

# Gallery: *Out of the Dust*

by *Todd Shallat*

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New Dealers sold resettlement programs with conservation morality tales. From 1933 to 1941, when great storms of swirling dust chased farmers from Snake River farmsteads, photographers documented the devastation, cheering government aid.

Three of Idaho's most talented storytellers were Arthur Rothstein, Dorothea Lange, and Russell Lee, all photographers with FDR's Farm Security Administration. Rothstein of New York first reached the Boise Valley in May 1936. Lange of New Jersey tracked migrant farm hands. Lee of Illinois studied Canyon County as the farming rebounded with water from the Payette River in 1940 and 1941. Thousands of memorable photos—of jalopies Idaho-bound on the Old Oregon Highway, of high school stoop labor in pea fields, of farmers on resettlement projects, their families living in tents—show gumption in the face of hardship, triumph in times of despair.

But few of the Idaho photos were published. Preserved on microfilm, they remained negatives never developed and mostly unknown until the age of digitization. Our Idaho sampling features the fate of farmers on New Deal resettlement projects. We begin with the epicenter of dust in southeast Idaho's Oneida County. The rest show labor and living conditions of the Okie migration to Ada and Canyon counties. All are in the public domain in the Library of Congress's collection from the Farm Security Administration and Office of War Information, 1936-1943.



One of the families resettled from exhausted land in Oneida County, Idaho. By Arthur Rothstein, May 1936.



Family of six in tent after supper. Came to potato harvest after father was laid off of WPA in Boise, Idaho. Oldest child is 12. Little boy has dysentery. By Dorothea Lange, October 1939.



Chuck wagon in which part of family of 14 lived. Oneida County, Idaho. By Arthur Rothstein, May 1936.



Migrants bound for an Idaho resettlement camp. By Arthur Rothstein, July 1936.

Pile of bleached bones of horses and cattle that have died on the overgrazed land in a resettlement development area, Idaho. By Arthur Rothstein, May 1936.

Bagging wheat on an Idaho farm cooperative. By Russell Lee, July 1940.



Laborers bring in hampers of peas, Nampa, Idaho. By Russell Lee, June 1941.



Farm workers unloading their car and moving into tent in which they will live at Wilder's migratory labor camp mobile unit. By Russell Lee, May 1941.



Dust bowl migrants. Left Texas to work the cotton and fruit harvests, reaching Idaho via California and Oregon. By Dorothea Lange, September 1941.



Widow husking corn on the Black Canyon Project in Canyon County, Idaho. By Russell Lee, November 1941.

Filling station and store across the street from a labor camp, Caldwell, Idaho. By Russell Lee, June 1941.



High school girls waiting to go work in the pea fields, Nampa, Idaho. By Russell Lee, June 1941.



Children in school at farm workers' camp in Caldwell, Idaho. By Russell Lee, May 1941.



Laborer with hamper of peas, Nampa, Idaho. By Russell Lee, June 1941.



When you deliver a hamper of peas to the checker he gives you this check redeemable once a week. Nampa, Idaho. By Russell Lee, June 1941.



Widow husking corn on the Black Canyon Project in Canyon County, Idaho. By Russell Lee, November 1941.



Farmer, Canyon County. By Russell Lee, June 1941.