

Dorothea Lange
in Oregon



1939 Farm Security
Administration Photos



Dorothea, Berkeley, 1936

Photo taken by 19-year-old family friend Rondal Partridge

image unavailable for additional reproduction in any setting

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All members of the congregation,
Friends church (Quaker).
Dead Ox Flat, Malheur County, Oregon
Dorothea Lange, FSA, 1939

Dorothea Lange Chronology (1895-1965)

- 1895 May 25 Dorothea Nutzhorn (Lange) born in Hoboken, New Jersey
- 1902 Contracts polio
- 1907 Henry Nutzhorn abandons the family during economic depression;
Moves with mother Joanna and brother Martin to grandmother Lange's house in Hoboken
- 1913 Graduates from high school, enrolls in New York Training School for Teachers
- 1914 Grandmother Sophie Lange dies;
Begins a series of apprenticeships in photography
- 1917 Takes Clarence White's photography course at
Columbia University
- 1918 Drops the name Nutzhorn assuming mother's maiden name;
Embarks on a trip around the world; meets photographer
Imogen Cunningham and Cunningham's husband, artist
Roi Partridge in San Francisco; opens a portrait studio
- 1920 Marries artist Maynard Dixon (born 1875, California)
- 1925 Birth of son Daniel Dixon
- 1928 Birth of son John Dixon
- 1931 Family in Taos, New Mexico; photographs Hopi Indians
- 1933 Begins photographing on streets of San Francisco
(*"White Angel Bread Line"*)
- 1934 Exhibits street photos at Willard Van Dyke's gallery



Dorothea & her brother Martin
circa 1905, photographer unknown



First husband artist Maynard Dixon
circa 1920, photographer unknown

Dixon sketched in Eastern Oregon in 1901

- in San Francisco (*"Man Beside Wheelbarrow"*);
Paul Schuster Taylor (born 1895, Sioux City, Iowa) asks
to publish her photograph of San Francisco general strike
in *Survey Graphic*
- 1935 Hired as "field investigator, photographer" for the
Resettlement Administration's Division of
Information; transferred to the Resettlement
Administration's Historical Section at request of
Roy Stryker; photographers Ben Shahn and
Walker Evans impressed by Lange's work;
Divorces Maynard Dixon and marries Paul Taylor
- 1936 Makes *"Migrant Mother,"* her most famous
photograph, in Nipomo, California
- Oct Dropped from Resettlement Administration by Stryker;
- 1937 Rehired by Stryker (full-time, Jan to Oct); laid off for
second time in November; Resettlement Administration
renamed Farm Security Administration (FSA)
- 1938 Rehired in the fall by Stryker

1939 Jan	Photographs FSA camps, works on <i>American Exodus</i> ;
Feb-Mar	Photographs U.S. 99 and San Joaquin, Imperial, and Salinas valleys;
1939 July	Works with Margaret Jarman Hagood and Harriet Herring on documentation of North Carolina Piedmont before returning to California;
	Photographs in Willamette and Yakima valleys, Klamath Basin, central Washington;
Sept	Writes captions for North Carolina work; returns to Oregon (Klamath Basin);
Oct	Rebuffs Stryker's offer of transfer to a job with filmmaker Pare Lorenz (October 5); continues work in Oregon (Willamette Valley, Columbia Basin, Malheur County); photographs northern Idaho; returns to California via Klamath Basin; receives telegram from Stryker terminating her job and asking her to end all work by Nov. 30;
Nov	Writes Pacific NW photo captions; job ends
1940 Jan	Reynal and Hitchcock publish <i>American Exodus</i>
1941	Receives a Guggenheim to "photograph people in selected rural American communities"
1942	Photographs evacuation and internment of Japanese Americans working for War Relocation Authority
1944	Works with Ansel Adams on a <i>Fortune</i> story about workers in Richmond, California shipyards
1945-48	Surgeries and illnesses; occasional photographing near home
1949	Featured in "Sixty Photographs by Six Women" curated by Edward Steichen for the Museum of Modern Art in New York
1951	Participates in Aspen Conference on Photography; becomes a founding member of Aperture
1953	Completes story for <i>Life</i> on three Mormon communities with Ansel Adams and Daniel Dixon
1958	Selected as one of nineteen photographers by Beaumont and Nancy Newhall for their book <i>Masters of Photography</i> ;
	Accompanies Taylor to Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, Burma, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Afghanistan
1960	Travels with Taylor in Ecuador and Venezuela;
	Publishes "The American Farm Woman"
1964	John Szarkowski, curator of photography at New York's Museum of Modern Art, proposes a major Lange retrospective
1965 Oct 11	Dies of cancer
1966	Retrospective exhibition opens at MOMA
1967	Publication of Lange's <i>The American Country Woman</i> by Amon Carter Museum



