

Documentary Photography

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HOW IT BEGAN

The most important aspect of documentary photography is that they tell a true story

- Since photography captures images from the real world, it has always been valued for its honesty and accuracy. Because of this, documentary photography began soon after photography was invented in 1839.
- Within a few years of its invention, travel photographer Francis Frith began to photograph exotic locations like Egypt for eager audiences in England and Europe.







With the rapid expansion into the western frontier of the United States in the mid and late 1800's, people were becoming exposed to the vast wilderness, the wide expanses and natural beauty of the land through the use of photography. Photographers, such as Carleton Watkins, Timothy O'Sullivan, and William Henry Jackson, made incredible images of the land that helped convince the U.S. Congress to grant Yosemite Valley to California as a state park in 1864, and later, making Yellowstone a national park in 1872.



Carleton E. Watkins, View from the Sentinel Dome, Yosemite, 1865-66



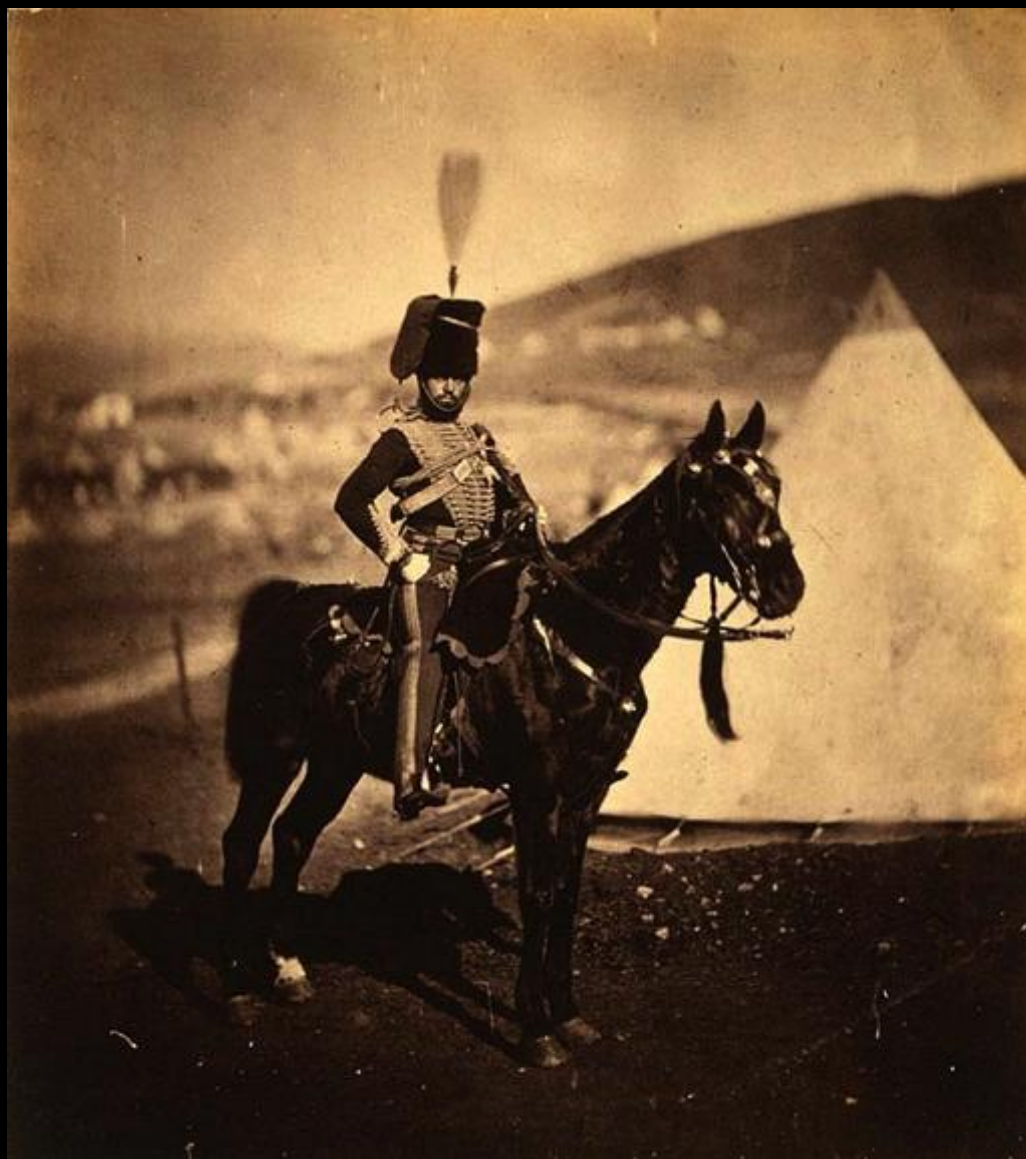


Timothy H. O'Sullivan, Tertiary Conglomerates Utah, 1869. U.S. Geological Survey.



