

Weegee (Arthur Felig)

He captured tenement infernos, car crashes, and gangland executions. He found washed-up lounge singers and teenage murder suspects in paddy wagons and photographed them at their most vulnerable — or, as he put it, their most human. He caught couples kissing on their beach blankets on Coney Island and the late-night voyeurs on lifeguard stands watching them. And everywhere he went, he snatched images of people sleeping: drunks on park benches, whole families on Lower East Side fire escapes, men and women snoring in movie theaters. He was the supreme chronicler of the city at night. He was the only shutterbug that would make it to a murder scene before the cops.

Weegee loved New York and New York eventually loved Weegee.



Weegee's car-trunk lab

Weegee was born June 12, 1899, in Austria, under the name Usher Fellig. Shortly after he was born his father left for America, where he was a Rabbi while saving enough money to send for the rest of his family. At the age of ten, Weegee with his mother and three brothers, finally arrived to America. At Ellis Island, Weegee's name was changed from Usher to Arthur. (Aperture 5-9)

Early Life

As far as education, Weegee made it through the eighth grade. However, the family needed money and Weegee was needed to help work. He worked a lot of odd jobs: he helped his father with a push cart business, he even worked at a candy store for a while. It was when he had his picture taken by a street tintype photographer that he decided that this was what he was meant to do. Weegee often said that he was, "A natural-born photographer, with hypo in my blood." He

quickly ordered a tintype outfit from a Chicago mail-order house, and after a few months he got his first job as a commercial photographer. After a few years he left the studio, due to a disagreement on what he should be paid. He then bought a second-hand 5x7 view camera and rented a pony from a local stable. He named the pony "Hypo," and on the weekends when the kids were in their best clothes, he would walk around town putting kids on his pony and taking their picture. He would then develop the negatives, make prints, and go back to the families of the kids to try to sell them the photos.

Acme Newspictures

At the age of twenty-four, Weegee got his big break working for Acme Newspictures. Acme was the source for stock photos for their own paper and other papers around the country. Weegee started off working in the darkroom, developing other photographers' work for the paper. Occasionally, when all the other Acme photographers were busy or sleeping, he would get to go out at night and take pictures of emergencies. After a few years of working for Acme, Weegee started to get called to do assignments and cover stories. This was what he always wanted; the only problem was that he worked for Acme, and thus, he never got credit for the photos he turned in. In 1935 he got tired of doing other peoples' work and left Acme to go out and try to freelance his own work. The girls around Acme gave him the name "Weegee" after the board game. They said he always seemed to know where to be when a story broke.

Freelance Photographer

Weegee worked on his own as a free-lance photographer for the next ten years. He started to work out of Manhattan Police Headquarters; he would arrive around midnight and check the Teletype machine to see if any stories had broke. After a few years he decided he didn't want to wait for the news to come over the Teletype. He bought himself a 1938 Chevy Coupe and a press card, and he was allowed to have a police radio in the car (the only press photographer ever allowed to have a police radio in their car). Weegee's car was his

home away from home, his office on the road. In the trunk he kept everything he would need including a portable dark-room, extra cameras, flash bulbs, extra loaded holders, a typewriter, cigars, salami and a change of clothes. (Weegee by Weegee 52)

"I was no longer glued to the Teletype machine at police headquarters. I had my wings. I no longer had to wait for crime to come to me; I could go after it. The police radio was my life line. My camera... my life and my love... was my Aladdin's lamp." (Weegee by Weegee 52)

After ten years he published his first book, *The Naked City*, which was inspired by the city he loved. It was during these ten years that Weegee produced some of his most expressive and beautiful photos.

Photographic Training

Weegee never had any formal photographic training. He never heard of Alfred Stieglitz, Ansel Adams, or even the Museum of Modern Art. The work Weegee did came strictly from his heart. None of his photos were planned; his 4x5 speed graphic camera was preset at f/16 @ 1/200 of a second, with a focal distance of ten feet. All of his photos were taken at this setting with a flash. What photographic training Weegee may have needed to be a great photographer, he learned as he worked for Acme, or he just taught himself. Style, texture, or even quality of the photography did not matter much to Weegee. He was more concerned with capturing a moment of time on film. He recorded history as it happened. He had only a split second to capture the emotions of an event as they unfolded. A good example of this is the photograph of the Mother and Daughter crying as they watch another daughter and young baby burning to death inside a tenement fire. All that Weegee could really say about this photograph was, "I cried when I took this picture."

