking, I asked Penny and Peter how they had met, and how they had become a couple. They began with a description of the circumstances, but soon Peter brought out their album of snapshots. The entire narrative, encompassing the photographs, was over an hour long. The photographs were commented on as descriptive moods and feelings, showed the chronological and location divisions which were significant, and were used as a mnemonic device to aid in recollection of the sequence of events. By including the photographs, Penny and Peter brought me closer to their past, and made my view of it more complete.

At the time, I saw the photographs as a kind of visual accompaniment to a personal experience narrative. Certainly, they added another dimension to the narrative, but more than that, they were integral and necessary to an intimate and personal account of this couple's life together. As stressed, or at least implied by most informants, collections of family photographs are a kind of visual enthnographic recording of personal and family history and life, created by the family members for their own various uses, only one of which is the narration of family history to outsiders. This thesis will involve a discussion of the form and use of family photograph collections, and the ways in which the symbolic and iconic aspects combine to present a partly con-

trolled and conscious, and partly involuntary view of the family.

I had initially expected this thesis to be a work dealing with aspects of family photograph albums in Newfoundland. However, when I began visiting people, looking at their collections, and talking to them, it became obvious that both "photography" and "album" were terms and categories with minimal relevance to Newfoundland culture. Family photograph collections had boundaries which existed beyond the covers of an album or the products of the family camera. Even the terminology which referred to photography and portraiture showed unexpected nuances.

'Family portrait' referred specifically to a picture which included the entire nuclear family, as in "This group is of my husband, myself and our two older children and was taken when we thought it was a family portrait, that was before our family enlarged."[2] A 'picture' could be a painting or a photograph. 'Snapshots' or 'snaps' were distinguished from photographs in that they were not professional or posed, as Mrs. Cousens expressed in the following statements:[3]

> Mrs. Cousens: Most of the real old ones (photographs) that we have were done professionally, so they're well set up and they don't, there didn't seem to be as many snaps, we call them today. They are actually photographs.

I found that when I asked about 'family photographs', I was at first directed to group shots, usually professional, showing family members only, rather than to the total collection of photographs in a family's possession. This selection may have been the result of a difference in definitions, but the implied denigration of the amateur informal photograph was often accompanied by a sense of disbelief that anyone could be interested in them.

This attitude is similar to that of professional photographers,

especially photographer-artists, who have few good words for the snapshot or non-professional family photograph. Helmut Gernsheim describes its relation to composed, creative photographs as that between noise and music,[4] reflecting a consensus which sees photography as a creative medium whose potential is not realized by snapshots. The merits of photographers are ranked according to the frequency of their use of their cameras -- holiday photographers are at the bottom, the processing methods used - owning one's own darkroom is more respectable, and communication with others - membership in organizations and awareness of journals is the ideal. The patience of the professional photographer in choosing the right moment to shoot is contrasted with the amateur's random snapping which may produce a decent picture, but only as a fluke from multiple shots.

Some students of photography, however, address themselves more sympathetically to the idea of snapshooting and amateur photography and an issue of Aperture[5] is devoted entirely to the subject. It emphasizes function and content over style and technique as most snapshooters do, thus showing an almost enthnoscientific perspective. Tod Papageorge, for instance, defines the snapshot according to the photographer's attempt to make the subject central to the picture,[6] both symbolically and in fact. Paul Strand defines it by the use of a hand held camera, and the sense of arrested movement which results from this; Strand's own technique eschews the tripod, since it gives the photographer's subjects time to change and consciously present themselves, which the hand held camera may not.

John A. Kouwenhoven defines the snapshot as a photograph taken quickly with a minimum of posing and selectivity of vantage point, and

framed arbitrarily.[8] Lisette Model prefers to emphasize subjectivity; the snapshot's innocence and its record of everyday experience and status.[9] Most analysts of the snapshot in this volume are aware of the diversity of things which are so named, from chaotic structure to frontal family portraits; and of the apparent dichotomy between the carelessness of the photographing event itself and the care taken to preserve its results.

Nevertheless, however it is defined, the family photograph collection includes more than snapshots. It may record scenes or people, and the shots may be professional or amateur. They may be studied and conscious, or relatively candid. They may record significant events, rites of passage or relatively unimportant events or scenes. They may be found on the wall, in cabinets, on furniture, in boxes, in attics, or in albums. Yet there are certain common features in family photographs themselves, as well as features which unite family collections as a whole.

I expected my own research to show in most cases that photographs were isolated from other momentoes, kept in an album or carefully preserved in a drawer, and labelled with information as to the date and subject, at least. I also expected the photographs to be generally candid and informal in style, and that professional photographs would play only a minimal role in the collections.

Instead, I was faced with photographs scattered throughout the house, in direct association and close physical proximity to other types of ephemera. Objects found with photographs could contain photographic or pictorial aspects (such as postcards or devotional cards) or could be prose only, such as newspaper clippings or letters.[10] Consider,

for instance, the following inventory of material on a bookcase in Stephenville Crossing: "Britannica Encyclopedias, Reader's Digest books, Chatelaine, a Family Medical book, a Bible, Home-Guide books, various Harlequin Romance books and a number of family photo albums."[11] I was surprised to see that almost all the amateur photographs were formal and posed rather than candid or relaxed, and that there were often quantities of professional photographs in the collections.

In dealing with the family album, I found a conflict between the descriptive/structural categories which seemed necessary to distinguish between an album and a box as containers for significant material, between amateur snapshots and professional photographs, or between photographs and other small pieces of ephemera and the functional/associational categories of momentoes, or collections; the latter apparently do not follow the structural/descriptive lines suggested above, but are emic categories, the reflection of the Newfoundlander's worldview, while the former are a series of etic categories, dividing reality according to a non-native worldview: the folklorist's perspective. Thus my basic unit of study became the collection, a group of photographs found in a family dwelling. Only when their functions differ will distinctions be made between albums, boxes, drawers, and walls as containers and media of display. The boundaries of the unit, then, are the walls of the house, and therefore both professional and amateur photographs are considered.

Although I looked through most available photographs in both collections at some time, I chose to concentrate on a few album pages and photographs in each as examples of the material portion of the family photograph collection. The quantity of data involved in illus-

trating all photographs would be unworkable for a project of this scope, since I consider narratives and context as well as the photographs themselves. This approach was partly suggested by the methods of the owners of the collections I studied: they did not examine and discuss every shot in turn. Rather, they tended to scan a group of photographs or an album page until they found something appropriate -- for whatever reason -- for the moment. Often, in fact, their comments were more concerned with the family or historical events than with the content of any single photograph. Much of the material which was most significant to the family or individual looking at the photographs was apparently unrelated to its immediately visible subject.

This aspect is easily suggested by a solitary glance at an undocumented collection of family photographs. It is possible to make many observations about such a collection: the kinds of material it contains, the general location of the shots, the dates (from clothing, etc.), the physical arrangement, and so on. But basically, one senses that its significance is lost; a family album is about people. Without someone to explain the relationships between the individuals in the photographs, what they did and why they are important, or some kind of written documentation containing that material, the album is merely a collection of random shots and only minimally meaningful.

The family photograph collection is essentially a conservative phenomenon. Throughout its history, photography has been used by family groups to record their activities, to communicate with other families and between members of the same family, and to provide through these processes a form of entertainment for all concerned. These functions have remained similar, as the form of the family photograph collection

has, despite the multitude of changes in the nuclear family during that time. This conservatism has been possible because of the flexibility of the behavioural roles involved in the creation of the collection. The roles of photographer, subject, archivist, interpreter, and audience can be filled by anyone with sufficient interest in the collection. The functions of recording, communication and entertainment remain necessary to the family although the rituals, participants, and other internal phenomena change. The family remains a central concern in these photograph collections, and everything in them relates in some way to the family or to individual members of it.

The next chapter of this thesis will outline the theoretical problems involved in undertaking a study of visual and verbal materials, and concludes that they may be complementary, and best studied as symbolic material. The third chapter will outline the methods used in gathering information for this project, and will describe and evaluate previous studies of similar subjects. The fourth chapter provides a brief history of photographic processes and the involvement of the amateur in photography, especially as these relate to St. John's, Newfoundland. In the fifth chapter there will be a discussion of the roles involved in family photography, showing the informants' participation in them. The sixth and seventh chapters will describe and analyze both collections on which this work has concentrated; the photographs themselves and the narratives about them. In the final chapter, a comparison of the two collections will show the great variation possible between them, the major significant points will be restated, and conclusions will be drawn.

The basic hypothesis, that family photograph collections, which are conservative in form and function, have been preserved thus because

of the flexibility, has been stated. Before the substantial and particular questions can be dealt with, and before the collections and behaviour involved can be described, it will necessary to outline the theoretical and methodological approach which has been taken in this research. The following chapter deals with the theoretical background in anthropology, folklore, communication and art criticism which have generated this problem statement and hypothesis.

Footnotes:

1. The term 'culture' is being used here to express the primarily mental and cognitive constructs which individuals and groups use in their construction of reality. A. L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn, Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), list and categorize hundreds of definitions of culture, some of which include material objects as part of culture, but many of which concentrate on non-material or behavioural components.

2. Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive (henceforth MUNFLA), Ms. 78-328, p. 16.

3. This quotation and all others from tapes made during my fieldwork may be found in MUNFLA collection 79-17.

4. Helmut Gernsheim, Creative Photography: Aesthetic Trends 1939 - 1960 (Boston: Boston Book and Art Shop, 1962), p. 13.

5. Jonathan Green, ed. "The Snapshot", Aperture, vol. 19, no. 1 (Millerton, N.Y. 1974).

6. Tod Papageorge, in The Snapshot, p. 24.

7. Paul Strand, in The Snapshot, p. 46.

8. John A. Kouwenhoven, in The Snapshot, p. 55.

9. Lisette Model, in The Snapshot, pp. 6 - 7.

10. MUNFLA, Ms. 78-354, p. 2.

11. MUNFLA, Ms. 78-339.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Background of Visual Studies in Folklore

"We can give cameras to our subjects-of-study, we can take photographs of our subjects-of-study, or we can observe our subjects involved with photographs."[1] Paul Byers' triad of possibilities shows the visual anthropologist's perspective on the use of still photography in ethnographic research. It requires the manipulation of five variables: camera, photographer, subject, photograph and ethnographer. For instance, the first involves the ethnographer giving a camera to a photographer so that the latter will take photographs which will be studied by the former. If all these sequences applying the variables to Byers' alternatives are followed through, it will be found that in the first two cases, the ethnographer must be the starting and finishing point of the encounter. Family photograph collections, when studied by the ethnographer, can follow a different set of sequences.

Essentially, the study of family photograph collections involves the third of Byers' possibilities, but the implications are different in family photography than what is conventionally meant in ethnography. The ethnographer does not bring his chosen selection of photographs to the subject, rather (ideally, at least), the subject shows his chosen selection of photographs to the ethnographer. Instead of presenting an unfamiliar object to the subject, and asking him to work with it, the ethnographer studies the products of an individual who, by virtue of his membership in the culture, is already an expert at manipulating and using them. Occasionally, the ethnographer, instead of taking pictures of his subjects of study, may be photographed by them.[2] The work of the ethnographic photographer requires that he interfere as

little as possible with the interactions his camera records.[3] The family photographer's presence and activities, on the other hand, are essential to the activity in which he participates. Doing family photography is not the same as recording interaction, although it may do so. Because of this, and the following points, I chose to discuss the collections with their owners, rather than trying to interpret them from a seemingly more objective stance.

When looking at photographs taken by the informants themselves, significant interaction between the photographer, his medium and his subject are seen. The medium of photography creates its own implicit range of what is important; that which is within the frame -- the viewfinder -- is important, and that which is outside is unimportant. The frame is a regular enclosure isolating the field of representation from surrounding surfaces. The activity of the figures within the frame, their location (central or peripheral) and even the location of empty space within the frame is expressive.

There are certain technical limitations, of course, in that the camera, even with interchangeable lenses, allows only a limited range of variation in the amount of data which can be framed in the photograph. However, we can assume that in some way, the photograph records a series of activities which have been chosen by the photographer. If patterns can be found in this series, then we can also assume that some message is being conveyed[5] by the photographer to whomever is looking at the picture; like any other form of non-verbal communication, photography contains content, interpretation, and suggestion.[6]

Of course, different patterns may be perceived by the different manipulators of the product. Particular rules determined both by

culture and by the individual must be applied in order to get meaning from these.[7] Communication, defined as an isomorphism between internal response (meaning) of a given set of symbols on the part of the sender and receiver, involves a source, which formulates the meaning into the message, a transmitter, which changes the message into information, a channel on which the message is sent, a receiver, which receives and decodes the message, and a destination, which interprets the message into meaning.[8] In the case of family photography, these would be, respectively, the photographer, the camera, the film, the photograph, and the viewer. Even assuming that the message being sent is an unambiguous one, factors called noise may at any point in the system interfere with the message.

Certainly there is no lack of ambiguity in photography. The photographer may be attempting to present any of a series of messages about himself as well as about the scene in choosing to frame the particular aspects of life that he does; and he may be sending unconscious messages. Noise can interfere in the medium in the form of technical problems of various sorts, or if the subjects being photographed have messages of their own to convey, contrary to, or different than that of the photographer, a conflict which can be obvious to both. One informant discussed the difficulties of implied conflict in intention between subject, and photographer, both describing the form it took and speculating on the motivation behind it.

> Pauline: How do the people you photograph react to being photographed?
>
> Mrs. Cousens: Most of them don't mind. Um, we have a couple of friends who are not, one loves to pose, but she has, she doesn't like to have you photograph her unless you warn her, warn her

> because she wants to be just right. We have one friend that we've got to watch very carefully because she's inclined to spoil a picture by clowning, and just behaving silly. I mean it's fun. I think she's self-conscious about being photographed, is probably the reason.

The camera may not be able to lie; certainly something corresponding to the truth exists in an individual photograph, but without the total context which surrounds it, in the form of other instrumental or expressive aspects of culture, or both, the truth remains elusive. This is perhaps why there are so many photographs in family collections, and why they are often discussed at length.

Perhaps it is valid to assume, as Mark Silber does, that the message can be the same for the photographer as for the ethnographer or at least substantially similar, in the case of family photography. "The reality of the image, as well as the myriad message implied by the choice to produce that image, is subjective and objective at the same time."[9] That message must surely involve the assumption that the photograph is informative about what is happening in it, and to whom. To a certain extent, then, the information in family photographs is a laundry list of activities and personalities meaningful as a totality. This is the overtly ethnographic aspect of family photography. Simplistically, it is a descriptive record of the family.

Choice and interpretation again enter the picture; what is not recorded is as important as what is recorded. Some aspects of life are considered inappropriate to family photography, and these subjects vary through time. It was once considered quite normal to have photographs of dead individuals in their coffins, either in albums or displayed on the walls of the house. These are now increasingly seen as grisly or morbid,

and therefore not to be included in the family collection. One informant, otherwise vehemently stating that she took pictures of everything, and at any time, rejected these kinds of photographs strongly.

> Mrs. Kelly: Oh my gosh, they wouldn't have one in the house for the world. Or I wouldn't have one. I wouldn't even look at it. Cause I don't think that's the time to take pictures. But I've seen them. My cousin took pictures of her mother and then she -- I said "Take them. I'm not, wouldn't even think about taking them." I want to remember them when they were alive, not when they were dead.
>
> I wouldn't keep it, I wouldn't have it in the house. For to take it and seeing the little brother and sister, and they laying out waking. And like I say, my cousin took it and all the flowers around the house, the wreaths and everything else. I want to forget all that. You know, my dear, that's one picture I wouldn't take.

In fact, sex, death and elimination are probably the only taboo subjects in family photography, with certain qualifications. Sex is incorporated in the photography of courtship and marriage rituals, and elimination in the series of photographs on bringing up baby such as diaper changing and child on the potty. Death is included through the veneration of images, especially the last photograph taken of a person before they died.

> P.G.: Are photographs important to you?
>
> Mrs. Kelly: Special ones, of the family, you know. I wouldn't let anybody touch a picture of mam and dad, or anybody, of my sister and my brother that's dead. I wouldn't let them do anything with that. But that's all. Just there's so many of the ones around, new ones, today. Well, you're always getting new pictures. But the real old pictures, I wouldn't let nobody touch them to tear them or destroy them, in no way.
>
> The memory is there, you won't forget. I like to keep pictures of somebody who's gone, like that.

Death is the only subject on the taboo list which can still be politely discussed, even if it is not usually photographed. Although there is a certain amount of reticence and euphemism in such discussion, it is not closed conversation, as sex and elimination are.

One possible source of information from the photographs is the kinesic messages of the people in them. Gesture, position and expression can be seen, but because these are not behavioural isolates, and are without explicit invariable meaning, they are difficult to correctly interpret[10] using the photograph, alone. Family photographs can also be a source of information on interaction. Certainly, they tell not only about the characters involved in any interaction, but also, from associated material and objects, about the activities in which people participate. But again, meaning is problematic. The context of photography is vitally important to any understanding of its content. Only 'caught' or 'candid' pictures, few of which are found in family collections "show objects and events as they are in regard to some matters other than photography."[11] In portraits and posed pictures, the identity of the subject must be perceivable, and therefore the familiar, conventional and culturally accepted stance is necessary. Ritual use of the photograph also prejudices the subject toward particular kinds of poses. The latter often tell more about photographing behaviour than they do about the person, or about expected behaviour in other circumstances. In the area of interaction, the photographer-ethnographer is in a much better position to record behaviour. Although he is intrusive, he is less likely to change the entire dynamic of an event than the family photographer. Thus it is necessary to look at family photography from the point of view of the user of it, and to interpret the collection in light

of its function.

Most of the family photography is non-sequential in nature. The static formal portrait, or the occasion recording snapshot, not only arrests an isolated moment in space by framing it, but isolates time by cutting off movement and activity from that which precedes it, and that which will follow it. This sense of time isolation again results from the fact that the action immediately preceding and following is related to photography - setting up and dismantling a scene, rather than with the everyday life which further circumscribes it. The assumption that a photograph or film provides context for narrative or for social behaviour, other than the physical presences recorded, is invalid.[12] The context exists in all the material outside the photograph, and before and after it was taken, and the importance may lie not in the image itself, but in the circumstances. Mrs. Kelly expressed something of this feeling when she said:

> That picture you take today, that day never comes again. You never get that picture again, no matter what it was, whether it was a baby you're taking or whether it's an old person. That day may, you never take that picture again. That's what I like about it.

Photographs contain different, rather than more or less, information than verbal statements and therefore combine well to give a more thorough understanding of certain phenomena, such as family life.[13] Verbal statements about photographs can only be analogical; the context of a photograph is in the photograph and is couched in photographic terms. Changing the medium of expression changes the message, and is therefore interpretive. At this point one is faced with the problem of determining what boundary exists between perception and cognition, and between them and expression. Yet one cannot even assume that perception will be correct.

In the face of corroborative redundancy of information, the viewer will select material relevant to identification and react appropriately. If the material is restricted or conflicting, the viewer makes inferences as to the real nature of the message:

> Mrs. Kelly: I love looking at old pictures.
>
> P.G.: Why do you think that is?
>
> Mrs. Kelly: I don't know. More so than pictures you take today. They are so different it is, you know. See, the pictures that you had taken fifty years ago, you're older looking on that than pictures you will have taken today. You know, that, what you see, what I showed you.

Perhaps in this case, Mrs. Kelly is selectively choosing aspects of the photographs, such as clothing, to fit a hypothesis that she is not really changing as she grows older. She is expressing in this statement more about herself than about the photographs themselves. Generally, perception cognition goes beyond the immediate sensory data.[14] However, if culture influences perception,[15] it must affect cognition and expression in turn, so through this long and indirect sequence is produced a culture artifact, narrative, explaining a cultural artifact, photography, both of which can be affected by individual input.

The visual images responded to will be those deemed useful or important; instinctively we endeavour to translate sensory experience into coherent concepts and thus to derive meaning from it. Internal and visual interpretations contain elements which are rational; related to context, knowledge and an understanding of the background of the item, or emotive, not necessarily totally personal, but partly a product of ritual and habit[16] and it is important to attempt to isolate the rational and emotional aspects of any interpretation, and this can result only from an exploration of context.

The viewer of the photograph may be hampered in his attempt to extricate the meaning from the photograph by cultural or subcultural differences which interpret aspects or motifs in the photograph differently from the way the photographer intended it to be seen. As various experiments have shown, the viewer's intention can affect the way a picture is seen.[17] Personal idiosyncracies of the viewer may predispose him to be unreceptive to certain types of information from photographs; the eye does not see what the mind does not wish to interpret.

However, it is not the purpose of the paper to discuss what information cannot be found in family photographs. "If the object was made for practical use, then it is unfair to both the producer and the object to evaluate the product only from the perspective of psychic distance, for the object was made not solely for the contemplation of its formal qualities."[18] Family photographs are intended for display and discussion within the family and discussion within the family and to outsiders. They are partly intentional or partly unintentional personal documents,[19] intentional in that they are being done to be shown or looked at, and unintentional in that the information in them is not entirely controlled, or controllable. For this reason, a study of family photography must deal with the end of the channel of communication, the viewer or audience, including input whenever necessary from the photographs themselves, and from their photographer-creators. The photograph is sometimes the weakest link in the series since it is seen as technological and therefore impersonal; the least apparently affected by cultural differences, the most manipulated by it, but the only one recognized as significant by the members of the culture.

A significant source of contextual raw data is the narratives, anecdotes, and comments associated with photographs. Some of these naturally arise in the process of using them.

> Mrs. Kelly: If you're sitting down in the conversation, you talk about, like I said, old times. And bring back memories, show (the photographs) to them then.

Others may be specifically elicited by the ethnographer as a student of this aspect of culture, although much interaction between ethnographer and informant is directly analogical to any photograph-showing situation. Since the photographs are of the past, most of the associated narratives involve the past as well. The events may be personally experienced, heard from participants, or removed even further, but because of the small time depth of photography and its recent introduction into Newfoundland society, most of the events in photographs could have been experienced by an older member of the family. One can assume that this factor, and the fact that information in the photographs can both recall memories and verify them, tends to make the narratives associated with the photographs accurate. However, in a great many cases, the narratives cannot be confirmed by information within the photographs, and is what Vansina defines as oral tradition, testimony of an event not witnessed or remembered by the informant himself.

These narratives belong to a class of oral tradition (unimportant family traditions) which Vansina considers untrustworthy. Many are explanatory materials associated with genealogy, the elaborative inessentials[20] which may be anything from an aid to memory to a decorative addition. These narratives are particularly difficult to verify. Family solidarity would tend to promote confirmation of the truth of any narrative, since denial of the narrative accepted by mutual consent within

the family is a rejection of the family itself. Most of these narratives would be found only within the family, and thus could not be confirmed or denied by someone without an emotional investment in the maintenance or denial of it. The context of family narratives suggests that the question of their truth should be approached cautiously. However given the narratives, photographs or any other aspect of culture for that matter, function can be discussed without reference to historical validity.

The majority of actual narratives, (as opposed to comments or identifications) associated with family photographs are personal experience ones. It is important to consider the point of view taken by the narrator, who can be a protagonist or observer, autobiographer or memorist, apologist or confessor, or almost any combination of these.[21] The act of looking at photographs might tend to place the narrator in the position of observer, but his activities and involvement in the scene would affect his attitude and narrative style. The fact of an individual's presence in a photograph can be supplemented in narrative by an understanding of how the person feels, or was said to feel about the situation, a type of information not directly available from the photograph itself.

Labov and Waletsky assume that units in a narrative would match temporal sequence,[22] yet the introduction of visual elements, arranged or viewed out of sequence, as family photograph collections often are, affects the narrative as a whole. There is a tendency for the viewer to isolate important elements relating to individual pictures, and these pictures, rather than time in the event described, would sequence the narrative. In one session, narratives were interrupted in mid-telling when the informant chose to consider another photograph, then were

returned to as another photograph of the first event was viewed. Presumably, an outline of the narrative exists, and the photographs call up certain elements in it. Sequencing may be primarily a strategy for remembering,[23] rendered unnecessary by photographs as mnemonic devices.[30] Thus, a discussion of narrative alone could lead to confusion.

"We only know the external world by images which it leaves on us and by the reactions of our sensibility."[25] In both family photographs and narratives, there is stored information, and in both the information is primarily descriptive rather than analytical. Analysis comes into play only when the narratives or photographs are related by the listener or viewer to his existence, and used in some way. The relation between the content and analysis is symbolic or iconic, as Raymond Firth defines them:[26]

> Icon - where a sensory likeness-relation is intended to be interpreted. Change of scale or motion or dimension may be involved, since an icon is constructed as a physical or imaginative representation, suggesting a referent by a complex combination of elements ...
>
> Symbol - where a sign has a complex series of associations, often of emotional kind, and difficult (some would say, impossible) to describe in terms other than partial representation. The aspect of personal or social construction in meaning may be marked, so no sensory likeness of symbol to object may be apparent to an observer, and imputation of relationship may seem arbitrary.

Family photographs are iconic to their possessors, in that they represent individuals, as these examples imply or show:

> P.G.: Do you think that photographs become more important when the person in them has moved away or dies?
>
> Mrs. Cousens: Yes, I think so. It's a way of keeping them close to you.

> Mrs. Cousens: As we make new friends, I always want to introduce them to members of the family that are not here with us, so I have to trot out the albums. I feel, well, we've made new friends, well now they must know our sons. Well our family are not with us, you see they've moved away, and the only way I can bring them into the picture is to trot out the albums.
>
> Mrs. Cousens: I just love going back over them (the old photographs). I have a very strong sense of family, and as I say, a lot of these people I've never seen but I almost feel that I know them. But, my mother talked about them so much and so warmly that, you know, they're real to me. And I just loved having them.
>
> On the television set are pictures (two), miniature photographs of my aunt and uncle's mothers. These are the most personal objects I detected in the room. 27
>
> Also, in the picture is my grandfather, who had lived with us until he died. I believe he is the reason why the picture is on the wall. 28
>
> One picture that she is very proud of is that of her oldest grandchild, who is an Irish Christian Brother. 29

In all of these cases, the individual in the picture is linked with its presence, and the individual's presence seems to be implied by the picture.

However, the meaning of family photographs is symbolic of the family and individual in a wider sphere. In one instance, the photograph of the married couple only in their house was felt to be an "indication of closeness".[30] Photographs cease, then, to be representative of the individual, and become representative of family solidarity. Some of the content of this symbolic association can be inferred from verbalisations about the photographs. The symbolic associations may not be conscious ones on the part of the user of the family collection:

> Mrs. Kelly: I'm after looking at them so often I knows just what they are, you know. But if I'm looking at them with somebody I'll, oh I can't say that because every now and then I'm could be moving something and then I'll sit down, looking at the pictures. I'll go right through them and get just the same joy as twas the first time I saw them. But for no reason, you know.

Awareness of symbolic function in the user is destructive of faith and capacity for action,[31] and therefore of the ability to use the symbol. The family photograph collection is at once a public and a private symbol. As will be shown, the individual uses to which the collection may be put are extremely varied, yet the general idea remains common throughout North America, and perhaps beyond.

Some of this symbolism is directly related to the iconic nature and use of photography. Consider the analogies used in the active verbs which replace 'to photograph': to shoot, and to capture. Because the product is iconic, photography is partly an aggressive act. It is an attempt, in a way, to possess the person being photographed. Capturing or shooting people not only allows them to be permanently placed in a position to be manipulated, but also proves the prowess and influence of the photographer. In owning a photograph, one possesses part of its subject. This is an expression of photography as a symbol of power. Most of the symbolism, however, is related to what is done with the photographs once the images are captured.

The family photograph collection, then, can be viewed as a kind of symbolic ethnography of family life. It is ethnographic because it is primarily descriptive, and it is symbolic because the essential meaning lies outside its immediate content. We have seen that both photographs and narratives contain considerable quantities of information, and it will be shown later that these media provide a kind of self-reinforcing

redundancy of information, communication and entertainment. In choosing to view the family photograph collection as a unit, a selection has been made of particular kinds of information. The next chapter will deal with the methods used in collecting this symbolic information, and how previous researchers have dealt with similar problems.