This 1882 Photo shows Cliff Palace before excavation.
Photo: (William Henry Jackson, DPL, Western History Collection)

- Rodger Fenton used a camera to document the Crimean War in Europe. He took the first war photographs, but they were mostly landscapes and posed group shots of soldiers. It wasn't until the American Civil War (1861-1865) that Matthew Brady and Timothy O' Sullivan would photograph actual battles and reveal the human casualties of war.
- People who wanted to bring about social change soon began to use photography for their causes.



Cornet Henry John Wilkin, 11th Hussars.





Incidents of the war. A harvest of death, Gettysburg, PA. Dead Federal soldiers on battlefield.
Timothy H. O'Sullivan. Date between 4 July 1863 and 7 July 1863

Good photojournalism takes a stand on a subject or an event and has a definite point of view. The attitudes and feelings of the photographers come through their images. Many times it's this emotional content that connects the viewer to the image and its subject, and creates a hard-hitting photograph.



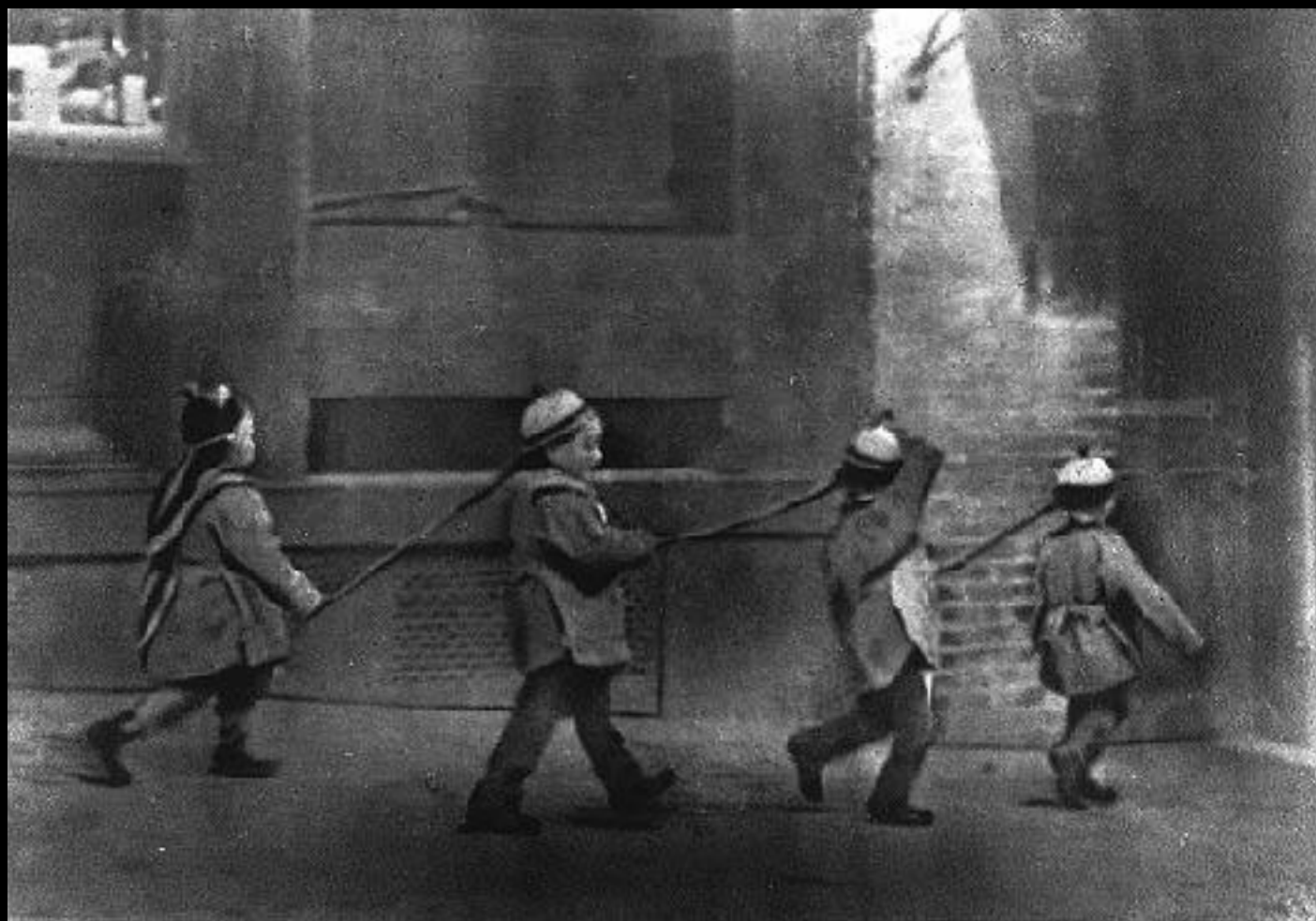
Art Exemplar
Title: Untitled (sodhouse and family)
Artist: Solomon Butcher (1856–1927)

