



May 27, 2005

Ms. Cristina Mittermeier
432 Walker Road
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Dear Ms. Mittermeier:

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Sincerely,

Kraig M. Butrum
Senior Vice President

*American Photographers
and
The National Parks*

ROBERT CAHN
ROBERT GLENN KETCHUM

A STUDIO BOOK THE VIKING PRESS NEW YORK
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Foreword

GOVERNMENT and the arts have long been inter-related. From early times, governments, churches, and wealthy patrons have sponsored the careers of prominent artists. In our own country, both the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities, as well as other government agencies, routinely support artistic endeavors. Only rarely, however, has the work of artists had occasion to profoundly affect government policy. But just such an interplay characterizes the impact of landscape photography on America's national park system. The work of fine photographers provided a strong visual impetus for the congressional decision to set aside land for the establishment of America's first national park system, which now preserves more than seventy-five million acres of our nation's most valuable natural, cultural, historic, and recreational areas.

It is appropriate that the exploration of this very unusual and productive relationship between photographic art and government policy was initiated by the National Park Foundation. Chartered in 1967 by the U.S. Congress, it is a private nonprofit institution that was established to stimulate the contributions of private-sector philanthropists and to channel those funds in support of innovative programs and activities that benefit America's national parks.

In 1978 the foundation undertook the funding of the research, assembling, and artistic supervision necessary to mount an exhibi-

tion showcasing those works of photographic art that best exemplify the creative relationship between the development of landscape photography and the emergence of our national park system. The realization of our plans was greatly furthered by the early understanding and support of Mrs. William Hatch and Mr. Barnabus McHenry, both of whom helped to sustain the project in its initial phases. And although those planning stages stretched into four years of constant work, the foundation's support never wavered, for we recognized that we had the singular opportunity to provide the American public with a truly unique insight into the genesis of our national park system—the first such system in the world.

Gathering the photographs was no simple task. Private and government collections, trustees of deceased artists, agents of living artists, and artists themselves had to be contacted. As we experienced the difficulties of assembling the collection, we came to realize that it was unlikely that such a body of work—diverse in subject and tone but consistent in its evocation of nature's beauty—would ever be brought together again. This book emerged as the means of providing a permanent chronicle of an exceptional collection of art, a collection that has played an important part in creating, protecting, and enhancing our nation's park legacy.

JOHN L. BRYANT, JR.
President, National Park Foundation

Acknowledgments

THIS BOOK was the natural outgrowth of a photographic exhibition sponsored by the National Park Foundation that chronicled the interrelationship of landscape photography and the national park ethic in the United States. It has taken four years to research and assemble the exhibition and prepare the book for publication. I am indebted to an incredibly large number of people who have given freely of their time and help during this period. My deepest gratitude is due the board, officers, and staff of the National Park Foundation, which provided the financial and administrative wherewithal to develop the concept into a reality. In particular, I am grateful to John Bryant, the foundation's president, who believed in this project from the very first moment we discussed it, made its execution a learning experience for me, and offered me endless encouragement and advice. And in addition to providing the National Park Foundation's ample support, he was also able to enlist major independent financial contributors. Thanks are also due Tom Fise, director of administration, who oversaw all the infinite practical details pertaining to the planning of both the exhibition and the book, and to Lillian McLeod, who cheerfully generated a seemingly endless stream of letters and forms while also doing a phenomenal job maintaining records of the ever-changing inventories.

At the spring meeting of the National Park Foundation's board in April 1979, the Honorable Cecil D. Andrus, then chairman of the board and Secretary of the Interior, hosted a reception for the board in the East Wing of the White House. A mini-preview was held in conjunction with this event in order to demonstrate the viability of the exhibition concept and to display the works of twelve of the photographers included in the show. Although of short duration, this event had the distinction of being the first photographic exhibition ever held in the White House. Rex Scouten, the chief usher, and the staff of the Office

of the Social Secretary deserve special thanks for coordinating the installation.

The work presented in the exhibition and reproduced in this volume was collected from sources all over the country. In addition to lending their photographs, many of the artists and curators also assisted Robert Cahn and me with personal interviews and research information to help us in developing the essays included here. Apart from the contributing artists, many of whom met with me, I would like to thank the following individuals, institutions, galleries, and collections, as well as their staffs: Marni Sandweiss, of the Amon Carter Museum; the Colorado Historical Society; the Western History Department of the Denver Public Library; Graham Howe, photographic consultant to the Graham Nash Collection; Grapestake Gallery; the G. Ray Hawkins Gallery; the Imogen Cunningham Trust; Jon Freshour and Gerald Maddox, of the Library of Congress; Light Gallery; the Lunn Gallery; Richard Rudisill, of the Museum of New Mexico; Christina Rudy Smith, of the National Archives; L. Thomas Frye, Therese Heyman, and Tom Curran, of the Oakland Museum; Peter Bunnell, of the Art Museum, Princeton University; the Robert Freidus Gallery; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the Simon Lowinsky Gallery; Hilda Bohem, of the Research Library Special Collections, University of California, Los Angeles; Rita Bottoms, of the Special Collections, University Library, University of California, Santa Cruz; and Jack Gyer, curator of the National Park Service's Yosemite Collection. Their patience and trust in lending us valuable prints have made possible both this exhibition and this book.

Although I did not draw works from the following sources, their help and cooperation were essential in ensuring the completeness and accuracy of my research. I am equally grateful to all of them for offering freely of their valuable time and advice.

They are: the California Historical Society; Jim Enyeart, of the Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona; Charis Weston; Jim Alinder and David Featherstone, of the Friends of Photography; Weston Neaf, of the Metropolitan Museum of Art; Peter Palmquist; John Szarkowski, of the Museum of Modern Art; David Haverstich, of the Smithsonian Institution; Richard Phillips, of Stanford University Library; Anita Mozley, of Stanford University Museum of Art; Stephen White's Gallery; the Susan Spiritus Gallery; the Daniels, owners of the Print, A Photographic Gallery; the United States Geological Survey; the Weston Gallery; and the Witkin Gallery. Thanks are also due those artists who either sent me work to review or contacted me but whose photographs ultimately were not included in the exhibition. Seeing their work was extremely helpful in defining my own perspective on the show. I regret that all could not be included, and trust that the artists understand that choices were dictated by the scope of the exhibition rather than by a specific evaluation of their work.

I am also grateful to Dick Russell, curator of archives for the National Park Service, Harpers Ferry. He was my first contact when the research began, and he introduced me to many of the Washington collections that proved to be valuable sources of vintage works.

