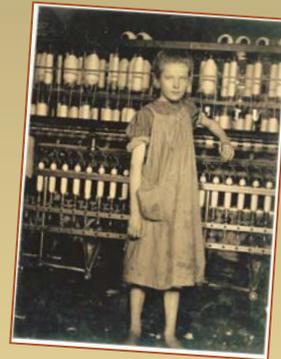


THE LEWIS HINE PROJECT, *By Joe Manning*

“Paint us an angel with the floating violet robe and a face paled by the celestial light; paint us a Madonna turning her mild face upward, and opening her arms to welcome the divine glory, but do not impose on us any esthetic rules which shall banish from the reign of art those old women with work-worn hands scraping carrots, those rounded backs and weather-beaten faces that have bent over the spade and done the rough work of the world, those homes with their tin pans, their brown pitchers, their rough curs and their clusters of onions.

It is needful we should remember their existence, else we may happen to leave them out of our religion and philosophy, and frame lofty theories which only fit the world of extremes. Therefore, let art always remind us of them; therefore, let us always have men ready to give the loving pains of life to the faithful representing of commonplace things, men who see beauty in the commonplace things, and delight in showing how kindly the light of heaven falls on them.” ~ George Eliot



BACK IN THE 1960s, I WAS TAKING AN AMERICAN HISTORY COURSE IN COLLEGE, and it occurred to me that the reason I was so bored with it was because I couldn't identify with the people and events I was studying. As far as I knew, no one in my family was ever a general, or a president, or a senator, or a railroad magnate, or some other famous or privileged person (mostly rich white men). As the saying goes, we were just plain folks. I thought to myself, "Didn't history happen to ordinary people, too?"

In 2002, I took a course in genealogy at a local college and went to work exploring my family history. I found out a bunch of amazing stuff. My father's maternal grandparents married at age 17, and left their homes in Indiana in a covered wagon, heading slowly to Kansas to look for a place to farm. They eventually had nine children, four of them destined to die in their first year. My father's paternal great-grandfather came to the US from Ireland in the 1830s, and lost five of his six sons in the Civil War. Both my father and I were named after the only son who survived. That's history that I can relate to.

The children and families depicted in the child labor photographs of Lewis Hine were unwittingly caught in the act of making history, but we know almost nothing about them. The pictures were taken for a noble purpose, but a century later, they have become an enormous photo album of the American Family. By finding out what happened to some of them, and by revealing the photos to their descendants (most descendants are unaware of them), we are dignifying their lives, and the lives of everyone that history has forgotten.

I am well aware that the mostly anecdotal information from descendants has limited historical value, since some important details will be left out due to faded memories or an occasional unwillingness to mention embarrassing or deeply personal events. I also understand that the child laborers for whom I have been successful may tend to represent those who left the most easily followed trail, such as those who lived long enough to get a Social Security number, or those who married and had children. And I have come to realize that I often select children with "searchable" names, such as Archie Love, Shorpy Higginbotham and Ora Fugate; or that I may favor photos that are

compelling simply because of their artfulness or because of the way they touch me emotionally, whatever the reason.

But my aim here is not to write definitive biographies of each child, nor to establish any trends, nor to come to any conclusions about how the experiences of child labor influenced the outcomes of children in their adult lives. The stories, however long or brief help us to get to know a few people whose only public persona, for as long as a hundred years, has been a simple snapshot.

IN THE FALL OF 2005, I WAS HIRED BY AUTHOR ELIZABETH WINTHROP TO FIND THE DESCENDANTS OF ADDIE CARD (ABOVE), a 12-year-old cotton mill worker in Pownal, Vermont, who had been photographed by Lewis Hine in 1910. Winthrop had recently completed *Counting on Grace*, a novel inspired by Addie's photo. She wanted to find out the real story of Addie, who had been identified by Hine as Addie Laird. Previous attempts by others had come up empty. Winthrop had already determined that Addie's last name was actually Card. With that information, she learned that she had married at the age of 17. But after the 1920 census, Winthrop could find no record of Addie or her husband, or if they had any children. That's when she turned to me for help.

Within two weeks, I had located and contacted Addie's granddaughter. In two more weeks, I was standing before Addie's grave. Just after Christmas, Elizabeth and I interviewed Addie's great-granddaughter, descended from the adopted daughter of Addie's second marriage. No one in the family had ever heard of the famous Hine photograph of Addie.

As the summer of 2006 approached, I learned that more than 5,000 of Hine's child labor photos are viewable on the Library of Congress website. I waded through some of them one morning. I stared at the children, and they stared back. I said to myself, "I can do for these children what I did for Addie." So far, I have tracked down the stories of over 300 child laborers.

TO SEE ALL OF JOE MANNING'S STORIES OF THE CHILD LABORERS, GO TO WWW.MORNINGSONMAPLESTREET.COM, AND CLICK ON THE LINK FOR LEWIS HINE PROJECT.