



## Interior Detail, West Virginia Coal Miner's House

### Date

1935, printed later

### Primary Maker

Walker Evans

### Medium

Gelatin silver print

### Description

Having had early ambitions to become a writer, Walker Evans took up photography only as an adult, in 1928. With the support of friends, his photographs soon appeared in Lincoln Kirstein's literary journal *Hound and Horn* and Carleton Beals's book *The Crime of Cuba*. In June 1935, Evans began working first for the Resettlement Administration and then for the renamed Farm Security Administration established as part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal program, traveling around the country to record the effects of the Great Depression—work he continued through early 1937. Thereafter, he became one of the foremost American photographers and played an important role in

developing what is today called "documentary" photography. Even though Evans shot *Interior Detail, West Virginia Coal Miner's House* in the first month of his tenure with the Resettlement Administration, his distinctive style is already evident. Using an 8-by-10-inch view camera on a tripod, which could capture extreme detail, he photographed his subject straight on, with a seeming lack of emotional content. The resulting image depicts an interior in company-owned housing at one of the coal mining camps at Scotts Run, near Morgantown; the walls are patched or insulated with cardboard and advertisements, whose offers of hope and satisfaction are at odds with their surroundings. The extreme poverty at Scotts Run—home, at that point, to fifteen thousand unemployed miners and their families—is said to have helped inspire the New Deal legislation. (SOURCE: Alcauskas, *INNOVATIVE APPROACHES, HONORED TRADITIONS*, 2017)

### Dimensions

Image: 9 5/16 × 7 7/16 in. (23.7 × 18.9 cm) Sheet: 9 15/16 in. × 8 in. (25.2 × 20.3 cm)