Polaroid Corporation provided me with an SX-70 camera and a supply of film that I used to record the hundreds of images I viewed. This method was invaluable in documenting and keeping track of the prints, their titles, and the various collections from which they were drawn. Without this visual aid, the task of researching and then choosing the works to be used would have been a nightmare, and I am indebted to Polaroid for their assistance.

Jim Mahoney and John Widener of the Smithsonian Office of Exhibits Central coordinated all framing and crating. William Zamprelli of Eagle Transfer provided all of the critical care and handling during the transportation of the exhibit, and Norman

Newman of Great Northern Brokerage skillfully handled our very complex insurance needs. I wish to thank them all.

In closing, I would like especially to dedicate all my curatorial efforts to John Humphrey, former curator of photography at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, who, during our collaboration on an unrelated project in 1976, encouraged me to pursue interesting ideas such as the one that resulted in this book and who taught me the mechanisms of proposal writing. His kind tutelage at that time has since acted as an incentive for me to become involved with further investigations and, moreover, has given me the strength to proceed, to see the value of the end product beyond the often forbidding walls of forms and paperwork.

ROBERT GLENN KETCHUM

A NUMBER of people made significant contributions as I delved into the interlaced histories of the national parks and American photography. I am indebted to the National Park Foundation president, John Bryant, and to Robert Ketchum for their encouragement and overall editorial guidance. Photographic historians Peter Palmquist, Therese Thau Heyman, and Nanette Sexton Richman and photographers Ansel Adams, Eliot Porter, and Dave Bohn gave generously of their time, providing valuable background information and reviewing the manuscript to ensure historical and technical accuracy. I am also grateful to Jack Gyer, Andrea Gray, David Brower, and Eleanor Caponigro for helping with the necessary research and later for reviewing parts of the manuscript. And finally, I gratefully acknowledge the work of my partner and collaborator, Patricia L. Cahn, who was involved in the project from the start, shared in the research, assisted in the interviewing, and spent many hours developing and editing the manuscript.

ROBERT CAHN

*Evolving Together: Photography
and the National Park Idea*

ROBERT CAHN

HISTORY credits America with many contributions, from microtechnology to jazz, assembly-line production and plain American ingenuity to the hamburger, the hot dog and baseball. But one of the stars shining most brightly on the American crown is a unique idea that has been exported throughout the world over the century or more since it was conceived. It is a concept that is distinctly part of the democratic tradition — so much so that it is all too often taken for granted nowadays by the very people who cherish it and whose support is needed to keep it alive. It is the idea of public ownership of and shared access to the nation's outstanding scenic and natural areas, the idea known as "the national park."

The national park idea did not gain acceptance immediately or without a mighty struggle. The colonists arrived in the New World firmly imbued with the Lockean ethic that considered stewardship of the land to be akin to stewardship of capital—they saw land as a commodity to be owned and converted to whatever use might best suit the economic interests of the individual owner. True, the forefathers also brought along the tradition of the commons, the small public green available to all the citizens of a village or city. But it was the aristocracy who owned and controlled the expanses of forest, the scenic hills and vales. The common folk were granted access to the land only when it was not in use for hunting, and always under the sanction of the gentry who owned it.

The Native Americans, who were eventually dislocated and relegated to reservations, had a far different tradition regarding the land, which they believed could not be owned or sold by any person. The American Indians sometimes fought among themselves over territorial rights, but for the most part they lived in harmony with the earth, a sacred element in their religion. They could call a lake "*the smile of the Great Spirit*"; they looked to the earth as the source of all life and regarded themselves as fellow members of the biotic community of land, beast, tree, plant, and water.

In their rush to develop the new land, however, the settlers viewed nature as an obstacle to be reshaped and overcome. The apparent abundance of natural resources bred practices that emphasized speed and efficiency with little regard for the effects on the future of the land and the resources. The federal government owned most of the land, but only until such time as citizens could stake their claims to it for agriculture, logging, mining, transportation corridors, or settlement. According to the prevailing

ethic, the quicker the development and westward movement, the greater the benefit to the nation and society. Following this philosophy, loggers stripped forests with little concern for the biological or cultural factors, and gold miners' hydraulic mining and dredging equipment laid waste to mountainsides and river valleys.

Even in those days of unbridled exploitation in the name of progress, however, a few voices were urging a new ethic of preserving some of the land for both the present and future generations. One of the first, artist-explorer George Catlin, noted in his 1832 journal that the abundant buffalo and their habitat in the wilderness of South Dakota might become extinct. "*Many are the rudenesses and wilds in nature's works which are destined to fall before the deadly axe and desolating hand of cultivating man,*" Catlin wrote. The buffalo and the wilderness might not disappear if they were "*preserved in their pristine beauty and wilderness, in a magnificent park, where the world could see for ages to come, the native Indian in his classic attire, galloping his wild horse . . . amid the fleeing herds of elks and buffaloes. What a beautiful and thrilling specimen for America to preserve and hold up to the view of her refined citizens and the world, in future ages! A nation's park, containing man and beast, in all the wild freshness of their nature's beauty.*"

Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote in 1844: "*The interminable forests should become graceful parks, for use and delight.*" And in 1858, his friend Henry David Thoreau wrote: "*Why should not we . . . have our national preserves . . . in which the bear and panther, and some even of the hunter race, may still exist, and not be 'civilized off the face of the earth' . . . for inspiration and our true re-creation? Or should we, like villains, grub them all up for poaching on our own national domains?*"

A few years later, across the continent from Emerson and Thoreau's New England, a small group of men in California began to talk of ways to give practical reality to the idea of preserving land and beast in an area of scenic magnificence called Yosemite, and in a place nearby, where Giant Sequoia trees of almost unimaginable age and hugeness stood in a large grove.

The narrow, forested Yosemite Valley is surrounded by huge granite cliffs that rise about three thousand feet above. Thundering waterfalls plummet to the valley below, where streams and rivers flow through gentle meadows. The Indians who summered in the valley had been driven out in 1851, and a few settlers had moved in during the early 1850s. They built a small hotel, planted an orchard and looked forward to development

of the valley. There were those who regarded the valley's scenic grandeur as a marvel to be exploited. And, in 1853, two promoters saw in the nearby Calaveras grove of Giant Sequoias a chance to cash in on one of nature's wonders. They selected a tree 315 feet in height and 61 feet in circumference, a tree that had stood since before Columbus landed in the New World. They stripped the tree to a height of 116 feet and shipped the bark to the East Coast, where they had it put back together in the form of a tree trunk and featured it as a curiosity in a show. The scheme was a financial failure, both in the eastern United States and in London, where the reassembled tree trunk was subsequently shown. People refused to believe the huge replica had been made out of the bark of one tree and not out of many. The rape of the ancient tree filled some observers with revulsion, inspired protests that were published by the press, and strengthened the resolve of people concerned with preserving the Yosemite area.

