

The Snap

By Mattie Lennon



Photography records the gamut of feelings written on the human face, the beauty of the earth and skies that man has inherited, and the wealth and confusion man has created. It is a major force in explaining man to man.

--Edward Steichen

When Joseph Nicephore made the first permanent picture with a camera, in 1826, photography enabled us to look at the past in a way which was not possible up to then.

It was a Sunday morning in the early Summer of 1949. My mother was combing my curly uncooperative hair and my father was repairing one of my boots on the small foot of the last. I was to be brought to the other side of Kylebeg, to my mother's uncle's place. His nephew, my mother's first cousin, was down from Dublin and would take my "snap".

Across the valley was a long walk for a four old. I was put standing on a dry stone-wall which seemed frighteningly high.

My Grand-uncle was an economy conscious bachelor, sheep farmer, not in the habit of dispensing lemonade or sweets. And he wouldn't even dream of pressing a shiny shilling, or even a tanner, into the sweaty palm of a shy junior.

The click of a Brownie didn't impress. Perhaps it led to my camera-shyness in later years.

David Hockney said, " All you can do with most ordinary photographs is stare at them". And isn't that enough. I can stare at it now after 61 years . . . and so can you.

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