

# History of photography (part 4): photography as a tool

CS 178, Spring 2010

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Stanford University

# Outline

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- ◆ the technology improves
- ◆ popularization of photography
- ◆ documenting the growth of America
- ◆ gigantic undertakings (around the world)
- ◆ the industrial aesthetic
- ◆ scientific uses of photography
- ◆ documenting the social scene
- ◆ the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl
- ◆ profile: photographers of the Farm Security Administration
- ◆ still to come: photojournalism, modern art photography...

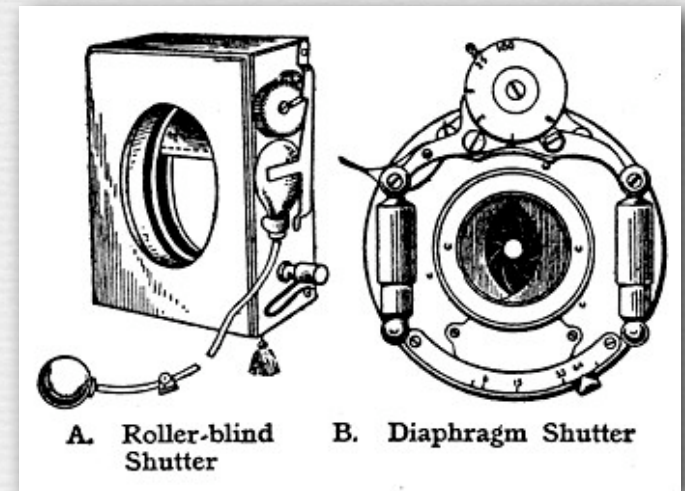


# The technology improves

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- ◆ 1878 dry-plate photography (Richard Maddox, Charles Bennett)
  - hardened gelatin-silver bromide
  - exposure time under one second
  - plates could be stored, separating shooting from processing
- ◆ 1885 paper roll film (Arthur Melhuish, George Eastman)
  - gelatin coated onto paper (or film)
  - exposures under 1/10 second
  - multiple pictures without fiddling
- ◆ 1880s shutters (many people)
  - needed as films became more sensitive
  - focal plane (roller blind), leaf (diaphragm)

(wikipedia)



# The Kodak Camera



(Newhall)



(brightbytes.com)

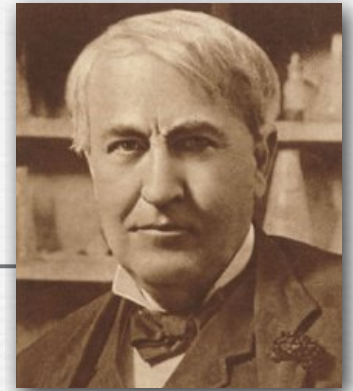


George Eastman  
(1854-1932)

- ◆ 1888      Kodak camera No. 1
  - fixed-focus, single shutter speed (1/100 sec?)
  - 100 shots per roll, then mail the camera back for reloading
  - “You press the button, we do the rest”
  - \$25 for the camera, \$10 per roll to process
  - contribution was not a single invention, but a system

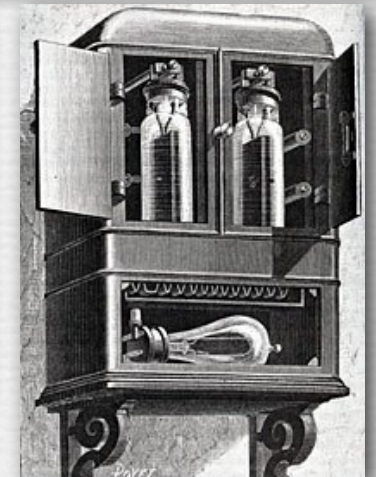
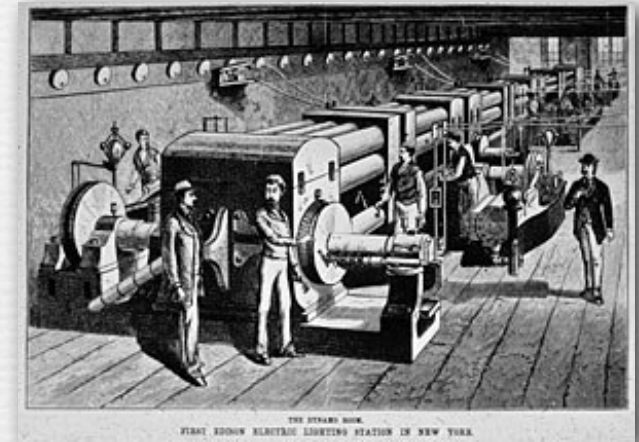


# Edison's lighting system



Thomas Edison  
(1847-1931)

- ◆ 1880 patent for incandescent light bulb
- ◆ 1882 first lighting system, New York City
- ◆ system components
  - central generating station
  - underground conductors
  - usage meter
  - wiring and plugs
  - sockets and fixtures
  - fuses to prevent overloading
- ◆ misjudged one component
  - direct current versus alternating current



# Related technologies



(Tim Page)

platinum print  
(you have to see  
it in person)

(wikipedia)



first photograph  
printed using  
halftoning

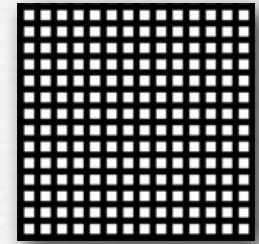
- ◆ 1870s German chemistry / dye / drug industries:  
new processes and compounds, purity, standardization
- ◆ 1880 flash photography (using flash powder)
- ◆ 1890 platinum paper printing (matte but with a deep black)
- ◆ 1873 screen-based halftone printing for mass publication



# Screen-based halftoning

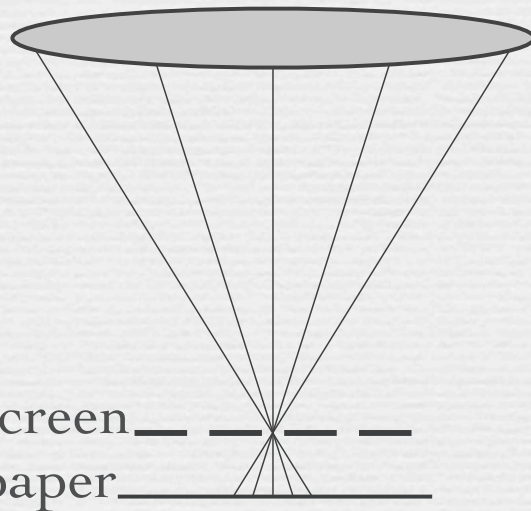
(simulated in Photoshop)

screen



- ◆ since a printing press can only print black or white (no grays), goal is to convert tones into dots of varying size

image  
focused  
on screen

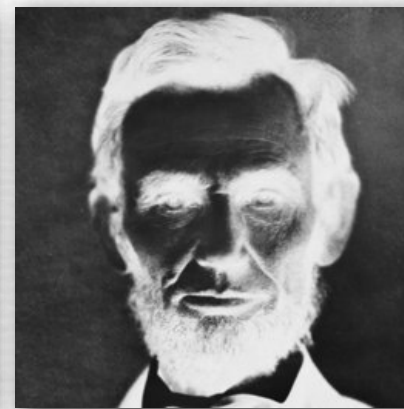


screen  
paper

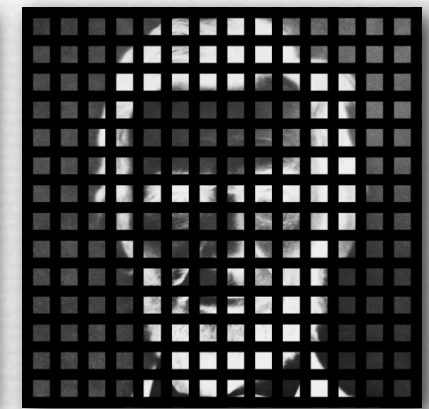
now largely replaced  
with digital halftoning



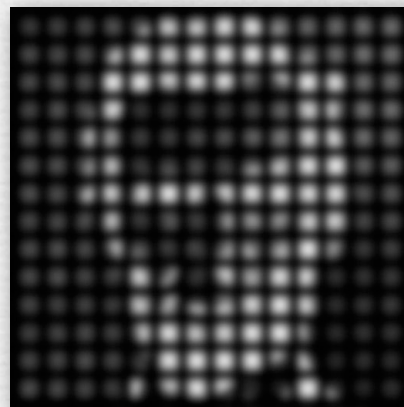
original



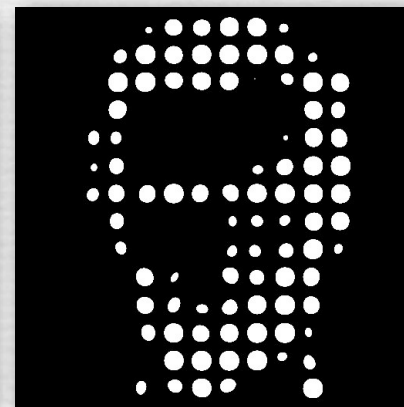
inverted



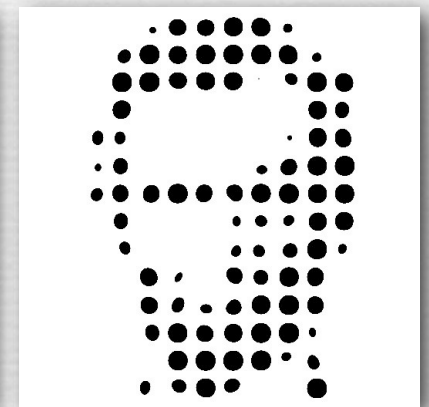
screened



blurred

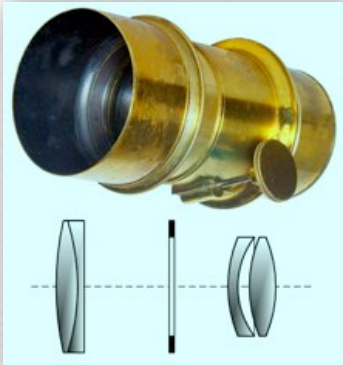


thresholded



inverted

# Later technologies



1

1. 1850s



3

35mm camera (Leica I)



5

2. 1890s

anastigmatic lenses - corrects for all aberrations

3. 1925

4. 1932

photoelectric meter

5. 1930s

zoom lenses for cinema (Cooke Vario 40-120mm)

6. 1960s

zoom lenses for still cameras

7. 1981

autofocus SLR (Pentax ME-F)



7

*diffraction-limited*



# Digital photography



640×480



1.5 Mpix

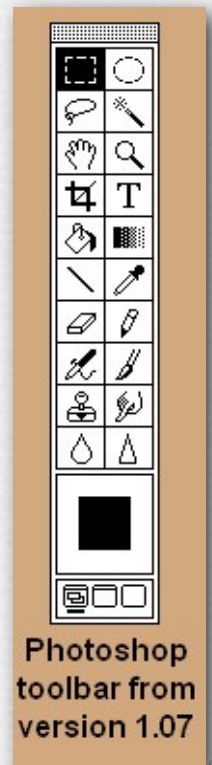
- ◆ 1994 mass-market digital camera (Apple QuickTake)
- ◆ 1992 digital SLR (Nikon-Kodak DCS 200)
- ◆ 1990 Photoshop 1.0



John Knoll.  
Photo by Jeff Schewe.



Thomas Knoll.  
Photo by Jeff Schewe.



# Popularization of photography

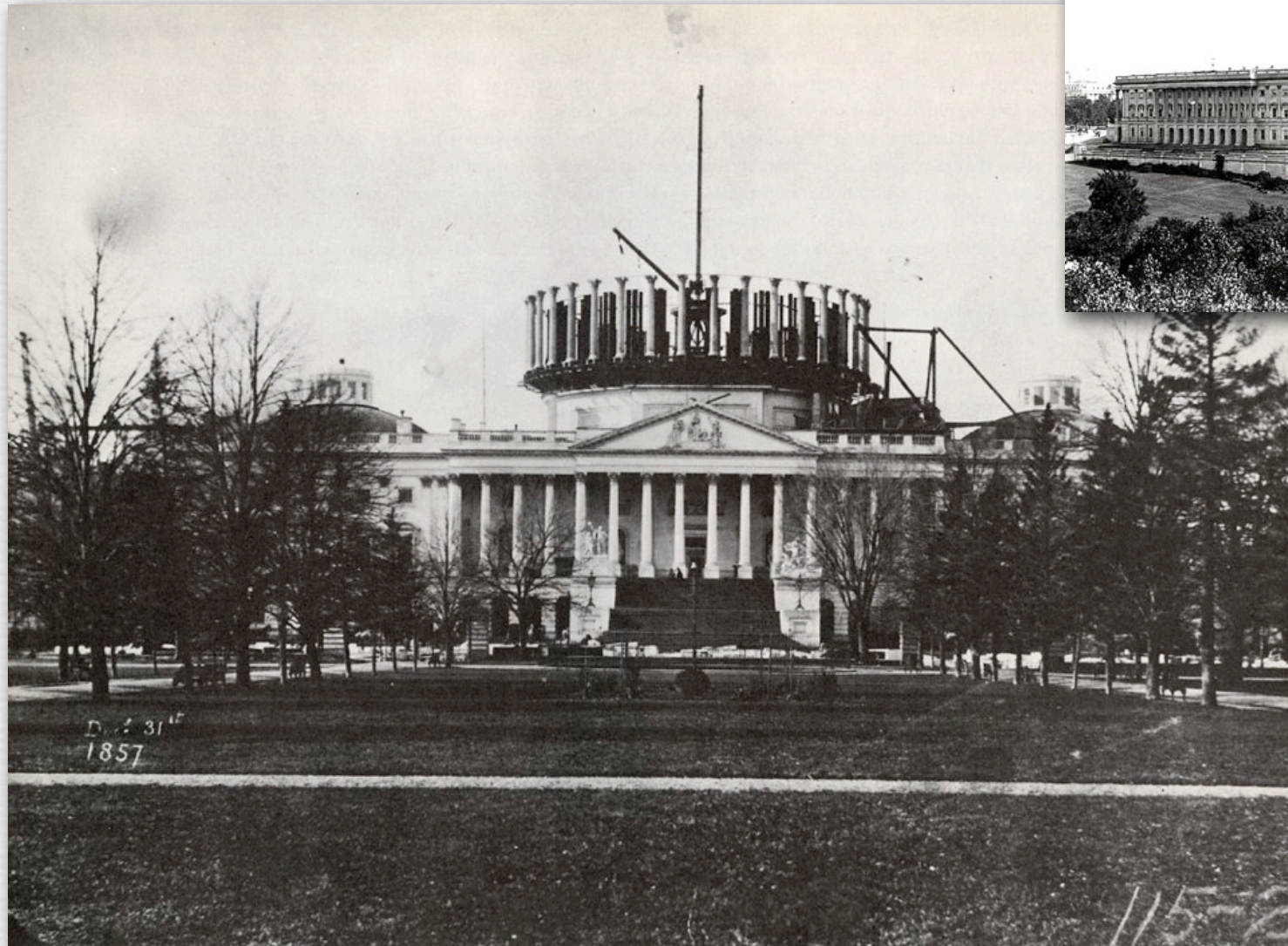
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- ◆ before George Eastman, photographers were skilled, photographs were posed, and images were “crafted”
  - ◆ the Kodak camera was cheap, portable, and easy to use
  - ◆ photography became casual, spontaneous, and popular
- 
- ◆ concentrated on documenting everyday life
  - ◆ word “snapshot” invented by Herschel
  - ◆ privacy became an issue (it still is)
  - ◆ women started taking pictures - so subjects changed
- 
- ◆ Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1935)