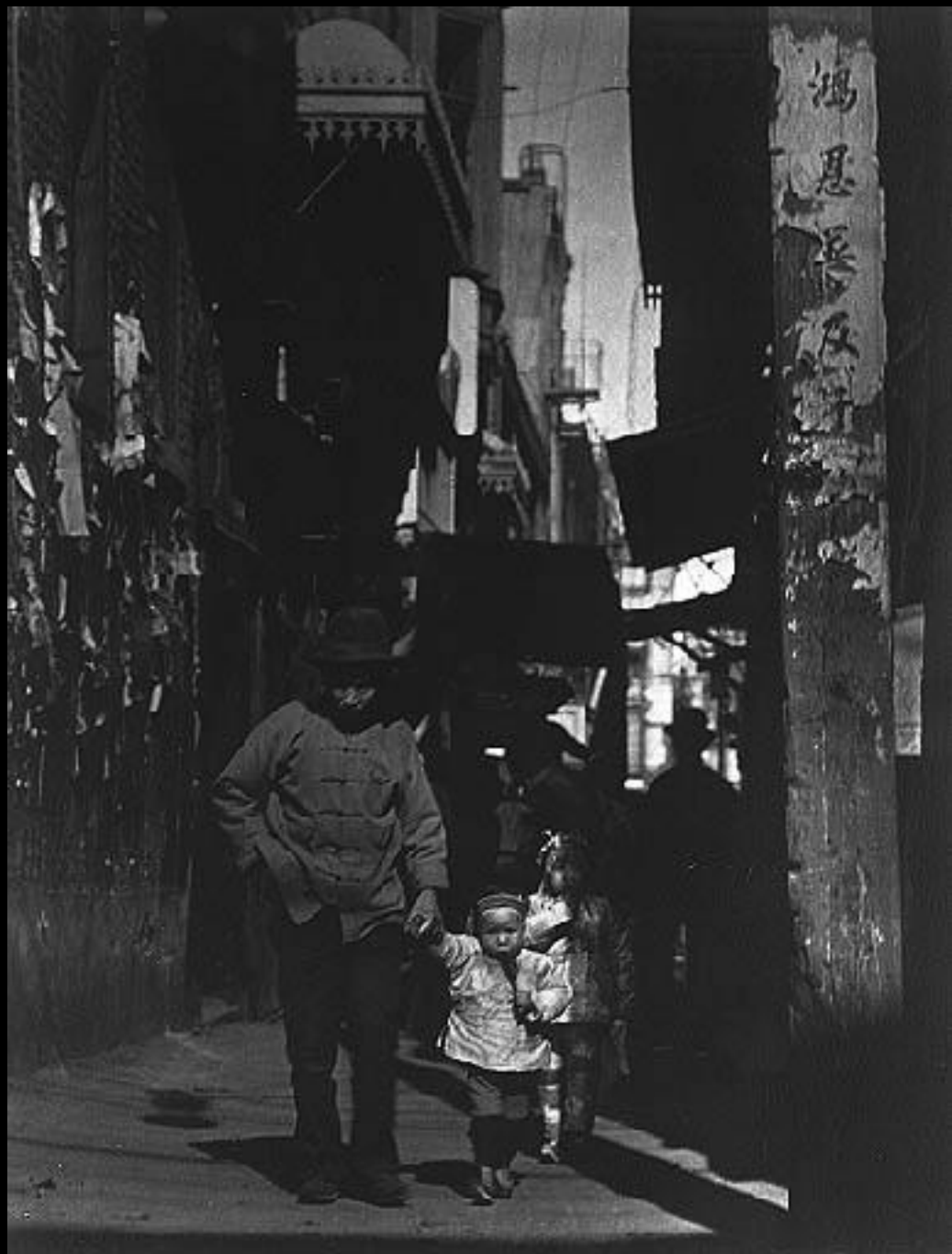


Solomon D. Butcher poses with his first Nebraska home, a prairie dugout where he survived the winter of 1880 after heading west from Virginia. After a two-week career as a farmer and an inconclusive stint as a medical student, Butcher became an itinerant photographer, chronicling the homesteads of Custer County, Nebraska, and selling prints of his portraits to the proud pioneers.



