

THE AMERICANS

Key Events 1954 - 1955 – 1956 – 1957

Life Magazine

What Frank Says About His Work

Henri Cartier-Bresson's America(ns)

Photographs

1954

FRANK APPLIES FOR GUGGENHEIM GRANT
(NOT SO COMMON FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS THEN)

- Polio Vaccine – vaccination trials of children begin
- Communist Control Act – outlawing the Communist Party in the US
- Brown v. Board of Education decision – stated segregation in public schools is unconstitutional
- Ellis Island closes as a port of immigration
- “Operation Wetback” – sends almost 4M illegal immigrants back to Mexico
- The words "**under God**" are added to the United States Pledge of Allegiance

1955

FRANK BEGINS HIS JOURNEY

- Gunsmoke debuts on television (previously a radio program)
- Disneyland opens in California
- US gets involved in the Vietnam conflict
- Rosa Parks is arrested in Montgomery AL
- Montgomery Bus Boycott – led by Martin Luther King Jr.
- Emmett Till – a black teenager murdered for not showing respect to a white woman in Money, MS
- Ray Kroc starts McDonalds
- First riot at an Elvis Presley concert takes place in Jacksonville, FL

1956
GUGGENHEIM GRANT IS RENEWED
FRANK PHOTOGRAPHS, DEVELOPS, PRINTS & EDITS

- The NAACP files the Browder v. Gayle lawsuit testing the legality of Alabama bus segregation
- Bus companies begin implementing desegregation in several Southern cities
- “The Ten Commandments” premieres - most expensive film ever made and featured some of the largest sets ever created. It was a huge financial success and had critical acclaim, being nominated for 7 Academy Awards.
- Browder v. Gayle - Alabama Bus segregation laws declared illegal by US Supreme Court
- Federal-Aid Highway Act - signed into law on for the construction of 41,000 miles of interstate highways over a 20-year period
- Eight black students are refused entry at Sturgis High School in Sturgis, Kentucky

1957

ROBERT FRANK EDITING THE AMERICANS
83 PHOTOS CHOSEN FROM 23,000+ IMAGES

- Peak of Baby Boomer years
- Little Rock Nine - The National Guard is used to prevent nine black students from entering Central High School in Little Rock. Shortly thereafter Federal troops charge defiant protesters with fixed bayonets to ensure nine African American Students can attend Central High School.
- The House for Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) convicts a number of writers and playwright's for Un-American Activities / Communist party membership. (Recent movie: 'Trumbo' blacklisted by Hollywood)
- Martin Luther King Jr. heads nationwide resistance to racial segregation and discrimination in the US
- The Americans is released in France in 1958 and in the US in 1959

QUOTES BY ROBERT FRANK

“What I have in mind, then, is observation and record of what one naturalized American finds to see in the United States that signifies the kind of civilization born here and spreading elsewhere.”

“Across the USA I have photographed with these ideas in mind: to portray Americans as they live at present. Their everyday and their Sunday, their realism and dream. The look of cities, towns and highways.”

“When people look at my pictures, I want them to feel the way they do when they want to read the line of a poem twice.”

83 PHOTOGRAPHS 22 STATES + DC + TRAIN

- 15 California
- 10 New York & Michigan
- 8 South Carolina
- 4 Illinois & Montana
- 3 LA, NV, FL, NM
- 2 NJ, NE, ID, TN TX, IN
- 1 GA, CT, AZ, UT, OH, NC, DC, Train
- 26 States not represented in the book (assuming AK and HI not on his radar)

THE ROUTE

MAY 1955 TO JANUARY 1957

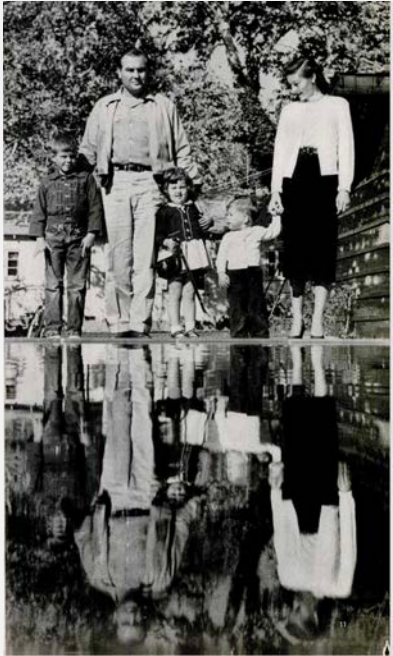
- Begins in Michigan in May-June 1955
- Starts photographing in FL in October 1955
- Drives to TX (joined there by his wife and children in Houston)
- Drives to CA with family and stays 4 months
- Drives across the US in Spring 1956 without family
- Attends the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in late 1956
- Attends the the Presidential Inauguration in DC in January 1957