# Documenting the growth of America

(Archives)



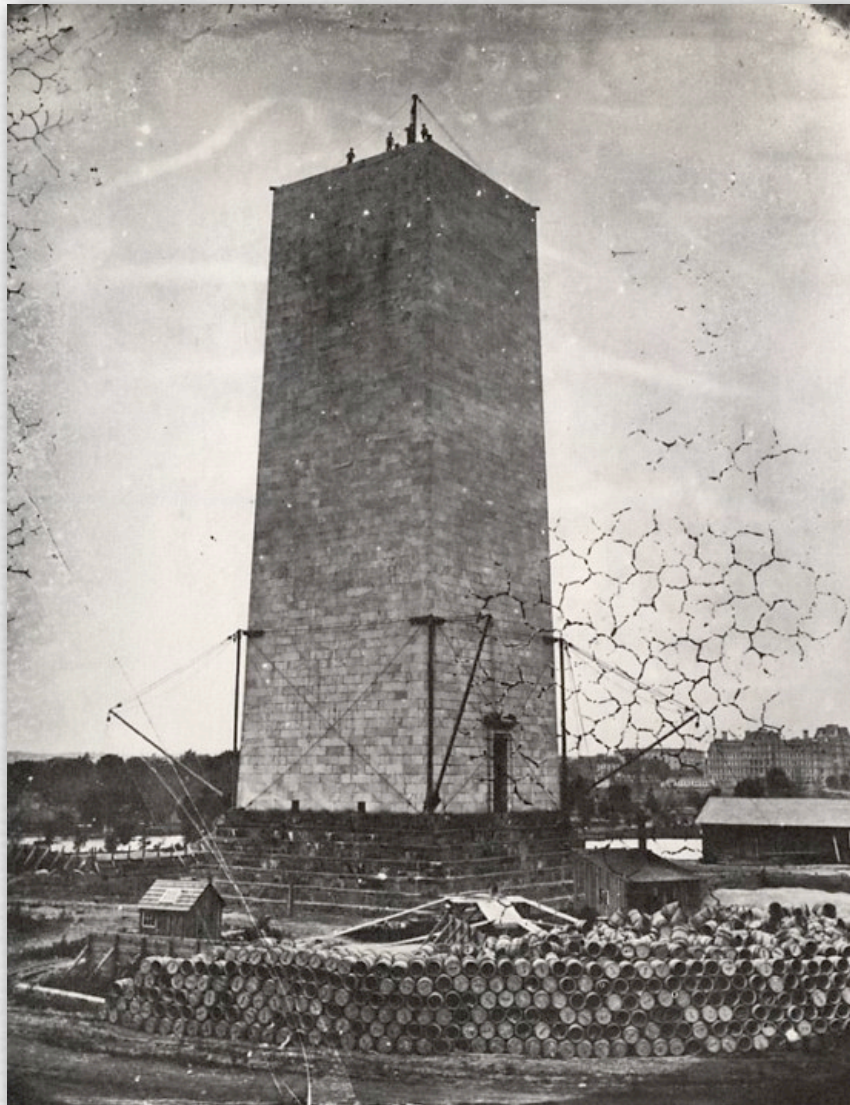
view in  
1906

Dome of the U.S. capitol, photographer unknown, 1857



# Documenting the growth of America

(Archives)



view in  
1884

Washington Monument, photographer unknown, 1876



# The push west

(Archives)



Oklahoma, photographer unknown, 1893

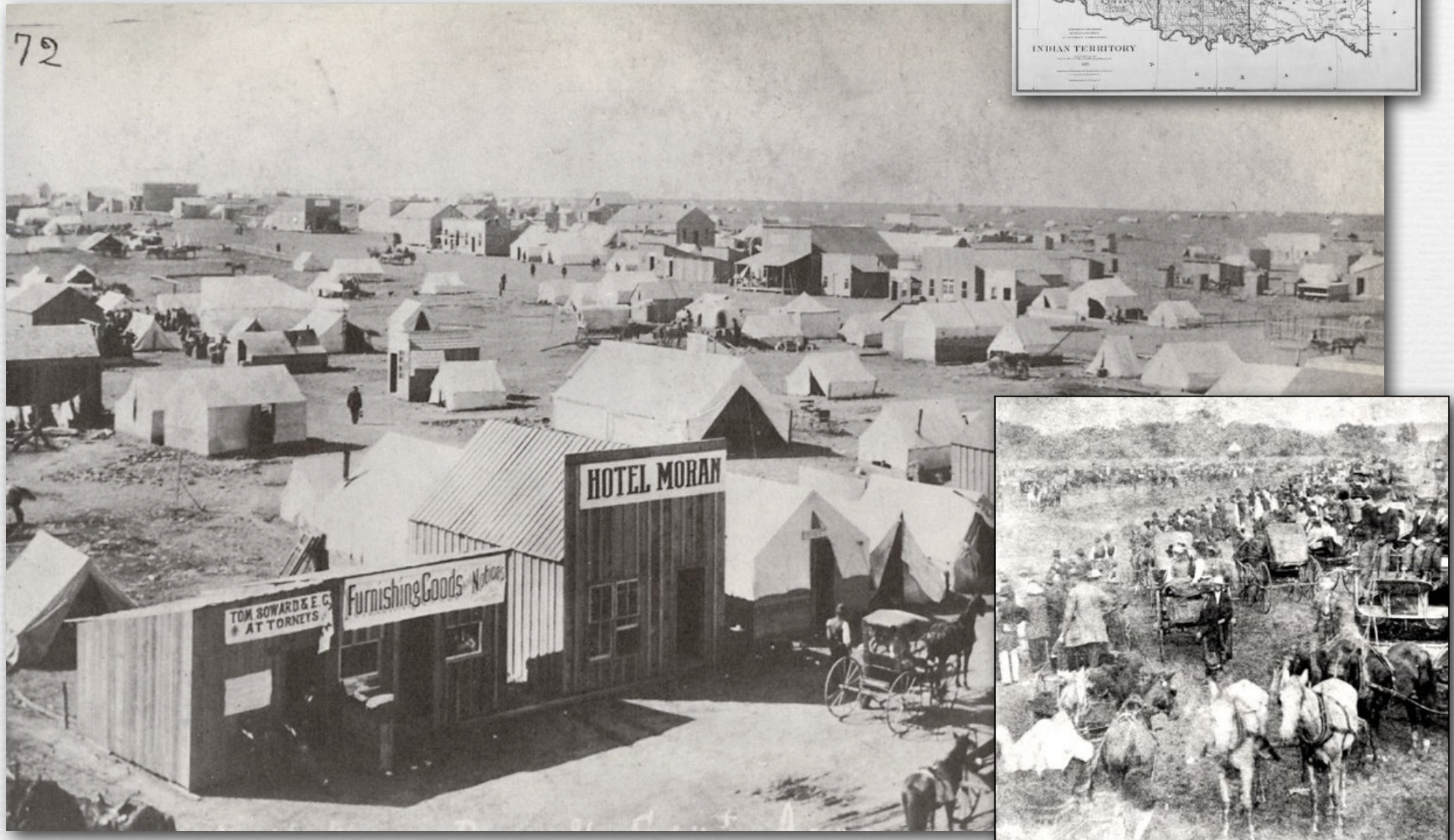


(wikipedia)

# The end of the frontier



(Archives)