Pictures of Old Chinatown, by Arnold Genthe, 1908.









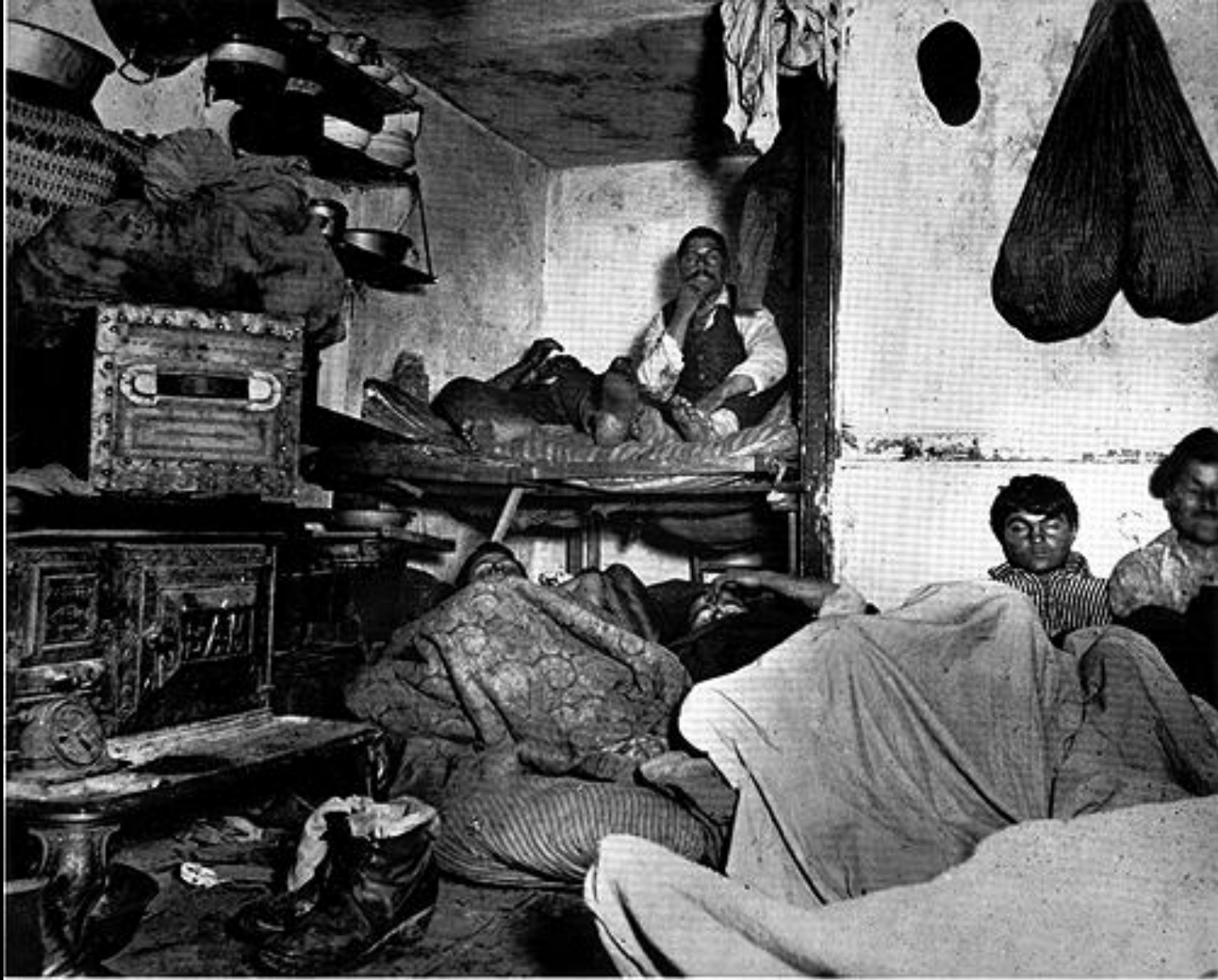
The job of the
photojournalist is to
inform us, intrigue us,
and make us care, but
never to deceive us.

