

## PHOTO ESSAY

### *From Philadelphia to the Pinelands: The New Jersey Photographs of Lewis W. Hine*

A WIDE VARIETY OF STUDIES have functioned to make Progressive-era photographer Lewis W. Hine a recognizable household name.<sup>1</sup> Despite the proliferation of these monographs, photo books, scholarly articles, and museum exhibitions, a large number of the artist's region-specific photographs still remain untouched by historical research. By locating and exploring Hine's photographic documentation of certain places, historians are beginning to unearth previously unknown aspects of state and local history, gaining a better understanding of the larger social, political, and cultural climate of specific locations at particular points in time.<sup>2</sup> This photographic essay uses selections from Hine's 1910 photographs documenting child labor on the cranberry bogs of New Jersey in order to introduce the reader to an underdocumented aspect of

<sup>1</sup> For critical works, see Kate Sampsell-Willmann, *Lewis Hine as Social Critic* (Jackson, MS, 2009); Sampsell-Willmann, "Lewis Hine, Ellis Island, and Pragmatism: Photographs as Lived Experience," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 7 (2008): 221–52; Peter Seixas, "Lewis Hine: From 'Social' to 'Interpretive' Photographer," *American Quarterly* 39 (1987): 381–409; George Dimock, "Children of the Mills: Re-Reading Lewis Hine's Child-Labour Photographs," *Oxford Art Journal* 16, no. 2 (1993): 37–54. For pictorial works, see Karl Steinorth and Marianne Fulton, eds., *Lewis Hine: Passionate Journey, Photographs, 1905–1937* (New York, 1996); Walter Rosenblum, Alan Trachtenberg, and Naomi Rosenblum, *America and Lewis Hine: Photographs, 1904–1940* (New York, 1997); and Judith Mara Gutman, *Lewis W. Hine and the American Social Conscience* (New York, 1967). For a recent volume of Hine photographs that also contains a comprehensive listing of past museum exhibitions of Hine's work, see Alison Nordström and Elizabeth McCausland, *Lewis Hine* (New York, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Some examples include Robert Macieski, "Before Their Time: Lewis W. Hine and the New Hampshire Crusade against Child Labor," *Historical New Hampshire* 55, no. 3/4 (2000): 90–107; Joseph D. Thomas, "Lewis Hine: Portrait of Two Cities, Fall River and New Bedford," in *Spinner: People and Culture in Southeastern Massachusetts*, vol. 3 (New Bedford, MA, 1984), 6–27; and Dennis O'Kain, "Lewis Hine in Georgia," *Georgia Review* 34 (1980): 535–43.

Garden State history and its connection to the Italian immigrant enclaves of nearby Philadelphia. In depicting the work of Italian laborers from Philadelphia who traveled to the New Jersey Pinelands for work, Hine's photographs draw attention to the ongoing issue of migrant labor—an important element of the history of the mid-Atlantic region. These images also add another dimension to the larger labor history of Italian immigrants in Philadelphia, one that has yet to be fully explored by historians of the Italian American experience.

Lewis W. Hine was born in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, in 1874. Following the untimely accidental death of his father, the teenaged Hine was forced to undertake a number of jobs in order to support his widowed mother and sisters. Aspiring to become an educator like his mother, Hine managed to save a portion of his earnings as the family breadwinner to pay for schooling at the University of Chicago, where he enrolled in 1900. While a student in Chicago, Hine met Frank Manny, a professor of education at the Normal School who was named superintendent of the Ethical Culture School in New York City in 1901. At Manny's invitation, Hine accepted a position as an assistant teacher and relocated to New York. The enthusiastic young educator soon became interested in the budding practice of photography. With meticulousness and passion, Hine learned to use a cumbersome, tripod-mounted five-by-seven view camera complete with heavy glass plates or negatives and a flash pan and powder. Self-taught in the field, Hine soon shared his newfound skills with his students and encouraged them to use the photographic medium to enhance their classroom learning. Between 1904 and 1909, Hine made repeated visits to Ellis Island, where he photographed arriving immigrants. He then brought the prints into the classroom in order to give students an appreciation and understanding of the immigrant experience. Hine personally took over two hundred photographs of immigrants at Ellis Island. This project was his first experience in what would become a lifetime dedicated to documenting the underprivileged in American society.

Hine's experiences at Ellis Island convinced him to leave the Ethical Culture School and pursue a career as a documentary photographer. In 1907, he traveled to the industrial center of Pittsburgh in order to compile photographic illustrations for the monumental Pittsburgh Survey, the first all-encompassing analysis of the social structure of an American industrial city. Around the same time, Hine began to work as a freelance photographer for the National Child Labor Committee (NCLC).

Founded in 1904 with the mission of eradicating child labor in the United States, the organization believed that the American people would enthusiastically join their crusade to end child labor if only they were provided with enough evidence of the ills it fostered. Photographs, they reasoned, would provide that evidence. By 1908, Hine had become a full-time photographer for the NCLC. Over the next ten years, Hine travelled around the continental United States with his view camera in a herculean effort that resulted in the compilation of more than five thousand photographs of children at work.

