



International Center of Photography

## Photographs from the Resettlement Administration/Farm Security Administration

Accession numbers: 1020.1975 – 1124.1975  
Finding Aid prepared in 2006

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### Descriptive Summary

**Collection name:**

Photographs from the Resettlement Administration/Farm Security Administration

**Inclusive Dates:**

1907 – 1937, bulk 1935 - 1937

**Size:**

105 images from the Permanent Collection of the International Center of Photography; various sizes.

**Abstract:**

A collection of RA/FSA vintage prints that document the effects of the Depression in different areas of the country. In addition to these photographs, there are a number of prints that were not taken by RA/FSA photographers.

**Photographers:**

Various photographers, including: Lewis Wickes Hine, Theodor Jung, Dorothea Lange, Carl Mydans, Arthur Rothstein, and Ben Shahn.

**Language:**

English

**Repository:**

International Center of Photography  
1133 Avenue of the Americas  
New York, New York 10036



## **Administrative Information**

### **Provenance:**

Mildred Baker donated the prints to ICP in 1976. The prints were in her possession from the 1930s until the time of the donation.

### **Access:**

The collection is open to qualified researchers, by appointment only.

### **Digital Representations Available:**

Digital representations of original materials are available at <http://emuseum.icp.org/>. Digital image files were prepared at ICP from the originals.

### **Publication Rights:**

Application to use images, reproduce or quote text from this collection for publication, in any form, including digital, must be requested and granted, in writing, from the Curator of Collections, International Center of Photography, 1133 Avenue of the Americas, New York, New York 10036. Questions may be directed to the Curator by mail or email at [collections@icp.org](mailto:collections@icp.org).

### **Preferred Citation:**

Photographs from the Resettlement Administration/Farm Security Administration,  
International Center of Photography



## Historical Note

The photographic section of the RA/FSA documented the agencies' efforts to reduce rural poverty by offering assistance to those who lacked work after having been displaced from their farms. This crisis was largely the result of two conditions in rural America during the 1930s: the Dust Bowl and the technological changes in agricultural practices that enabled modernization. The rural poverty that was prevalent during this period had in fact begun shortly after World War I, and was the target of numerous government programs before the institution of the RA. The approach of the RA differed from other agencies in focusing its relief efforts on the poorest tenant farmers, who were most affected by technological changes. Prior to the RA, efforts often benefited farm owners without helping to alleviate the devastating effects of changes in agricultural practice on small farm owners and laborers who did not own land.

This new focus was initiated by Rexford Tugwell, an economist who taught at Columbia University and had previously worked as assistant secretary of agriculture. However, Tugwell was not in favor of workers organizing themselves in response to displacement, and instead argued that workers should revise their own values in order to better conform to the technological changes taking place. Tugwell believed that people struggling in the face of agricultural restructuring could no longer stay in rural areas and instead would have to relocate to urban centers. Despite this belief, the RA did help people stay in rural areas if this was their preference.

As Tugwell developed programs that resettled rural farmers, created suburban communities, and provided financial assistance to those who did not want to relocate, he appointed Roy Stryker to create a photographic record of the need for such programs as well as their effect. Tugwell had worked with Stryker when he was a student at Columbia University and acted as picture editor for some of Tugwell's economic texts. Before arriving at the RA, Stryker had already become adept at using photographs to support Tugwell's economic arguments. The photographic section was an opportunity for Stryker to document, on a large-scale using numerous photographers, the ways in which modernization would improve the lives of rural and urban inhabitants.

As Stryker built his photographic file, he began to distribute the photographs to magazines and exhibitions. The photographs he circulated reflected his desire to create a photographic record of daily, American life as well as his and Tugwell's ideas about the transition to modernization underway throughout the country. However, there were photographs in the RA/FSA file that documented opposition by farmers and tenants to the changes affecting their livelihoods. These images belie a tension inherent to the RA/FSA file: the argument for modernization does not exist without its own internal resistance, by the farmers as well as by some of the RA/FSA photographers who were sympathetic to their plight.

In 1942, the RA/FSA became the Office of War Information (OWI), shortly before losing Congressional funding in 1943. Stryker left to begin a photographic project at Standard Oil of New Jersey, while also working to secure a place for the RA/FSA photographs at the Library of Congress. Stryker feared, with reason, that opponents of the



photographic project's ideological stance would try to destroy the 270,000 images that had been taken over the years. As a result of his work to preserve the collection, the photographs can be accessed in the Prints and Photographs Division at the Library of Congress by the public.

### **Scope and Content**

The collection contains 105 gelatin silver prints, taken by six identified photographers and a number of unidentified photographers. Of these 105 prints, an estimated 16 photographs were not taken by RA/FSA photographers. These may have been acquired by Roy Stryker, Adrian Dornbush (Assistant Director of the RA), or another person working for the agencies. Many of the RA/FSA photographs in this collection were taken in the South during 1935; however, there are numerous images taken in other parts of the country during earlier and later years of the Depression.