Word of Yosemite's scenic majesty continued to trickle back to the East Coast as various members of expeditions tried to describe it. *Country Gentleman* magazine published an article about it in 1856. And Horace Greeley returned from a visit in 1859, hailing Yosemite Valley as "the most unique and majestic of nature's marvels," and also voicing the hope that the State of California would provide for the safety of the Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias.

Before long, Yosemite Valley was being spoken of throughout the country as one of the wonders of the world. Its fame grew partly through newspaper and magazine articles, partly through paintings by Albert Bierstadt and other artists, and partly—perhaps primarily—through photographs. For at this very time, new photographic processes were making it possible for photographers, particularly Carleton E. Watkins, Eadweard Muybridge, and Charles Leander Weed, to capture a sense of the magnificence of the Yosemite landscape.

IN THE 1850s advances in photographic technology and a growing awareness of nature's aesthetic value converged, and landscape photography became inextricably interwoven with the growth of the national park idea.

Until the introduction of the collodion wet-plate process in 1851, professional photographers did not often venture far from their portrait studios. Daguerreotype photography involved ex-

pense and difficulties that made it impractical in the field, and prints could not be made from the metal plate. The collodion process, technically demanding and cumbersome though it was, allowed a much shorter exposure time, and since the result was a glass-plate negative, an unlimited number of paper prints could be obtained.

Galleries and photographic studios displayed the prints—6½ by 8½ inches and larger—and those who could afford the price purchased them. When stereoscopic photographs, made with the collodion wet-plate and a camera with two parallel lenses were introduced, Yosemite Valley and other western landscapes became favorite subjects. These small pairs of images, seen through a stereopticon, a device that produced a three-dimensional effect, were inexpensive to produce and were used as promotional materials by railroad companies and steamship lines, in addition to being merchandised widely by photographic studios. Robert Vance's photographic galleries in Northern California, for instance, featured stereographs and prints by Weed immediately after Weed had made the first known photographs of Yosemite in 1859.

A Vance gallery, by happenstance, also may have been the place where the best known of the early Yosemite photographers learned his craft. In 1854 Carleton Watkins agreed to take care of one of Vance's studios for a few days when the regular daguerrean portrait technician suddenly left. According to some versions of the story, Watkins knew nothing whatever about photography, and Vance instructed him in the rudiments, leaving him to carry on as best he could. But Watkins took to photography immediately, and Vance hired him as a regular studio technician.

Two years after Weed's visit to Yosemite, Watkins was ready to make his first foray. He had seen in Weed's photographs—each about 11 by 15 inches in size—the desirability of making much larger images. The only way to do so was to use bigger collodion plates, since in those days there was no way to make enlargements from a negative. So Watkins had a camera made that would accept 18-by-22-inch glass plates.

Getting to Yosemite was no simple task even without a supply of the mammoth plates, each of which weighed about four pounds. The road ended at Mariposa, and from there it was an arduous fifty-mile journey into the valley. When Watkins made later trips to Yosemite, it took a dozen mules to carry his mammoth glass plates, his darkroom tent, cameras, and the other

paraphernalia involved in the collodion wet-plate process.

The process itself would overwhelm today's photographer. When the desired scene was chosen and composed and the lens in the large camera focused, the photographer began an exacting series of chores. First he would take a perfect piece of glass that had been cut to specifications, clean the glass carefully with alcohol and flannel, remove any remaining particles with a soft brush, and from then on handle the glass in such a way that his fingers did not touch the surface. Then he had to coat it with collodion—that is, pour a little on the glass and tilt the glass this way and that until the sticky fluid had evenly covered the entire surface. After waiting for the collodion to set to just the right tacky consistency, he had to dip the plate (holding it carefully by the edge) in silver nitrate to sensitize it. About five minutes later, he would drain the plate, then put it in the holder, place the holder in the camera, and make the exposure of up to ten minutes. *Immediately* he would take the plate to a tent that served as a traveling field darkroom and apply a developing solution, again tilting the plate to spread the solution. Then he had to rinse the plate in water, and place it in hyposulphite to fix the image permanently. Next he had to rinse the plate again in *clean* water, then let it dry. Finally he had to varnish the plate by the same tipping motion used in applying the collodion and the developing solution. When one views photographs made by Watkins and others, obviously taken from ledges or precipices at the end of a long climb, the magnitude of their physical as well as artistic achievement becomes apparent.

Watkins also carried a stereo camera and made a series of about one hundred stereographs of Yosemite. When the writer Oliver Wendell Holmes saw them, he remarked that they were “. . . vigorous, in the foreground, delicately distinct in the distance, in a perfection of art which compares with the finest European work.” Holmes (father of the famous jurist) was the leading photography critic of the time, and he praised Watkins's work warmly in an article in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1863. About the same time, the prestigious Goupil's Art Gallery in New York City featured Watkins's work in its windows. Watkins—and Yosemite—were becoming famous.

THE GROWING public recognition photography was bringing to Yosemite came at a propitious time for a group of Californians who had been trying to gain protection for the

area. In 1864 they were joined by a man of national reputation and powerful connections, who had just arrived in California.

Frederick Law Olmsted—the nation's leading landscape architect, who was already widely known for his work with Calvert Vaux in designing New York City's Central Park—arrived in California in September 1863 to manage the Mariposa Estate, a large mining property about thirty miles southwest of Yosemite. Olmsted journeyed into the valley soon after his arrival and hailed it as “*the greatest glory of Nature.*” He enthusiastically enlisted in the cause of preserving Yosemite and the Mariposa Grove of Big Trees.

One of the leaders of the group was Israel Ward Raymond, California representative for the Central American Steamship Transit Company of New York. Raymond wrote to California Senator John Conness in March 1864 to urge protection for Yosemite, and he sent along a package of large Watkins photographs to give the senator “*some idea of its character.*” Raymond noted that the summits were mostly bare granite rocks and the surface covered only by pine trees, “*and can never be of much value.*” And he wrote: “*I think it important to obtain the proprietorship soon, to prevent occupation and especially to preserve the trees in the valley from destruction and that it may be accepted by Congress . . . at its present session . . .*”

Raymond outlined rough boundaries for the valley as well as for about four square miles of the Mariposa Grove, and included draft language for legislation that would show that the lands “. . . are granted for public use, resort and recreation and are inalienable forever . . .”