Hine's monumental body of child labor photographs includes a small, yet noteworthy, set of images taken in New Jersey. His earliest New Jersey photographs, shot in 1909, chronicled the plight of child laborers in the glass mills of southern New Jersey. Hine later visited the northern New Jersey cities of Newark and Paterson in order to photograph newsboys, bootblacks, night messengers, vendors, and others involved in the so-called street trades. The artist's most substantial body of work in the Garden State, however, came from the cranberry bogs of the central and southern New Jersey Pinelands. Over a five-year period from 1910 through 1915, Hine made periodic trips to the cranberry bogs as part of the National Child Labor Committee's ongoing investigation of working conditions among Italian immigrants from Philadelphia who came to the Garden State in search of employment. Hine served as the principal photographer for this effort, and his photographs were reproduced in various exhibitions, photomontages, and popular publications protesting the evils of child labor on the bogs.

Original silver gelatin prints of Hine's New Jersey photographs are found in two major repositories of his collective body of work: the George Eastman House in Rochester, New York, and the Albin O. Kuhn Library and Gallery at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. A small, state-specific collection of Hine's New Jersey photographs is also housed at the New Jersey State Museum in Trenton. The most comprehensive collection of Hine's New Jersey images, however, can be found in the records of the National Child Labor Committee at the Library of Congress.<sup>3</sup> Received in two groupings in 1947 and 1954, this collection

<sup>3</sup> National Child Labor Committee (US) Records, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. Lewis Hine photographs associated with the collection are accessible online through the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division (<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collections/nclc>).

contains nearly seven thousand archival documents addressing aspects of the work of the National Child Labor Committee from its founding in 1904. Among these materials are scrapbooks, correspondence, proceedings of annual meetings, pamphlets, financial statements, minute books, and investigative reports by field operatives. The collection also contains more than one hundred of Hine's most compelling photographs of life and work on the New Jersey cranberry bogs as well as original NCLC reports that Hine illustrated with his photographs and, in some cases, coauthored. These images, samples of which follow, provide an excellent visual framework for exploring a long-overlooked aspect of Garden State agriculture and immigration in the greater Philadelphia region.

*New Jersey State Museum*

NICHOLAS P. CIOTOLA



Rose Bido, Ten Years Old, Carries Berries Two Pecks at a Time, Whitesbog, Browns Mills, New Jersey, 1910. Photograph by Lewis W. Hine. NCLC Records, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

When Lewis W. Hine visited the cranberry bogs of the central New Jersey Pinelands, the state was a leading national producer of cranberries, second only to Massachusetts. In the autumn of 1910, more than eight hundred children worked in the state's cranberry bogs. Six hundred of them, including Rose Bido, were ten years of age or younger. Their short statures and tiny hands were well suited for cranberry picking, a delicate job that was often done by hand from the sprawling vines that grew close to the ground. Although owners deemed the work to be "light," Progressive reformers found that strained muscles during immaturity resulted in debilitating, lifelong problems for the young laborers. More importantly, reformers argued that migrant work in the cranberry bogs took children away from school for weeks at a time.



Millie Cornaro, Ten Years Old, Whitesbog, Browns Mills, New Jersey, 1910. Photograph by Lewis W. Hine. NCLC Records, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

Although Hine's images of cranberry bogs may elicit feelings of pastoral peacefulness to the first-time viewer, his notes often chronicle the darker side of the industry. Cranberry pickers worked in uncomfortable positions close to the cold, soggy earth. The need to complete the harvest before the first frost meant a feverish pace and long hours. Laborers started early in the morning and stayed on the bogs until dusk, plagued by swarms of mosquitoes and unpredictable weather. Around the time of his visit to New Jersey cranberry bogs, Hine reflected on his work for the National Child Labor Committee in a note to his friend Frank Manny, the principal of the Ethical Culture School. "I am sure I am right in my choice of work. My child labor photos have already set the authorities to work to see if such things can be possible," Hine wrote.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Field note sent by Lewis W. Hine to Frank Manny, ca. 1910, Elizabeth McCausland Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.



Group of Children Carrying in Their Pecks to the “Bushel Man,” Theodore Budd’s Bog, near Pemberton, New Jersey, 1910. Photograph by Lewis W. Hine. NCLC Records, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

Many workers in the cranberry bogs of central New Jersey were migrant laborers from Philadelphia who traveled up and down the East Coast following the various fruit and vegetable harvests. According to surveys by the National Child Labor Committee, entire families left their tenement homes together, worked side-by-side in the fields, and pooled their earnings at the end of the harvest season. Hine often kept meticulous notes regarding his photograph subjects, including their names and exact streets of residence in Philadelphia. Based on this information, we know that many of the migrant laborers in the New Jersey cranberry bogs hailed from the Ninth Street—or Italian—Market section of South Philadelphia.