Dorothea & second husband Paul Taylor, 1939
photo Imogene Cunningham



School friends, San Francisco, 1942
photo Dorothea Lange

"There I was, sitting on a big rock. And right in the middle of it, with thunder bursting and the wind whistling, it came to me what I had to do was to take pictures and concentrate on people, only people, all kinds of people, people who paid me and people who didn't."

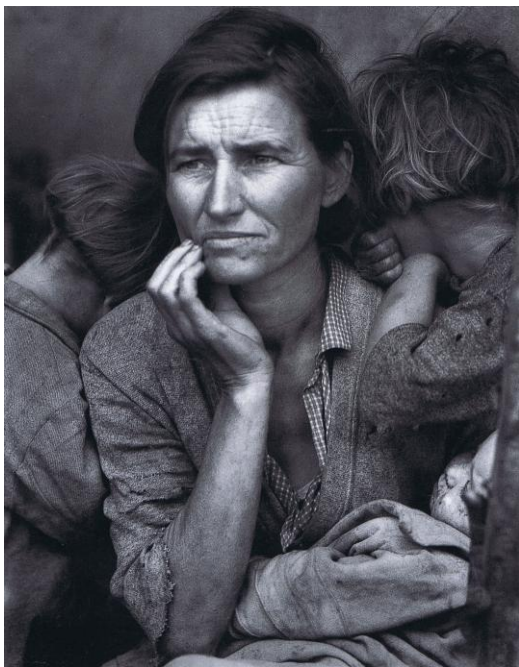
Dorothea Lange, Fallen Leaf Lake, California, 1934

Chronology adapted from: *Daring to Look: Dorothea Lange's Photographs & Reports from the Field*, Anne Whiston Spirn, The University of Chicago Press, 2008
Photographs and quote from *Restless Spirit*, Elizabeth Partridge, Viking, 1998

Dorothea Lange

The Farm Security Administration's best-known photographer, Dorothea Lange, was born Dorothea Nutzhorn in Hoboken, New Jersey in 1895. At age seven, she experienced a bout with polio that left her with a slight, life-long limp. Five years later, her father abandoned the family. Undeterred from her goal of becoming a camera artist, Lange found work as a photographer's assistant in New York studios and took classes at Columbia University.

After adopting her German mother's maiden name, she moved to San Francisco, where she found a job in a photo supply house before establishing her own studio and specializing in portraits of the social elite. By the early 1930s, however, Lange's populist sensibilities led her into the streets to record images of poor, unemployed, and migrant families. After marrying Berkeley economist Paul Taylor in 1935, she collaborated on an extended illustrated study of Dust Bowl migrants.



Hired for the Farm Security Administration by Roy Stryker, Lange continued to focus on migrant families. In "Toward Los Angeles" (1937) she depicted two ragged hitchhikers striding past a highway billboard that read "Next Time Try the Train — Relax." Another famous image showed a family carrying their clothing in a wagon and baby carriage as they moved on foot down an Oklahoma highway. Lange's most widely acclaimed photograph is "Migrant Mother" (1936 – left), a picture taken in Nipomo, California that remains the single most significant icon of the Great Depression and a testament to the contrast between the subject's inner strength and pride and the impoverished nature of her surroundings.

In the late summer and fall of 1939, Lange traveled to Oregon and the Pacific Northwest. She produced over five hundred photographs in Oregon of the people and rural environment of the Willamette Valley, Columbia Basin, Josephine County, the Klamath Basin, and Malheur County.

Forty eight of the original images, preserved in the Library of Congress, have been digitally printed, enlarged, and mounted for exhibition by Oregon Cultural Heritage Commission. The first exhibition opened in October 2009 at the Littman Gallery at Portland State University. Subsequent showings have taken place in Bay City, Washington County, Ontario, and the University of Oregon Law School in Eugene, all in Oregon.