Senator Conness immediately asked the General Land Office to prepare a bill. On March 28, 1864—at the height of the Civil War—he introduced the legislation. It is believed, though the story has not been authenticated, that Conness passed around to his Senate colleagues the magnificent Watkins photographs. In Senate debate, Conness said that the bill had come to him from gentlemen in California “*of fortune, of taste and of refinement.*” He referred to the notorious incident of the stripping of the Calaveras tree. And though he conceded that the bill made no provision for protection, he said he had been assured that the state would take good care of the land. The bill, enacted by Congress and signed by President Abraham Lincoln on June 29, 1864, contained the stipulation that the State of California accept the grant “*upon the express conditions that the premises shall be held for public use, resort and recreation; shall be inalienable for all time.*”

The law called for establishment of a commission to manage the area; Olmsted was appointed to the eight-member group and acted as its leader. He remained in California only a few more months before returning to New York to complete the planning and development of Central Park. But in those few months he produced a report defining the policy that should govern the management of Yosemite and the Mariposa Grove and, in late 1865, presented the report to the commission and subsequently to the State of California.

Olmsted reached deep into philosophical principles to undergird the ideas presented in the report. He wrote that a nation whose founding fathers guaranteed citizens the right to the pursuit of happiness has the duty to provide places for the occasional contemplation of natural scenes, "*especially if this contemplation occurs in connection with relief from ordinary cares.*" He pointed out that in the Old World only the rich could afford to own places of great natural beauty or had the leisure to enjoy them. The aristocrats assumed that the working classes were too burdened by toil and possessed too little refinement to be able to enjoy the beauty of art or nature to any great degree. Thus the enjoyment of the choicest natural scenes in the Old World became a monopoly of the rich, and the masses were excluded. In the ornate style of the day, Olmsted wrote that without means taken by government, "*places favorable in scenery to the recreation of the mind and body will be closed against the great body of the people.*" Government, he wrote, should not only preserve these places from monopoly by individuals but provide for their use by all the people. "*The establishment by government of great public grounds for the free enjoyment of the people under certain circumstances, is thus justified and enforced as a political duty.*"

"*It is in accordance with . . . the destiny of the New World and the duty of the republican government that Congress enacted that the Yosemite should be held, guarded and managed for the free use of the whole body of the people forever,*" Olmsted wrote. But he added that care of the park and responsibility for admitting strangers from all parts of the world should be a duty of the individual state. So while his words eloquently outlined the theory of federal responsibility in preserving the land, he apparently felt that considering the problems of the Civil War, it was more expedient for the state to take care of it. Several years would pass before it was recognized that there should be parks that were truly national, backed with the federal authority necessary both to establish and protect them and to provide the means for their

enjoyment by all citizens.

Olmsted's specific policy guidance for management of Yosemite and the Mariposa Grove included "*two considerations which should not escape attention. First: the value of the district in its present condition as a museum of natural science and the danger, indeed the certainty, that without care many of the species of plants now flourishing upon it will be lost and many interesting objects be defaced or obscured if not destroyed. . . . Second: . . . it should be remembered that in permitting the sacrifice of anything that would be of the slightest value to future visitors to the convenience, bad taste, playfulness, carelessness, or wanton destructiveness of present visitors, we probably yield in each case the interest of uncounted millions to the selfishness of a few individuals.*"

"*It is but sixteen years since the Yosemite was first seen by a white man,*" Olmsted continued, "*several visitors have since made a journey of several thousand miles at large cost to see it, and notwithstanding the difficulties which now interpose, hundreds resort to it annually. Before many years if proper facilities are offered, these hundreds will become thousands and in a century the whole number of visitors will be counted by the millions.* [One hundred years later, in 1965, Yosemite recorded 1.6 million visits.] *An injury to the scenery so slight that it may be unheeded by any visitor now, will be one of deplorable magnitude when its effect upon each visitor's enjoyment is multiplied by these millions. But again, the slight harm which the few hundred visitors of this year might do, if no care were taken to prevent it, would not be slight if it should be repeated by millions.*"

Thus Olmsted correctly foresaw one of the great dangers confronting national parks in the late twentieth century—overuse of the more popular areas.

Although the Olmsted plan was helpful in the early management of the park, and enunciated, more clearly than ever before, the basis for national parks, the report was not published. It somehow dropped from sight entirely until 1952, when it was unearthed by Olmsted's biographer Laura Wood Roper.

Nevertheless, a revolutionary principle had been established by Congress when it passed the 1864 law. For the first time, a large tract of land had been protected from settlement, and declared to be for the use of all the people permanently and inalienably. In legislation formally accepting the grant and the conditions, the State of California made it a penal offense to commit deprivations on the land, appointed a guardian, and appropriated two thousand dollars for administering the park.

Without the protection of law, parcels of land could have

been claimed by homesteaders or others under the federal land laws then in effect, and the valley could have undergone development that would have rendered it difficult, if not impossible, to preserve it later. Indeed, one enterprising citizen had tried unsuccessfully in 1860 to organize a lottery scheme to raffle off titles to the land in the valley. As it was, Yosemite Valley in 1865 was by no means in the pristine condition demanded of national parks today. It would take many years and another act of Congress to get the farms and shacks—and even a dairy—out of the valley. Nor did enactment of the 1864 law and the appointment of its guardian afford much practical protection from those who considered it their right to cut down trees and make other harmful changes in the valley. But Yosemite's remoteness served to protect it to some extent. Relatively few people cared to venture beyond Clark's Station (now known as Wawona) over the horse trails that afforded the only access until 1874. As of 1864, when the law was passed, fewer than two thousand non-Indian people had ever set foot in the valley.

By 1867, however, photography had carried Yosemite's fame to Europe. That year international awards for landscape photography at the Paris Exposition went to Watkins's work and to photographs credited to Thomas Houseworth. Proprietor of a San Francisco photographic studio and store, Houseworth aggressively merchandised the work of various California photographers, seldom crediting them by name. Circumstances and timing suggest that it was Weed's work that was shown in the 1867 Paris Exposition. And in 1873 Watkins and Houseworth won medals at the International Exposition in Vienna, along with another Yosemite photographer, Eadweard Muybridge.

Muybridge, though a native of England, lived and worked in the San Francisco area for a number of years, operating a bookstore in addition to making photographs of a great variety of California subjects. The photographic world knows him primarily for the pioneering work he did in photographing the bodily movement of men and animals. But during the relatively brief period from 1867 to 1872, he threw himself into photographing the Yosemite landscape with something akin to passion.

A man of gigantic ego and drive, Muybridge approached photography with considerable intensity. The timing of his work and his choice of unusual vantage points (he even had himself lowered by rope over a precipice to achieve a particular angle) suggest that he was inspired at least to some extent by a desire to outshine his contemporaries, especially Watkins, who

had achieved such wide recognition. With his technical inventiveness, Muybridge used a separate negative to superimpose clouds onto some of his prints, achieving effects that were unique in the day of the wet-plate. The collodion process was extremely sensitive to blue and left skies overexposed, with clouds usually invisible. Muybridge later devised what he called a "*horizontal sky shade*," a device that fitted onto the camera and reduced the exposure on the upper part of the image so that clouds were visible on the negative.

