

Margaret Bourke-White In Print: An Exhibition

Exhibition at Archibald S. Alexander Library,
Rutgers University
New Brunswick, New Jersey
January-June 2006

Gary D. Saretzky, Guest Curator

In 1936, New Jersey-raised Margaret Bourke-White was named one of the ten most prominent women in America and, among the general public, was probably the best known photographer, male or female. At that time, she had written and published only one book illustrated with her photographs but her images had appeared in forty-five issues of *Fortune* magazine, as well as numerous other magazines and books.¹ As a result of the substantial number of articles by and about her, her name was used to market the publi-

cations in which her work appeared and she became the first photographer who had sufficient celebrity status to earn money by endorsing non-photographic products in print and on the radio: Maxwell House, the Victor Library of Recorded Music, Camel cigarettes, and wine.²

Although few of her pictures had appeared on the walls of museums or art galleries, in the following year, 1937, she was included in the first major photography exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.³ Unlike prominent photographers today, who often become known through exhibitions and exhibition reviews by critics writing in art magazines and metropolitan newspapers, Bourke-White became prominent through her commercial success and because, as an attractive young woman in a male-dominated profession, she was newsworthy: "Now at 26, her income is \$50,000 per year," wrote *Time* on December 14, 1931, during the early years of the Great Depression.

By the time Margaret Bourke-White wrote and published her autobiography, *Portrait of Myself*, in 1963, her last and tenth book, nearly sixty major articles had been writ-



¹ Theodore M. Brown, *Margaret Bourke-White: Photojournalist* (Cornell University: Ithaca, 1972). Bibliography on pages 109-119.

² Vicki Goldberg, *Margaret Bourke-White: A Biography* (NY: Harper & Row, 1986), 138, 194-195.

³ Beaumont Newhall, *Photography, 1839-1937*. NY: MOMA, 1937.

ten about her in magazines and newspapers.⁴ Since her death in August 1971 after a protracted battle with Parkinson's disease, her fame has continued to spread through monographs, exhibitions, journal articles, and even a 1989 Hollywood movie: *Double Exposure*, starring Farrah Fawcett and loosely based on Vicki Goldberg's authoritative biography published in 1986. More recently, the prestigious Phillips Gallery in Washington, D.C., premiered a major exhibition, *Margaret Bourke-White: The Photography of Design*.⁵ Books for children have been written about her as a model for youth.⁶ People who hardly know her name have seen, and will always remember, her images of Southern sharecroppers, World War II concentration camp victims, and Gandhi, among many others.

The attention that continues to be given to Bourke-White is well deserved and it arises from a confluence of several complementary factors. The first is, of course, the continuing fascination with Bourke-White herself: a vivacious, determined, and skillful photographer whose work ranged from innovative Machine Age abstractions to poverty-stricken unknowns to the most famous people of her time; a successful woman photographer in an era when most of her peers were men; a communicator who could express herself in both image and word; one of the chief photographers of two very important magazines of her era: *Fortune* and *LIFE*, the former read by policy makers, the latter by just about everyone in America; and a celebrity in her own right by the time she married Erskine Caldwell, who had written *Tobacco Road*, a bestseller which, when dramatized, became a record-setting play on Broadway.

Even in her own time, Bourke-White grabbed the attention of the media for her courage: she hung out of airplanes and skyscrapers to get photos; she photographed the bombing of Moscow from her hotel room after everyone with any sense had gone to the bomb shelters; her ship was sunk by a German torpedo in the Mediterranean; she photographed from the air on a bombing run over Tunis. While those who got in her way may have complained that she was a woman who couldn't take "no" for an answer,⁷ there is no denying that Bourke-White was an irresistible force who was widely admired and respected by her peers, as well as the public that saw and read her work in print.

At the time of Bourke-White's death in August 1971, there was barely a market for original photographs; today, with auction houses regularly offering work by major photographers, her photographs sell for prices she could not have imagined: at Christie's NY on October 5, 1998, a 1930 photo she took of the gargoyle outside the window

⁴ Brown, *op cit.*

⁵ Catalog, Stephen Bennett Phillips, *Margaret Bourke-White: The Photography of Design, 1927-1936* (NY: Rizzoli, 2003). See exhibit items I and J.

⁶ For example, Genie Iverson, *Margaret Bourke-White: News Photographer*. Mankato, MN: Creative Education, 1980.

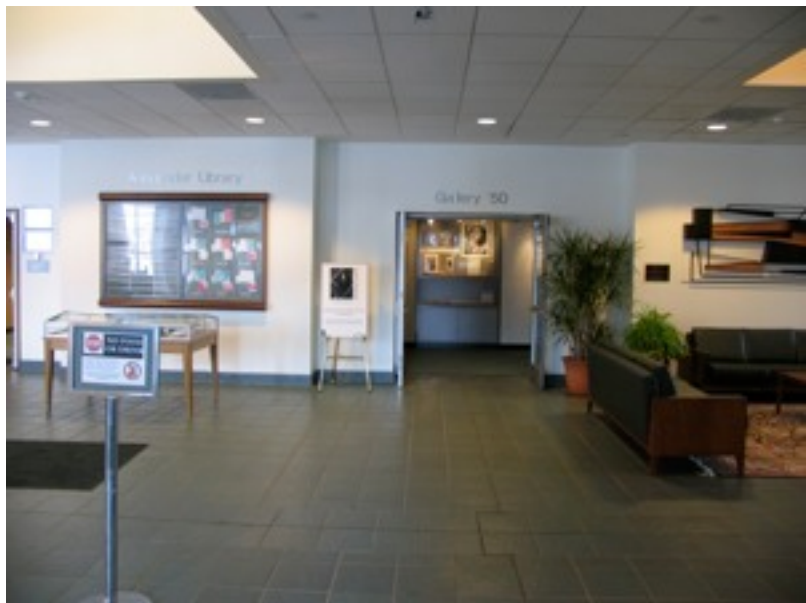
⁷ *Time*, December 14, 1931, 49.

of her studio on the 61st floor of the Chrysler Building, sold for \$96,000.⁸ Such prints often end up on museum walls where they are seen by thousands but, in her own time, aside from a few murals, notably the NBC mural at Rockefeller Center, Bourke-White's images became known mainly through publications.

The primary intent of the present exhibit is to present materials that illustrate how Bourke-White's images were "consumed" by her contemporaries through the display of vintage books and magazines that contain her photographs and writings, or articles about her. Only by seeing the context in which her work first appeared can we begin to appreciate how she became the legend that she is today.

The exhibit also includes posthumous publications about Bourke-White that have brought her work, including images never published in her lifetime, to new generations; portrait photographs of Bourke-White; Bourke-White ephemera; and selected other relevant items. It draws on materials from the Rutgers University Libraries, Syracuse University (which holds Bourke-White's vast archives), and my personal collection.

This exhibition would not have been possible without the significant encouragement, cooperation and assistance of Fernanda Perone and Timothy Corlis of Special Collections, Rutgers University; and Christian Dupont, Carolyn Davis, Peter D. Verheyen, and Nicolette A. Schneider of Special Collections, Syracuse University. The three 24x20 digital enlargements of photographs of Margaret Bourke-White were generously provided by Alex Saretzky.



Gary D. Saretzky

Exhibition List

⁸ Prices realized for auction, *The Image as Object: the Photographs from the Collection of Barry Friedman*, Christie's, New York, 5 October 1998, lot 6. For the value of Bourke-White prints, see the annuals published by Stephen Perloff, ed., *The Photographic Art Market: Auction Prices*. Langhorne, PA: The Photograph Collector.

Items in this exhibition credited to Rutgers University Libraries are from the Archibald S. Alexander Library except where noted differently. Unless otherwise stated, exhibition items credited to Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library are from the Margaret Bourke-White Papers, Arents Research Library. If no source is given, the item is from the curator's collection.

This exhibition list is divided into three sections according to physical location of the exhibit items:

A to J: Exhibit case in main lobby

1 to 70: Gallery 50, off main lobby

71 to 138: Downstairs gallery at entrance to Special Collections and University Archives

A

“Margaret Bourke-White”

Life, September 10, 1971

Facsimile

In recognition of Margaret Bourke White, one of the original photographers for *Life* magazine in 1936, the magazine honored her passing on August 27, 1971, with a three page tribute, of which the first is on display here. The other pages reproduced five of her best known photographs taken of taxi dancers in Montana, Buchenwald survivors, South African gold miners, India (Gandhi with his spinning wheel), and a chain gang in Georgia. Most of these photographs are on view elsewhere in this exhibit.

B

Rutgers University Summer Session Catalog

1922

1922

Special Collections and University Archives, Rutgers

In 1921, after graduation from Plainfield High School, Margaret White, as she was then still known, attended the Rutgers Summer School, taking classes in swimming and “aesthetic” dance.⁹ Rutgers University Archives does not have a 1921 catalog but the 1922 catalog lists courses in “swimming for women” and a general physical training course described as “advanced games and dances.” Unfortunately, no archival records



⁹ Vicki Goldberg, *Margaret Bourke-White: A Biography* (Harper & Row, 1986), 22.

of her attendance have been found. Rutgers was the first of six universities Bourke-White attended before receiving her baccalaureate degree.

C

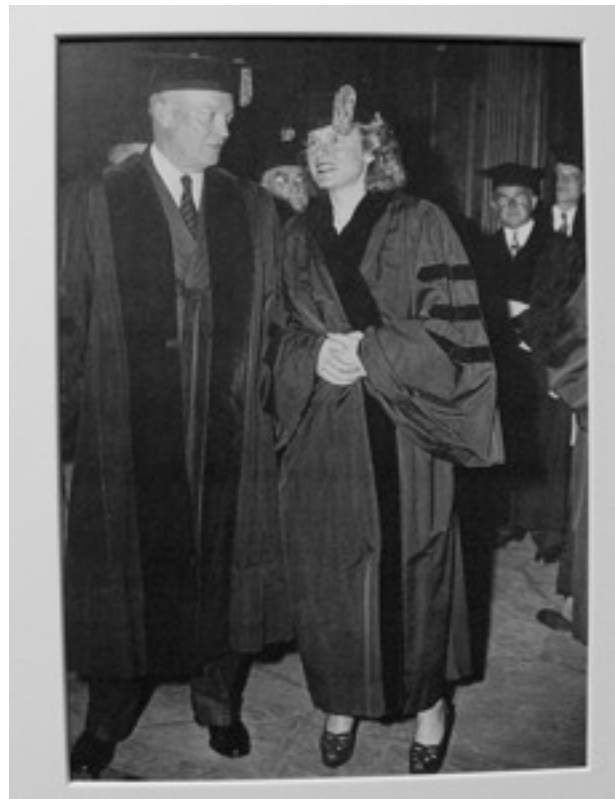
Rutgers University Commencement Brochure
June 13, 1948
Special Collections and University Archives, Rutgers

In 1948, Margaret Bourke-White was awarded an honorary Doctor of Letters by The New Jersey College for Women, known today as Douglass College, Rutgers University. Although the degree is mentioned in the Rutgers Commencement brochure dated June 13, the commencement at the women's college actually took place on June 9. The brochure describes her as "Graduate of Cornell University in the Class of 1927; has taken photographs in twenty-one countries including the Arctic region; associate editor of Fortune magazine, 1929-1933; Life magazine since 1936; accredited war correspondent-photographer for Life magazine to the United States Air Force, 1942-1944; author and co-author of several books and articles on industrial subjects, Russia, and World War II.

D

Margaret Bourke-White and Dwight D. Eisenhower
Photograph at Rutgers University Commencement
June 13, 1948
Facsimile, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library

General Eisenhower was president of Columbia University in 1948, when he was given an honorary doctorate (L.L.B.) by Rutgers and invited to give the commencement address. Bourke-White, who also received an honorary doctorate, was well known to him: during World War II, he had approved her access to the Italian front and she had interviewed him for *Life* magazine.



E

"Margaret Bourke-White Goes to Hollywood" by William Hebert
Popular Photography, December 19, 1943

Returning from the battlefronts of World War II in February 1943, Bourke-White went on a coast-to-coast lecture tour that ended in Los Angeles, where she was commissioned by Samuel Goldwyn to shoot stills for his new war movie, *The North Star*, featuring Walter Huston, Eric Von Stroheim, Anne Baxter, and other well known actors. *The North Star* was based on a book and screen play by Lillian Hellman and was one of many morale-boosting movies produced by Hollywood to help the war effort. In the second half of this *Popular Photography* article, William Hebert provides a surprisingly detailed biography of the photographer. Hebert was employed as a Hollywood publicist; his credits include promotion of the premieres of *Gone with the Wind* in 1940.

F

“An American Photographer Shoots ‘The Russian War’” by Leonid Mitrokhin
Soviet Life, May 1985



Soviet Life was a magazine published by reciprocal agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union. The agreement provided for the publication of *Soviet Life* in the United States and the magazine *America* in the Soviet Union. This special issue of *Soviet Life* marked the 40th anniversary of the victory over Fascism. The author recounts that Margaret Bourke-White was in Moscow when the Nazis attacked, that she courageously photographed the bombing of the capital,

and that she wrote a popular book about her experiences, *Shooting the Russian War*. One of the highlights of her 1941 trip was photographing Stalin, who ruled the U.S.S.R. with an iron fist. By coincidence, this issue of *Soviet Life* also featured the election of Mikhail Gorbachev as General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist



archives at Syracuse University.

Party of the Soviet Union, an event which ushered in the “Perestroika” era of increased freedom that in many ways was the antithesis of Stalinism.

G

“Margaret Bourke-White: *Eyes on Russia*” by Gary D. Saretzky

The Photo Review, 22:3&4 (Summer & Fall 1989), 1-14

The cover article in this issue of *The Photo Review* provides an analysis of the events which led to Bourke-White’s trip to the Soviet Union in 1930, her first book, *Eyes on Russia*, how her Russian portfolio helped further her career, and how her Left-wing associations in the 1930s caused her problems during the anti-communist McCarthy era in the early 1950s. Much of the essay is based on excellent primary resources in Bourke-White’s ar-

H

“The Margaret Bourke-White Collection” in *Syracuse University: Treasures of the University Library* [NY: Syracuse, 1996]

The Bourke-White Collection is one of the most important in the impressive holdings of Special Collections at the Arents Library of Syracuse University, which loaned, or provided reproductions for, a number of items in this exhibition. The Collection includes a vast quantity of photographs, negatives, correspondence, business records, clippings, publications, and photographic equipment. A guide to the collection is available on the University’s web page. This brochure highlights some of the holdings, including cameras, photos, the first issue of *Life* magazine (with cover photo by Bourke-White), and original story boards for a comic book called *Camera!* about the photographer.¹⁰ In one scene in the comic, she is shown standing with a camera on a tripod photographing Stalin, who is seated; in truth, he stood and she was on her knees.

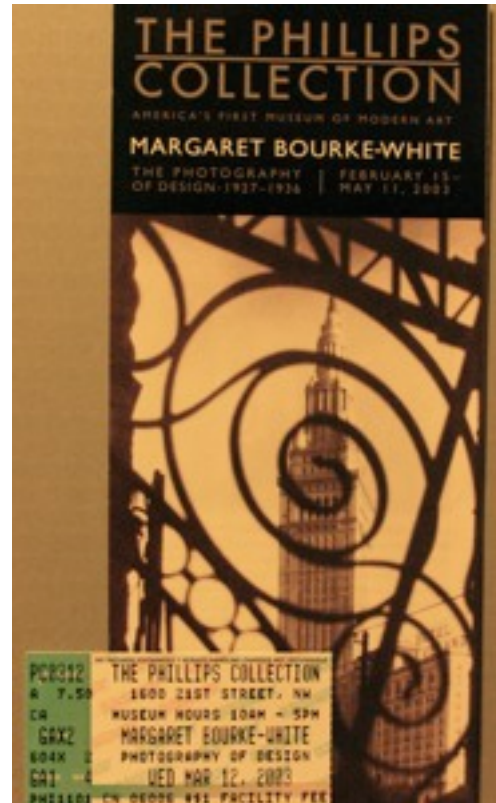


I-J

¹⁰ While it is not known if this comic was ever published, U.S. Camera Publishing Co. started a series of comic books called *Camera Comics* in July 1942. The third in the series featured “Linda Lens,” a character loosely based on Bourke-White.

Stephen Bennett Phillips
Margaret Bourke-White: The Photography of Design, 1927-1936
NY: Rizzoli, 2003
With exhibition brochure and admission tickets¹¹

Margaret Bourke-White's career falls more or less into two phases: from 1927 to 1936, she sought to make aesthetically inflected photographs, primarily of architecture and industry, that could be considered works of art; from 1936 until illness forced her to put down her cameras in the mid-1950s, she worked primarily as a photojournalist and used photography to help tell stories about economic and social problems, war, and other current issues with an emphasis on images of people. This book focuses on the first phase of her career and was issued as the catalog for an exhibition that opened at The Phillips Collection, February-May 2003, and subsequently traveled to a series of other venues. In addition to Phillips' informative introduction, excellent reproductions of the images in the exhibit, it includes a chronology of Bourke-White's life and times, selected Bourke-White correspondence, and two radio transcripts of Bourke-White talking about photography as a career for women.