### **Note on Cataloging the Collection**

The RA/FSA prints did not come to ICP with any information regarding titles. The titles in the Contents of Collection section of this finding aid have been determined from a number of different sources. Some of the titles are from the prints themselves, when captions have been adhered to the verso. The majority of titles are from the Library of Congress, the repository for RA/FSA prints. In some cases, the LC prints corresponding to prints in ICP's collection do not have caption cards. In this situation, titles from similar prints have been used. This manner of titling is consistent with how the LC catalogs their prints; when there are no caption cards for RA/FSA prints, the LC cataloger has the option of devising a title from a similar print.

A small number of prints do not have titles on the recto or verso, have not been found on the LC website, and are not similar to any prints on the website. These prints have been assigned descriptive titles, in brackets.



## Contents of Collection

### Unidentified Photographer

[1020.1975](#)

Smoke cloud from forest fire on Tea Kettle Mountain, Flathead National Forest, Montana, ca. 1932

[1021.1975](#)

Ouachita National Forest, Arkansas. Abandoned homestead along No. 27 Highway between Norman and Mt. Ida, Montgomery County, 1932

[1022.1975](#)

[Three Unidentified Women], ca. 1932

1023.1975

A beautiful harvesting scene cutting wheat near York, Pennsylvania, 1907

1024.1975

[Unidentified Woman], ca. 1935

1025.1975

[Unidentified Man and Woman], ca. 1930

1026.1975

Example of bad housing conditions, ca. 1935

1034.1975

[Workers in Tunnel], ca. 1932

1035.1975

[Unidentified Man], ca. 1932

1036.1975

[Unidentified Man], ca. 1932

1037.1975

[Unidentified Man], ca. 1932

### Lewis Wickes Hine

[1029.1975](#)

This family in Pulaski County, Arkansas, was one of the Red Cross beneficiaries in the drought relief work. The mother in a sanitarium, the oldest daughter and the grandmother, were the main stay in keeping the humble home together, ca. 1930

[1030.1975](#)

Awaiting Red Cross garden seed in Cleveland, Mississippi. A good type, ca. 1930

[1031.1975](#)

[Unidentified Child, Paintsville, Kentucky], ca. 1930



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1032.1975  
[Unidentified Man, Lonoke County, Arkansas], ca. 1930

1033.1975  
[Unidentified Child], ca. 1930

**Ben Shahn**

1027.1975  
Trische home, Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana, October 1935

1028.1975  
Church at Natchez, Mississippi, October 1935

1038.1975  
Child musicians, Asheville, North Carolina, 1937

1039.1975  
Mrs. Mary McLean, Skyline Farms, Alabama, 1937

1040.1975  
Painting class in school, Westmoreland Homesteads, Pennsylvania, 1937

1041.1975  
Painting class in school, Westmoreland Homesteads, Pennsylvania, 1937

1042.1975  
Painting class in school, Westmoreland Homesteads, Pennsylvania, 1937

1043.1975  
Painting class in school, Westmoreland Homesteads, Pennsylvania, 1937

1044.1975  
Painting class in school, Westmoreland Homesteads, Pennsylvania, 1937

1045.1975  
Miners at Calumet, Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, October 1935

1046.1975  
Sharecroppers, Pulaski County, Arkansas, October 1935

1047.1975  
Squatter's camp, Route 70, Arkansas, October 1935

1048.1975  
Squatter's camp, Route 70, Arkansas, October 1935

1049.1975  
[Unidentified Man, Arkansas], October 1935

1050.1975  
Jaspar Lancaster, Arkansas rehabilitation client, October 1935



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1051.1975

[Unidentified Man, Pulaski County, Arkansas], October 1935

1052.1975

Poverty on the march, a destitute Ozark family, Arkansas, October 1935

1053.1975

Poverty on the march, a destitute Ozark family, Arkansas, October 1935

1054.1975

Poverty on the march, a destitute Ozark family, Arkansas, October 1935

1055.1975

Rehabilitation client, Arkansas, October 1935

1056.1975

Wife of sharecropper, Pulaski County, Arkansas, October 1935

1057.1975

Natchez, Mississippi, October 1935

1058.1975

[Unidentified Group, Natchez, Mississippi], October 1935

1059.1975

Negro quarter, Natchez, Mississippi. The home of a Negro family with a Negro man and a woman looking out a window, October 1935

1060.1975

West Memphis, Arkansas, October 1935

1061.1975

[Unidentified Levee Worker, Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana], October 1935

1062.1975

[Unidentified Levee Worker, Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana], October 1935

1063.1975

[Unidentified Levee Workers, Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana], October 1935

1064.1975

[Unidentified Levee Worker, Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana], October 1935