Muybridge adopted the signature "Helios," which he applied with a flourish to his negatives in order to protect them from the plagiarism being practiced by Houseworth and some other entrepreneurs. Even without the signature, however, the technical inventiveness, striking angles, and sheer drama of his scenes sometimes distinguished them from those of his contemporaries.

Yosemite had been under federally mandated state protection for five years when the concept of a truly national park began to take shape. Explorers and scientists surveying the Wyoming Territory were overwhelmed by the unique geology, fantastic scenery, and abundance and variety of wildlife that they saw in the region known as Yellowstone. The specific suggestion for preserving the vast Yellowstone region as a national park has been credited to both David E. Folsom and Cornelius Hedges, two members of an 1870 expedition into Yellowstone led by Montana Territory Surveyor-General Henry D. Washburn. Folsom suggested to General Washburn in August 1870 that the area be reserved for public benefit. And at a campfire beside the Firehole River the following month, Hedges expressed the opinion (as recorded in a diary by one of the party) "*that there ought to be no private ownership of any portion of that region, but the whole ought to be set apart as a great National Park, and that each one of us ought to make an effort to have this accomplished.*"

Hedges and Washburn wrote articles for newspapers describing the Yellowstone country and the need to save it. *Scribner's Monthly* carried an article by expedition member Nathaniel Langford, who also delivered a series of lectures before distinguished East Coast groups. The audience at one lecture included Dr. Ferdinand Vandiveer Hayden, director of the U.S. Geological and Geographical Survey of the Territories, who had led a survey party near Yellowstone in 1870. Hayden was so impressed by the public's obvious interest and the scientific community's

curiosity about Yellowstone that he petitioned Congress for, and received, forty thousand dollars to carry out an official survey of the area during 1871.

Hayden realized that most people assumed the Washburn expedition members' articles and lectures grossly exaggerated the curiosities of the bubbling mudpots, steaming fumaroles and towering geysers; the scenic beauty of the upper and lower falls in the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone; the great inland sea of Yellowstone Lake; the canyons and gorges and mountains and forests; the herds of buffalo, elk and deer. So Hayden decided to get plenty of graphic evidence. He hired several artists and photographers, including the noted painter Thomas Moran and William Henry Jackson, a photographer who had accompanied the 1870 Hayden survey, though not as an employee. Jackson had taken a number of photographs during that survey, but the party did not get into Yellowstone at that time.

Jackson was a vigorous, colorful individual whose past included brief service in the Civil War and a stint as driver of an ox team in a wagon train heading west in 1866, where he dreamed of striking it rich at silver mining. He kept voluminous diaries and had a flair for drawing. He had picked up knowledge of photography, and for a time owned a portrait studio in Omaha with his brother. But Jackson had felt restless making studio portraits and often went around the countryside taking photographs outdoors, including some of the first portraits made of Plains Indians. When the transcontinental railroad was finished in 1869, Jackson and a colleague, A. C. Hull, began to ride the Union Pacific trains, making and selling portraits and group pictures, and photographing scenes along the way. It was during this time that Hayden had given Jackson permission to accompany the 1870 Survey.

For the 1871 Survey, as a salaried member and with some experience photographing in the wilds of Wyoming, Jackson outfitted himself with a 6½-by-8½-inch camera, a stereo camera, portable darkroom, chemicals and enough glass for four hundred large wet-plates. A valued member of his entourage was "Hypo," a rotund little mule with cropped ears who "*was almost as indispensable to me as his namesake, hyposulphite of soda, was to dark-room chemistry,*" wrote Jackson. "*Carrying my cameras, tripod, dark box, chemicals, water keg, and a day's supply of plates, all loaded in big, brightly-painted rawhide containers called parfleches, Hypo was good for as many miles as my horse was, and together we covered an enormous amount of ground off the road from the wagon party.*"

Jackson and Moran became close friends and often went off together on sorties to distant places. Moran took a keen interest in Jackson's photography, helped him with composition, and sometimes scouted out views in advance. Moran made sketches and watercolors, and left the expedition early to return east to make paintings from some of the sketches. Jackson stayed until the end, often producing as many as twenty negatives a day. On many occasions, his vantage point afforded no space for setting up his processing equipment. It took real stamina, once he had focused his camera, to trudge or climb some distance back to his black box, sensitize a plate, hurry back to the camera while the plate was still moist, make the exposure, return to the dark box and develop the latent image. Making each photograph took thirty to forty-five minutes.

Jackson returned to Washington in the winter of 1871 to make prints. Hayden was in Washington too, working with those who were trying to get Congress to pass a bill making Yellowstone an extensive public park, and he distributed Jackson prints among the congressmen to illustrate its wonders. The survey's geological displays were laid out in the Capitol rotunda with Jackson's photographs and Moran's watercolors forming a backdrop behind them. Congress later purchased Moran's famous 7-by-12-foot canvas "The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone" and hung it in the Senate lobby.

Hayden and other Yellowstone advocates were expecting heavy opposition to their proposal to preserve two million acres of the Wyoming Territory as a national park. Permanently closing to settlement or development such a large expanse of the public domain ran counter to the established policy of transferring public lands to private ownership with all due speed. And because it was part of a territory, the land could not simply be granted to the state for protection the way Yosemite had been granted to California. But when the Yellowstone bill was introduced in both houses of Congress in December 1871, there was, surprisingly, little opposition. Newspapers and magazines supported the bill, having been sold on its virtues by Hayden and the other early explorers. Lumber companies may have been too busy in the Great Lakes area to be concerned over Wyoming. And no rail line was available to take timber out of Yellowstone. Miners knew of no minerals; water-power developers had not yet become interested. And prospective settlers remained wary of the area because of its remoteness and rugged terrain. One senator, Cornelius Cole of California, expressed grave doubts

about the bill, saying in floor debate that "*the geysers will remain, no matter where the ownership of the land may be, and I do not know why settlers should be excluded from a tract of land forty miles square . . . I do not see the reason or propriety of setting apart a large tract of land of that kind in the Territories of the United States for a public park.*" Nevertheless, the bill passed both houses late in February 1872, and President Ulysses Grant promptly signed it into law on March 1.

The Yellowstone Act provided that an area of more than two million acres "*is hereby reserved and withdrawn from settlement, occupancy, or sale under the laws of the United States, and dedicated and set apart as a public park or pleasuring-ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people.*" It directed the Secretary of the Interior to publish regulations to provide "*for the preservation, from injury or despoliation, of all timber, mineral deposits, natural curiosities, or wonders within said park, and their retention in the natural condition.*" Hunting, settling, and cutting of timber were prohibited. The term "national park" did not appear in the act, and many years would pass before the area could be made easily accessible to visitors or given adequate protection. Nevertheless, the Yellowstone Act constituted the legal beginning of federal establishment and administration of national parks for all the nation's people for all time.

