



TWENTIETH CENTURY AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHY: A BRIEF HISTORY

- 1880 The first tabloid newspaper, with sales driven by images, is published. The *New York Graphic* would eventually spawn the *Illustrated Daily News* and the *New York Daily News*, which still thrives and is one of the country's largest newspapers.
- 1900 George Eastman introduces the inexpensive Brownie camera (the first Kodak roll film camera had been introduced in 1888). American commercial ingenuity turned photography into an accessible medium for the masses, putting it in the hands of thousands of budding enthusiasts across the country, including, eventually, a young Paul Strand.
- 1902 Alfred Stieglitz and Edward Steichen establish the New York Photo-Secessionist movement to promote photography as a fine art. Members rebelled against what they considered to be commercial and amateur photography. Instead, they concentrate on producing works that emulated drawing and lithography.
- 1906 Lewis Hine is hired by the National Child Labor Committee to take photographs of working children. His images ultimately lead to the enactment of laws against child labor in the country.
- 1915 Strand, one of Hine's students, reveals a startling new modernist approach to the medium with his "straight" photography, which eschews soft-focused romantic images for precise, dynamic views of New York City.
- 1920s After World War I, photographers such as Paul Strand and Edward Weston, continue to experiment, striving to make images with a new level of clarity and detail. Both use view cameras, which expose sheets of 8-by-10-inch film, to capture details and images that as clearly resemble the original object or scene as possible. Weston is among the founders of the f/64 Group, whose members include photographers such as Imogen Cunningham and Ansel Adams.

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- 1925 First commercial systems for transmitting photographs over telephone lines, enabling images to be quickly shared with newspapers in New York, Chicago, and San Francisco. Sensational photographs of current events captivate the country.
- 1930s During the Depression, the Farm Security Administration hires photographers like Walker Evans and Dorothea Lange to travel the country documenting depression era deprivation. *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* is published, teaming Evans' powerful photographs of tenant farmers in the South, with James Agee's trenchant prose, to expose the stark realities of rural life and demonstrate the strength of human dignity.
- 1937 In New York, press photographer Arthur Fellig, who became known as Weegee, dominates the news with his pictures depicting the underbelly of life in the big city: from accidents to fires, riots, and murders. Armed with his Speed Graphic camera and flash bulbs, Weegee seemed to appear wherever news was happening, selling pictures by the next morning to tabloids, broadsheets, and picture agencies.
- 1940s World War II becomes the first war to be extensively covered by photographers. Robert Capa's photographs of the D-Day landing and images such as the flag-raising at Iwo Jima become icons.
- 1950s Photography becomes commonplace in everyday life, used with news stories and for advertisements in popular magazines such as LIFE and LOOK. Photographers such as Frederick Sommer develop new ways to manipulate photographs, combining negatives or creating cameraless negatives, which Sommer does by painting on cellophane in 1957.
- 1960s Photojournalism takes center stage with images of the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights movement dominating private discussion and national debate. A series of traumatic events, including the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, civil rights demonstrations in Birmingham, Alabama, and the evacuation of Saigon, are captured by camera.
- 1968 The first man-made photograph of Earth seen from space. Spurred by images from satellites generated by the U.S. space program, photography of the era explored picture-making possibilities through many new technologies and imaging systems, including photocopy machines.
- 1970s Color photography becomes more widely used by artist photographers, such as William Eggleston, Stephen Shore and others. Reversion to landscape photography as new concerns mount over the environmental effects of population growth and industrial development.