Footnotes:

1. Paul Byers, "Cameras Don't Take Pictures", Columbia University Forum, 9 (1975), p. 31.

2. In one of my first ventures into outport Newfoundland, a fellow student and I were invited into a house, ushered immediately into the front room, and photographed with a Polaroid camera recently acquired by the couple who owned the house.

3. Paul Byers, "Still Photography and the Systematic Recording and Analysis of Behavioural Data," Human Organization 23 (1964), pp. 83 - 84.

4. Meyer Schapiro, "On Some Problems in the Semiotics of Visual Art: Field and Vehicle in Image Signs," Semiotica 1 (1969), pp. 228 - 229.

5. Virgil G. Aldrich, "Expression by Enactment," Philosophy and Phenomenological Research 16 (1955 - 1956), p. 200.

6. Jurgen Ruesch and Weldon Kees, Nonverbal Communication: Notes on the Visual Perception of Human Relations (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956), p. 46.

7. Colin Cherry, "Communication Theory' -- and Human Behaviour," in Studies in Communication (London; Martin Secker and Warburg, 1955), p. 46.

8. Melvin L. DeFleur, Theories of Mass Communication (New York: David McKay Co., 1970), pp. 91-93.

9. Mark Silber, "Review of City Families, etc." Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication 5 (1978), p. 67.

10. Ray L Birdwhistell, Kinesics and Context: Essays on Body Motion Communication (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1970), p. 80.

11. Erving Goffman, "Gender Advertisements," Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication 3 (1976), p. 81.

12. See Steven Feld and Steven Ohrn, "I Guess You Could Say This Is About Why You Can't Make Chicken Liver Out of Chicken Shit," in Saying Cheese: Studies in Folklore and Visual Communication, ed. Steven Ohrn and Michael E. Bell, (Folklore Forum Bibliographic and Special Series,) 13 (1975), 95 - 100.

13. Byers, "Still Photography," p. 81.

14. D. Vernon, Perception Through Experience (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1970), pp. 59-60.

15. M. H. Segall et al, The Influence of Culture on Visual Perception (Indianapolis: Bobs Merrill, 1966), p. 25.

16. R. Wittkower, "Interpretation of Visual Symbols in the Arts," in Studies in Communication p. 118.

17. John D. Gould, "Looking At Pictures", in Eye Movements and Psychological Processes ed. Richard A. Monty and John W. Senders (Hillsdale N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1976), p. 229.

18. Michael Owen Jones, The Handmade Object and Its Maker (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), p. 229.

19. See Gordon Allport, The Use of Psychological Documents in Psychological Sciences (New York: Social Science Research Council, 1942), p. 11.

20. Jan Vansina, Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology trans H. M. Wright (Chicago: Aldine, 1969), pp. 20, 186 - 187.

21. Robert Scholes and Robert Kellog, The Nature of Narrative (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 265.

22. William Labov and Joshua Waletsky "Narrative Analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experience," in Essays on the Verbal and Visual Arts ed. June Helm (Seattle: American Ethnological Society, 1967) p. 13.

23. Robert J. Miller, "Situation and Sequence in the Study of Folklore," Journal of American Folklore 65 (1952), p. 32.

24. Benjamin N. Colby, "Cultural Patterns in Narrative," Science 151 (1966), p. 798.

25. Raymond Firth, Symbols; Public and Private (Ithaca: Cornell, 1973), p. 31.

26. Ibid., p. 75.

27. MUNFLA Ms. 78-360, p. 25.

28. MUNFLA Ms. 78-352, p. 29.

29. MUNFLA, Ms. 78-348, p. 2.

30. MUNFLA, Ms. 78-347.

31. Firth, Symbols: Public and Private, p. 164.

Chapter 3

Methods of Study of Family Photograph Collections

My search for family photographs was not particularly long or difficult; most families have a collection of some sort. However, a few of my initial contacts presented me with difficulties. The major part of one informant's collection had been lent to an institution which was not sufficiently prompt about returning it to allow it to be included in the study. One informant refused to be taped and objected to being written about, even in an unpublished report. She seemed very concerned about the 'private' nature of the material in her collection. Because her family was not illustrious or wealthy, and had not directly participated in the conventionally important events of Newfoundland history, she was suspicious of my interest in them. This caused a great deal of hesitancy on my part to deal with the topic as I had first thought of it; the study of a family photography collection which was still being worked with by its creators. However, I subsequently found the point of view that family photographs should be kept private, to be anomalous. Although my informants were sometimes puzzled about my interests and questions, they were not reluctant to raise objections and questions of their own, and would often co-operate even when my admittedly rather vague attempts to explain myself were unsuccessful.

The families whose collections are presented here for detailed examination, the Kellys and the Cousens, were contacted through different sources. I was referred to Mrs. Bride Kelly as a person with an interest in photographs and a large collection of them, by Aly O'Brian, a friend who belonged, as Mrs. Kelly and her husband Gerald did, to the community of farmers in the Freshwater Valley of

St. John's. Mr. Charles Cousens was referred to me through my landlady, Dr. Susan McCorquodale, who told me that the neighbour of a fellow Memorial University of Newfoundland professor had a large collection of photographs, including some old and historic material, and that he and his wife Elizabeth were usually willing to show them.

I chose these collections for close study because they were large, recorded a relatively great span of time -- into the nineteenth century -- and because they showed many aspects which I came to recognize after a relatively informal survey of twenty or more collections, both in Newfoundland and elsewhere, as characteristic of family photography. There were interesting similarities between the Kellys and the Cousens; both were older couples then living alone in different parts of suburban St. John's, and having a concern with history, especially that of their families. Both trace their origins to Great Britain and dated their families' arrivals in Newfoundland to the mid-nineteenth century. The most significant differences between the couples were in occupations and economic levels. Perhaps most important, they were willing to show and talk to me about their photographs, did not object to my questions, and were willing to lend their albums for reproduction.

In initial visits, I saw their collections and attempted to evaluate their general suitability to the project. In follow-up visits, I taped their descriptions and reactions as we went through the collections together, and directed a series of questions about photographing activities and use of the collection, based on a questionnaire found in Pierre Bourdieu's Un Art Moyen: Essai sur les usages sociaux de la photographie,[1] and on my previous examination of family collections. These afternoon visits usually began with the relatively formal interview

and ended with informal tea and chatting. I usually stayed for two to four hours.

During the informal part we talked about family, Newfoundland history, and because of the upcoming elections and recent developments in Newfoundland government, about politics as well. The questions and discussion seemed to get more personal on both sides as the visits progressed. Often the Kellys or the Cousens would ask me questions about my background, as if to balance my questions about them. My informants were more than generous with their time, and often gave me home baked food and preserves to take home with me, as well.

I wanted the sessions which preceded the question asking interviews to be as natural as possible. I avoided directly the informants to any specific picture, or changing the sequence of events and photographs. Basically, I was a visitor, interested in photographs and the family, being shown the album as the informants wanted it shown. I felt that I would gain little insight into how they reacted to the pictures as a collection in asking them to go picture by picture through each album and box, as well as risking making the sessions unpleasant and boring for both of us.

Some of the material elicited by Karin Becker Ohrn in her study "The Photo Flow of Family Life: A Family Photography Collection",[2] confirms this; her informants are uninterested in her attempts to identify photographers, and one senses that the affective content of the photographs of 'less momentous' events could not be reached by asking 'Why a particular photograph was taken'. However, Ohrn uses the photographs primarily as a research tool for oral history, and not as the subject of her study.

Because I was also interested in the place of professional photography in family collections, I interviewed three professional photographers in the St. John's area. I tried to get an appointment to talk to a fourth, who, it became obvious, was too busy to do so. In each case, I went to the studio, explained my work and asked for an interview. One photographer was able to talk to me immediately, but refused to be taped. The other two set up appointments for a more convenient time. These interviews were brief, not extending beyond three-quarters of an hour. I found the photographers to be very cooperative, and to have strong and well thought out opinions of their role, and they helped me to extend my perspective on family photography.

The value of regarding the professional portrait photographer as part of the photographic style of a culture is demonstrated in an article by Stephen Sprague.[3] He discusses the traditional formal portrait tradition, proper conduct, identity, the maintenance of proper social position as it is expressed in the dignified pose and symbolic objects associated. The traditional perspective of the formal portrait, used for memorials as well as momentoes by the Yoruba, is contrasted with the Western ideals of eccentricity and individuality. The contrast of these pictures with the products of professional portrait photographers in Newfoundland points out the cultural nature of both posing and photographing.

I talked to another professional photographer in St. John's, Manny Buchheit, who taught art and photography courses for Annex Gallery, Extension Services at Memorial University of Newfoundland. I knew that he was teaching an afternoon introductory photography course to amateurs, and wanted to get his opinion and perspectives on family photography

especially since he was teaching people who would use their photographs primarily in their family collections. I interviewed him for over an hour after one of his classes, and sat in on two teaching sessions. His insights as a professional artist and photographer were very valuable, especially on questions of style.

I made visits to Mr. Aly O'Brian, Mrs. Greta Hussey, Mac and Cheryl Ray Swackhammer, Mrs. Florence Murrin and several others to look at their photograph collections, taping their narratives, and asking similar questions to those asked the Kellys and Cousens for comparative purposes. I also searched through MUNFLA,primarily a collection of student papers, reports, tapes, and material culture, hoping to find a province-wide base of information. Unfortunately, however, only one report (from Grand Falls)[4] was found which concentrated on a family photograph album. It dealt with the material in an anecdotal and identifying style, in common with much of the description I collected in the field. Concern was shown in this collection with photographs of people now dead, rites of passage, and significant events or objects. Occasionally, descriptions were given of the picture taking event, rather than of the content of the photograph. However, this one report was not sufficient to confirm any general hypothesis about similarities between photograph collections in St. John's and elsewhere on the Island.

Similar content -- anecdote and identification -- is found in the recitation The Family Album (see Appendix A) which I collected from Mrs. Greta Hussey of Port-de-Grave. This recitation sets up the circumstances of a new resident of an outport being introduced, through the photo album, to the family and circumstances of an older resident. It is told from the point of view of the latter, who narrates various

stories about the pictures and characters involved, until the other leaves. The emotion generated by a look through the album is demonstrated contextually; the old woman weeps after the visitor has left, presumably because she has again been left alone, and because the memories in the album are happier than her present solitary circumstances. I was particularly interested that family photography was considered a suitable subject for a recitation, although Mrs. Hussey knew of no other similar material on the subject, and that this one was performed by Mrs. Hussey at a concert celebrating Confederation, showing aspects of the community before 1949.

The only references to photography which I found in MUNFLA (other than picture taking at a wedding on the Southwest Coast)[5] is a series of class assignments on house decoration. Most make some mention of the use of photography to decorate interiors, and describe the place and location of photographs in the houses, the subjects, and associated material artifacts. Occasionally stories about the photographs, about people in them, or about the photo taking event such as the ritual involved are recorded. Rarely the account gives a suggestion of why these particular photographs were important to the family or individual living in the house.[6]

As background material, and to acquaint myself with the kind of work which had previously been done with family albums, I looked through a number of local history, photography, and family folklore sources. The ground breaking studies which combined text, analysis and photography were Michael Lesy's two works, Wisconsin Death Trip[7] and Real Life: Louisville in the Twenties.[8] In these, the photographs are integral to the structure and hypothesis of the works; they were a

part of, rather than an adjunct to his theoretical perspective. Lesy's nineteenth and early twentieth century photographers were not amateurs, and a great deal of work was not oriented entirely toward the family, but included commercial and other work. His unit of study is the photographer, or photographic studio, rather than the family collection.

Dorothy Gallagher's Hannah's Daughters: Six Generations of an American Family,[9] while it relies primarily on the oral accounts given by five American women, uses family snapshots to good effect, if only partly as an aside. Gallagher discussed the self-presentation shown in some of the photographs and implies its relation to the stated feelings of the subject. She also seems to be conscious of the effect the photographs had on her as a researcher; that she viewed and approached each woman differently after having seen pictures of them as they were in the past.

Roslyn Banish makes an important point, in her City Families: Chicago and London[10] of the connections between the photographs which she as a professional photographer took of her subjects (who were urged to dress as they like and to choose the locale of the photographs) and the brief life stories which she taped. She also taped the families' reactions to the photographs, their descriptions of why they thought the photographs were or were not good representations of themselves, and incidentally gave indications of what the subject's self-concept might include. Again, though, this type of photograph is perhaps a more artificial and alien form for the subjects to interact with than the pictures which would be found in their family albums.

Other family photographic books of the work of amateurs, such as Mark Silber's The Family Album Photographs of the 1890's and 1900's

by Gilbert Wright Tilton and Fred W. Record[11] or of the work of professionals, such as Leonard Norris et al's Who Wouldn't Have a Photograph: Isaac Horning and the Pioneer Photographers of Norfolk County,[12] concentrate far less on the information content of their photographs or narratives, and have much less comment on the function or importance of either. They show an interest in the photographs as images or as nostalgia.

The most impressive study of family photography, integrating history, local history, family studies, and photographic history was Colin Gordon's A Richer Dust: Echoes from an Edwardian Album.[13] Gordon found a collection of photographs at a flea market and proceeded to research the photographers and subjects and to fit them into the historical setting. He was able to find many of the subjects, or people who had known them, still living, and this helped to bring his study beyond the purely historic or nostalgic, and into the present. Gordon's sensitivity to his material is considerable, and his comments about them insightful:[14]

> In snapshots, the external world is always implied; we continually recognize that a person's entrance into the picture is an exit from somewhere else, and vice versa. Snapshots assert that we continue to live even when we are stopped in a picture; and that we live as much, if not more, through our relationships outside the picture than within the truncated image.

Most of the family folklore[15] and family study material examined has very little or no reference at all to family photography and its significance in family life. Only Holly Cutting-Baker's Family Folklore[16] pamphlet mentions photography as an integral part of folklore, suggesting that it is an intragenerational record. Karen Baldwin's thesis Down on Bugger Run: Family Group and the Social Base of Folklore[17] shows

the family's role as the first context for socialisation, and therefore for learning folklore. Like several others,[18] she hints at the genealogical, historical, and personal experience nature of much of family folklore, an aspect probably more important than its esoteric nature. Certainly, family photograph collections are not intended as entirely esoteric phenomena. They are deliberately created so that their significance can extend beyond the family circle. In this aspect at least, photography has perhaps less in common with other types of family folklore, and this may partly explain why it has been almost completely ignored by those concerned with this aspect of it.

Folklore Forum devotes an entire issue of its Bibliographic and Special Series to visual studies in folklore.[19] Although many of the papers deal with film-making and photography by the folklorist, and with various forms of moving picture media, others are concerned with the application of home and family still photography. Several of these will be discussed elsewhere in this work.

A few family sociology articles reviewed dealt with cohesion in the nuclear and extended families and suggest qualities of mobility, isolation, size, kinship, status, generation, and frequency of contact, as important factors to be studied with relation to the family.[20] Family photograph collections have much information to contribute to these questions which will be dealt with later. A few family sociology studies mention photography. Sandra Titus uses snapshots as an index of the transition to parenthood,[21] and shows that photographing is part of a technique for parents to learn how to care for the child and observe it, as well as creating a lasting image of the family. James Bossard and Eleanor Boll's Ritual in Family Living: A Contemporary

Study,[22] makes a passing reference to family photography, but describes in greater detail those aspects of family life which are commonly recorded in photographs; rituals such as dinners, picnics, Sunday drives, weddings and birthdays.

My approach to family photography, combining visits with informants with the study of the photographs was not a departure from the best of previous scholarship, and I tried to emulate the examples given by those who had produced significant works. Although my involvement with the two families could not be described as particularly close or personal, I attempted to get to know them well enough to speak confidently on contextual questions which would allow me to draw conclusions of interest to family studies in general. In the next chapter, I will discuss the historical background of family photography, its links with earlier traditions, the manifestations of the conservatism which is the rule for family photography, and the introduction of family photography to St. John's.

Footnotes

1. (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1965).

2. Karin Becker Ohrn "The Photo Flow of Family Life: A Family's Photograph Collections," Folklore Forum Bibliographic and Special Series 13 (1975), pp. 27-36.

3. Stephen Sprague, "How I See the Yoruba See Themselves," Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication 5 (1978), 9-29.

4. MUNFLA, Ms. 78-269.

5. MUNFLA, Ms. 77-120, p. 23.

6. MUNFLA, Mss. 78-223; 78-326; 78-372; 78-328; 78-329; 78-330; 78-331; 78-335; 78-337; 78-338; 78-339; 78-340; 78-343; 78-346; 78-347; 78-348; 78-349; 78-350; 78-351; 78-352; 78-355; 78-356; 78-357; 78-359; 78-360.

7. (New York: Pantheon, 1973).

8. (New York: Pantheon, 1976).

9. (New York: Crowell, 1976).

10. (New York: Pantheon, 1976).

11. (Boston: David R. Godine, 1973).

12. (Simcoe, Ontario: Norfolk Historical Society, 1976).

13. (London: Elm Tree Books, 1978).

14. Ibid., p. 176.

15. Other books combining family photography and narrative, or applicable to this aspect of family folklore include Catherine Hanf Noren, The Camera of My Family (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976) and Daniel Seymour, A Loud Song (New York: Lustrum Press, 1971).

16. (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1976).

17. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Pennsylvania Department of Folklore and Folklife, 1975.

18. These include Mody D. Boatwright, "The Family Saga as a Form of Folklore," in The Family Saga and Other Phases of American Folklore, ed. Mody C. Boatwright et al (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1958), Stanley H. Brandes, "Family Misfortune Stories in American Folklore," Journal of the Folklore Institute 12 (1975), 5-17, Kim S. Garrett, "Family Stories and Sayings," in Singers and Storytellers, ed. Mody C. Boatwright (Dallas: Southern Methodist University, 1961), Paulette Jiles, "Card Players and Story Tellers," This Magazine Is About Schools 5 (1971), 269-279, Kathryn Morgan, "Caddy Buffers: Legends of a Middle Class Negro Family in Philadelphia," Keystone Folklore Quarterly 11 (1966), 68-88, and Stanley Perin, "A Tradition in Search of Its Origin," New England Historical and Genealogical Register 121 (1967), 29-36.

19. Saying Cheese: Studies in Folklore and Visual Communication ed. Steven Ohrn and Michael E. Bell, Folklore Forum Bibliographic and Special Series 13 (1975).

20. Such as Millicent Ayoub, "The Family Reunion," Ethnology 5 (1966), 415-433, Frederick Elkin, The Family in Canada (Ottawa: Vanier Institute of the Family, 1964), Howard H. Irving, The Family Myth: A Study of the Relationships Between Married Couples and Their Parents (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1972), Eugene Litwak, "Occupational Mobility and Extended Family Cohesion," American Sociological Review 25 (1960), 9-21, and Edward Shorter, The Making of the Modern Family (New York: Basic Books, 1975).

21. Sandra L. Titus, "Family Photographs and Transition to Parenthood," Journal of Marriage and the Family 38 (1976), 525-530.

22. James H. S. Bossard and Eleanor S. Boll, Ritual in Family Living: A Contemporary Study (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1950).

Chapter 4

Historical Background of Amateur and Family Photography

> In a big gilt frame, slander of the family in oil: papa holding a book ('Constitution of the United States'): guitar leaning against mamma, blue ribbons fluttering from its neck; the young ladies, as children, in slippers and scalloped pantalettes, one embracing toy horse, the other beguiling kitten with ball of yarn, and both simpering up at mamma, who simpers back. These persons all fresh, raw, and red -- apparently skinned. Opposite, in gilt frame, grandpa and grandma, at thirty and twenty-two, stiff, old-fashioned, high-collared, puff-sleeved, glaring pallidly out from a background of solid Egyptian night.
>
> ... spread-open daguerreotypes of dim children, parents, cousins, aunts, and friends, in all attitudes but customary ones; ... all of them too much combed, too much fixed up; and all of them uncomfortable in inflexible Sunday-clothes of a pattern which the spectator cannot realize could ever have been in fashion; husband and wife generally grouped together -- husband sitting, wife standing with hand on his shoulder -- and both preserving, all these fading years, some traceable effect of the daguerreotypist's brisk "Now smile, if you please!" 1

This description, from Mark Twain's reminiscence of the 1850s in the southern United States, Life on the Mississippi, indicates several important points about family portraiture. In comparing the accounts of the oil paintings and the daguerreotypes, one has a sense of the similarity in the stylization and artificiality in both. Many of the conventions of the painted family portrait, themselves deriving from still earlier styles, were carried on into family photography in the nineteenth century, and some can be seen in photography even today.

Mark Twain's account indicates the importance of portraiture of members of the extended and nuclear family. The attitudes of the sitters

suggest that sitting for this portrait is a duty. It was not always a pleasant one since the subject had to be clamped into position for the long exposure. The consciously self-presentational style of the portraits is seen in the stance and organization of family members in the pictures, showing the kind and strength of ties between family members, ties which are affirmed by the sitters' participation in the portrait as well as when it is viewed by outsiders. Finally, the age of the pictures and sense of the past that they present to the viewer is significant. The family links in the past are demonstrated, and it is shown that the sense of family is found in its past. Mark Twain's sarcasm about the idealised view of the family presented in these pictures is shown in the details he describes, but these details were an essential part of the lives of the people they represented, and their images were essential to the decoration of the front room.

The recording of family life in photography and portraiture is a significant part of much of Newfoundland culture. In the examination of some of the historical factors behind amateur photography and family portraiture, forerunners of the present style and use of photography as an everyday, popular phenomenon can be seen.

The invention and initial use of photography in the nineteenth century was both a part of and a reflection of the changes in European and American society and culture at the time. The first photographic process which was neither too ephemeral nor too impractical, the daguerreotype, was introduced in 1839.[2] It entered a world in which the growing middle class, the rising standard of living, and the spread of population to previously unexplored areas, or from rural to urban locations, increased the demand for private portraiture.[3] The relative

cheapness of the daguerreotype, combined with decreased sitting time for a portrait, at least in comparison with some hand done methods, and the attractiveness of the object, a positive image on a silvered copper plate, combined to make the daguerreotype popular. Although initially long exposure times, eight to ten minutes, and up to half an hour, had made portraiture impossible, improvements were quickly made in the process. In 1840 the world's first daguerrean portrait studio was opened in New York[4] and by the mid-1850s, portrait photography had totally supplanted miniature painting,[5] and it retained its popularity until the middle of the 1860s.[6]

Apparently, the first daguerreotypists in St. John's were Valentine and Doane, who opened a studio at the Golden Lion Inn in 1843. Like many other early daguerrean artists, they also did portraits in oil. Dr. J.J. Dearin, similarly a jack of all trades, was a daguerreotypist, politician, chemist, and dentist, and itinerants such as M.H. Grant of Saint John, New Brunswick, also took 'likenesses' in St. John's. No known specimen of their work survives.[7]

Even at this early date, photographic portraits were taken to record aspects of life which are associated with family photography today: cultural rites of passage and vacations were recorded on daguerreotypes. The Harvard Class of 1852 decided at a class meeting to get portraits done at graduation by a Boston daguerreotypist.[8] At tourist attractions such as Niagara Falls, studios were set up so that visitors could pose with the Falls as a backdrop.[9]

The ambrotype, a negative image on glass which was placed on a black backing to produce a positive, was introduced in 1851, and with it photography became "the art for the million".[10] It was much less

expensive to make than the daguerreotype. There was an ambrotypist in St. John's by 1858. The tintype, a cheaper and more durable form of ambrotype on a thin black japanned iron plate, further extended the use of portrait photography to less wealthy individuals. Although it was considered humbler than the ambrotype, the tintype was not as prone to destruction of the image as its glass predecessor. The use of the tintype continued into the present century, and one St. John's resident, Aly O'Brian, recalls hearing from his parents about having tintypes taken:

> ... Going and getting your tintype taken was a really popular way. It was part of the entertainment of the day. Usually -- maybe after -- if anybody would meet by the racecourse the day of the races, then you'd go up to town and get your tintype taken. Or I've seen it myself, men who'd meet at a funeral. A funeral would have been another social event, inasmuch as that was when people would meet, where they may not ordinarily meet for months, and possibly they'd go down and get their tintype taken. Nearly always after a funeral. And then, well, you could take it basically after every meeting, no matter what the occasion might be, if it would be one or two or more then tintypes were (taken).

As implied in the above passage, photography helped to cement relationships between people who did not often see each other.[11] Members of the family, and friends who lived elsewhere could remain at home in image and the communal act of picture-taking, again, confirmed the ties.

The long exposures needed in the early processes necessitated an armchair and headrest, and a sturdy solemnity of expression. Although the techniques changed and faster emulsions were made available, the static aesthetic tended to remain the same,[12] especially in professional portrait photography: people were posed in a way which minimized any sense of movement. Behind them was unrelated background scenery, classical or rustic. Cabinet photographs (4" x 5½" paper prints,

mounted on slightly larger pieces of card) introduced in 1866,[13] were the epitome of this artificiality in the professional portraiture of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The collection and exchange of photographs, and diverse ways of displaying them began early in the history of photography. In the 1840s, the Scottish calotypists Hill and Adamson were apparently the first to put collections of their prints in albums, both as an attractive medium for marketing their works, and to preserve them from fading. There were three different kinds of albums; those collections of chosen loose calotypes made up by those who bought individual prints, those ready made for sale to the public, and special presentation albums given to societies or individuals.[14] Although the first form is more similar to most albums today, presentation and ready-made albums continue to be part of the work of professional photographers working in the family market.

The collection of stereoscopic views became popular in the 1850s. Most homes which could afford them had collections of these small prints mounted side by side on cardboard, which produced a three-dimensional effect when seen through a stereoscopic viewer. Outdoor scenes and sentimental posed tableaux were popular, but a few portraits of famous people were available. Stereo views were used as a form of entertainment[15] rather than as a medium for family portraiture, but the idea of occasionally going through a collection of photographs continues to be associated with family collections.

The popularity of the stereoscope declined with the rise of the carte-de-visite, introduced to North America in 1861. Disderi, the French populariser of the carte realized that large sized photographs

were too expensive, and used multiple shots on one plate to produce 2¼" x 3½" prints which were mounted on 2½" x 4" card. Most cartes were full length portraits, men conventionally standing by a column, women sitting, in front of a painted backdrop.[16]

Cartes-de-visite were initially used as visiting cards and were put on a card tray. Later baskets became necessary to deal with the large number of cartes which were brought into the home, and finally they were put into specially constructed albums,[17] the leaves of which had envelopes with portions to display the image. Albums of cartes can be seen as the forerunners of the family album as it is known today; a collection predominated by small portraits. Numerous examples of the cartes-de-visite and cabinet portraits of the St. John's photographers, S.H. Parsons and Lyon and Vey survive today in family collections. Both studios are listed in an 1885 business directory.[18] Parsons recorded many scenes around Newfoundland as well as doing portraits in St. John's. A directory of 1908-9 lists five photographers in St. John's. The partnership of Lyon and Vey had split up in 1892, and they had opened separate studios. S.H. Parsons' son was carrying on the business for the Parsons studio. Tooton's studio, which had opened in 1904, was in operation, and an individual by the name of LeBlance was also photographing.[19] By 1913, LeBlance was gone, another relative unknown photographer by the name of Mayer had a studio, and Elsie Holloway, the daughter of an amateur photographer, had opened her business, which survived well into the second half of this century.[20]

In America, the popularity of the carte can partly be correlated with the Civil War call for troops. Photographs of departing soldiers were left at home, and the soldiers took with them images of

their loved ones to war. Civil War soldiers left their carte portraits behind, but posed for tintypes when away from home. Occasionally these tintypes would also go into the family album.[28] The image of a family member came to be a representation of that person, a consolation replacing his or her presence in the home.

The carte album had more aspects of entertainment than its present form. It was not purely a family album, but also contained pictures of celebrities taken by studio photographers, for public distribution. Today the images of celebrities enter homes through newspapers, magazines, and (primarily) television. The photograph album has concentrated more specifically on the family.