THE PRECEDENT had been set. And it came none too soon, for in that era, when the government was promising a homesteading share of the public domain for every American family, the nation's natural crown jewels might have been broken up into privately owned fragments. In the very year Yellowstone was established, one attempt was made that harked back to the landed gentry of England. The 12,571-foot-high Dunraven Mountain in what is now Rocky Mountain National Park serves as a reminder of the British nobleman Windham Thomas Wyndham-Quinn, the Earl of Dunraven, who bought up the area where the town of Estes Park, Colorado, now stands, plus part of what later became the national park.

Dunraven had visited the area several times on hunting trips, and decided in 1874 to assure that the paradise would become a private preserve for his use alone. Using Denver drunks and unemployed drifters to sign homestead claims for one-hundred-and-sixty-acre parcels, Dunraven's agent circumvented the homestead law and obtained title to about fifteen thousand acres.

His Lordship only occasionally visited his domain, but he nonetheless had a large ranch developed, and even built a hotel. Despite the local people's open hostility to his aristocratic methods, he managed to hang on to most of the land until 1907, when lawsuits and other pressures finally forced him to sell.

THE EXTENSIVE activities of the U.S. Geological Survey and the Army Corps of Engineers in the nineteenth century presented great opportunities for the advancement of landscape photography, and many of the photographers did their work in areas that later became national parks and national monuments. But it is virtually impossible to document the extent to which photographers' work played a part in getting legislation passed to establish parks except in the case of the 1872 Yellowstone Act. However, that does not mean that photography's role in the growth of the national park system during the early years can be dismissed. Certainly, publication of photographs in the survey reports, and their availability to the media, were factors in building public support for preserving the areas. And the photographs were undoubtedly used by conservation advocates. Of course, many survey photographers concentrated on rock formations and other geological features to the extent that in most cases these photographs amounted to no more than uninspired documentation. But the surveys provided opportunities, available through no other means, for the handful of men touched with true artistry to get into remote regions of unique landscapes and scenic magnificence. For men such as Timothy H. O'Sullivan, William Bell, John K. Hillers and A. J. Russell, as well as for Watkins, Muybridge, and Jackson, the surveys were a chance to polish techniques, develop artistic vision, and earn recognition as the premier landscape photographers of their day.

Jackson's association with Yellowstone and with a number of other areas destined to become parts of the national park system is the most extensive and covers the longest time span of all the early landscape photographers. After spending the winter of 1872 in Washington, D.C., making prints for the Geological Survey, Jackson returned to Hayden's survey the following summer and commanded an independent photographic unit of five men. With a newly devised 11-by-14-inch camera that required a dark tent instead of his accustomed portable dark box, he struggled over hazardous terrain southwest of Yellowstone

to an altitude of eleven thousand feet to take the first photographs ever made of the Teton Range. He later photographed in the Jackson Hole area that was to become part of Grand Teton National Park.

In 1874, having heard about some ancient ruins in the canyons at Mesa Verde, Jackson made a trip into the then remote southern Colorado hills that would become a national park in 1906, and was the first to photograph some of the cliff dwellings there. But Jackson did not reach the major areas of Cliff Palace village ruins or Wetherill Mesa. In subsequent years he photographed the archaeological, geological, and scenic features in Canyon de Chelly and Chaco Canyon, both of which became national monuments. In 1878 Jackson visited Yosemite with his camera. And at the age of eighty-six, Jackson was on hand to photograph the dedication of Grand Teton National Park in 1929.

When Lieutenant George M. Wheeler launched his 1871 Survey West of the One Hundredth Meridian, he hired Timothy H. O'Sullivan as his photographer. O'Sullivan, the son of Irish immigrants, had learned photography as a lad while working in the New York studio of Mathew Brady. And O'Sullivan, like his famous teacher, spent the Civil War years photographing the Army of the Potomac on the battlefields. After the war he worked three years with Clarence King's survey party in the wilds of Nevada, Utah, Wyoming, and Colorado.

O'Sullivan had little education and left few written records. He apparently was willing to take whatever risks were necessary in order to make photographs in what must have been extremely difficult and hazardous conditions. When the expedition ventured into California's Death Valley, it was so hot that the photographic chemicals boiled. And while struggling up the Colorado River, the party's boat capsized, though O'Sullivan managed to save his plates from destruction. O'Sullivan made the first photographs ever taken in the Grand Canyon. Although other expeditions had preceded them in the canyon, Wheeler and his group evidently were the first to include a photographer. Not many of O'Sullivan's images of that part of the trip remain, however. After surviving the boat incident and other rigors of the trip, most of the plates were shattered during shipment to Washington.

It was in 1873 that O'Sullivan produced what some call his masterpiece, one of the first photographs of the ancient White House Ruin in Canyon de Chelly. The work he did in Canyon de Chelly remained the standard against which other photo-

graphic renderings of the subject were measured for a century.

Of course, photographers not connected to the surveys were doing important landscape work, too. One of these was Peter Britt, who operated primarily in southern Oregon. Considered one of the outstanding photographers of the era, Britt was best known for his portraiture and social documentary of the early frontier and mining days in the Northwest. One of his infrequent ventures into landscape work, however, produced the first photograph ever taken of Crater Lake.

Britt, who lived eighty-seven miles away in Jacksonville, Oregon, had accompanied expeditions to the lake in 1868 and 1869, but had been unable to make photographs during those trips because of bad weather. Determined to record the scene, he returned in 1874, his wagon loaded with two hundred pounds of photographic equipment. He and his party spent five days working their way to the rim of the crater, the final three miles on a trail blazed during the 1869 expedition. They found the lake again shrouded in fog and mist. They waited three long days for better conditions and were ready to give up and break camp when the weather suddenly cleared. Britt set up his equipment and made at least two exposures with an 8-by-10-inch camera in addition to taking some pictures with his stereo camera. These artistically outstanding and dramatic portrayals of the mountain-rimmed lake, especially the stereographs, were sold throughout the nation. William Gladstone Steel, the publisher and conservationist who waged a seventeen-year campaign to have Crater Lake protected as a national park, took the Britt photographs to Washington in an effort to build support among members of Congress and the press.