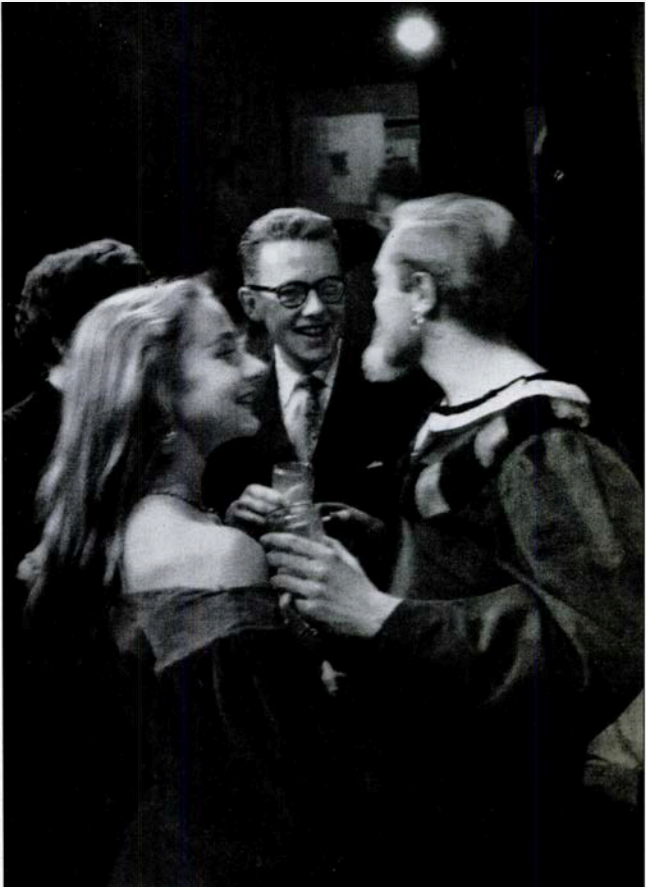
OBSERVATIONS ON THEMES & SUBJECTS

- 20 photos include black people
- 14 photos include children & teens
- 13 photos incorporate cars and motorcycles
- 12 photos seem to hide or obscure people, places and/or things
- 12 photos include what appear to be upper middle class or affluent white men
- 10 photos include what appear to be upper middle class or affluent white women
- 7 photos have death as a major or underlying theme
- 6 photos include what appear to be poor people
- 6 photos include flags (counting one banner with stars and stripes)
- 5 photos in diners
- 4 photos depict music (3 jukeboxes)
- 5 photos depict some aspect of religion