In 1939, Weegee took a portrait of a mother and her son in Harlem. Even a photograph that Weegee would consider to be a portrait showed an incredible amount of emotion. With a snap of the shutter he told the story of this poor woman. The way he positioned her and her son behind the broken glass is representative of the shattered life she lived. Yet even with despair all around her, she still has a look of hope in her eyes, as if she were saying that she cannot give up. She has a sense of pride as she holds her son. This is the power and gift that Weegee had with a camera.

It is impossible to look at a work by Weegee and not get emotionally involved. That was the whole point to his photographs — he wanted the viewer to get involved. On one of the first stories Weegee had to cover, he was asked to get photos of a kid that was abandoned by its mother. In his autobiography Weegee stated, "They (the cops) wanted pictures of the kid, so that the mother, seeing the picture in the papers, might become remorseful and come to claim the child." Weegee was ready to take a smiling picture when the nurse stopped him. The nurse stuck the baby with a pin, the kid started to cry and the nurse said "Now take a shot...This will bring the mother back." Luckily for the baby, this did bring the mother back. (Weegee by Weegee 56) Weegee had a job to do — this was the way he made a living. He had to make pictures that the newspapers would want to buy, and the newspapers wanted drama.

Being a free-lance photographer was not an easy job during this point in history. Not a lot of people could make it as long as Weegee had. Even when things were going bad, Weegee had good spirits about it. He was always able to find happiness in whatever he was doing. He loved people, he loved photographing people, and he loved being with people. In his work he confronted murder, brutality, children in need, brawls, the homeless, fires and victims. He also confronted people who were happy, lovers, celebrations and the end of the War. Weegee's work stands on its own — it's meant to be viewed one at a time, not as a group. With each shot, Weegee captured a truth that can never be recreated.

Weegee died of a brain tumor on December 26, 1968. Today Weegee is credited with ushering in the age of tabloid culture, while at the same time being revered for elevating the sordid side of human life to that of high art.

Bibliography

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5. Weegee, Andre Laude, Pantheon Books, New York, 1986.
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from <http://www.chrysler.org/weegee/biography/>

Margaret Bourke-White

BIRTHDATE: June 14, 1904

BIRTHPLACE: The Bronx, NY

EDUCATION: Margaret Bourke-White attended several universities throughout the United States while pursuing a degree in Herpetology (the study of reptiles). They included Columbia University in New York, the University of Michigan, Purdue University in Indiana, Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, and she received her degree in 1927 from Cornell University in Ithaca, NY.

Margaret began to study photography as a hobby while a very young woman. She developed the styles and techniques that she needed for various formats on her own. Her father was also somewhat of a camera enthusiast and he exposed her to the wonders of the photographic lens as a youngster.

FAMILY BACKGROUND: Her father, Joseph White, was of Polish-Jewish background. He was an inventor and an engineer. He believed in equality in education and opportunity for all his children. Margaret's mother, Minnie Bourke, was of Irish-English ancestry and was a loving and nurturing mother. Minnie was completing her college degree at the time of her death. Margaret was married twice; once to Everett Chapman, when she was but 18 years old; and to Erskine Caldwell, the writer, in 1939, after they had worked together. They divorced in 1942.

DESCRIPTION OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Margaret Bourke-White is a woman of many firsts. She was a forerunner in the newly emerging field of photojournalism, and was the first female to be hired as such. She was the first photographer for Fortune magazine, in 1929. In 1930, she was the first Western photographer allowed into the Soviet Union.

Henry Luce hired her as the first female photojournalist for Life magazine, soon after its creation in 1935, and one of her photographs adorned its first cover. She was the first female war correspondent and the first to be allowed to work in combat zones during World War II, and one of the first photographers to enter and document the death camps. She made history with the publication of her haunting photos of the Depression in the book *You Have Seen Their Faces*, a collaboration with husband-to-be Erskine Caldwell. She wrote six books about her international travels. She was the premiere female industrial photographer, getting her start in Cleveland, Ohio, at the Otis Steel Company about 1927.