The Farm Security Administration

Among the many Franklin Delano Roosevelt-era agencies birthed during the Great Depression is the Farm Security Administration (FSA). The FSA succeeded the Resettlement Administration, a New Deal agency created in 1935 to transfer poor farmers to richer soil, improve cultivation techniques, and assist agricultural laborers. Under the leadership of economist Rexford Tugwell, the bureau sought to build support for its goals through publicity and a documentary photography project administered by Roy Emerson Stryker, who hoped to provide visual evidence of the agency's accomplishments to Congress and the public and establish an historical record of its activities.

Hiring a dozen photographers, Stryker set out to portray the suffering of rural Americans in terms understandable to the urban middle class. He insisted, however, on the need to balance off images of economic distress with evidence of the survival of traditional values and family cohesion. Stryker's ground rules stipulated that no representation ridicule its object or present a cliché.

Photographers for the Resettlement Administration and the FSA amassed an unprecedented documentation of American life though some 270,000 pictures. "It was our job to document the problems of the Depression," photographer Arthur Rothstein once observed, "so that we could justify the New Deal Legislation that was designed to alleviate them."

Three FSA photographers worked in Oregon – Dorothea Lange, Russell Lee, and Arthur Rothstein – all vividly capturing the Oregon scene.

Lange took her last photos for the FSA here, fired for the third and final time by Stryker. Returning to her home in Berkeley, California, she completed her field notes and finished her assignment November 30, 1939.



Vernon Evans (with his family) of Lemmon, South Dakota, near Missoula, Montana on Highway 10. Leaving grasshopper-ridden and drought-stricken area for a new start in Oregon or Washington. Expects to arrive at Yakima in time for hop picking. Live in tent. Makes about two hundred miles a day in Model T Ford.

Photo and field notes by Arthur Rothstein, July, 1936.