While working as a police reporter for the New York Tribune newspaper, Jacob Riis investigated the slums of the Lower East, documenting the poor living conditions through his writings and photographs which were published in his landmark book, *How The Other Half Lives*, in 1890. His extensive reportage and photographs served as a catalyst for the reform of building codes and landlord-tenant relations through-out the city of New York.





Jacob Riis, "Italian Mother and Baby, Ragpicker, New York," ca. 1889-1890.



Jacob Riis, Five Cents Lodging, Bayard Street, c. 1889





Lewis Hine worked as a staff photographer for the National Child Labor Committee to provide visual evidence of the social conditions facing children at the dawn of the Industrial Age in the early 1900's in an effort to abolish child labor. After leaving his position as a teacher in 1908, Hine made thousands of photographs, often working undercover, of children working across the country in sweatshops, textile mills, factories and mines. He wrote captions for the photographs based on interviews he would conduct with children while photographing them.

Presentations of the photographs and statistical facts further illustrated and heightened awareness of the plight of child labor which would eventually lead to Congress passing the Keating-Owens Act that established child labor standards in 1916.

- From 1908 until 1930 Lewis Hine photographed and campaigned to change child labor laws in the US. Hine made images that highlighted the dangers that many children faced every day of their lives while working in mines and factories. Because of his photography laws were changed.

