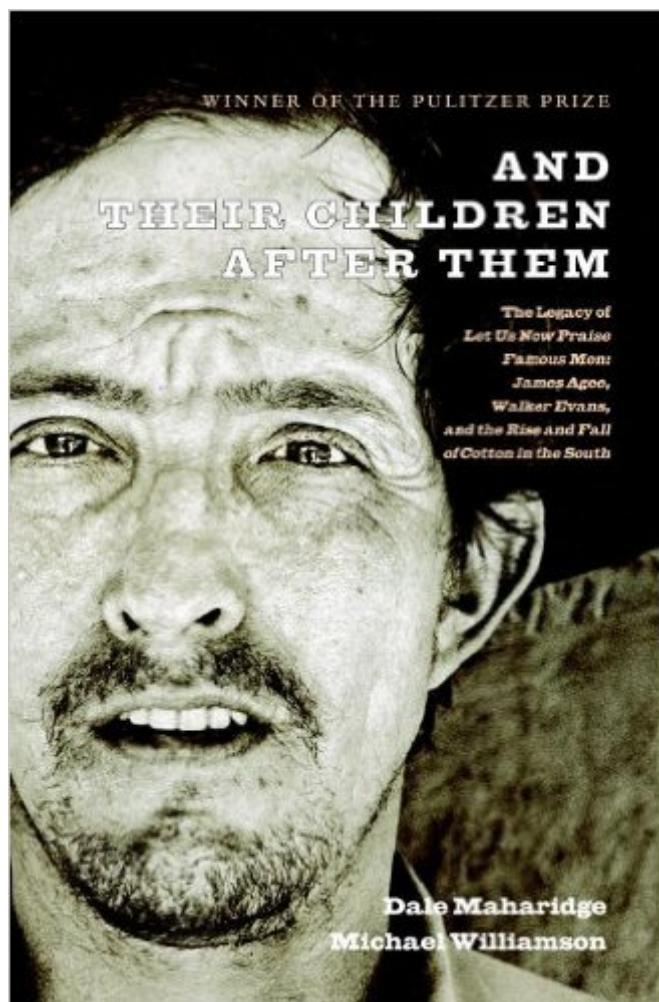


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And Their Children After Them: The Legacy Of Let Us Now Praise Famous Men: James Agee, Walker Evans, And The Rise And Fall Of Cotton In The South



Synopsis

In *And Their Children After Them*, the writer/photographer team Dale Maharidge and Michael Williamson return to the land and families captured in James Agee and Walker Evans' inimitable *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, extending the project of conscience and chronicling the traumatic decline of King Cotton. With this continuation of Agee and Evans' project, Maharidge and Williamson not only uncover some surprising historical secrets relating to the families and to Agee himself, but also effectively lay to rest Agee's fear that his work, from lack of reverence or resilience, would be but another offense to the humanity of its subjects. Williamson's ninety-part photo essay includes updates alongside Evans' classic originals. Maharidge and Williamson's work in *And Their Children After Them* was honored with the Pulitzer Prize for nonfiction when it was first published in 1990.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

For readers of the original Agee/Evans collaboration, "And Their Children" is well worth the time. The reporter and photographer tracked down the 116 living offspring of the pseudonymous Gudger, Ricketts, and Woods families, as well as those who were part of the original book (12 of 22 who appeared in "Let Us Now" were still alive when they began their research in 1986). Not all were willing to be interviewed or photographed, but many were. As with the first book, the tale here is not a particularly happy one. The author begins by recounting the suicide of Maggie Louise Gudger, age 10 in 1936, a particular favorite of Agee's, and dead at age 45--the same age at which Agee

himself died from drink. And yet there are varying degrees of hope in many of the stories, such as that of Maggie Louise's daughter Debbie and her children. The structure of the book follows each family through different periods: 1936-1940; 1940-1960; and 1960-1986. The author also includes sections on one of the local landowning families (which was far from rich!) and an African-American sharecropping family. Along the way, we learn surprising things about the evil (and Faulknerian) Fred Ricketts, the fate of Clair Bell (she did not die at age 4, as Agee had feared she would), the struggles of George Gudger, and the families' views on Agee, Evans, and the original book. About the children and grandchildren, we find out about those who ran away (and usually came back) and those who stayed; marriages; children; the end of farming; attempts at succeeding at school and at work; closeness and bitterness. It's all grippingly told. And the photographs that allow one to compare the state of things in 1936 and 1986 are excellent. Several photos exactly re-capture the originals.

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