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Archives of American Art

Celebrating 175: Lewis Hine, Elizabeth McCausland Files, Correspondence, 1938-1940

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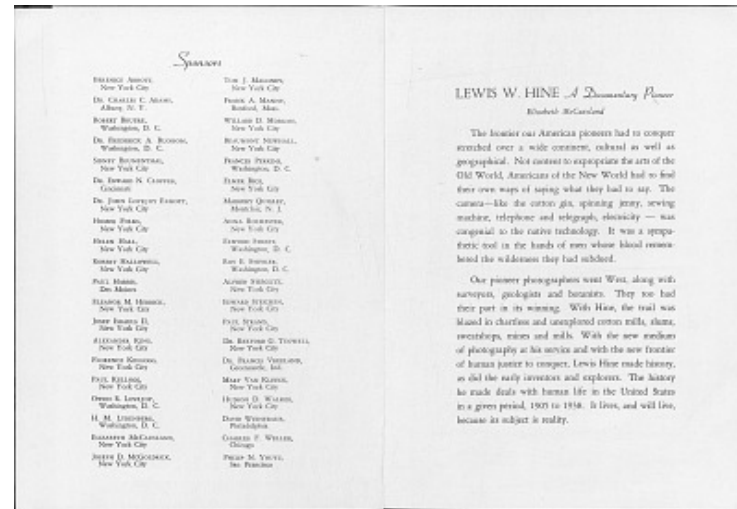
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LEWIS W. HINE
 A Documentary Pioneer

Elizabeth McCausland

The frontier our American pioneers had to conquer stretched over a wide continent, cultural as well as geographical. Not content to expropriate the arts of the Old World, Americans of the New World had to find their own ways of saying what they had to say. The camera - like the cotton gin, spinning jenny, sewing machine, telephone and telegraph, electricity - was congenial to the native technology. It was a sympathetic tool in the hands of men whose blood remembered the wilderness they had subdued.



Our pioneer photographers went West, along with surveyors, geologists and botanists. They too had their part in its winning. With Hine, the trail was blazed in chartless and unexplored cotton mills, slums, sweatshops, mines and mills. With the new medium of photography at his service and with the new frontier of human justice to conquer, Lewis Hine made history, as did the early inventors and explorers. The history he made deals with human life in the United States in a given period, 1905 to 1938. It lives, and will live, because its subject is reality.

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