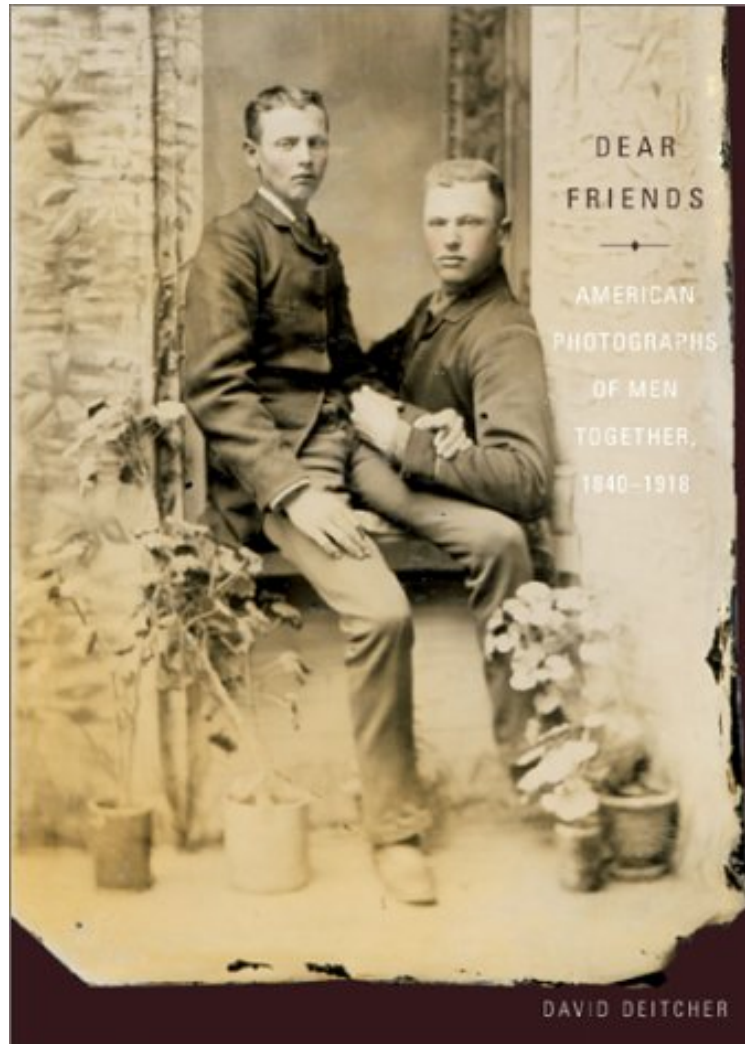


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## Dear Friends: American Photographs of Men Together, 1840-1918

*David Deitcher*

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**David Deitcher : Dear Friends: American Photographs of Men Together, 1840-1918** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Dear Friends: American Photographs of Men Together, 1840-1918:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. "From their attire it is easy to assume this was a planned event"By Len GershmanTo those of you who don't judge a book by its cover this one is powerful and provocative.in what it does not say.. But it should embolden the reader to take a chance and enter a world where nothing may be the way it seems. A kind of mystery. that played itself out over a century ago.with a series of photographs that we are confronted with. The fact that documentation is missing or never existed would be grist for the mill, But then, everyone is not gifted in finding solutions for historical factors, even when the clues are completely open for speculation.The author,