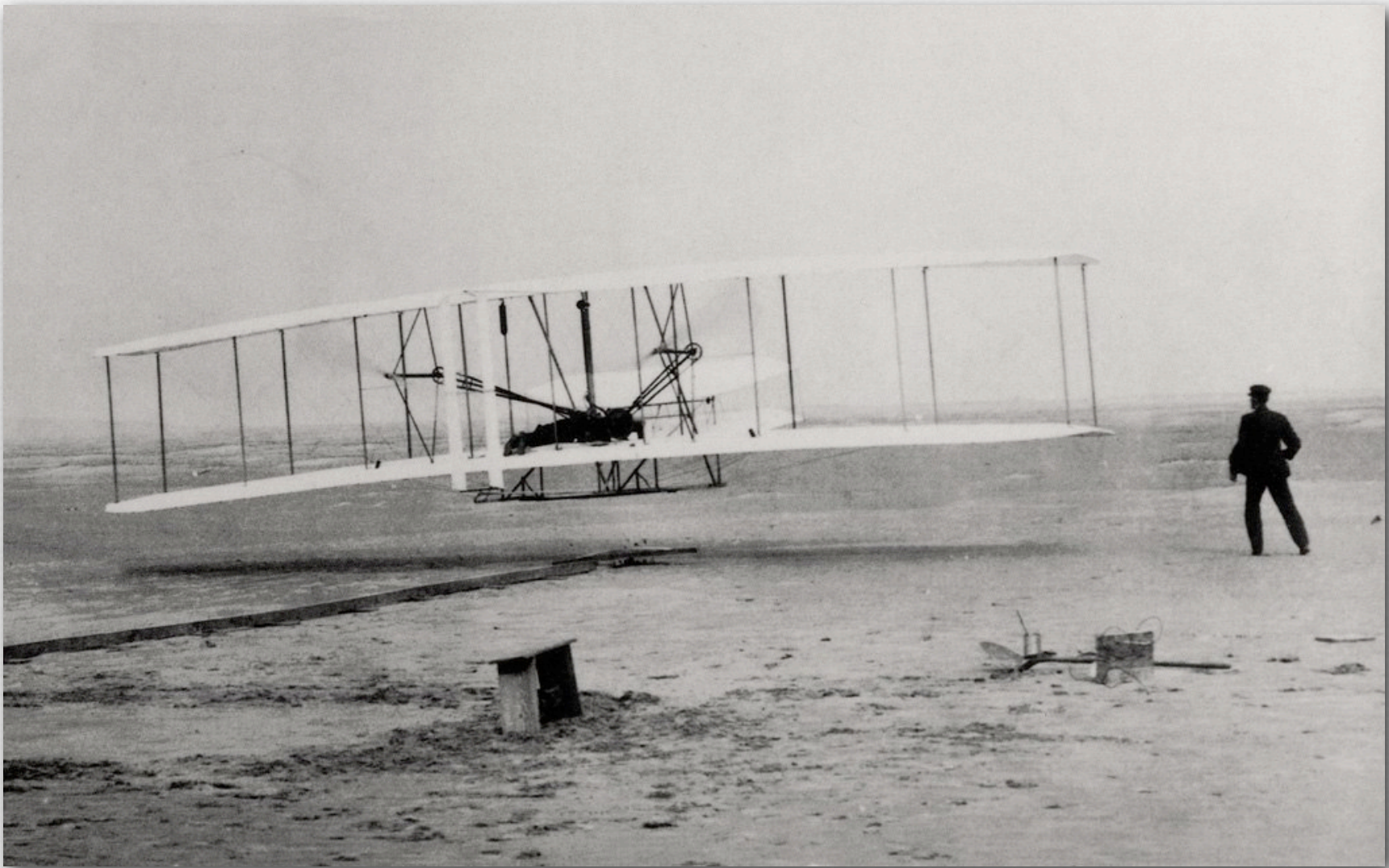


Opening the Cherokee Strip, W.A. Flower, 1893



# Photography as proof of achievement

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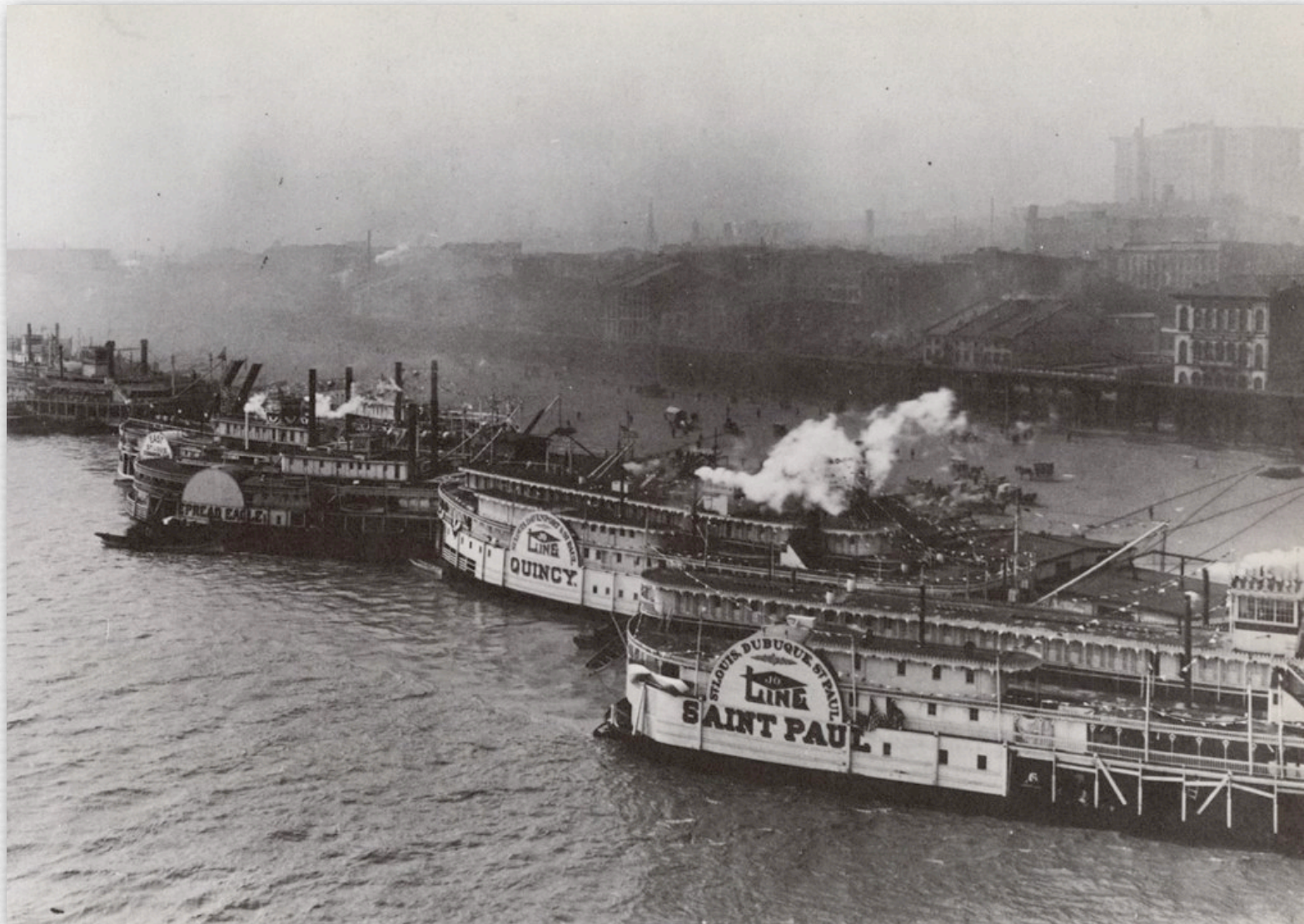
First powered flight, Wright Brothers, Kitty Hawk, 1903



# Industry and commerce

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(Archives)



Waterfront at St. Louis, photographer unknown, 1909



# Gigantic undertakings

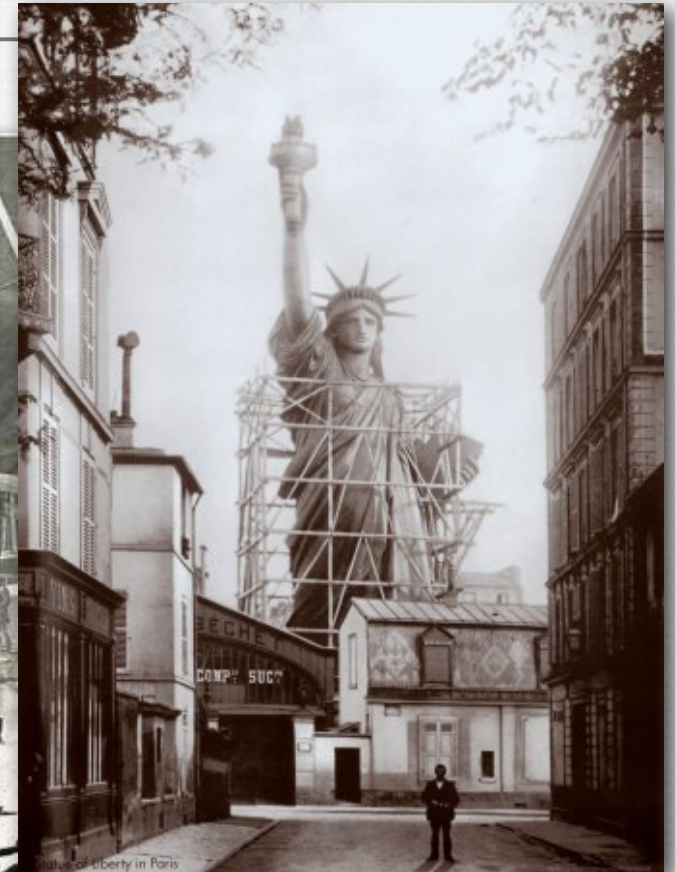


after completion  
(mid-1880s)

Brooklyn Bridge, 1881



# Gigantic undertakings



fully assembled  
(in Paris)

Statue of Liberty in Bartholdi's Parisian workshop, 1882?



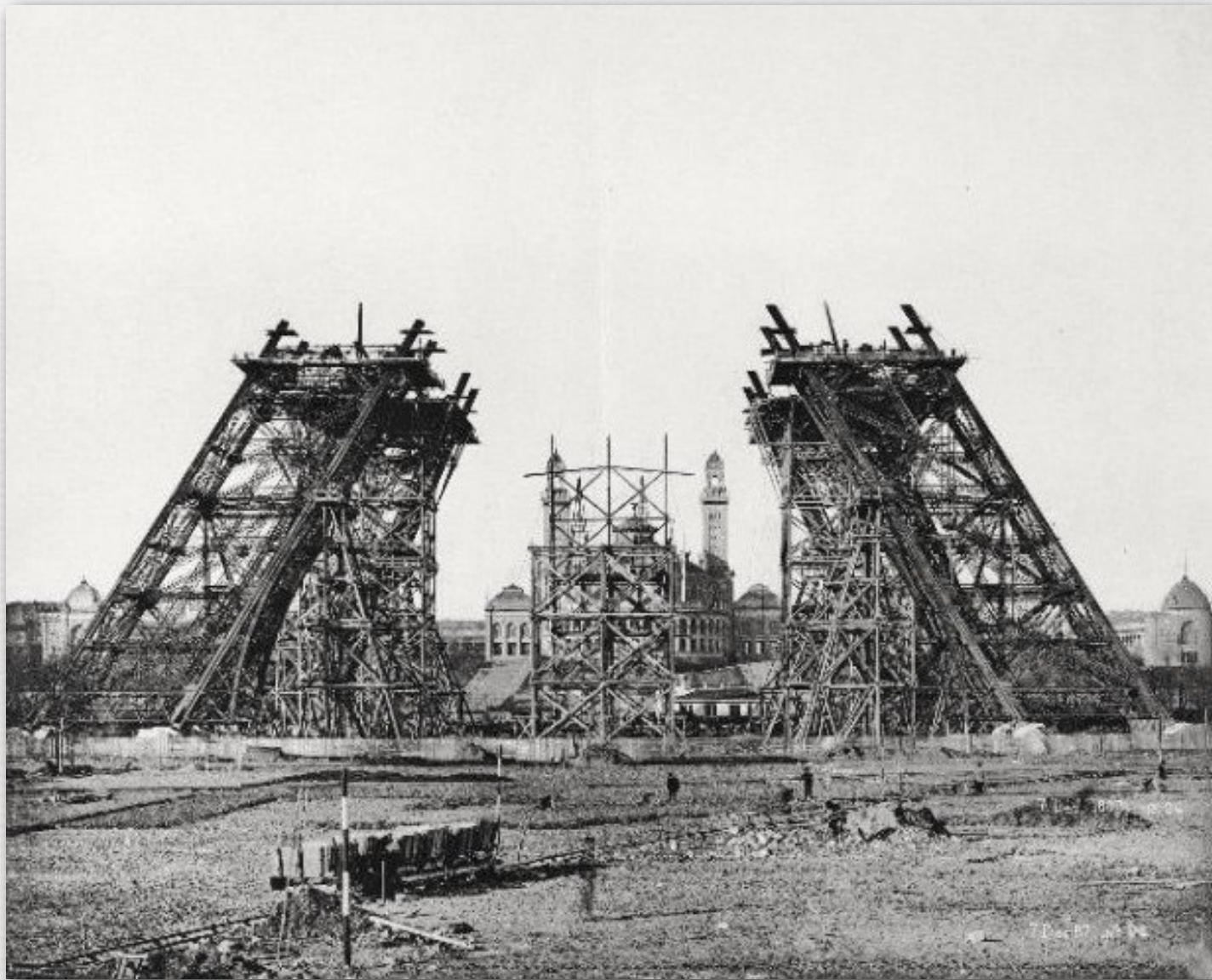
# Gigantic undertakings

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# Gigantic undertakings

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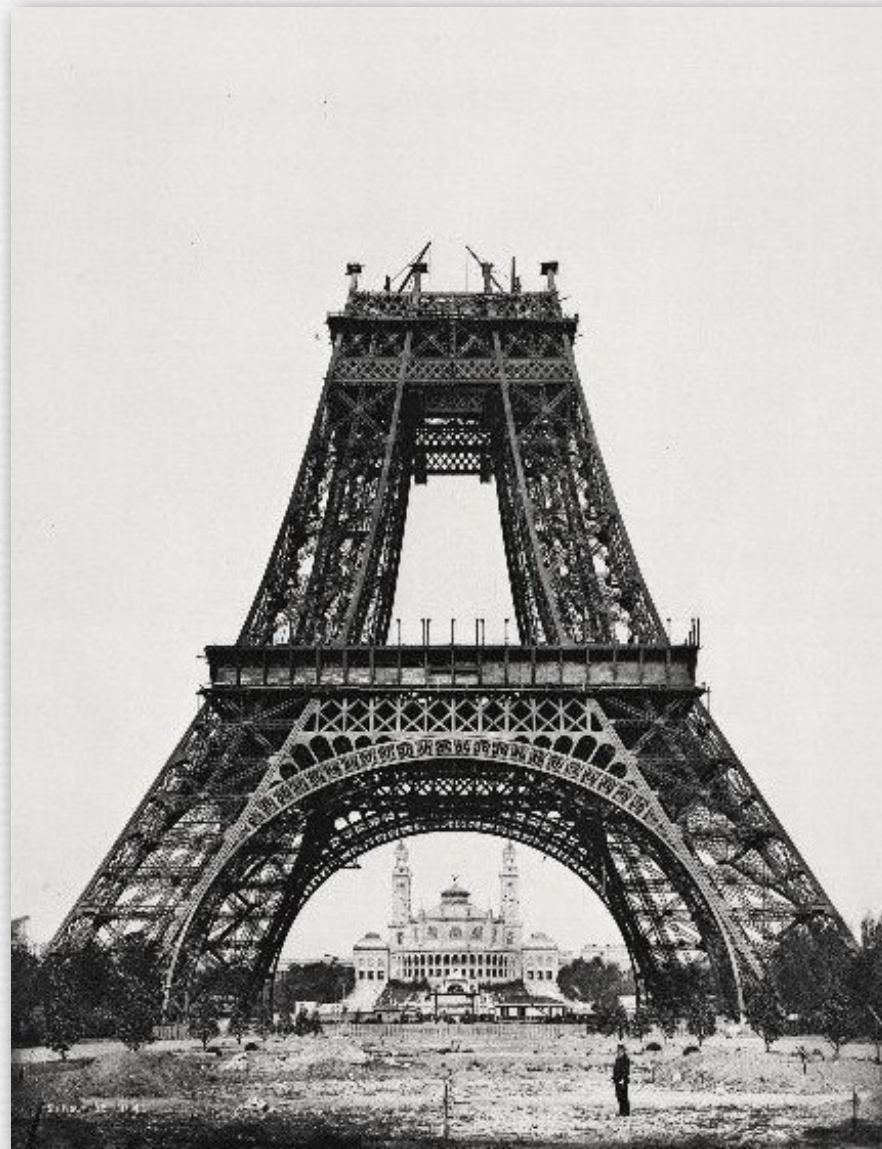
# Gigantic undertakings