In the early 1850s, amateur photographers were working chiefly on landscapes, town views and architecture as subjects. Portraiture was almost exclusively a professional domain.[22] Because of the long exposures and visibility of the cumbersome equipment, the full cooperation of portrait subjects was essential.[23] It was the amateurs, in fact, who were responsible for most of the technical innovations in photography. They wanted to make the processes easier to use, but the professionals were too busy taking portraits to be concerned with technical problems.[24]

Journals and photographic societies allowed considerable cooperation between amateur photographers. These societies would hold meetings in which photographers could discuss their technical and artistic problems, published journals in which new technology was presented and assessed, and organized field trips to locations which were likely to yield interesting subjects.[25] The memoir of Paul Martin, a Victorian amateur, cites the influence of journals and photographic society contests:[26]

> Amateur Photography had monthly competitions and was the first paper devoted to the interests of amateurs. It gave medals for what it called 'artistic' photographs. I sent one in, and mine secured the medal; it had a nice blue ribbon and a clasp to it, and was presented to me with some charming compliments.

There were apparently too few photographers to form an amateur association in Newfoundland. No doubt colonials could belong to the various British societies, or join an American one. At least one professional photographer from St. John's, S.H. Parsons, was awarded for his work at an 1888 exhibition in Barcelona, so some kind of communication in St. John's and elsewhere between photographers existed, probably through the journals. Two amateur photographers working in the nineteenth century in Newfoundland were typical in many ways of those elsewhere being professionals and educated men. Robert E. Holloway was a schoolmaster and the Reverend Edmund Hunt was an Anglican clergyman. Atypically, at least elsewhere, they achieved some measure of semi-professional success. Holloway's photographs appeared on Newfoundland stamps, and were later put on a Canadian banknote,[27] and Hunt's photographs were used as postcards. His daughter, Mrs. Florence Murrin, told me about washing her father's negatives and prints in streams running outside their house, a phenomenon which not only suggests some of the difficulties amateurs had to endure, but has also led to the physical deterioration of much of Hunt's work. It was less difficult to obtain the necessary materials, which could be sent away for, than to process the results.

Even before Eastman's roll film cameras and the incredible proliferation of amateur photography that followed it, there were innovations which made amateur photography easier. In the early 1880s, the gelatine

dry plate, faster, and requiring less paraphernalia than the collodion wet plate, was taken up by amateurs. The 'Detective' camera, a hand-held box which was more easily transportable than previous equipment, encouraged many amateurs to take up photography. Because it did not look like a conventional camera, the Detective camera also allowed candid photography and in the 1890s, amateurs were using photography more in ways that are seen today, "to capture and preserve their moments of escape".[29] Summer resorts became popular locations for amateurs with Detective cameras, as they are for amateurs today.

Although the professional photographers continued to emulate painting and to aspire to the status of 'art', photography became more associated as its history unfolded with popular recreation. The amateur's ignorance of perspective and composition certainly created a different image than the self-conscious works of the professionals, and professionals became protective of their milieu. In 1897 photographer Alfred Steiglitz not only equated the hand camera with bad work but compared it to the bicycle, a mere fad.[30]

Amateur photographers and snapshooters, in addition to the effect upon technical innovation in photography had considerable effect upon photographic style. The earliest photographers followed conservative conventions in artistic composition. Professionals were emulating painting, as well as attempting to establish photography as an art. The amateurs, on the other hand, were interested mainly in creating a visual record and preserving events and objects in image. Aesthetics intruded only insofar as necessary to the creation of a meaningful image. Many interpreters have seen the modern snapshot as more reflective of the subjective world than earlier photographs were. The blurring

movement, horizontal line distortion, the edge of the picture bisecting figures, are seen as phenomena generated by the camera's encounter with the real world.[31] The subject matter, a focus upon family life, is a reflection of the photographer's consciousness and desire to record personally significant material.

The subjective nature of family photography and its concern with content can be contrasted with some, but by no means all, of the types of contemporary photography. In fact, aspects of many of what Beaumont Newhall has identified as the modern trends in modern photographic style[32] can be applied to family photography. Straight photography has perhaps the least in common with family photography, being concerned with the aesthetic, exact previsualized image, texture, detail and technique, as well as with the reality expressed. Some family photography could be considered formalistic, in terms of the accidental creation of an image, and the effects of distortion of the image, although the interest in isolating and organizing form for its own sake is certainly not characteristic of family photography. Documentary photography has a similar subjective concern with communication, recording and information. However, the documentary print is only an intermediate form preceding publication, and this is an unlikely fate for most family photographs. The view of family photography as equivalent photography comes primarily from the interpreter of the photographs. In equivalent photography, the photograph is a symbol or metaphor; its subject is recognizable, but the meaning comes from the vision of the photographer.

It would be difficult to overemphasize the importance of George Eastman and roll film cameras to the popularization of photography.

Although Eastman, himself an amateur, did not initially see his innovations as encouragement to amateur photographers, the simplicity of the Kodak Camera, introduced in 1888 and marketed by Eastman's company, certainly was.[33] The instructions to the photographer were to:[34]

1. Point the camera.
2. Press the button.
3. Turn the key.
4. Pull the cord.

The box-shaped Kodak could be sent in after one hundred shots, reloaded, and the prints and negatives returned, or the amateur could choose to do his own processing. For twenty-five dollars, a camera with film and leather case brought photography[35]

> ... within the reach of every human being who desires to preserve a record of what he sees. Such a photographic note book is an enduring record of many things seen only once in a man's life time and enables the fortunate possessor to go back by the light of his own fireside to scenes which would otherwise fade from the memory and be lost.

Eastman's cameras and materials, because they were obtained by mail, were available in Newfoundland, and many amateurs immediately took advantage of this to record their lives. Since processing was done by Eastman Kodak, it was unnecessary for the photographer to be a chemist, and improvise techniques as Hunt did. In 1911, Tooton's was appointed sole distributor of Kodak for Newfoundland. The necessary materials for photography could be purchased locally by residents of St. John's, and printing and developing could also be done there, leaving the amateur free to concentrate on image making.[36] As technical innovations in photography continued, colour photography, various lenses and other equipment became available to the amateur. However, attractive packaging and ease of use continued to be paramount considerations in

marketing. The Brownie box camera was replaced by the Mickey Mouse camera, and the original Kodak with the Instamatic and Polaroid.[39]

Photography, throughout its history, has provided entertainment, a method of communication between individuals and groups, and a record of the physical and social landscape. In outport Newfoundland, in the early twentieth century, getting a photograph taken was part of the highlight of the year. Mrs. Greta Hussey explains:

> You went fishing in the spring of the year. You either went to the Labrador or you stayed home here, and all your fish were salted and dried. But nobody got any money until the fall of the year, see. You've all the summer, if you didn't have the money to keep you going through, you'd go and take everything you (could) on credit till the whole voyage was straightened out. Well then you had -- you counted your earnings and everybody fitted out for the winter. They had a new suit, and everything, and then they'd go and get their picture taken in a studio in St. John's ....
>
> My sister and I, though we weren't very big, we went to Blow-Me-Down. We went down to get -- half scared of the dogs along the way -- and got her (the local teacher) to come up and take the picture, one Sunday afternoon. We were dressed in our finery then.... No special occasion. we went up to Grandfather Dawe's and stayed to tea, and while we were up there, something really special, (having the photograph taken), that was.

The novelty of picture taking has gone, but it is perhaps surprising that the functions of it have remained essentially the same, and more so that the form and style of family photographic technology have allowed considerable experimentation by professional photographers, but the style of family photography has not been affected. Changes have also occurred in the family; the extended family continues to decrease in importance, and the so-called sexual revolution of the 1960s and 1970s has called into question the relevance of the nuclear family.[38] Yet family albums continue to record rites of passage,

vacations and other traditional activities. The importance and function of family photography, then, lies partly outside the form of the family, and the techniques of the medium. The survival intact of the family photography as an institution must obviously be significant. Family photography is essentially conservative because it deals with the past, with the stability and regularity of existence, and with memories of the enjoyment of various activities.

Throughout its history, similar themes have been repeated in the use of photography by amateurs. The development of processes increased the ease and efficiency of portraiture and decreased its cost, so that as the daguerreotype gave way to the ambrotype, tintype, carte and cabinet photograph, photographic portraiture became available to more and more people. The use of photography as communication, record and entertainment was established early in its history and has continued to the present day; like the people of the mid-nineteenth century, we have graduation portraits done, and photograph our visits to Niagara Falls. Display forms were also elaborated in forms similar to the present shortly after the beginning of photography. Even the static, posed style of the photograph has its origins in photographic history.

The first professional photographers came to St. John's only four years after the daguerreotype process was introduced. None of the nineteenth century studios remains in business today, but their artistic heritage can be seen in both professional and amateur photographs. Most significant in Newfoundland's photographic history to this subject was the arrival, with Tooton's studio, of Kodak. Very few amateur photographs in collections in St. John's predate this event.

Unfortunately, it is impossible to know, other than through the occasional literary reference like Mark Twain's, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, much about the historical context of use of family photographs, yet we can infer some similarity of function because of the similarities in form. The subjects of the next three chapters are firmly based in the present, but in them it is possible to see links with the past as described. The next chapter will deal with the roles involved in the creation, organization and maintenance of the collection. These roles, because of their flexibility, have helped to make the homogeneous continuation of family photograph collections possible.

1. Mark Twain, Life on the Mississippi (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1901), pp. 280-281.

2. Ralph Greenhill, Early Photography in Canada (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 10.

3. William F. Stapp, "Curatorial Preface," in Harold Francis Pfister, Facing the Light: Historic American Portrait Dageurreotypes Harold Francis Pfister, Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), p. 13.

4. Ibid., pp. 20-21.

5. Helmut Gernsheim and Alison Gernsheim, The History of Photography from the Camera Obscura to the Beginning of the Modern Era (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969), p.234.

6. Greenhill, Early Photography, p. 20.

7. Paul O'Neill, The Oldest City: The Story of St. John's Newfoundland, (Erin, Ont.: Press Porcepic, 1975), pp. 208-209.

8. Pfister, Facing the Light, p. 126.

9. Greenhill, Early Photography, pp. 25-27.

10. Gernsheim, The History of Photography, pp. 238-239.

11. See G. M. Trevelyan, English Social History: A Survey of Six Centuries Chaucer to Queen Victoria (New York: David McKay Co., [illegible]42), p. 571.

12. Stephen Halpern, in The Snapshot, Aperture Vol. #19, no.1, ed. Jonathan Green (New York, 1974), p. 65.

13. Greenhill, Early Photography, p. 37.

14. Colin Ford, An Early Victorian Album: The Photographic Masterpieces (1843 - 1847) of David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), p. 38.

15. Robert Taft, Photography and the American Scene (New York: MacMillan, 1938), p. 167.

16. Gernsheim, The History of Photography, pp. 293-294.

17. Taft, Photography and the American Scene, p. 140.

18. Directory for the towns of St. John's, Harbour Grace and Carbonear, Newfoundland, for 1885-1886: containing much useful information relating to the colony compiled and arranged by John Sharpe (St. John's, 1885).

19. McAlpine's St. John's directory containing a directory of citizens and business and street directories, also directories of citizens of Harbour Grace and Carbonear and classified business firms of Newfoundland (Halifax, N.S.: McAlpine Publishing Company, 1908-9).

20. St. John's Newfoundland directory 1913 containing an alphabetical list of all business firms and private citizens classified business directories and list of streets, also directories of Harbour Grace, Carbonear and Bell Island CB. compiled by the Newfoundland Directory Co. (St. John's: the company, 1913).

21. Ibid., pp. 153-159.

22. Gernsheim, The History of Photography, p. 234.

23. Michel Braive, The Photograph: A Social History, (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1966), p. 72.

24. Charles Coleman Sellars, "Coleman Sellars: Reflections by his grandson on the life of 'the most energetic amateur of his day,'" Image 7, no. 10 (December 1958), pp. 233-235.

25. See Colin Gordon, A Richer Dust: Echoes from an Edwardian Album (London: Elm Tree Books, 1978).

26. Paul Martin, Victorian Snapshots (London: Country Life, 1939), p. 16.

27. O'Neill, The Oldest City, pp. 209-211.

28. William Welling, Photography in America: The Formative Years, 1839-1900 (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1978), p. 291.

29. Ibid.

30. Alfred Steiglitz, "The Hand Camera - Its Present Importance," in Photographers on Photography, ed. Nathan Lyons (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966), p. 108.

31. Steven Halpern, in The Snapshot, pp. 66-67.

32. Beaumont Newhall, The History of Photography from 1839 to the present day (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1964), pp. 196-197.

33. N. Solbert, "George Eastman, Amateur," Image 11, no. 8 (1968), 51.

34. Beaumont Newhall, "How George Eastman Invented the First Kodak Camera, The step by step development of an Idea," Image 7, no. 3 (March 1958), 62.

35. Ibid.

36. O'Neill, The Oldest City, p. 211.

37. Eaton S. Lothrop Jr., "Personality Cameras," Image 20, no. 1 (March 1977), 22-27.

38. Edward Shorter, The Making of the Modern Family, (New York: Basic Books, 1975).

Chapter 5

Behavioural Roles Involved in Family Photograph Collection Creation and Use

My informant, Aly O'Brian, said: "Certainly photographs of faces don't mean anything unless you know whose faces they are." Most discussions of family photographs are subjective in orientation. Michel Braive quotes the photographer Edward Steichen that "One picture is worth ten million words -- provided that ten words accompany it."[1] This comment is probably more true of family photographs than of any other branch of photography, and sometimes even the words which accompany the photographs require interpretation for understanding. Knowing that a picture records Great-Aunt Bertha's wedding means very little to someone who is not interested in her life. The image is less significant when one is without an understanding of the subject, or someone to whom the subject was important. Yet Jerald Maddox' comment that the family photograph is "almost meaningless except to those who participated in the events recorded"[2] is not necessarily true. The meaning is different, certainly, to a participant. However, there are several other roles in the creation of a family photograph collection which are not involved with participation in the picture taking event, either in front of or behind the camera, most of which are reflected in and inform upon the content of the collection themselves. It is these roles -- photographer, subject, archivist, interpreter and audience -- which will be the focus of this chapter.

Erving Goffman has demonstrated the usefulness to an understanding of social phenomena of examining roles and role playing. He describes teams of performers, co-operating to present a given definition, an event.

These teams work both in the back region, where the performance is prepared, and in the front region, where it is presented.[3] The idea of roles and the interplay between front and back regions can be applied to family photography. In order to fulfill the minimal requirements of their roles, photographers must record on film the activity which is taking place, the subjects must allow themselves to be represented in the photographs, the archivist must arrange the presentation of photographs, the interpreters must give it some meaning, and the audience must observe it. The family photograph collection is one of the aspects of family life which most often occupies a front region. It is created within the family to be presented, sometimes simultaneously, both to the family itself and to outsiders. When taking photographs at a picnic, for instance, the family confirms to itself and to others watching its own particular identity as a cohesive group of individuals who enjoy doing things together. The photographs themselves are a record which can recall that sense of cohesiveness to members of the family, and they can be presented, since the family is in a controlled and favourable light, to outsiders. The act of creation of the family album (back region) is not sufficient to make it important, it becomes most significant in presentation (front region).

Richard Chalfen's "Introduction to the Study of Non-Professional Photography as a Visual Communication" presents a suggested theoretical method with which to approach family photography (his 'home-mode') as expressive behaviour, visual communication and social activity. He does not limit himself to the consideration of roles, or attempt to relate all material to them, but divides his scheme into events (planning, filming, editing, and exhibition) and components

(participant, setting, topic, message form and code).[4] My approach, to divide the material into roles, is perhaps a broader index, which will admit different aspects of each collection. It is also a deliberate attempt to concentrate on the behaviour necessary to the creation of family albums, and the individual's input into it.

Chalfen also suggests separating the photographs into the categories of vacation, holiday, special activities and local activities. These are too broad for some collections, and too narrow for others. It seems that each collection should suggest a partly unique set of division in order that it be fairly characterized, although common themes will be found. Each role will be discussed in turn, suggesting interrelationships between roles, narrative and content when necessary.

PHOTOGRAPHER

The photographer is often an anonymous presence whose style cannot be distinguished by his photographs, and most informants denied that their photographs were self-expressive.

> Mr. Cousens: I don't think there's any pattern to them really that you can say "Gee," you know, "Karsh took that, but Charlie Cousens took that." (laughs) Don't think that's possible. I think they're just run of the mill, that's the way I think about them.

Another realized that certain aspects of her shots were in fact self-expressive:

> P.G.: Do you think your, the photographs you take, express you; are sort of self-expressive photographs?
>
> Mrs. Cousens: Ah yes, I think they probably do. Because I always want to put in photographs something that's really appealing to me, and something that means a lot to me.

Family photographs, to Mrs. Cousens, are self-expressive in content, rather than in style. Any overall stylish expression by the family photographer is not a conscious decision, or a recognized phenomenon. Although as we will see below, the situation may call for an arrangement of the scene to be photographed, the above comments suggest that this is not thought of as style in photography.

The photographer's involvement with his subjects can be assumed by his inferred presence behind the camera in the family grouping being photographed which tells the viewer that he is a member of the family, a friend, or someone participating in similar activities. His choice of timing, framing and background may involve some unconscious choices, affecting who is in the picture as well as the incidental content.

At times the photographer's relationships with the subject can be inferred from the subject's reactions to being photographed, although the picture taking event also exerts pressures on the subject to act in particular ways. If for instance, there is a series of close-up portraits of one individual done by a photographer who usually takes portraits from a distance, one can infer something unique in the relationship between the photographer and his subject.

The photographer may be the same in most of the photographs in one collection. He could be the hobbyist, the self-proclaimed or acclaimed recorder, the head of the family, or a combination of these. Something of the role being chosen by the photographer will be reflected in the corpus of his work: the photo buff may take 'arty' shots and scenes, the head of the family may take formal portraits, and so on. However, even within a nuclear family, there is usually more than one photographer, if only to allow all family members to be recorded with a

camera which has no timed shutter. Even if there is only one photographer, he may be playing more than one in a series of roles as he photographs the family and its activities sometimes according to the different functions of the pictures and these roles will be reflected in how the picture is taken:

> Mrs. Cousens: A photograph that I would display, then I will arrange it, but not maybe look too arranged if possible. But other than that I like to take them just spontaneously, like to catch people in action and doing their thing. But if we wanted, now, like when the family were here at Christmas, we had a couple of pictures taken that we didn't want anybody moving or clowning around, we want them just to look happy, and we would arrange it.

Most family photographers centre the subject and place the horizon at a point which bisects the picture.

Manny Buchheit, a professional artist and photographer, finds this aspect of amateur photography somewhat disturbing:

> There's a tendency to centre your subject in that viewfinder. You see, you're given a little bright viewfinder, a bright square that shows your little picture, and you do use, tend to use it just as if it was an aiming device, and you centre your subject in that little rectangle and click your shutter. And it's even -- that whole idea has been furthered by people like Kodak who've just brought out an instant picture camera with a little brown bullseye in the centre that you change to various sizes to suit people's heads, the width of people's heads ... And it's really a bullseye in the centre of your viewfinder. So you tend to use exactly that. You tend to place things dead centre, you know? We tend to centre our subject. It's the way our eyes work, anyway.

The centrality, as well as being a reflection of the eye's view (and the eye's view can be trained by exposure to photographs, or different ways of seeing objects, to frame a view according to a camera lens) is a reflection of the subjective nature of the photograph.

The family photographer takes a picture of someone, rather than creating an image: the subject's location in the picture, and his importance to it, are both central. Because of this, we can assume in most cases that the individual centred in the photograph is the subject, and the most significant person in it. However, the subject need not be physically centred to be centrally important. Don Lane (a St. John's professional photographer) gives an example of this:

> There was a man last week who came in about a twenty inch by thirty inch photograph of the centre of St. John's, just because the house he grew up in, oh, forty years ago, was just barely, barely in the corner. You could just see on, even in the enlargement, a thirty inch enlargement, you could only see one sixteenth of an inch right in the edge of the print, of his house.

The subject of a photograph then, could change for different viewers. Each looks for something relating to his own life, but the photographer's significant centre is in the middle of the picture.

Professional photographers are represented in most family photography collections. School pictures of young relatives or other small pictures exchanged within the extended family or given to friends require little creativity from the professional and are quite uniform in style although they may be taken by different photographers. For such production line material, graduation photographs for instance, the photographer may have a mechanical, automatic series of comments made to the subject, as Lynn Burns (cameraman manager and photographer) has:

> First thing when you sit them down, it's just a matter of positioning them. You have to pose them; get them to look at you and then:

"Fine, OK. It's not that painful. Come on, look right here. No, don't bother looking at the camera," - cause the immediate instinct is -- you get them to look slightly out of the picture.

"Look right here. There you go, no, go ahead, you can laugh at me." And they look at you and go (grimaces), start to smile and you click. That's the first one. You change the position.

"Now, that wasn't too bad. Looking right here." (laughs) I really do have this rehearsed:

"OK. Look right here. Yeah, now just tip your head a slight bit towards the wall. That's it. OK. Right here. Now just one more. That's it, good got it." And you get, that's more of a serious one. For the third shot we'll use a hat. We'll give them the option, anyway, to wear the graduation hat. Given them their -- put the graduation hat on them and then back to the camera, refocus and,

"OK. There you are, in full academic garb. Your mother's going to love you for this. Now look right here." and bang away, you've got the picture. And you whip them out, and the whole process can take about five minutes.

This approach produces portraits which look essentially similar, since stance and expression are determined, or at least influenced, by the photographer. The image may be professional in quality but it is not likely to be particularly striking.

Clients having a professional portrait taken on an individual basis are looking for something quite different from their photographs. They seem to feel the need to express their individuality in more than just the image itself.

Don Lane: In the case of an individual portrait it might not be just the expression. It's probably there more of a mood, a pose, lighting, that kind of thing. With children, parents would look for cuteness and originality, playing and not necessarily a smile ....

> But with families, I think they're looking for a good arrangement, a pleasing, generally a pleasing straightforward portrait that can look good on their wall, and something they're not going to get tired of after a year. And therefore in family portraits you don't go to the extreme of having them too natural, too unposed. With children for example you can have them play around with the dogs or cats or each other or look up in the sky or whatever, and create a mood. With the family portrait you don't usually. It's fairly straightforward because you can't possibly get a mood of the same of everybody in the picture so you more or less go for a nice pleasant pose, reasonably formal, and trying to get the expression on everybody's faces.

Group shots are more studied than individual shots, but that elusive family expression must be captured.

The professional photographer is often called in to record the most significant rites of passage: graduation, weddings, etc. Because rites are important, they must be properly recorded, and because they are formal, the expertise of the professional is needed. Yet at least one photographer in St. John's, Don Lane, has specialized for his wedding business in taking a number of photographs at the reception, to supplement formal portraits and formal shots of the wedding itself. One important characteristic of these is their candid, snapshot style.

> Don Lane: At the reception we take pictures of everybody. Not just cakecutting, reception line, goodbye, but -- we do that, of course, do the reception line and what not -- but also we do every table, with every guest. No formal posing, just snap snap snap around the whole reception. And it's a great way to finish off the album because everybody that's at the wedding is there in the picture. And just about every customer says "My, that's a wonderful thing to have." Nobody gets an eight by ten print made of them, but it's just a great little thing to have, the small prints at the back of your album. Because it's not the wedding vows and the, not even the bridal portraits that we, that you look back on in four, five, eight, ten, twenty, thirty years in a wedding album. It's who was at the wedding and what's he like now and "Oh my, isn't he funny wearing those short pants", and that kind of thing. It's the people.

Even in professional photography, then, the subject makes the picture important and memorable and it is the informal material, for browsing through and discussing, which people find most interesting.

Another photographer commented that he often had family portrait business after funerals. This is a time when people from the extended family get together who usually see little of each other, but it also emphasizes the importance of having a family picture. This becomes a record of members of the family, who for whatever reason, are no longer part of the family group.

> Don Lane: When somebody dies the importance of the value of the portrait of a family would tend to hit home more. That's a problem, if you like, that plagues the business I'm in, is how do you sell future. You know, you're selling a family portrait which is, which is only valuable when somebody in it is not there any more. (laughs) And really can't sell that as "Somebody get your picture taken before you die." That's a bad kind of advertising.

Rarely, the pristine nature of the present will sell a family portrait:

> Don Lane: There was one last year, for example, a family. One of the little boys was three or four years old, was going in for, he had some sort of cancer and had the operation he was headed for would -- may -- remove all his hair. And so they wanted to get the portrait of the family done before the hair went. And as it happened, the hair <u>did</u> go. The operation went as planned, and the hair was lost. So they had that done. But that's that's sort of an exception to the rule. You don't find many like that.

The extended family is also together more often in the summer during holidays, and at Christmas. Not surprisingly, this is the busiest time of the year for the professional photographer, as families use this time to be recorded together.

The amateur may choose to photograph because of a need or desire to record things which are extrinsic to the family. He may feel others do not see these phenomena as he does, or that they are valuable for reasons other than an immediate importance to the family such as an historical record of ephemeral aspects of the environment.

> Mr. Cousens: They might end up in an archive somewhere, someday. I don't have any thoughts of that when I take them. It's primarily just a record .... I think I sort of follow my dad's footsteps in that way, because most of his pictures were taken, Hawker and Greeve, and their getting ready for the Transatlantic flight. And construction of the Newfoundland Hotel, and the Newfoundland Rail, the railway station, that sort of thing, you know, which is a record of St. John's.

The photographer whose work is included in the family collection may sometimes be a non-professional who is not a member of the family, with whom pictures are exchanged.

> Mr. Cousens: Occasionally, if we're out with friends, for instance, we went to Bonavista last year in a camper, spent three days, and they were taking pictures as well as the ones that we took. And there were some prints that I said, "Gee", you know, "That's nice." So they had prints taken off and given to us.

It is perhaps surprising, considering the great variation of photographers and points of view, that the style of most family photography is so easily identified. Much of the photographic style of amateurs, especially for portraits, is an attempt to emulate professional style, or at least those aspects of it which are considered important: expression and direction of the photograph, rather than background or lighting. Althoght it is never difficult to distinguish between a professional and an amateur portrait, even when questions of format (framing, or size and quality of print) are ignored, the connections between them are obvious. They tend to take complementary

roles, the professional specializing in the personal image and the significant rite, and the amateur in everyday life. Few amateur photographers would take a straight head and shoulders portrait; to most the background situation and entire body of the subject are important. The closing of personal space necessary for a close-up with a normal lens would be uncomfortably out of the ordinary, but the professional lens allows him to take close shots without getting close to the subject. The roles and viewpoints of the amateur and professional photographers reflect this specialization, which is in turn reflected in their photographs.

SUBJECT

Like the photographers, the subjects of family photographs have important and distinct roles to play. Although not necessarily directed to do so, people will pose for an amateur photographer in a characteristic fashion; groups or individuals stand stiffly, their attention directed at the camera.

> Manny Buchheit: I've noticed that in this province for sure, for certain, that even young children are programmed right into that pose. You know, like, Daddy says, "Listen, OK, I'll just take a picture now." But little Suzy and little Johnny get together and stand side by side, arms at the sides and look straight at the camera, erect like little soldiers.

The professional photographer uses various methods to keep the subject relaxed and to get him out of this picture taking mode and pose:

> Don Lane: I keep talking all the time and make jokes and poke fun. And, ah, generally, not only because it's nice to talk to the people but because it relaxes them. If I'm quiet and formal, they're bound to be quiet and formal, and they won't like the results.

Basically, the professional photographer uses this behavioral indicator to indicate his role, and their roles, to the subjects. This is very unlike an amateur family photographing session, and therefore the results are different.

The photographer may choose to rearrange people, perhaps to make the shot look more natural. This is the emic definition of posing: the arrangement of the subject done by the photographer, not by the subject. The stance taken in professional photographs, especially older ones, is seen as a kind of false representation.

> Aly O'Brian: Certainly if you went to the studio, quite plainly you would be, you were posed. Old people would put on quite a posture of dignity. You've seen many of them I'm sure. There was a lovely table, and maybe even, if you're studious, you're holding a book. Really wise, you know. And the lovely backdrop behind.

Note that group shots are felt to be unposed (as Aly O'Brian said, "Out in your garden, at a picnic, or something like that, people wouldn't pose.") although the stances taken indicate that they are anything but candid. Posing is considered unnatural behaviour whereas taking a "being photographed" stance is culturally expected, and therefore natural.