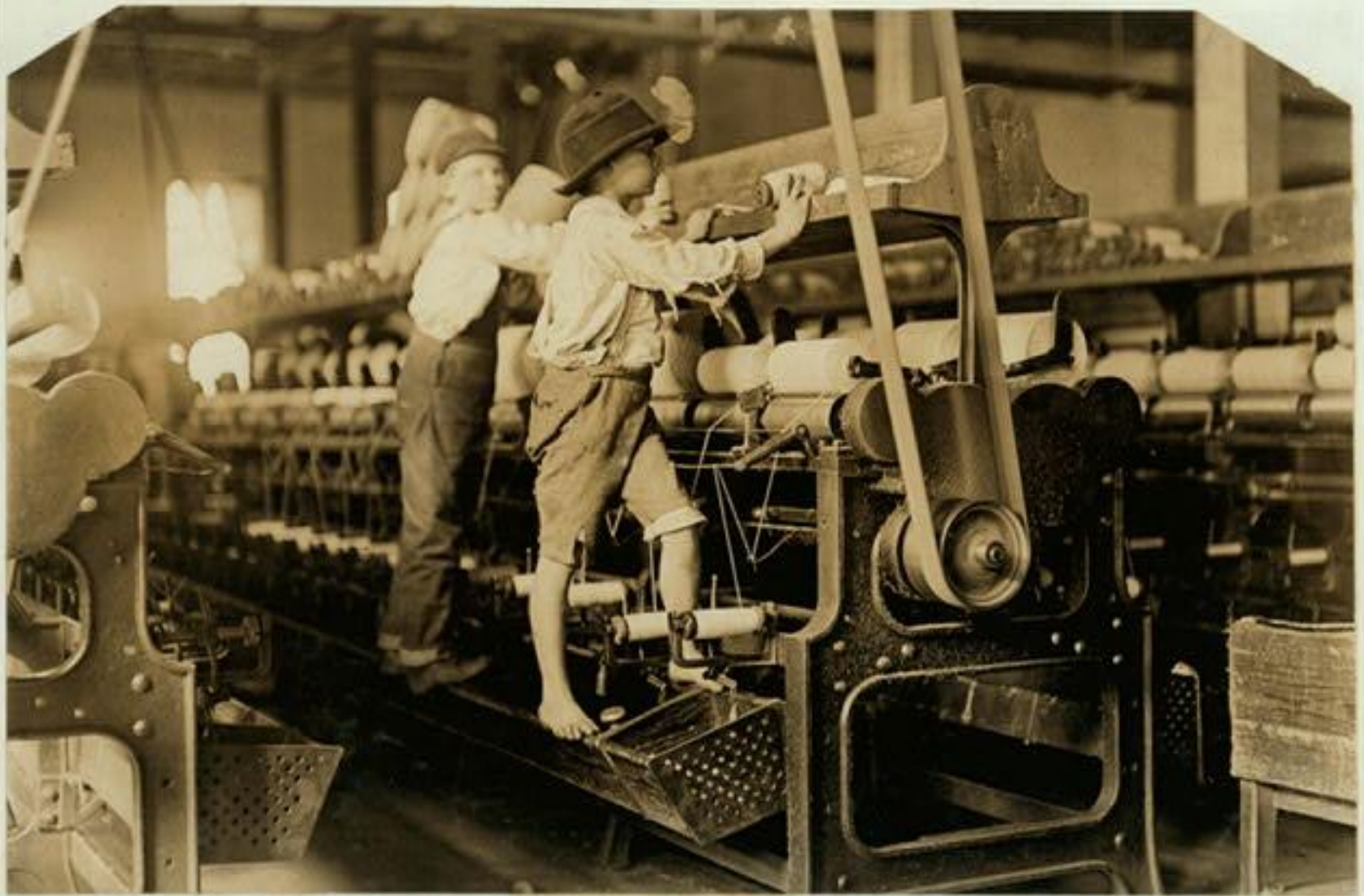




Child worker in cotton mill, 1908 Lewis Hine 1980



11 A.M. Monday, May 9th, 1910. Newsies at Skeeter's Branch, Jefferson near Franklin, St. Louis. View full size. Lewis Hine.







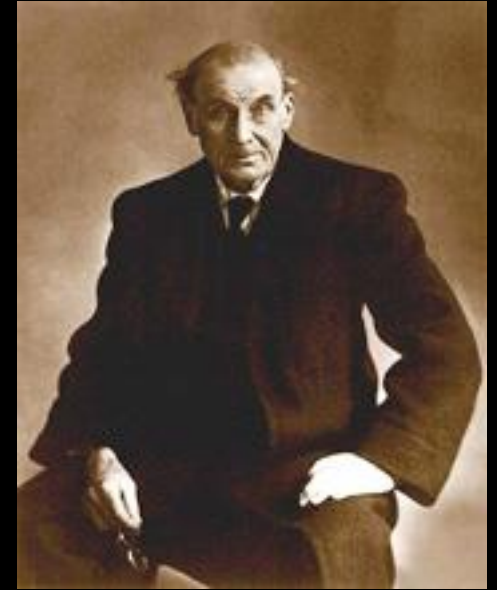
LEWIS HINE
Trapper Boy
1908



Lewis Hine, Breaker Boys, 1912



Eugène Atget was a French photographer noted for his photographs documenting the architecture and street scenes of Paris during the 1920's.







Eugene Atget Avenue de Gobleins



Eugene Atget, Trianon, Versailles, 1923-24