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# Gigantic undertakings

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# Gigantic undertakings

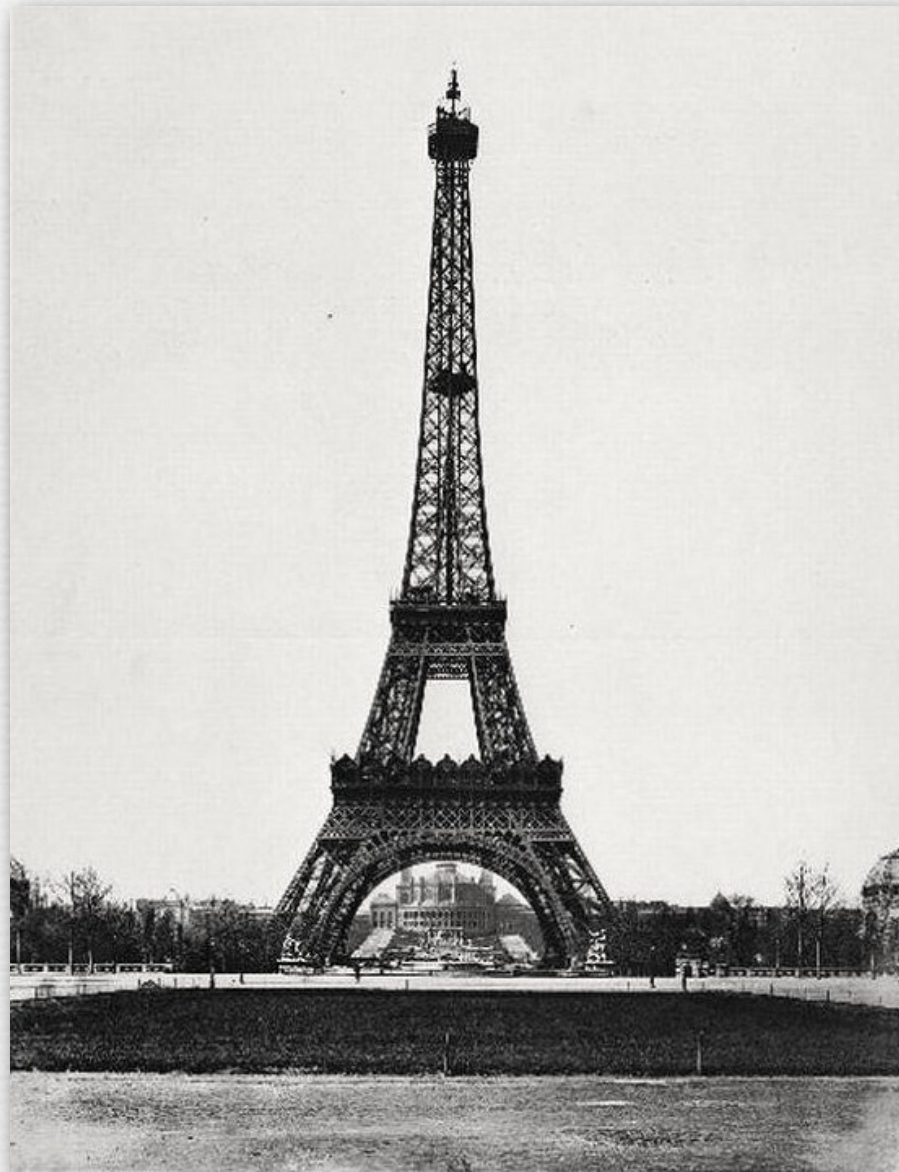
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# Gigantic undertakings

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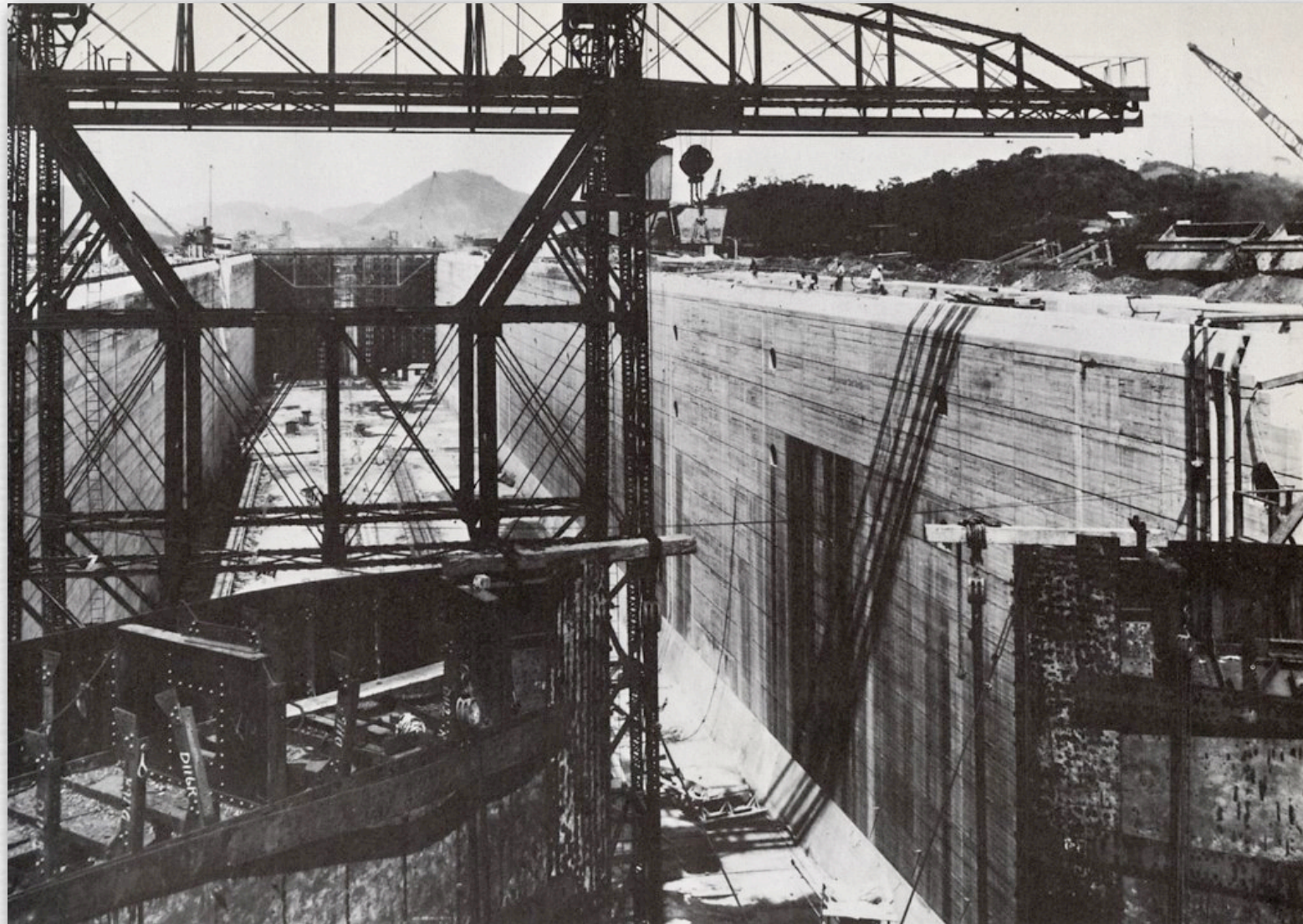
Gustave Eiffel,  
The Eiffel Tower,  
1889





# Some projects were almost too gigantic

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(Archives)

Panama Canal, Miraflores Locks, photographed by Ernest Hallen, 1913





The ship Lord Templeton traverses the  
Panama Canal's Culebra Cut, 1915





The bark Passat in heavy seas while rounding Cape Horn,  
photographed by Capt. H. Piening





Port Blakeley Mill Company Dock,  
Puget Sound, photographed by Wilhelm Hester 1905



# Aerial photography

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- ◆ from balloons
- ◆ from tall buildings
- ◆ from airplanes
- ◆ from space

James Wallace Black,  
Boston from the Air,  
1860



(Rosenblum)



(Rosenblum)



Berenice Abbott,  
New York at Night,  
1933



# Tall buildings

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Chrysler Building, 1930  
William van Alen, architect



Margaret Bourke-White  
atop the Chrysler Building

# Tall buildings

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Chrysler Building, 1930  
William van Alen, architect



Burj Khalifa, Dubai, 2010  
tallest structure in world (2717')



# The industrial aesthetic in photography

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(Newhall)

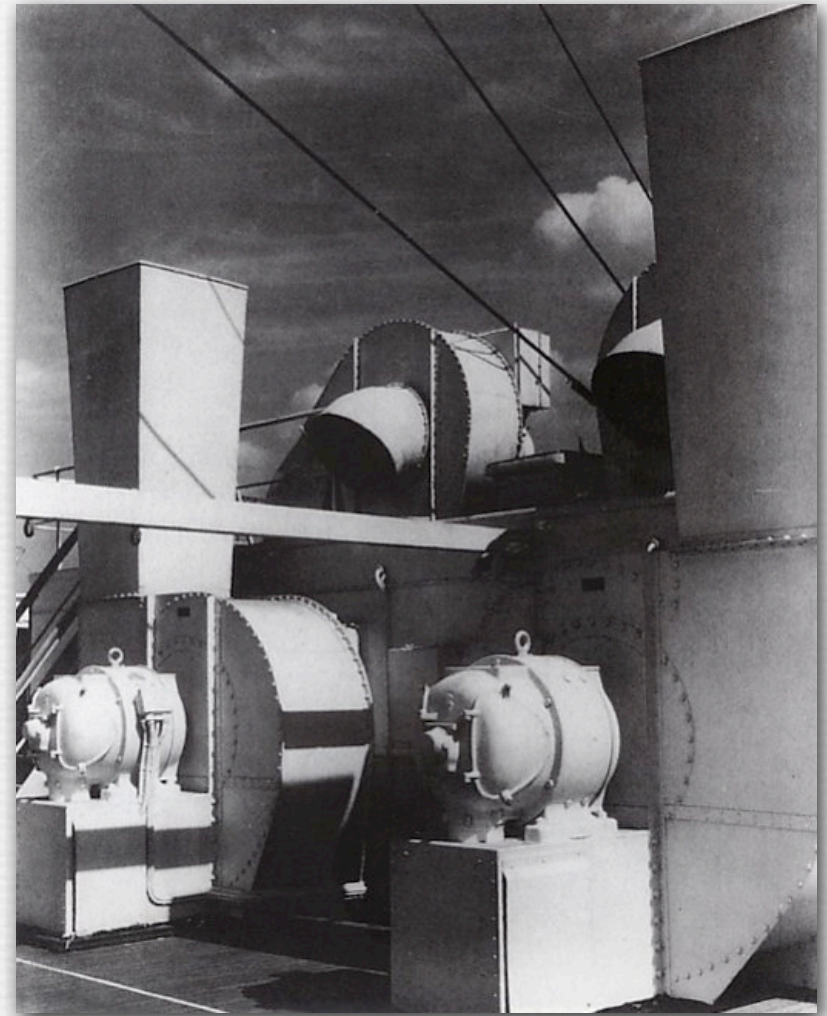
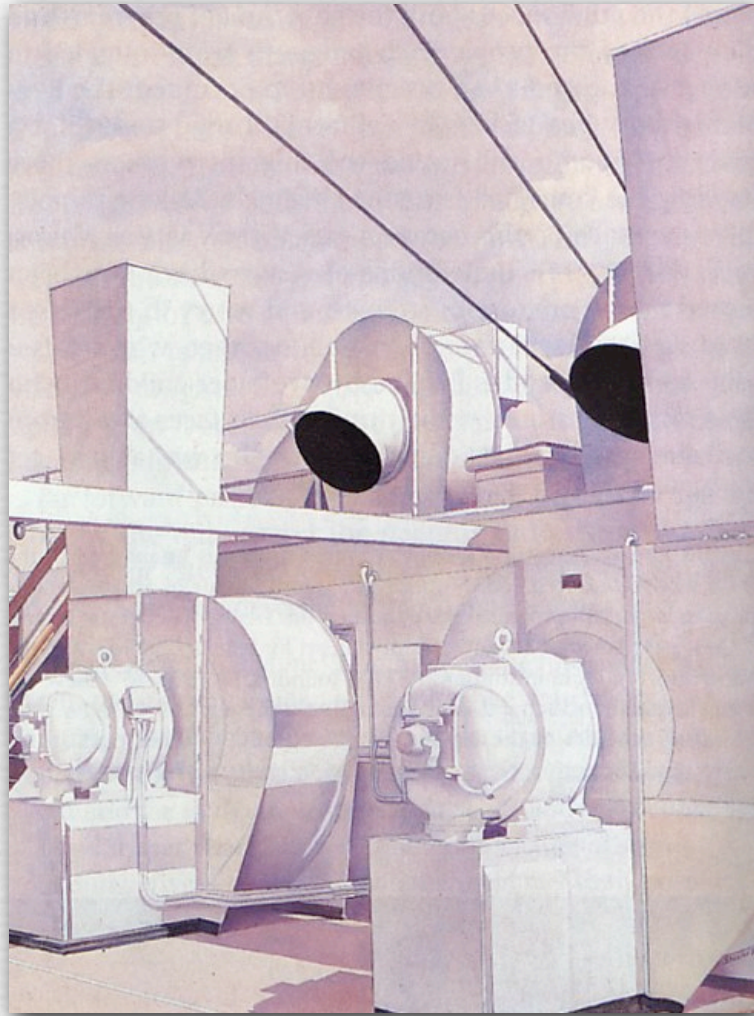
Charles Sheeler,  
Ford Plant, Detroit,  
1927



# The industrial aesthetic in photography

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(Gardner)



Charles Sheeler, *The Upper Deck*, 1929



Lewis Hine,  
Powerhouse Mechanic,  
1925







Margaret Bourke-White, Fort Peck Dam, 1936





**LIFE**

NOVEMBER 23, 1936 **10** CENTS

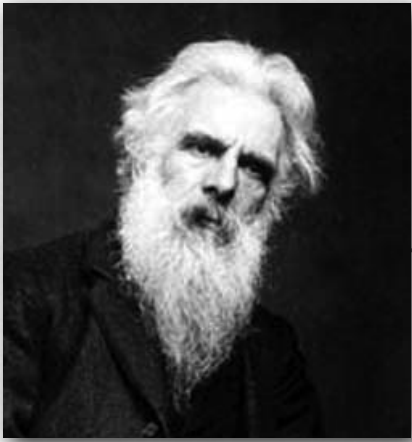
REG. U. S. PAT. OFF.

