

The Barbara Ann Series
Reviewed by David Baumann
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A few weeks ago the Barbara Ann series was recommended to me and, fortuitously enough, within a day or so I managed to acquire the entire set (four books) on ebay, all volumes in dust jacket. This is a little known series--I'd certainly never heard of it. The only reference I found online is here: <http://series-books.com/grosby/barbara-ann.html>

Just a few minutes ago I turned the last page of the last volume and feel inspired to share some opinions about this series. The four books were written 1939-1942 by an author named Ruth Grosby. That "Grosby" with a G, not "Crosby". I can't find anything else written by her or any information about her. Too bad, because she was a good writer.

Her books express the era in which they were written almost as well as the books by Capwell Wyckoff do--which is considerable. The stories are well devised and a pleasure to read. Although all are quite good, the last one, *The Clue in the Camera*, is my favorite. It is a pleasant coincidence that the main storyline in this book is the theft of old and valuable first editions from a university library, and includes a visit to a second-hand book store--the plot should appeal to collectors of old books. The story includes stormy nights with wind, rain, and sleet; dimly-lit underground passages connecting the various buildings of the university; a few red herrings; a good secondary mystery having to do with a major university football game; and a satisfying conclusion.

Particularly enjoyable are several scenes of young people enjoying themselves, such as the early original Hardy Boys mysteries featured and which were excised as wasted space and clutter in their revisions. In the Barbara Ann series, such scenes include picnics and dances and even an event in a biology class whose only purpose is to provide humor. There is an old-fashioned feel to the stories, the characters, and the dialogue which I, at least, found more than satisfying.

The first and last stories, *The Stolen Blueprints* and *The Clue in the Camera*, take place in Barbara's home town somewhere in the Eastern U.S.; the second, *The Mystery at Mountain View*, takes place somewhere in the west, probably Colorado; the third (in my opinion, the weakest in the series), *Mystery Across the Border*, is set in Mexico.

This is a worthy series to be collected. Except for the last title there are numerous copies of these books available online, some for very reasonable prices. I think there is only one copy of *The Clue in the Camera* offered for sale, and the seller wants about \$90 for it. If anyone decides to collect this series on my recommendation, I hope you enjoy it as much as I did.

David Baumann