Lucy, Carrying Peck of Cranberries to the "Bushel Man," Forsythe's Bog, near Pemberton, New Jersey, 1910. Photograph by Lewis W. Hine. NCLC Records, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

Hine never claimed to be an unbiased photographer. This image depicts two young pickers next to a "padrone," an agent who recruited laborers to work for the bog owners in return for a monetary commission. In 1885, the federal government passed the Foran Act—a labor measure supported by unions that outlawed the practice of bringing inexpensive contract labor to the United States. As Hine's photographs and notes attest, however, a form of the practice was still in place on the New Jersey cranberry bogs in 1910. The contrast of two children lugging heavy loads, flanked by a grown "padrone" who appears aloof, empty-handed, and wearing a clean white shirt, captures the photographer's disdain for those responsible for putting children to work. The irony of the youngest child flashing a wry smile despite carrying a heavy load also evoked public sympathy for the anti-child labor cause.





Arnao Family, Whitesbog, Browns Mills, New Jersey, 1910. Photograph by Lewis W. Hine. NCLC Records, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

Hine developed relationships with some of his subjects, often encountering them in more than one locale. He documented the Arnao family working on a strawberry farm in Delaware in May of 1910, then found them the following autumn toiling on the cranberry bogs of New Jersey. During the summer months, the family worked on the tomato harvest for the South Jersey canning industry. As a lifelong educator, Hine came to believe that the great tragedy of child labor was that it kept children out of school. The cranberry industry, Hine argued, was one of the most egregious because it required child laborers to leave their homes and work full time over a five-to-seven-week harvest period in September and October—the exact time of year when more fortunate children had returned to school.



Tenjeta Calone, Ten Years Old, Been Picking Cranberries Four Years, Whitesbog, Browns Mills, New Jersey, 1910. Photograph by Lewis W. Hine. NCLC Records, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

Although Hine prided himself in being an “interpretive photographer,” interested in photographs as an avenue for societal change, many of his images have the same beauty as those of his contemporaries, such as Alfred Stieglitz, who advocated for the photograph as a fine art form. The soft light, carefully constructed composition, and rich tonality of this photograph taken on White’s Bog establish Hine’s abilities not just as a documentarian but as an artist. The White family, the leading pioneer of the New Jersey cranberry industry, took particular offense at the photos taken on their bogs. Led by Elizabeth White, the family publicly challenged the findings of the National Child Labor Committee in a targeted media campaign and argued that the conditions on their bogs were humane, decent, and fair.



Eight-Year-Old Jennie Camillo, Theodore Budd's Bog, near Pemberton, New Jersey, 1910. Photograph by Lewis W. Hine. NCLC Records, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

In a 1915 report on the cranberry bogs coauthored with M. Louise Boswell, Hine used the power of the pen to augment the photographic record. He wrote: "Of the 80 pickers, I counted 25 who were under 14 years. [They were] picking and carrying continuously all the time I was there. These ages were according to my judgment after watching the children closely and carefully. Some of these pickers were apparently only 8 and 9 years old [and] showed the effects of the work. They were much fatigued and terribly bitten up by mosquitoes. This was another frightfully hot day (on top of over a week of the same) and the workers all showed the result, working half-heartedly and apparently ready to drop with exhaustion."<sup>5</sup> The report, now housed in the NCLC records at the Library of Congress, was delivered to the Public Education and Child Labor Association of Philadelphia with the intent of demonstrating the deleterious impact of migrant labor on the schooling of America's inner-city youths.

<sup>5</sup> M. Louise Boswell and Lewis W. Hine, "Report on Child Labor on the Cranberry Bogs of New Jersey, September and October, 1915," National Child Labor Committee (US) Records.



Salvin Nocito, Five Years Old, Carries Two Pecks of Cranberries for Long Distances to the "Bushel Man," Whitesbog, Browns Mills, New Jersey, 1910. Photograph by Lewis W. Hine. NCLC Records, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

*Good Housekeeping* magazine used this photograph in a November 1913 article titled "Who Picked Your Cranberries," published just in time to reach American women preparing their Thanksgiving Day meals. Underneath the cut-out image of Salvin Nocito, a caption read: "If they can't pick, they can carry . . . children too little to keep the pace are not too little to carry the filled measures—your cranberries, coming to you."<sup>6</sup> Appealing to middle-class women became a common strategy of Progressive reformers hoping to end child labor. The persistent argument that the cranberry industry hindered a child's right to an education fell on deaf ears. Because many of the workers were officially Philadelphia city residents who came to New Jersey as migrant workers, officials argued that they were unable to enforce the state's compulsory education laws on them. The use of child labor in cranberry bogs declined only after the introduction of the wooden cranberry scoop, a device that allowed for faster, more efficient harvesting and eventually obviated the need for child labor.

<sup>6</sup> *Good Housekeeping*, Nov. 1913.