



## **Railroaders: Jack Delano's Homefront Photography**

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In the winter of 1942–3, photographer Jack Delano was assigned by the Office of War Information (successor of the Farm Security Administration) to tell the story of the American railroad system and its essential role in keeping the nation's troops armed, fed, and housed, in addition to normal homefront railroad work. Delano's boss was Roy E. Stryker, the visionary leader of FSA photography projects during Franklin Roosevelt's presidency, documenting social conditions during the Great Depression. The best of Delano's photographs compare favorably with images made by such other famed FSA photographers as Dorothea Lange and Walker Evans.

Delano's photographs of railroaders in Chicago, the nation's railroad hub, captured life in the yards, shops, and environments of the freight lines. He concentrated on the men and women who made the railroads tick: those employed directly in train service as well as many working behind-the-scenes in repair, maintenance, and bookkeeping. These superb portraits and their subjects' milieus have never before been published as a collection, and they are reproduced here magnificently. Extraordinary documentary text complements the images. Editor John Gruber and others at the Center for Railroad Photography & Art researched the railroaders' lives and wrote their biographies. Delano's son Pablo, himself a professional photographer, made new portraits of many of the railroaders' families and wrote a reflection on his father's career. The book also includes essays by historian Jeremi Suri on the railroad and modern America and by editor John Gruber on Delano's railroad assignment.

*Railroaders* breaks new ground for the genres of railroad books and historical photography books. These workers' compelling, universal stories create a composite history not only of railroad work but of labor in the first half of the twentieth century.

Winner, George W. and Constance M. Hilton Book Award, Railway & Locomotive Historical Society

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