Posing is sometimes related to the particular stance taken.

> Mr. Cousens: My wife's mother ... her father was a photographer, and she posed for a lot of his pictures, and as soon as the camera came out, her head went over on one side, and her eyes rolled to heaven with that angelic expression of the 1800s, you know- the late 1800s.

The subject in this case poses herself in a way which her background suggests is correct. It is seen as posing by the photographer and therefore slightly deviant, because the convention is a somewhat different one from that which his background expects. The stance

taken by the subject must look natural at least in the present conception of what is natural in a snapshot, and the creation of this look is normally the duty of the subject, not the photographer. Posing by the photographer is associated with the past, and this regimented aspect of photography then:

> Mr. Cousens: I had a picture taken in scout uniform, and you had to stand in a certain way and look a certain way and put your head a certain way, and have your eyes looking in a certain direction. That's a little much to me. If I was taking a picture of my son in uniform today, I would let him stand normally and naturally and look where he liked, except at heaven you know, and take the picture.... A lot of the pictures that he (Mr. Cousens' father) has of the family were posed, and you can see that. I can remember pictures that he took when we lived on the south side, that's when I was only four, five years old if I was that age. And they, too, were posed. My brother and I, taken in a great Morris chair that was on the verandah of the house over there at that time. But I can remember him saying, "Now", you know, "you've got to sit so and so", and coming and putting my foot here and twisting that foot this way, that sort of thing. But I don't go for that myself. I would take pictures today in a much more natural position than he did.

Because the expected stances of the subjects in a family photograph are so conventional, irregularities may be very significant. Robert Akeret, a psychologist who uses family photographs in his practise to uncover the subtleties and complexities of his patients' relationships with others, works from the assumption that at least some family photographs are sufficient unposed to reveal such things, or even that the convention of family photography would allow these to be seen. His work, however, suffers in that he has neither defined the conventions, nor how to separate them from the idiosyncracies, and therefore some of his interpretations seem false. His studies, however, indicate the importance of content and of the subject's position in family photo-

graphy. Akeret rightly points out that family photographs have a great deal of emotional significance to members of the family, and evoke feelings of strong association with the family. They may aid in recollections of experiences or in the precision of these recollections, pinpoint times of change in appearance, and provide spiritual encouragement in the confirmation of family ties.[5]

Not all family photographs are portraits. Most of those photographs which have no people in them are familiar scenes or holiday shots. These, probably more than the portraits, are the escapist element of family photography. In looking over these photographs the viewer vicariously re-experiences the times recorded. For instance, one informant displayed two black and white enlargements on her wall which showed a road bordered by trees. She explained to me that this was how the road by her house had looked before the Avalon Mall was built. She specifically pointed to an anomaly at the edge of the photograph, which I would probably not have otherwise noticed: a pail suspended in mid-air which she said was held by one of her nephew's friends. I assumed that he had been cut off in the original picture, and that her reference was to her memory of the picture taking event. However, when I looked through her album, I recognized one of the snapshots as that from which the enlargement was made. In the snapshot, the nephew and his friend were a significant part of the picture, in the central left hand quarter of the photograph. In the enlargement, it was the road which was the centre of attention. The informant had removed the possible ambiguity from the photograph by having her nephew and his friend removed as much as possible without spoiling the new subject. I surmised that the scenic elements of the picture had become more

important, firstly because she had many pictures of her nephew already, and secondly because the heretofore familiar topography no longer existed. The snapshot had changed both function and content in its transition to an enlargement.

The connection of the scenes recorded with a past which was thought to be better than the present is part of its importance. Photographing the disappearance of previously familiar landmarks allows an association with those landmarks to continue:

> Mrs. Kelly: Was one right down where Coughlan College is today, that old house. Well, see it wasn't too far from where he (her husband, the photographer) was reared and this was what he liked, before it was torn down, to take it. And O'Dea's house there on Freshwater Road, that was after being burned. And then there was another one, Freshwater Road, my uncle's. Right where the Pop Shoppe is today. Took the camera and he going to work in the morning and bulldozer was right by the door, took the picture ... When he was coming out the house was gone. But he was glad he took it, see.

Pictures of scenes are probably more time and place specific than portraits in terms of the memories they call up. Portraits may recall memories of the individual at any time or place, but pictures of scenes tend to stay in that location.

Portraits in the collection need not be of family or friends. Ones of religious functionaries, members of the Royal Family, or any famous personalities with whom the family feels some connection may be included, as they were in the carte-de-visite albums of the past.

Family photograph subjects may be people or scenes, inanimate objects or animate ones, but in all cases their connection with the family is known and understood. The photographer places the subject in a closer personal relationship with the family by taking a picture of it.

The subject is then included in the family's material culture and is a possible topic for narrative as well. The subject's role is recognized as meaningful by the family. The photographer is taken for granted, the archivist dismissed, and the interpreter and audience not recognized, but the subject is commented upon and discussed in the normal use of a family photograph collection.

ARCHIVIST

Unlike the role of photographer and subject, the position of archivist is usually taken by only one individual in the family. In many cases this person is an older or retired member of the family, or one who is unmarried and/or female:

> P.G.: He (her husband) didn't bring a photo album of his own (when they were married)?
>
> Mrs. Kelly: No, cause he's got sisters down there (at his family home).

Both Mr. and Mrs. Kelly have always taken pictures, but only Mrs. Kelly arranges them in the album.

> Mrs. Kelly: I'd rather have him not (help with the albums), cause he confuses me. He could probably put them in, you know. But he do help me sometimes. If he's really in the mood. But not too much. I'd rather do it myself.

Interest in a family photograph collection is seen as an interest in the past, as well as in the family. The family photograph archivist is usually a family genealogist as well.

The family album is not necessarily the final product of a collection. I expected to find the difference between boxes of photographs and albums as that between an active and passive repertoire of song, that boxes would be filled with photographs not considered, for lack of

immediate relevance, suitable to be put into albums. Although this may sometimes be the case, the split between box and album is often a function of the number of albums owned (there may not presently be an album for the photographs to go into) or the ongoing nature of family album creation - pictures when they arrive may be put in boxes until the archivist has time to arrange them in the albums. One informant kept a picture in a safe place until he had an album to put it in:

> Mac Swackhammer: I've kept that in a record cover of - my sister gave me a record that Christmas that I got this photograph, and I kept it in the record, kept it for safekeeping until I ever got a photograph album. I didn't ever want to lose it.

Organization of the album could be based on expediency:

> Mac Swackhammer: ....Above where I work there's pictures of Cheryl (his wife) and where Cheryl works there are pictures of me. And they change every so often. New ones come and different things happen. And this was taken and it was stuck there for quite a while above where I work, and then later on, this picture of Cheryl, the one on the boat, came, and so this one was put in the album. Now new ones come up for where Cheryl is, and that one's gone into the album.

Pictures may be sorted and put in albums when they arrive from processing; or they may be created much after the pictures arrive.

> P.G.: When do you put the albums together?
>
> Mrs. Kelly: When I have nothing to do, whenever that's going to be. Could be Sunday afternoon. That's about all, I'd say Sunday afternoon, cause in the night-time we're always gone or there's something to do.

Something of the importance of family photographs can be seen from the fact that they were often kept in the family Bible:

> Greta Hussey: I spent I don't know how long looking through it, (the Bible) paper clippings, recitations, photographs, one leaf after the other. The Bible was gone with it. Not everybody had a photograph album, but everybody had a Bible, and this was where it was all poked.

The organization of the family collection is not always based entirely upon content, event association, chronology or temporal sequence, individual association, etc. Instead, the organization most often exists outside the content. In boxes, the organization is random, and partly recreated each time the collection is viewed, as pictures are replaced in different order. In the album the organization may be based upon emotional attachment (important photographs are put in first to facilitate preservation) or upon which photographs fit on the page together. Even when chronological order is used, other factors may come into play:

> Mr. Cousens: My dad died subsequently about six months after my mother, and my brother who was living with him, he had a bunch of pictures. And five or six years after they died, he decided that he'd clear his out. And so he gave me a bunch which should have been integrated into the ones that I already had, and so what happens is that you get them in chronological order and then you start again back there, and you've got another series in chronological order of the same period, where they should have been integrated.

There is very little selection of photographs to be included in a family collection. Shots may be out of focus, double exposure, head or feet of the subject cut off, but they are not discarded. A member of the family's stated dislike of one photograph, especially a picture of that person, can be effective:

> Mr. Cousens: I've taken pictures of my wife, for instance, and she said, "Gee, I don't like that." Well, OK, if she doesn't want it put in the slide tray, I'll say, "Well, OK, I'll get a better one," so I'll throw it out.

Duplicate shots may be given away, but are not usually thrown out. Even photographs which do not have any tangible or known family association, where the subject or individual cannot be identified, are kept. These are usually older pictures, and their significance is as objects,

as symbols of the past, rather than as icons of the family:

> Mr. Cousens: I think that the ones that you can't identify, I simply keep them because of the period in which they were taken, the costumes, the clothes, or anything about them that would relate to that particular era ....OK, the clothing is the same as the one you can identify, but I would still keep the one that I can't identify because of the period in which it was taken.
>
> Mrs. Kelly: Probably I would have them thrown out, said "There's no one around to tell me who they are today, and there's no point in keeping them," but (her husband) wouldn't part with them. And I can see his point in a way, because you're not going to see them again. They're not going to be taken by anybody today. And then, who around have any of these tintypes, you know. Not too many.

Because of this lack of selection, family photograph collections tend to be very large.

Family photographs are found in places other than albums and boxes. Often they are displayed more prominently, so that the visitor to the house, or its residents cannot help looking at them. Most often, in Newfoundland, photographs are found in the living room or front room. This emphasizes their public nature, in that the front room has traditionally been the room for visitors and outsiders, whereas the kitchen is used for entertaining members of the community. Like some aspects of photography, the front room is associated with celebratory occasions and family festivities. John Szwed points out that in Newfoundland it is used at Christmas, Easter, or for large gatherings:[6]

> Family heirloom dishes rest in a cupboard and the pictures of all near kin hang on the walls. The critical events of the family's past, the weddings, baptisms, confirmations, and first communions, are pictured here, and a family Bible records them .... This room, unlike the others has a strong time dimension. Yet, it is time of the scrapbook variety, and this room is opened only as a scrapbook is opened: when ties with the past are to be evoked.

The placement of family photographs in the front room emphasizes their correctness as a public social metaphor for the family and their presentation of the ideal view of family life. Usually the family members photographed are dressed up, and they can be arranged in an orderly fashion, controlled in a way that their subjects often are not in everyday life. Most of the family pictures displayed in the house are professional photographs. The exceptions may be last pictures of a now dead relative or friend, or pictures with some other extra significance. Although the front room may now be opening up more to the family and close community, and is becoming a living room in the North American sense, it is probably still significant as a more formal room than any other in the house.

Also significant is the placement of photographs within the room itself. Some may be hung, framed, upon the wall, others placed in stand-up frames on some object of furniture. One of the most popular places for family photographs is on the television set. Presumably, watching television is considered a pleasurable activity. The television set is one of the most common and regularly used forms of entertainment in the house. Family photographs within the peripheral vision of someone watching television may suggest to them a similar pleasant association with the photographs and their subjects. The television has been considered a kind of secular shrine to the family[7] on which is placed commemorative flowers, bronzed baby shoes and other baby items, "rare ornaments", diplomas, and scripture pieces and this is confirmed by the placement of photographs there. A detailed house inventory could suggest similar associations between family photographs and their locations in dining rooms, bedrooms, hallways, and libraries, and on

end tables, pianos, bookcases, mantlepieces, shelves, mirrors, cabinets and stereos.

One individual may play all roles at different times, or specialize. All of these roles, photographer, subject and archivist, involve some kind of interpretation of the collection or of the family. The archivist is an interpreter in that he chooses the organization, or disorganization, of the collection as a presentational quality and likewise presentation can be interpreted as much as content. The subject is an interpreter in that most shots are not candid: if he is aware of his picture being taken, the subject poses and is showing an interpretation of the picture-taking event. Either in the conventional straight-on, hands-at-the-sides snapshot pose, or in a studied attempt to be 'natural', aspects of self-presentation can be seen. The photographer is an interpreter when he chooses to frame in his viewfinder the particular aspects of family life seen in his photographs.

However, in the sense meant here, the interpreter's primary role is directed from the product of the first three roles to an audience. That audience may be the interpreter itself, since often the family photograph collection is viewed by one individual alone. In these circumstances, the distinction between audience and interpreter is very much blurred. Even when the interpreter is showing the collection to another person, and attempting to foster a certain impression, the audience considers the collection as a group of materials, objects which may speak for themselves. Because of the interrelationship between these two roles, and because the distinctions are only minimally separated in the informant's comments, the interpreter and audience will be considered together.

[redacted]PRETER/AUDIENCE

Each person looking at the collection is an interpreter. The variations between one interpreter's memories and experiences, and those of another, alter the meaning of a collection, so that each interpretation of it could be different. The interpreter may be describing the album to another person, who is also an interpreter, or may be looking at it on his own, so there can be differences in interpretation when the same person looks at the collection under different circumstances. One informant looking at her collection in the presence of an old friend whom she had not seen for twenty years, emphasized mutual connections and described the subjects involved and their relatives and friends who had been common acquaintances. When addressing me, she talked about the age of the pictures, or costumes. The role of the person to whom the album is being interpreted, then, is significant to the content of the interpretation.

The people to whom I talked were quite conscious of showing different pictures to different people. The individuals chosen had to have some personal connection with the subjects of the photographs, have expressed an interest or have some definite or stated reason for looking at them.

> Mr. Cousens: My wife's sister and her husband are coming in next week as a matter of fact, and I know that when they come they'll want to see pictures of the boys and their families, and our holiday last year, and that sort of thing, you know. So you'd show these. Now, a couple of years ago when the university houses around here were sold, neighbours moved in on both sides of us who had come from Montreal and they knew absolutely nothing about Newfoundland, and so we invited them in one evening with some other friends and put on a showing, if you like, of Newfoundland slides.

While showing the pictures there were definite standards of behaviour; one had to be sensitive to the audience's feelings. Slides were felt to be particularly audience oriented as opposed to albums which could be more private.

> Mr. Cousens: Periodically if I'm tired reading in the evening, I'll go into, take out one of the albums and just sort of go through it. But we don't set up the projector and screen and so forth to go through out slides unless there are folks in who want to see them. You know the way, "We got slides last week from Bonavista," "We'd love to see them," so you'd come in and go through this ritual of setting up the screen, setting up the projector table, and all the rest of it, and maybe three or four times a year, that would be about it. But I periodically will take out one of the old albums and go through them, especially the old ones, my dad's.

Technical problems were considered particularly annoying in other people's collections, and most noticeable in home movies:

> Mr. Cousens: With the family album, if you want to stop looking at it, you can lay it aside and if you smoke, sit back and have a cigarette, and close your eyes and dream. But, you know, if they've got movies on and they say "Just look at this now," you know, and you see something, and there's a dozen streaks down over it and a blat blat blat of light and you see a face for a fraction of a second and you say "Did you see Joe there," you know. Joe was on for probably a hundredth of a second and if your eyesight is quick enough you might pick him up.

The strongest sentiments expressed were in the area of interpretation, especially the question of what pictures were suitable for showing. The personal connection to the material is emphasized with an awareness that different circumstances would call for different photographs:

> Mac Swackhammer: Slides are a different thing, snaps too, you know. Cause you'd have slide shows if you want and people are going to come over and say well "Pictures of our vacation, far out. Come and take a look at these," click, click, click. Something like we did with Catherine and the pictures of Greece and what not. Catherine, Peter and Penny had their pictures and I had some, I had like five or six pictures of May processions,

> and my buddies next door, and I was part of the slides. And I showed six or seven pictures of Larry Malouin and Annie Burke, click, click, click. Which I think is much more interesting than silly pictures of nice old Greece, cause Greece is fine, but when you're sitting around having a bunch of beers with some people, you want a, friends, laughs, you want to have a good time, you don't want to study great photography.
>
> Mr. Cousens: I don't think there's anything can drive you up the wall faster than people getting involved in family photographs. So you sort of gauge your audience, that's what it amounts to.
>
> Manny Buchheit: I find myself that if I were to have slide shows, showing what happens with my family, that those people watching better be members of my family, otherwise they're going to be awfully tired and bored by the time it's finished. However, I feel the same way when I'm watching someone else's slides and I'm seeing, you know, their family going through their paces. It tends to be not your bag, really, to look at someone else's stuff that much.

People seemed to feel strongly that some photographs should not be shown, not because their content could be embarrassing or too private, but because they would be uninteresting to anyone outside of the family or close friends. Family photographs record friends, family, scenes or pets. They may be group or individual shots. Some may be associated with rites of passage such as birthdays or weddings, or with seasonal activities such as summer picnics, or Christmas gift opening. Others are associated merely with the presence of a camera and subject. Some professional and amateur shots are at the discretion of the photographer. Some photographs in family collections record interesting or unusual events external to the family, such as pictures of June snow, February crocuses, or a parade. Others record events that have significance primarily within the family or group of friends. Very few family albums have pictures taken deliberately of people who are mere acquaintances although others may intrude into a scene.

Very often scenic shots are characterized by a particular intensity of content: the photographer records a scene rather than an image. Amateur scenic photographs tend to be cluttered or busy, in comparison with the professional shot of a similar subject. Scene shots are felt to be less controllable, and therefore less controlled.

Family photographs derive meaning from the context in which they are found. They are icons of family members and symbolic of the family as a continuing unit with a past and with connections to the community. They are an ethnography, created by the family for presentation to others, but also for the confirmation of the family's personal identity.

> Mrs. Cousens: My mother's albums, I go back and I guess I talk about them. I talked about them to the boys, mother talked about hers to me. And when I look at them now, I can, I can almost feel these events that she enjoyed, although I didn't share them. I talk about them as if I did because she spoke. And I think the same way with me, you know. We look back on them now, and events that I've almost forgotten, people that I've almost forgotten, dig out an old album and I enjoy them all over again.

Some of the role players needed for the creation of the family photograph collection can be drawn from within the family. This is the norm for the photographer, archivist and interpreter. However, the subjects, and especially the audience, need not come from within the family. The photographer and subject's roles are fairly well defined; they must do particular things in clearly static forms. However, a great range of variation is available to the archivist, interpreter and audience, as will be exemplified in the following chapters. Thus, both the rigidity and flexibility of roles extend into the family and beyond it. The roles are not difficult to learn by example, and since most families have photograph collections, it seems likely that this is the way such roles are learned. The combination of learning by example

and experience, and the interplay between the family and outsiders seems to have allowed family photograph collections to retain their form through time. The next chapter will deal with one family collection as an example of the form of family photograph collections.

Footnotes

1. Michel Braive, The Photograph: A Social History (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1966), p. 349.

2. "Photography as Folk Art," in One Hundred Years of Photographic History: Essays in honour of Beaumont Newhall ed. Van Deren Coke (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1975), p. 105.

3. Erving Goffman, The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1959), p. 238.

4. Richard Chalfen, "Introduction to the Study of Non-Professional Photography as Visual Communicator" in Saying Cheese; Studies in Folklore and Visual Communication, Folklore Forum Bibliographic and Special Series 13 (1975), 19-26.

5. Robert Akeret, Photoanalysis: How To Interpret the Hidden Psychological Meaning of Personal and Public Photographs (New York: Peter B. Wyden, Inc., 1973), pp. 20-27.

6. John Szwed, Private Culture and Public Imagery: Interpersonal Relations in a Newfoundland Peasant Society (St. John's, Nfld.: Institute of Social and Economic Research, M.U.N., 1966), p. 19.

7. Conversation with Gerald Pocius, Winter 1979.

Chapter 6

General Description of the Cousens Collection

In this chapter, the collection of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Cousens, a somewhat typical one, not in its content but in the care which is taken to arrange it, will be described. Similar subjects are photographed as in the Kelly collection, to be discussed in the next chapter, but there is a different kind of elaboration. Although it is a record which communicates and entertains, and the style and subjects of the photographs in it are similar to most, the emphasis on the archivist's role makes it different. The separation and distinction made between all roles makes the collection highly individual, yet the same themes are echoed as in other approaches.

Mr. Charles Cousens was born on March 14, 1915, in St. John's. He left school at seventeen to take pre-engineering at Memorial College. After two years there he decided to leave and worked at the Bank of Nova Scotia in St. John's, Grand Bank and Carbonear for ten years, then became a civil servant for the Newfoundland Fisheries Board in St. John's, later absorbed by the Federal Fisheries Board at Confederation in 1949. He started in administration, then became a personnel administrator. He chose to retire in April 1975, holding the position of manager of the Newfoundland personnel office of Environment Canada.

Mrs. Elizabeth Cousens, nee Bartlett, was born in Boston on January 2, 1916:

> Mrs. Cousens: When I was born, my dad was overseas. He left mother expecting. And my aunt, my mother's aunt, was running a private nursing home in Boston, and mother went there to visit. Actually, she had an idea, I think that --- and she tried to join up here -- she thought it would be a great idea to get overseas, thinking if she was a V.A.D. she would meet

> up with Dad, you know, that coincidence would come about. But then she decided that she'd go to Aunt Annie's because it was a nursing home. She thought, well, after the baby was born, maybe she'd leave me with Aunt Annie and then she could get a chance to go overseas. I think I spoiled that for her, because after I was born she had a baby she couldn't leave. So we came back here to St. John's when I was about two months old.

She was seventeen when she left school, and then did a full secretarial commercial course. She was a secretary in the Department of Home Affairs in the government of Newfoundland, working for the secretary of one of the commissioners of government. She married Mr. Cousens on November 10, 1943, left her job, and became a homemaker and mother to two children, Des (born November 5, 1944) and Dean (born December 29, 1945). Mr. and Mrs. Cousens now live in St. John's.

The Cousens home is full of pictures and images, and of antiques as well, part of their interest in the past. There are photographs in the living room, one of which was a retirement present from Mr. Cousens' office, a colour enlargement of a romanticized view of a fisherman pulling in his net. This had been given at Mrs. Cousens' suggestion when she was asked what her husband might like. She was very embarrassed when she found out that it had taken considerable effort to secure permission to copy it, since the photograph, from the cover of an Environment Canada publication, was copyrighted. There are two small professional portraits, in stand up frames on side tables in the living room, a school picture of their grandchild, and one of a daughter-in-law:

> Mr. Cousens: Des's wife, in Halifax, that was her graduation picture, and when it was done, that was taken in 1969, and it turned green. So the photographer redid them and this one came to us just a little while ago. But we're looking for a frame just a little bit larger so there'll be a margin around it, you know.

These pictures are both recent arrivals to the house. They are incidental to the decoration and have nothing of the permanent look of the huge oil portrait on the wall of the living room, also a family image, of Mr. Cousens' grandmother as a young woman, or of Mrs. Cousens' and her mother's paintings, also used to decorate the house. In the Cousens' bedroom there is a professional portrait of Mrs. Cousens, taken in the 1930s. There are also photographs in Mr. Cousens' den; enlargements of his father's photographs of historical scenes and events, and an engraving done from a photograph of relatives:

> Mr. Cousens: The picture in the den (is) of my mother and her sister and two brothers. I have a couple in there of the old Newfie Bullet, going up through Bowring Park, and one of the C.N. ship Glencoe, coast boat. But that pair was given me by Dean, my son. Another one of Baie de Verte, another taken from the headland there, looking at all the boats in the harbour. And that again, simply because it's Newfoundlandia.

This is Mr. Cousens' work area, and many of his albums are kept in a cabinet there.

Albums of photographs are found both in Mr. Cousens' study, and in the closet of the front hallway. Most of the albums in the study contain pictures taken by Mr. Cousens' father, an amateur photographer in the early twentieth century, who took pictures of his family, important events, and of his cooperage business on the South Side of St. John's. Those in the closet are pictures taken by Mr. and Mrs. Cousens themselves, also of family, historical events in Newfoundland and business. There are twenty-five to thirty albums (Mr. Cousen's estimate), arranged chronologically by subject. There are 'historical' albums, on significant events in Newfoundland history, 'Newfoundlandia' albums, on events and places that are distinctive, or unique to Newfoundland, a series on

the changes in St. John's, begun about eight or ten years ago, and 'family' albums, separate ones on the families of each of Mr. Cousens' parents, of his nuclear family, and an album on each of their sons. Mr. Cousens estimated that seventy percent of his photographs are of the family, but lately, since his sons have moved away, he has concentrated more upon the other subjects.

This chronological/subject sequence is partly distorted because Mr. Cousens received from his brother a collection of his father's photographs, after his albums had been completed:

> Mr. Cousens: So what happens is that you get them in chronological order and then you start back there, and you've got another series in chronological order of the same period, where they should have been integrated. But he was not aware, obviously, or he didn't want to part with the ones that he had, and so instead of having them set up the way I'd like to have them, I couldn't go back then and tear them all out because it would mean an awful mess, so what I've really got is two series, you know, from 1895 up to 1925, something like that, and then another series, from 1900 up to 1929, you know, when they should have been all together.

Mr. Cousens carefully labels and dates the events, as soon as the photographs come back from processing. However, I did find one unlabelled picture. When I questioned him about this, he said that it was obvious to the family, to whom the albums are directed, who it was; the son in Halifax, with an example of his hobby, a reconditioned old car.

There is a distinction to Mr. Cousens between the pictures of historical events, which are of more general interest:

> Mr. Cousens: When his (a neighbour's) parents were visiting last year, they were at a loose end much of their time, and I said 'Look. Take the albums over, go through them.' So after they went back, David kept them for quite a while, and when his friends would come in, they would apparently go through them, according to what I've learned from him since.

and the family photographs which are interesting only to family and friends:

> Mr. Cousens: I think the pictures of the family are solely for family record. Now when I said that some of them might end up in the archives, I was thinking, for instance of pictures of St. John's or of Newfoundlandia, before and after, that sort of thing. The pictures of Hawker and Greeve, Alcock and Brown, the C5, the flying boats at Trepassey, the Italian flying boat when they were here in Conception Bay, these were pictures taken by my dad, and while they're all identified (to be understandable to anyone), I think Des might be interested. But there will come a day, perhaps, depending on whether he has family who might be interested, he might say, 'O.K. I'll give them to the archives.'

Mr. Cousens is very proud of the historical pictures, and does historical record photographing, continuing his father's tradition:

> Mr. Cousens: If I happen to see anything in council notes, that's going to involve any kind of a reconstruction, you know, like the parkway out here, I think I mentioned that one to you. I wasn't aware that they were tearing down the old naval dockyard buildings until I saw an item in the paper that they had been just about removed. But I had pictures of that area on the other side of the street, and up to where the naval dockyard buildings are, because Hickman's building was supposed to have been torn down, and Steers on the corner of the Cove, down there, where Simpsons-Sears used to be. So I've got that area covered. Also from the naval dockyard buildings west up to the railway station, before they started the arterial overpasses and that sort of thing. Then I went up on New Gower Street and took pictures across the long bridge before the arterial overpass was put in.

These are not necessarily landmarks with personal significance, although they are ostensibly directed at Mr. Cousens' son:

> Mr. Cousens: Well, in twenty or thirty years' time, he might be glad to go back and look at the before and after in St. John's where he grew up.

They take on personal significance as time passes, as people move away, and as the total landscape becomes permanently altered.

These photographs are distinguishable from the family photographs because they are done in black and white film:

> Mr. Cousens: A friend of the family tried to get me interested in colour, and at that time I switched to 35mm colour slides using Ansco film. Now I find that these pictures have faded, so if I want to take anything of a lasting nature, I usually go black and white.

The family photographs, then, are understood to be less permanent than these, and no attempt is make to make them more so, perhaps because the are not considered important, as these are. There are a few exceptions to the rule of permanent black and white pictures: the intervening slides, and the occasional mistake when the wrong film was loaded or the wrong camera brought. Mr. Cousens generally uses a 2¼ Yashica camera for the historical pictures, and a 35mm Practica for the slides and other prints.