Mr. Deitcher, does a remarkable job of cataloging a series of photographs that he knows nothing about. He has arranged them and put them in a distinctly handsome book. and one that once opened will not be easy to put down. the book concerns a series of men, some young and others slightly older who decide to have professional photographs taken of themselves. not individual portraits or a group shot but a more intimate photograph sharing the photo with their best friend, or their buddy. Taking this a step further from what we could ever know would be a loving friend. These portraits of men who are dressed, posed and it seems determined to have the best photograph possible. These individuals had to make a decision regarding how much or how little they wish to reveal to the camera. From their attire it is easy to assume this was a planned event. If the reader becomes trapped in evaluating just what their clothing tells us about their status in society the reader may remain perplexed throughout this unique opportunity to view these young lads through a keyhole. Exactly who is looking at who is a bit disconcerting.. Their clothing and what it may or may not tell us has often been used to discredit and/or exaggerate their position in that society. These elements do little to uncover the complexities of personality that may be gleaned by gently removing our own idiosyncratic ideas regarding the clothing we wear, and when we where it. These factors and what became of these men and all their unassuming status seems to be where this is taking us. Our view of status and the role it plays in our lives cannot be transferred to the way society of a century ago appreciated their neighbors. What became of these young men. is what holds our attention. Even though this remains unsolved .Mystery is in their eyes and the way they hold each other: hand-in-hand, resting on each other, and otherwise supportive of each other's physicality. For me, these photographs taken over a century ago hold secrets and an intimacy of friendship, love and kindness. They didn't know or realize that living in their world would ever be any easier. "Be kind when you look at us," .is my perception of what these friends would ask of us if they could.. The photographs entice the reader to look these men over. The book clearly tells us that we don't know and never will about these hauntingly beautiful ghosts. The book challenges us to form opinions without offering us an ounce of hard facts. Giving the reader this kind of blank slate may make some of us uncomfortable. We live in an age of information overload. When confronted with so little personal information we may quickly tire of the task and put the book aside, unfinished.. After all, we can go to a museum and see deceased men and woman who have names and history. It's all there for the asking. Although no one has a name or any link to who and what they thought or did in their lifetime, there is one undeniable fact: they all had a photograph taken. I want to believe that these men while waiting for the light to burn their image on a small piece of paper were set on keeping their pose very still. The photographer clearly told them they had to keep very still and not change their expression or move. about. If all these men with all their feelings, could remain still for nearly 4 minutes just to share a picture with each other. Yes If there were deep feelings between them, they would share space on a tiny piece of paper that could keep them company when alone or separated. Would either dare disclose such feelings. They surely may have had ideas and hoped for a better future. The years of the photos tell us that many would die in the Great World War( 1914-1918). If by chance, they lived to see peace declared, they had to face the worst flu epidemic in history. In 1918 Influenza killed millions.. More men and women died than all the deaths from all the wars combined.. Perspectively, few if any would see middle age. This is their tragedy.. They were cheated out of life and stripped of an identity. Never able to plan an adventure, to create their own dwelling, to begin a love affair that would see them through. It is as though they are calling out for understanding and someone to remember them, to remember who and what they stood for as friends and individuals. What did they believe in? There is a sensitivity about these couples. There are times when their silence is filled with fears. But there is nothing empty about their poses and the depth in thier eyes. If the eyes are a window to the soul then these young men would never truly be alone. they had each other. They had a buddy. I found the book quietly engaging and emotionally satisfying. For those readers who enjoy heavy plots and bold personalities living out their lives in spite of each other I'd recommend, they look for another thick plot . In reviewing, "Dear Friends: American Photographs of Men." by David Deitcher, I'd be hard-pressed to seriously suggest that anyone not read this book.. There is something for most readers who resist upon reading the last page first to see how it turns out. There is no ending in this book ,at least, in the traditional sense. This historically/ pictoriall book is filled with opportunities to create fictional biography of each of the subjects. the volume could be read and enjoyed by anyone who thinks or has thought what it would be like to live for awhile in someone else's shoes. There is food for thought and quiet contemplation . There are mysteries that cannot be solved. The book is beautifully bound and the photography in sepia is exquisitely rich. The weight and feel of the book is a tactile delight. I believe anyone who enjoys storytelling could derive great enjoyment in filling in the blanks. The reading demands your attention because the writer believes you would be enriched with some knowledge regarding photography a century ago, and I think Mr. Deitcher is right. there actually was a time when people had to delay immediate gratification and wait patiently. It is fortunate that the depth of this historical book is impeccable. And for those of you who just enjoy learning about the human condition this unique find deserves your attention. It can help us think differently. And it may help us think differently about people and when, where and how they became unique.. Your best reading is ahead of you. LG7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. A Wonderfully-Written Book By ESM517I'm not sure where I heard about this book, but I am grateful to the author for writing it. The photographs Deitcher describes and provides for us are beyond words. They provide such a wonderful insight into male friendships/relationships in the 19th Century and are