In Yosemite, meanwhile, photographers continued to work in the awesome valley, and their widely distributed prints and stereographs added to its fame. George Fiske, who had been one of Watkins's assistants, received considerable recognition when he produced the first photographs of a snow-clad Yosemite after spending the winter of 1879-80 in the valley. He lived and worked in Yosemite Valley for forty years, his intimate knowledge of the area producing a great variety of photographs that were sold by agents in San Francisco. Many of his images were also used to illustrate books, including *Yosemite and the Big Trees of California* by E. S. Dennison and *In the Heart of the Sierras* by J. M. Hutchings. Another of the early photographers, J. J. Reilly, was one of those making stereographs in Yosemite, and he was the first to open a photographic gallery in the valley. In 1871

Reilly photographed for John Muir on a three-week trip into parts of the Yosemite area, including the upper Tuolumne River, Lake Tenaya, and Cathedral Valley. A number of others also were producing pictures of this magnificent high country, and as its scenic grandeur became widely known, Muir and other conservationists moved to preserve it. In 1890 these citizens succeeded in getting the U.S. Congress to designate two million acres of federal land around the Yosemite Valley as a national park. The 1890 act also provided for the State of California to return Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove to federal ownership, although it took the state fifteen years to comply.

IT WAS 1880 before the cumbersome collodion wet-plate began to be replaced by a dry-plate that reduced exposure time and permitted a greater latitude of tone in the negative. And in the decades that followed, innovations in lenses, papers, processes, and cameras were introduced in quick succession, greatly easing the technical difficulties under which photographers worked. The twentieth century brought further technical developments that made possible effects and quality that would have been out of the question for a Watkins or a Muybridge or an O'Sullivan. Smaller cameras, better lenses, and faster films gave the photographer greater mobility and a much wider range of light conditions under which he could work. Many landscape photographers today, however, still prefer to work with tripods and the large format sizes, the 4-by-5-inch, 5-by-7-inch, 8-by-10-inch or even larger-view cameras.

The new century also saw a change in the symbiotic relationship between the American photographer and the national parks as both the park idea and the art of photography matured. The two remained strongly linked, but, while still playing an important role, landscape photography became less identifiable among the many factors contributing to the fast-growing national park system. At the same time, the parks themselves were beginning to repay their photographic allies, for as economic development brought changes to formerly unscathed areas, the landscape photographers became more dependent on the pristine natural settings protected within the national park system as places to exercise their freedom of expression with the camera. And they continued, in alliance with the conservation movement, to exert an influence as their works were reproduced in the media and shown in galleries. In many cases the photographs portrayed

natural areas still needing protection, or national parks being threatened by forces that would mar their unspoiled beauty.

By 1916 thirty-seven national parks and monuments had been set aside. Each was operated independently, with no central assistance or policy guidance for planning, development, protection, or visitor services. All had insufficient funds and personnel. Yellowstone was run by U.S. Army troops. And the official recognition of Yosemite as a national park did not prevent construction in 1913 of the Hetch Hetchy Dam inside the park, flooding an entire valley, to increase San Francisco's water supply.

After a six-year fight in Congress, the national park areas finally gained the status for which conservationists had long pleaded when Congress passed the National Park Act of 1916, authorizing establishment of the National Park Service. The act also set down in law the purpose of national parks in language that has never been improved upon: "*To conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.*" That purpose, however, has resulted in a dilemma for the National Park Service—how to make some of the most popular parks available for the enjoyment of all the hordes of visitors who want to use them and still leave the parks unharmed for the future.

BY COINCIDENCE, the year 1916 also marked the first visit to Yosemite National Park of a fourteen-year-old San Francisco youth carrying a No. 1 Box Brownie camera, a lad destined to become the foremost landscape photographer of the twentieth century and the photographer more closely linked with national parks than any other in history—Ansel Adams.

After reading James Hutchings's *In the Heart of the Sierras*, with its illustrations made from the work of Fiske and other early photographers, young Adams persuaded his parents to spend the family's 1916 vacation in Yosemite Valley. Adams instantly lost his heart to Yosemite. His experiences in the park and his growing ability to express himself artistically with the camera eventually turned him away from a career in music (he had seemed destined to become a professional pianist) to a life devoted to photography. As he later recalled, "*That first impression of the valley—white water, azaleas, cool fir caverns, tall pines and solid oaks, cliffs rising to undreamed-of heights, the poignant sounds*

and smells of the Sierra . . . —was a culmination of experience so intense as to be almost painful. From that day in 1916, my life has been colored and modulated by the great earth-gesture of the Sierra.”

The next year Adams returned to Yosemite with a better camera and an experienced mountaineer to teach him wilderness lore. And he has gone back every year to take photographs, hike, lead Sierra Club outings, and, since 1940, to lead photography workshops there during the summer.

He became a familiar figure, hiking into the high country with tripod in hand, a camera and lenses in his backpack, and a mule carrying his large-view camera, holders, and supply of plates, film and accoutrements. After a period of working in the pictorial style then in vogue, with its soft-focus lenses and textured papers, Adams realized, in the spring of 1930, the expressive futility of his work. He discarded pictorialism for what he called “pure” photography, with sharp focus, strong contrast, clarity of image, and depth of field.

Adams, Edward Weston, Imogen Cunningham, Willard Van Dyke, and several other colleagues who were now passionately immersed in this sharp-focus school of photography decided that they must exhibit together to promote the cause. They named themselves Group *f/64*, after one of the small lens stops employed in producing clarity of image because of greater depth of field. Following an exhibition by some of the group in 1932, a critic wrote: “*The f/64 prints are . . . angular. The accents are stentorian. These pictures do not sing. They shout. Sentimentalists that we are, we shall never forgive these fellows for shattering our pet traditions. . . .*”

Adams’s photography extended outside of Yosemite into other parts of the Sierra. His photographs of the Kings River Canyon were so impressive, and Adams himself was so dedicated to preservation of the area, that the Sierra Club sent him to Washington, D.C., in 1936 to lobby for a Kings Canyon National Park bill then before Congress. For a week he lugged his large portfolio of prints around the Senate and House office buildings, showing them to more than forty members of Congress and describing the need to preserve the Giant Sequoia trees and surrounding area. He also made a speech and lobbied for the new park at a conference on the National Park Service, where he made the acquaintance of Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes and other government officials who saw his photographs mounted on easels outside the conference room.

