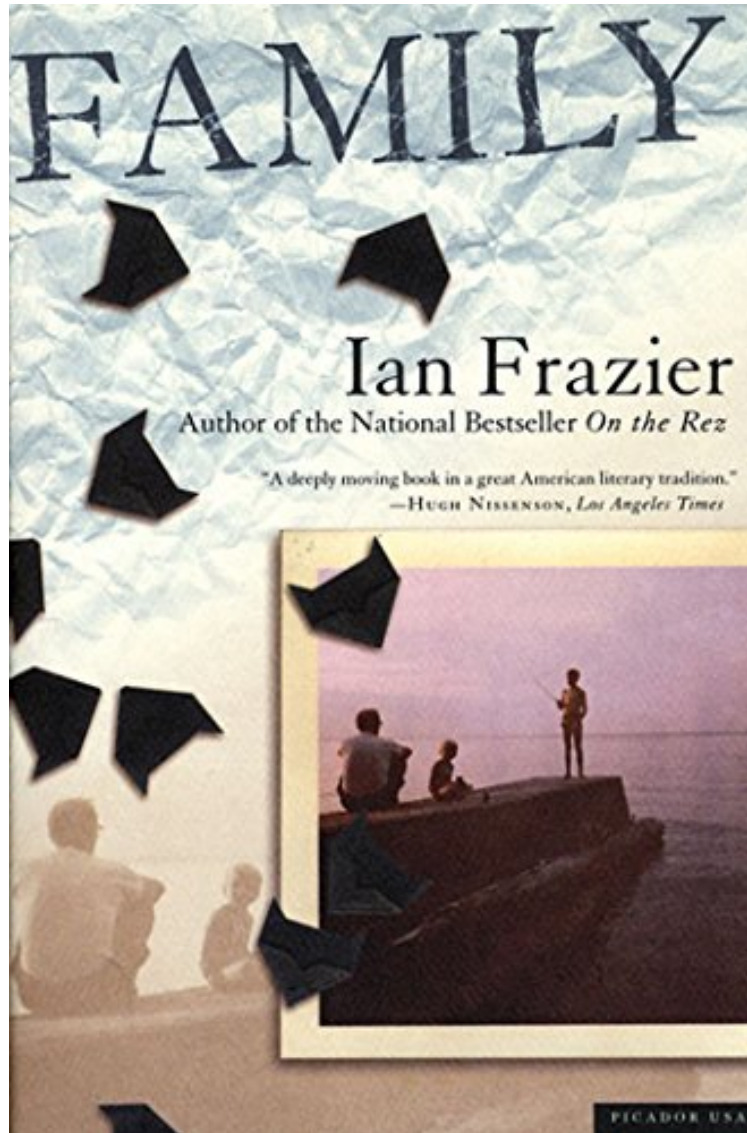


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Family

Von Ian Frazier

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Von Ian Frazier : Family before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Family:

Kundenrezensionen Hilfreichste Kundenrezensionen 0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. how they lost their center Von Ein Kunde This book is an exploration and attempted explanation of how white Anglo-Saxon Protestants fell from grace through American history. E. Digby Baltzell's "The Protestant Establishment" was a drier, more social scientific survey made decades ago. Nelson Aldrich's "Old Money" was, like Frazier's "Family", a more personal account, but dealt with the very rich of the East Coast. In "Family" you can follow the history of several

WASP families that lead to Frazier's nuclear family. The various Frazier forebears went from being biggish to medium-size fish in the small bowl of 19th century Ohio to typical middle-class suburbanites in the mid- to late 20th century. I watched this steady diminution with more empathy than I thought I would feel. Frazier's style is almost telegraphic through certain passages where each consecutive sentence includes a story in miniature about some member of the family during a particular historical time-slice. For the most part this works as a way of imparting a lot of information in a condensed package and suggesting much more than is actually told. The chapters of the book that I found the least interesting were those concerning the Civil War. Two of Frazier's Wickham ancestors happened to be participants in several pivotal battles, most notably Chancellorville. Frazier devotes a great many pages to Stonewall Jackson because the Confederate general's deathbed words ("Let us cross the river and find rest in the shade of the trees") come to represent the most important theme in American history for Frazier. He makes a case for the hypothesis that a belief in salvation and a promised land were the organizing principle for his ancestors and the gradual diminution of that faith is at the root of our collective modern malaise. It seems like a hypothesis worth fleshing out, although not by supplying so many details about several Civil War battles.