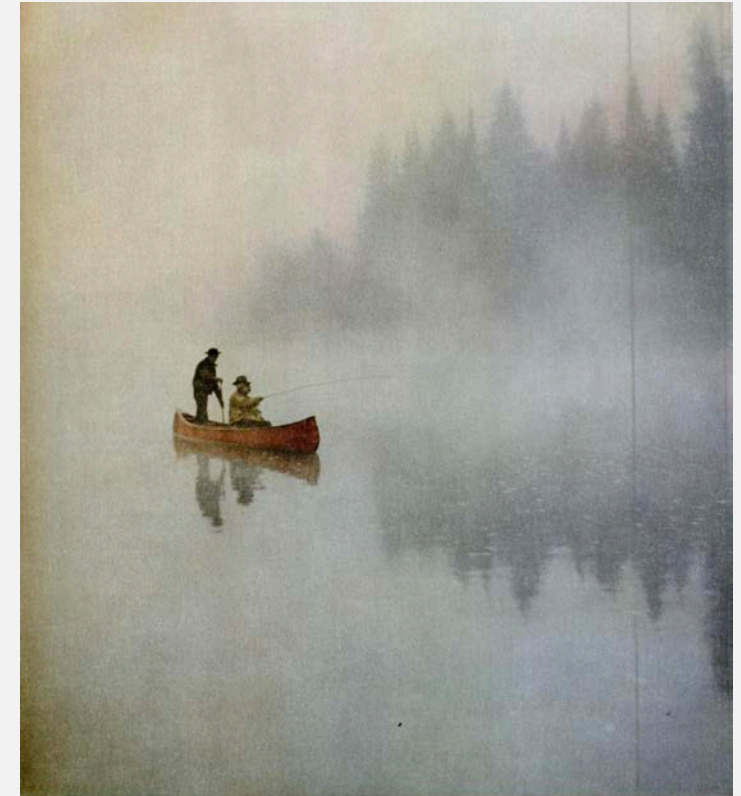
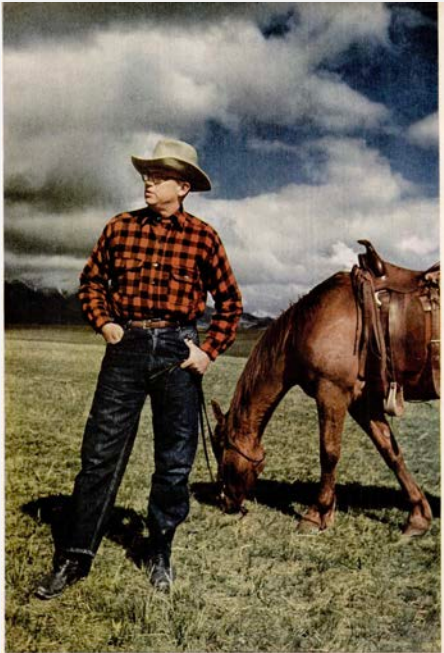
LIFE MAGAZINE 1954



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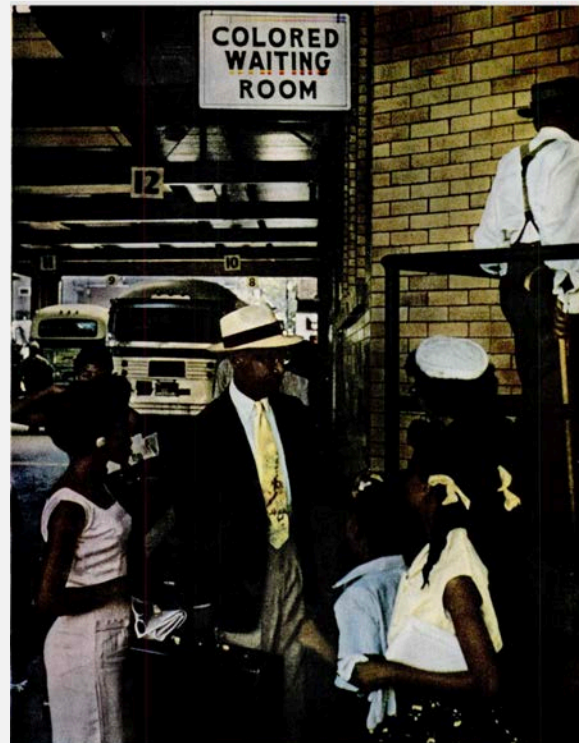
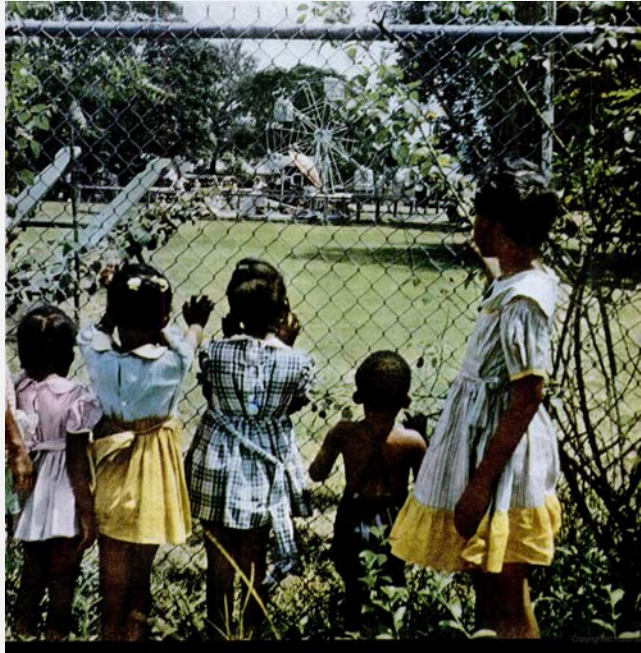
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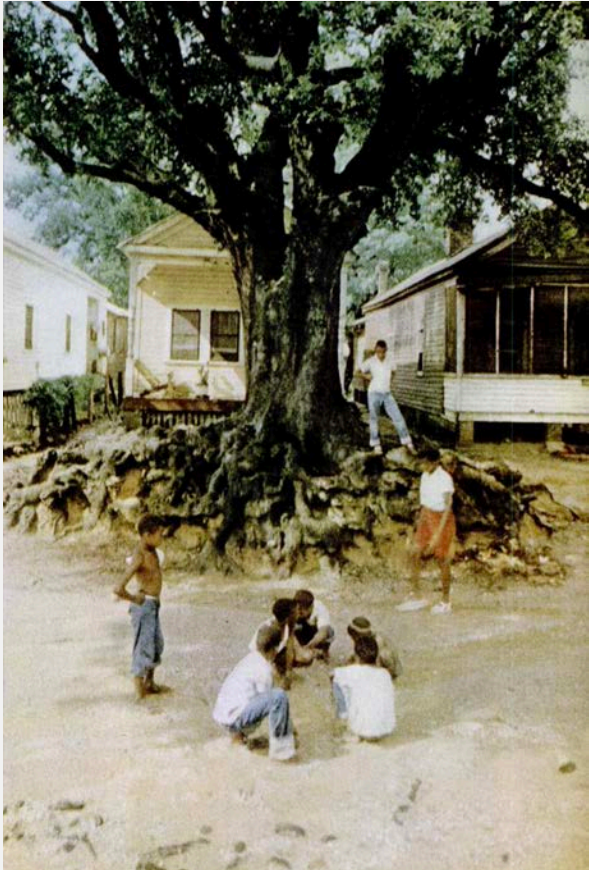
LIFE MAGAZINE 1954