Mr. Cousens has 1500 to 2500 slides (his estimate), both in trays and in circular drums. On slide film he has recorded family and personal events, from professional conferences in Ottawa to gatherings at home. These are also organized:

> Mr. Cousens: I went through my slides about two or three years ago, and I didn't like the way I had them arranged, so I took them all out and made new indexes for the back of each box and each slide tray, and started from scratch. And I did trays of the family, trays of Newfoundlandia, trays for St. John's, trays for events, and that sort of thing. So that now instead of having a couple of pictures of the boys and then a fire down Water Street, you know, as it appeared chronologically. They're still chronological, but they're separated. At that time, I threw out quite a lot, some that had faded. This was the Ansco film that I had used originally. They fade more than the Kodak. But it was an editing job, really, at that time.

Slides are not functionally separated from prints as far as the photographing event is concerned. However, slides are meant for public

display more than the prints in albums.

In addition to slides and prints, Mr. Cousens keeps his negatives and has them indexed for retrieval. His 2¼ negatives are organized as follows:

> Mr. Cousens: I have two file drawers like this. This one became filled out so I got a second one. And the headings are set out like that: accidents, animals and pets, aviation in Newfoundland, bank fishery, Betty alone (that's my wife), Betty and myself, cars and cycles, children, Clayton House, damage fire and flood, then Dean, and pictures pertaining to him (in which he was not the principal subject, but related to his birthday parties and things like that) and then Desmond, and pertaining to Desmond, family, couples in groups, mixed groups, moonlight, parades and celebrations, St. John's, and streets, buildings, scenery, Bowring Park, scouts, self alone, shipping general, sports, Sudbury Street (that's our home), sundry, survey camp at Brigus 1933 (that's when I was at the university), water scenery. Now these are the forty headings ... so that the negatives are all in order and more or less chronological, the old ones at the back and the newer ones in the front.

35mm negatives, with the exception of a few sent back in strips of twenty, which are in their original containers, are labelled numerically as they arrived and kept in a paper notebook in plastic envelopes, numbered and identified chronologically. These negatives are the only photographic artifacts not indexed or organized by subject.

Mr. Cousens' albums seem to be arranged internally so as to be self-explanatory. They not only give names and dates, but explain the relationship of the individual in the photograph to the family. For example, a picture of a minister is identified as "Rev. Cogan who married Dad and Mother 1905", and another "Duke of Connaught presents First Aid Certificates -- shaking hands with Charlie Hunt -- later prominent lawyer in St. John's". (See Plate One) Newspaper clippings and family letters are included in the album to further explain the photographs. Although the albums are directed primarily at people in


Duke of Connaught presents First Aid Certificates -
medal being won by Charlie Hunt - later lieutenant
lawyer in St.John's.
Charlie Hunt - first medal.
NFLD 1ST REGIMENT CAMP.

Plate One

the family, there seem to be few purely esoteric comments which could be understood only by them.

The photographs are symmetrically arranged on the pages and the pages are viewed in one of two positions. Each page is viewed from one position only, with the spine above, or with the spine on the left hand side. Most pictures are taken with the long axis horizontal, and the maximum number are put on each page, so most pages are viewed with spine above However, even sets of smaller pictures which could have been arranged otherwise are oriented thus. The pages are not turned as if in reading a book, but from bottom to top. Even numbers of pictures on the page are favoured, especially groups of four. This is usually the maximum number which can be fitted on a page. Since it is possible to view these kinds of albums as books, and most albums I have seen are arranged thus, it seems that Mr. Cousens' arrangements could be a deliberate attempt to bring the albums out of a book mode, and into another medium of communication more suited to the pictorial mode.

Since the photographs have already been organized by Mr. Cousens according to subject and date, with the exception of one pot pourri album, it would seem worthwhile to discuss the collection by photographer, especially since distinct and significant style differences can be seen.

The oldest photographs are professional portraits: cartes-de-visite and cabinet photographs, but they are almost all of family. (See for example Plate Two.) No stories seem to be associated with the individuals involved, but there is a story about how these photographs were used to prove Mr. Cousens' father's lineage, so that he could get his inheritance from the estate of his grandfather.

Plate Two

Let's go back. My grandfather came out from England sometime in the late 1800s. He was a waiter or a steward on a ship and when he came out to St. John's, he decided he would stay, and he went to work in the Atlantic hotel which was on Water Street, west of where the present War Memorial is. And he was either a chef or a cook or chief steward, something like that, I don't know. It was in that area of the kitchen anyway. He was a Clayton, and he, when he decided to stay, he married. A few years after he was married his wife died, and he married her sister. So that my dad was a child by the first wife, and his aunt became his stepmother, right? A few years after that, my grandfather died and left the stepmother with families from both wives. It was at that time that my dad was supposedly adopted by Nicholas Cousens who was a friend of the Claytons. And he went to live with him on the South Side, got into the business with him, the mercantile cooperage, finally took it over and ran it, until the business phased out in 1932 when the commission of government allowed second hand steel barrels to be used for the fishery for the oil for the seal fishery and that killed the cooperage trade in Newfoundland. But sometime around 1928 or '29 a notice appeared in the Evening Telegram, asking for friends of John Joseph Clayton of West Bromwich, to notify a firm of Moody and Wooley, lawyers, Barristers and Solicitors, in London. Somebody brought it to Dad's attention and he wrote them. And they were looking for relatives of John Joseph Clayton. So dad said that he was apparently related through his father. And then he had to provide proof, so he had pictures of his father and of the brothers and sisters and of their offspring. He had a sister living here who was married, she was married to a farmer in Mount Pearl and she had some pictures that had been passed down to her by her father. In other words, the father divided the pictures between the two. And in correspondence, I have all the correspondence inside as a matter of fact, in a scrapbook, from the very beginning when the notice appeared in the first letter that he wrote to Moody and Wooley and a series of letters back and forth over the next four or five years. He had to prove his identity. And this was where he set up the pictures of the family, as I mentioned to you, little tiny prints. They're about 3, 2 and a half, 3 inches by maybe one and a quarter, one and a half, something like that (cartes-de-visite). And he sent these to Moody and Wooley, and they in turn had them verified by the family. He had affidavits from the court, judges of the court, from police officers, from justices of the peace, from clergymen certifying that he was actually E.G. Clayton, Cousens in brackets. And eventually when the identification was complete, he and his sister shared in part of the estate of his grandfather.

There are almost no other professional portraits in the collection of the Cousens' nuclear family, except for work related photographs, and these are far outnumbered by the amateur pictures.

Another photographer in the collection is Mr. Cousens' father, Bert. He took up photography as a teenager in the mid-1890s. Perhaps coincidentally this happened shortly after he lost the sight of one eye in an accident at his father's mercantile cooperage, where he was "learning the business from the bottom up". He bought his equipment from catalogues, and did his own processing until Tooton's opened a Kodak outlet in St. John's when he had developing and printing done professionally.

It is obvious that he attempted to make his pictures as polished and self-expressive as possible. The people he photographed are posed and well integrated into the background in a highly composed fashion. They are never candid shots of people in action, but always portraits of individuals or of groups, with an attempt to capture the sentiment of the occasion. Even in his pictures of a picnic (See Plate Three), the stillness of the subjects is almost alarming. These are not people caught in the midst of a continuing summer's day, but rather, they are the arrangements of the photographer.

Bert Cousens also photographed buildings, both interior and exterior, and scenes, such as a bush covered with snow, but in his scenes, he apparently did not see conventions of composition to emulate. These pictures are much more snapshot-like in style, less well organized, with distortion of lines from lens angling, ambiguity, (in one photograph (See Plate Four) a small bush in front of the house completely dwarfs it because of the angle at which it was taken), etc.

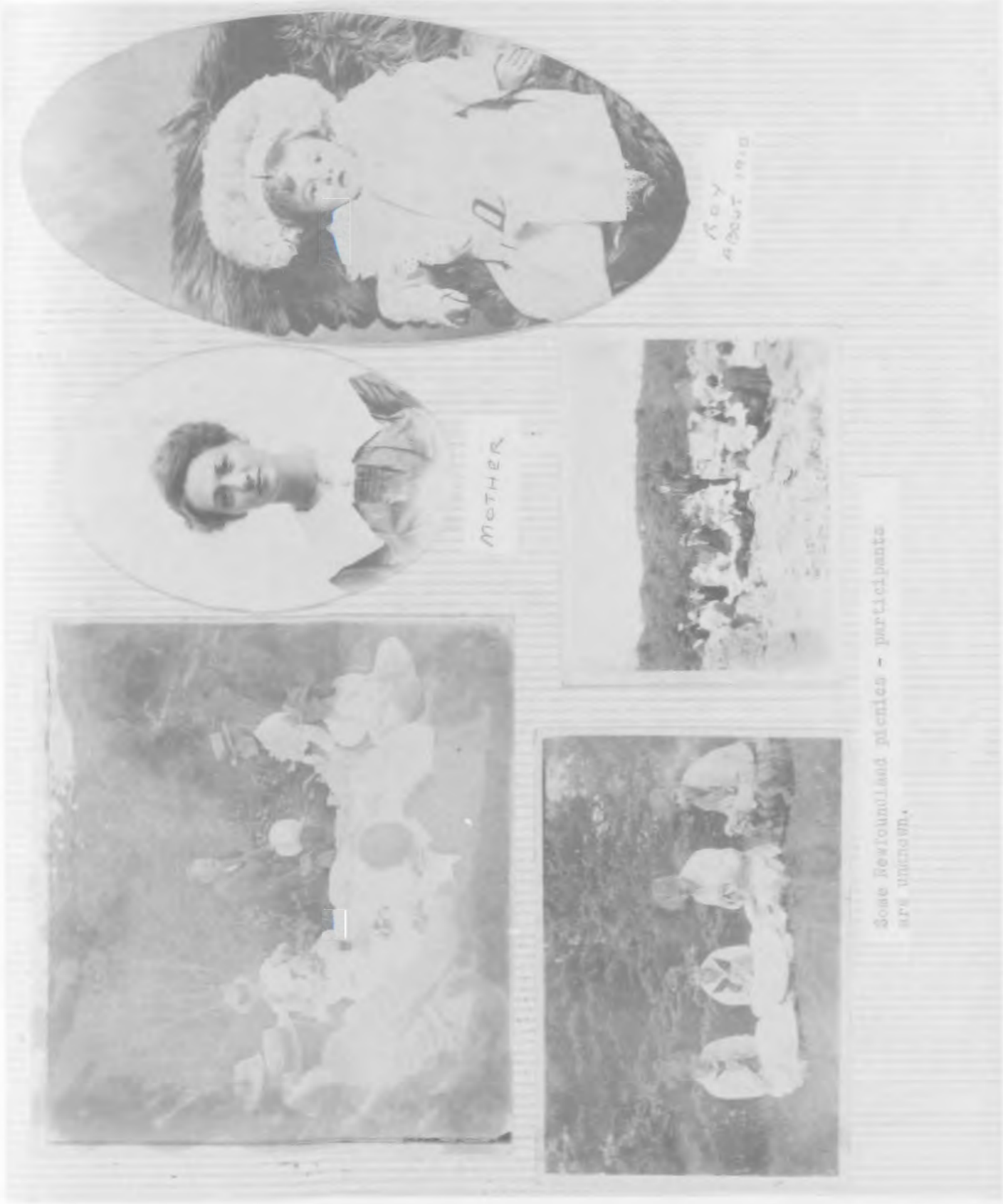
MOTHER
Some Newfoundland picnics - participants are unknown.

Plate Three

Plate Four

His historical event pictures are much more informal than the portraits, and perhaps because most of them include people, they are less awkward than the building and scene pictures. In these he is portraying people in formal situations, where their behaviour is more stereotyped, and therefore he could capture the appropriate moment easily, since it would be predictable.

Certains aspects of photography are divided between Mr. and Mrs. Cousens. Mr. Cousens is responsible for archival duties, and is photographer for 'record' shots of the family and of the historical material. Mrs. Cousens' position is also well defined, at least from her husband's point of view. Although she takes pictures of the family as well, she is the artistic one:

> Mr. Cousens: These are some of Betty's in the winter, winter scenes, and you can see ... where she had an eye for that sort of thing, that I don't have. The group, O.K., I can take a picture of a group, but when it comes to an attractive piece of scenery, she points it out to me. I'll see it, and I'll say 'Gee, that's nice', and I'll take a picture of it.

Mr. Cousens took a few self consciously image oriented shots when he first took up photography:

> Mr. Cousens: I'd take moonlight shots, moonlight on the water, close up of flowers with a drop, raindrop on a petal, you know, that sort of thing. A lot in Bowring Park, up through the paths when you'd get the sun shining through, making patterns on the pathways, that sort of thing.

He may take a shot of this type now when his wife draws his attention to it, but recently, this has become his wife's milieu. She uses a camera which Mr. Cousens originally bought to keep in the car "just in case something comes up" and which she took over a few years ago for her own use. She takes colour slides and prints, leaving the

black and white to Mr. Cousens, and using only the Miranda automatic. She had not used lenses, filters, or any other paraphernalia. Although Mr. Cousens said that his wife had only recently taken up photography, it became obvious that he was using the word in a special sense. As Mrs. Cousens explained:

> Mrs. Cousens: Before I used to use a little box camera. You know, the ordinary little camera, all these, you know. And it wasn't until I got this camera that I could see what to do with a camera, that I got interested in it.

She told me that she had taken 'snapshots', (but not 'photographs') before she got the Miranda.

When I asked Mrs. Cousens what she photographed, she said:

> Mrs. Cousens: I take them haphazardly. I, it's more events, I think, that influence me, you know. Well, if we're out walking, I always take my camera. Other than that, I record special events, or, you know, any happenings around town that would be of interest. I like to get out and photograph it. I don't just go out to take pictures. I'm not that involved with it, you know. Just enjoy it.
>
> That's it really, I mean. I don't think I've taken any pictures that are worthy of displaying as a work of art or anything like that you know. I wouldn't show them for that reason. Some have pleased me and then when I, oh I've been glad to show them to close friends and I'd say look at this lovely shot I got, you know? But I don't show them to anybody other than people who know me well.

Either she is being modest, or Mrs. Cousens sees her role somewhat differently than her husband does:

> Mr. Cousens: She's had some excellent results. She paints, incidentally, and does pastels and she does drawing. And she's got an artist's eye for a scene, composition that I don't seem to be able to get. I can get into candid shots, and to get into pictures for record purposes, but I don't have the artistic eye that she does, for a lot of the pictures that she'd take. They're quite good.

> We certainly would be taking pictures on vacation, not only of the places we visit. And again, as I said, if my wife is taking them it would be something that would catch her eye from composition point of view.
>
> My wife has set up actual still lifes, you know, with a candle holder and the flower, and something else, and she will photograph that. Because, again, as I say, with her background in painting and drawing, she can compose that sort of thing and get something out of it.

Mrs. Cousens undoubtedly sees her husband as the family expert on photography and will not encroach upon his domain. She enjoys looking through the albums, but otherwise sees photography as a hobby:

> Mrs. Cousens: I've been very involved with other crafts, and I think that (photography) is the next thing that I'll take up now. Get a taste of it.

Mr. Cousens certainly spends much more time and effort upon photography than she does.

Although it is fairly easy to distinguish the professional photographs from those of Bert Cousens, and his from his son and daughter-in-law's , it is difficult to tell which photographs in Mr. Cousens's albums are by him, and which are by his wife. It is, however, safe to assume that most of them are his. All except the family pictures are known to be by him and few family pictures show him. Also, his greater interest and specialization in photography must be reflected in the collection.

Mr. Cousens admits to being less concerned with composition than subject:

> Mr. Cousens: If I have a picture, for instance, of Water Street which shows definition of the buildings, with names of the firms and that sort of thing, that's what I'm looking for, and so can be satisfactory. But I wouldn't want to have one like that with a telephone pole or a wire pole in

> in the middle of a doorway, blocking it out, you know. That I think is unforgiveable. You should either get up on the pole and take it or do something like that, if it can spoil. I think composition is important, but I think that the, that focal point of interest in the picture is important, too.

However, in contrast to his father's, his photographs of objects are usually fairly well constructed, perhaps, in fact, because he is concerned with record rather than with the creation of an image. His camera lenses allow him to correct distortion or to eliminate unnecessary foreground and background elements, but the uncluttered look shows that he must be aware of these elements and is consciously ridding the photographs of them.

Most of his pictures of people are informal and candid. It is interesting to compare his picnic series "July 1969", with that of his father. Mr. Cousens commented: "I would take pictures today in a much more natural position than he did." Because he is not carefully posing his subjects, he can take more pictures; he may not be unobtrusive, but he is not as disturbing to the people he photographs as a meticulous photographer would be. Mr. Cousens takes multiple shots of a single scene, and these are not edited; all are placed in the album. Even minor events, such as backyard barbeques, are extensively documented. No particularly auspicious occasion is shown in most of the family albums although the sons' albums, naturally, have many pictures of their weddings. Most are records of day-to-day existence. The family album photographs are highly repetitious which makes them more esoteric. Basically, people stand around in various stances, doing relatively unexciting, everyday things. There is little compositional interest, and almost no narrative to engage the observer.

Mr. Cousens is a good storyteller, as I found when I asked him questions about the family or his life. He was willing to go through one album with me, but after two narratives, one about a series of holiday pictures, and one about some ex-neighbours, he confined his speech to identifying the pictures:

> Mr. Cousens: This was taken at the Hawk Hills, out at the back of Holyrood. This is the Trans-Canada Highway. Des and his wife and myself went, strolled up over the hills that day. This is the Found family, a reunion at their home. (etc.)

or to making comments:

> Mr. Cousens: That was one of Betty. See what I'm taking, with the shadows with the flash, see the outline on that, the outline on her head. You see the black outline, right around, look, where she was just framed on the wall.

Either his family photographs are self-explanatory, and narrative is inappropriate, or they are meant primarily for the family, and thus the narratives are not told to me as an outsider, or both.

A few photographs, exceptions to the rule that pictures of people be candid, are very formal poses. The series "Family-January 1967" (See Plate Five) are posed in front of a curtain, perhaps as an attempt to avoid a cluttered background. However, the 'studio' look is spoiled by the curtain rail at the top, and by the busy foreground , the coffee table covered with various objects, which also cuts off at mid-calf what is otherwise a full length view of the people. Mr. Cousens would rather not pose people, partly because of his own dislike of the results:

> Mr. Cousens: I might make sure, for instance, if I was taking a group, that if there was one tall person, they were in the centre and it tapered a little or tapered to one side, but beyond that, they're not posed ... I don't like the posed, stilted pictures.

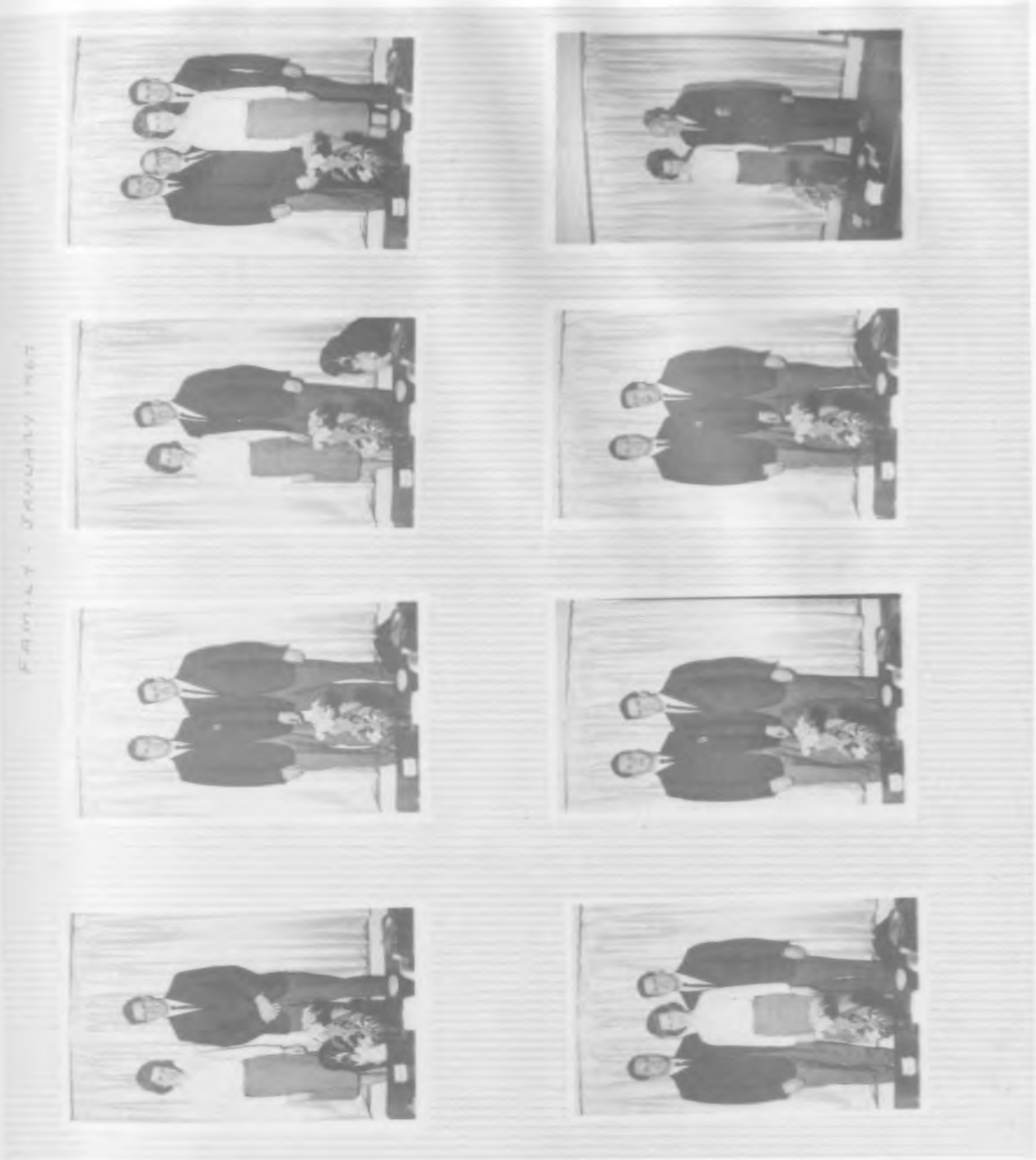

Plate Five

His posed pictures show a haste and lack of patience indicated in this discussion of the problems involved:

> Mr. Cousens: I used to get all the floodlights, but then, of course, you're confined because you're taking them all from the same angle, you know. You got to have the flood light here and you got to judge the distance from the lamp to the subject, and from the subject to the camera, and the restrictions are just fantastic. There's no way, for instance, that you could go around the other side of the room and take the picture from the other angle, because you're looking into your floods. Either that or you take them and carry them, you know, these great massive things. They were an absolute mess.

Mr. Cousens used to take what he called 'press' photography: fires, disasters, etc., but says:

> Mr. Cousens: I haven't done any of that, press photography, I call it, recently. It's only once in a while I get involved. I'd hear of a fire and I'd say, "Gee, I'd go down tomorrow and take pictures of the ruins", you know. I guess I'm getting old.

These kinds of pictures are similar to the historical and Newfoundlandia shots; an attempt to capture the fleeting and the exciting and to turn it into something as personal as a family photography by getting the image and manipulating it. The Cousens are aware of having lived through exciting times in Newfoundland history. Our discussions of politics led to reminiscences of commissions of government, responsible government, rioting and Confederation. Photographing static aspects of this history is a proof of connections with the history in general.

Although Mr. Cousens does not develop his own photographs (his father did, and so did he for a short time when he first took up photography), his array of photographing paraphernalia, lenses, filters,

tripod, flashes, and developing equipment indicates that he is very much a photograph enthusiast hobbyist. He is recognized as such by friends and acquaintances, one indication of which is that he was given an electronic Rollei flash and 300mm telephoto lens as a retirement present.

Despite this, he is almost entirely self taught, or has learned photographic techniques from his father. He has a library of books on photography and several camera manuals. He once subscribed to Modern Photography and Popular Photography, but found them too technicall, oriented toward particularly expensive equipment and advertising. In 1967 he attended the Nikon School of Photography, a one-day promotional course on all aspects of photography, held at the Holiday Inn in St. John's.

There is an interesting conflict in Mr. Cousens between the meticulous -- every photograph is dated and numbered as soon as it comes back from processing -- and the artistic -- he is aware of, but finds difficult to control, the visual aspect of his photographs. Mr. Cousens comes from an artistic and musical family; his father was, of course, an amateur photographer, and his mother a musician. He once commented, "I think if I had a choice, I'd like to have been a professional musician of some sort." His mother seems to have had an intense dislike of photographs and having her picture taken.

Mr. Cousens attributes to his mother the role of archivist of his father's photographs, although her enthusiasm for it was not as great as his; most of his father's photographs were left in the envelopes as they came from Kodak. Neither of his parents valued the photographs as he does, and his mother once went through the albums

and cut out her own face from all the pictures. Mr. Cousens own involvement in photography is thus a departure from that of his parents.

Photography is an outlet for the organizing aspect of his personality. The fact that he separates the family photographs from the others implies a kind of division in his world view between the proximate and the distant. Mr. Cousens brings the distant closer by photographing and manipulating it, but remains partly aloof from the proximate by doing the same things to it. Mr. Cousens is very conscious of the ordering of things, and dislikes the disturbance of this order:

> Mr. Cousens: You get a group and you might try to get them in a good frame of mind, you know, so that nobody's scowling or sticking out their tongues or something. You get these idiots, you know, they're in a group, and somebody puts their fingers behind their head like this is, with the two fingers. I could punch them. They did that one time in one of the official pictures we were having taken for a, at a conference in Ottawa. And one of the nitwits standing next to one of the guys put his hand around, put the fingers up over his head, like that, you know. Completely spoiled the picture, and of course when it came out, and he thought it was a great joke. I can see time for humour in photography, but not at a time like that, you know, that will go down in history. We thought something of ourselves.
>
> P.G.: Well, that can always get painted out anyway.
>
> Mr. Cousens: I know, but it's just the attitude of the individual, you know.

This sense of order is very much reflected in the collection.

There are three albums in the family collection which are considered the domain of Mrs. Cousens. Two were given to her by her mother shortly before she died:

> Mrs. Cousens: My mother gave them to me because I, she wanted me to have them because I'm the one member of the family who shared her interest and love of the old photographs. I have many others

> that, after my parents died they were, there was a stack of photographs and we divided them. Each member of the family took, just drew from them really, and took some of the photographs. But these two, my mother gave to me, before she died.

One is her mother's snapshot album a series of candid pictures of friends and activities from Mrs. Bartlett's youth, of which Mrs. Cousens said, "I can't really tell you much about them because most of them were her own little photographs." The other is an album of cabinet photographs of Mrs. Bartlett's family and various unidentified friends. Most of the pictures were done by Lyon and Vey, one of the studios in St. John's in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Mrs. Bartlett's adoptive parents were the Lyons of Lyon and Vey:

> My mother's father was Captain Joseph Chase, and he came from Weston-Super-Mare in England, near Plymouth. And he was, had his own vessel and he would come out here with, um, I don't know what. He would be bringing salt or whatever he was bringing, and he would go back with fish from Newfoundland. And one of the places that he called all the time would be Aquaforte on the Southern Shore. And when they, when he was in port he stayed at the home of Captain Washington Windsor, who was my great grandfather. My grandfather -- my mother's -- no, my mother's, he's my great grandfather. My mother's grandfather. His daught Elizabeth Windsor, she married -- he married Elizabeth Windsor, Captain Washington Windsor's daugher, and brought her to St. John's. And mother was, my aunt was born to them. She was about four years old when my mother was born. And mother was only a baby when Grandmother died. Captain Chase - my grandfather had nobody belonging to him in Newfoundland, no family. Of course my mother's family were here, but he wanted to bring his children back to England, to his family to be brought up, because that was where he would plan to make his home. He had no interest in staying in Newfoundland any longer. And mother being too young to go back with him on a schooner, um, he left her here with friends, the Lyon family, Edwin Lyon, photographer, and his wife, Elizabeth. Um, he -- at that time -- they

were just hoping that sooner or later somebody would be travelling who could take her, mother, over to his sister in England to be looked after. In the meantime, he was killed, himself. In Portugal, at the time. They had -- they were painting the boat, and Grandpa was on the side of the boat with some of his -- another seaman, in the slings that they use while they were painting and scraping the boat. And just a freak accident, some way or another, a wave struck the boat in a certain way that it was lifted and came crashing into the wharf and he was crushed, his chest was badly crushed. He died as the result of his wounds. So, mother was still here in St. John's and Grandpa and Granny Lyon had become very fond of her at the time, so they agreed that they wanted to adopt her. And my aunt in England agreed to that. So mother never did go to them.