#1
Joseph Rosenthal
Portrait of Margaret Bourke-White
San Francisco
Original date stamped January 13, 1953, on verso
Digital enlargement, 24x20

This fine portrait was made by Joe Rosenthal, the photographer renowned for his photograph of the flag raising on Iwo Jima in 1945. At the time this picture was taken, Bourke-White had recently come back from Asia and *Life* magazine had published

¹¹ Brochure and tickets courtesy of Elsalyn Palmisano as gift to curator.

her photo essay, "A Savage Secret War is Waged in Korea," on December 1, 1952. Bourke-White didn't know it, but her career as a photographer was coming to an end. For more than a year, she had begun to feel stiffness in a leg and her hands and the condition was getting worse. Eventually she learned that she had Parkinson's Disease. Although she continued to work as a photographer occasionally until about 1956, her condition made it increasingly difficult.

#2

Margaret Bourke-White

"DC-4 Flying Over Manhattan," 1939

Poster, 22x28

Published by Graphique du France, n.d.

Bourke-White had no fear of flying. In the 1930s, she had commercial assignments from TWA and Eastern Airlines, including a series commissioned by Eastern showing their planes flying over major U.S. cities. For that job, Bourke-White photographed from a small plane that accompanied the larger one and she probably used the same technique here. The photo was made for a June 19, 1939, *Life* magazine story, "The DC-4," several years after Bourke-White gave up most commercial assignments to concentrate on photojournalism. The DC-4 has no airline markings, although the faint name, "Super Mainliner," on the side of the fuselage is associated with United Airlines, which used the plane for flights between New York and Chicago. Two elevated railway lines, now long gone, are clearly visible below the plane; in the background looms the Chrysler Building, which housed Bourke-White's studio on the 61st floor in the early 1930s.

#3

"What Makes a Good Photographer"

Popular Photography, October

1957

Facsimile

Although Bourke-White, as a result of Parkinson's disease, was no longer working when this article was published, her list of qualities needed for a photographer describe her own in her prime, not the least of which was "energy, energy, energy." Bourke-White had all of what she calls for here, including willingness to get up before dawn to use the best light, having "a nose for news" to

get the scoop, personal magnetism to insure the cooperation of others, a sense of re-

corner of the scene.
MARGARET BOURKE-WHITE, *photographer*—What makes a photographer? An overwhelming compulsion to show what he sees to others. To do this well he uses the highest degree of selectivity. He shears out one small rectangle from all the world. He will inevitably give it good composition—almost unconsciously—and will use his good pictorial sense because probably these assets were built in before he was born and determined his choice of a profession in which he could make pictures. . . . He will have energy, energy, energy. He will have the self-command to get up in the dark so as to catch the handsome slanting light of sunrise, and when it turns out to be cloudy he

sponsibility to history, and the desire to use her work to tell the truth and possibly influence millions of people.

#4

Portrait of Margaret Bourke-White
Photographer Unknown
Date stamped October 4, 1955 on verso

#5

Bourke-White: A Retrospective
Invitation to Exhibition Opening
International Center of Photography, New York
Exhibit, March 4-May 1, 1988

Invitation to a major exhibit, sponsored by United Technologies Corporation with the cooperation of *Life* and *Fortune* magazines, which after opening at ICP, traveled to nine more museums, coast to coast, over the next two years. The photograph of Bourke-White was taken on Chrysler Building scaffolding in 1930. Bourke-White photographed the construction of the skyscraper, then moved her studio there from Cleveland in 1930. The same photograph was used on the cover of the catalog for the ICP exhibit; see item 132.

#6-9

Trade Winds: Four covers
May and September 1928; February and
October 1929
Facsimiles, Special Collections Re-
search Center, Syracuse University Li-
brary

For nearly five years beginning in November 1927, Bourke-White supplied photographs for covers to *Trade Winds*, an industrial magazine published by the Union Trust Company in Cleveland, for \$50 each. Often emphasizing repetitive lines and dynamic diagonals, her photographs helped popularize the "Machine Aesthetic," an artistic style that glorified work and industry through finding beauty in industrial form. The steady income enabled her to move into a studio on the 12th floor of the prestigious Cleveland skyscraper, The Terminal Building, which she photographed repeatedly for its owners.



#10-11

Two illustrations from *Trade Winds: Study in Steel* and untitled images of Otis Steel Co. ca. 1928-1929

Facsimiles, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library

In addition to publishing monthly covers by Bourke-White, *Trade Winds* also reproduced industrial scenes that were printed on pages inside. Bourke-White probably made these two images in Cleveland at Otis Steel in early 1928, when its president, Elroy Kulas, agreed to give her unrestricted access. Kulas was so pleased with the photographs that he selected some for \$100 each and published a set in a booklet, "The Story of Steel." One of Bourke-White's photographs of the two-hundred-ton ladle was awarded first prize in a May 1928 exhibit at the Cleveland Museum of Art. Bourke-White's steel photographs also brought her to the attention of Henry Luce, who hired her to be the first photographer for *Fortune* magazine.

#12-20

Margaret Bourke-White

Photographs of U.S.S.R.

Twenty-Four Plates with an Introduction by the Artist

Argus Press, 1934



[Eight of 24 photogravures and Bourke-White's introduction in display.]

Special Collections Research Center,
Syracuse University Library

From hundreds of photographs she made during her three annual trips to the Soviet Union in 1930-1932, most of those Bourke-White selected for this portfolio were of workers and students representing the new nation builders, the "men and women around the machine." With both Russian and American audiences in mind, Bourke-White also included portraits of Stalin's mother and great-aunt, four scenic views, a dam with an American engineer, and the huge Magnitogorsk blast furnace. In November 1934, Bourke-White suggested to the Soviet Embassy that Ambassador Troyanovsky present Roosevelt with a special copy "bound in red leather, with the President's name on it in gold." She mentioned that she herself was preparing a

similar copy for Stalin.¹²

#21

Margaret Bourke-White

Eyes on Russia

Simon and Schuster, 1931

Rutgers University Libraries

In the fall of 1930, with recommendations from Sergei Eisenstein and others, Bourke-White arrived in Moscow, where she obtained the endorsement and financial backing of the chief of the Soviet publishing house, A.B. Khalatoff, a leading Bolshevik later liq-



uidated in the 1937 purges. Bourke-White toured some of the most important industrial and other sites and came back with stellar images of Russia under construction during the Five-Year Plan. She complemented the photographs with a spirited narrative of her experiences as the first foreign photographer to photograph in the Soviet Union with official permission. From 800 negatives, she published forty in a sepia tone in *Eyes on Russia*. Along with at least eight related illustrated

articles in *Fortune*, the *New York Times Sunday Magazine*, and other periodicals, *Eyes on Russia* significantly enhanced Bourke-White's reputation and initiated her long-term relationships with Soviet officials and Americans sympathetic to the U.S.S.R.¹³

#21A

Eyes on Russia

Facsimiles of Covers from Softcover Edition

Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library

The reproductions here are believed to be identical to the now very rare dust jacket of *Eyes on Russia*, although they come from a rare contemporaneous paperback version of the book, which is geneally known in the cloth edition. The text on the cover clearly was intended to market the “charming” Bourke-White as much as the Soviet Union.

¹² Gary D. Saretzky, “Margaret Bourke-White: *Eyes on Russia*,” *The Photo Review*, 22: 3&4 (1999), 10.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 1-14.

21B

Eyes on Russia

Photographic reproductions of title page and frontispiece

#22

Louis Fischer

Machines and Men in Russia

[Illustrated with seven photographs by Margaret Bourke-White]

NY: Harrison Smith, 1932

Rutgers University Libraries

Like Bourke-White, whose *Eyes on Russia* expressed hope about the future of the



U.S.S.R., Louis Fischer, a journalist from Philadelphia whose Russian wife Markoosha was a linguist for the Soviet Foreign Office, wrote books in the 1920s and early 1930s that helped prepare the United States for recognition of the Soviet Union in 1933 as a bona fide regime. While he did not advocate Communism for the United States, Fischer thought that Lenin was the greatest statesman of the age and in this book, his positive reports about the Five-Year Plan of Economic

Construction underscored his sympathy for the Russian Revolution. In a few years, Fischer would become disillusioned by the excesses of Stalinism. But in 1932, he was still writing very sympathetically about the Soviets and Bourke-White's upbeat photos of children and workers, only one of which was in her book, *Eyes on Russia*, enhanced his message. The frontispiece, displayed here, is titled, "A Member of the New Soviet Intelligentsia: A Draughtsman in a Moscow Factory."

#22A

Machines and Men in Russia

Facsimile of endpapers by Margaret Bourke-White

#23

Sir Arthur Newsholme and John Adams Kingsbury

Red Medicine: Socialized Health in Soviet Russia

[Illustrated with eight photographs by Margaret Bourke-White]
Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran, 1933

In 1932, Bourke-White was on her third trip to Russia with a primary purpose of shooting a documentary film. In Georgia, she visited Borzhom, known for its spa, health clinics and mineral waters, and nearby Tiflis (Tbilisi), where she photographed Stalin's mother (not reproduced in this book). *Red Medicine*, like several other books published in the early 1930s with Bourke-White's Russian photographs, is very sympathetic to Soviet innovations, in this case, universal preventive and curative medical care for all its citizens, the first nation to offer this service. The authors visited Russia in August and September 1932 and used carefully posed images that Bourke-White shot in health facilities in Moscow and, while traveling on horseback, in the mountainous Transcaucasian province of Georgia,



where she took the photograph on exhibit of a children's rest home. Most of the photos in *Red Medicine* were not published elsewhere, although she used two in her 1934 gravure portfolio, *Photographs of the U.S.S.R.*: a hospital waiting room in Moscow and medical students at the Tiflis Tuberculosis Institute. Other photos in *Red Medicine* are by co-author Kingsbury, the former Commissioner of Public Charities in New York City, or supplied by the So-

viet Photo Agency.

#24

"American Woman Endures Great Hardship in Russia"
Clipping, Denver, Colorado

December 4, 1932
Facsimile, Special Collec-
tions Research Center,
Syracuse University Library

This news story from an un-
known paper reports that
Bourke-White had returned
from Russia with 20,000 feet
of movie film. Bourke-White
had little previous experience
with a motion picture camera
and experienced numerous
technical problems that
made much of this work un-
usable. Only about 10% of
her film was eventually re-
leased in two shorts, *Eyes on*



Russia and *Red Republic*. This clipping is also interesting for the two photographs: the one by Bourke-White of the women in the Baku oil fields has not been published a book. The other one of Bourke-White, cropped from a wider view, is by James Abbe, a Hollywood glamour photographer whose several trips to Russia (without Soviet endorsement for his photography) resulted in his book, *I Photograph Russia* (1934), which was not as sympathetic to the Russian Revolution as Bourke-White's *Eyes on Russia*.¹⁴

#25-27

Margaret Bourke-White

"Silk Stockings in the Five-Year Plan," "Making Communists of Soviet Children," and "Where the Worker Can Drop the Boss"

Excerpts from three illustrated articles in Sunday *New York Times Magazine*
February 14, March 6 and 27, 1932

Facsimiles

With the United States wallowing in the Great Depression and the Soviet Union apparently booming with a state-managed economy, Western economists, social theorists, and others began looking toward the U.S.S.R. as a model, especially after Stalin focused his nation on internal economic and social change rather than world revolution. The U.S.S.R. had been practically closed to foreigners from 1917 to 1930 and much was unknown in the West on the impact the Bolsheviks had had on the life of the people. And it was the people, rather than politics, that Bourke-White wrote about. Sympathetically portraying the Russians as diligent workers and peasants trying to make a life for themselves under a new egalitarian social system, Bourke-White helped prepare

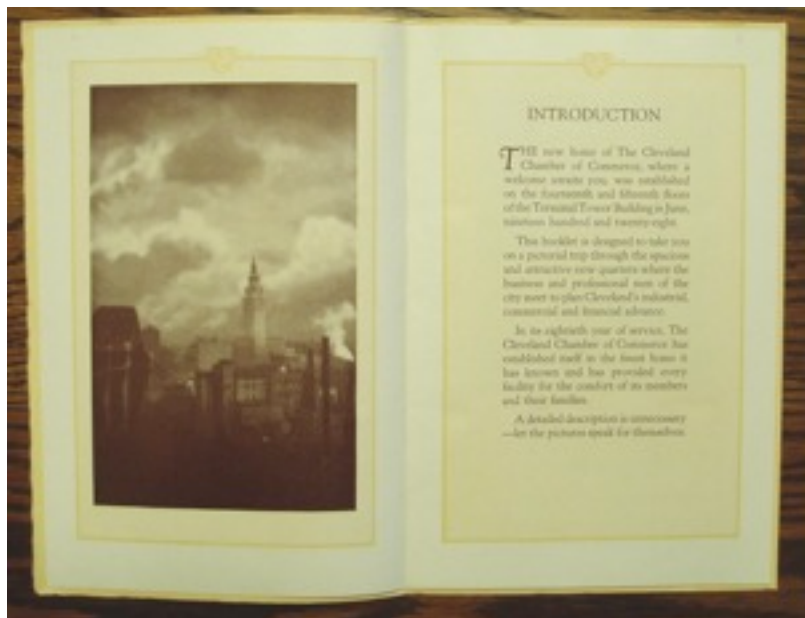
¹⁴ An uncropped version of this photograph, without credit to Abbe, was published in Jonathan Silverman, *For the World to See: The Life of Margaret Bourke-White* (NY: Viking, 1983), 33, and in Carolyn Daffron, *Margaret Bourke-White* (NY, et al.: Chelsea House, 1988), 65.

Americans for U.S. recognition of the Soviet regime in 1933. Demonstrating the depth of her Russian files, the eighteen photographs published in these articles had not appeared in print previously and few have been reproduced since. That Bourke-White was able to supply six articles to this prestigious magazine in 1932 is indicative both of the degree of public interest in the Soviet Union and Bourke-White's own growing celebrity as a courageous photojournalist with a flair for publicity. In addition to the three represented here, the other articles in the series were "Nothing Bore the Russian Audience (March 13); "A Day's Work for the Five-Year Plan," (May 22); and "A Day in a Remote Village of Russia" (September 11).

#28

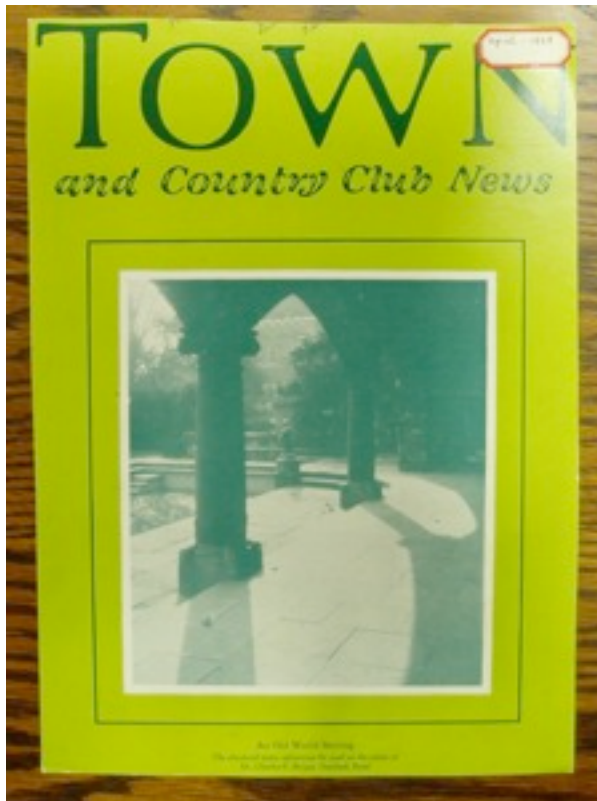
Bourke-White photograph, "The Terminal Tower," 1927
The New Home of the Cleveland Chamber of Commerce, [1928]
Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library

In 1927-1928, the Terminal Tower in Cleveland became a focus for Bourke-White's camera. Under its twenty-eight stories, passengers arrived by train each workday and boarded streetcars to get to work. For both the city and Bourke-White, the Terminal Tower symbolized the fast-paced and efficient modern metropolis. She photographed it so extensively and well that, by the end of 1927, the Van Sweringen brothers, powerful railroad magnates who owned the building, hired her as their official photographer. She was given unrestricted access to photograph the skyscraper while it was being completed and obtained a twelfth floor studio for herself, after trying unsuccessfully to get one *over* the Sweringens on the 28th. The Cleveland Chamber of Commerce, which issued this brochure with Bourke-White's photo inside the front cover, had its offices on the fourteenth & fifteenth floors. The Terminal Tower series was a precursor to Bourke-White's extensive documentation in 1928-1929 of the construction of New York's Chrysler Building, to which she moved her studio in 1930.



#29-30

Town & Country Club News
April 1928 and May 26, 1928
Covers with Bourke-White photographs



Facsimiles, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library

By the spring of 1928, Bourke-White had made many contacts among architects and business leaders in Cleveland and was doing a good business photographing the steel industry, the construction of the Terminal Tower, mansions, and country clubs. Her photographs appeared regularly in local publications such as *Town & Country Club News*, *The Cleveland District Golfer*, and *Tradewinds*. Often using soft focus lenses, Bourke-White produced images consistent with the pictorialist aesthetic she had learned in the Spring 1922 semester at the Clarence White School of Photography in New York, through a course offered by Teachers College, Columbia University, one of six universities she attended as an undergraduate. As she later wrote in her autobiography, "I belonged to the soft-focus school in those days: to be artistic, a picture must be blurry. . . ."