PLACE OF DEATH: Connecticut

DATE OF DEATH: August 27, 1971

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Books by Margaret Bourke-White:

You Have Seen Their Faces (1937; with Erskine Caldwell)

North of the Danube (1939; with Erskine Caldwell)

Shooting the Russian War (1942)

They Called it "Purple Heart Valley" (1944)

Halfway to Freedom; a report on the new India (1949)

Portrait of Myself (1963)

Dear Fatherland, rest quietly (1946)

The Taste of War (selections from her writings edited by Jonathon Silverman)

Books about Margaret Bourke-White:

For the world to see: the life of Margaret Bourke-White by Jonathon Silverman (1983)

Margaret Bourke-White: a biography by Vicki Goldberg (1986)

The Photographs of Margaret Bourke-White edited by Sean Callahan (1972)



from <http://www.lkwdpl.org/wihohio/bour-mar.htm>

Henri Cartier-Bresson (1908–2003)

Regarded as one of the greatest photographers of his time, Henri Cartier-Bresson was a shy Frenchman who elevated "snap shooting" to the level of a refined and disciplined art. His sharp-shooter's ability to catch "the decisive moment," his precise eye for design, his self-effacing methods of work, and his literate comments about the theory and practice of photography made him a legendary figure among contemporary photojournalists.

His work and his approach have exercised a profound and far-reaching influence. His pictures and picture essays have been published in most of the world's major magazines during three decades, and Cartier-Bresson prints have hung in the leading art museums of the United States and Europe (his monumental 'The Decisive Moment' show being the first photographic exhibit ever to be displayed in the halls of the Louvre). In the practical world of picture marketing, Cartier-Bresson left his imprint as well: he was one of the founders and a former president of Magnum, a cooperative picture agency of New York and Paris.

Henri Cartier-Bresson was born in 1908, in Chanteloupe, France, of prosperous middle-class parents. He owned a Box Brownie as a boy, using it for taking holiday snapshots, and later experimented with a 3 X 4 view camera. But he was also interested in painting and studied for two years in a Paris studio. This early training in art helped develop the subtle and sensitive eye for composition, which was one of his greatest assets as a photographer.

In 1931, at the age of 22, Cartier-Bresson spent a year as a hunter in the West African bush. Catching a case of backwater fever, he returned to France to convalesce. It was at this time, in Marseille, that he first truly discovered photography. He obtained a Leica and began snapping a few pictures with it. It was a pivotal experience. A new world, a new kind of seeing, spontaneous and unpredictable, opened up to him through the narrow rectangle of the 35 mm viewfinder. His imagination caught fire. He recalls how he excitedly "prowled the streets all day, feeling very strung-up and ready to pounce, determined to 'trap' life, to preserve life in the act of living."

Thus began one of the most fruitful collaborations between man and machine in the history of photography. He remained devoted to the 35 mm camera throughout his career. The speed, mobility, the large number of exposures per loading, and, above all, the unobtrusiveness of the little camera perfectly fitted his shy, quicksilver personality. Before long he was handling its controls as automatically as an expert racing driver shifts gears. The camera itself, in his own famous phrase, became an "extension of the eye".

When World War II erupted, Cartier-Bresson served briefly in the French Army and was captured by the Germans during the Battle of France. After two unsuccessful tries, he escaped from the camp where he was held as a prisoner of war, and worked with the underground until the war's end. Resuming his interrupted career as a photojournalist, he helped form the Magnum picture agency in 1947. Assignments for major magazines would take him on global travels, across Europe and the United States, to India, Russia and China. Many books of Cartier-Bresson photographs were published in the 50's and 60's, the most famous being 'The Decisive Moment' (1952). A major milestone in his career was a massive, 400-print retrospective exhibition, which toured the United States in 1960.

As a journalist, Henri Cartier Bresson felt an intense need to communicate what he thought and felt about what he saw, and while his pictures often were subtle they were rarely obscure. He had a high respect for the discipline of press photography, of having to tell a story crisply in one striking picture. His journalistic grappling with the realities of men and events, his sense of news and history, and his belief in the social role of photography all helped keep his work memorable.

He has said that a sense of human dignity is an essential quality for any photojournalist, and feels that no picture, regardless of how brilliant from a visual or technical standpoint, can be successful unless it grows from love and comprehension of people and an awareness of 'man facing his fate.'" Many of his portraits of William Faulkner and other notables have become definitive, catching as they do, with relaxed and casual brilliance, the essence of personality.

His first book contained an often-quoted paragraph that sums up his approach to photography and has



become something of a creed for candid, available light photojournalists everywhere. The decisive moment, as Cartier-Bresson tersely defined it, is 'the simultaneous recognition, in a fraction of a second, of the significance of an event as well as the precise organization of forms which gives that event its proper expression.'

Some critics accused him of being nothing more than a snap-shooter. It is true that the "decisive moment' approach, in less disciplined hands, can degenerate into haphazard, unselective snap shooting. But the best of Cartier-Bresson's works, with their uncanny sense of timing, rigorous organization, and deep insights into human emotion and character, could never have been caught by luck alone, unaided by a rare talent. They are snapshots only in the classic sense of "instantaneous exposures " snapshots elevated to the level of art.

"In photography, the smallest thing can be a great subject," he wrote in 'The Decisive Moment'. "The little human detail can become a leitmotif." Most of his photography is a collection of such little, human details; concerned images with universal meaning and suggestion. He lived in a haunted world where mundane facts, a reflection in a mud-puddle, an image chalked on a wall, the slant of a black-robed figure against mist, radiate significance at once familiar and only half-consciously grasped. His was an anti-romantic poetry of vision, which finds beauty in "things as they are," in the reality of here and now.

All his great pictures were taken with the kind of equipment owned by many amateur photographers: 35 mm rangefinder cameras equipped with a normal 50mm lens or occasionally a telephoto for landscapes.

Along with Dr. Erich Salomon and Alfred Eisenstaedt, he was a pioneer in available light photojournalism, and would no sooner intrude flash or flood into his pictures than would a fly fisherman toss rocks into a pool where he hoped to catch a prize trout.

By having so skillfully exploited the camera's ability to transfix a moment in time's flow, Cartier-Bresson has left us a treasure of images. We can, through his eyes, see the world a little more clearly, and find truth and beauty where we had not guessed they existed.

from <http://www.photo-seminars.com/Fame/bresson.htm>

James Van Der Zee (June 29, 1886 - May 15, 1983)

James Van Der Zee was an African-American photographer best known for his portraits of Black New Yorkers. He was a leading figure in the Harlem Renaissance. Aside from the artistic merits of his work, Van Der Zee captured the most comprehensive documentation of the period. Among his most famous subjects during this time were Marcus Garvey, Bill "Bojangles" Robinson and Countee Cullen.

Biography

Van Der Zee was originally from Lenox, Massachusetts; he soon traveled to Harlem. He was a skilled pianist and an aspiring professional violinist. The five piece Harlem Orchestra was created by Van Der Zee which he also performed in. He discovered photography as a hobby in his hometown of Lenox. At age fourteen, he had his first camera which he had received from a magazine promotion. His interest with the toy camera led him to getting a slightly better camera with which he would take hundreds of photographs of the town and his family. He developed the images himself. He was only the second person in Lenox to own a camera. This early start led him to a vast and prolific career documenting each decade in his unique style.

Moving to New York, music lessons were a prime source of income for Van Der Zee. At age 29, he worked as a dark room technician at Gertz Department Store in Newark, New Jersey. He would substitute as a photographer when his employer was unavailable. Patrons enjoyed his creative manner of shooting subjects. This encouraged him to open his own immediately successful studio, Guarantee Photography, within two years. In 1932, he outgrew his first studio and went on to open the larger GGG Studio. In these studios, many visual techniques were employed using props, architectural elements and costumes in the tradition of the Victorian and Edwardian eras. So much time was taken in posing his subjects that he often only could do three sittings a day.



During the Great Depression and as the availability of personal cameras severely lessened the need of professional photography, the gap was filled by shooting passport photographs and miscellaneous photographic jobs to make a living. After World War II, he survived via commissions and in the field of photo restoration.

National recognition was given to him at age 82, when his collection of 75,000 photographs spanning a period of six decades of African-American life was discovered by the Metropolitan Museum of Art. His photos were featured in 1969 as part of the Harlem on my Mind exhibition. From the 1970s to his death in 1983, Van DerZee photographed the many celebrities who had come across his work and promoted him throughout the country.

Photographic techniques and artistry

Works by Van DerZee are artistic as well as technically proficient. These work were in high demand due to his experimentation and skill in retouching negatives and in double exposures. One theme of his photographs was the emergent black middle class which he captured using traditional techniques in often idealistic images. Negatives were retouched to show straight teeth, add jewelry and hide bald spots. This would affect the likeness of the person photographed, but he felt each photo should transcend beyond the subject. Other techniques were also employed in his photographs.

A technique of combining several photos in one image was employed. The attempt was made to give what he thought should be there. He did not limit himself to the studio and photographed street scenes, funerals, parades and children. These images were done with the same attention to detail and placement as the studio imagery was. He added a ghostly child to an image of a wedding to suggest the couple's future. A funeral image was superimposed upon a photograph of the deceased to give the feeling of her eerie presence.

Many famous residents of Harlem were included among his subjects. His concentration was on the business first and artistic merit second; the people photographed were those who could afford to buy his pictures. Outside of portraiture, images were taken of organizations, events and other businesses. Subjects were treated with equal respect regardless of fame.

from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Van_Der_Zee

Dorothea Lange

(May 26, 1895 – October 11, 1965)

Dorothea Lange was an influential documentary photographer. Lange is best known for her Depression-era work for the Farm Security Administration (FSA). Lange's photographs humanized the tragic consequences of the Great Depression and profoundly influenced the development of documentary photography.

Born in Hoboken New Jersey, Lange began her career in New York, later migrating to San Francisco where she opened a portrait studio in 1918. With the onset of the Great Depression, Lange turned her camera lens from the studio to the street.

Her searing studies of homelessness immediately captured the attention of local photographers and led to her employment with the



federal Resettlement Administration (RA), later called the FSA. From 1935 to 1940, Lange's work for the RA and FSA brought the plight of the poor and forgotten, particularly displaced farm families and migrant workers, to public attention. Distributed free of charge to newspapers across the country, her poignant images quickly became icons of the era.

Her most famous photograph, commonly known as Migrant Mother, was the sixth and last frame taken of Lange's haphazard visit to a migrant workers' campsite. She had initially passed the campsite, but twenty minutes later, she turned around on the highway and to take another look. Rumor has it that the two younger children's faces are turned away from the camera because they were smiling and laughing during the picture, but none of the six frames shows them laughing or smiling. Lange had them turn away to give the image a more solemn, desperate mood. In 1960, Lange spoke about her experience taking the photograph:

I saw and approached the hungry and desperate mother, as if drawn by a magnet. I do not remember how I explained my presence or my camera to her, but I do remember she asked me no questions. I made five exposures, working closer and closer from the same direction. I did not ask her name or her history. She told me her age, that she was thirty-two. She said that they had been living on frozen vegetables from the surrounding fields, and birds that the children killed. She had just sold the tires from her car to buy food. There she sat in that lean-to tent with her children huddled around her, and seemed to know that my pictures might help her, and so she helped me. There was a sort of equality about it.

In 1941, Lange was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship for excellence in photography. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, she gave up the prestigious award to record the forced evacuation of Japanese-Americans (Nisei) to relocation camps in the American West.

On October 11, 1965, Lange died in San Francisco at the age of seventy.

from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dorothea_Lange

Weegee



Drunken men in the Bowery, c. 1943



Charles Sodokoff and Arthur Webber Use Their Top Hats to Hide Their Faces, January 27, 1942

Weegee (continued)



The Fashionable People, [title first used for "The Critic" in LIFE Magazine], published December 6, 1943



Norma Devine is Sammy's Mae West, December 4, 1944

Rehearsal, Metropolitan Opera, 1943



Margaret Bourke-White



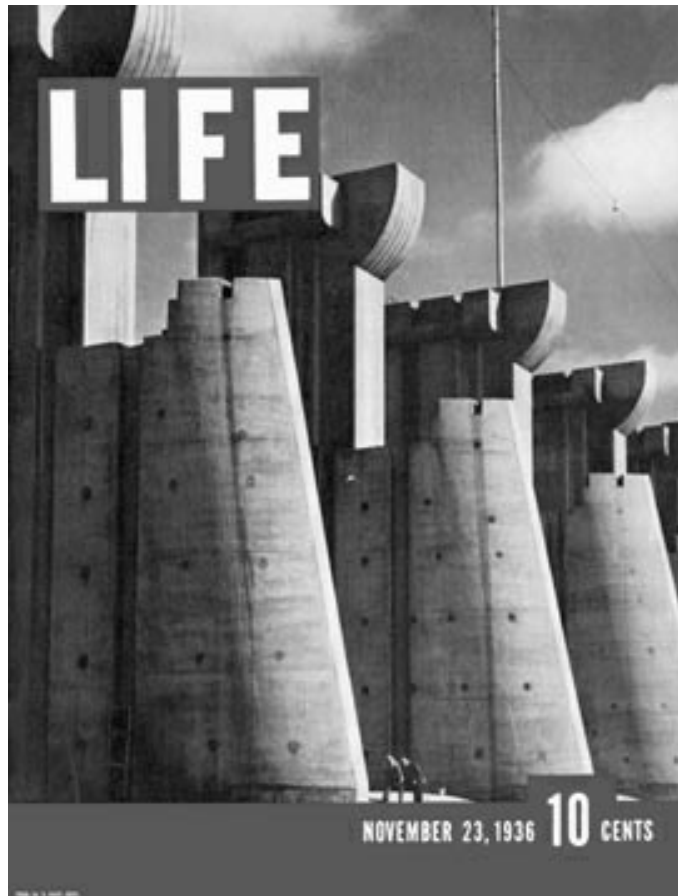
In 1936, when Margaret was 32 years old, she began an association with Life magazine that would last the rest of her career.



