

A Bountiful Harvest



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A Bountiful Harvest introduces the work of a newly discovered photographer, A. M. "Pete" Wettach, whose career spanned the early to mid twentieth century. Wettach photographed the people of farming communities in and around his home state of Iowa during the Great Depression, World War II, and the postwar years, leaving behind an incomparably rich account of a way of life that has nearly vanished from the rural Midwest. At the time of his death in 1976, Wettach left behind an enormous collection--some tens of thousands of images--that provides a breathtaking complement to the work of other American photo-journalists of his time. A self-taught photographer who worked for the Farm Security Administration as a county supervisor in southeast Iowa during the 1930s and 1940s, he carried his camera as he traveled across the countryside visiting clients. Although Wettach was not hired as an FSA photographer, his pictures provide a fascinating parallel to the more famous work of his FSA colleagues Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, and Russell Lee. Yet unlike their photographs, his reveal an amazing intimacy and familiarity with his subjects, who were frequently his friends, neighbors, family members, and clients. Leslie Loveless has carefully selected the images that best represent both the creativity of the photographer and the poignancy of midwestern farm life during some of its most difficult years; she has also provided an informative essay on Wettach's life and times.

The pictures and corresponding written record provide a fascinating and sometimes heartbreaking account of these families' lives. A Bountiful Harvest is as much a tribute to the people living today who have so much to share about a time and a way of life, as it is to the man who helped record it in so much detail. The work of Pete Wettach, hidden for decades, is poised to become a new national treasure.

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