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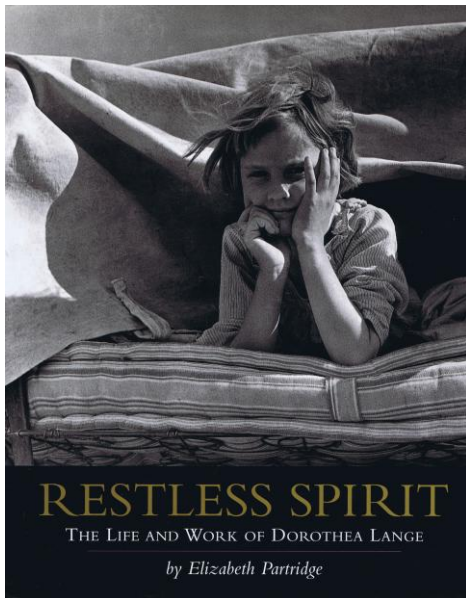
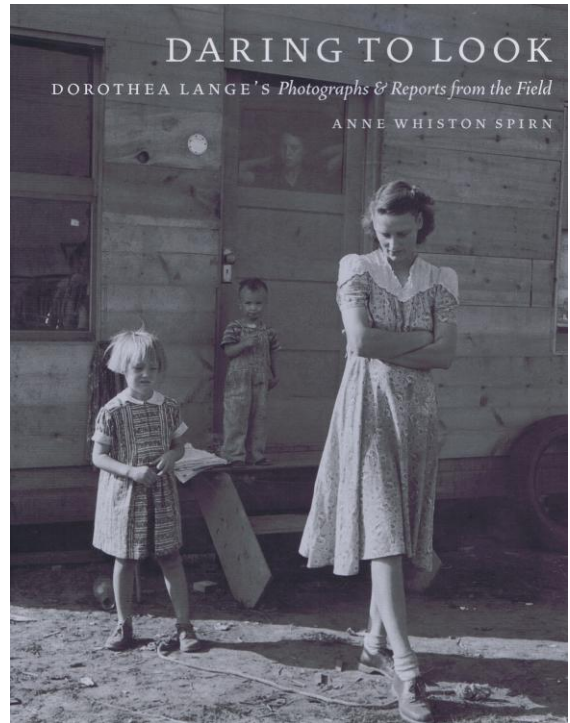
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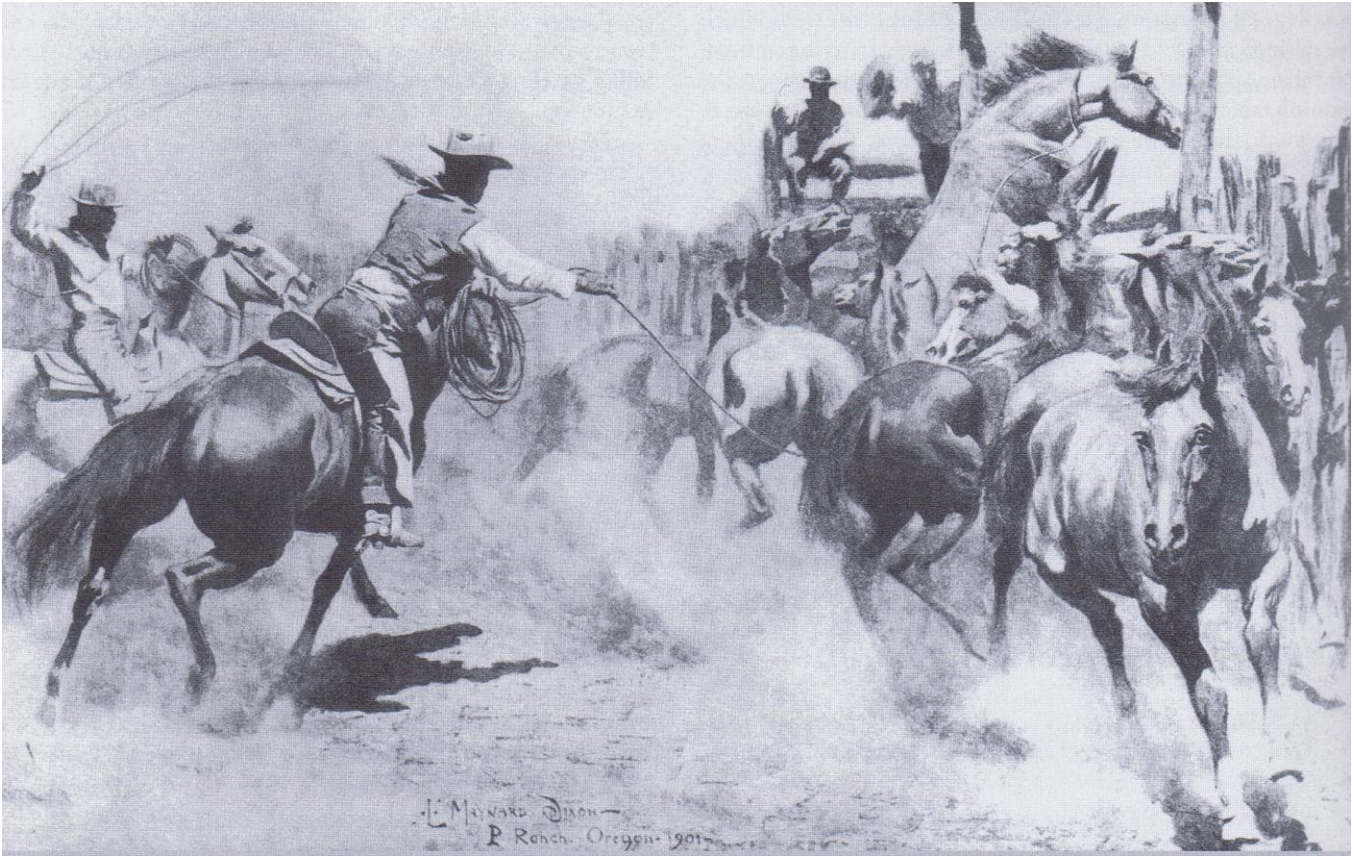
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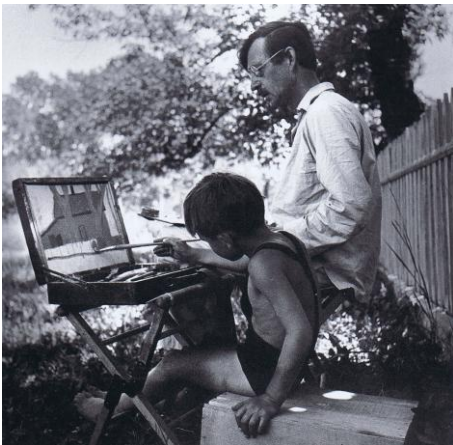
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Maynard Dixon at the P Ranch, 1901



This illustration by Maynard Dixon was published by *Harper's Magazine* after he and fellow artist Ed Borein took a horseback trip through Harney County in 1901. Dixon reflects the image of the vaqueros who worked for the big cattle ranches in Southeastern Oregon at the turn of the century. The young men became two of the most prominent western artists of their day.



