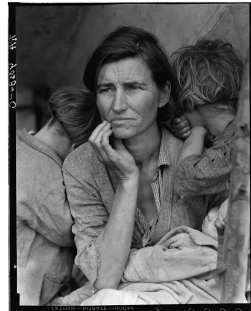




A TIMELINE OF THE WOMEN  
WHO CHANGED AMERICA



## February 2020 Her Story ENewsletter Photographers



A recent article on Dorothea Lange with her signature photo (above) of “Migrant Mother,” prompted us to write this month’s enewsletter on two women photographers: Frances Benjamin Johnston and Dorothea Lange.



Regarded as the “court photographer” for the Presidents’ Harrison, Cleveland, McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, and Taft administrations, **Frances Benjamin Johnston** was one of the earliest female photographers and photojournalists. Born during the Civil War, her photographic career spanned six decades. Her first camera was a gift from George Eastman, the founder of Eastman Kodak.

After studying art in Paris, Johnston returned to the U.S. and established a reputation as a photographer and businesswoman. She opened a studio in Washington, DC in 1894. At that time her photography work was primarily portraits. In the 1890s and early 1900s, she was one of the few photojournalists; she provided images and wrote articles for many magazines. Later, she documented students in the public schools in Washington, D.C. She also took photos at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama and at what is today Hampton University (in Hampton, Virginia), the first higher educational institution to admit both African-American and Native American students. Her photo career also directed her to photograph the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania. Overall, her work was both wide-ranging and encompassing. Her interest in architectural photography led her to document buildings and gardens. That effort resulted in her becoming an honorary member of the American Institute for Architects. Her work is housed at the Library of Congress.



Best known for her Depression-era photography, **Dorothea Lange** studied at Columbia University. She eventually settled in San Francisco where she shot portraits in her studio. In the 1930s, she turned her focus to images outside of her studio, especially images from the Great Depression. Lange’s objective with her photographs was not to create art, but to foment social change. In the 1930s, she documented the hardships caused by the Depression and the Dust Bowl. She was on assignment for the Farm Security Administration. This effort included a photo considered one of the most well-known in history: “Migrant Mother, Nipomo, California”, which is now hanging at the Library of Congress.

Lange became the first woman to receive a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1940. After the U.S. entered World War II, she was assigned by the War Relocation Authority to take photos of Japanese Americans at internment camps. She opposed the policy of internment and made critical images which came into public view only after the War. Lange has been inducted into the National Women’s Hall of Fame. She said: “Bad as it is, the world is potentially full of good photographs. But to be good, photographs have to

be full of the world.”

Frances Benjamin Johnston and Dorothea Lange are among the more than 850 women profiled in our book *Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America*. Women’s accomplishments continue to inspire and encourage us all. Continue to help us tell women’s stories! Tell young women especially that their dreams can become a reality.

Charlotte Waisman and Jill Tietjen

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