

# SEANKELLY

Coppelman, Alyssa. "The Genuine American Communities That Still Exist in the Age of Facebook,"  
*WIRED*, February 6, 2015.



## The Genuine American Communities That Still Exist in the Age of Facebook

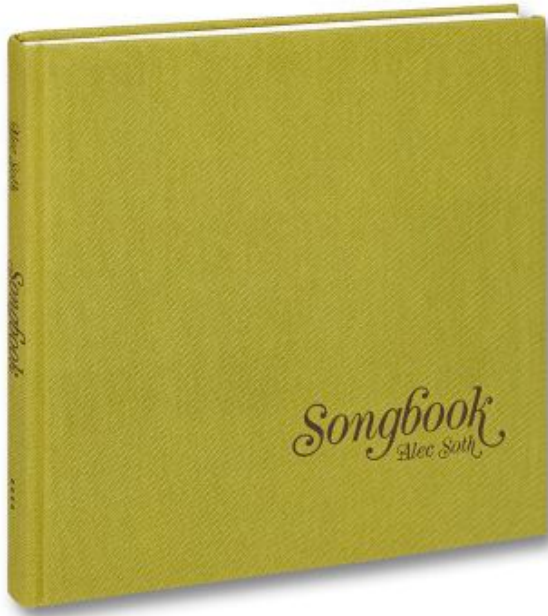


Bil. Sandusky, Ohio ALEC SOTH. COURTESY MACK

Social media has become one of the leading ways we engage with life and feel connected to others, but the reality is, it's often surreal and lonely. Everywhere you look, people are staring at a small screen, liking, swiping, commenting, and "socializing" with people they can't actually see, let alone interact with. Photographer Alec Soth longed for a genuine, human connection, and took a series of road trips to search for signs of real-life community in America.

"It's amazing, from my very first outing three years ago, I did in fact feel more connected to the world around me," he said. "It's so easy to get cynical about the world when you engage with it from behind a screen. But when you go out and talk to real people living real lives, it is somehow comforting—even if those lives are full of pain and hardship."

He was inspired while working with writer Brad Zellar on *The LBM Dispatch*, a self-published news periodical that focuses on the local happenings of a different state in each issue. From Silicon Valley to Sandusky, Ohio, he became something akin to a small-town newspaper reporter and captured hundreds of community gatherings, church meetings, sports events, dances, and festivals.



*Songbook*, MACK, 2015.

Though shot between 2012 and 2014, Soth's images feel like they were taken decades ago, full of colorful characters and vaguely familiar faces. A selection of photos from his various trips are collected in *Songbook*, published by MACK. The series is enduring proof that community is alive and well throughout our 50 states, despite the nonstop notifications, alerts and status updates that distract us even as they exacerbate the isolation of contemporary life.

"While this work is about community, it is also very much about loneliness, or the longing for community. This is something I really wanted to convey in *Songbook*," he said. "Rather than focusing on the stories of the people and places I photographed, I wanted these photographs to be more emotive than narrative, more musical than news."

Since completing *Songbook*, Soth has found a way to connect with his own community. "I'm in the process of creating something called the Winnebago Workshop—a kind of mobile storytelling classroom for teenagers in Minnesota," he said.

*Songbook* is showing at Fraenkel Gallery in San Francisco through April 4, and Sean Kelly Gallery in New York City through March 21. A third exhibition opens February 20 at Weinstein Gallery, in Soth's hometown of Minneapolis.



Sue. Sierra Sky Park. Fresno, California ALEC SOTH. COURTESY MACK



Children of Eden. Maplewood, Minnesota ALEC SOTH. COURTESY MACK



Woodville Farm Labor Camp. San Joaquin Valley, California ALEC SOTH. COURTESY MACK



Fellowship Church. Grapevine, Texas ALEC SOTH. COURTESY MACK



Madden Golf Club Women's Association. Dayton, Ohio ALEC SOTH. COURTESY MACK



Heikki. Lido, California ALEC SOTH. COURTESY MACK



Kaaterskill Falls, New York ALEC SOTH. COURTESY MACK



The Key Hotel. Kissimmee, Florida ALEC SOTH. COURTESY FRAENKEL GALLERY, SAN FRANCISCO



Miss Model Contestants. Cleveland, Ohio ALEC SOTH. COURTESY FRAENKEL GALLERY, SAN FRANCISCO



Near Kaaterskill Falls, New York ALEC SOTH. COURTESY FRAENKEL GALLERY, SAN FRANCISCO



Cade and Cody. Au Gres, Michigan ALEC SOTH. COURTESY FRAENKEL GALLERY, SAN FRANCISCO



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Magic Castle Inns and Suites, Kissimmee, Florida ALEC SOTH. COURTESY FRAENKEL GALLERY, SAN FRANCISCO





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