very interesting to look at and ponder. This book is of particular interest to me as I'm currently writing a novel about a great uncle of mine and I have several photographs of him with other men, some more defined than others. But it isn't just the photographs that makes the book so excellent, it is Deitcher's words that bring everything to life. I was interested in his analyses of the relationships and that he is honest and forthcoming with the fact that we can never really know for certain what these photos represent, particularly when examined within the context of 19th Century social constructions.<sup>4</sup> of 5 people found the following review helpful. A Wonderfully-Written Book By ESM517 I'm not sure where I heard about this book, but I am grateful to the author for writing it. The photographs Deitcher describes and provides for us are beyond words. They provide such a wonderful insight into male friendships/relationships in the 19th Century and are very interesting to look at and ponder. This book is of particular interest to me as I'm currently writing a novel about a great uncle of mine and I have several photographs of him with other men, some more defined than others. But it isn't just the photographs that makes the book so excellent, it is Deitcher's words that bring everything to life. I was interested in his analyses of the relationships and that he is honest and forthcoming with the fact that we can never really know for certain what these photos represent, particularly when examined within the context of 19th Century social constructions.

A groundbreaking presentation of rarely seen photographs, history, social observation, and pictorial analysis provides an entirely new perspective on male friendship in the nineteenth century and suggests a surprisingly broad-minded attitude toward physical intimacy between men. Inside Out, QPB, Reader's Subscription.

.com Dear Friends: American Photographs of Men Together, 1840-1918 collects more than 100 portraits--from daguerreotypes to cartes des visites and early photographic postcards--depicting affectionate male friendships whose precise nature, whether platonic or sexual, will never be known. Editor David Deitcher, who teaches art and critical theory at the Cooper Union, reflects on the history of these images and their possible significance. In the late Victorian period, he notes, men commonly established intimate, passionate friendships with other men, and often "posed for photographers holding hands, entwining limbs, or resting in the shelter of each other's accommodating bodies, innocent of the suspicion that such behavior would later arouse." These photographs have long been collected by gay men, for whom they are vehicles of longing "for the self-validation that comes from having a history to refer to; longing for a comforting sense of connection with others--past as well as present--whose experience mirrors one's own." Nevertheless, Deitcher reminds readers, because almost all the subjects of these photographs are anonymous, "they are powerless to communicate anything more than the following: This is how these men looked on that day when they sat for the photographer." But what these photographs prove is ultimately far less interesting or engaging than what they are: tender, funny, strange relics of a time when public expressions of love between men were freer and more natural than they are in our own ostensibly more liberated age. --Michael Joseph Gross From Publishers Weekly Nineteenth- and early-20th-century photographs often reveal a surprising physical intimacy and affection between men, observes art historian and critic David Deitcher (editor, *The Question of Equality: Lesbian and Gay Politics in America Since Stonewall*) in *Dear Friends: American Photographs of Men Together, 1840-1918*. In many of these crisply detailed daguerreotypes and portraits, men strike romantic poses: one man unabashedly drapes a leg over his companion; another fetching pair share an umbrella and a coy gaze. The mystery of the subjects' actual relationships to each other is part of the book's teasing, understated allure. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. From *Library Journal* At first glance, this appears to be a simple collection of quaint images daguerreotypes, tintypes, and so forth that derive a certain charm from the convivial young men they picture. More than 100 images feature pairings, or occasionally small groups, engaged in what to 21st-century eyes are surprisingly demonstrative though never unseemly poses. In one, a dapper Victorian gentleman, cigar in hand, casually sits on the lap of another man with pipe in mouth, both looking as if it is the most natural thing in the world. What makes this book so much more than a coffee-table curiosity is Deitcher's 50-page essay. The art historian and critic deftly intermingles scholarly research on 19th-century same-sex friendship with his own personal reactions to the photos as a gay man and model pictorial analysis: he consistently picks out the salient details for rigorously accurate description, then moves on to the ambiguities of interpretation. The pictures compel readers to speculate on the ultimately unknowable mindset of these mostly anonymous sitters. Deitcher's essay turns these thoughts into a dialog on the nature of viewing, posing, desire, and photography itself. Eric Bryant, "Library Journal" Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc.