

Indiana Farm Security Photographs



Dorothea Lange

Dorothea Lange was born Dorothea Margareta Nutzhorn in 1895, in Hoboken, New Jersey. She dropped her middle name and assumed her mother's maiden name after her father abandoned her and her mother. Dorothea developed polio at age 7, which left her with a permanent limp. She attended public schools in New York City and was enrolled in the New York Training School for Teachers from 1914 through 1917. Lange worked in the photography studios of Arnold Genthe and Charles Davis and attended a class taught by Clarence White at Columbia University. In 1918, she moved to San Francisco, where she opened a successful portrait studio. In 1935 she married economist Paul Schuster Taylor, professor of economics at the University of California, Berkeley. Together they documented rural poverty and migrant laborers for five years; Lange took the photos, and Taylor did the interviewing and collected data. As the Depression progressed and her portrait business declined, she turned her camera to unemployed people. These photographs led to her employment with the Resettlement Administration, later called the Farm Security Administration. From 1935 to 1939, Lange photographed the poor, sharecroppers, displaced families, and migrant workers. Because FSA photos were distributed free to news publications, many of her photos became icons of the Depression. Lange's most famous photo is undoubtedly "Migrant Mother." During World War II she was hired by the War Relocation Authority to document the internment of Japanese-Americans to relocation camps, highlighting Manzanar, the first of the permanent internment camps. The Army impounded her photos as being too critical. The photographs of the internment are now available in the National Archives on the website of the Still Photographs Division, and at the Bancroft Library of the University of California, Berkeley. In 1945, she photographed the United Nations Conference in San Francisco for the State Department. Lange was invited by Ansel Adams to accept a position at the California School of Fine Arts, and in 1952, she co-founded the photography magazine *Aperture*. Lange died in 1965 in California. A retrospective exhibition of her work was shown at the Museum of Modern Art in 1966. In 1972 the Whitney Museum used twenty-seven of Lange's photographs in an exhibit entitled *Executive Order 9066*. This exhibit highlighted the Japanese internment during World War II.

Dorothea Lange Bibliography

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