Maynard Dixon and sons Daniel (left – 1930s) and John (right – 1929), his children with Dorothea Lange. A dynamic, restless relationship (1920-1935), Lange often subsumed her career in motherhood and supporting Dixon's artistic efforts until their divorce.

Both photos by Dorothea Lange



Credits

This exhibition produced by Oregon Cultural Heritage Commission.

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Dorothea Lange Committee: Lois Leonard, Mike Munk, David A. Horowitz & David Milholland.

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Scholarly consultation: NYU history professor Linda Gordon. Gordoh's *Dorothea Lange: A Life Beyond Limits*, W. W. Norton & Company, 2009, was first released at this show's opening.

Dorothea Lange's work in the Pacific Northwest – her photographs and texts – was first featured by Anne Whiston Spirn in *Daring to Look*, University of Chicago Press, 2008.

Exhibition Images – U.S. Farm Security Administration, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, and Randal Partridge

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Willamette Valley

The bean crop requires a large number of harvesters for a few weeks in August of each year. Beans are trained up strings attached to cross wires similar to those in hop yards, only lower. Crops are grown mostly by small farmers. Pickers are partly local people, partly from nearby portions of Oregon, who work seasonally only in the bean crop, and partly migrants who follow the crops from harvest to harvest.

Most of the pickers camp on the land of the growers. Small farmers do not maintain organized, well-equipped camps. There is less formality and freer, more intimate relationship between small farmers and pickers than between the large growers and workers in California. There are one or two large camps which charge rental. 1939 pickers' wages are \$1 per 100 lbs.



A small Farmer: "We watch all the time for agitators. An agitator will turn the whole yard upside down in two hours."

Excerpt from Dorothea Lange's field notes on the string bean harvest in Marion County.



001 Migratory child at end of day in bean pickers' camp near West Stayton, Oregon.

*sponsored by Hilda & Bill Welch
in memory of the world's children*



002 Migratory boy, aged eleven, and his grandmother
work side by side picking hops. Started work at five a.m.
Photograph made at noon. Temperature 105 degrees.
Oregon, Polk County, near Independence

sponsored by David A. Horowitz
in memory of Mickey Levine (1913–1996)



003 Farm women, members of the “Helping Hand” club,
carefully roll up the quilt upon which they are working.
Near West Carlton, Yamhill County, Oregon

sponsored by Sandy Polishuk
in memory of Mary Catherine Lamb (1949–2009)



004 Here are the farmers who have bought machinery cooperatively. Photographed just before they go to dinner on the Miller farm where they are working.

By exchanging work there is no cash outlay and all are directly interested in completing the job so as to move on the next cooperator's place.

