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When We Were Three: Travel Albums Of George Platt Lynes, Monroe Wheeler And Glenway Wescot 1925-1935

WHEN WE WERE THREE



George Platt Lynes

Monroe Wheeler

Glenway Wescott



Synopsis

The travel albums of photographer George Platt Lynes, publisher Monroe Wheeler, and writer Glenway Wescott are illuminating documents of the American expatriate years. Together, this extraordinary minage-trois spent the heady interwar period frequenting Paris, Villefranche-sur-Mer, and other European cities, meeting up with such lively personalities as Thornton Wilder, Jean Cocteau, Katherine Anne Porter, Man Ray, Reni Crevel, and Christian Birard. Inspired by the encouragement of Gertrude Stein, Alice B. Toklas, and Jane Heap, all three men went on to pursue vibrant careers in the arts. Platt Lynes became a celebrated photographer in 1931; Wheeler, with Wescott's sister-in-law, Barbara Harrison, started the extraordinary little press, Harrison of Paris in 1930; and Wescott became a bestselling fiction writer in 1927. The photographs represented here date from the threesome's first meeting, and underscore the intimate bond they shared. It is a story of youthful passion and enthusiasm that speaks to the enduring ties that held these three talented men together throughout the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s.

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Customer Reviews

Glenway Wescott and Monroe Wheeler were an extraordinary couple, to be sure. The two met for the first time in 1919, and it was, it seems, a classic case of love at first sight. At the time, Wescott was still in his teens and Wheeler just 20. Seemingly inured to the social mores of the time and inconstancies of youth, the two embarked on a relationship that can be called nothing short of a

marriage, for the next 68 years, until Wescott's death in 1987. The young couple traveled the world, stopping in on Gertrude Stein's Paris Salon and crossing paths with Jean Cocteau on the Riviera, while Wescott developed his poetry and later fiction (he authored *The Grandmothers* and *Pilgrim Hawk*, among other bestsellers of his day) and Wheeler found his path. Eventually he would become the director of publications at the Museum of Modern Art. The two moved with equal ease through the literary and artistic circles of London and the continent as well as their families' Midwestern homes. That their relationship thrived is notable enough. But 1927 brought a new challenge to their pairing. High-school student George Platt Lynes fell passionately in love with the strikingly good-looking Wheeler. And Wheeler, for his part, was entranced by Lynes's "full, luscious mouth and his wasplike waist." Instead of driving a wedge between Wescott and Wheeler, as might be expected, Lynes soon became part of their shared life. When, after some casting about, he hit upon photography, the two nurtured his career and used their considerable connections to get him both work and gallery shows. *When We Were Three* presents photographs the trio took as they traveled the world together during the late '20s and '30s. They are the subjects of many of the images, but the Great Wall of China, an Egyptian sphinx, and their numerous friends--including Stein, Cocteau, Thornton Wilder, and Katherine Anne Porter--are captured, too. Oddly, the subject, date, and location of each photograph are carefully documented, but the photographer is not. Some of the earliest-known Lynes images are here, but it is the biographical essay by Anatole Pohorilenko in the front of the book that calls this out. Still, with its high production value and informative essays by Pohorilenko and James Crump, the book is an enjoyable choice for those interested in early-20th-century photography and the lifestyle of the legendary 1930s American expatriate in Europe. --Jordana Moskowitz

...a beautifully produced text-and-photos compilation that is part love story, part informal cultural history and part excavation of the gay demimonde between the world wars. -- The New York Times Book Review, Christopher Benfey Surely, one of history's dynamic trios consisted of photographer George Platt Lynes, publisher Monroe Wheeler, and writer Glenway Wescott, who became friends in 1927 and spent the next several years visiting Paris and other European capitals. *When We Were Three* is the first-ever compilation of photographs from their travel albums, with glimpses of Thornton Wilder, Jean Cocteau, and Man Ray. -- Travel & Leisure, October 1998

...a must have book if you are a fan of George Platt Lynes photography. It gives the man's background AND helps explain what made the man who he was along with great details on the

people in his life that were the most important... especially the two closest for a good portion of his life. Also, includes many photos that are equally important to understanding who George Platt Lynes was.

Great photos. Text is rather stilted.

A great look into three interesting lives

Excellent in every way!

When We Were Three is a testament to a close, often physically intimate friendship among three remarkably talented young men during the mid-1920s to the mid-1930s. One would become a renowned photographer, another a best-seller fiction writer, and the third a small-press publisher and then a long-time director of exhibitions at New York's Museum of Modern Art. Each became great cultural and artistic influences, enhanced by their collaborations and experiences together. Specifically, this volume documents, as its subtitle, states, The Travel Albums of George Platt Lynes, Monroe Wheeler, and Glenway Wescott, 1925-1935. During this exceptional period between the World Wars, the three men travelled Europe and mingled with the most prominent artists of the day — Gertrude Stein, Thornton Wilder, Jean Cocteau, and Alice B. Toklas among many others. The time period has been described and documented by several others, but none with the perspective of three men bonded together facing the uncertainties and opportunities of the day. The narrative is insightful, although it sometimes seems to dote on the protagonists' charm and beauty. The photographs are well-produced and thankfully collected here to capture not only a unique relationship but also the look and feel of the Europe the three visited and the people important in their lives. The cultural and LGBT record is much-enhanced by this exquisite contribution. Michael Helquist, MARIE EQUI: Radical Politics and Outlaw Passions

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