# Scientific uses of photography

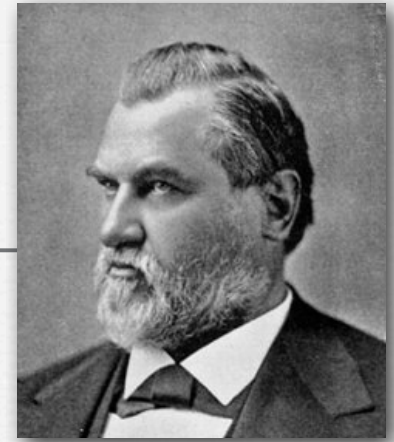
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- ◆ aerial photography
- ◆ freezing motion
- ◆ the birth of cinematography





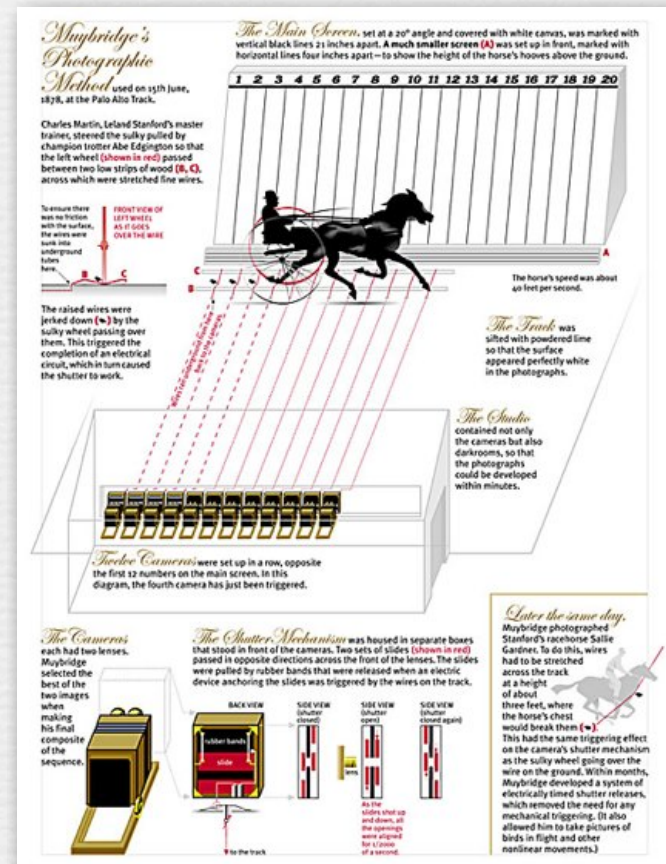
# Muybridge and Stanford



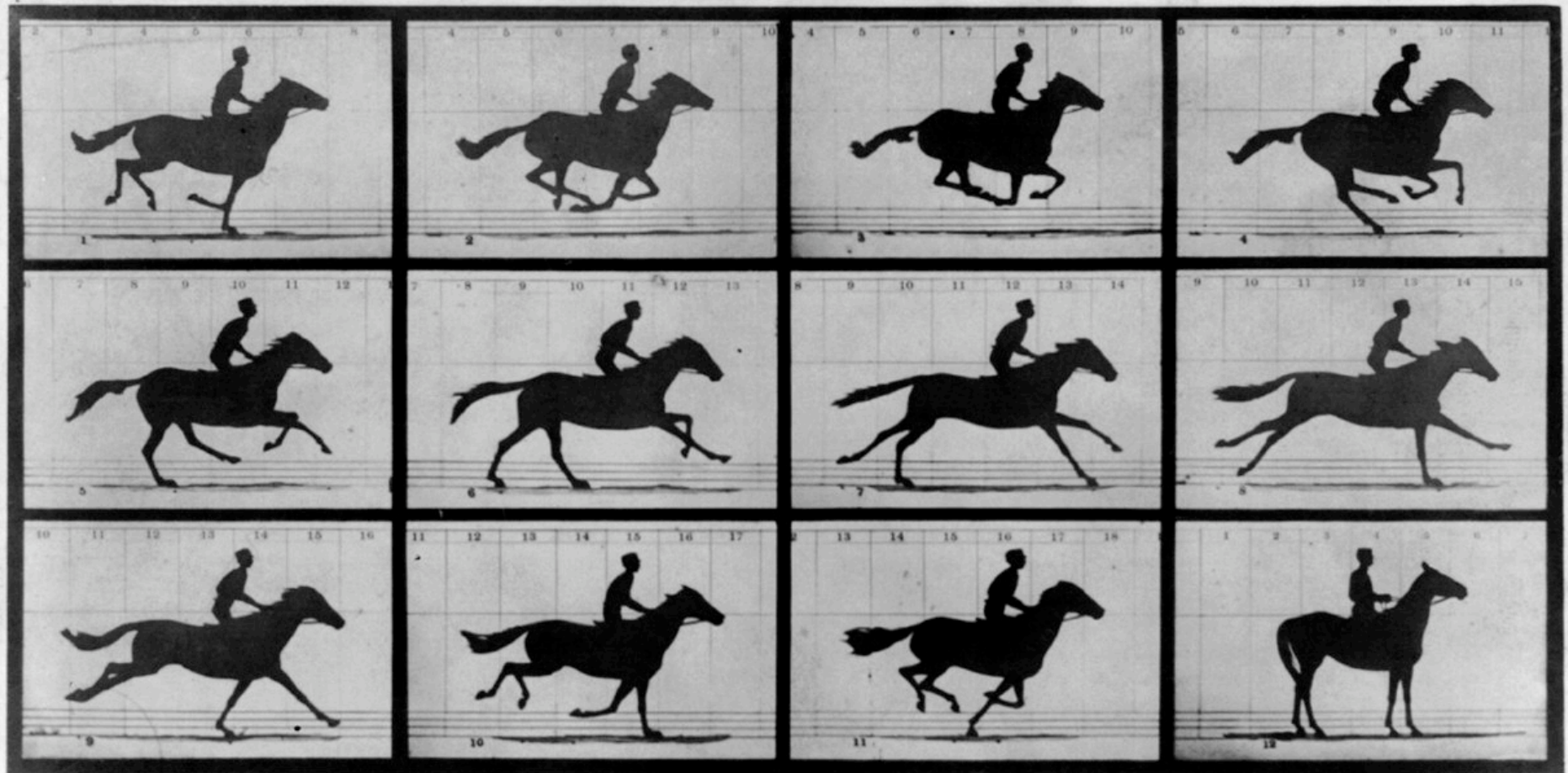
Eadweard Muybridge  
(1830-1904)

Leland Stanford  
(1824-1893)  
(Stanford magazine)

- ◆ In a galloping horse, are all four hooves in the air at once?
- ◆ collaborative effort; Stanford suggested using trigger wires
- ◆ experiments spanned 1872-1878, in Palo Alto & Sacramento, with an interruption in 1874 when Muybridge was tried for the murder of his wife's lover



# Public demonstration, June 19, 1878



Copyright, 1878, by MUYBRIDGE.

MORSE'S Gallery, 417 Montgomery St., San Francisco.

## THE HORSE IN MOTION.

Illustrated by  
MUYBRIDGE.

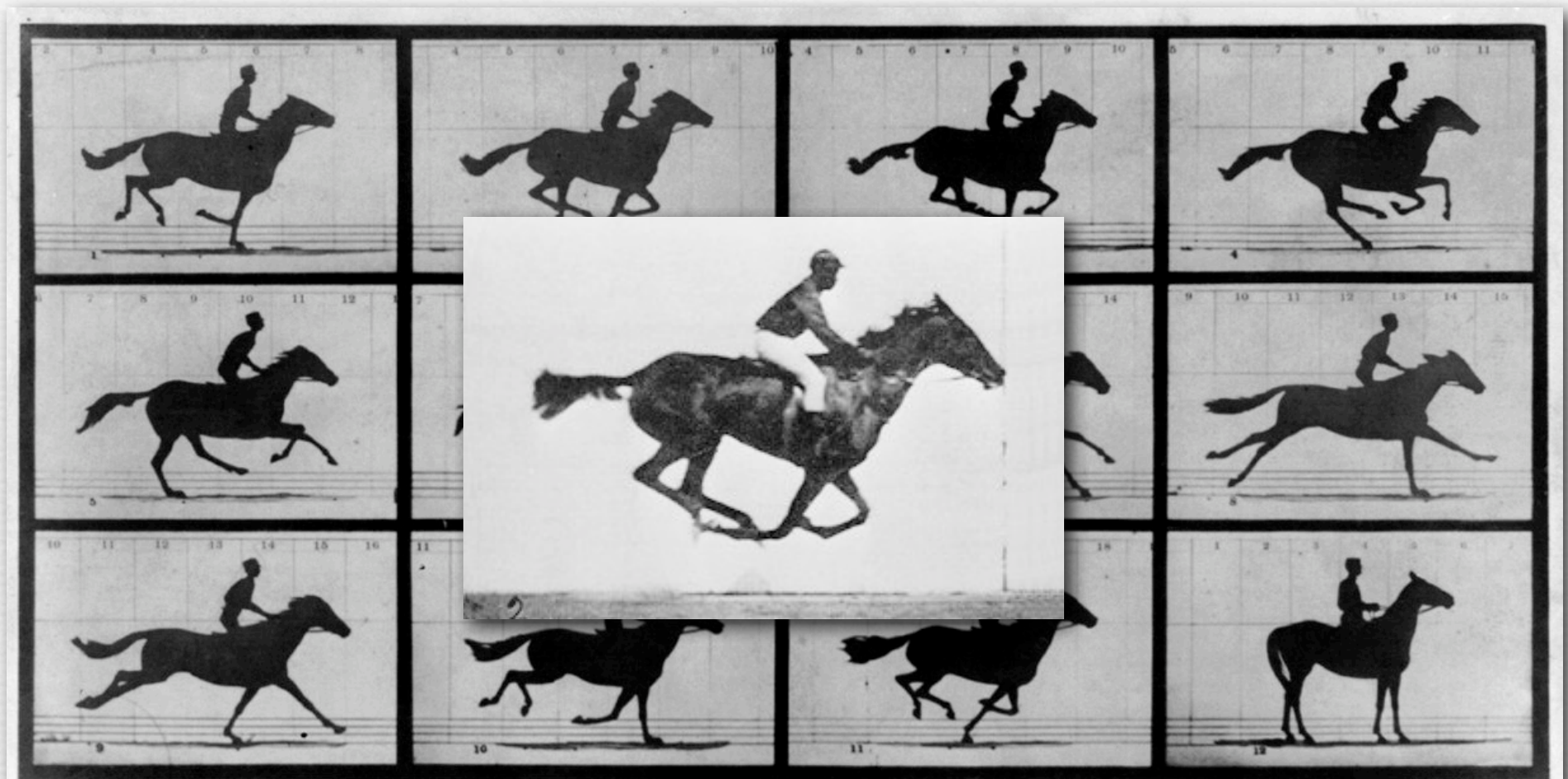
AUTOMATIC ELECTRO-PHOTOGRAPHY

"SALLIE GARDNER," owned by LELAND STANFORD; running at a 1.40 gait over the Palo Alto track, 19th June, 1878.

The negatives of these photographs were made at intervals of twenty-seven inches of distance, and about the twenty-fifth part of a second of time; they illustrate consecutive positions assumed in each twenty-seven inches of progress during a single stride of the mare. The vertical lines were twenty-seven inches apart; the horizontal lines represent elevations of four inches each. The exposure of each negative was less than the two-thousandth part of a second.



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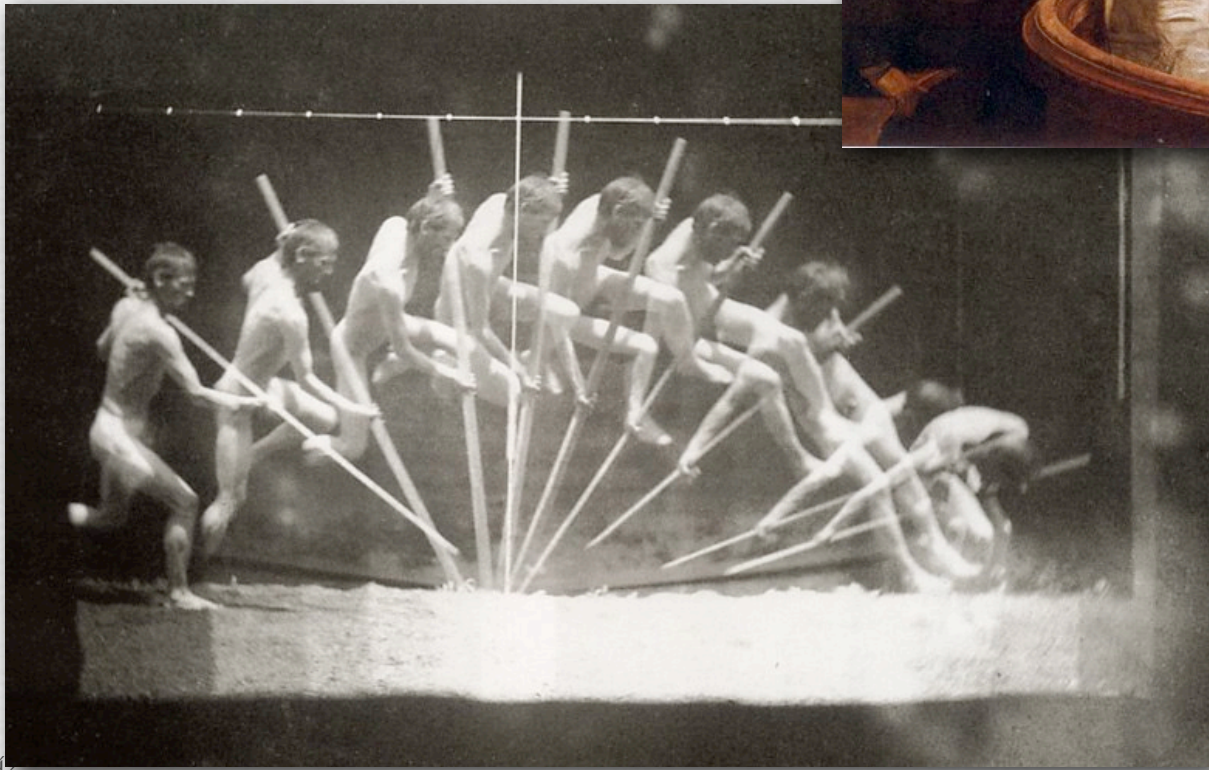
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# Thomas Eakins