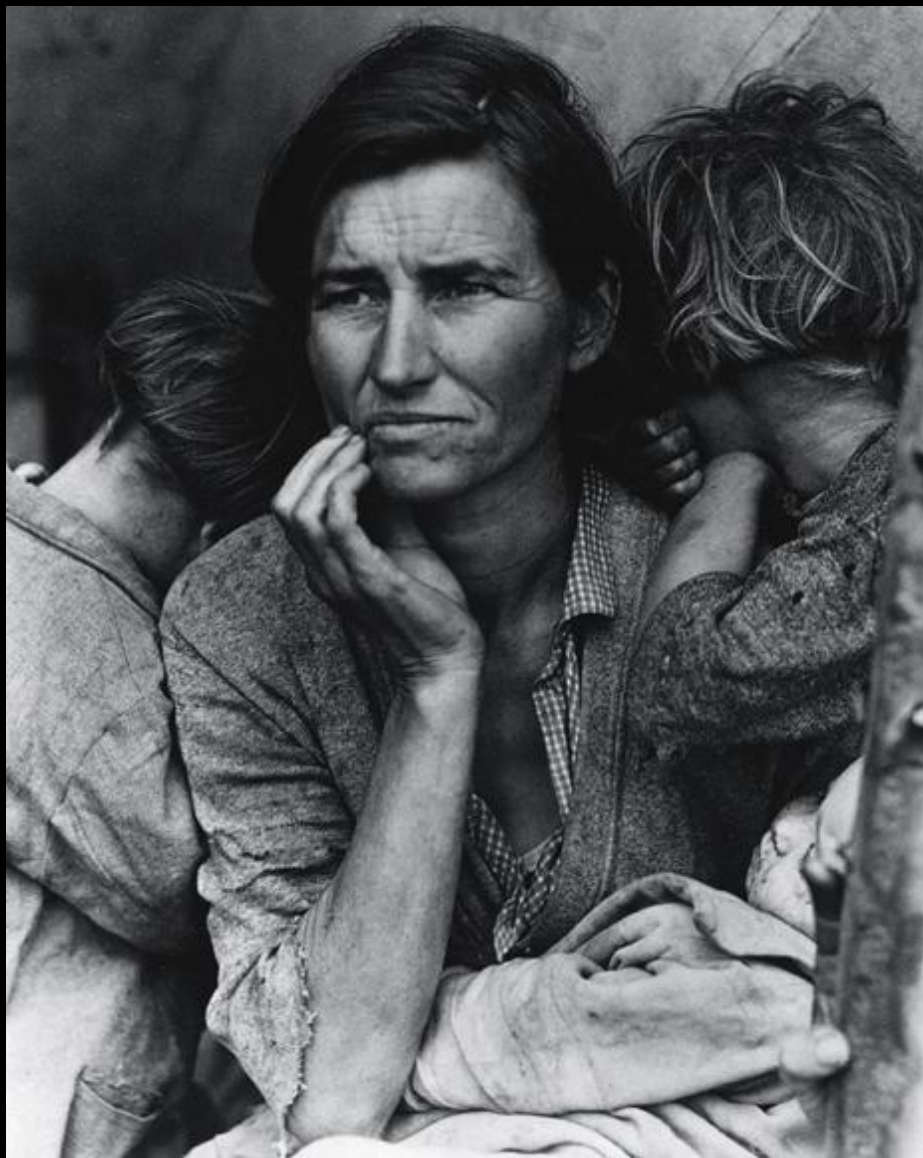
Between 1935 and 1943, the FSA Photographers (Dorothea Lange, Walker Evans, Arthur Rothstein, Marion Post Wolcott and others) made nearly 80,000 photographs for the Farm Security Administration to document the impact of the Depression on the nation. Many of these photographs focused on rural America and the plight of farmers. The photographs were distributed to newspapers and magazines throughout the country to build support and promote the New Deal policies and programs of President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