Ethel Chase worked in the studio doing the retouching of his photographs, and often posed for Edward Lyon. Mrs. Cousens told me the following story before I was aware of the existence of the album and cabinet photographs and subsequently showed me the picture referred to (See Plate Six):

Mrs. Cousens: The Ilford people, the film people, there were contests, yearly contests, and professional photographers took part in this. And my grandfather submitted a photograph he had taken of mother, sitting on a bearskin rug, with a stuffed babyseal in her arms, which was, which belonged to her. And it won first prize at the competition. And my grandfather was approached by an American soap manufacturer, and he wanted to buy the print or buy the negative, and they wanted to use this photograph for their advertising. And what they did with it was they took away, took out the bearskin rug and substituted a -- well it was like a cake, it was supposed to be an ice floe, but it was in the shape of their soap, and naturally the wrapper and everything was on it for advertising purposes. So the advertisement appeared then, with my mother in a little black velvet dress with white lace collar and a little seal pup in her arms, sitting on a cake of soap. (laughs) But he sold the negative and that was the end of that, and he couldn't even use the picture himself again. It was theirs entirely, which I think was a great pity.

Plate Six

Clearly, this narrative, and several of the others related to photographs in the Cousens collection, such as Mr. Cousen's inheritance story, are capable of standing on their own, without the photographs. This is an example of the dissociation of photographs and narrative in this collection.

Mrs. Cousens has another album of pictures taken from 1937 until her marriage. Again, the photograph album is not intended to be accompanied by narrative. Unlike Mr. Cousens' albums, these pictures are not always identified by place, name of subjects and dates. Rather, there are arch and humourous captions for almost every photograph. I asked Mrs. Cousens how these captions were composed:

> Mrs. Cousens: When the photograph comes back, just something that I usually see in it that will remind me of the person. I'll put down a little something that might mean something to them and to me and not to anyone else. Other times, it's just a little memory of the moment when I took the picture, and just make a little note, you know, that we have some -- just thrown back to that, to the event. I think it, probably a lot of silly things in there.

Mrs. Cousens is slightly embarrassed about the captions, but they make this album an expressive narrative, which the others are not. The photographs and captions combine to give a very distinct impression of a life, which neither alone would do so effectively. The viewer senses that Mrs. Cousens had a basically happy youth, surrounded by many friends. This album shows Mrs. Cousens' generation: there are very few pictures of children or people of her parent's generation. The subjects are not all friends; there are many pictures of her siblings, to whom she was obviously very close. A few were sent by friends away at school or elsewhere, but most were taken by Mrs. Cousens and her friends. A large number include Mrs. Cousens; unlike her

husband, she did not use her camera to prevent being photographed herself. Most of the pictures are of people, but the exceptions are also personally important, like the series of the "Royal Visit - June 1939". Mrs. Cousens admitted elsewhere: "I've always had a strong feeling for the Royal Family, I guess". A few scenes are interspersed, such as "Marystown", as well as buildings, "Cora Foote's home, T.B.", and cars, "The Atom". The latter are associated with the holidays and outings recorded in the photographs. (See Plate Seven)

The album is also an eloquent story of the effects of the Second World War on individual lives. There are pictures of friends in training camps, in uniform before leaving for Europe, and of servicemen who were invited over by the Bartlett family at Christmas, for dinner. I asked Mrs. Cousens about one of the latter series (See Plate Eight):

> Mrs. Cousens: These were two naval lads. They were both British. And at Christmas time, always our family just simply phoned forces headquarters and said, you know, "We can take two boys or four boys, for Christmas dinner, and for the day." We never did know who was coming. So this year, these two had this particular, these two lads. They were born entertainers. They were absolutely marvelous. They did all these silly English music hall things, and this was one of the acts. This chap, he just used to put a comb, a little piece of his comb across his lips and do a Hitler act, and he really went into this speech. He was, didn't know a word of German, but it sounded very good. And the other chap did a hula dance. I think he has a feather duster in one of them, up behind his head.

The war's impact on expressive culture is seen here and the fact that it would intrude even into the festivities of Christmas indicates its all pervasive quality. Several family Christmases of this sort are

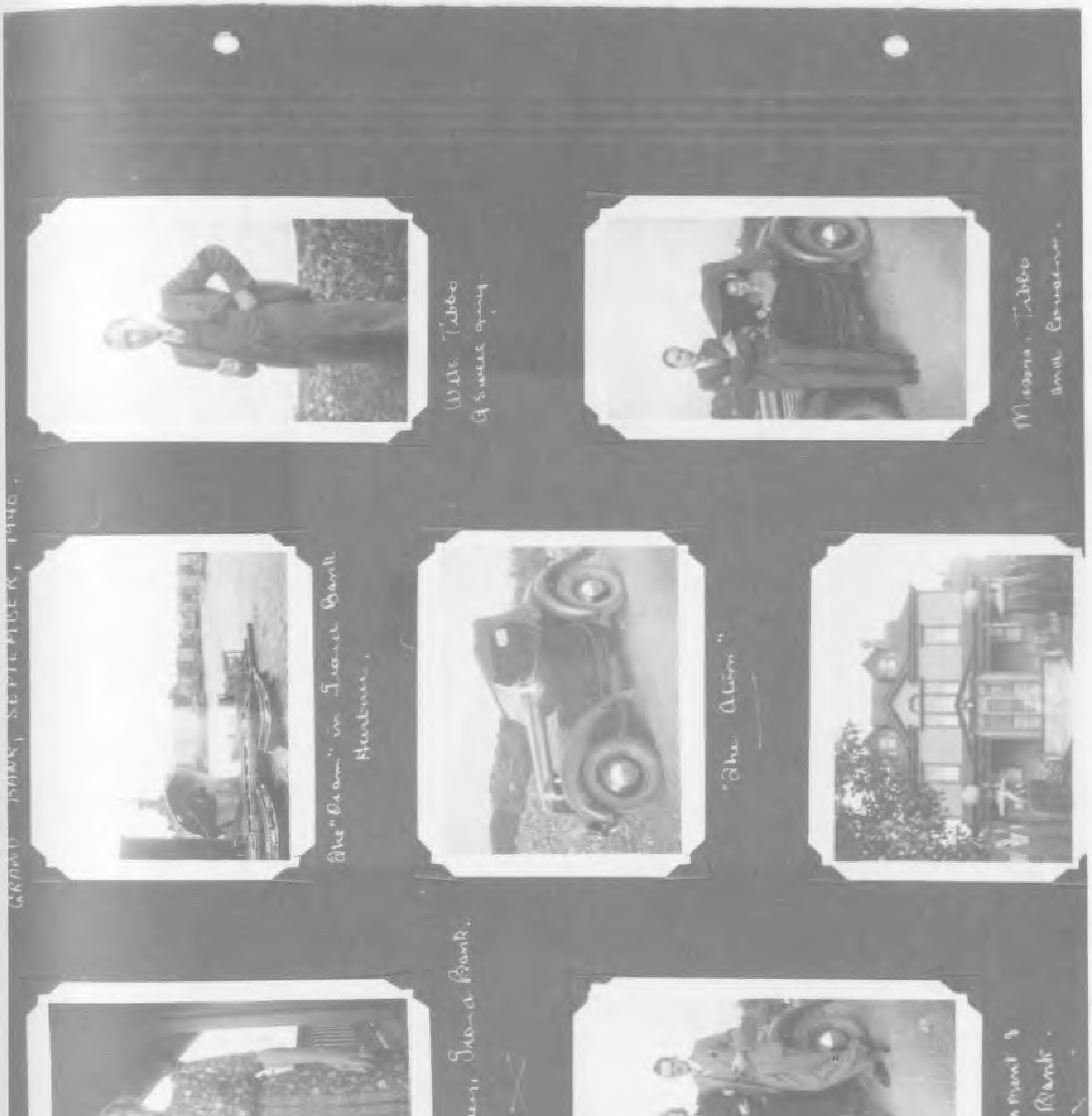

Plate Seven


CHRISTMAS DAY, 1942.
IT'S A BIRD, IT'S A PLANE, IT'S — O.K. — WHAT IS IT?
The Group including Petty Officers Art Bugby & Joe Tearce.
"HEIL!!!" DER FUHRER'S FACE
THE P.O.'S POSE.
THE GANG.
The Lads with Mum & Pop

Plate Eight

recorded. Some of the servicemen involved, if they stayed in Newfoundland, became friends of the family:

> Mrs. Cousens: There was a little boy that we practically adopted, a young sailor. Mother had his twenty-first birthday party at our house.

Perhaps more important, is the only serious section of the album, the pages on two servicemen who were killed. In both these cases, Mrs. Cousens wrote no expressive captions herself, but included poems, which she thought were appropriate. She passed over one page as we went through the album but I drew her attention to it and asked where the poem came from:

> Mrs. Cousens: I just cut this from a magazine, and this is my brother, young John, who was killed in the airforce. This is his career in the R.A.F. And that little poem, just at the time, appealed to me and said a lot about John, I thought, so I just tucked it in there. He was a fine lad, young John.

Besides the poems, there is one additional non-photographic item, a Christmas card, also from a serviceman. Otherwise, all the inclusions in the album are photographic.

Mrs. Cousens urged me to question anything I wanted to, and we went through the album quite quickly. She identified circumstances of picture taking:

> Mrs. Cousens: These are all my home on Waterford Bridge Road, you see, all of these. And these are the people that visited.

She stopped occasionally at photographs which struck her at the time, to explain anomalies:

> Mrs. Cousens: I don't know whether you noticed, but you see the little tiny fork, knife and spoon. They came out of some kind of a surprise package, or something. And these are all, the little boys belong to the C.L.B. (Church Lads Brigade) and they were lined up for inspection, and they have their plate and their mug and their rolls, and their blanket,

> and they're all folded here, and the colonel of the C.L.B. army is marching by. And there's this one little boy standing there looking like a perfect angel, these three little tin knife, fork and spoon. And I thought it was so cute, I just took a picture of it. So that was, you'd have to see the little small one, because -- that would be naturally bigger because it's so close to the camera. But I thought, I don't know, he got hauled over the coals, I guess, afterward, but sense of humour there.

She would mention things she felt would be of interest to me about the characters in her pictures. "Incidentally, this lad, St. Laurent, was a relative of the Prime Minister." A general question would elicit a relatively idiosyncratic answer, partly because Mrs. Cousens tried to relate as much as possible in her album to the present day and to aspects of life I could identify with:

> P.G.: Who are these children?
>
> Mrs. Cousens: Well, this boy now, he is, is the economic advisor, he's one of the directors of Hydro, David Mercer. His picture was in the paper just two weeks ago when they called, they -- what did they do -- there was a plaque or something unveiled in their boardroom. One of the people who was killed in this airplane crash, and David is Director of Hydro. Is that, there he is again. His dad, Roy Mercer, who was registrar, Supreme Court lawyer. And that's Charlie's sister, you see, and Charlie, and, so the Mercer Family. This boy, Jim, he is, there he is now. He was a photographer at the CBC and now he's free lance, and he, you may see the name once in a while in, he does, he did 'This Hour Has Seven Days'. And now, I think, 'Newsmagazine'. You always see J.C. Mercer. That's our Jim.

However, there are not enough narratives to categorize, and as far as Mrs. Cousens is concerned, this album is interesting only to the people in the photographs. Explanatory narratives, as most of hers were, are unnecessary to this group, and the album, because of the captions, stands alone.

There is only one direction from which the album is viewed -- with the spine to the left, like a book. The arrangement of the photographs on the page is usually symmetrical, and various different patterns are found, arranging numbers of different sized pictures on the page. One repeated motif is the placement of four short horizoned pictures, one at each corner of the page, with various other pictures in the centre. Most often, the photographs are arranged at straight angles to the page (See Plate Nine) but there is one exception, where the outside photographs are tilted with the bottoms facing the centre of the page. (See Plate Ten) There does not seem to be any distinctive content on this page, but it is fairly close to the beginning of the album. Perhpas Mrs. Cousens originally intended to do several in this way, and then forgot to do so.

There is more variety and selection of scene in these photographs than in Mr. Cousens' candid shots. A page apparently illustrating one event, such as "August 1939", (See Plate Eleven) will have poses in different places, of people doing different things, and the individuals vary from picture to picture, instead of, for instance, a whole series of people posing beside the barbeque. In addition, the photographs are visually and subjectively placed on the page. The three bottom pictures are portraits, the subjects seen close-up and somewhat more self consciously posed than in the three top pictures which include the scene in which the person is being photographed.

The stances, and camera point of view also vary, perhaps because there are different photographers. However, the captions also add to the visual interest of the photograph, directing one's attention to an aspect or characterization in the shot, such as "Industry and Idleness"


"That'll Be The Day."
April 15th 1941.
"Resting From Their Labours"
Lynn Durfy & Bob
"I'd Love To Ride A Ferry"
Stan & Charlie - April 4th.
Gunner H. John Jeans
England
Sergeant Pilot J. Roderick McRae
Canada
Sergeant-Mech. Robert L. Saunders,
Newfoundland
"Three Swell Guys"

Plate Nine

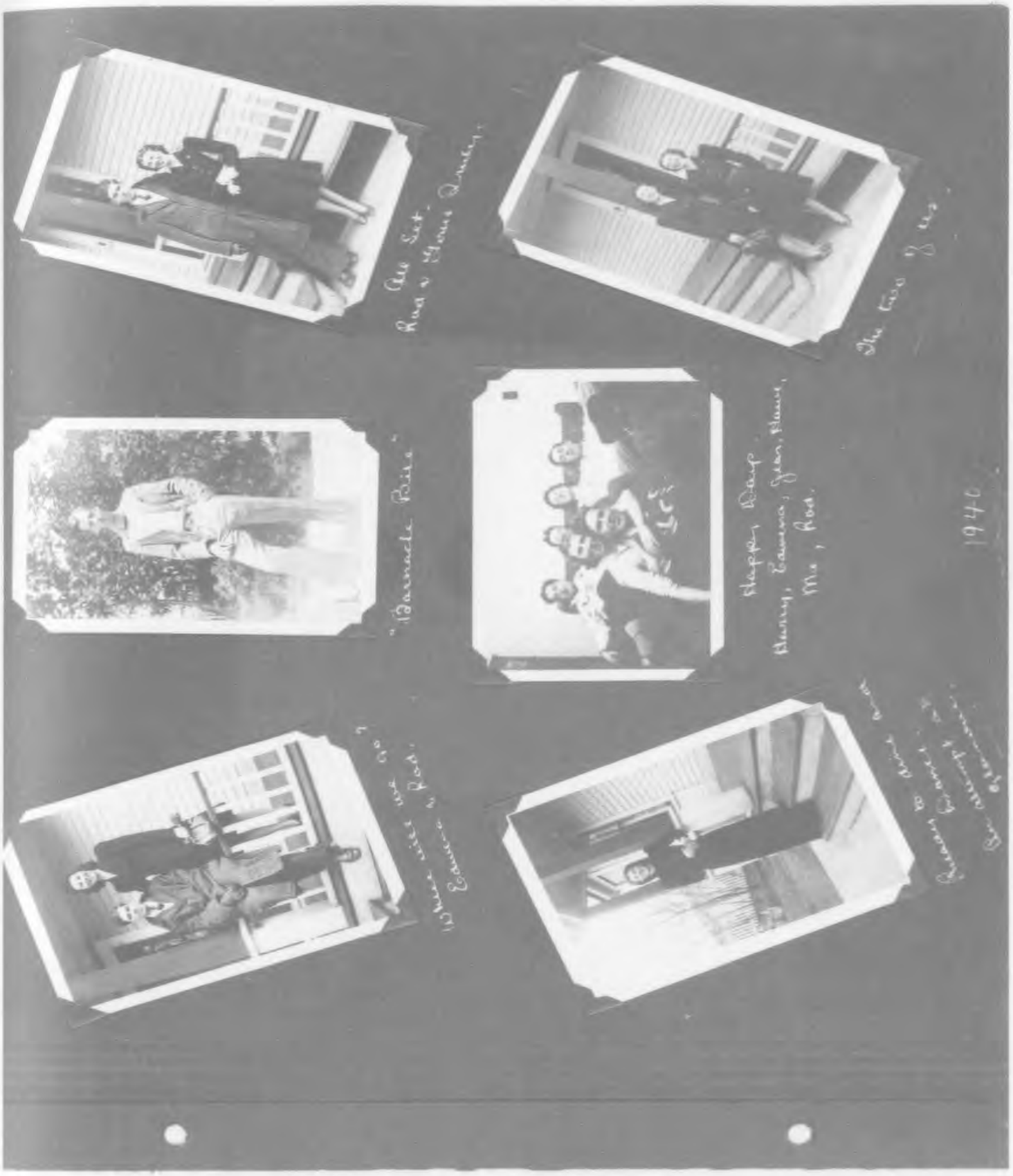

Plate Ten

Plate Eleven

(See Plate Twelve). People in the photographs tend to be very aware of the camera, and frequently strike humourous poses, such as "I'd love to ride a ferry; Stan and Charlie April 19th". Some captions are understandable to almost anyone, such as "The big broadcast of 1942", whereas others apparently refer to external circumstances, such as "That's what we all want to know ... Where'n the h--- is Trudy?" (See Plate Thirteen). Because of this variety in presentation, the viewer's interest is sustained.

This album is an everyday life representation, with a few exceptions. Few pictures of rites of passage seem to be included except for the Cousens' wedding (See Plate Fourteen) and there is little indication of the occupations of the individuals involved, with the exception of the soldiers in uniform. Their wealth can be assumed from the material circumstances, and the large number of holidays taken. The impression, however, is a general one -- specific information on economic questions is not found in this album.

A few photographs were added at the back by Mr. Cousens:

> Mrs Cousens: He was doing quite a few (albums) for Mother and Dad, of latter years, just fixing up albums for them, and some of the pictures that I had lying around, he just put in haphazardly at the back.

Not all of Mrs. Cousens' pictures, then, went into the album when she worked on it. However, most of the contemporary pictures which have been included at the back do not fit into the ethos of the album. Most are professional pictures, such as the group pictures of Newfoundland servicemen before departure overseas, or portraits, which could not have been captioned, as the candid shots are. The rest are later pictures, with the exception of some professional photographs of the

Plate Twelve

THAT'S WHAT WE ALL WANT TO KNOW...
WHERE'N THE H--- IS TRUDY?.

CHATTING.

POSING

"THE BIG BROADCAST OF 1942"

Plate Thirteen

Plate Fourteen

Royal Family:

> Mrs. Cousens: These were publicity photographs that came out during the war to our office. And a lot of them were just thrown aside and I've always had a strong feeling for the Royal Family, I guess. I just salvaged those.

Mrs. Cousens, like her husband, comes from an artistic family; her mother painted and, of course, her paternal grandfather was a professional photographer. She herself paints and does several crafts. However, she sees these things as unimportant and worries about making a wider contribution. She was involved in volunteer work, organizing the Home and School Association in Newfoundland, and helping Vera Perlin, who founded the school for mentally retarded children here. But this, too, could be related to the photographs:

> Mrs. Cousens: I often wonder about people who knew nothing about their families, you know. Where their sense of worth comes into the picture, at all. I guess it's what, is it maybe what everybody is talking these days, finding yourself?
>
> P.G.: Oh, I think so, yeah.
>
> Mrs. Cousens: You know, you do, after all, have an identity, if you can. I mean I've never felt that I hadn't an identity, although it's of no importance to anybody but myself, probably.
>
> P.G.: Well, I think it allows you to do the kind of things that you have.
>
> Mrs. Cousens: You feel that it's worthwhile. You, if you've got, you're building on something. I mean I had a foundation to start on, the interests that my parents and my grandparents had in keeping the family history alive had given us a foundation to build our lives. And our boys are interested, interested in all this good stuff that we have.

In many ways this collection may be considered indicative of one direction family photography could take; an increased reliance on the photographic image and visual aspects in general. Even in the earliest

albums created within the present nuclear family and in Mrs. Cousens' album, the emphasis is upon a picture book presentation, and away from the sort of random lack of deliberation which requires more input from the interpreter. These albums are apparently very audience oriented; most interpretation comes from the photographer, subject and archivist, so that the necessary connections can be made easily by the audience. The aim or direction of the albums is somewhat ambivalent. Mrs. Cousens is reluctant to consider the photographs particularly important, since they are so introspective and she is concerned with aspects of life beyond the family for her leisure activities. Mr. Cousens records much that is of interest to people outside the family, who have no involvement with it. Yet he considers this material the eventual preserve of one of his sons and his grandchildren, and stresses its self-presentational aspects and the connections the family can feel to it. Despite the stated reticence about showing photographs to strangers, pictures are frequently used to introduce the family. The viewer may side with Mrs. Cousens in feeling that they perform a necessary function, or with Mr. Cousens in thinking that they are too personal to be interesting, but in any case, he views the photographs, and derives from them an image of the family.

Chapter 7

General Description of the Kelly Collection

An equally strong image is presented in the Kelly collection as in the Cousens, but in the former case it is a picture of community as well as family, since the family extends itself out into the community. The photographs are dealt with more as a means to the end of communication than as self expressive objects, but they do not fail to record activities, to provide entertainment in their use, or even to communicate in their own right. Mr. and Mrs. Kelly are much more haphazard about the organization of their collection, although their respect and fondness for the images is equal to that of the Cousens. The Kelly collection is more conventional than that of the Cousens since interpretation and audience roles are stressed over the others, and this can be seen in the form which the collection takes.

My major informant for the Kelly collection, Mrs. Bride Kelly, nee Courish, was born in the Freshwater farming community St. John's, Newfoundland, on January 12, 1914. She has lived in her present residence all her life. After about eight years of schooling, she worked as a seamstress in a factory on Duckworth Street in St. John's until 1945 when she married Mr. Gerald Kelly, a farmer and employee of Bell's. Mr. Kelly was also born in Freshwater, and Mrs. Kelly had known him, as she did other members of the community for most of her life. Since her marriage, Mrs. Kelly has been a homemaker. Both Mr. and Mrs. Kelly have lived in St. John's all their lives.

Several photographs are displayed in the Kelly home, on the walls and on the television set. These include pictures of Mrs. Kelly's late

mother and father, and of Mr. Kelly on skis, the day he won a championship race. These seem much more personally important pictures to the Kellys, although they are displayed more publicly than other photographs in boxes and albums. They are not discussed spontaneously, as the rest of the collection is, and when I specifically asked about them, very little was said. Most are enlargements of photographs found in the rest of the collection. About these photographs, Mrs. Kelly said: "If you were interested in putting them up on the wall, you would have them blown and put it up for memory's sake."

Wall photographs are an adjunct to the rest of the collection. They are larger than the snapshots in the living room, so that it is sufficient to glance at them in order to remember the event, person or place. They must not intrude into living room activity, which they might if they were so small that they could not be seen and recognized from a distance. If it were necessary to approach and examine them, they could be disruptive. They are decoration or iconographic representation of individuals rather than a social activity on which to concentrate. It is appropriate for snapshots to be small, because they are person to person, and social in orientation. However, the wall and television photographs are reminders of this encounter, rather than part of that process.

Mrs. Kelly has a huge collection of photographs, in twenty or so albums, and hundreds more in boxes. Most of the photographs are black and white; it was not until about 1960, with improved colour, that the Kellys stopped using black and white film. Now only colour is used, and only print film. The organization, even of the albums, is haphazard. Mrs. Kelly sarcastically commented: "Certainly put them in straight,

didn't we?" about one album. The photographs are placed facing up, down and to each side so that it must at various times be viewed from all directions. Photographs of different events and dates are found together on the same page, and pictures of the same event are found in different albums. One senses that, to say the least, the method of organization of the albums is not apparent from its physical composition. However, Mrs. Kelly does not use her album for a chronological narrative of her life, but looks at each photograph or page until she comes to something appropriate or interesting, and points it out or discusses it. Thus, the narrative content, and active content of the collection can be recreated each time the albums and boxes are looked at, to suit the circumstances. Mrs. Kelly is very familiar with the contents of her albums and boxes, and can quickly find most pictures, as I discovered when I asked her to locate a few for copying.

When I first went to visit Mrs. Kelly, she had brought out most of her older photographs, tintypes, cabinet photographs and cartes-de-visite, and they were placed on the coffee table in the living room. We went through them quite quickly and Mrs. Kelly named the subjects when she knew them. She told me that these older pictures had been in the house when she was a child and that she remembered her mother's cousin, Nan, and her mother, telling her about the people in them. I was overwhelmed with kinship data, but was quite surprised to find that a large number of people in the photographs did not belong to Mrs. Kelly's family but were "people from Freshwater", farmers and other residents of the area, and even their employers. This seemed surprising because they were all professional portraits, and although a few were taken with members of Mrs. Kelly's family, most were of individuals alone. This is

in sharp contrast to the rule today, that people have many snapshots of friends, but few high quality professional portraits of people in their community.

Mrs. Kelly wanted me to see some large old portraits on paper, engravings done from photographs:

> Mrs. Kelly: These were kept to the old (house). There's one, now, used to be up on the wall. That's Granny and her mother, and Mam. And then there's one of Mrs. Gladney's mother and father, and they're all in a great big frame. And she had, when she was breaking up home and she asked me to take them. Now she was, like I said, ninety-seven when she died, and I, for me, I didn't want them, you know, but I wouldn't refuse to take them because some day they'll get thrown out. Cause they're not nothing to me but just to see how old they are. And when I put them upstairs Gerry put them up in the attic.

Mrs. Gladney was Mrs. Kelly's mother's best friend, with whom Mrs. Kelly herself was close. In giving her the photographs, Mrs. Gladney was not only acknowledging an emotional bond, but an understanding that Mrs. Kelly was the sort of person who was interested in old things.

Mr. and Mrs. Kelly also have portraits of Mr. Kelly's grandparents or great grandparents (he was unsure), in a wood veneer octagonal box which opened to show a frame of seashells. I was curious about it, but no one seemed to have any explanation of where it had come from or how it came to be in their possession. However, one might speculate that someone from Freshwater who had emigrated to Florida or California as many did, had sent it.

I asked several questions about family background and the relationships between people in the pictures, which often led to a general reminiscence about life in Freshwater when Mrs. Kelly was young:

> Mrs. Kelly: These were farmers in Freshwater. Paddy Wickam and Jack Murray, Mike Dooley. He wasn't, you see, this was all farm land. Every bit of Freshwater one time was all farm land. The -- started from O'Dea's by Merrymeeting Road, and then from O'Dea's it went to McPherson's. McPherson's was across here. Cramps is here. Then it went to Baird's, in next here was another farm ...

Although her genealogical background was well represented, Mrs. Kelly regretted that she never had a picture of her paternal grandparents perhpas because those photographs would have been kept by the women in that family.

The early pictures gave me a sense of the accuracy of Mrs. Kelly's dating of events and people, mostly by association with facts that were more important than dates, and therefore easier to remember. People's ages were very important for this:

> Mrs. Kelly: Mam was born in Kilbrite. Her people originally came from Ireland, her mother and her father. That also goes for Dad's mother and father, they both came out from Ireland. And Mam was born in Kilbride. She came out here when she was seven years old. She lived in this house, which was her cousin's and I guess it -- we called -- she was Mam's cousin, we called her Nan. And her mother is on them pictures. Well, her mother, I don't remember her mother, her mother was seventy or eighty years dead. Well she, Nan today would be older than Dad, would be about a hundred, let me see, Nan would be about a hundred and seventeen.

Mrs. Kelly knew how old people were when they died, and how long ago they died -- and events in the more recent past than their birth. From that it was simple subtraction to find their birthdate and by estimating the age of the person in the photograph, and adding that to the birth-date, she arrived at fairly accurate assessments of the dates of photographs. Dating was, of course, done entirely for my benefit. It was not particularly significant for Mrs. Kelly, since she understood

which generation the person belonged to, and so had no need of specific time attributions.