West Carlton, Yamhill County, Oregon

sponsored by Theresa Marquez

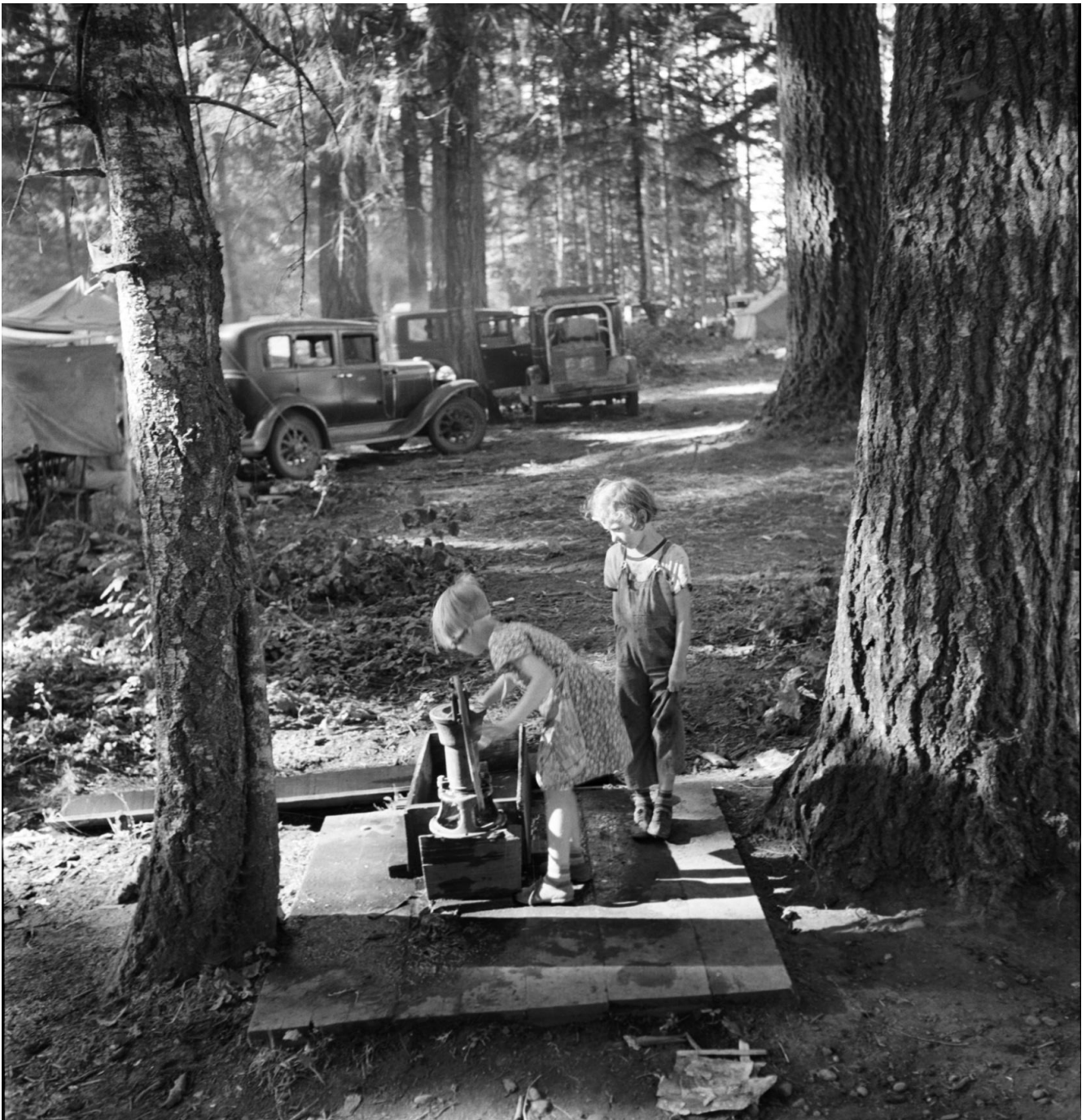
in honor of cooperators everywhere



005 Unemployed lumber worker goes with his wife to the bean harvest. Note social security number tattooed on his arm. Small farmers do not maintain organized, well-equipped camps. There is less formality and more intimate relationship between small farmers and pickers than between the large growers and pickers in California.

A small farmer: "We watch all the time for agitators. An agitator will turn the whole yard upside down in two hours."
Marion County, Oregon

sponsored by Phil Wikelund
Great Northwest Books



006 Children in large private bean pickers' camp. Pickers came from many states, from Oklahoma to North Dakota. Marion County, near West Stayton

*sponsored by Jean Anderson Pezzi & Ugo Pezzi
in memory of Roderick M. McCalley Sr. (1891-1965)*



007 Willamette Valley hop farmers in town hold their political forum on drug store corner. Independence, Oregon

sponsored by Gordon Rockett & Hazel Rigsby, Sallisaw, Oklahoma



008 Happy man on main street of a Willamette Valley town.
Independence, Polk County, Oregon

sponsored by Jim & Sue Kopp



009 Caption before agency editing: "Panaceas for poor people." Homemade, crudely painted signs proclaim the Townsend plan, a device for full employment and prosperity as well as a help to the aged.

Even Technocracy, with trim metal sign as befits an organization based on engineering principles, is advertised to meet weekly at the town library.

Salem, Oregon August 1939