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A Southern Illinois Album: Farm Security Administration Photographs, 1936-1943 (Shawnee Books)



Synopsis

Life on the road—was anything but glamorous for Farm Security Administration photographers traveling through southern Illinois in the mid-1930s. Often their most promising subjects lived at the end of the worst roads, many of which lacked bridges, drainage ditches, or gravel. Outfitted with three government-issue cameras, flashbulbs, tripods, and film-processing chemicals, their job was to help "explain America to Americans" by seeking out and photographing the one-third of the nation FDR described as "ill-housed, ill-clad, and ill-nourished." Featured in this book are more than one hundred photographs from the collection of a quarter of a million taken by FSA photographers between 1935 and 1943. These pictures capture life during the Great Depression as viewed in the coal-mining towns of Herrin, West Frankfort, and Zeigler; the river communities of Shawneetown, Cairo, and Grayville; the farming regions near McLeansboro, Newton, and Harrisburg; more than two dozen southern Illinois county seats, hamlets, and landings. Together they comprise a photographic portrait of the determination, hard work, and capacity to find ways to celebrate life exemplified by the people of southern Illinois during one of the most difficult periods of American history. FSA photographers helped to invent and popularize the "documentary style," a type of photography in which pictures and their arrangement carry much of the information in a story. Intended to document the success of a government project, these pictures survived to preserve for later generations the story of the people of southern Illinois and how they endured the difficult times of the Great Depression.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“The individual photographs selected by Russell represent the best of the FSA style. Some are evocative, some are instructive, and all are interesting.”—David B. Danbom, Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society

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It is primarily a book of pictures of an era when my parents grew up. I enjoyed seeing pictures of how they lived. It is interesting to note that in the pictures of their homes there are not a lot of papers or books laying around and few, if any, devices of communication, other than a radio.

This book is great for history buffs. Its good reading, very interesting. Its a little sad to see how people had to live back then. is very fast in shipping items in case you are anxious to receive your items in a hurry. also makes it easy to return items.

This book would be a great gift for someone who grew up in Southern Illinois in the 1930s and 1940s. The photographs are of people and places in all walks of life. The following towns all have pics in the book: Colp, Shawneetown, Carbondale, Cairo, Herrin, West Frankfort, Royaltown, Bush, Salem, McClelland, Anna, Zeigler, Freeman Spur, Robbs, Ridgway, Carrier Mills and others.

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