LIFE MAGAZINE 1956



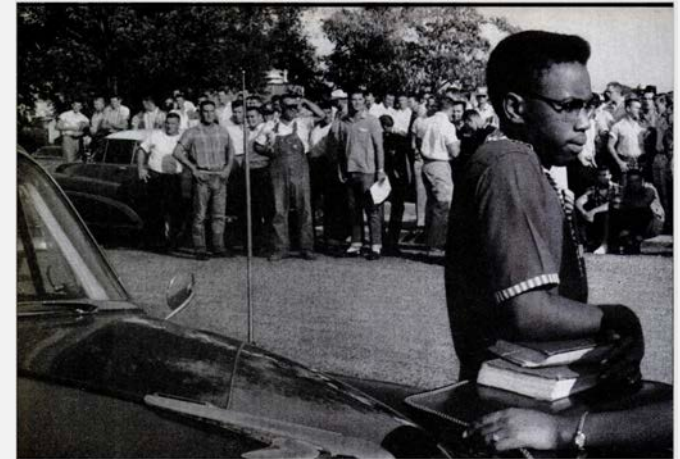
LIFE MAGAZINE 1956



INVITATION TO JOIN P.T.A. at son's new school is given Mrs. Arkie Gardner by Principal Paul Sparks, who made personal call because she has no phone.



LIFE MAGAZINE 1956



HENRI CARTIER-BRESSON
AMERICA IN PASSING
1947-1960



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JACK KEROUAC QUOTE
(FRANK MET KEROUAC IN 1957)

“Robert Frank, Swiss, unobtrusive, nice, with that little camera that he raises and snaps with one hand he sucked a sad poem right out of America onto film, taking rank among the tragic poets of the world.”

CITY FATHERS, HOBOKEN, NJ 1955
FUNERAL, ST. HELENA, SC 1955



CHARLESTON, SC 1955



CAFÉ, BEAUFORT, SC 1955



CAR ACCIDENT US 66 BETWEEN WINSLOW AND
FLAGSTAFF, AZ 1955
COVERED CAR, LONG BEACH, CA 1956



NEWBURGH, NEW YORK 1955



BELLE ISLE, DETROIT 1955
DETROIT, 1955



MOVIE PREMIERE, HOLLYWOOD 1955

MOVIE PREMIERE, HOLLYWOOD 1956