- Farm Security Administration Photographers

Initially created as a part of the New Deal in the US, the (FSA) was an effort during the Depression to combat American rural poverty.



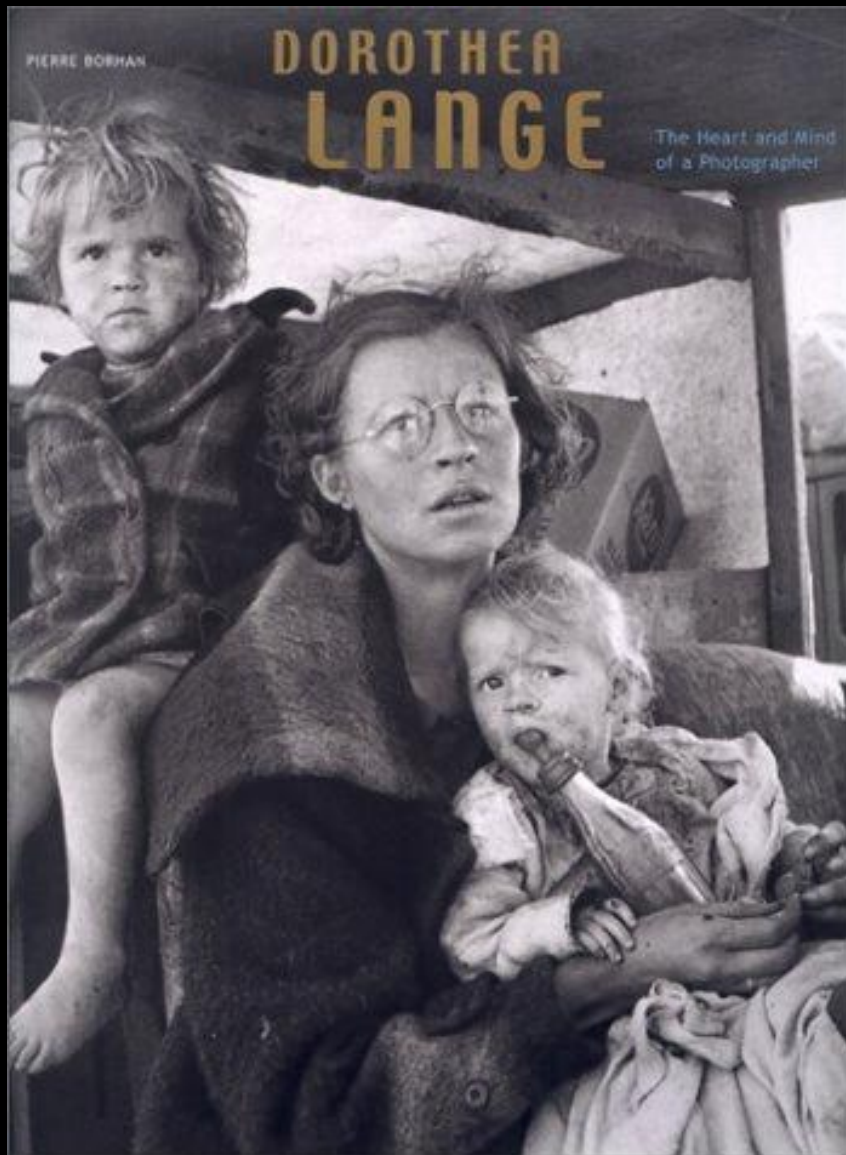




PIERRE BÖRMAN

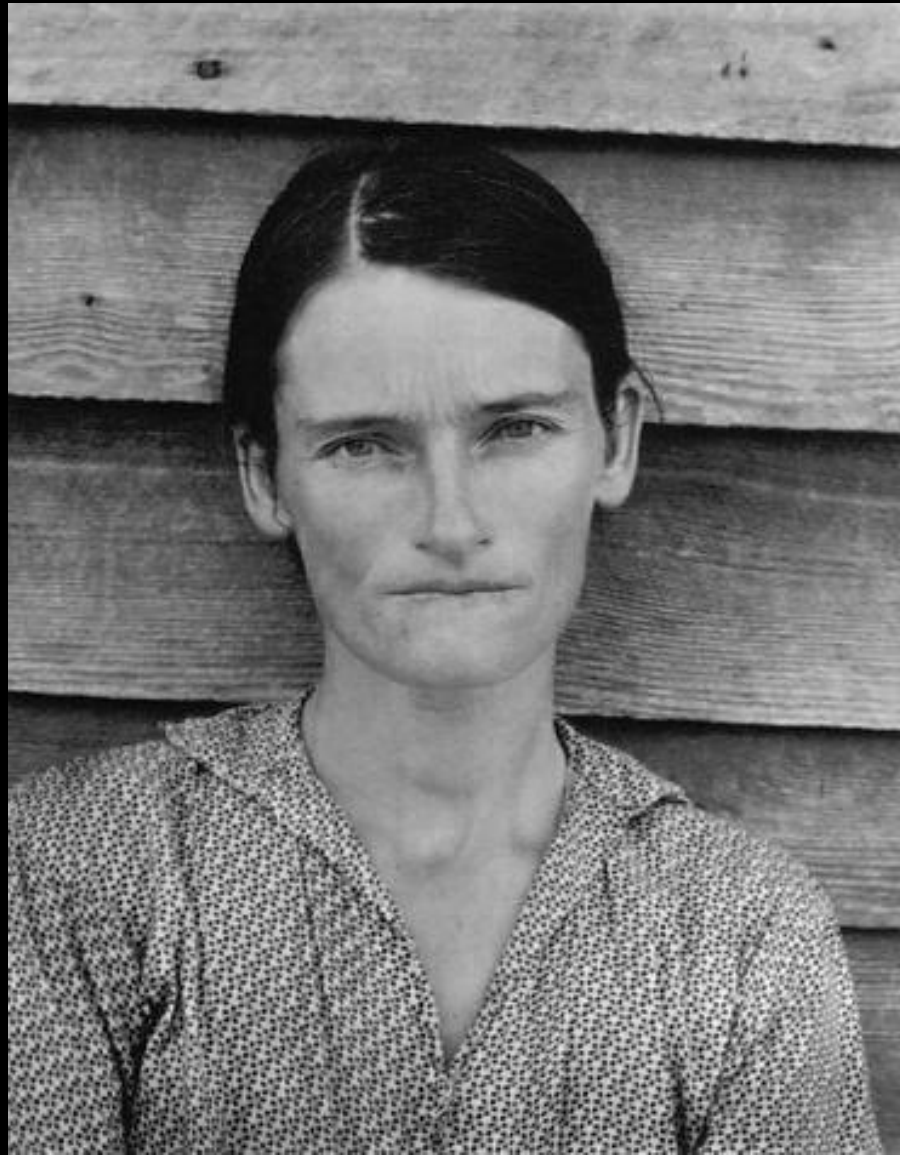
DOROTHEA LANGE

The Heart and Mind
of a Photographer





Bud Fields and His Family, Hale County, Alabama, photograph by Walker Evans, c. 1936-37







Walker Evans





Jack Deleano





"At the bus station in Durham, North Carolina." May 1940, Jack Delano.



Utuaado, Puerto Rico. Children in the slum area