1065.1975

Street scene, Natchez, Mississippi, October 1935

1066.1975

Scene in Natchez, Mississippi, October 1935

1067.1975

[Unidentified Woman, Arkansas], October 1935



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1068.1975

Church in Louisiana, October 1935

1069.1975

Tomb painter in cemetery at Pointe a la Hache, Louisiana, October 1935

1070.1975

Purseglove Mine, Scotts Run, West Virginia, October 1935

1071.1975

Liberty, unincorporated, Scotts Run, West Virginia. Negro family living in Moose Hall, October 1935

1072.1975

Liberty, unincorporated, Scotts Run, West Virginia. Negro family living in Moose Hall, October 1935

1073.1975

Striking miners, Scotts Run, West Virginia, October 1935

1074.1975

[Unidentified Group, Scotts Run, West Virginia], October 1935

1075.1975

Cattle dealer in western West Virginia, October 1935

1076.1975

Omar, West Virginia, October 1935

1077.1975

Typical folk art, Middlesboro, Kentucky, October 1935

1078.1975

Maynardville, Tennessee, October 1935

1079.1975

Railroad yard at Williamson, West Virginia, October 1935

1080.1975

Maynardville, Tennessee, October 1935

1081.1975

Railroad yard at Williamson, West Virginia, October 1935

1082.1975

[Unidentified Children, Hammond, Louisiana], October 1935

1083.1975

Car belonging to strawberry picker, Hammond, Louisiana, October 1935

1084.1975

Picking cotton on Alexander plantation, Pulaski County, Arkansas, October 1935



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1085.1975

Omar, West Virginia, 1937

1086.1975

Omar, West Virginia, October 1935

1087.1975

Omar, West Virginia, October 1935

1088.1975

Men loafing in Crossville, Tennessee, 1937

1089.1975

Horse and wagon, Crossville, Tennessee, 1937

1090.1975

Horse and wagon, Crossville, Tennessee, 1937

1091.1975

Post Office, Crossville, Tennessee, 1937

1092.1975

Bus station, Crossville, Tennessee, 1937

1093.1975

Puppets for the show, Red House, West Virginia, 1937

1094.1975

Puppets for the show, Red House, West Virginia, 1937

1095.1975

Medicine show, Huntingdon, Tennessee, October 1935

1096.1975

Puppeteers, Red House, West Virginia, 1937

## **Dorothea Lange**

1097.1975

Housing for Oklahoma refugees, California, February 1936

1098.1975

Imperial Valley, California, Mexican. He tells his story: he helped drive the French out of Mexico, fought against Maximilian, and he has, by serving the crops for many years, help build up Imperial Valley, March 1935

1099.1975

Oklahoma dust bowl refugees, San Fernando, California, June 1935

1100.1975

Homes of Mexican field laborers, Brawley, Imperial Valley, California, June 1935

1101.1975

[House, Marysville, California], ca. 1935



1102.1975  
[Backyard], ca. 1935

### **Theodor Jung**

1103.1975  
Client whose property has been optioned by the government, Brown County, Indiana, October 1935

1104.1975  
Farmer, local type, Brown County, Indiana, October 1935

1105.1975  
Client whose property has been optioned by the government, Brown County, Indiana, October 1935

1106.1975  
Prospective clients whose property has been optioned by the government, Brown County, Indiana, October 1935

1107.1975  
Settler, eighty years old, whose property has been optioned by the government, Garrett County, Maryland, September 1935

### **Carl Mydans**

1108.1975  
Interior of Ozarks cabin housing six people, Missouri, May 1936

1109.1975  
[Backyard, Cincinnati, Ohio], ca. 1935

1110.1975  
Kitchen, white family, Hamilton County, Ohio, December 1935

1111.1975  
CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) boys at work, Prince George's County, Maryland, 1936

### **Arthur Rothstein**

1112.1975  
[Children of John Wilson], ca. 1935

1113.1975  
[Unidentified Man with Bull], ca. 1935

1114.1975  
Rehabilitation client, Washington County, Arkansas, August 16, 1935

1115.1975  
[General Store and Post Office, Madison County, Arkansas], ca. 1935



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1116.1975

Resettled farmer clipping mule, Grady County, Georgia, August 1935

1117.1975

Lunchtime, Pulaski County, Arkansas, August 17, 1935

1118.1975

[Two Unidentified Men, Wolf Creek Farms, Georgia], September 11, 1935

1119.1975

Miller at Nethers, Virginia, October 1935

1120.1975

Young farmer who has been resettled, Penderlea, North Carolina, August 1935

1121.1975

Postmaster Brown at Old Rag, Shenandoah National Park, Virginia, 1935

1122.1975

Russ Nicholson, grandfather of all the Nicholsons in Nicholson Hollow, Shenandoah National Park, Virginia, October 1935

1123.1975

Russ Nicholson, grandfather of all the Nicholsons in Nicholson Hollow, Virginia, October 1935

1124.1975

Interior of mountain farmhouse, Appalachian Mountains near Marshall, North Carolina, March 1936



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