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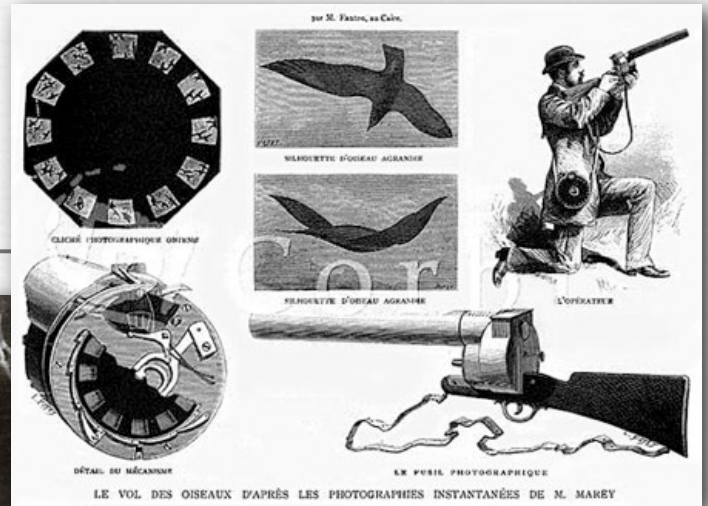
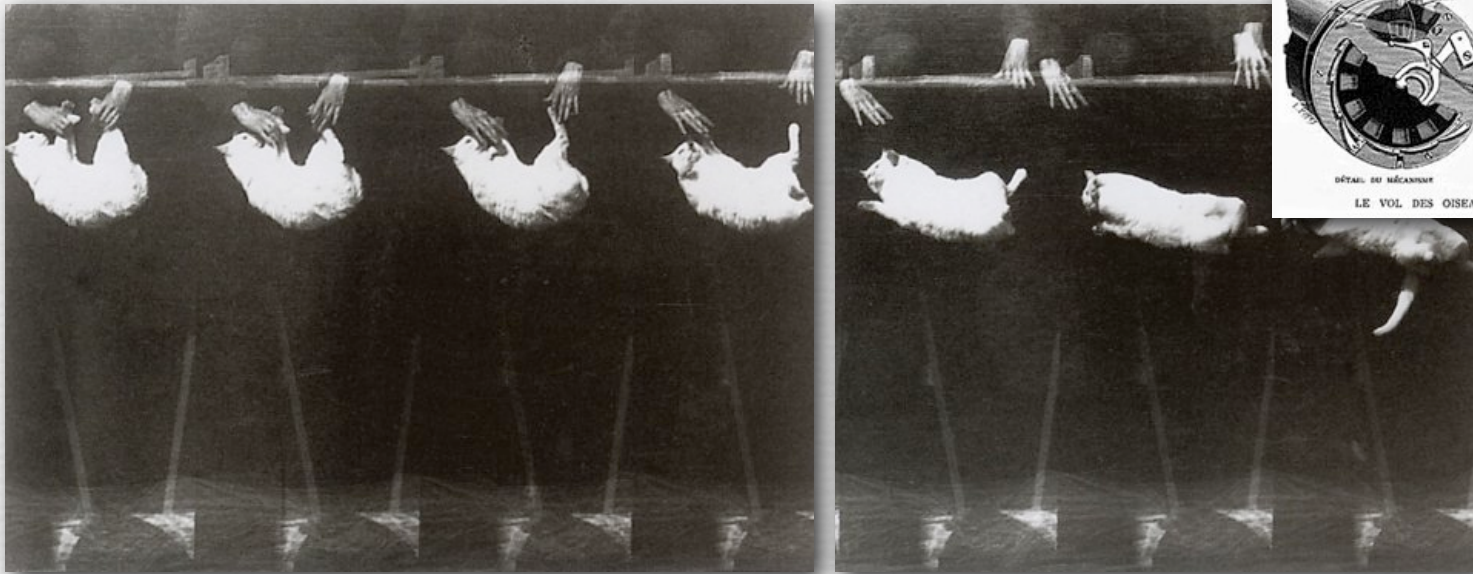
History of a Jump, 1884



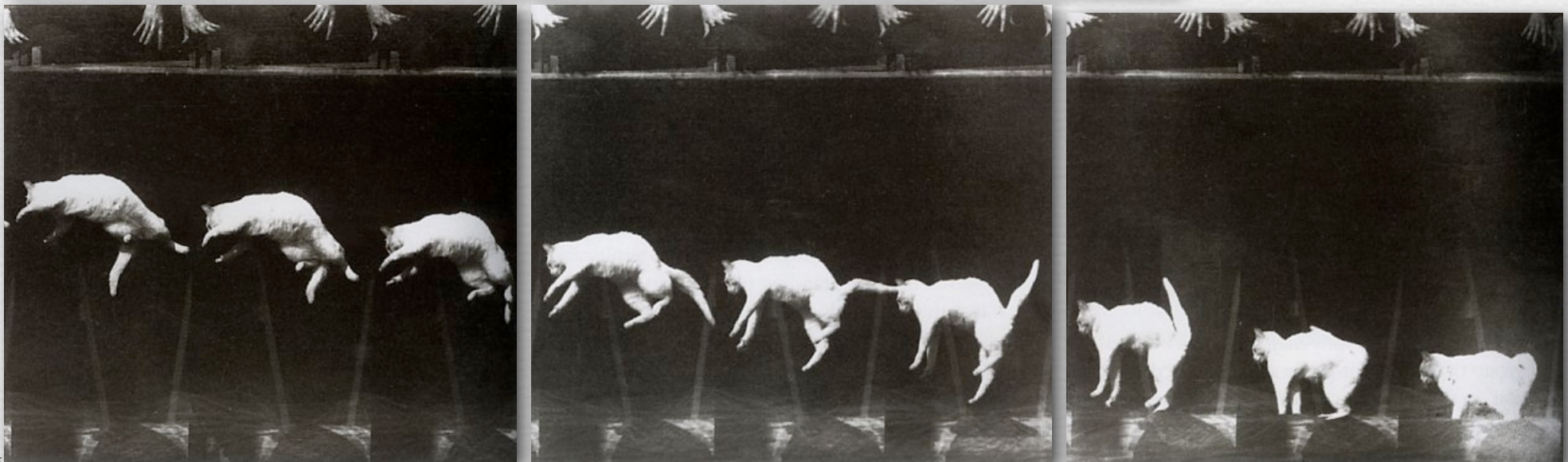
The Agnew Clinic, 1889



# Etienne Jules Marey



Falling Cat,  
1880s





# The birth of cinematography

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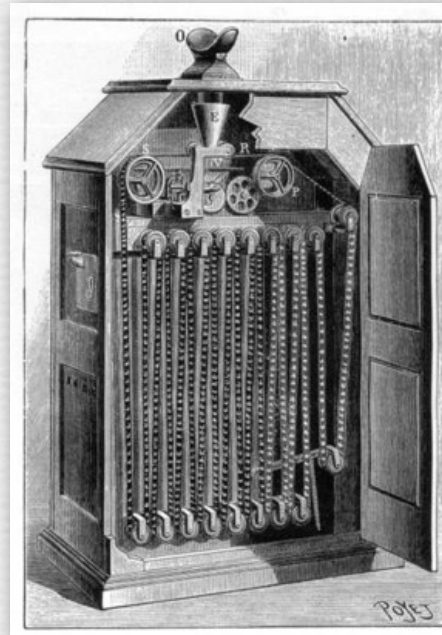
- ◆ Muybridge's images could be viewed using a Zoopraxiscope (invented by him)





# The birth of cinematography

- ◆ Muybridge's images could be viewed using a Zoopraxiscope (invented by him)
- ◆ first practical unlimited-duration recording technology was Edison's 1893 Kinetograph (with William Dickson)
  - perforated 35mm-wide strip of celluloid film
  - intermittent pull-down at 30 frames per second
- ◆ looped, backlit filmstrip displayed to individual viewers using Edison's Kinetoscope



**Edison Kinetoscopic  
Record of a Sneeze,  
January 7, 1894**  
**©January 9, 1894**  
**W.K.L. Dickson**

Fred Ott's sneeze

# The birth of cinematography

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- ◆ concurrent work by Lumière brothers in France



(wikipedia)



workers leaving the  
Lumière factory

© Marc Levoy



# Documentating the social scene

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- ◆ photography recognized early as a force for social change
  - ◆ social conscience initially awakened by seeing inequity in Europe's colonial possessions: Egypt, Cuba, Africa, India, etc.
  - ◆ government-funded projects undertaken to document ethnic groups and their living conditions, for lectures or pamphlets
  - ◆ expanded to include the economic hardship in Europe and American brought about by industrialization
  - ◆ given impetus by late 19<sup>th</sup> century moral reform movements, many of them religious in origin
- 
- ◆ before paper film, photographs were carefully posed, so they seldom represented real living or working conditions
  - ◆ ability to influence public opinion needed the power of the printing press, not individual prints hanging in an art gallery



# Recording non-European cultures

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(Rosenblum)



Marie Cabannis,  
Syrian Bedouin  
Women, 1870



# Showing the success of relief programs

---

(Rosenblum)



Raja Lala Deen  
Dayal, famine  
relief program  
in Aurangabad,  
1899



# Showing the success of relief programs

---

(Rosenblum)



Raja Lala Deen  
Dayal, famine  
relief program  
in Aurangabad,  
1899



# Advertising social programs at home

(Rosenblum)



unknown  
photographer,  
1875

# The Progressive era

---

- ◆ transition from religious charity to social agitation
- ◆ gradual realization that urban poverty arose from economic laws, not the moral inadequacy of slumdweller
- ◆ seminal work was Jacob Riis's 1890 book "How the Other Half Lives", about the tenements of New York



# Venturing into the slums

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(Rosenblum)



Jacob Riis,  
Bandit's Roost,  
New York, 1888



# Immigrant ghettos

(Rosenblum)



Jacob Riis,  
Five Cents  
Lodging, 1889







# Child labor

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(Archives)



Lewis Hine,  
Breaker Boys,  
1911





Lewis Hine, Carolina Cotton Mill, 1908

# The Great Depression

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- ◆ causes included an uncontrolled stock market, unstable banking system, inequitable distribution of income, and agricultural collapse caused by excessive production and misuse of marginal farmland
- ◆ milestone was the October 1929 stock market crash, but the market didn't bottom out until 1933
- ◆ marked by bank failures, high unemployment, labor unrest, and agricultural hardship, exacerbated by draught in the early 1930s



# Soup kitchens and breadlines

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# Rural poverty

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Margaret Bourke-White,  
Two Women, Lansdale,  
Arkansas, 1936

(Rosenblum)







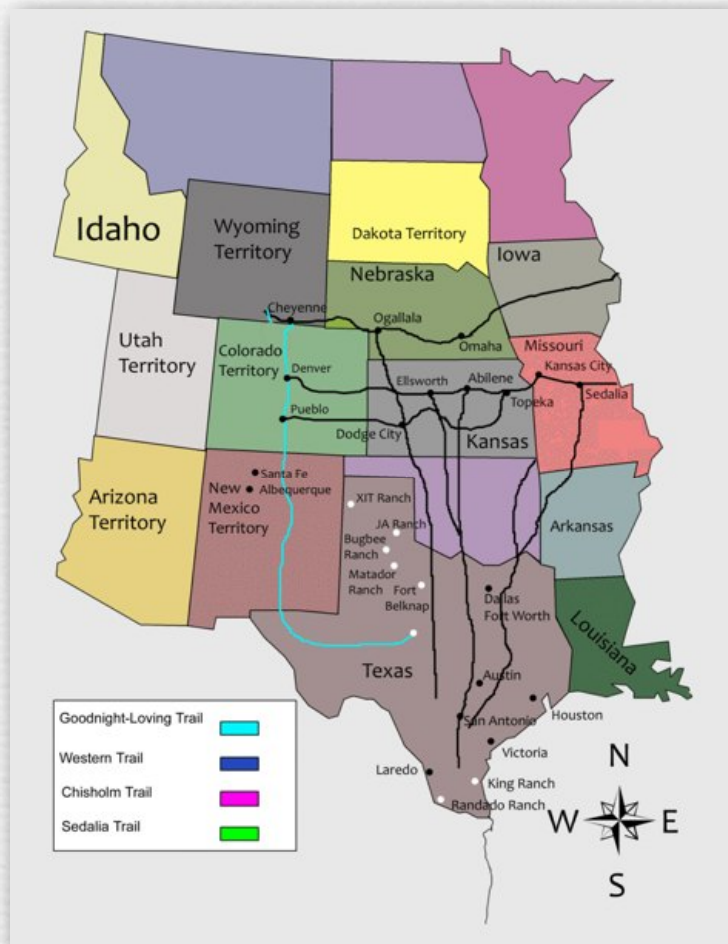
Margaret Bourke White, Louisville, Kentucky, 1937

