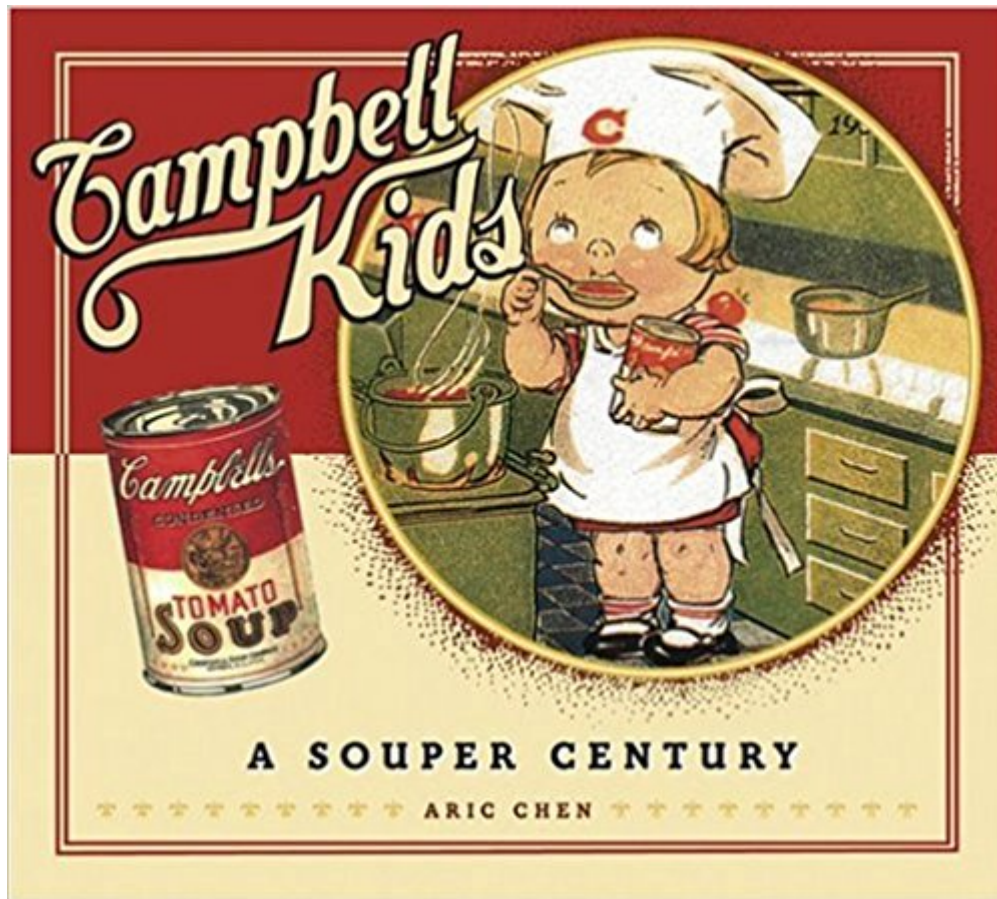




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Campbell Kids: A Souper Century



Synopsis

First sketched by Gebbie Drayton in 1904, the Campbell Kids have endured for decades, in everything from streetcar ads and magazine layouts to dolls and animated commercials. The rosy-cheeked, cherub-faced youngsters have grown with America, reflecting its cultural shifts and expressing its ideals and aspirations. Charmingly innocent, plucky, and playful, they struck poses as Rosie the Riveter during World War II and flower children wearing tie-dye and holding peace signs in the 1960s. They have promoted the Red Cross, inspired Americans to buy war bonds and conserve electricity, and even promoted children's self-esteem. In the process, the Campbell Kids became more than a trademark of Campbell's Soup; they became true American icons, embodying goodness and wholesome living. As the famous kids celebrate their 100th birthday, collectors of memorabilia and Americana will delight in this decade-by-decade trip through the lives of the Campbell Kids, the company they represented, and the country they came to symbolize. **AUTHOR BIO:** Aric Chen is a freelance writer in New York whose work has appeared in The New York Times, New York magazine, GQ, Elle, House & Garden, and the book *American Dream: The Houses at Sagaponac*.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The opening page spread showing selected Campbell kids from each decade, starting with their creation in 1904 to their present (and possible future) incarnations, neatly illustrates this book's premise, which is to chronicle changes in America through apple-cheeked cartoon

children. Chen begins with the story of the soup company itself, then focuses on the metamorphoses of the kids, first drawn by Grace Gebbie Drayton, whose "full figure, round face, pug nose, and wide-set eyes bore a remarkable resemblance to the children she adoringly created." As the book's many photos attest, the popularity of the characters propelled them into magazines, onto postcards and led to their formation as dolls. The American history that Chen imparts is predictably stereotyped, rooted as it is in advertisements: the kids are subdued in Depression years, patriotic in the '40s ("Food Fights for Freedom") and prosperous and family-oriented in the '50s. However, apart from half-hearted attempts to give the kids a modern feel (paisley pants, girls on skateboards, more diverse ethnicities, etc.) after the mid-century mark, they haven't changed much, though Chen offers glimpses of how Campbell's is looking to update the kids' appearance with anime and 3-D art. Even if the kids do take on personae ranging from "the artsy bohemian and the techno-geek to the fashionista, skater... and high school jock," Drayton's cheerful cherubs will likely remain part of America's pictorial lexicon and a favorite with collectors, the likely readership for this illustrated retrospective. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Aric Chen is a freelance writer in New York whose work has appeared in The New York Times, New York magazine, GQ, Elle, House & Garden, and the book American Dream: The Houses at Sagaponac.

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