On her second trip to the Soviet Union, Margaret photographed a blast furnace under construction in Magnitogorsk.



Photographs from You Have Seen Their Faces, published in 1937



First issue, LIFE magazine, 1936, Fort Peck Dam, Montana

Margaret Bourke-White (continued)



Ghandi

Henri Cartier-Bresson



Behind Saint-Lazare Station, Paris, 1932

Henri Cartier-Bresson (continued)

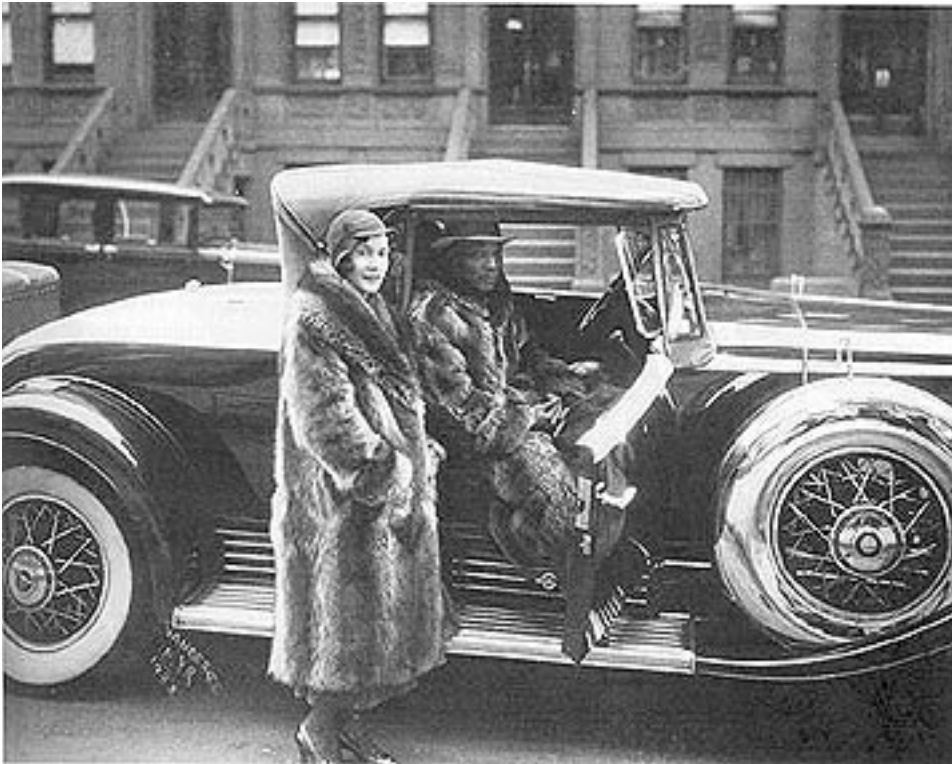


Sunday on the Banks of the Marne, 1938

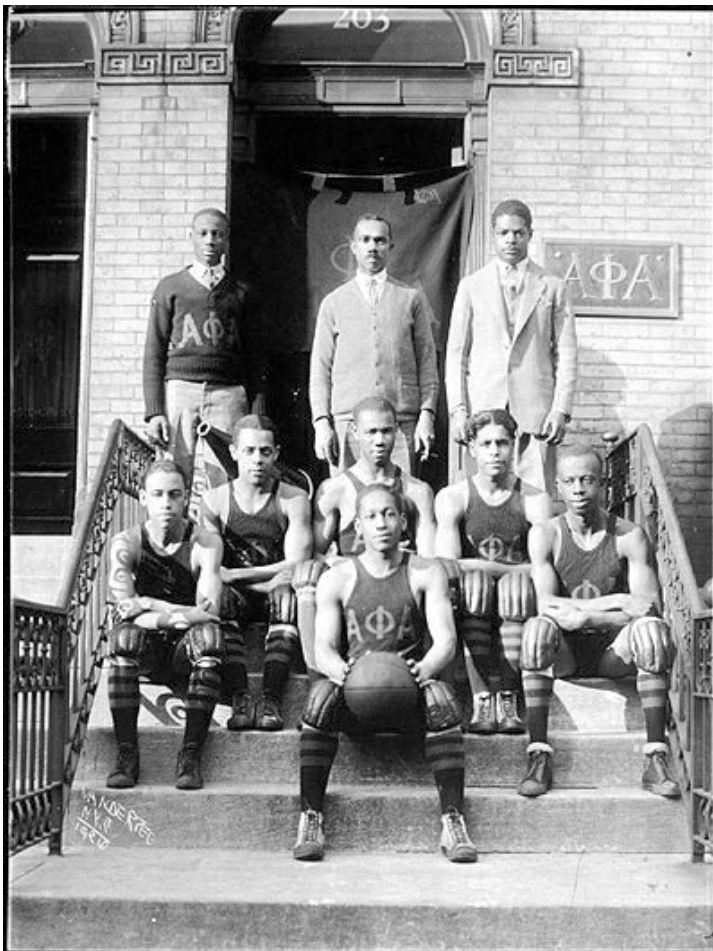


Matisse, Venice, 1944

James Van Der Zee



Couple and Cadillac, 1934

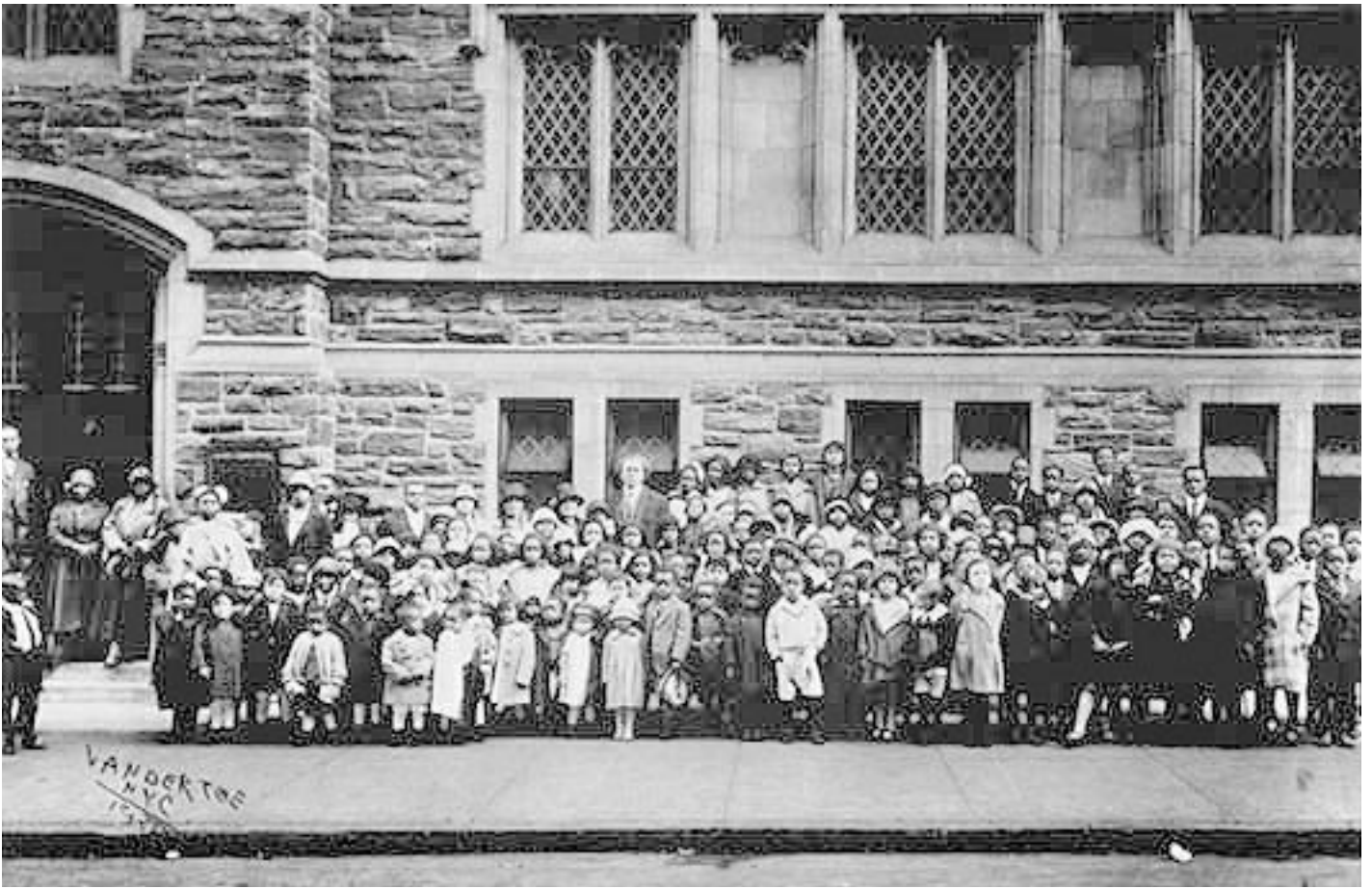


African-American Fraternity



The barefoot Prophet

James Van Der Zee (continued)