# The Dust Bowl

## prequel: settlement on the High Plains

a chuckwagon,  
S. Dakota, 1887

- ◆ 1870s - cattle drives from Texas to the transcontinental railroad



along the Goodnight-Loving trail



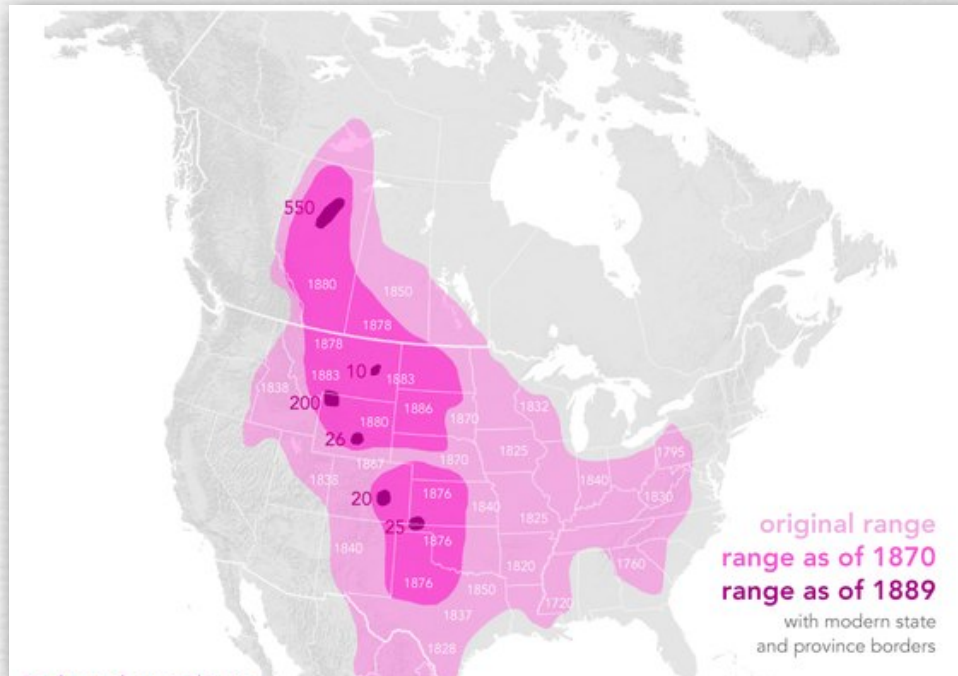
# The Dust Bowl

## prequel: settlement on the High Plains

- ◆ 1870s - cattle drives from Texas to the transcontinental railroad
- ◆ 1880s - American Bison (Buffalo) hunted nearly to extinction



buffalo stampede, 1917



range of the American Bison



buffalo skulls, 1870

# The Dust Bowl

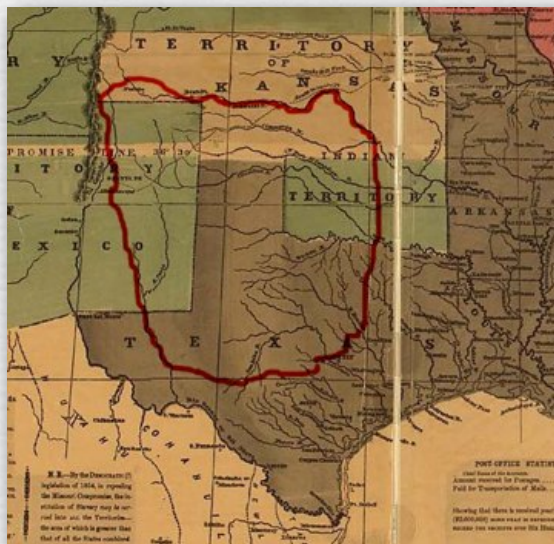
## prequel: settlement on the High Plains

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- ◆ 1870s - cattle drives from Texas to the transcontinental railroad
- ◆ 1880s - American Bison (Buffalo) hunted nearly to extinction
- ◆ 1890s - Indian wars end, Comanches confined to reservations

Edward Curtis,  
The Vanishing Race, 1904

range of the  
Comanches  
prior to 1850



(Rosenblum)



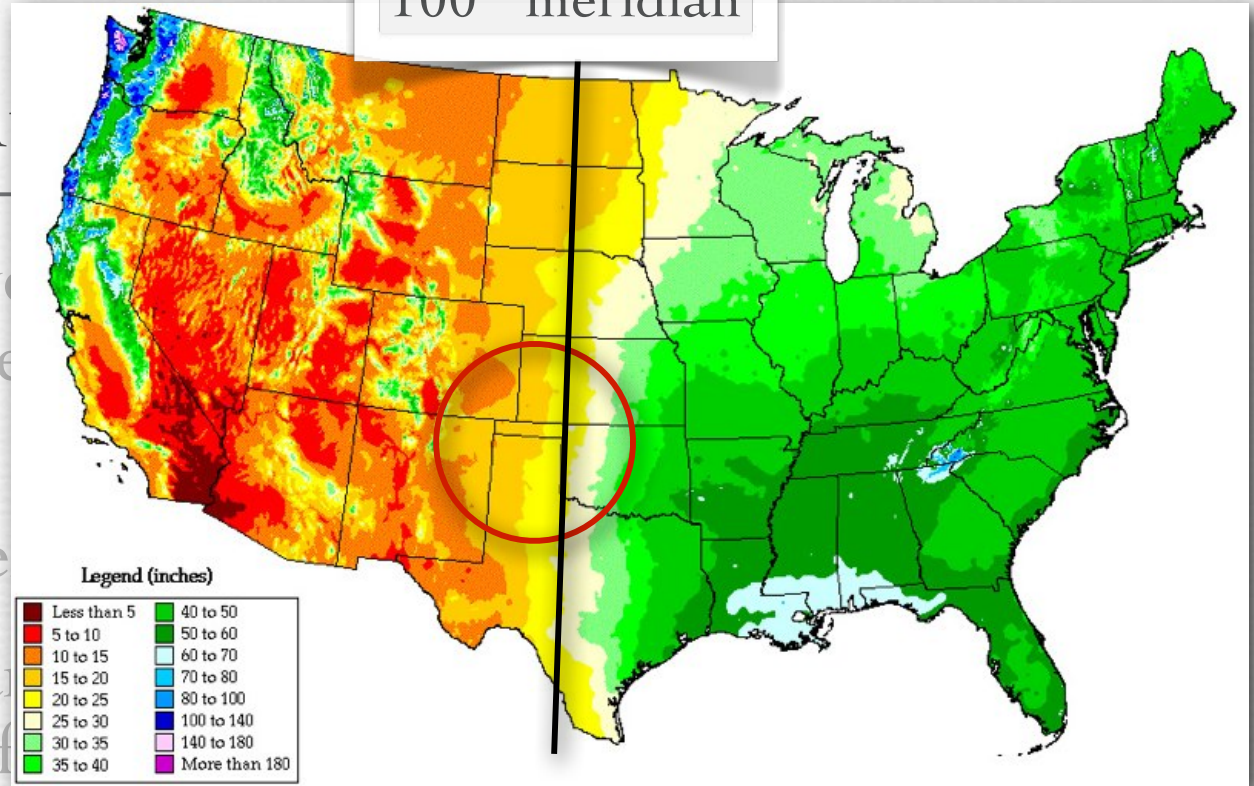


Commanche warriors, photographer unknown, 1874

# The Dust Bowl prequel: settlement

(Oregon Climate Service)

100<sup>th</sup> meridian



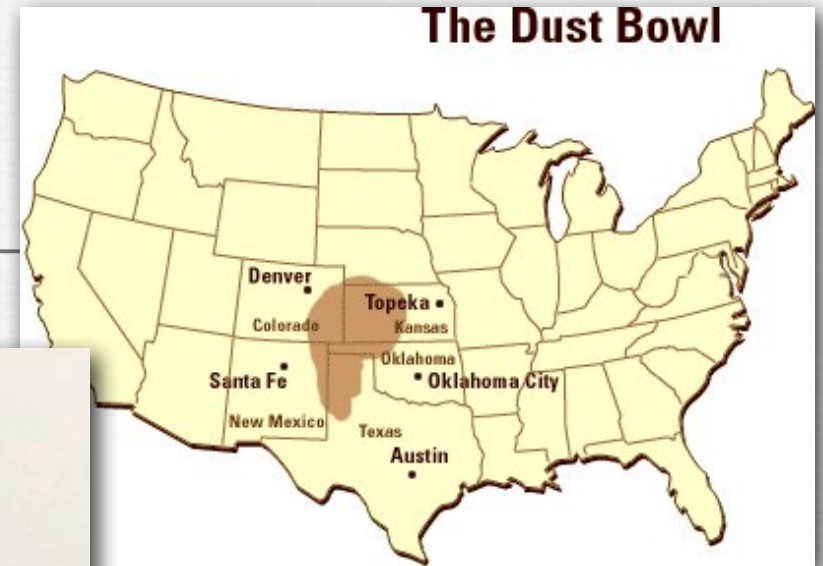
average annual rainfall, 1961-1990

- ◆ 1870s - cattle drive to the transcontinental
- ◆ 1880s - American bison hunted nearly to extinction
- ◆ 1890s - Indian wars  
Commanches confined to reservations
- ◆ 1900s - settlers encouraged to plow and plant
  - “sodbusters”
  - “Rain will follow the plow”





# The Dust Bowl



- ◆ deep plowing by new, gasoline-powered tractors stripped the land of its protective, deep-rooted grasses
- ◆ nutrient-hungry cotton planted on draught-prone land

Dorothea Lange,  
Tractored Out, 1938

# The Dust Bowl

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Black Sunday,  
April 14, 1935



# The Dust Bowl

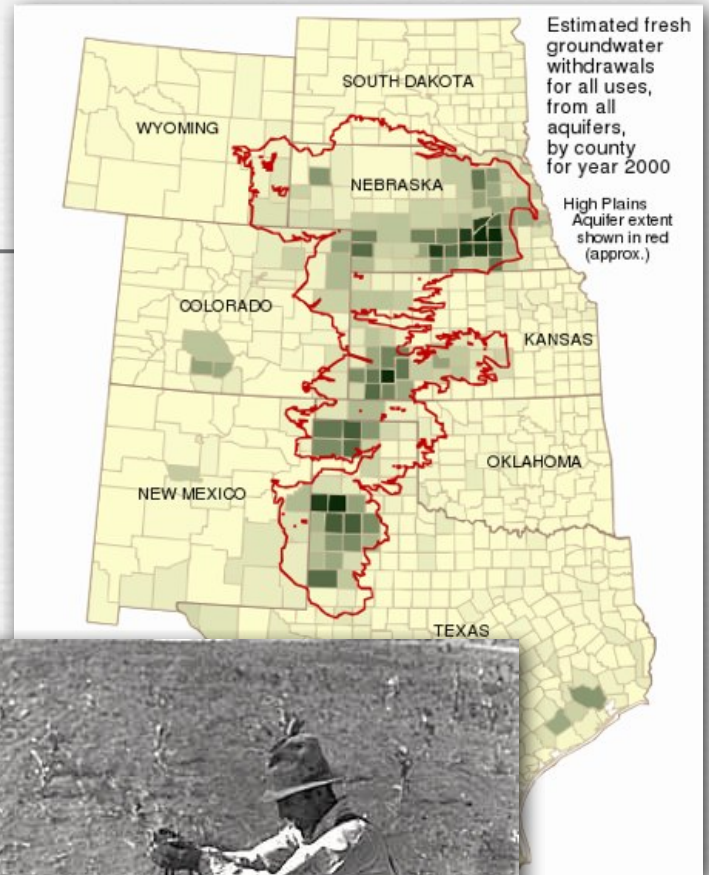
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Dodge City, Kansas  
April 14, 1935



# The Great American Desert





(Laurie Winslow)



Abandoned farmhouse, Kansas



(Laurie Winslow)



Winslow farm, Dalton, Kansas



# Farm Security Administration

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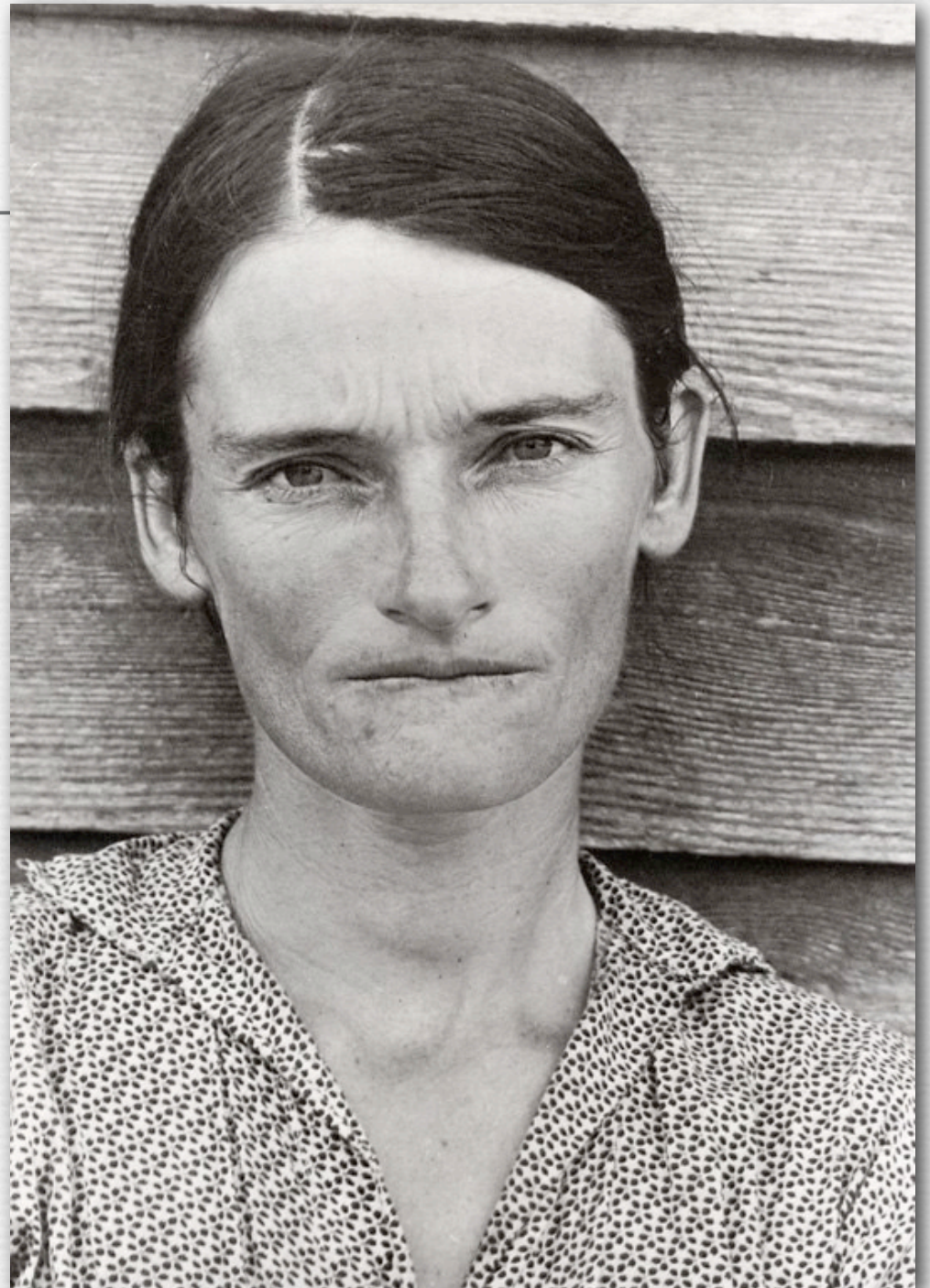
- ◆ created by Franklin Roosevelt in 1935 as the Resettlement Administration, to combat rural poverty
- ◆ under Roy Stryker, photographers were hired to record the agricultural disaster unfolding on the High Plains, to help justify multiple, expensive relief programs
  - Walker Evans
  - Arthur Rothstein
  - Dorothea Lange, and 8 others
- ◆ related effort
  - Margaret Bourke-White