#31

Margaret Bourke-White

"A Black Francis of Assisi"

The Clevelander, January 1928, p. 11

Facsimile, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library

In 1927, after graduating from Cornell, Bourke-White returned to Cleveland, where she had lived in 1925. While peddling her portfolio to Cornell-trained architects, she later recalled, "I passed through the public square and saw a Negro preacher standing on a soapbox. He was earnestly exhorting the air, but no one was paying the slightest attention to him. Soaring about his widespread eloquent arms and gathered in a bobbing congregation at his feet were flocks of pigeons: what a wonderful picture! But that day I had no camera." (*Portrait of Myself*, p. 36). Not to be denied, Bourke-White dashed to the nearest camera store, borrowed a Graflex, and returned with a bag of peanuts to encourage the "spectators." One result was this published photograph. Another was a lasting friendship with the camera store clerk, Alfred Hall Bemis, who became her coach and technical advisor. The story, somewhat fictionalized, was featured in the film, *Double Exposure*, with Farrah Fawcett in the role of Bourke-White. The photo was reproduced, cropped and lightened, in Bourke-White's 1963 autobiography, *Portrait of Myself*, under the title, "A preacher and his parishioners, Cleveland Public Square."



#32

"She May Snap at You; It's All in a Day's Work"

Cleveland Plain Dealer

November 13, 1927

Facsimile, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library

Quite possibly, the author of this article was the Harriet Parsons (1906-1983) who became a Hollywood film producer and director between 1935 and 1954 and whose mother was the famous movie-star gossip columnist, Louella Parsons. Harriet Parsons emphasized how unusual it was for a woman to be doing industrial photography: "Swarthy, sweating men toiling in the inferno of the steel mills. . . . They all stop and gaze at her wide-eyed and wide-mouthed with astonishment." She also emphasized Bourke-White's femininity: "Tyrannical masculine customs, which hang like a pall over the photographic profession, she is scornfully flouting. She sees no reason, for instance, why black is the only color for the camera cloth used while focusing. She uses black only with her red outfit, while she has purple, green and blue ones to match her other costumes."

#33

Cornell Alumni News, March 24, 1927

Cover photograph by Margaret Bourke-White

Facsimile, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library

Taken during her senior year at Cornell University, Bourke-White's soft focus picture of Lake Cayuga seen through a window is typical of her work at this time and one of her first published photographs. She graduated from Cornell in 1927, culminating a rather peripatetic higher education. After Plainfield High School in 1921, Margaret White took swimming and modern dance in the summer session at Rutgers. She then enrolled in Columbia University; in her second semester she studied photography with Clarence White (no relation). Margaret then transferred to the University of Michigan, where she studied biology and herpetology and was a photographer for the yearbook. At Michigan, she became engaged to senior Everett Chapman, whom she married on June 13, 1924. Chapman got a teaching job at Purdue University, so Margaret enrolled there for her senior year. However, in 1925, "Chappie" became employed in Cleveland, so Margaret took classes at Case Western Reserve University, majoring in education. In 1926, Margaret left her husband, began calling herself Bourke-White (a combination of her parents' surnames), and enrolled at Cornell, where she earned income through selling her campus photographs.

#34

"Artist, With Camera as Brush, Dares Heights and Hidden Perils to Capture Spirit of Steel Mills"

Cleveland Plain Dealer, May 6, 1928

Facsimile, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library

In less than a year after graduating from Cornell in 1927, Bourke-White achieved a reputation as a daredevil, whether shooting from dizzying heights while wearing high heels or ignoring searing heat and fumes in the heart of a steel mill. "I wanted to take a picture from the top of a coke oven and no one would go up with me, as every time workmen made repairs at the top of the oven a few were overcome by carbon monoxide gas. But I took a deep breath and went up alone," she said. "My idea is to reflect the spirit of the steel mills in photographs. Artists spend their lives imitating what must have been done before them. I didn't want to do that. It seems to me that steel mills and sky scrapers symbolize the spirit of the industrial age." This article also praised Bourke-White for her willingness to get up before dawn, wait for hours in the rain, or crawl over dirty piles of ore to get the shots she wanted.

#35

"Girl's Photographs of Steel Hailed as New Art"

Associated Press Feature News Service

May 28, 1928

Facsimile, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library

This AP Feature on Bourke-White went to newspapers across the country and probably was reprinted numerous times. The article begins by mentioning Bourke-White's first prize at the spring exhibition of the Cleveland Museum of Art, helping to build Bourke-White's reputation as an innovative artist who could turn a grimy blast furnace scene into an aesthetically pleasing dramatic photograph. Explaining her motivation, Bourke-White's statement quoted here must have been like sweet music to the ears of business leaders: "Industry is the true place for art today. Art should express the spirit of the people, and the heart of life today is in the great industrial activities of the country." Only a year out of college, Bourke-White was achieving a national reputation through dogged determination, skill at photographic composition, and a shrewd understanding of how to obtain and use publicity.

#36

"March of the Dynamos" [1928?]

American Annual of Photography, Volume 44, 1930

Boston: American Photographic Publishing, 1931

In 1930, the *American Annual of Photography* was still the leading annual compilation of photographs in the U.S., especially for photographers with a Pictorialist orientation. Pictorialism, a photographic art movement that began in the 1890s and promoted aestheticization of the medium through special lenses and hand crafted printing processes, was well past its prime by 1930 but the *American Annual* had not yet been challenged by the Modernist *U.S. Camera Annual* that first appeared in 1935.



"Who's Who in Pictorial Photography, 1928-9," may be found in the back of the 1930 *American Annual*. It provides data on the past four years of exhibitor participation in competitive photographic salons sponsored by amateur clubs all over the world. Bourke-White exhibited two prints in two salons in 1927-1928 and four prints in three salons in 1928-1929. As explained by Ann Thomas, "The adoption of the word 'salon' by camera club aficionados and pictorialists

to describe the setting in which their works were judged, selected, and hung, attests to

the self-conscious attempt that was made to situate photography within a fine-art picture-making tradition.”¹⁵

That Bourke-White, already a successful commercial photographer by 1930, submitted work to this *American Annual of Photography* is an indication that at this stage in her career, she still sought acceptance of her work as art. Her photograph with its repetitive forms consistent with the Machine Age aesthetic that Bourke-White helped popularize, is here published with an anthropomorphic title, “March of the Dynamos,” although it has more recently appeared with the more prosaic, “Hydro-Generators.” It was one of a number Bourke-White made at the Niagara Falls Power Company that were used in stage sets for Eugene O’Neill’s play, “Dynamo,” in 1928; as a result, Bourke-White became known as “the girl who discovered the dynamo.”¹⁶

#37

Lincoln Steffens

The Autobiography of Lincoln Steffens, Vol. 2

New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1931 [Fourth printing, July 1931]

Frontispiece of steel mill by Margaret Bourke-White

Born in San Francisco, California, on 6th April, 1866, Lincoln Steffens achieved renown as a muckraking journalist exposing government corruption in the early 1900s. An advocate of social and political revolution, Steffens visited Russia in 1919; upon his return in 1921, he uttered the famous dictum, "I have seen the future and it works." But by the time he wrote his *Autobiography*, he was disillusioned with communism. In addition to the frontispiece, Bourke-White’s photo of St. Basil’s Cathedral in Moscow appears in this volume, one of the first of her Russian photographs to be published in a book.



#38

America As America Sees It, edited by Fred J. Ringel

New York: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, 1932

¹⁵ “Reflections on an Exhibition,” *Archivaria* 17, Winter 1983-1984, 143).

¹⁶ Stephen Bennett Phillips, *Margaret Bourke-White: The Photography of Design, 1927-1936* (NY: Rizzoli, 2003), 175.

Photograph of Grain Elevator by Margaret Bourke-White
Rutgers University Libraries

Although first published in the United States, *America As America Sees It* was intended to inform Europeans about many aspects of American culture, in forty-six short chapters



and more than one hundred illustrations by American artists. The juxtaposition of photographs by Margaret Bourke-White, still an up-and-coming young photographer, with one by Edward Steichen, then the dean of American photographers, underscored the remarkable rise of Bourke-White to the heights of her profession in just a few years. Even being included in this book was quite an honor, as the contributors included the elite in American literature and the arts. While the reputation of

some have faded over time, others are still familiar names today, such as writers Sherwood Anderson, Robert Benchley, Malcolm Cowley, W.E.B. DuBois, Will James, James Weldon Johnson, and Upton Sinclair. Among painters and graphic artists were George Bellows, Thomas Hart Benton, Marsden Hartley, Edward Hopper, Rockwell Kent, John Marin, Reginald Marsh, Georgia O'Keeffe, John Sloan, James Thurber, and Ben Shahn. Photographers, in addition to Bourke-White and Steichen (who also contributed an article on news photography), included Anton Bruehl, Walker Evans, Lewis W. Hine, Charles Sheeler, Paul Strand, and Ralph Steiner. Even Walt Disney contributed thirty-four small drawings of Mickey Mouse. In short, this book remains an excellent resource for the American culture of which Bourke-White was a part in 1932.

#39

Color facsimile of cover of *America as Americans See It*

#40

"Medical Students at TB Clinic in Tiflis" by Margaret Bourke-White
M. Lincoln Schuster, ed.

Eyes on the World: A Photographic Record of History in the Making
NY: Simon and Schuster, 1935

In its attempt to show newsworthy events through photography, *Eyes on the World* was a book format precursor to *Life* magazine. The kaleidoscopic contents address the rise of Fascism and communism, although domestic economics, arts and sciences also are covered. Schuster boldly explained, "It is the function of such a chronicle as this to disclose glimpses of the mad, incredible totality of human behavior at its highest and lowest reaches, and to take the entire earth for its province." A number of Russian and other photographs by Bourke-White appear in this volume, issued by the same publisher as her 1931 book, *Eyes on Russia*.



#41

"Dizzy Heights Have No Terrors for This Girl Photographer...."

New York Sun

April 25, 1929

Facsimile, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library



This article by Marjorie Lawrence (not to be confused with the famous opera singer of the same name) emphasized Bourke-White's ambition, youth, and femininity. Lawrence provides a laudatory account of Bourke-White's varied images, from gardens to heavy industry, and predicts a bright future for her. Like other accounts of the period, Bourke-White was headlined as "the girl photographer." On May 3, this piece was reprinted (without illustrations) under the title, "Former Local Girl Fine Photographer," in *The Chronicle* (Bound Brook, NJ), prefaced by an editorial note stating that Bourke-White formerly lived with her parents in the present residence of Mrs. Cookman on West Union Avenue and that her family later built a house in Beechwood Heights.

#42

"Industrial Photographer Is Pioneer; Miss Margaret Bourke-White, Out of College Two Years, Has Successful Business"

Cleveland Press

August 6, 1929

Facsimile, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library

At the age of twenty-four, writes Helen N. Allyn, Bourke-White has achieved national recognition and has a studio in the Terminal Tower in Cleveland with her name in gold letters on the door. Her motto, "anything to get the right picture," leads her to "almost life threatening situations." Allyn quotes Bourke-White about the severe lighting problems she encounters when photographing blast furnaces and her frequent need to take 500 pictures to get a good one. Her recent jobs have included steel mills in Pittsburgh, a light bulb factory in New York State, and an orchid farm. The orchid photographs probably were shot for the first issue of *Fortune* magazine, which appeared in February 1930 with four photo-essays by Bourke-White, including one on the orchid industry.

#43

"She's Sitting on Top of the World"

Chicago Daily News, 1930

Facsimile, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library

This 1930 clipping from Bourke-White's archives dates from just after Bourke-White boarded the S.S. Bremen on June 30 on her first trip abroad to photograph industry in Germany and then Russia, which was in the midst of its Five-Year Plan of industrialization. During the interview for this piece, she was still excited about her recent meeting, arranged by Congressman James T. Begg of Cleveland, with President Herbert Hoover to discuss her trip. Bourke-White states that "Russia is the most interesting place, industrially, in the world right now." The photograph of Bourke-White was taken at the Chrysler Building in New York where she had moved her studio after relocating from Cleveland. The author of this article was novelist Eleanor Blake (born 1899).

#44

"Trade Routes Across the Great Lakes: A Portfolio of Photographs of Iron, Steel, Coal and Ships" by Margaret Bourke-White
Fortune, Volume 1, Number 1
February 1930

Henry Luce, publisher of *Time* magazine, was deeply impressed with the photographs Bourke-White made in Cleveland for Otis Steel. He invited the young photographer to New York and made her a lucrative offer she couldn't refuse: to become the first photographer for his new business magazine, *Fortune*, a sumptuous monthly that cost \$1 an issue during the Great Depression. For the first number, Bourke-White photographed pigs, orchids, and Great Lakes industry and shipping. She soon moved to New York, where she worked half-time for herself on commercial assignments and half-time for Luce.

#45

"Cloak & Suit"
Fortune, Volume 1, Number 5
June 1930

Bourke-White was adept at finding her "Machine Age" patterns of repetitive forms, such as these bobbins, wherever assignments took her. This essay also included more conventional images of garment workers, finished dresses on the rack, and West 36th Street in New York, the heart of the garment district then dominated by Russian Jewish immigrants.

#46

"Soviet Panorama"
Photographs by Margaret Bourke-White
Fortune, February 1931

By early 1931, Bourke-White was being bombarded with requests for her 1930 Russian pictures from the New York newspapers and *Vanity Fair*. At lunch in her studio, young publishers Richard (Dick) Simon and Lincoln (Max) Schuster encouraged her to do a book. Max advised her to publish a few photographs to build up interest. A spread appeared in the February 8, 1931, *New York Herald Tribune* and there were nine full-page

pictures in the February 1931 issue of *Fortune*; seven would appear in *Eyes on Russia*. *Fortune* introduced the illustrations with a statement that Bourke-White was "both reporter and artist." It put a frame around each photo for the art connotation, but also provided a caption and a brief paragraph of information under each picture to convey the reporting function.

By comparison to *Eyes on Russia*, the captions in *Fortune* were much more detailed and specific, and emphasized the industry rather than the worker where both were present. For example, "The Red October Rolling Mills in Stalingrad" in *Fortune* became "An Iron Puddler" in *Eyes on Russia*. Other captions were changed in *Eyes on Russia* to reflect Bourke-White's text, for example, "Pattern in Thread" in *Fortune* became "The Woman Who Wept for Joy." (She cried because she was chosen to be photographed by the "Amerikanka.")¹⁷

#47

"Risking Life for Photos Causes Young Woman to Become Famous Figure; Margaret Bourke-White, Back from Russia, Where She Snapped Great Construction Work, Writes Book of Her Experiences"

Central Press Association, December 15, 1931

Facsimile, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library

Published on the occasion of the release of Bourke-White's first book, *Eyes on Russia*, this article includes some additional details about the dangers and difficulties the photographer encountered trying to photograph dam building on the Dnieper and the Red October Rolling Mills at Stalingrad, where she said she exposed 100 plates from a badly vibrating traveling crane in the hope that one would come out. Although the book and the articles Bourke-White penned about her experiences in the early 1930s emphasized what she learned about the Russians, newspaper articles about Bourke-White focused on her courage, youth, and commercial success.

#48

"Wheels of Industry Turn for Camera Artist; At 25 Miss Bourke-White Has Won Fame"

New York Telegram, February 13, 1931

Facsimile, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University

Like most of the clippings in this exhibit, this one comes from Bourke-White's own extensive files. In the 1930s, she subscribed to a clipping service that sent her hundreds of articles. This laudatory piece, written after her return from the first of three trips to Russia, calls her "the most modern of modern artists," who has become virtually a queen of photography. It suggests that she inherited some of her abilities and interests

¹⁷ Gary D. Saretzky, "Margaret Bourke-White: Eyes on Russia," *The Photo Review*, 22:3&4 (Summer/Fall 1999), 1-14.



from an architect great-grandfather on her mother's Irish side of the family and from her father, a camera buff. Bourke-White's father, Joseph White, who came from a Jewish family in Poland named Weiss, was described by Bourke-White in her autobiography as an inventor of improvements to printing processes and an enthusiastic amateur photographer. It seems possible that he also modified cameras as stated in this article but if he did, it is curious that Bourke-White didn't mention it in *Portrait of Myself*.

#49

"Soviets by Camera"

Time, December 14, 1931, p. 56

"Her pictures confirm the conviction that photography is an art, that she is a photographer of the first hypo. Now at 26, her income is \$50,000 a year. . . . Nervy, she has gone where her eye led her, never takes no for an answer," opined *Time* in its review of Bourke-White's first book, *Eyes on Russia*. *Time* was

published by Henry Luce, who also published *Fortune*, Bourke-White's principal employer in 1931. While one might expect *Time* to provide a favorable review, its opinion was consistent with others in print media. The article's illustration shows the photographer sitting on scaffolding near the top of the Chrysler Building while she was documenting its construction.

#50

"Girl Puts Soviet Russia on 20,000 Feet of Film; Margaret Bourke-White Breaks Red Barrier"

Daily News [New York], December [?], 1932

Facsimile, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library

Published after her third trip to the U.S.S.R., this article emphasizes Bourke-White's attempt to make a movie of her travels in the socialist republic of Georgia, the birthplace of Stalin. After traveling for the most part just with her guide from Moscow to Baku, in Georgia she was accompanied by a military guard to protect her, it was said, from fifteen escaped Turkish murderers who had crossed the border. Highlights of this trip included photographing Stalin's mother, great-aunt, and other relatives. In *Eyes on Russia*, one of two short films produced from her footage, Stalin's great aunt emerges laughing from her bunker-like underground home. Bourke-White also did portrait photographs of Stalin's relatives; Stalin's mother and great-aunt were included in her gravure portfolio, *U.S.S.R. Photographs* (1934).



#51

Sperryscope, Vol. 6, No. 9, July 1931

Sperry Gyroscope Co.

Cover Photograph of Passenger Ship by

Margaret Bourke-White

Facsimile, Special Collections Research

Center, Syracuse University Library

This photograph was published during the period when Bourke-White was working half-time for *Fortune* magazine and half on her own for corporate clients, working out of her studio in the Chrysler Building in New York.

#52

“Cosmetics with a Conscience”

Ladies Home Journal, May 1935, pages

30-31

Photographs by Margaret Bourke-White

Facsimile, Special Collections Research

Center, Syracuse University Library

Although by 1935, Bourke-White was beginning to become more interested in photographing people as a photojournalist, she still was taking on commercial assignments. These photographs of cosmetics manufacturing are classic examples of her Machine Age style, with repetitive forms and strong diagonals that create dramatic geometric designs.



#53

“Competition Not Cartelization”

Fortune, October 1932

Photographs by Margaret Bourke-White

This article is about the Champion Paper Company, which in 1932 made one-third of all the paper sold to printers in the United States. To illustrate the essay, Bourke-White photographed one of Champion’s suppliers, the Oxford Paper Co. in Rumford, Maine. The style of these photographs, with workers being dwarfed by huge machines, is similar to those in her book, *Eyes on Russia* (1931). Later in her career, Bourke-White made more photographs of the paper industry, including a 1937 story for *Life* magazine.

#54

“Where the Streams Dried and the Cattle Thirsted”

Cincinnati Post, August 29, 1934

Photographs by Margaret Bourke-White

Facsimile, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library

In 1934, Bourke-White was sent by *Fortune* magazine to cover the great drought that was creating the Dust Bowl in the Midwest. Hiring a small plane, she spent five days flying from the Dakotas to Texas. Although her story did not appear in *Fortune* until October, some of her photographs were published in August in the *Cincinnati Post*, leading to a subsequent copyright dispute. For Bourke-White, as she recalled frankly in her autobiography, the trip was “a powerful eye-opener and had shown me that right here in my own country there were worlds about which I knew almost nothing.” “I think this was the beginning of my awareness of people in a human, sympathetic sense as subjects for the camera. . . . During the rapturous period when I was discovering the beauty of industrial shapes, people were only incidental to me, and in retrospect I believe I had not much feeling for them in my earlier work. But suddenly it was the people who counted.”¹⁸

#55

“The Drought”

Fortune, October 1934

Seventeen Photographs by Margaret Bourke-White; text by James Agee

When *Fortune* sent Bourke-White to the Midwest to photograph the worst drought in United States history in the summer of 1934, neither the editors nor Bourke-White knew what a profound effect the experience would have on her. From the small plane she hired, Bourke-White saw mile after mile of devastated land turning into dust that rose in the sky and landed as far away as Boston. “Below us,” she wrote later, “[I saw] the ghostly patchwork of half-buried corn, and the rivers of sand which should have been free-running streams. Sinister spouts of sand wisping up, and then the sudden yellow gloom of curtains of fine-blown soil rising up and trembling in the air. Endless dun-

¹⁸ Margaret Bourke-White, *Portrait of Myself* (NY: Simon and Schuster, 1963), 110-113.

colored acres, which should have been green with crops, carved into dry ripples by the aimless winds. I had never seen people caught helpless like this in total tragedy.”¹⁹ Not long after this experience, with her social conscience heightened, Bourke-White started turning down lucrative advertising assignments and sought to do more socially conscious work.

Although James Agee wrote this text for *Fortune*, in the following year, Bourke-White published her own eloquent article, without illustrations, about dust storms.²⁰ Along with photographer Walker Evans, Agee subsequently was sent by *Fortune* to Georgia to write about sharecroppers, a topic that Bourke-White examined in depth with Erskine Caldwell.

#56

“Billions of Bottles”

Fortune, April 1932

Three photographs by Margaret Bourke-White

This *Fortune* story about the Owens-Illinois Glass Company, which dominated the bottle manufacturing industry at the time, is illustrated with three of Bourke-White’s signature style industrial photographs. In the one of the gleaming bottles on the conveyer belt, she composed on the diagonal, with the line going out of the frame on the upper right, suggesting that it continues indefinitely. Similarly, in the image of the pile of bottles, she moved in close so that the bottles are cut off by the frame on three sides, implying an endless number of bottles outside the picture. Both photographs are expertly lit: Bourke-White was noted for her use of multiple flash units and often enlisted the assistance of whoever was nearby to hold them for her.

#57

[Margaret Bourke-White at Russian Consulate]

New York Times

June 24, 1934

After her trips to Russia in the early 1930s, Margaret Bourke-White became an advocate for diplomatic recognition by the United States of the Soviet Union. The *New York Times* reported on March 25, 1933, that she was one of 170 women who signed a petition advocating recognition that was hand delivered to the White House; others included Jane Addams and Amelia Earhart. Later that year, the United States recognized the U.S.S.R. and embassies were established in Moscow and Washington, DC. Bourke-White soon began socializing with Soviet Ambassador Troyanovsky and his wife. After an unsuccessful attempt to have her work decorate the Soviet Embassy, she was contracted to install five eight-foot enlargements of her Russian photographs in the Soviet

¹⁹ Ibid., 110)

²⁰ “Dust Changes America,” *The Nation*, 140:3646 (May 22, 1935), 597-598.

Consulate in New York, for which she was paid \$202.05.²¹ On June 24, 1934, the *New York Times* ran a photo of Bourke-White with the Soviet Consul, Leonid M. Tolokonski, in front of one of her mural-sized photographs taken at Magnitogorsk in 1931, which was also issued as a postcard in the U.S.S.R.

#58

“Experience of Monumental Photography in U.S.A.”

Sovietskoye Foto, March/April 1934

Facsimiles, Article and translation, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library

Bourke-White’s photo mural for NBC Studios at then-new Rockefeller Center was the largest in the world at the time. Installed in the public rotunda, it was a total of 160 feet long in two hemispheric sections and ten feet, eight inches high. In the center of one



section was an image of microphones with the NBC logo (seen in the illustration with Bourke-White standing next to them); in the other, radio tubes. Surrounding these central images were close-ups bordering on abstraction of radio components and, on the ends, four antenna towers. Of the numerous articles about this prestigious commission in Bourke-White’s papers, perhaps the most critical was this bizarre review in a Russian photography magazine, which while praising “Boork-Yait” as a “well-wisher” toward the Soviet Union, stated that the mural, while technically brilliant, “makes an impression of an enormous congealed chaos . . . deprived of apparent visual directions and void of composition.” In the 1950s, the mural was removed and probably destroyed; the circumstances concerning its disappearance have not been determined by historians.²²

#59

“Making Radio City Murals”

Citizen (Asheville, North Carolina), November

9, 1933

Facsimile, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library

²¹ Gary D. Saretzky, “Margaret Bourke-White: Eyes on Russia,” *The Photo Review*, 22:3&4 (Summer & Fall 1999), 10, 14.

²² For fourteen reproductions of the mural photographs, see “Photomurals in NBC Studios, R.C.A. Building, Radio City, New York, Photographs by Margaret Bourke-White,” *Architectural Record*, August 1934, pp. 129-138.

At the height of her career, Bourke-White's name was frequently before the public. Between 1929 and 1949, she wrote or was mentioned in 331 articles in just the *New York Times*, an average of more than once per month over a period of twenty-one years. This article was sent to Bourke-White by the clipping service she used to keep track of the hundreds of stories about her that appeared annually in newspapers across the country in the 1930s. The photo shows "the celebrated artist-photographer" in front of her NBC mural in Rockefeller Center, which was about to be dedicated on November 11, 1933. This commission for the world's largest photo mural was timely, as Bourke-White's income was declining from clients unable to pay their bills in the depths of the Depression and fee cuts by *Fortune* magazine; despite her celebrity and high business volume, she was outspending her income and getting into debt. In 1934, she moved her studio out of the Chrysler Building to less expensive quarters but her financial woes continued.

#60

"Outstanding Woman Photographer Banked on Industry"

Newark Evening News, September 13, 1934

Facsimile, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library

In addition to the fine photograph of the trim and physically fit Bourke-White with her view camera, this article recounts Bourke-White's successes as an industrial photographer in the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., and as an associate editor for *Fortune*. Although she has a staff of five, for every Bourke-White Studio photograph "she herself has clicked the shutter." Recently, Bourke-White has been actively making murals and advocates them for home decoration. The author of the piece, Virginia J. Fortiner, also recounts that Bourke-White had recently been an active participant in a career counseling conference in Newark, New Jersey, when she said, "There is probably no profession that will call on all of a woman's faculties as that of photographer will. If she is able to arrange flowers, if she knows how to adjust the fold of a dress, if she can read the characteristic expression of a person's face, if she can chat comfortably and be at ease, or if on the other hand she has a feeling for architecture, for industry, or a sense for news, any or all of these qualities will be brought into her business."

#61

"Girl Translates Machinery into Photographic Murals"

Washington Herald, January 14, 1934

Facsimile, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library

One of a number of clippings in Bourke-White's files about the murals she installed in the Radio City rotunda at Rockefeller Center, this one is another example of how Bourke-White got national attention for her work during this period. One unusual aspect of the way in which Bourke-White marketed her services was that she often included photographs of herself in her media releases. In fact, in the history of photography, she was arguably the most successful who tried to market her commercial business through regular distributions of self-portraits to the press. Decades before Andy Warhol, Bourke-

White understood how her celebrity status, as much as the quality of her photographs, were important elements in commercial success. When called for, she did straight product photography in the early 1930s, but her forte was creating an image, whether for herself or for a major industry, through visual associations with physical beauty.

#62

“America’s Interesting People”

American Magazine, October 1935

Photograph of Margaret Bourke-White by Peter Keane

Of the ten men and women featured in this article, seventy years later, Bourke-White is the best known. Most of the others are now obscure, with the exception of nineteen-year-old Keenan Wynn who was just beginning a long acting career. Each was accompanied by a moniker--Bourke-White was “Dangler” because she liked dangling from skyscrapers and smokestacks to get bird’s eye views. The text mentions that she has exposed about 40,000 negatives in the past nine years, likes to tango, and hates slow talkers, all probably true. But there is also an error in the text, where it states that Bourke-White became interested in photography through an art course at Cornell, when in fact she took a photography course with Clarence White several years earlier when she was a Columbia University student.



#63

Mrs. Clarence H. White, “Camera’s Eye”

Independent Woman, 16:2, February 1937

Facsimile, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library



After an introduction in which she briefly mentions several prominent women photographers with enduring reputations, Mrs. White (no relation to Margaret) profiles several in greater depth, of whom only Bourke-White is a nationally known figure today. Mrs. White, the widow of Bourke-White's first photography teacher, recalls Bourke-White as a Columbia University freshman in 1921-1922, arriving at her husband's studio with pet snakes around each arm.

This is not as surprising as it may seem: as an undergraduate, Bourke-White intended to become a herpetologist.

Clarence White had been a leading member of the Pictorialist group of art photographers known as the Photo-Secession and led by Alfred Stieglitz. Stieglitz published White's soft-focus photographs in the Photo-Secession's sumptuous magazine, *Camera Work*, ensuring White's emplacement in the history of photography. By all accounts, a gentle, sensitive man, Clarence White was an inspirational teacher and Bourke-White's early work was influenced by him. After his death, his Clarence White School of Photography was continued until the 1940s by his wife and son, Clarence H. White, Jr. Other famous photographers who studied there included Laura Gilpin, Dorothea Lange, Paul Outerbridge, Jr., and Ralph Steiner.

#64

"The Vanitie" by Margaret Bourke-White

U.S. Camera 1935, edited by
Thomas J. Maloney
NY: William Morrow, 1935

Bourke-White's inclusion in the first of more than forty *U.S. Camera* annuals was a mark of her prominence by 1935. Among other photographic artists in this landmark publication were Berenice Abbott, Victor Keppler, Charles Kerlee, Dmitri Kessel, Dorothea Lange, George Platt Lynes, Wendell Macrae, Ira Martin, Martin Munkacsi, D.J. Ruzicka, Ben Shahn, Edward Steichen,



Ralph Steiner, Max Thorek, and Brett and Edward Weston. Taken with a 5x7 Graflex camera, Bourke-White's photograph is of one of the grand yachts of the 20th century, "The Vanitie," a 118-foot J Class America's Cup racer built in 1914. The photograph was also published in the *New York Times* on December 22, 1935.

U.S. Camera was started by Tom Maloney, then a young advertising executive. He gathered together a committee of well known photographers led by Edward Steichen to select the photographs. The first few annuals, modeled on the earlier French *Photographie* and the German *Das Deutsche Lichtbild*, were published in high quality photogravure on heavy weight paper with outstanding deep black tones but Maloney later switched to less expensive halftones on glossy, thinner paper. The annual was so successful that Maloney started a monthly magazine of the same name in 1939. After 1935, Bourke-White's work appeared regularly in *U.S. Camera* publications. In 1963, when Maloney presented Steichen with the U.S. Camera Achievement Award, Bourke-White sat next to Steichen at the formal dinner at the George Eastman House.²³

²³ Gary D. Saretzky, "U.S. Camera: A Thomas J. Maloney Chronology," *The Photo Review*, 26:4/27:1 (2004), 1-13,45.

#65

"Landscape," by Margaret Bourke-White

U.S. Camera 1936 edited by Thomas J. Maloney
NY: William Morrow, 1936

Bourke-White was one of only a few photographers in *U.S. Camera 1936* given the honor of a double-page spread, as seen in this dramatic mountainous landscape. It must have been one of her favorites, as she used part of the same image for the dust jacket of her autobiography, *Portrait of Myself* (1963). In the first



decade of her career, Bourke-White was best known for her images composed with repetitive forms in industry and architecture, but as this photograph shows, her style extended to her landscape work as well.

#66

One Thing Leads to Another: The Growth of an Industry by Fred C. Kelly

Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1936

17 illustrations by Margaret Bourke-White

When this book appeared, Margaret Bourke-White was making a career transition from commercial industrial photographer to photojournalist. *One Thing Leads to Another* is more relevant to her commercial career. It contains fine examples of her industrial photography; as in other industries, she found beauty in the repeating forms of machinery and architecture used in the manufacture of chemicals. *One Thing Leads to Another* is the story of the Commercial Solvents Corporation, which was formed after World War I to profit by the discovery of scientist Chaim Weitzmann that bacteria could be used to produce industrial products. Commercial Solvents bought the rights to Dr. Weitzmann's patent for using bacteria to distill a corn mash into butanol, ethyl alcohol, and acetone, a process of enormous economic and military importance (acetone was needed to produce naval munitions). Weitzmann used the substantial royalties to support and lead the Zionist movement; in 1947, he became the first President of Israel.

#67

Newsprint: A book of pictures illustrating the operations in the manufacture of paper on which to print the world's news. Montreal: International Paper Sales Company, Inc., [1939].

Illustrated with photographs by Margaret Bourke-White, et al.



For the first issue of *Fortune* magazine in May 1930, Bourke-White photographed International Paper's manufacturing operations in Quebec, where most paper used in newspapers was produced. In April 1937, shortly after her return from the South where she worked with Erskine Caldwell on *You Have Seen Their Faces*, Margaret Bourke-White returned to Canada. Her photographs for International Paper were used in *Newsprint*. Bourke-White covered the story of newsprint manufacturing from lumbering (the cover photo) to sawmill to pulp to paper machine to finished product, but she also included the lives of the workers, an indication that her growing humanist orientation was influencing her commercial assignments.

This promotional book was probably issued to coincide with International Paper's fortieth anniversary. It features approximately eighty of Bourke-White's photographs, as compared to forty in *Eyes on Russia* and sixty-seven in *You Have Seen Their Faces*, and is in a larger format. Although it includes some of her strongest work, it remains one of Bourke-White's lesser known publications since it was not sold in bookstores and is scarce today. In 1988, Boston University Art Gallery refocused interest on *Newsprint* through an exhibition and accompanying catalog that examined this important phase in Bourke-White's career.²⁴

²⁴ John R. Stomberg and Kim Sichel, *Power and Paper: Margaret Bourke-White, Modernity, and the Documentary Mode*. Boston University Art Gallery, March 6-April 12, 1988. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1988. Stomberg's excellent essay was helpful in writing the caption for *Newsprint* in the Rutgers exhibition.



#68

Camel Cigarettes Ad
Featuring Margaret Bourke-White
Life, 1938 [issue unknown]

Bourke-White was the first photographer to have the celebrity status that enabled her to earn income by endorsing non-photographic products. Consequently, she not only made photographs to illustrate *Life* magazine, she also appeared in its full-page ads for tobacco and wine in 1938 and 1939, as did other prominent men and women. In this ad, featuring three photographs of the photographer, she describes smoking non-filtered Camels as “extra-mild and delicate,” fun, helpful for digestion, and “different” and states that it is rare that she doesn’t keep “plenty” along with her. In 1944, she testified to the Federal Trade Commission investigating truth in advertising that she was “a constant smoker” but did not smoke

Camels exclusively. She liked Camels but also smoked Old Golds and Luckies.²⁵

#69

“Acoma,” March 1935
Aerial Photograph by Margaret Bourke-White
Bourke-White file #226 AC

²⁵ *Official Report of Proceedings Before the National Trade Commission. Docket No. 4795. In the matter of R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company.* New York, April 4, 1944, pp. 794-800, National Archives, Washington, DC; *New York Times*, April 5, 1944, p. 30. For her testimonial, Bourke-White was paid \$250 and a weekly carton of Camels for a year. Tobacco companies were not required to include warnings about the possible negative health effects of smoking in their ads in the United States until 1965.

Vintage Print ²⁶

Bourke-White took this aerial photograph of Acoma, New Mexico, thought to be the oldest continuously inhabited Native American settlement in the United States, for Transcontinental & Western Air, Inc., better known as TWA. At the time, Bourke-White noted on a sheet of TWA stationery, "I suppose the ins. [insurance] people would love it if they knew I do all my work with a parachute strapped to my back-- just in case." In September



1935, she filled an order for thirteen contact prints, including one of this image, to TWA's magazine, *Speed*, for 35 cents each.²⁷ "Acoma" was also published in "America from the Air," *Scientific American*, October 1936.

#70

"Camera Eye View of Life Given PHS Students by Graduate of Class of 1921"
Courier-News (Plainfield, New Jersey), September 29, 1939
Facsimile, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library

Margaret Bourke-White grew up in Bound Brook, New Jersey. Less than a month after Germany started World War II by invading Poland, Bourke-White returned to her secondary school alma mater, Plainfield High School, to address the students. Bourke-White said that to form one's own judgments, one must know what is going on in the world and

²⁶ This vintage print produced by the Bourke-White studio was given to Gary Saretzky by Grace Turner Wood, the widow of Ben D. Wood (1894-1986), Director of Collegiate Educational Research at Teachers College, Columbia University. Dr. Wood is best remembered for the introduction of standardized multiple-choice tests such as the *Graduate Record Examinations* and the *National Teacher Examinations* (precursor to the current *Praxis Series: Professional Assessments for Beginning Teachers*). Why, when, or how Dr. Wood acquired the Bourke-White photograph is unknown, but he had a strong interest in civil aviation. During World War II, he was chairman of the Education Committee for the Institute of the Aeronautical Sciences, which sponsored the Air-Age Education Series, consisting of fifteen volumes produced under his direction and authored largely by the Aviation Education Research Group at Teachers College. Wood described his efforts to promote aviation as "air-conditioning America." Through her aerial photographs, Bourke-White did that, too. Gary D. Saretzky, *A Guide to the Ben D. Wood Papers* (Princeton, NJ: ETS Archives), November 1989.

²⁷ Margaret Bourke-White Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library Library, information courtesy of Carolyn A. Davis, Reader Services Librarian, to Gary Saretzky, September 17, 1992.

she helps herself and the public develop this knowledge by traveling to all parts of the world and bringing back photographs of what she sees. She described some of the highlights of her career, emphasizing the amusing and adventurous aspects, including two days on short rations with the Governor General of Canada at a remote spot in the Arctic after their small plane was forced down by fog. A month after this hometown visit, Bourke-White was on her way to Europe to cover the war.

#71

Bourke-White: A Retrospective
Invitation to Exhibition Opening
International Center of Photography, New York
Exhibit, March 4-May 1, 1988
24x20 Digital Enlargement

See #5 for caption.

#72

Portrait of Margaret Bourke-White
Photographer Unknown
Original date stamped January 22, 1953, on verso
24x20 Digital Enlargement



This publicity photo from a newspaper file was probably used to publicize one or more of Bourke-White's frequent public lectures.

#73

U.S. Camera 1937
Edited by Thomas J. Maloney
New York: William Morrow & Company, 1937
[Sleeping Worker with Coffee Sacks] by Margaret Bourke-White, p. 48.

Bourke-White's photographs shot in South America for the American Can Company are among her least known today. In late Spring 1936, she flew to Brazil, visiting Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, as well as the "interior" on horseback. A selection was published in *Coffee Through the Camera's Lens* (#74 in this exhibit). As she was wont to do, Bourke-White also sought to publish her Brazilian photographs elsewhere, as seen in this sumptuously printed photography annual. Bourke-White submission of a photograph of a worker rather than a machine to *U.S. Camera* for consideration by the committee of judges led by Edward Steichen is indicative of the shift in her concerns by 1937. (In *You Have Seen Their Faces*, also issued in 1937, one of the first photographs

is strikingly similar to this one: a worker sleeping on a pile of tobacco.) Curiously, editor Tom Maloney juxtaposed Bourke-White's photo with an industrial photograph taken for *Fortune* by Dmitri Kessel that is reminiscent of Bourke-White's earlier work.

#74

Coffee Through the Camera's Lens

American Can Company, 1936

[11 photographs by Margaret Bourke-White]



This small educational publication about coffee, described as “the principal product of Brazil,” reproduces eleven of Bourke-White's pictures. It consists of a printed folder with a small vignette of Bourke-White next to a camera on a tripod. Pockets hold sixteen instructional inserts, including photographs by Bourke-White, a map, and two tests for students. Also included is a post-paid postcard for the student's mother if she wanted a complimentary copy of “Coffee Facts for Homemakers.” Bourke-White's compassionate photographs of Brazilian children and workers in 1936 anticipated her documentation of Southern United States tenant farmers in *You Have Seen Their Faces* (1937).

#75

S.A. Spencer

The Greatest Show on Earth: A Photographic History of Man's Struggle for Wealth

Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran, 1938

Photograph of machine by Margaret Bourke-White, pp. 82-83.

Margaret Bourke-White's photographs have been used in numerous publications by authors with a variety of political perspectives. In florid style, author S.A. Spencer advocated capitalism and the book's hero for “The Machine Age” is the middle class:

“Never has the Middle Class dared thus usurp the center of the stage before. But that now seems its historic destiny. Only through the vigorous new Middle Class can a new Hero emerge. He will be, he must be--to the use that word later to be so much maligned--a *Bourgeois*.

“All power, then, to the Middle Class!”

Profusely illustrated with photographs of industry and agriculture, the publisher used Bourke-White's name on the cover of the dust jacket to enhance its appeal. Three of the photos are credited to Bourke-White: a steel mill; shoe factory; and a huge unidentified machine. Among other sources, the book used government file photographs from the Resettlement Administration (later reorganized as the Farm Security Administration) taken by Arthur Rothstein and Ben Shahn.

#77

The Story of Rockefeller Center. Souvenir of the Rockefeller Center Guided Tour.
NY: Rockefeller-Center, Inc., 1939
Photographs by Margaret Bourke-White, et al.

In addition to creating the huge photo-mural for the rotunda at the R.C.A. Building, Bourke-White also photographed the exteriors of Rockefeller Center and the spectacular views afforded by the skyscrapers. Her photographs were used in this guide pamphlet as well as in *The Last Rivet*, a more elaborate promotional book about the skyscraper complex. In neither publication are the photographs individually credited and the Rockefeller Archives does not have information about which were taken by Bourke-White. The centerfold of the souvenir booklet features the famous observation deck on top of the 70-story RCA building, which was closed in 1986 to make way for an expansion of The Rainbow Room, a revolving restaurant. Fortunately for view seekers, the deck was reopened in 2005.



#78-79

The Last Rivet. The story of Rockefeller Center, a city within a city, as told at the ceremony in which John D. Rockefeller, Jr. drove the last rivet of the last building, November 1, 1939. NY: Columbia University Press, 1940

Illustrated with photographs by Berenice Abbott, Margaret Bourke-White, et al.

Green velveteen cloth-covered boards inlaid with a metal rivet design, backed in red cloth, spine lettered in

silver. End-papers decorated with repeating silver rivet design.

Rutgers University Libraries

Columbia University, which owned the land on which Rockefeller Center was built, published this book about its famous tenant. Like the guide booklet, *The Story of Rockefeller Center* (#77), photographs are uncredited in this publication but it seems likely that Bourke-White was responsible for the birds-eye view on page 26, as aerial photography was one of her specialties and a negative taken from a similar angle is in Bourke-White's archives. She was also contracted by the Center in August 1935 to document artistic architectural features such as entrances, murals, and decorations.²⁸ Since the Time-Life building at Rockefeller Center housed the offices of Life magazine, for which Bourke-White worked for decades, she was a regular visitor to the complex even when she was not on assignment to photograph it.



#80

"Travels"

[Chronology by Margaret Bourke-White, 1954 or later]

Vicki Goldberg Research Files, Box 1, Time-Life Folder

Facsimile, first five pages, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library

Bourke-White's extensive travels beginning in 1929, when she began work for *Fortune* magazine, to June 1954, when she zig-zagged across the U.S. by air and car, are well documented in this typed eleven-page chronology.

#81

Margaret Bourke-White and Erskine Caldwell

You Have Seen Their Faces (NY: Viking, 1937)

Facsimile of dust jacket of first edition

Unlike the rather common 1937 softcover reprint by Modern Age, which featured a woman and child sitting in front of an abandoned plantation mansion, the dust jacket of the first hardcover edition published by Viking depicted tenant farmers living in homes wall-papered with the *Saturday Evening Post*. As noted in Roth's compendium of 101

²⁸ E-mail, Carolyn A. Davis, Syracuse University, to Gary Saretzky, April 16, 1998.

“seminal” photography books published in the twentieth century, the design for the dust jacket was influenced by Russian Constructivism, with white text on red blocks in opposing corners.²⁹

#82

Erskine Caldwell and Margaret Bourke-White

You Have Seen Their Faces

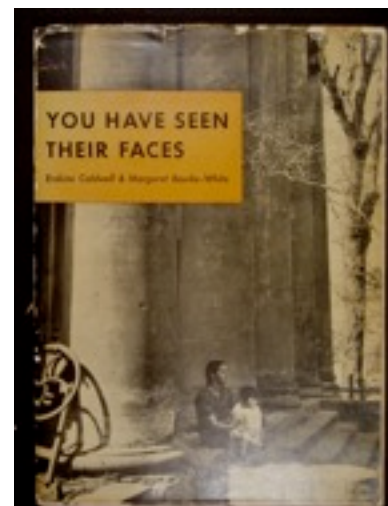
NY: Modern Age, 1937 (reprint of 1st edition by Viking, 1937)

Bourke-White’s most successful book, in terms of sales, was *You Have Seen Their Faces*. The first hard-cover edition sold out and was followed by this inexpensive (75 cents) soft cover reprint with a different cover design and a new caption format under the illustrations.



Throughout her career, Bourke-White went after the big story of the day whenever possible. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, it was industrialization, including the Soviet Union’s Five-Year Plan. By the mid-1930s, it was the Dust Bowl and the impoverishment of farm workers. Some of the nation’s most able photographers like Walker Evans and Dorothea Lange, were hired by a New Deal agency, the Resettlement Administration, to document agricultural problems. Instead of working for the government, Bourke-White joined with best-selling author, Erskine Caldwell, to do this book about Southern tenant farmers.

Caldwell, by the mid-thirties, was the more famous of the team: he had written two best sellers, *Tobacco Road* and *God’s Little Acre*, and was considered an authority on his native South. The combination of a famous writer and a famous photographer guaranteed the book’s commercial success and helped develop public interest in a significant social problem, subsequently addressed by other documentary photography books such as Dorothea Lange and Paul Schuster Taylor’s *American Exodus* (1939).



²⁹ Andrew Roth, ed., *The Book of 101 Books: Seminal Photographic Books of the Twentieth Century* (NY: PPD Editions, 2001).

To accompany her dramatic and explicit photographs of suffering, Bourke-White and Caldwell jointly wrote “quotations” by the subjects. This technique, while not uncommon at the time, came to be viewed by some as undercutting the documentary value of the work. As critic Shelley Rice recently argued, “when the caption underneath a picture of a woman . . . reads: ‘Life is hardly worth living,’ this assessment represents the opinion of the authors, not the subject. In *You Have Seen Their Faces*, photographs and text conspire to create a simplified image of *les miserables* that is a middle-class projection rather than an earnest attempt at understanding and communication.”³⁰ Despite the captions, Bourke-White’s photographs in this book remain among the most memorable of the decade.

#83

Ralph Thompson

“Books of the Times [review of *You Have Seen Their Faces*]

New York Times

November 10, 1937

Facsimile

Erskine Caldwell conceived the idea for *You Have Seen Their Faces* and employed Bourke-White to do the photographs. In recognition of his leading role in the book, one reviewer called it “Erskine Caldwell’s Picture Book.”³¹ Ralph Thompson, writing for the *New York Times*, characterized it as a book by Caldwell illustrated by Bourke-White but he seemed to imply that the text was superfluous when he wrote that the text and captions “are eclipsed by the wordless eloquence of the photographer’s lens.” Today, con-

³⁰ “When Objects Dream,” in Andrew Roth, ed., *The Book of 101 Books: Seminal Photographic Books of the Twentieth Century* (NY: PPP Editions, 2001), 18.

³¹ D. Davidson, “Erskine Caldwell’s Picture Book,” *Southern Review*, 4:1 (Summer 1938), 15-25.

sistent with Thompson's response, the work is principally valued for Bourke-White's photographs of Southern tenant farmers rather than what Caldwell had to say about them.

#84

"You Have Seen their Faces"
by Erskine Caldwell and
Margaret Bourke White
Popular Photography, 2:3
(March 1938)
Facsimile



In these companion articles, Caldwell and Bourke-White provided separate accounts about their experiences over a two-year period producing their best-selling book about Southern sharecroppers, *You Have Seen Their Faces* (1937). Both accounts stress the terrible poverty of the farmers whose story needed to be brought before the public. Caldwell recalls that he spent years looking for the right photographer for the project and when he reviewed Bourke-White's portfolio, at first he didn't think she was the right one for the job. But then he came across her picture, "Borscht," of three Russian women eating out of the same bowl, and knew that at last he had found her. In her essay, Bourke-White stresses the difficulties, both emotional and logistical, of trying to photograph "hungry, ragged, crippled, or imbecilic children; haggard, undernourished, snuff-dipping mothers; bitter, frustrated, "body-sick" fathers--all living in flimsy shacks, the walls of which were covered with sheets of newspaper."

#85

Erskine Caldwell and Margaret Bourke-White
North of the Danube



NY: Viking Press, 1939

This second book by Caldwell and Bourke-White was issued in only one edition and is the scarcest of the three that they did together. It is based on their twelve weeks of travels in Czechoslovakia just before Hitler annexed its German-speaking areas and assumed virtual control over the country. It was on this trip that Margaret Bourke-White was first directly confronted by the threat of Nazism. Particularly chilling is

an account by Caldwell of a confrontation between a Nazi and an Austrian Jewish woman on a train that clearly conveys the fanaticism that made the Holocaust possible. Bourke-White's photographs of Nazis underscored the threat but most Americans at the time tried to steer clear of European problems. Perhaps because it dealt with a problem abroad rather than at home, it got less attention than Bourke-White and Caldwell's previous effort, *You Have Seen Their Faces*.

#86

"Czechs Will Fight to the Death Says Miss Bourke-White"

New York Post, September 17, 1938

Facsimile, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University

In 1938, Hitler was complaining that Germans in Czechoslovakia were starving, unemployed, and miserable, as a pretext for annexing his neighbor's territory. But Bourke-White returned from Czechoslovakia with the impression that ethnic Germans

there were well treated, along with other minorities. Much of the trouble, she said, was caused by Nazi propagandists, "a smooth lot, of the type of our own high-pressure ad-



vertising men.” She told Michael Mok, the reporter who interviewed her, that she had a Nazi guide show her around Prague and he “picked all the ugly buildings” and “constantly sneered at the Czechs.” At the time of this interview, France and England, which had supported democratic Czechoslovakia, was negotiating with Germany. In a classic case of appeasement known as the Munich Pact, the French and English allowed Hitler to annex four Czech provinces on September 29. In March 1939, the same month that Caldwell and Bourke-White’s book, *North of the Danube*, was published, Hitler occupied the rest of the country.

#87

U.S. Camera Annual, 1940

Edited by Thomas J. Maloney

“Czech Children” by Margaret Bourke-White, pp. 22-23

This sympathetic photograph of Jewish children in Czechoslovakia also was published in *Life* magazine, May 30, 1938, which featured a 15-page photo essay by Bourke-White after her return from that country. Although this photo was not published in her book, *North of the Danube*, two of the three children appear in another one published therein of a crowded schoolroom in Carpathian Ruthenia under the title, “Talmudic Scholars.” In *U.S. Camera*, the caption is just “Czech Children,” leaching the photograph of much of its political and social significance.



#88

“Erskine Caldwell Weds; ‘Tobacco Road’ Author Takes Miss Bourke-White as Bride”

New York Times, February 28, 1939, p. 17

Facsimile

Margaret Bourke-White and Erskine Caldwell took time out from their busy schedules to get married in Silver City, described by Bourke-White as a “ghost town” in Nevada, after taking a cab there from Reno with a Nevada State Representative who was also a minister. As much as she loved Caldwell, Bourke-White had many reasonable doubts that a marriage to the moody author would succeed and she made him sign an elaborate prenuptial agreement, including a clause that he wouldn’t interfere with her photographic assignments. They honeymooned in Hawaii.³²

³² Margaret Bourke-White, *Portrait of Myself* (NY: Simon and Schuster, 1963), 169-173.

#89

U.S. Camera Annual 1939

Edited by Thomas J. Maloney

NY: William Morrow, 1938

"Arctic Madonna" by Margaret Bourke-White, p. 138

One of two photographs by Bourke-White in *U.S. Camera Annual 1939*, "Arctic Madonna" was taken in August 1937 on assignment for *Life* magazine, which published two photo essays taken in the Far North by the photographer in its October 25 issue. Bourke-White made this portrait in Coppermine, Northwest Territory, at 10pm, in the "land of the midnight sun." The Inuit woman had come several hundred miles in an open boat to greet the Bishop of the Arctic, with whom Bourke-White was traveling by air. At one point, due to bad weather, the party was forced down in the Arctic Ocean two hundred miles from the magnetic North Pole and spent time on a small island far from any human habitation. During this trip, Bourke-White was besieged with telegrams from love-struck Erskine Caldwell, addressed to "Honeychile" from "Skinny," asking her to return and marry him. One was even read on the radio when she was marooned in the Arctic.³³



#90

³³ Vicki Goldberg, *Margaret Bourke-White: A Biography* (NY: Harper & Row, 1986), 199-203.

“Focusing on Romance; Erskine Caldwell and Margaret Bourke-White on Their Honeymoon” [Facsimile]

Atlanta Journal Magazine,
May 14, 1939

Facsimile, Special Collections Research Center,
Syracuse University Library

When Bourke-White met Caldwell, he had achieved fame as the author of *Tobacco Road*, a best seller made into a long-running Broadway play. They fell in love in 1936 during their long trip through the South gathering material for *You Have Seen Their Faces* but Caldwell was married at the time.

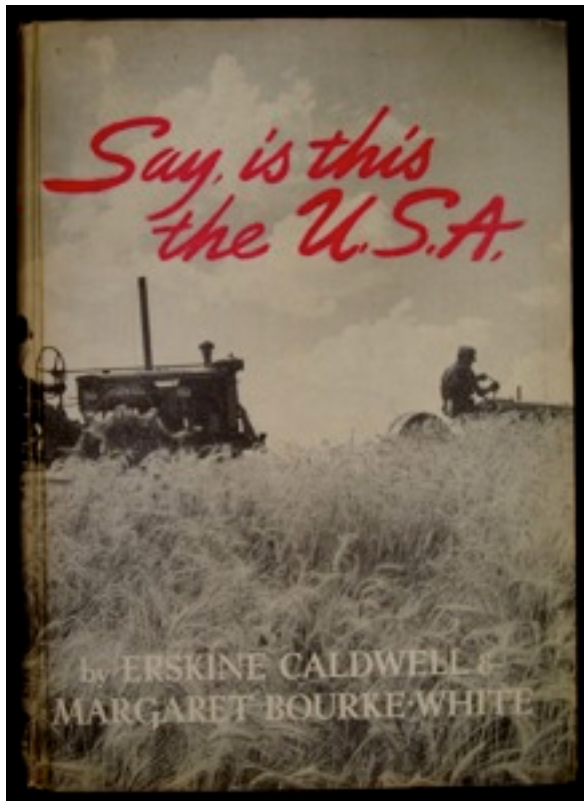
Some months after his divorce in 1938, Bourke-White and Caldwell tied the knot at the end of February 1939. It was also Bourke-White's second marriage; her first to a college flame lasted but briefly. In 1942, while Bourke-White was abroad for a long period covering the war in Europe, Caldwell asked her for a divorce. Bourke-White never married again; Caldwell had two more wives. This article, published a few months after their marriage, found the celebrated couple still in love in Georgia, Caldwell's birthplace, where Bourke-White had gone to photograph the Southern Paper Festival.

#91-92

Erskine Caldwell and Margaret Bourke-White
Say, Is This the U.S.A.

NY: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1941





The third and last book Caldwell and Bourke-White co-authored, *Say, Is This the U.S.A.*, was the result of a 10,000 mile jaunt zigzagging across America and interviews with the locals they encountered (none of them famous), including a gas station attendant, a horse trader, a hotel clerk, a farmer, and a coffin maker. Bourke-White photographed Americans at work and play in St. Johnsbury, Vermont; Sarasota, Florida; Pretty Prairie, Kansas; Texarkana, Texas; Tucson, Arizona; Elko, Nevada; Provo, Utah; San Diego, California; and numerous other places en route. The result was a snapshot of the United States on the eve of World War II. Reviewing the book in the *New York Times*, Ralph Thomson concluded, "There is nothing mysterious about the book itself. It is as candid and unaffected as America. It reflects the plain, earnest, expressive face of the country we all know. . . ." ³⁴

#93-94

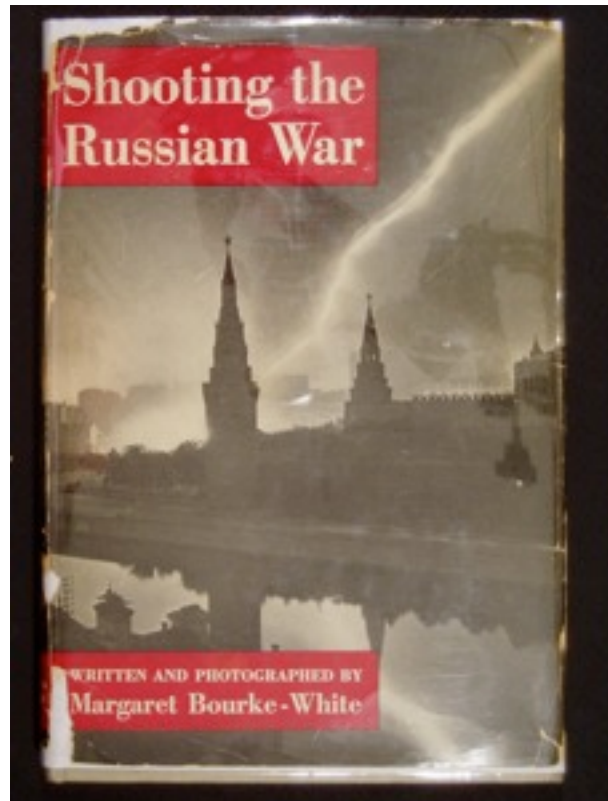
Margaret Bourke-White

³⁴ June 26, 1941.

Shooting the Russian War
NY: Simon and Schuster, 1942
With facsimile of dust jacket

After her three trips to the Soviet Union in the early 1930s, Bourke-White didn't return to Moscow until May 1941, just in time for the nightly German bombings of the Russian capital. Rather than go to a fallout shelter as was required, Bourke-White hid under the bed in her hotel until the air raid wardens had finished their inspection, then went out on the balcony and photographed the fireworks. Her visit was also notable for her coup in photographing Stalin in the Kremlin.

With Bourke-White in Moscow, her husband, Erskine Caldwell, gave nightly radio news broadcasts. They each wrote their own books about the war in Russia. Bourke-White wrote about her own experiences. Her text remains valuable as an eye witness account of the first days of the war between Germany and the Soviet Union.

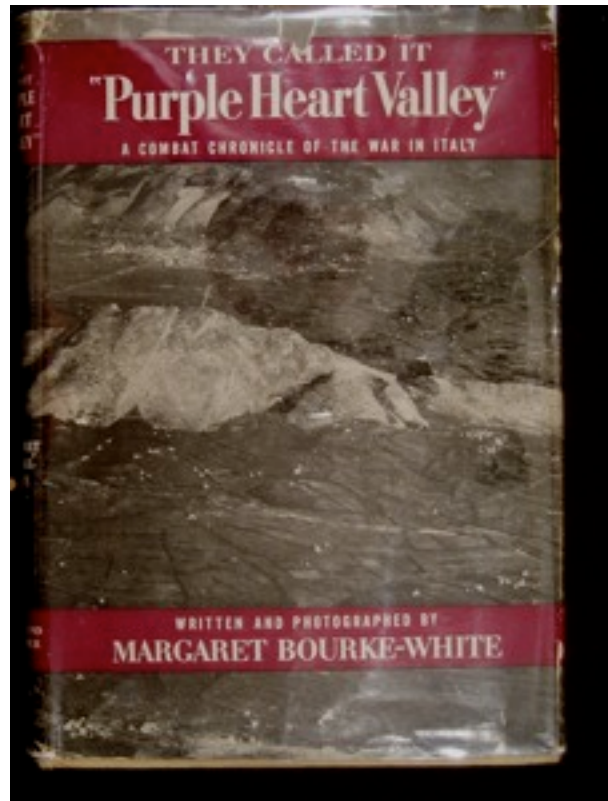


#95-96

Margaret Bourke-White
*They Called It "Purple Heart Valley"; A
Combat Chronicle of the War in Italy*
NY: Simon and Schuster, 1944
Rutgers University Libraries
With facsimile of dust jacket

On the ground and in the air, Bourke-White spent five tough months on the Italian front near Cassino, accompanying American forces as they slowly fought their way up the boot of Italy against strong opposition. The casualties were heavy and Bourke-White pulled no punches in her account of the grim realities of war, including what it was like in a field hospital as the casualties poured in. She highly praised the courage of the G.I.'s and was critical of bureaucratic ineptitude. Although this book includes many photographs, it was praised even more for its text, in which a young soldier, Corporal Padgitt, emerges as the leading character. The *New York Times* reviewer,

Foster Hailey, concluded, "one of the best and most remarkable books to come out of the war. . . this book qualifies her as a first-rate reporter, in command of a lean, hard prose that is the only true medium of description for the ordered insanity of war."³⁵



#97

Margaret Bourke-White
"Dear Fatherland, Rest Quietly": A Report on the Collapse of Hitler's "Thousand Years"
NY: Simon and Schuster, 1946
Rutgers University Libraries

The defeat of Hitler's Third Reich was undoubtedly one of the great news stories of the 20th century and Bourke-White was there to cover it: According to her recollection, in the spring and summer of 1945, she "covered almost all major industrial cities and ind. centers by air & ground, as each point fell to our armies."³⁶ Bourke-White accompanied General George Patton's troops in their victorious thrust into the heartland of Germany. Her photographs of the liberation of the Buchenwald concentration camp, some of which are included in this book, were among the most important of her career. At Pat-

³⁵ November 26, 1944.

³⁶ Itinerary ("Travels"), 1929-1954, copy of typescript, Vicki Goldberg Papers, Time-Life folder, Box 1, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library.

ton's insistence, a thousand local Germans were rounded up, brought to the camp, and forced to witness piles of corpses and emaciated survivors.

Along with images taken by different photographers at Dachau and other camps, Bourke-White's photographs were unprecedented in their frank depictions for mass media publications and seared the memories of the public. Recalling her own experience viewing such visual evidence of evil, Susan Sontag wrote, "One's first encounter with the photographic inventory of ultimate horror is a kind of revelation. . . . Nothing I have seen--in photographs or in real Life --ever cut me as sharply, deeply, instantaneously. Indeed, it seems possible to divide my life into two parts, before I saw those photographs (I was twelve) and after. . . ."37

The liberation of the camps is only one part of *Dear Fatherland*: it's scope is much broader. Particularly valuable are her portraits and interviews with a range of Germans from industrialist Alfred Krupp on down the social ladder, capturing their opinions on the past and future of the nation at this critical juncture. In 1945, most of them were still unrepentant Nazis.

#98

"Gandhi Joins the Hindu Immortals"

Life, February 16, 1948

Photographs by Margaret Bourke-White and Henri Cartier-Bresson

Essay, "On Day of Death He Talked of Love and the Atomic Bomb" by Margaret Bourke-White

Bourke-White spent much of two years in India working on her book, *Halfway to Freedom*, and photographing for *Life* magazine. The first time she photographed Gandhi, she had to learn how to use a spinning wheel before she was allowed to photograph him with one. (For Gandhi, spinning meant economic independence for India and was symbolic of his people's non-violent struggle for freedom.) Eventually, after many visits, they became friends, although he jokingly called her "The Torturer" because he disliked



³⁷ Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), 19-20. Sontag was not referring specifically to Bourke-White's photographs but they were comparable in explicit content.

her flash bulbs.³⁸ Just a few hours before he was assassinated by a fanatic, Bourke-White interviewed Gandhi on world affairs and her memoir was included in this story about his death. In the double-page spread on pages 22 and 23, Bourke-White took the photo on the top left on page 22 and the photograph on page 23.

In 1982, Candice Bergen played Bourke-White in the movie, *Gandhi*.

#99

Margaret Bourke-White

Halfway to Freedom: A Report on the New India

NY: Simon and Schuster, 1949

Rutgers University Libraries

After World War II concluded in 1945, Bourke-White made a series of extended trips to India for *Life* magazine, recording the momentous changes that were occurring there: independence from British rule and the creation of the independent countries of India and Pakistan. At the time, a *Life* representative in India wrote that she “has more energy than anybody else in India, and she works like hell in spite of the deadly heat.”³⁹ Bourke-White met and photographed important industrial and political leaders, including Gandhi just before his assassination. Her historically important photographs of the region appeared in several *Life* magazine articles from 1946 to 1948; more than one hundred are in her book, *Halfway to Freedom*.

³⁸ Margaret Bourke-White, *Portrait of Myself* (NY: Simon and Schuster, 1963), 278.

³⁹ Memorandum, Will Lang to Wilson Hicks, June 5, 1946. , Vicki Goldberg Papers, Time-Life Archives folder, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library.

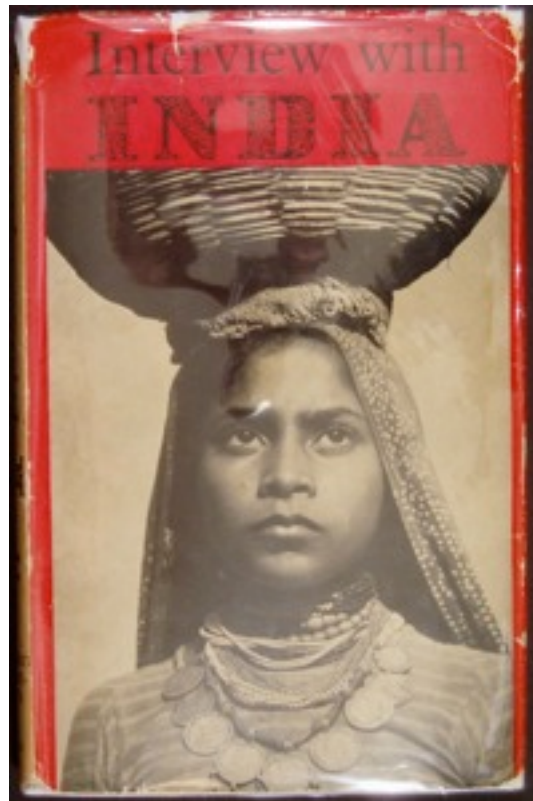
#100

Margaret Bourke-White

Interview with India

London: Phoenix House, 1950

Interview with India is the British edition of Bourke-White's 1949 book, *Halfway to Freedom* that was published by Simon and Schuster in New York. The title and some of the content was changed to downplay India's recent independence. For example, in Bourke-White's introduction, her concluding sentences were dropped: "But to an American, the whole charter of liberty for the Indian people is illuminated by its first five words. 'We the People of India. . .,' it begins." The main body of the text also shows evidence of careful excising: negative references to the period of British rule were largely eliminated.⁴⁰ In fact, so much was cut that *Interview with India* is about fifty pages shorter than *Halfway to Freedom*. Although most of the illustrations are the same, there are both obvious and subtle differences in the sequencing, cropping, and captioning. This version of Bourke-White's book on India is practically unknown in the U.S. and has not been not discussed by her biographers.



#101

Gordon Parks

Camera Portraits: The Techniques and Principles of Documentary Portraiture

NY: Franklin Watts, 1948

Gordon Parks, soon to become the first black photographer to work for *Life* magazine, included this fine portrait of Margaret Bourke-White taken at her home in Darien, Connecticut, in his second technical book about photography. In his biographical notes about her, he mentioned that Bourke-White had recently been awarded an honorary doctorate from Rutgers University. In addition to being a successful photographer, Parks later became a film director, composer, and writer.

#102

Stanley Rayfield

How Life Gets the Story: Behind the Scenes in Photo-Journalism

Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1955

⁴⁰ For example, Bourke-White's statement, "Great Britain offered nothing but discouragement to Indian industrial enterprise" on page 78 in *Halfway to Freedom*.

Chapter, "Shooting from a Whirlbird" re Margaret Bourke-White, pp. 34-35

Margaret Bourke-White spent several months photographing America from above for *Life* magazine in the fall of 1951. Her photo essay, "A New Way to Look at the U.S.," appeared in the April 14, 1952, issue. One of a number of large format books about *Life* photographers, *How Life Gets the Story* includes an account of how Bourke-White's Navy helicopter lost power over Chesapeake Bay. After escaping into the water, she was rescued by another helicopter, although but she lost her three 20-pound aerial cameras. Bourke-White's willingness to hang from a helicopter to get a better camera angle, as seen in one of the accompanying photos, augmented her reputation as a courageous photographer.⁴¹

#103

Memorable Life Photographs

Foreword and comment by Edward Steichen

NY: Museum of Modern Art, 1951

Two Photographs by Margaret Bourke-White

Rutgers University Libraries (Art Library)

This book commemorates an exhibit celebrating the first fifteen years of *Life* magazine, held at the Museum of Modern Art, with photographs selected and arranged by Edward Steichen. The larger of the two Bourke-White photographs reproduced here, "Family Fleeing Pakistan," was taken during The Great Migration, when, as a result of the split of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan, followed by six weeks of massacres, ten million people crossed the border in two months, Hindus in one direction, Moslems in the other. Bourke-White, who traveled in India for five months with *Life* reporter Lee Eittington, particularly liked this group. Eittington recalled, she "made them go back again and again and again. They were too frightened to say no. They were *dying*. . . . That's why she was such a good photographer. People were dying under her feet. . . . She thought herself a great humanitarian, but when it came to individual people. . . ." ⁴²

#104

Stanley Rayfield

Life Photographers: Their Careers and Favorite Pictures

[Garden City, NY]: Doubleday & Co., 1957

Although several volumes had been published with photographs from *Life* magazine, this was the first book about the photographers themselves. Thirty-nine *Life* photographers were asked to submit a dozen of their favorite pictures. (Robert Capa, who had been killed in Indo-China, was also included.) Stanley Rayfield, the editor, selected six images by Margaret Bourke-White, one of the original members of the *Life* staff. Two of

⁴¹ The *New York Times*, September 8, 1951, page 15, reported that the Sikorsky helicopter went down 300 yards offshore near Little Creek, Virginia, while practicing a rescue of a man in the water. The helicopter narrowly missed the man it was trying to "save."

⁴² Quoted in Vicki Goldberg, *Margaret Bourke-White: A Biography* (NY: Harper & Row, 1986), 311.

the six were from the first issue of the magazine. Asked why she had chosen these pictures, she wrote, "I like to look deep into the human heart with my camera."

#105

Margaret Bourke-White

"Caste: India"

Photo-Graphic 1949. The Annual of America's Leading Photographers, Selected and Edited by the American Society of Magazine Photographers

NY: Whittlesey House/McGraw Hill, 1948

Bourke-White's contribution to this prestigious compilation of photographs is taken from her large body of work on India and graphically depicts a "wealthy landlord of southern India dropping wages into the hands of his low caste workers." Cropped differently, it also appeared in Bourke-White's books on India, *Halfway to Freedom* and *Interview with India*; in the latter, the right half of the picture, including the old man, was eliminated to make it into a vertical image.



#106

LaFarge, John, S.J.

A Report on the American Jesuits

Photographs by Margaret Bourke-White

NY: Farrar, Straus, and Cudahy, 1956

Rutgers University Libraries

Bourke-White was in the early stages of Parkinson's disease when in 1953-1954 she went on an extensive trip to Maine, California, and British Honduras to photograph the Jesuits for *Life* magazine. The story was expanded into a book, with text by the editor of *America*, a Catholic magazine. Due to her deteriorating health, *A Report on the American Jesuits* was Bourke-White's last major photographic project. Her biographer, Vicki Goldberg, commented that it provided "an ironic coda to the religious history of a woman whose Irish mother had refused to have her children baptized, whose Jewish father remained a well-kept secret, and who said that work was the only religion she ever had."⁴³

#107

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 345.

Margaret Bourke-White
Portrait of Myself
NY: Simon and Schuster,
1963
Rutgers University Libraries

Bourke-White spent ten years writing her autobiography during a period when, due to the worsening effects of Parkinson's disease, she sometimes could barely move her fingers on the typewriter. (Much of her time was spent exercising to prevent growing rigidity and in recuperating from two experimental brain operations.)



The autobiography became her “constant companion,” to which she could always return when she was able, even if it meant adding only one or two sentences a week. Her determination not to let her disease stop her work entirely earned the admiration of the public and *Portrait of Myself* was widely read, especially after it became a Book-of-the-Month Club selection.⁴⁴ Her battle with the disease also became the subject of a TV film⁴⁵ and a number of magazine articles that helped educate the public about Parkinson's.

⁴⁴ The book club edition was slightly smaller than the first edition on view in the exhibit.

⁴⁵ “The Margaret Bourke-White Story,” starring Teresa Wright (1918-2005), was broadcast in 1960 on NBC's *Sunday Showcase*. The actress earned an Emmy nomination for her stellar performance. *Life* magazine had an article about the film in its January 11, 1960 issue.

#108

“Aviators of 38 Nations Do Their Jumping in Parachutes”

Life, March 22, 1937

Photographs by Margaret Bourke-White

Although Leonardo DaVinci understood the practicality of parachutes, and pioneer balloonists used the devices, there was not much demand for them until the advent of airplanes in the 20th century. As a frequent flyer who sometimes wore a parachute while photographing from small aircraft, Bourke-White must have taken a particular interest in doing this photo essay on the Irving Air Chute Company which almost had a monopoly on parachute manufacture in the U.S. The *Life* cover, of a descending parachute test dummy, was Bourke-White’s second of twenty that she did for the magazine. Toward the end of the article, *Life* correctly emphasized that parachutes would be important in the next war.



#109

Margaret Bourke-White

Twenty Parachutes

Tucson, AZ: Nazraeli Press, 2002

Bound in white parachute silk in an edition of 1,000.

To date, *Twenty Parachutes* is the only posthumous book of consisting entirely of previously unpublished Bourke-White photographs. These tiny gems, reproduced 1:1, are unused images from a photoessay Bourke-White shot for the *Life* magazine issue of March 22, 1937, about the Irving Air Chute Company. Each beautifully composed photograph depicts an epic struggle between men and the wind. According to Trudy Wilner Slack’s introduction, “Their wonder is in their ambiguity, their lack of captions and context, their archetypal address of human insignificance, of who is really pulling the strings.”

#110

Phyllis Ehrlich

“Margaret Bourke-White: Still Aiming for the Moon”

New York Times, June 27, 1963

Facsimile

The publication of Bourke-White's autobiography, *Portrait of Myself*, was the occasion for numerous positive articles about the photographer, including this piece in the *New York Times*. The title is in reference to Bourke-White's request to be the first *Life* magazine photographer to be sent to the moon, an assignment she no doubt would have enjoyed. The reporter, Phyllis Ehrlich, visited the photographer at her home in Darien, Connecticut, where Bourke-White talked about her career and her daily physical therapy for Parkinson's that kept her from becoming rigid. In 1971, she had a fall and was confined to bed; the resulting immobility led to her death two months later.

#111

"A *Life* Photographer Looks at Moscow a Week Before the Nazi Invasion Began"
Life, August 11, 1941

Nearly a decade after her last visit to the Soviet Union, Bourke-White and her husband Erskine Caldwell arrived in Moscow after a lengthy trip via the Pacific and China to avoid the war in Europe. They brought 617 pounds of luggage, of which 600 was hers, including five cameras, twenty-two lenses, and three thousand flash bulbs.⁴⁶ In the August 11 issue of *Life*, the first of nine photo-essays in 1941 by Bourke-White on Russia, the thirty photographs show streets, subways, Moscow University, a kindergarten, government meetings, exhibition halls, shops, and recreational activities. Atypical scenes for the communist society included an expensive shop, where a dress cost the equivalent of about ten months rent for an average apartment, and a pricey bar that served "cowboy cocktails," consisting of apricot liqueur, benedictine, a raw egg yolk, gin, and pepper liqueur. The egg yolk kept the colors of the drink separated.

#112

Margaret Bourke-White
"How I Photographed Stalin and Hopkins in the Kremlin"
Life, September 8, 1941

In 1941, Bourke-White scored an incredible photographic coup by gaining permission to photograph Stalin, who rarely made himself accessible to foreign photographers. Stalin needed support from the United States to fight the Germans, so he probably hoped that Bourke-White's photographs would improve his image among Americans. Nevertheless, the photographer reported that the rather short dictator maintained a stony visage until she got down on her knees to make him look taller in the photographs, a posture he apparently found amusing. With Stalin, in some of the pictures, was Roosevelt's trusted emissary, Harry Hopkins, who has recently been identified through KGB records as "Agent 19," a high level spy for the Soviet Union.⁴⁷

#113

⁴⁶ Vicki Goldberg, *Margaret Bourke-White: A Biography* (Harper & Row, 1986), 236-237.

⁴⁷ Herbert Romerstein, *The Venona Secrets: Exposing Soviet Espionage and America's Traitors* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2001).

Margaret Bourke-White

“Women in Lifeboats; Torpedoed on an Africa-Bound Troopship, A *Life* Photographer Finds Them as Brave in War as Men”

Life, February 22, 1943

In December 1942, Bourke-White took a troop ship to cover the war for *Life* in North Africa, a month after the Allied invasion. One night, after a very rough trans-Atlantic crossing, Bourke-White’s ship was torpedoed in the Mediterranean. Thrown from her bunk by the explosion, she climbed out on the severely listing deck and got on line to get into a lifeboat already half full of water. Perhaps for the first time, she knew what fear felt like. Once they were launched, she and her shipmates, who included Eisenhower’s driver, Kay Summersby, and forty nurses, bailed with their helmets. At dawn, Bourke-White did what came naturally: she started to photograph. After eight hours in the crowded little boat, she and sixty-three others were picked up by a destroyer. Upon reaching Algiers, knowing it would make a good story, she cabled a *Life* editor, “what incredible luck to get torpedoed!”⁴⁸

#114

“*Life*’s Bourke-White Goes Bombing: First woman to accompany U.S. Air Force on combat mission photographs attack on Tunis”

Life, March 1, 1943

With the permission of General Jimmy Doolittle, Bourke-White flew on a B-17 that successfully attacked a German airfield at Tunis, a career highlight to which she devoted two chapters in her autobiography. After several weeks of training, Bourke-White boarded the bomber on January 22, 1943, about a month after she was rescued from a torpedoed troop ship in the Mediterranean. She was not without risk of being shot down: her plane took two hits in a wing but suffered only minor damage. During the flight in the leading plane in the squadron, she photographed the crew at work, other bombers, and scenes below, including the burning target. More than one hundred German planes were destroyed on the ground, while the Allies lost two in the attack.⁴⁹ The *Life* article on the event included a dozen of her photographs, as well as an uncredited one of Bourke-White in a high-altitude outfit that became the best known photograph of her. (See also exhibit items #127 and 129.)

#115

“Women in Steel: They Are Handling Tough Jobs in Heavy Industry”

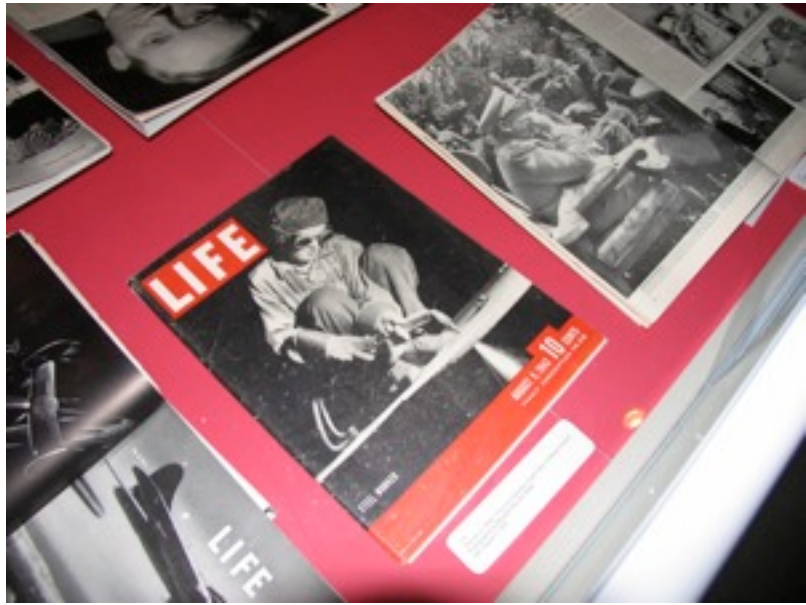
Photographs by Margaret Bourke-White

Life, August 9, 1943

⁴⁸ Eliot Elisofon speech at Ohio University, April 14, 1969, Vicki Goldberg Papers, Time-Life folder, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library.

⁴⁹ Margaret Bourke-White, *Portrait of Myself* (NY: Simon and Schuster, 1963), 217-232.

In 1943, Bourke-White returned to the steel mills, one of her favorite subjects in the late 1920s, for this outstanding photo essay with two dozen images. In 1928, when she photographed the foundries of Otis Steel in Cleveland, she was the only woman there; now, as a result of the war, there were nearly 5,000 women working for U.S. Steel subsidiaries in Gary, Indiana. Bourke-White photographed scenes of “Rosie the Riveter” wearing a gas mask and doing a variety of tiring, dirty, and dangerous tasks. She also did a series of close-up portraits, including flame burner Ann Zarik, who appeared, using a blow torch, on *Life*’s cover. In a note on the Table of Contents page introducing the story, *Life* drew a parallel to Bourke-White’s photographs of Soviet women workers in its September 1, 1941 issue.



#116

“Herr Goring [sic] Talks; The Fat Former Reichsmarschall Sweats Out a Press Conference”

Life, May 28, 1945

Photographs by Margaret Bourke-White & Signal Corps photographers

In one of the more bizarre incidents of the immediate post-war period in Germany, Herman Goering, Hitler’s legal heir and one of the top Nazis since 1923, was allowed to conduct a press conference with fifty reporters in attendance. Although he denied any guilt for atrocities, he was later convicted for war crimes at Nuremburg and committed suicide by swallowing potassium cyanide to avoid execution. Bourke-White took the full-page photo on page 30 of this issue of *Life*, as well as the four close-ups on page 31.

#117

Photo of Margaret Bourke-White on a Refrigerator Magnet
Fabricated by Vivian G. Weaver, Kimberly, Idaho, ca. 2000

An unusual piece of Bourke-White ephemera, the photograph on this magnet was taken no later than September 13, 1934, when it appeared in the *Newark Evening News*.



#118

First Day Cover

15 Cent Photography USA Stamp, June 26, 1978

Bourke-White on silk cachet

Issued by National Organization for Women (N.O.W.-N.Y.)

Women's History Series, No. 64

Whether or not in military uniform, Bourke-White was noted for her style throughout her career. Here she is wearing the first uniform designed for a woman war correspondent



after she was accredited in the late spring of 1942. The picture of Bourke-White on the first day cover is based on a photograph that appeared in Bourke-White's autobiography and earlier in *Life* magazine. (The hand holding the camera was not in the original image.) In her autobiography, Bourke-White recalled that the design was seriously debated by officers in the Army War College, with much discussion on the

buttons. While following the basic design for male officers' uniforms, it came with both skirt and slacks. Army green was the color for the standard uniform, with "dress pinks" (a shade of gray) for special occasions. Once the design was approved, Abercrombie & Fitch in New York City custom made the uniforms for Bourke-White. While at the store for a fitting on July 30, 1942, Bourke-White was overheard by an FBI informant to state that she was going on a secret bombing mission. She said it loud enough for everyone

in the store to hear and this incident generated a report to FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover in Washington.⁵⁰

#119

Double Exposure: The Life of Margaret Bourke-White

Starring Farrah Fawcett and Frederic Forrest

Turner Home Entertainment, 1989

VHS Tape

According to the liner notes to *Double Exposure*, Bourke-White “discovers that her obsession for work is stronger than her passion for the man she loves.” Based largely upon selected chapters of Vicki Goldberg’s biography of Bourke-White, much of this film dramatizes the photographer’s steamy affair with Erskine Caldwell during their first trip to the South in 1936 for *You Have Seen Their Faces*. Somewhat fictionalized (especially the dialogue), *Double Exposure* provides a reasonably accurate portrait of Bourke-White’s personality, emphasizing her abilities to charm men who could get her access to what she wanted to photograph and once she got there, to get the picture. Some of the scenes, such as one where she rearranges people on a bread line for a famous photograph, while pure invention, are consistent with her character. Others, such as when she borrows a camera to make a photograph of a man preaching to the pigeons in Cleveland, are mostly accurate. While Goldberg’s book is a much more accurate

⁵⁰ Teletype, Bourke-White FBI file, copy in Vicki Goldberg Papers, Arents Library, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library. Due to her left-wing associations, Bourke-White was under FBI surveillance from no later than 1941, when she and her husband Erskine Caldwell were put on the “A” list of most dangerous individuals who would be detained in the event of a national emergency, to 1947 when her name was removed from the Security Index after years of spying on her without finding any evidence that she was a threat. See Robert E. Snyder, “Margaret Bourke-White and the Communist Witch Hunt,” *Journal of American Studies*, 19 (1985), 1, 5-25.

source for information about Bourke-White, the film is reasonably entertaining.

#120

Margaret Bourke-White. The 1930s.

Exhibition Catalog, Syracuse University Lubin House Gallery, New York City
October 23-November 14, 1975

Bourke-White, who received an award from the Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University in 1966, began donating her archives to Syracuse well before her death in 1971, when she bequeathed to the university an enormous collection of papers, photographic files, and equipment. In 1975, Syracuse exhibited 45 original prints at the Lubin House: 22 from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, 1930-1938; and 23 from Appalachia and the South, 1936. The portrait of Bourke-White in the brochure is by Latvian-born Philippe Halsman, another recipient of the Newhouse Citation and, like Bourke-White, a *LIFE* magazine photographer.



#121

Life, Volume 1, Number 1, November 23, 1936

Cover story, "Dam at Fort Peck, Montana," by Margaret Bourke-White

Reduced size dummy distributed in advance to sign up advertisers

Life's prospectus stated its intentions: "To see life; to see the world; to witness great events; to watch the faces of the poor and the gestures of the proud; to see strange things, machines, armies, multitudes, shadows in the jungle and on the moon; to see man's work -- his paintings, towers and discoveries; to see things thousands of miles away, things hidden behind walls and within



rooms, things dangerous to come to; the women that men love and many children; to see and take pleasure in seeing; to see and be amazed; to see and be instructed.”⁵¹

To produce the magazine, Henry Luce initially hired four photographers: Margaret Bourke-White, Alfred Eisenstaedt; Thomas D. McAvoy, and Peter Stackpole. Bourke-White’s work was featured as the cover and lead story of the first issue, which was an immediate success. The editors had sent Bourke-White to the Northwest to get a story on WPA projects and they pestered her by wire for night life pictures at the Fort Peck dam under construction. Bourke-White delivered. She wrote back, “Think Peck night life will be very good. Have several bar scenes, crowd watching bowling, billiards, taxi dancers at work, two or three hard-won snaps of prostitutes, also exteriors, their establishments, also famous Ruby Smith with her boy friends, also typical shanty-town orchestra, also assorted drunks.” Bourke-White’s essay firmly established the major theme of the magazine on “the lives of ordinary people, their work, their pleasure, their follies, their anguish. Such stories touched virtually every reader.”⁵²

#122

“Muncie, Ind. Is the Great U.S. ‘Middletown’ and This Is the First Picture Essay of What It Looks Like”

Life, May 10, 1937

Photographs by Margaret Bourke-White

With twenty-five photographs, selected from a three-foot stack she brought to *Life*’s editors, Bourke-White told the story of a typical American town, which had been made famous in the 1920s by *Middletown*, a book by sociologists Robert and Helen Lynd. This *Life* article was published on the occasion of a followup by the Lynds, *Middletown in Transition*, which was released in April 1937. The economy of Muncie, the real Middletown, was largely based on the Ball Mason Jars factory and the essay is framed between a shot of William H. Ball getting a shave at a barbershop and a view of women workers in the factory. In between are scenes from daily life in Muncie, including the first publication of a frequently reproduced Bourke-White photograph, “In the Conversation Club.”

#123

“Jersey City’s Mayor Hague: Last of the Bosses, Not First of the Dictators”

Life, February 7, 1938

Photographs by Margaret Bourke-White

On one of the few occasions when her photographic assignments brought her to New Jersey, Bourke-White and *Life*’s editors pulled no punches in this major essay on Jersey City Mayor Frank Hague. The article details how Hague enriched himself at the expense of the taxpayers and used police intimidation to fight unions seeking to organize

⁵¹ Marianne Fulton, *Eyes of Time: Photojournalism in America* (Boston: NYGS/Little, Brown, 1988), 130.

⁵² Loudon Wainwright, “*Life* Begins: the Birth of the Late, Great Picture Magazine,” *Atlantic*, May 1978, 70.

workers. During Hague's term in office, the tax rate in Jersey City tripled and city debt increased 500%. Hague's salary was only \$6,520 per year, yet in seven years he acquired \$400,000 in real estate, including the \$125,000 summer home in Deal, New Jersey, depicted in one of Bourke-White's twenty-two photos.

#124

"Senate and Senators"

Life, June 14, 1937

Photographs by Margaret-Bourke-White

In a major photo-essay on the U.S. Senate illustrated with thirty-five Bourke-White photographs, *Life* provided readers with insights into what the Senate does, some of its leaders, and the Capitol Hill working environment. Both the layout skill and male prejudices of *Life*'s editors are evidenced by the two-page spread featuring Senate "ladies man" Bob Reynolds with a sling-shot on the left and a group of women, senators' daughters, on the right. In the lower right, Hattie Caraway, the first woman elected to the Senate, is described as "mousy" in the caption because she never made a speech from the floor and became known as "Silent Hattie." She was a Senator from 1931 to 1945.

#125

"The Flood Leaves Its Victims on the Bread Line"

Life, February 15, 1937

Photographs by Margaret Bourke-White

Bourke-White's seven photographs of the aftermath of the Louisville flood were atypical for her photojournalistic work before World War II in that here she documented an event rather than a group of people, an industry, or a place. But her lead photo of the bread line for flood refugees transcended the disaster to become a frequently published, ironic icon about the lower socioeconomic status of black Americans. As explained by Theodore Brown, although "it is not a scene of unemployment, or welfare, or the kind of chronic poverty documented by FSA and by Bourke-White in the cotton South. . . the photo has been used repeatedly to comment on inequality, poverty, and deprivation."⁵³ Bourke-White, who hitch-hiked on rowboats and a large raft to get to the city, recalled this important coverage in her autobiography, where she stated, "this mammoth flood was another bitter chapter in the bleak drama of waste of our American earth, which I had watched unfolding and had tried to record since the drought. The juxtaposition of blowing soil and rainfall, of eroded farmlands and inundated cities, made an ominous continuing pattern."⁵⁴

#126

⁵³ Theodore M. Brown, *Margaret Bourke-White: Photojournalist* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1972), 61-62.

⁵⁴ *Portrait of Myself* (NY: Simon and Schuster, 1963), 150.

“American Aces: Margaret Bourke-White”
U.S. Camera, #9, May 1940, pp. 43-48

Tom Maloney, who introduced *U.S. Camera Annual* in 1935, had such success with his annuals that a few years later he started a monthly magazine, *U.S. Camera*, initially in this large format.⁵⁵ Bourke-White was honored in the ninth issue by a lengthy encomium. Maloney noted that while her politics were to the left of most business leaders, they were enthusiastic about how her photographs could glamorize their industries. He praised her for her courage and determination, noting that she is not well liked by most male photographers because she was very competitive and didn't do things the “feminine way.” “Strange indeed is the fate that has chosen a woman to be the most famous on-the-spot reporter the world over. Never before has any man, let alone the skeptical newspaper man, even thought of such a happening, to say nothing of countenancing it. But Bourke-White goes gladly on her way. She still seems to eat it up.” The article is well illustrated with a range of her work, including industrial photographs and selections from her books with Erskine Caldwell, *You Have Seen Their Faces* and *North of the Danube*.

#127



The 100 Greatest Women of American History
Margaret Bourke-White, Issue No. 17
Coin issued by the Franklin Mint, 1977
Accompanying card with text, 1978

Bourke-White's canonization after her death in 1971 is reflected by this commemorative coin. The image is based on a 1943 photograph in which Bourke-White is wearing her high-altitude flying suit and is holding her camera and goggles. Behind her is a propeller from a B-17 bomber. In her autobiography, *Portrait of Myself*, she wrote, “I was flattered

when this picture . . . became popular as a pin-up.” The text that accompanied the coin mentioned that Bourke-White retired from *Life* magazine in 1969; while literally true,

⁵⁵ Gary D. Saretzky, “U.S. Camera: A Thomas J. Maloney Chronology,” *The Photo Review*, 26:4 & 27:1(2004), 1-13, 45.

Parkinson's disease prevented her from doing photography after the mid-1950s. (For other versions of the image, see items #114 and 129.)

#128

Ruth Ann Appelhof, Curator
Margaret Bourke-White: The Humanitarian Vision
Exhibition Catalog, Joe and Emily Lowe Art Gallery,
School of Art, College of Visual and Performing Arts,
Syracuse University, April 24 - September 9, 1983
Printed in an edition of 1,000
by Syracuse University



A short but excellent catalog documenting an exhibit of 110 Bourke-White photographs, largely drawn from her bequest of 15,000 photographs to Syracuse University, supplemented by the archives of Time, Inc. The exhibition was arranged by geographic location, which was for the most part was also chronological: U.S.S.R; American South; Czechoslovakia; Italy; Germany; India; South Africa; Korea; and North America. The catalog includes an introductory essay by the curator, a biographical profile by Jonathan Silverman, and essays by Syracuse University graduate students on seven individual

photographs. The cover illustration depicts Gandhi with his grandniece and grand daughter a few hours before his murder on January 29, 1948.

#129

American Photographer, June 1986
Magazine Cover with Hand-Colored Photograph of Bourke-White with B-17 Bomber

This popular photograph of Bourke-White, then about to embark on a bombing mission in North Africa, was published in *Life* magazine in 1943 (see also exhibit items #114 and 127). Since no other photographer has been credited for this image, it is probably a self-portrait. Originally in black-and-white, *American Photographer* had the image hand-colored. The accompanying 24-page article, "Margaret Bourke-White: She Went Boldly Where No Man Had Gone Before" by Vicki Goldberg, adapted from Goldberg's biography (also published in 1986), and includes reproductions of many of Bourke-White's most famous photographs. Writing about Bourke-White's twenty-year battle with Parkinson's disease, Goldberg wrote, "Fighting illness, she showed a courage that knew no bounds and an optimism that admitted no obstacles." (For another version of the image, see items #114 and 127.)



#130

Vicki Goldberg
Margaret Bourke-White: A Biography
NY: Harper & Row, 1986

Vicki Goldberg did such a fine job on her comprehensive and balanced biography of Margaret Bourke-White that no one else has attempted one in the twenty years since it was published. Goldberg was able to conduct her research when many people who knew Bourke-White well were still living and she interviewed, or received letters from, about 300 individuals. In addition to her personal contacts, Goldberg used Bourke-White's extensive archives at Syracuse University, the Time-Life archives, and other primary and secondary sources. It took Goldberg four years to write this impressive book, now the standard reference for all those interested in Bourke-White's life and work.

#131

Margaret Bourke-White Photographs

Terrence Heath, Introduction
Toronto: Jane Corkin Gallery, 1988

The Jane Corkin Gallery has published a number of exquisitely designed and printed photography catalogs, including this one from 1988 which reproduced images collected by Ms. Corkin over a ten-year period. Each photograph in the catalog is reproduced in its original tonality from a vintage print, most of them signed by the photographer and some with notes by Bourke-White on the verso. Since so much of Bourke-White's work is known from reproductions, some of which were cropped by editors, Corkin's catalog is valuable as a reference for what Bourke-White wanted her own prints to look like. Most of the thirty-one photographs were either previously unpublished or not published since about the time they were made. The cover image, "Nursery in Auto Plant, Moscow, 1931" (Children at Table), silver gelatin print, was issued as a photogravure in Bourke-White's *Photographs of U.S.S.R.* (1934).

#132
Vicki Goldberg
Bourke-White
n.p.: United Technologies, 1988

This sumptuous book was the catalog for the major exhibition, "Bourke-White: A Retrospective," that opened at the International Center of Photography in New York and traveled for two years. The exhibit included 120 items, most of them vintage photographic prints. This catalog remains the best printed publication that surveys the whole of Bourke-White's career, from student photos made in 1922 to a color aerial view of American farmlands in 1955. Most of the photographs before 1936 were printed in a warm-tone or sepia color, as seen in these examples of her industrial work.

#133
Sean Callahan, ed.
The Photographs of Margaret Bourke-White
Theodore M. Brown, Introduction; Carl Mydans, Foreword
Greenwich, Connecticut: New York Graphic Society, 1972

Margaret Bourke-White helped a *Life* editor, Sean Callahan, on this first retrospective of her photographs in book form, issued a year after her death. In the last two months of her life, she was so immobilized (only her eyes could move freely) that Callahan had to put his ear next to her mouth to catch the few words she managed to speak. It was a difficult process for both of them but the result was worth the effort. *The Photographs of Margaret Bourke-White* contains selections from all the major periods of her career, accompanied by a scholarly essay by Theodore Brown, Professor of Art History, Cornell University, who also provided an excellent bibliography. Brown's essay is accompanied by many fine photographs of Bourke-White. Photographer Carl Mydans, Bourke-White's colleague at *Life* for more than thirty years, writing his heart-felt foreword on the day she died, recalled, "She was a woman of indomitable courage, dedicated to capturing on film the events of our times, and she would not cringe from any scene or action

that she thought should be photographed and added to the record of men and the world they live in.”

#134

Theodore M. Brown

Margaret Bourke-White: Photojournalist

Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1972

Margaret Bourke-White was delighted to learn that her alma mater, Cornell University, planned the first large retrospective of her work--two hundred prints--but unfortunately, she did not live to see the exhibition, on view at Andrew Dickson White Museum of Art, March 15-April 23, 1972. Cornell Art History Professor Theodore M. Brown, the curator and author of this accompanying book, limited the exhibition to published work and all the photographs on view were new prints made from Bourke-White's negatives. In *Margaret Bourke-White: Photojournalist*, Brown provided an extensive illustrated text about Bourke-White's major books and photo essays, with insights about the context in which she worked. His text is still instructive although he did not yet have access to the Bourke-White archives that came to Syracuse after her death. The book also includes an exhibition list and a lengthy selected bibliography of publications upto 1971 by or about Bourke-White that, while now out of date and limited to the most important items, is still the most extensive in print.

#135

Theodore M. Brown, Introduction

Margaret Bourke-White: The Cleveland Years, 1927-1930

[Exhibition Catalog], The New Gallery of Contemporary Art
Cleveland, Ohio, May 8 to June 5, 1976

This catalog of an exhibit of 73 items remains an excellent source for Bourke-White's early years as a professional photographer. It reproduces fifty-three photographs, mostly of the estates of wealthy Clevelanders, Terminal Tower views, and industrial scenes (Otis Steel, Lincoln Electric Company, and other heavy industry firms). Examples of her early published photographs, especially *Tradewinds* magazine covers, are also featured. Theodore M. Brown, who curated a major Bourke-White retrospective in 1972, writes in his introduction that Machine Age photographers like Bourke-White “held an almost millennial belief in salvation through technology” and that she “shared with painters, architects, and critics her belief in the cultural value of industrial forms.” Building on the work of Paul Strand, Charles Sheeler, and Lewis Hine, Bourke-White, according to Brown, helped define the Machine Age aesthetic and explored “the dynamic nature of the man-tool partnership.”

#136

Genie Iverson

Margaret Bourke-White: News Photographer

Mankato, Minnesota: Creative Education, 1980

[ex-Grant School Library, Fairview Heights, Illinois]

One of several juvenile biographies⁵⁶ of Bourke-White issued since her death, Iverson provides an accurate, if abbreviated, account of the photographer's life, illustrated with some of her best known photographs. Rather surprising for a book intended for children, Iverson included Bourke-White's disturbing image of the burned bodies of concentration camp prisoners alongside a barbed wire fence where they tried to escape after their clothes were set on fire by their guards. Iverson wrote, "Margaret wanted to turn away. But she didn't. She stayed to photograph the Nazi concentration camp and its victims."

#137

Jonathan Silverman

For the World to See: The Life of Margaret Bourke-White

NY: Viking, 1983

Silverman's *For the World to See* was the first major biography of Bourke-White after her own autobiography of 1963 and Theodore Brown's *Margaret Bourke-White: Photojournalist* (1972), which relied on secondary sources. While it was to some degree overshadowed by Vicki Goldberg's thoroughly researched and lengthy biography a few years later, Silverman's account still stands well on its own merits and was the first to use Bourke-White's correspondence and photographs in her archives at Syracuse University. It has about thirty pages on the photographer's important Russian trips and throughout the book, the quality of the reproductions, including some full-page, is excellent. Many of the photographs of Bourke-White in *For the World to See* are hard or impossible to find in print elsewhere, such as a shot of Bourke-White with Dwight D. Eisenhower at Rutgers University, when she received an honorary degree in 1948.

#138

Sean Callahan

Margaret Bourke-White, Photographer

Boston, et al.: Bulfinch/Little Brown, 1998

Twenty-six years after his first book on the photographer, *The Photographs of Margaret Bourke-White* (1972),⁵⁷ Sean Callahan wrote the prologue for this retrospective monograph in 1998. Although each book provides a chronologically arranged selection of Bourke-White's photographs, there are significant differences. The first had more than 200 photographs; though more comprehensive, many were small and reproduced two or more to a page. The result was a somewhat cluttered layout that underscored Bourke-White's career as a photojournalist and commercial photographer. The second

⁵⁶ Others include Iris Noble, *Cameras and Courage: Margaret Bourke-White* (NY: Julian Messner, 1973); Beatrice Siegel, *An Eye on the World: Margaret Bourke-White, Photographer* (NY & London: Frederick Warne, 1980); Carolyn Daffron, *Margaret Bourke-White* (NY, et al: Chelsea House, 1988); Eleanor H. Ayer, *Photographing the World: Margaret Bourke-White* (NY, et al.: Dillon Press, 1992); and Emily Keller, *Margaret Bourke-White: A Photographer's Life* (Minneapolis: Lerner Publications, 1996).

⁵⁷ See exhibit item 133.

was more selective--138 illustrations--and most were reproduced one to a page, leaving the reader with a stronger impression of Bourke-White's achievement as an artist. As regards context, the first book published a number of fine photographs of the photographer and included much more text: a biographical essay, introductions to the different phases in Bourke-White's career, and Theodore M. Brown's useful bibliography of books and articles by and about Bourke-White.⁵⁸ By comparison, the 1998 work is almost exclusively pictures and doesn't mention that in addition to her photographic work, Bourke-White wrote six lengthy books and about two dozen significant magazine articles. These differences between the two books are reflective of the enhanced appreciation of photography as an art medium between 1972 and 1998.

#139

Eyes on Russia: From Caucasus to Moscow

Motion Picture Produced, Directed, and Narrated by Margaret Bourke-White

RKO Pictures, Van Beuren Productions

1934

Margaret Bourke-White returned from her third trip to Russia in 1932 with 20,000 feet of silent movie film but, due to her inexperience, much of it was unusable. After giving up on two scripts, she shelved the project and unsuccessfully tried to sell it to Hollywood. The U.S. recognition of the U.S.S.R. on November 16, 1933, revived interest and RKO bought a tenth of her footage for a third of her cost to make it. Two short travelogues in 1934 were the result: *Eyes on Russia* and *Red Republic*, the former narrated by Bourke-White herself.⁵⁹



Bourke-White seems to have been naively unaware that, during the years of her visits to Russia in 1930, 1931, and 1932, repressive Soviet policies resulted in the deaths of many thousands of people, especially the kulaks (better off peasants). Although she includes an outdoor exhibit showing how the kulaks were being gradually eliminated (without stating how), the film *Eyes on Russia* conveys the overall impression that Soviet citizens are enthusiastically building a new, more progressive society. "The real rul-

⁵⁸ Later published in Brown's own book; see exhibit item 134.

⁵⁹ Vicki Goldberg, *Margaret Bourke-White: A Biography* (NY: Harper & Row, 1986), 134-135.

ers of the Soviet state are the people," she states, who have shifted their allegiance from religion to nation-building.

Eyes on Russia begins in a small village in the Soviet state of Georgia, where Stalin was born. Many of his relatives dressed in regional costumes appear in the film, of whom the greatest attention is given to the oldest member of the family, his great-aunt who lives underground in a room with a dirt floor. (Bourke-White also did a superb portrait of her that she included in her U.S.S.R. portfolio [see items 12 to 20].) The scene then shifts to Moscow, where Bourke-White narrates views of the Kremlin, ballet dancers, religious institutions, and child-rearing practices, including a ban on spanking. Interspersed in the film are shots of Bourke-White vigorously cranking her hand-powered movie camera.