One striking thing about the older photographs was that many were not from Newfoundland, but were by photographers in Boston, Texas, Florida, California, etc. I asked Mrs. Kelly about this, as we looked at a picture of Kit Lamb (See Plate Fifteen) one of Mrs. Kelly's mother's friends:

> P.G. Would she have gone to Massachusetts to get married?
>
> Mrs. Kelly: Well in them times, no. She didn't, no, to get married. They used to go away. There was nothing in Freshwater, nothing here and people would gradually go away. Like Dad had a brother went away, Uncle Andrew. Went out, Dad never heard tell of him after. It was a lot of Freshwater crowd went together.
>
> P.G. Just to find a job, or?
>
> Mrs. Kelly: Just to find work and then (?) had a couple of more uncles, and Gerry had a couple of uncles, they went, they went off on the gold rush. You know, I guess, I don't know if you've heard tell of the gold rush.
>
> P.G. Which one?
>
> Mrs. Kelly: Up in Alaska.
>
> P.G.: Oh, really?
>
> Mrs. Kelly: And there was a lot of them went but never came back. It was an awful lot killed, whether they were killed or not nobody know. But they never, all they know they went but they never heard tell of them after.
>
> P.G.: Did anyone ever come back?
>
> Mrs. Kelly: No, none of them ever came back. They, there's a Dad used to tell us that they were -- and this Art Neil. He had a brother, Jack Neil, and they just, they were there in the morning and they went out at 5 o'clock in the evening. It was even men was down carting on the street with the horse and cart, and just

Plate Fifteen

> tied up the horse, and went off in the train in the evening, with a crowd of buddies of theirs. Well, they go see, they travel then for, heard Mam say, Mam went up to Boston one time for twelve dollars on the train you know. Imagine that today. And then there might be some of them came back, I don't know. I forget what dad used to tell but another - his brother didn't come back. And Gerry had a couple of uncles that stayed up there. Yeah, Gerry had one uncle all right, stayed up there, went at the same time and he was up there for over forty years and he didn't come back. But his brother, two brothers, he never heard tell of them.
>
> P.G.: Must have been hard times to have people leaving that quickly and just sort of packing everything up and going.
>
> Mrs. Kelly: Well, you see was hard times everywhere and when we were young. There was no work only what they do, work on the street and the bit of farming, they'd do and, the crowd was nothing built up only just had to clear the land themselves. And you can imagine what it was like anyway.

Mrs. Kelly was able to identify most of the people, but had a few memory lapses. She stated frequently that she wished she had paid more attention when she was younger to the people who were identifying the portraits; her interest now is much greater than it was then.

For a few of the older photographs, there was a story about the person in the pictures (See Plate Sixteen):

> Mrs. Kelly: She went away to Boston. And Aunt Lizzie, and like I told you, she washed her head, for the Newfoundland Ball that they used to have, and put her head out through the window to dry her hair, and got galloping consumption. Granny had to go up and bring her home. So she was buried in Kilbride.

Mrs. Kelly assumed at first that I was interested only in older pictures, but was willing to bring out her albums and more modern photographs when I asked to see them. Most of these were snapshots taken by her or her husband, but there were also several professional

Plate Sixteen

pictures, mostly school pictures of relatives and friends, christening and wedding pictures. I saw no professional portraits of the Kellys:

> P.G.: You never had your picture taken by a professional photographer?
>
> Mrs. Kelly: Never interested. Why do you want to have them taken, when tis only yourself, anyway? (laughs)

Few of the amateur pictures seemed to have been taken by people outside the family.

The pictures can be divided into several categories: professional and amateur are easily distinguished by style. This is an important distinction because having a professional portrait done implies a large more self conscious and formal presentation, as Mrs. Kelly's statement shows, as well as the exchange of money for the service. In addition, as mentioned above, most of the older photographs are professional. The formal portraits are more anonymous and less idiosyncratic than the snapshots, which in many ways are evocative of the Kellys' way of life.

The professional pictures could be functionally subdivided according to the occasions for which they were taken, but for most, since they were sent to Mrs. Kelly or, as with the older ones, the circumstances are unknown, this will not be done.

Most of the modern professional portraits are head and shoulders, or from about waist level in the case of group shots, whereas the older ones usually are full length sitting or standing shots, especially the ones taken in St. John's. The concentration of these pictures is upon the entire person, but the backdrops, pastoral scenes with no apparent physical similarity to St. John's or any other part of Newfoundland,

and props, wooden benches upon which the subject leans or sits, are prominent. Portraits showing face only usually have a blurred background so that the face stands out more clearly.

The large majority of Mrs. Kelly's collection consists of the amateur photographs taken by Mr. and Mrs. Kelly on Kodak Brownie and Instamatic cameras. They now have a Polaroid as well, but these photographs are usually given away:

> Mrs. Kelly: They (the subjects) always say 'Oh, that's mine, I want that', or 'Come on, give it to me.' Don't matter what it's like, so they're after taking whether it come out poor or not, cause sometimes they're not that good. But they want to take it back with them.

The immediacy of the Polaroid print seems to encourage an exchange. The subject of a print which must be sent out to the developer may have forgotten about it by the time it has returned. Generally the print must be inspected to see if it is any good and it may not be seen until the excitement of the incident has worn off.

The amateur photographs can be subdivided by subject; some are of people, some of buildings and some of specific community events. Shots of scenes without people are virtually non-existent. Pictures of people are most numerous, and can be subdivided according to locale; inside or outside the Kelly's home, around St. John's, or on vacations and car trips. These locations imply different kinds of picture taking events and different uses for the camera.

Around home, the shots are informal and record various types of information, about the weather, for instance:

> Mrs. Kelly: (We take pictures of) anything in the summertime. If there are special flowers around, then different seasons they come out in, they're going to -- we're always snapping them. And like you see, the pictures of the lawns were green in February.

> Or if it was a novelty today to see banks of snow, in comparison that it used to be years ago when we were small.

They record important visitors to the house, especially people who stayed for some time. Many of these pictures include evidence of the Kelly's material circumstances, their car, lawnmower, snowblower, house, and furnishings. The Kellys take a great deal of care with their possessions, but usually these are not centrally placed. They are a part of the picture because they are a party of everyday existence.

The backgrounds of these, and the other shots of people, are usually quite intricate and 'busy'. (See Plate Seventeen) The camera being used, an Instamatic or Brownie, does not allow the blurring of background or foreground non-subject material which characterizes the professional portraits, but I feel the style also reflects a kind of modesty. Besides her statement, "Today, very seldom I go and have my picture taken", Mrs. Kelly also expressed the feeling that she liked her older pictures better. In their interest in snapping "anything on the spur of the moment", a familiar sight such as the living room drapes, or a seasonal one like Christmas presents or a blooming tree, becomes part of the image. The meaning and association of the picture comes from the background and foreground; at times it is difficult to tell which is the reference point and which additional interest -- the people or the objects which surround them.

Mr. and Mrs. Kelly do not take portraits, per se, of each other. Most include the other in a shot of a tree, etc. The pictures they take of others are much more portrait-like, that is, with less background and foreground detail, but rarely do the people fill the picture top to bottom, indicating perhaps a distancing from these people by the

Plate Seventeen

photographers.

In the photographs, Mr. Kelly faces the camera straight on with an almost imperceptible or non existent smile. Mrs. Kelly turns her body at a thirty degree angle away from the camera but smiles straight on into it. She is sometimes photographed with parts of her body hidden behind objects. These poses are evocative of their personalities: she is much more tentative than he is, but very openly social. These portraits also show the stances taken toward each other, since one is behind the camera, and the other in front of it. Some opinions and idiosyncracies intrude into the picture taking event. One picture shows Mrs. Kelly with the top part of her head cut out of the image:

> Mrs. Kelly: And that's something; that's about four years ago. But that year I got my hair, as Gerry used to tell me, I got my hair cut, the saucy hairdo, I got cut. And nobody seems to know (who it is in the picture). As a matter of fact, I didn't know myself when I seen it.
>
> That's, I had a saucy hairdo, that Gerry cut my head off.

The photographing incident became an opportunity for Mr. Kelly to show his disapproval of this change in his wife, in a joking form. Significantly, showing the effect of this as an editorial or didactic medium, Mrs. Kelly returned to her old hairstyle.

Mrs. Kelly explained to me a picture in which her husband is lying on a picnic table, not at all his usual stance:

> Mrs. Kelly: That's him, out in the garden again. That's the one I took of Gerry out there when he fell asleep that Sunday morning.

She had mentioned to me before that Mr. Kelly was sometimes reluctant to have his picture taken, and that this was one shot that she got without difficulty. Another picture shows her under similar circumstances,

taken by Mr. Kelly to get her back for the trick pictures she had taken of him. At times, then, the snapshots are used by the Kellys as a form of communication between them; to make a point, and to make a joke of it.

Mrs. Kelly usually flipped through the pages of pictures until she came to something she wanted to discuss. Of most of the pictures taken around the house which did not include Mr. Kelly or herself, Mrs. Kelly said little or nothing. Usually anyone in a picture with them would be (at least) identified. By this, their home is indicated to be a preserve, kept to them. Therefore it was most appropriate to point out pictures showing their connection to it, as owners, rather than showing visitors alone.

Pictures taken around St. John's, other than the house pictures, were infrequent. Many recorded work activities or breaks from work. Most of them are of Mr. Kelly working around the farm, and show equipment, animals, and/or crops. A number of the older pictures taken of Mrs. Kelly and her friends around the War Memorial, were taken during lunch breaks when she worked as a seamstress downtown, before she was married.

The pictures taken around St. John's when the Kellys were young in the nineteen thirties and forties are full of friends and people in the community of Freshwater. The later pictures have more relatives in them than friends, if they have any people other than the Kellys themselves. The Freshwater community has been broken up physically and socially by urbanization and the fewer pictures of community members reflects their absence from the Kelly's vicinity.

Pictures taken on vacations indicate places and activities

associated with leisure time. Mr. and Mrs. Kelly have travelled extensively in Newfoundland: "You name it, now, and we've been (there) on the Island", but have never been elsewhere. Together they have gone by car, but in her youth Mrs. Kelly took several train trips on summer vacations with girlfriends. It is unusual that this series seems to be fairly close together on a few pages of one album, whereas other series of pictures are scattered throughout the collection. There are many stories about these excursions:

> Mrs. Kelly: That's, that was up by the railway track. We were going on the holiday. Got out to take pictures and somebody took their purse down. Where is it to, look, see that there? One of them, I don't know which one of them now, laid her purse down. they all got all the money into it. And we got on the train and that stopped up what we used to call -- in Holyrood, by Duff's Siding. And stopped for a certain length of time, probably fifteen minutes or a half hour, you know, just taking the snaps. Laid the purse down there taking the snaps and went off and left it. And when we got in Whitburn, one of the girls knew, I don't know but they were all working on the train, I don't know who they were there, but one of the girls knew him, and he phoned back to the stationmaster. They went out, and found it. That was some lucky.

Another is about a picture taking event (See Plate Eighteen). They were making a human pyramid:

> Mrs. Kelly: We had a marvelous time. You know, we go out like that and you take -- they made fun of me there, you see, because I was down, but I said 'Now I had her knee on my back and I had her knee on my back.' Well, they only had one knee on their back, see, but I was in the centre, and I could hardly -- And then I also had the full weight of her on top of me again.

Many hunting trips of Mr. Kelly's are recorded. Usually Mrs. Kelly did not accompany them, but when she did, pranks resulted.

Plate Eighteen

> Mrs. Kelly: I was there then -- Gerry and I were in the pickup. We had the pickup, top on the pickup and we were parked on the side of the road. When it was four o'clock in the morning and Wilf and Alec Nichol and Bertie came and started knocking on it. Frighten us to death. That was up the Southern Shore.
>
> Imagine, you know, you're laying in bed asleep and somebody come, four o'clock in the morning, pounding that, and not expecting them.

This incident, of course, was not recorded on camera, but the sight of the characters involved and the pickup truck recalled this incident, perhaps because women do not usually go on hunting trips.

One photograph shows very little except a stove chimney, and has a narrative about Mr. Kelly and his friends going out hunting for a day, having left the stove going. The cabin burned down in their absence.

> Mrs. Kelly: That's the one day I told you they were up, and I told you they, their camp burned down in October, and it snowed and everything on them. When they came back, and that was all that was left.

On their trips together, the Kellys visit shrines such as Father Duffy's Well, and the Flatrock stations of the cross, but usually their holidays are camping trips. The camping trip shots are mostly taken at lunch stops or camping sites, but one set shows Mr. Kelly and his sister climbing around and posing on rocks. (See Plate Nineteen.) Most of these pictures seem much less posed than most around the house; people are caught in the act of doing something, usually related to food preparation or eating.

A slightly anomalous collection of pictures are the costumed or dress-up humourous shots. All of the humourous pictures, with the exception of one taken of a person framing his face with a toilet seat, are dress-up pictures, and the humour is, in most, the inappropriateness of the dress to the activity. For pictures such as the ones of various

Plate Nineteen

people in top hats sitting on a piece of farm machinery, Mrs. Kelly would only identify the individuals involved: "That's Gerry there, look, dressed up with the horse." The humour is implicit in the photography, there is no need to otherwise account for the event in the picture. I saw two costuming pictures ("Fore April 24, 1938" and "Sir William E.J.R. Clark-Doddington, The Rt. Hon. Lord Bummore April 24, 1938") in the collection of another member of the Freshwater farming community, Aly O'Brian. Occasionally, as in these, people in Freshwater would dress up for picture taking. In most of the costume shots, the individual's identity would be evident to anyone who knew them, and the enjoyment would come partly from the creation of an anomaly in everyday existence, showing the person in an abnormal, or culturally inappropriate role. The fact that top hats and farming do not go well together affirms that hard work is necessary, and by showing the top hat as ridiculous in the situation, glorifies this necessity. This fits well into the working life of the community.

However, at least one picture and story seem to beg comparison with mummering (See Plate Twenty):

> Mrs. Kelly: That's Mam. Now I remember I was telling you there, you know, she dressed up, and she was dressed up there. She was a queer hand for dressing up like that. She dressed up and put the old hat on her head. And she came down through the garden there, and there was a man, Gerry's uncle it was, that went away, you know, I told you. And then he, he was over forty years away and he came back home and he came up here to see Nan. Mam came down and Nan was frying herring on the stove there. And she come in and she grabbed the frying pan, and she went up to the yard running and he chasing her ... And Mam used to say it 'God damn it, go home. God damn it, go home," you know. (We laugh.) And he went home, and told his sister about the old fellow that came and robbed the pan off Annie's stove. We never, he went to his grave and we never told him. (laughs) After I was married to Gerry I told him.

Plate Twenty

The uncle was never told because Mrs. Kelly's family feared it would reflect badly on them.

I asked Mr. and Mrs. Kelly if people from Freshwater went mummering. They recalled doing so themselves, and enjoying it, up to around the time of Confederation. Most of these costuming pictures were taken within ten years of that time. However, the Kellys themselves saw no connection between the activities of this photograph, and mummering, which they saw as primarily a communal and seasonal activity. Two other aspects of this event, however, are common with mummering; the costumed disguise which makes recognition difficult, and the ludic behaviour, verging on nuisance - the destruction of property.[1] Mrs. Kelly's mother never restored the community balance, as mummer's do, by revealing her identity, or by returning the fish, but her identity was only uncertain to one family. It would seem appropriate, considering that this is a solitary example, to see the activity as metaphorical of community breakdown, rather than symptomatic of it.

Most of the pictures of buildings are recent, done since 1960, when urbanization began to change the look of the Freshwater community as the Kellys had previously known it. Most are of changes in the immediate landscape:

> Mrs. Kelly: This was right up to the Avalon Mall, and it was torn down. They took the ground, right where the Toyota is to.

The changes in Freshwater are a great concern to Mrs. Kelly:

> Mrs. Kelly: Dad farmed from Freshwater, on the Kenmount Road, which was in them times, Trans-Canada today, it was named Kenmount Road, but the right name is Mount Ken. I suppose you heard that, did you?
>
> P.G.: No.

> Mrs. Kelly: Well, it's Mount Ken is the right name of Kenmount Road.
>
> P.G.: That was -- is that one of the hills around here?
>
> Mrs. Kelly: That's the Trans Canada today. As you pass Woolco's, going in there, you know, by the Avalon Mall, going in by that way. It's called the Trans Canada, but that originally was Mount Ken. And it was called Kenmount. And this here, which they should never have dropped this, this is Freshwater Valley. When I was growing up, myself, I lived in Freshwater Valley. Freshwater Road came from Pennywell Road to Empire Avenue. Freshwater Road was from Empire Avenue to where Prince Phillip Drive meets today -- was Freshwater Valley and then it was Mount Ken, you know? They should never have dropped Freshwater Valley.

There are several pictures of buildings being constructed; new out-buildings for the farm, or a structure replacing a previous one. There is a series taken of the Kelly's house in winter, dated 1974, which may be attributable to the fact that they have been considering for quite some time selling it, and moving to a smaller place. Abandoned and burnt out buildings, especially those which are considered evocative of the Freshwater community, are recorded. Some of the buildings have specific memories, the importance of which can be assumed from the number of times the story is told or alluded to in the conversations:

> Mrs. Kelly: That was when the school house was being built up on Kenmount Road. That was there for about fifty years. The school house was there and an old school -- now I don't remember the old schoolhouse, but Mam and Dad lived into it, in an apartment - there was an apartment there, in the school house. And it was burnt, burnt when Mam's first child was six months old, I think it was Liz - was. And they just saved her out of the fire. And they moved out then, they moved up here after that. And it was for years there was no school house there.

And later:

> Mrs. Kelly: That's the one that burned down before. That's the one they built. Like I said that was,

> Mam just saved Liz out of it, that's my sister, out of the fire and she saved a table and a chair and that's still in the house. And that's, that's over sixty years ago.

A few building shots are not of Freshwater, but of hunting cabins and holiday cabins, but most are recorded because of a need to preserve images of the passing landscape. The new landscape is uninteresting as a subject for photographs:

> P.G. Would he (Mr. Kelly) take a picture after the area was just levelled?
>
> Mrs. Kelly: No, wouldn't be no interest. There was nothing there then, see, it was only just whatever's there is coming up new.

Many different kinds of events are recorded, celebratory and others not so. There is a long series of the Portuguese White Fleet bringing statues to the Basilica, the centenary of the Basilica, and the family rosary crusade. Others are related to Mr. Kelly's work, the Bell's boat show and the flood of Bell's store:

> Mrs. Kelly: That's when they had a flood down at Bell's, like I told you. The water ran down through Victoria Park. Gerry took the pictures, and they saved the day for them. Took all that. They got all the pictures, Gerry got the pictures, but they came in for the insurance, you know, because he took the pictures. Not intentionally.

Partly, these pictures are a record of community life, and they are sometimes, as above, used by others for their own purposes. They are understandable to anyone in the community, but it seems that they are also personal happenings for the Kellys since they are concerned with important aspects of their lives: work (there are many pictures of Mr. Kelly at work on his farm) and religion. Mrs. Kelly has a strong interest in religion and was happy to discuss with me some stories and jokes I had learned in my previous research on religious conflict in

Newfoundland. Her interest in such matters dates considerably prior to my visits; she showed me a newspaper clipping from the nineteen fifties about a woman who had been convicted of destroying Jehovah's Witness evangelical literature.

Several kinds of stories are associated with the photographs in Mrs. Kelly's collection. Besides the mere identification of the individual and statement of their relationship to Mrs. Kelly, there were stories about people or things in the pictures not directly related to anything happening in the photographs. Stories about picture-taking events (things that happened because or in conjunction with the camera), reactions to the pictures when first seen or when looking back at them, and stories of the circumstances recorded in the pictures.

The stories not directly related to the photographs were generally ones Mrs. Kelly had heard from her mother or Nan, so were not told as personal experience narratives. They, and the identifications, were associated mainly with portraits; the individual was primary to the content of the photograph, and so memories associated with that person would be called up. The incidental content of the photographs is in these cases only related to the photographing event with the professional photographer, a common case, and therefore not usually in itself a good topic for narrative. The stories of this type were not necessarily about the person at the same age as they were in the photograph. Often the picture was of a baby, but in the story he was a young adult or vice versa. For instance, after telling the story about Aunt Lizzie at the Newfoundland Ball, Mrs. Kelly acknowledged: "She was only young there", indicating that Lizzie was older when the incident occurred:

One story switches generations:

> Mrs. Kelly: That's old man Carroll, from Freshwater, and he went away and he went farming. He did farm here in Freshwater, only he was one of the ones that went away at, when I told you all the crowd went. And he kept in touch with Dad. All the time. See, that's fading out. Now he died, oh, let me see, about a year, two years after Dad. But we kept in touch with -- he had only daughter and we still keep in touch with her. As a matter of fact I only yesterday sent a letter off to her. But he never came back. He just kept in touch.

Another switches time and place:

> Mrs. Kelly: That's the woman that went away and she had the, she had Claudie and Elaine when she went away. And then she had three more after she went away. Now all them are there somewhere, and I didn't come across them. And then she got paralyzed, from the waist down. She was a sweet person. He (her husband) was a major in the army, and you know, all during the war them were the only Americans that I met.

A series of tintypes of residents of Freshwater called up the following memory:

> Mrs. Kelly: They all had farms and they were all, you know -- so this is why they'd all -- and there was nowhere else, only just the crowd would go and visit like that. Most of them are come here or Hennebury's out there, and go play cards, you know. Now that's the life they had.

A place could elicit memories, as well:

> Mrs. Kelly: That; now see, that cellar there, that was up there just at the end of the house, was a rock cellar. And still there, only we filled it in. But it's still rocked, right around ant that was up over the top of it. Where you'd go in on that, but then you'd go down in like a ladder. And this the way they used to be, right cold in the summer time and right warm in the winter time. That's where they keep their vegetables and everything.

A few of the stories or anecdotes of this sort were a completed narrative answer to a question of mine:

P.G.: Do you know when she (Kit) left (St. John's)?

Mrs. Kelly: Now, I don't know. But it was a long while ago. It would be, wait now, she was only young there. When Mam showed it to us, we were only young and Kit was gone away. Kit Lamb, as Mam used to call her. She had a sister just lived there, just in the road a bit. Married a Duff. She be about the same age of Mam. Cause they were born, reared together, after Mam came out here, and they lived just there on Freshwater Road. Told you where Duff's farm was, in the road a bit.

Although I could see this response as definitely in this case elicited by my question, it would be difficult to prove that the mode is unlike anything which Mrs. Kelly previously had in her repertoire. Firstly, it was an explanation to a stranger as much as to a student, and secondly, I heard Mrs. Kelly go through similar reminiscences with a visitor, a former resident of Freshwater whom she had not seen for twenty years. In addition, much of the material on tape was similar to what I heard on my first visit to look at the photographs, which was not taped.

Stories about picture taking events were numerous, and almost wholly about personal experiences, with the occasional exceptions of stories about things that had happened to Mr. Kelly on hunting trips, at work, and other situations recorded by the camera when Mrs. Kelly was not there. Mr. Kelly is in many ways a better story teller than Mrs. Kelly, more dramatic and consistent than she. At the end of my second visit, Mrs. Kelly played me a tape that Mr. Kelly had sent her when she was in the hosptial, on which he narrated a beautifully constructed personal anecdote and narrative. Mrs. Kelly urged me to come over at night when Mr. Kelly was home, suggesting that if I got him interested he could tell many stories. During my

visit we went through a pot-pourri of everything from sealing to fairies. I needed only to suggest a topic and the Kellys would take it up. Often Mrs. Kelly would remind him of a specific story or joke, which would then be told by Mr. Kelly. Mrs. Kelly's memory seems more complete and accurate than her husband's, though, and his interest in and knowledge about the photographs is less than hers.

Often Mrs. Kelly alluded to stories when she went through the album, or to incidents which Mr. Kelly told stories about in the untaped evening session with both of them. A comment such as:

> Mrs. Kelly: That's when they were going out fishing, friends of Gerry's, the crowd. There's Morris, Gerry's brother. And (the fish) still run up to the twenty-fourth of May. Them are all gone off fishing, that's out to the country ...

would perhaps refer to a story about a large fish caught, or a day wandering lost around the barrens.

There seemed to be no stories about picture taking events for the older pictures, perhaps because they were all professional photographs and because Mrs. Kelly was not involved in them as photographer or subject. That is, most stories about picture taking events were personal experience narratives. Sometimes these stories were about the circumstances under which the photograph took its particular form: "Now she's, that's my cousin and she's a very tall person, and she stood up on the back of that and that's a huge great plant, you know." In this picture, the cousin was being used to show how large the plant was, a reference which would be meaningful only to someone who knew the cousin. She was placed there entirely to give a certain meaning to the photograph, and it was therefore necessary to explain her presence.

The story of Mrs. Kelly's head being cut out of the picture is similar to the following one, in which there is another kind of apparent ambiguity in the photograph:

> Mrs. Kelly: Gerry was, that was down in Logy Bay and he just came up with the -- catching caplin. 'Twas after, Sunday morning had the, after Mass Sunday morning went down, you know, and they had the basket, caught caplin, and as he was coming up the, he was taking off his rubbers and I snapped it.

In this picture it is somewhat difficult to determine what Mr. Kelly is doing, and misinterpretation is again possible.

Stories about all of the photographs, since they are example interpretations, are about possible misinterpretation. It is necessary to understand the circumstances in order to understand the content, and because content is of prime importance, the stories must be told. A few stories are told about reactions to pictures, mostly about interesting or acute interpretations. There is never really a 'true' interpretation. However, those discussed in these stories conflict in some way with reality or with variant interpretation. For instance:

> Mrs. Kelly: She used to say, ah, "This is, Mam's some crooked looking there," And I said, "Liz, look, stop and think," I said. That was into Nellie's, my sister's, you know. And they would be fifty years married in September, cause Dad died in March and that was the first year (since he died). "Well" I said to her, "What do you expect her to be only sad looking, first year separated for fifty years." See, we couldn't expect anything else. You knew where her mind was to. That's see how sad looking she was there, look.

A picture of Mrs. Kelly, of which she is rather embarrassed, shows both her and her mother looking glumly at the photographer. She interprets it as a look of poverty:

> Mrs. Kelly: That's one, I was properly stricken when I seen that. "Mam", I says, "Mam, I don't remember when we were that bad off." But you know kids in them times.

She is refuting what she sees as the camera's evidence. Although she considers unimportant, or cannot remember why specifically she looked as she did on that particular day, she evokes childhood in general to explain it. Of course, part of the picture is unexplained: her mother's appearance. We assume because our attention is drawn to the fact that they look poor that the Courishes were not at that time poor. If they had been, and Mrs. Kelly was ashamed of it, as she is of her appearance in the picture, the photograph could easily have been passed over and not discussed.

The stories of the circumstances recorded in the picture are most common. These are elaborations on the photograph, such as:

> Mrs. Kelly: Gerry picked up there, some kind of, I believe it was a four leaf clover, it was. I remember that, and he picked it up and he was just you know. That's around somewhere now in a book to where I want to find it.

They are perhaps most similar to the stories told about people outside the circumstances of the picture taking event, especially when the context cannot immediately be seen from the picture. One series of an old man with a cane, dressed up sitting in a garden posing with various people is explained thus:

> Mrs. Kelly: That was in fifty-seven, look .... There was an election on and Dad was waiting for to go out and vote. We had to go out to K. of C. That's my sister was there. Dad was sick at the time, he had a stroke, was gone on one side. And he sat out in the garden for the whole afternoon waiting. Just like they wait today. He voted, and that was the last time he voted.

This is an important series to Mrs. Kelly because it shows members of the family together, and was taken three years before Mrs. Kelly's father died.

Circumstances are described to explain ambiguity or unusual things in the pictures which are not immediately obvious:

> Mrs. Kelly: They had the dog drunk there, on Christmas. Made the little dog drunk. And then they had to go put a diaper on him.

This incident was not really amusing to Mrs. Kelly; she seemed to feel sorry for the dog.

Rarely, there were expressions of sentiment, or sentiment was implied:

> Mrs. Kelly: There's the calf. He got the calf over to meet her, it's mother, first thing in the morning, you know. Black nose there, put down.