0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Capturing Time
Von Ein Kunde
For me, the pursuit of "feeling history" began about 2 years ago. Since there is no such thing as a time machine, I decided that the written word was going to be the only valid path to the past. This was one of the great books in which I traveled, and what a pleasure to read! (I found it in paperback on a sale table outside of Borders Books in Ann Arbor!) I would like to thank the author for his efforts to also "feel history" via evidence left by his family. If you read this book, you too will be able to capture a bit of history from someone willing to share it in a beautifully written style.

Kurzbeschreibung
With wit and an unerring eye for detail, acclaimed author Ian Frazier takes readers on a journey through his family's story, his nation's history, and himself. Using letters and other family documents, Frazier reconstructs two hundred years of middle-class life, visiting small towns his ancestors lived in, reading books they read, and discovering the larger forces of history that affected them. He observes some of them during the British raid on Danbury, Connecticut, in the Revolutionary War; he follows others west as they pioneer in the wilderness of Ohio and Indiana; he visits the battlefields where they fought the Civil War. Frazier interviews old-timers, uncles, aunts, cousins, maids, and a beer-store owner who knew his dad. He pursues the family saga in aspect from trivial to grand, hoping for "a meaning that would defeat death." Family is a poetic epic of facts, a chronicle of Protestant culture's rise and fall, a memorial, and a revised view of American history as romantic as it is cold-eyed.

Mr. Frazier, in this remarkable history of an unremarkable family, plays both roles, the gossip and the pedant, balances skillfully, then adds his own insights as a loyal family member. David Willis McCullough, *The New York Times Book Review*
From the author of the widely applauded *Great Plains* (1987), about a 24,000-mile van trip across the Midwest, comes another good book--but inconsistently so. Frazier writes about his family's past, and although some parts are fascinating, others are rather tedious. Readers will envy Frazier's extensive knowledge of his family history and his access to so much extant documentary evidence. He's done his research well, and he brings into his account of his family's ups and downs a substantial amount of background information on social, economic, and domestic history from colonial times to the present. We meet his progenitors on a personal level, hearing about how they grew up, courted, made a living, and died and about their individual achievements and disappointments. At times the narrative sweeps along with the drive and fluidity of fiction, but at other times, it descends into a mere recitation of facts that only family members would care about. Still, this is an effective illustration of the richness of history on the level of ordinary people who are neither kings nor presidents, and given the popularity of the author's previous book and his high profile as a regular contributor to the *New Yorker*, expect demand.

Brad Hooper
From Kirkus
The grand sweep of American history is writ small in this family history/memoir by humorist Frazier (*Great Plains*, 1989, etc.). Frazier undertook this effort after his parents died in the late 1980s, to "find a meaning that would defeat death." But his project seems more complicated and self-conscious, if not pretentious: an attempt to somehow reclaim American history for himself, a white Protestant. His preoccupation with his own religious doubt, contrasted with the firm faith of his ancestors--whether German Reformed, Old School Presbyterian, or, like his great-great-grandfather Simeon Frazier, a member of the antiauthoritarian Disciples of Christ--culminates in a strange, reductionist review of American history as an expression of the decline of Protestant faith. More broadly, Frazier shares indiscriminately with us every detail he has been able to root out: from the momentous (the arrival of Thomas Benedict on these shores in 1638 and his descendant Platt Benedict's founding of Norwalk, Ohio) to the trivial (his great-great-uncle Charles's first attempt at fly-fishing and his grandmother's showing family pictures to Tennessee Williams in Key West). The quantity of information that could have rendered full-blooded portraits of long-ago generations is lacking; the lengthy catalogs often offered (trite entries from a great-grandfather's school diary, quotations from his parents' rather ordinary love letters) seem like fillers. The histories of the Fraziers, Wickhams, Benedicts, and Hurshes do follow the outlines of American history: the push west (all his relatives ended up in Ohio); the Civil War (Norwalk was a stop on the

underground railroad); industrialization (his father became a chemist for Sohio). But Frazier's prose is flat as a prairie and his humor dry as stone. Only at the end, in interviews with two colorful relatives, and with the description of the deaths of his teenage brother Fritz from leukemia and of his parents, does the tale reach emotional heights. An object lesson in the pitfalls of writing a family history for anyone other than your family. (First printing of 50,000; \$50,000 ad/promo; author tour) -- Copyright 1994, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.