

Sponsor an Image – Context of the Russell Lee Farm Labor Camp Photos

In the summer of 1942, Farm Security Administration (FSA) photographer Russell Lee documented four FSA Japanese American farm labor camps in Oregon and Idaho. In July, he arrived in Malheur County, in Eastern Oregon and photographed the Nyssa camp. He then traveled east, shooting similar camps in Twin Falls, Rupert and Shelley, Idaho.

Trained as a chemical engineer, Russell Lee joined Roy Stryker's staff of FSA photographers in 1936. He continued to work for the New Deal agency until it was defunded in 1943. The FSA photo group was undergoing significant changes in 1942. By March of that year, the FSA began engaging in defense photography for the Office of War Information (OWI), in addition to its more traditional rural-oriented assignments.

Lee's 1942 series of farm labor camps were captured in the midst of the transition from FSA to OWI. Rather than falling under the jurisdiction of Department of War, the camps were managed by the Farm Security Administration and the Department of Agriculture.

The exhibit and website will highlight the photographic career of Russell Lee, who although the most prolific of all FSA photographers, has received less scholarly attention and public reputation than his agency colleagues Dorothea Lange and Walker Evans.

Here on the website, images are presented in 4 sections – **The Camp Sites, Life in the Camps, Labor & Recreation** – mingling images from the four Idaho & Oregon camps. In the exhibition, they may be presented in a different order.

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Life in the Camps # 026

Image from the Rupert, Idaho camp available for sponsorship