# FSA photographs

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Walker Evans,  
Wife of a Cotton Sharecropper,  
1936

(Newhall)



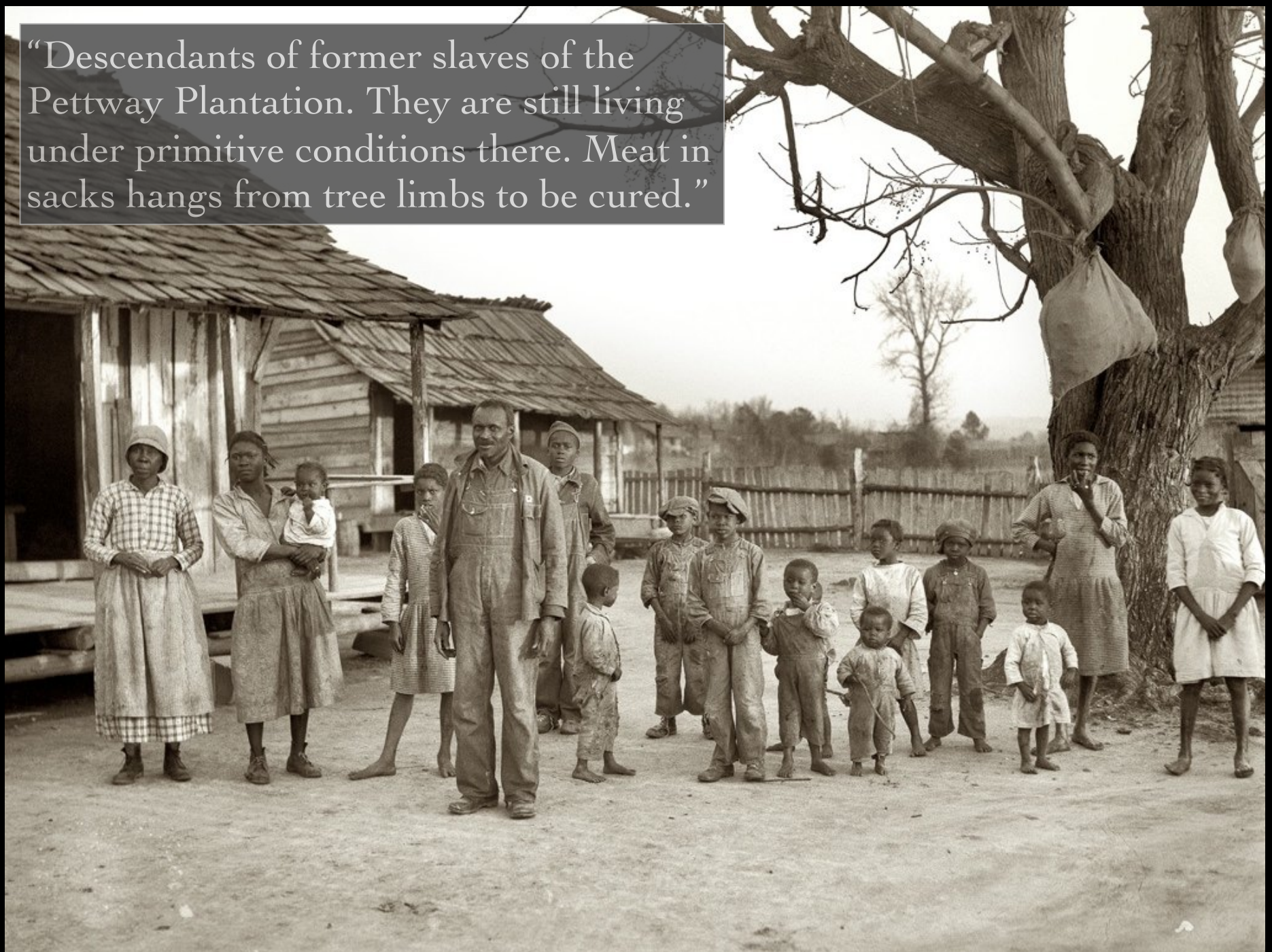




Walker Evans, Garage in Atlanta, Georgia, 1936



“Descendants of former slaves of the Pettway Plantation. They are still living under primitive conditions there. Meat in sacks hangs from tree limbs to be cured.”



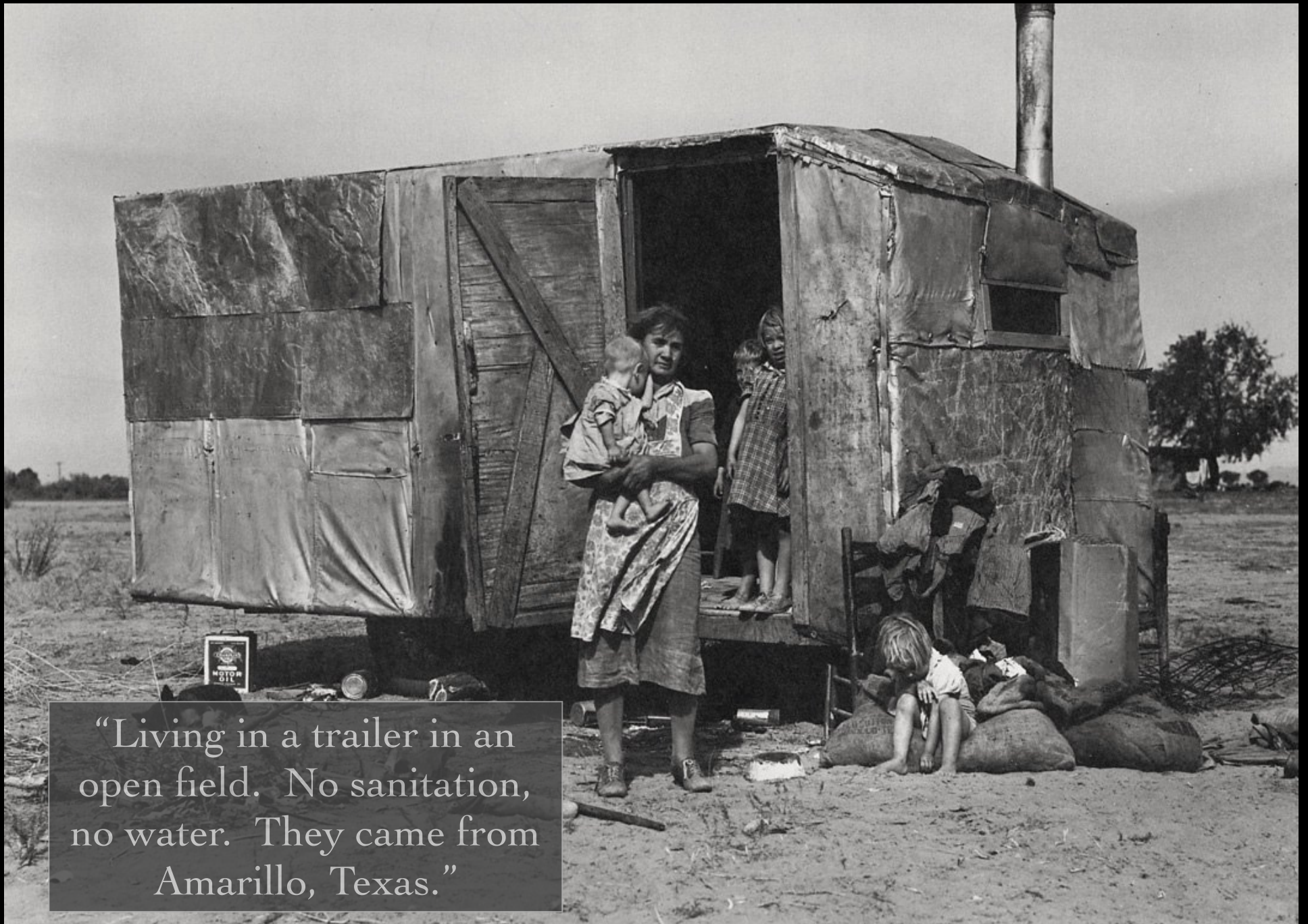
Arthur Rothstein, Gee's Bend, Alabama, 1937





Arthur Rothstein,  
Dust Storm, 1937





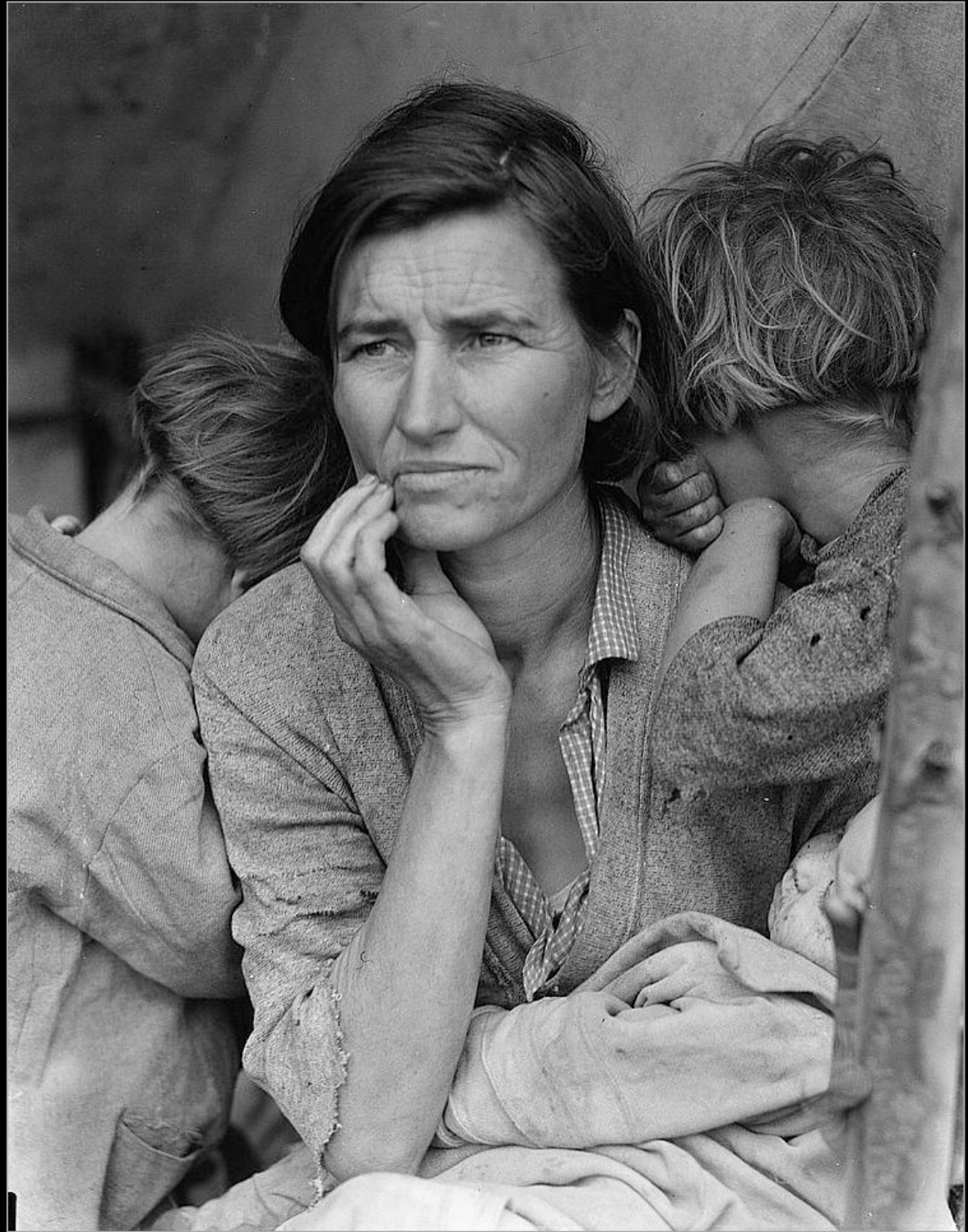
“Living in a trailer in an open field. No sanitation, no water. They came from Amarillo, Texas.”

Dorothea Lange, Migrant Family, 1940

(Archives)



Dorothea Lange,  
Migrant Family,  
1936



# Slide credits

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## ◆ Fredo Durand

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