Adam Clayton Powell, Sr. and children

Dorothea Lange

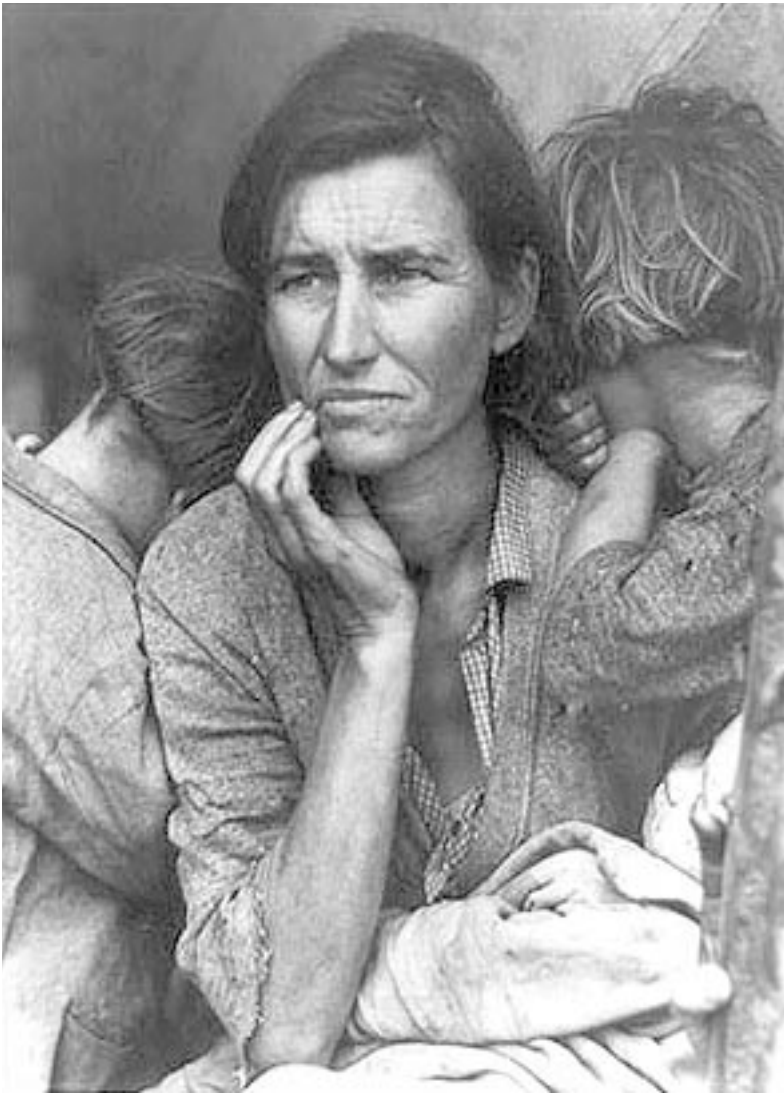


Wedding Couple, Harlem



Migrant family, 1936

Dorothea Lange (continued)



Migrant mother and children, 1936



A Depression Breadline, San Francisco. 1933



The Crystal Palace Saloon, 1938



Tractored Out, Childress County, Texas. 1939