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America Through The Lens: Photographers Who Changed The Nation



AMERICA Through the Lens

Photographers Who Changed the Nation

Martin W. Sandler



Synopsis

"If I could tell the story in words, I wouldn't need to lug around a camera."-Lewis Hine A stunning view of America as captured by groundbreaking photographersAmerican history is punctuated by defining moments-some proud, some tragic, some beautiful. Photography has made it possible for these moments to be captured and shared with the public. As the craft has evolved from unwieldy glass negatives to digital imagery, the photographs themselves have changed the way we see the world.From Mathew Brady's startling Civil War photographs to NASA's stunning images of the universe, America Through the Lens by Martin W. Sandler highlights twelve photographers whose work has truly changed the nation.

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Customer Reviews

The twelve photographers discussed in this illustrated volume are a fascinating lot. Based on previous knowledge of these photographers this reviewer was only surprised at the inclusion of one of them. Frankly, Toni Frissell was completely unfamiliar. I didn't even know whether the name applied to a man or woman. It turned out to be a woman and it was a pleasure to be introduced to

her and her work. According to the author she was the first fashion photographer to move her models and their fashion out of the studio and into the real world. Since I'm not a fashionista it's not surprising I wasn't familiar with her work. To me the early fashion photographer giants were Stieglitz, Steichen and Avedon. Others such as Man Ray, Lee Miller, Irving Penn and Helmut Newton were also familiar to me. But none of those photographers is even mentioned in this book. Their work didn't change the Nation. The twelfth photographer mentioned is really a group of photographers and technology that have come to us from the Space Program. Their pictures have reached out across space and showed us how small our little blue planet is in the universe. Computer cameras aboard spacecraft and roving robots have shown us even more distant visions. Ditto for the world beneath the sea. Once this later group was included it seems that medical and microscopic photographers had been neglected. Picturing the world of the individual atoms and the world inside the body has certainly made significant contributions to the world in which we live. But that's beside the point. This book deals with the lives and work of Mathew B. Brady (Changing the Way We View Our World and War), William Henry Jackson (Preserving our Natural Treasures), Frances Benjamin Johnston (Documenting a Rise from Slavery), Jacob Riis (Cleaning Up the Slums), Lewis Hine (Letting Children be Children), Edward S. Curtis (Immortalizing the Native Americans), James Van Der Zee (Revealing African-American Achievement), Dorothea Lange (Bringing Relief to Millions), Marion Post Wolcott (who in a photographic career of less than four years Introduced America to Americans through the Farm Security Administration Project), Margaret Bourke-White (Celebrating Industrious America), Toni Frissell (Moving Fashion outdoors and Changing Attitudes about African Americans) and NASA and NOAA (Changing Our View of the Universe). Each of these chapters is just about the perfect length to keep the reader entranced while also providing some samples of their photographic images. There have been hundreds of great photographers but most of them haven't been pioneers in the use of photography in a way that may have changed the course of America. Otherwise other photographers such as William Garnett (aerial photography as art), David Douglas Duncan (another great war photographer and documenter of perhaps the world's greatest artist) and Bradford Washburn (mountain climber explorer and photographer) might also be included. However, this is a wonderful summary of the work of some of the pioneers in photography that changed the face of society in America. The reader has to start somewhere and this is the perfect place.

AMERICA THROUGH THE LENS is an extensive look at America spanning two centuries, spanning many ethnicities (white, Native American, African American), spanning economic and social classes

(rich and poor) and spanning the Continent (urban, industrial, rural, nature). Featuring the photographs and mini-biographies of twelve photographers, AMERICA THROUGH THE LENS is an excellent introduction to photography and provides a new perspective of American history. It features six male photographers, five female photographers, and a look at corporate photography with its examination of NASA and NOAA photography. If AMERICA THROUGH THE LENS has a premise, it would be that a good photograph can wield great power and has the ability-with proper placement-to change public opinion and actually change the way the nation sees itself and the way the nation ACTS. For example, the photographs of William Henry Jackson prompted the government to begin its creation of NATIONAL PARKS protecting both the land and the wildlife. The photographs of Lewis Hine prompted the government to change its child labor laws. His work with a camera was able to change how children were treated and protected in the future. The examples are many, but Sandler shows how each photographer changed the nation in his/her own unique way.

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