In describing this picture, the contents of which were fairly obvious, it seems Mrs. Kelly was indicating some feeling for the picture, either because of the image of motherhood it presented, or because it would conventionally be considered a 'cute' picture. Her overt comments about the importance of picture taking were said in an undertone. To questions such as "What would you say the importance of taking pictures was?", the reply would be "a hobby", or "Why do you take pictures?" would elicit "for no reason". However, "Oh, I loves looking at the old photographs" came almost as an uncontrollable outburst, although a quiet one, in response to a picture of the back of the house and her family: mother, father, Nan, and siblings. It seemed as much an expression of love for the family as for the pictures.

Another comment, significantly, I think, made when I was turning over the tape, was that photography was a waste of money. But

hurriedly, she contradicted herself to indicate that it was meant to be taken as a joke:

> Mrs. Kelly: I'm just saying that now, don't believe me. I don't think it's a waste of money. I just said that.

This joking comment may have been a response to outside opinion, or maybe an allusion to the fact that the importance of photography to her is unrelated to the money spent on it.

It would be difficult to make any consistent correlation between the types of stories and the types of photographs in the Kelly collection. Rather, there is an interweaving of the functional and descriptive aspects of the photograph collection in the material culture and the expressive culture. At various times the photographs and narratives provide communication, record and entertainment, and neither specializes, as a form, in any of these aspects. Obviously, though, the simple identification of a picture shades away from the entertainment aspect, whereas some narratives may be more entertaining than informative. The professional portrait, because of its relative lack of redundant family information,compared, for instance with a backyard picnic scene, serves the purpose of record perhaps more than that of communication.

In the final chapter, a comparison will be made between the Kelly and Cousens collections with emphasis on contextual factors, showing that it is in role playing and interpretation that the greatest differences can be seen, since the content of photographs is substantially similar.

Footnotes

1. Herbert Halpert and George Story, Christmas Mumming in Newfoundland (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969).

Chapter 8

The Kelly and Cousens Collections: Comparison and Some Conclusions

The first chapter of this thesis introduced the main concepts with which it deals: the idea that family photograph collections are conservative in that their form and function have remained static and that this has been possible because of internal flexibility. In the second chapter, some of the problems of approaching visual and verbal data were outlined and it was suggested that the family photograph collection is best seen as a kind of symbolic ethnography. The following chapter dealt with the collecting methods used, and with previous approaches to the problem. A historical chapter showed the development of some important themes in family photography. The roles necessary for the creation and use of family photograph collections, and responsible for the continuity with historical processes in the previous chapter, were outlined and discussed in chapter five. In the next two chapters, two collections were described as examples of the present state of family photograph collections in St. John's, Newfoundland. In this final chapter, it remains to draw some conclusions from a comparison of these two collections, and from the work as a whole.

The complex and ambivalent nature of family photography and its interpretation is suggested in the following account from a house interior description:[1]

> The stereo holds several pictures of the family, one of which shows Geraldine and a boyfriend who is black. This was taken in Toronto and has been the subject of much teasing and embarrassment for her since she returned. There is no prejudice shown toward another race here, but perhaps the absence of black people in the area

> makes it odd enough to get a laugh. The fact that Geraldine herself is very conscious of her action enables the family to get a laugh more readily.

This picture is displayed in the living room of the house, so is in both the private and public spheres of the household. The wording of the account suggests that the photo was sent from Toronto before Geraldine's return, and therefore that she chose this to represent herself to the family in her absence. The photograph and its subject is characteristic to the family of one of the more foreign aspects of life in Toronto and is probably displayed partly for that reason. Yet it is also used in a humourously disciplinary way: the family laughs at Geraldine's self-consciousness of being different, and her embarrassment may cause her not to emphasize this difference in their presence. Partly, they are proud that she has gone to Toronto and they are not ashamed to display this behaviour, which would be deviant in Newfoundland to their neighbours, because it shows that they are relatively cosmopolitan, yet they use the same picture which is apparently shown proudly in public, to attempt to control behaviour within the family group.

Even in this simple example we can see the threefold function of family photography at work. The photograph itself communicates much about Geraldine to her family, and was probably deliberately sent to do so. It communicates impressions to outsiders, which must be reinforced or identified by information which can only be given verbally, such as the identity of the subjects and the place where the photograph was taken, all of which are essential to the message. The record is of Geraldine's past and activities, and again visual and narrative information are both necessary. The viewer can infer, because the boyfriend

is black, that the picture was probably not taken in Hampden, where the family lives, but the specific location may not be identfiable. In addition, the photograph will not show whether Geraldine is still in Toronto, in which case this is a record of the present, or if she has returned, and it shows the past. Finally, the oddness of the photograph, and the fact that it shows a community member, makes it entertaining. From the account, we assume that the photograph is shown frequently. Teasing and embarrassment, and even laughter cannot necessarily be correlated with entertainment, but in this case it seems that this aspect is the one most noted by the collector.

A recent work by Susan Sontag, On Photography, has stirred critical interest in the subject, and many of her conclusions about the effects of photography on society are profound ones. The first chapter of her book deals, among other things, with family photography:[2]

> Through photographs, each family constructs a portrait-chronicle of itself -- a portable kit of images that bear witness to its connectedness. It hardly matters what activities are photographed, so long as photographs get taken and are cherished. Photography becomes a rite of family life just when, in the industrializing countries of Europe and America, the very institution of the family starts undergoing radical surgery. As that claustrophobic unit, the nuclear family, was being carved out of a much larger family aggregate, photography came along to memorialize, to restate symbolically, the imperilled continuity and vanished extendedness of family life. Those ghostly traces, photographs, supply the token presence of the dispersed relatives. A family's photograph album is generally about the extended family -- and, often, is all that remains of it.

Sontag is correct, if a little harsh, in her judgement of the family photograph collection. Certainly the photographs become cherished as family symbols, and the family is a very important aspect

of its photograph collection, but the collection records much more than the mere passing of the extended family. It speaks extensively of the relationships between the people who created it. Sontag also ignores the fact that in being brought out, shown to people, and used in all its various contexts, the family photograph collection is not merely passive record but active communication and entertainment as well. As a record, the greatest similarities between one family photograph collection and another can be seen; rites of passage, family members, friends, vacations and landmarks are in most. However, as this chapter will show, the variation which allows the family album to be flexible comes in its use.

It is possible to see in the two collections studied the division of roles between the two individuals involved in their creation and maintenance. Such divisions are indicative of the characters of the people involved, as well as of the style of their albums.

The Kelly collection is so clearly divided between Mr. and Mrs. Kelly that Mrs. Kelly never even suggested that I might want to ask her husband about the photographs. He is skilled in narrating, so only when I indicated an interest in stories did Mrs. Kelly invite me to meet her husband. Although Mr. Kelly took many of the pictures in the collection and is the subject of many others, the products of photographing activity are Mrs. Kelly's domain. She is chief archivist and interpreter, as well as photographer and subject herself.

Part of this specialization comes from her association with the older photographs which are of her side of the family. But, more essentially, her responsibility for the collection seems to be part of her association with the house, both because it was her family's house,

and because the house is part of her responsibility as a woman. The Newfoundland usage of 'belonging' to indicate one's place of origin is important here; the photographs belong to Mrs. Kelly because she belongs to the house, as they do. Each is firmly rooted in the past. Frequently, Mrs. Kelly said that the historical documents and photographs had been in the house since she could remember, and probably, since their creation. Her position was that of caretaker of the family history, primarily of her side of the family, since she was caretaker of the material associated with it, and the house to which it referred.

With the Cousens, on the other hand, the role association is more ambiguous. Both Mr. and Mrs. Cousens have a collection of older family pictures for which they are responsible, and both have multiple roles to play in the mutual collection. Mr. Cousens is archivist of the collection as a whole. However his wife's older pictures were not touched, except where possible, to be identified, but he did take over some empty pages at the back of her album to place loose photographs of her friends and family. Although he always identified and dated his prints, his interest in organizing the rest of the collection seems recent. He described the work on his 35mm negatives:

> Mr. Cousens: I file them in strips, and they're chronological. And as far as possible, some of them I don't have the names in yet, and some of them I don't know if I ever will without going back to the album to find out who they are. Because I can't tell from the black and white, from the -- whether it's Des or Dean. And nothing on that to indicate a date. So I would have to go to the album, ah, find the print, and identify each one. And some of them could be in Des's album, and some of them could be in Dean's you know. So it would be a little bit difficult.

Understandably, perhaps, he is reluctant to commit himself to finishing

the mammoth task of identifying every negative, but one suspects that with the greater time available to him after retirement, Mr. Cousens may choose to more seriously pursue his interest in photography.

Mr. Cousens is rarely a subject of the photographs in the family collection, especially since his marriage, when he took the opportunity to use his position behind the camera to protect himself from having his own picture taken. The change of his status to head of a family allowed him to assert himself in this way:

> Mr. Cousens: I don't have many pictures of myself. I'm usually behind the camera. And as a matter of fact, I think I don't like being photographed. I know I was in Halifax last year with my son and he was there with the camera, and he said "Now, Dad, for heaven sakes, smile." And it's the hardest thing in the world to put on an artificial grin, you know, just to have your picture taken.

When visiting his son, now the head of a household as well, Mr. Cousens reluctantly allowed himself to be photographed. It seems that Mrs. Cousens, after they married, did not photograph Mr. Cousens although there are several pictures of him in her own album and her work is represented in the common albums.

In taking the position of archivist, Mr. Cousens has also become interpreter of the collection. He chooses the relevant associated material and notes it beside the photographs. Mrs. Cousens, in captioning her photograph, was doing essentially the same thing: becoming an interpreter. Both will do verbal interpretations of their albums, and the mutual family collections can be interpreted by either. However, the form of their collections indicates that the albums are almost entirely set up to allow the audience to work from the written material, and to do most of the interpretation themselves. The albums,

to the Cousens, are not intended to be presented, but to be looked through by one individual, alone, usually a member of the family.

> Mrs. Cousens: We, we found that, well I like to show pictures, you know, and I like to have them in albums, and look at them myself now and then. If I have the slides it's just too much bother to set everything up, to show them. And we do that just for the, on request, once in a while, you know. But I like my albums, I like to have them and look at them.

Slides in the Cousens collection are meant to be used as the Kellys use their albums: for a social evocation of the past events or particular people. This difference can be seen from the way in which the Cousens showed their albums to me. The albums were brought out and placed by my chair and I picked and went through them one by one. Not only was it my choice which album I would look at, but Mr. Cousens showed little interest in explaining them picture by picture to me. He would stand behind my chair, or beside it, or walk around the room as I leafed through. Any of these positions were difficult ones from which to describe pictures, and in addition, if I was turning the pages, I would be unaware of which pictures had appropriate stories, and could turn at the wrong time, or miss an important picture altogether.

When Mrs. Cousens and I went through her collection, I deliberately pulled a chair up beside hers, and placed the album on her lap, hoping to get something of the narratives. Instead, she flipped quickly through, telling me to stop her when something interesting came up. Admittedly, she would occasionally be caught by a picture herself, but the onus was upon me to interupt.

Mrs. Kelly, on the other hand, flipped through photographs and

albums herself. At one point when I was stretching over an album (I had chosen a chair at ninety degree angle to the counch, on which she sat), Mrs. Kelly invited me to sit beside her on the couch, which was a more satisfactory position from which both of us could view the pictures. On my second visit, she suggested that we take the pictures into the kitchen. This was the best arrangement, since we could place the photographs on the kitchen table between us. They were at a comfortable height for viewing, and could be easily moved. Mrs. Kelly and I again sat at a ninety degree angle to each other, but it meant this time that we could look at each other as well as at the photographs. Thus, an involvement with the photographs meant an involvement with the interpreter. I was aware not only of the personal meaning of the photographs since I could see her reactions to them, but that they were becoming personally important to me because of their presentation.

The small size of family snapshots means that they must be regarded closely by the viewer. Viewers must bring the snapshots into what Edward T. Hall calls their 'personal distance'. This invisible division of space around one's body is that into which only individuals on a relatively intimate status will intrude. It is surrounded by a layer of 'social' space, for acquaintances, and general social activity, and 'public' space takes up the rest.[3]

Family snapshots enter personal space as they must be brought close to the eyes to be seen. Thus, metaphorically and symbolically, one brings the person in the picture into one's personal space, admitting to some extent a close relationship to them. An interpreter showing a family album as Mrs. Kelly does, is also admitting the audience into personal space, or at least into the closer edges of

social space. Although this is a friendship oriented closeness, the side to side closeness of camaraderie rather than the face to face closeness of intimacy, it is significant to the interpretation of the photographs. One is brought closer to the interpreter and to the family in the photographs by this mode of presentation.

The Cousens, on the other hand, keep their photographs, at least when showing them to outsiders, on a less personal level. Their ideal mode of showing pictures in public is the slide show. This is metaphorical of the movie or television watching mode. The audience is larger and may have a minimal knowledge or understanding of each other and of the interpreter. The encounter is kept on an impersonal level, and in public space. It is entertainment more than communication. The images, being larger, are also kept in public space. One must, in fact, be distant from them in order to see them.

These varying approaches show two different ideas of the uses and appropriateness of family photographs. Mr. and Mrs. Cousens keep their albums and their personal memories within a small group of relatives:

P.G.: Do you show your photographs?

Mr. Cousens: Oh, just to family, that's all.

Mr. and Mrs. Kelly, because of their upbringing in a large open community of friends are willing to admit anyone into this sphere of friendship, and part of this is showing their photographs:

P.G.: Do you show your photographs to people?

Mrs. Kelly: Anybody that's interested.

Members of the family also look at the collection themselves, even when they are alone. It seems, however, that this is something that happens

from a chance encounter rather than a deliberate or conscious decision.

> Mrs. Cousens: I'm looking for a certain, certain picture and then that gets me started and I'll probably spend a whole evening then going back over them. It just takes that something to start me off and I'll, and I'll enjoy looking at them. But I don't take them out just for an evening's entertainment or anything like that.
>
> Mrs. Kelly: If I come across them and move them somewhere else I'd take -- and looking for something in the drawer where they were to, or in the box where they were to, and then I go right through them. Sit down, waste an hour, an hour and a half, looking at them by myself.

These objects are not given a particular ritual occasion when they must be looked at, although family gatherings seem to be appropriate for this. Their personal importance almost seems to be belied by this. However, if one sees the photographs as an important part of the house or household, always there, it makes sense that they need not be evoked with any regularity. The above quotations do not indicate that the photographs are associated with leisure activity per se. They are encountered during everyday work or a work oriented event and looked through at that time. There is no sense that there could be a more appropriate occasion than the moment of encounter to look at the photographs, that they must be put off until the work is done. They fit well into the everyday activities.

Mr. Cousens once mentioned to me an aunt of his, who had a large collection of photographs which were unlabelled. He tried several times to get her to sit down with him so that he could record the names, dates and events in the photographs. He expressed considerable frustration that this woman would not merely identify the pictures but frequently 'wandered off' on a reminiscence. Mr. Cousens feels that

now that this woman is dead, the information in her photographs is lost, and the pictures useless. His attitudes show some of the inflexibility of interpretation given to the symbols involved in family photography. To Mr. Cousens, the iconography of the photographs is essential to them: to his aunt, no doubt, that was an aspect or a tool used to get at the past, and to achieve some kind of synthesis between the individual present and the collective past. The names, dates, and events are insignificant without the rest of the information in the pictures and the associations known only to the individual. Mr. Cousens' aunt's reluctance to cooperate may have resulted from her interpretation of the collection as essentially inner-directed. For different individuals then, varying aspects of the collection are paramount. To Mrs. Kelly, it is communication and entertainment over record, and to Mr. Cousens, record and communication take precedence over entertainment. Between these two points of view, little compromise is possible.

A detailed examination of the entire Cousens collection might show variation in patterns of picture taking subject by subject through the years. However, since the photographs are arranged by subject, a great deal of searching would be necessary to do this. Thus the time dimension is partly distorted by the subject arrangement, and the fact that subject takes precedence over chronology. Time is important to Mr. Cousens not because the photographs change as it passes, but because it is a method of arranging them. Although photographs record the past, the importance of organizing is to put the past in some other form than a mere temporal sequence. Two series of photographs taken at Signal Hill, for instance, would be placed together in an album, chronological in that those taken in 1930 would precede those taken in 1960.

Similarly, the Kelly collection has no observable time dimension. Photographs in albums and boxes are sorted only according to their fit on the page or in the container; rather than being an aspect of organization, the albums and boxes are aids to presentation. This format forces a greater concentration on each individual image, since its material surroundings are not in any obvious way redundant. Each photograph is significant in itself, and is discussed as such.

We have seen the great variety of information available from family photograph collections and associated narratives as, respectively, visual and verbal media. The photographs have shown relationships between people; the Kelly's closeness to the community of Freshwater as a whole is contrasted with the Cousens' family orientation, or between families and the land; the Cousens need to record the wide changing landscape of St. John's, opposed to the Kelly's interest in their farm and that which is closer to home. The somewhat chaotic style of the individual Cousens' photographs -- the scattering of the subjects over the entire picture -- in comparison with the Kellys' organized, calm looking photographs, seems to a certain extent, to reflect aspects of their lives and gives a kind of information which can be sensed more easily than it can be articulated. Yet, throughout, the same subjects -- important people and things -- are being recorded, and the camera shot always centres the most significant aspect of the picture.

The nineteenth century family might go to Parsons' studio or to Lyon and Vey to record their birthdays or other occasions, whereas it is now more likely that the commemorative photograph would be taken at home. Throughout the history of photography, there has been an increase in the number of images in most family photograph collections,

and as technology made photography less difficult, an increase in the number and proportion of amateur photographs, yet the same subjects; family, friends, vacations, rites of passage and significant events are photographed, and still, composition centres the most important aspect of the picture.

Even in households such as the Cousens and the Kellys, with only two residents, the divisions of roles pertaining to the photograph collection can vary. Mr. Cousens plays all roles; photographer, subject, archivist, interpreter and audience, as does Mrs. Kelly. However, Mr. Kelly does not participate as archivist or interpreter, and Mrs. Cousens has ceded all archiving to her husband. It is possible to imagine collections with an infinite number of variations in role playing. The common aspect of these two is that one specialist in the family is the archivist, and so the major differences in the collections have to do with Mr. Cousens and Mrs. Kelly's varying approaches to the same problems. The packaging of these two collections is very different. The Kelly collection is totally unlabelled, and not overtly organized, in albums of different sizes or in boxes, on walls and on furniture. The Cousens' collection, on the other hand, is in albums of generally uniform size, carefully labelled and organized on a conscious level by subject and date.

The associated verbalizations can be community and family history, legend, personal experience narrative, description or observation. The Kelly collection is particularly rich in associated narrative, whereas the Cousens' collection is mainly restricted to observation. This, however, seems to be a difference primarily in role playing, as each interpreter of the collection chose to emphasize different aspects of it.

Role players may change, and with them the amounts of elaboration of each role. Because of this, changes in families, and in family structure, can be incorporated and absorbed by the collection. Bert Cousens, Mr. Cousens' father, was interested in taking photographs but not in arranging them, so his wife performed that role. Mr. Cousens, on the other hand, is interested in archiving and he takes that role in his nuclear family. Role playing may even skip a generation; individuals may refuse to be subjects or audiences, yet the collection continues and is taken up again by future generations. The family photograph collection remains a primary form through which the family, and individuals in it, can express themselves.

There may be little consensus between the Kellys and the Cousens about how to organize a collection or how to take a photograph, or what, specifically, could be photographed. However, throughout our conversations, there was a great deal of emphasis on photography as a record of the past, unique and irreplaceable, as communication between generations of the family or between the family and outsiders, and as entertainment for one person or a group. The roles do not change, but the role players and the relative importance of each does. The same kinds and events and individuals are photographed but the specific incidents and persons involved vary. However, the functions, unchanging, remain the unifying threads in family photograph collections.

Footnotes:

1. MUNFLA Ms. 78-358, p. 24.

2. Susan Sontag, On Photography (New York: Dell, 1977), pp. 8-9.

3. Edward T. Hall, The Hidden Dimension (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1969), pp. 113-130.

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Appendix A

Recitation, "The Family Album" given by Greta Hussey.
Material in square brackets: contextual stage directions.
Material in round brackets: explanation or aside by Greta Hussey.

Greta Hussey first heard this piece done by a woman from Brigus. In 1974, she included it in a concert to celebrate Newfoundland's first twenty-five years in Confederation. This concert was aimed at the young people of the community of Port-de-Grave and surrounding areas, to show them something of the life their parents and grandparents had had in the pre-Confederation years. The concert included traditional songs, recitations, and demonstrations of everyday life activities such as spinning and carding wool and home baking bread. A videotape of this concert was made by Gerald Pocius and was deposited in MUNFLA, Videotape 12.

When I saw the videotape, I decided to ask Greta if she would do the recitation for me on tape, since the videotape was somewhat unclear in parts and because I wanted some background information on the recitation and concert. I arranged a meeting at Greta's home, and on March 18 I was driven to Port-de-Grave by two friends, Chris and John Carton.

Greta was very open and friendly, showing us the dress and pantaloons she had worn for the concert, then giving the recitation. She sat at the kitchen table in the corner, facing into the room, and read the recitation from a book which she held on her knees. She bent forward occasionally, peering into the book at a word or phrase, and interrupted herself once to ask if the microphone of the tape recorder was properly placed. The audience consisted of Chris and John Carton, myself, and

Greta's daughter-in-law Daphne, standing or sitting in various parts of the kitchen.

The tone of Greta's delivery was slower, more deliberate, and differently accented than her normal speaking voice. At first she stumbled occasionally on words and seemed somewhat embarrassed by the artificiality of the situation. Otherwise she appeared to enjoy the recitation and it became more polished and relaxed after the first few sentences.

Greta described some of the kinesic elements of the performance. The paper on which the recitation was written was placed in a large book which represented the photo album, so that the audience would not know that it was being read, and not said from memory. Greta played the part of the woman who was showing the album, even to lifting up her dress edge and wiping her eyes at the point in the recitation when the visitor leaves. This action showed her lace pantalettes, eliciting a laugh from the audience.

> Oh my pause think you need a bit of practice on this you know. (grandmother seated as the curtain rises).
>
> Lar, yes Mrs. Sturge I must show you my photograph album. Seeing as how you're new here and ain't never seen (do I have to turn towards that?). It's getting along in years just like myself but it looks fair to middling yet. And it ought to, seeing what care of I took of it. Now this first picture, that's a cousin, that's cousin Lemuel Jenkins. Ain't he sad looking though. I've often said to Hezekiah says it "A graveyard is a realcheerful companion to what cousin Lemuel is. He's always just as gloomy." What made him that way? Well I was just going to tell you. Twas cause he was crossed in love. My, tis queer how different people, how different it affects different folks, being crossed in love. Sometimes it affects them crossways, and sometimes it affects them other wise. Now there was, ah, Sy Armin--Aren. He was crossed in love about the same time as Hezekiah was - that Lemuel

was. But he just cheered up and danced out of then ever, he got hisself another girl and was married inside of three months. But Lemuel, he just give up and he ain't never grinned more than two or three times since it happened. Yes just like the poets says. "Of all the sad things that ever was said, the saddest of all, he couldn't get wed, unto the woman he wanted." Did Lemuel ever get married to nobody else? Mercy sake, what woman do you suppose would have such a piece of melancholy sitting by her fireside?"

Now this here, this is Uncle John Benson, on me mother's side. Awful good man he was. Always singing the old gospel songs and always ready to help. But my land, was he slow. You never knew anyone as slow as Uncle John was. His wife used to push and pull and try to hurry him but it was all no good. He was an awful trick, he being as smart as a cricket. Once there was to be a funeral and she said "Now John, I'm going to do my work and get ready and go, and you can come when you gets around to it." So she done the dishes and fixed up the house, she put on her funeral clothes and started on foot, they being about a mile from the church. Well, they had the funeral and the folks got in their rigs and they started for the cemetery and still no John. And Sabriney his wife, got a ride with someone, and when they was more than half way to the graveyard they seed old Uncle John, jogging along the road, trying to keep up with the procession. My, she was dreadful mortified and Uncle John said he was glad he got a chance to look at the coffin before they laid it away.

Now this one here, that's Cousin Emmeline Bates on me father's side, she always being the lucky one. Her father said she should never get married until she feathered her nest good, so she married a man over to Bay Roberts and they're dreadful well off. One of their girls is an opry singer. She's been to Boston and Germany and all around learning to sing, and my, she trills and quivers and she goes away up and you can't hardly understand a word she say she sings so lovely.

Now this one here, this me sister Mary, you think she's nice looking? Yeah. She was the pick of the family, for looks all right. She was dreadfully high strung too. Things always had to go her way. She was the beatenest case I ever did see for wanting to be ahead of everyone else. If any of the rest of the folks done anything extra,

Mary had to find a way to beat 'em. Twas the same after she married. And when Cousin Ellen Dean had twins, she was so proud and folks made such a fuss over her, and she said to Mary "Well, I've got you beat now Mary, you ain't got twins, nohow." And Mary she felt real beat, both her children being only single ones. Well what do you suppose she did, done? Yes, you're right. Next year she had triplets. And all of them lived. I never seed anyone so proud in my life as she was to beat Ellen that way. (This is supposed to be up like this.) [shifting book on her lap, pause .

Now this one here, this is my younger sister Susie. Every time I looks at that picture I've got to have a good laugh. You see, Susie was the last one of the family and she was so determined to keep up with the times. Oh, it was about that time that the folks began to cut off their dresses and wear them terrible short. And she went and cut off her best dress. Ma was so mad she said she'd give her a good tanning if ever she put it on. But she sneaked into it once and had this picture took. And what a time she had with it, showing it to everyone. Well my land, Ma was so ashamed. Just look at her. You can even see her knees. But Ma never did have the heart to give her a tanning after all.

Now this one, this is a likeness of Hezekiah's second cousin on his mother's side. Poor man, he had an awful sad lot. He went to heaven by fire, as it were. No, he wasn't burned to death exactly, he was a missionary, the cannibal island. And them terrible man-eating can--savages cooked him and eat him up. I've heard that people get to be what--like what they eat, and I should think some of them cannibals would get to be a missionary before long if that be true. [pause]

Now this here, this one this is my brother William. He's real well off. And what do you suppose Henry got, one of them automobiles. When I was visiting last summer, nothing would do but I must have a ride in it. And I never thought I'd ever get out of it alive. Well my bonnet stood straight up on one corner and Henry said to me "Take it off, Aunt Jane, or you may lose it." So I took it off, but I said "Nephew Henry, I wouldn't care much if I did lose this bonnet cause it cost, it's ten years old now but if I was to lose my four dollar hairpiece, I'd never forgive you." I don't want to go scooting along so fast you can't see anything. Now Hezekiah and me when we goes along we wants to see who got

their fish spread, who got washin' out, who's crops is going--growing. And the flower beds, who got lawns mowed. And such things. Who's there into Clarence Morses's. What happened to George Wilson that was out of politics. But in one of them automobiles, going like lightening, and hanging onto your belongings and praying you won't get killed, you've got no idea of the scenery.

Now this next one is, what, you've got to go Mrs. Sturge? Well I'm real sorry you can't stay to see all my likenesses, but you'll come again and we can finish looking at the rest. Yes, I'm awful glad you came, goodbye. (and then) sings "Should old acquaintance be forgot and never brought to mind." (Can't sing, you finish that, and pick up the tail and does the sobbing, shows the drawers and garters.)

Appendix B

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3A February 13 with Aly O'Brian at home, St. John's
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4A February 19 with Don Lane at Lane Photographic Studio, St. John's

5A February 27 with Manny Buchheit at Bond St. Gallery, St. John's

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6A February 28 with Mac Swackhammer at home
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8A March 13, class given by Manny Buchheit on portrait photography, Bond St. Gallery, St. John's

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9A March 18, with Greta Hussey at home, Port-de-Grave (also Chris and John Carton, and Mrs. Hussey's daughter-in-law, Daphne)
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10A April 6, with Charles Cousens at home, St. John's
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13A June 23 with Mr. and Mrs. Cousens at home, St. John's

13B Continued

These tapes, together with other relevant material, have been deposited in MUNFLA 79-17.