The logging companies and other special interests wielded

strong influence, and the Kings Canyon bill failed at that session. But Adams continued to press for a park. He combined his Kings Canyon photographs with other examples of his work in a book, *Sierra Nevada: The John Muir Trail*, and sent a copy to Secretary Ickes when the book was published in 1938. A few days later, he received a note from a Park Service official asking for another book for Ickes. “*Yesterday the Secretary took it to the White House and showed it to the President, who was so impressed with it that the Secretary gave it to him.*” After Adams sent Ickes a new book, he received a thank-you letter from the Interior Secretary: “*I hope that before this session of Congress adjourns the John Muir National Park in Kings Canyon will be a legal fact. Then we can be sure that your descendants and mine will be able to take as beautiful pictures as you have taken—that is, provided they have your skill and artistry.*” Ickes’s hopes were fulfilled the following year, when, with President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s support, Congress passed a bill establishing the 454,600-acre Kings Canyon National Park. Park Service Director Arno Cammerer wrote to Adams, “*A silent but most effective voice in the campaign was your own book Sierra Nevada: The John Muir Trail. As long as that book is in existence, it will go on justifying the park.*”

SHORTLY thereafter, Adams accepted an assignment from Ickes to photograph national park scenes across the nation to be used in the new Interior Department building and for displays at major national-park-system areas which would show the unique features of other park areas. The Second World War interrupted the project before it could be completed. Adams delivered prints to Ickes, and they now reside in storage at the U.S. Archives. But after the war Adams received two John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation grants to continue his photographing in the national parks and monuments. He visited Acadia, Olympic, Great Smoky Mountain, Glacier, Grand Teton, Glacier Bay, Mount McKinley, Hawaii Volcanoes, Rocky Mountain, Carlsbad, as well as a number of the southwestern monuments, and did additional work in Yosemite. With the photographs resulting from his government and Guggenheim projects, Adams published two books: *My Camera in Yosemite Valley* (including twenty-four photographs) and *My Camera in the National Parks* (featuring thirty of his photographs and an essay, “The Meaning of the National Parks”).

“*The national parks are, indeed, phenomena of an advanced soci-*

ety," Adams wrote in the essay. ". . . Possessions, both material and spiritual, are appreciated most when we find ourselves in peril of losing them. The national forests were established just in time to prevent unimaginable disaster. Through the far-seeing efforts of men such as John Muir and Stephen Mather the concept of the national parks was solidified and vast areas were set aside in perpetuum against the ravages of diverse forms of exploitation. . . . The national parks represent those intangible values which cannot be turned directly to profit or material advantage. It requires integrity of vision and purpose to consider such impalpable qualities on the same effective level as material resources. Yet everyone must realize that the continued existence of the national parks and all they represent depends upon awareness of the importance of these basic values. The pressures of a growing population, self-interest, and shortness of vision are now the greatest enemies of the national park idea.

"Many of us will agree," Adams continued, "that the most significant parks and monuments are those which serve to protect supreme natural beauty and retain wilderness quality.

"The first phase of the development of the parks has been largely controlled by the requirements of public services which have in many instances (and with constructive intentions) dominated planning and interpretation. The final phase will see the complete adjustment of the material and spiritual aspects of the parks to human need, with full emphasis on the intangible moods and qualities of the natural scene. In that happy day we hope the public will be self-screened; those who prefer the wilderness aspects of the world will be able to find them within the national parks; they will visit the parks for the purposes for which they were originally intended."

Although Adams is identified in the minds of many people as a photographer of imposing mountains and wide vistas, he sees landscape photography as including the leaf and the flower, the intimate detail as well as the face of Half Dome or the majesty of Mount McKinley. In his *Yosemite Valley Portfolio III* (1960), for instance, four of the sixteen prints depict closeup studies of a snowy pine branch, a spray of dogwood blossoms, swirls of foam on a patch of river, and curving spears of grass rising out of a dark pool.

He holds his photography workshops in Yosemite not because he necessarily expects the students to photograph El Capitan or the long vista of Yosemite Valley, but because the environment of a national park, especially one such as Yosemite—which Adams considers almost a shrine—is an inspirational place to practice such an art form. More than forty-five hundred

photographers have attended these workshops.

"Most people have the idea that there is nothing you can do with a camera in Yosemite except take another postcard snapshot," Adams says. "I remind workshop participants that the national parks provide an experience, a mood, an incredible subject for the camera. For instance, a student might feel moved to concentrate on foam in the river, partly abstract patterns. Someone might say, 'You can do that anywhere.' But the fact is that it happened in a national park and was stimulated by the photographer's feeling that it was a new kind of scene, and this feeling may have been possible because Yosemite had been set aside and protected as a national park. But the beauty itself was there even before it was a national park."

Comments William Turnage, executive director of The Wilderness Society and formerly Adams's business manager: "It is not just that you take the photograph of the object. It is that you are in a place that is so uplifting and so inspiring that you can take a picture of a leaf and it is going to be richer and more meaningful."

At the start of each workshop, Adams talks to students about the national park idea, that a park "is really a reserve, a reservation for certain uses that are not just recreation, but re-creation. You must experience nature. In photography you have an external event, but just going 'click' doesn't mean that the image is going to convey the experience to you. The internal event is the putting of what you observed into an image—that is where the aesthetics come in. The result can be a shallow record, or it can be a profound statement. I can see the print even before I trip the shutter. When I come across something I recognize as being aesthetically valid, I see in my mind's eye a picture. I see the values of light, the shapes, the relationships. I am supposed to have enough technique to translate that visualization into an exposure scale so that I will get the information onto the negative. Then the negative becomes like the composer's score. The prints are the performance."

In the 1930s, at a time when the photographing of nature was being criticized by some photographers (including Henri Cartier-Bresson, who once said, "The world is going to pieces and people like Adams and Weston are photographing rocks!"), Adams wrote to his good friend Edward Weston: "Both you and I are incapable of devoting ourselves to contemporary social significances in our work. . . . I still believe there is a real social significance in a rock—a more important significance therein than in a line of unemployed. For that opinion I am charged with inhumanity, unawareness. I think it is up to such as you and I to maintain our conception of art as expressed through our medium. You and I differ considerably in our theory of

approach but our objective is about the same—to express with our cameras what cannot be expressed in other ways—to trust our intuition in respect to what is beautiful and significant—to believe that humanity needs the purely aesthetic just as much as it needs the purely material.”

Edward Weston replied (in part), “. . . I agree with you that there is just as much ‘social significance in a rock’ as in ‘a line of unemployed.’ All depends on the seeing. I must do the work that I am best suited for. If I have in some way awakened others to a broader conception of life—added significance and beauty to their lives—and I know that I have—then I have functioned and am satisfied. Not satisfied with my work as it is, understand. Thank the Gods we never achieve complete satisfaction.”

Adams’s frequent use of photography to further conservation ideals led him into one project that grew to have worldwide impact. In 1954 the National Park Service said that the Sierra Club’s Le Conte Memorial building in Yosemite Valley ought to be serving some purpose in addition to being simply a gathering place for club members. “Ansel came up with the idea of a public exhibit in the building, combining photographs and text so as to explain what national parks are really all about,” says David Brower, who was then the Sierra Club’s executive director.

The club appropriated sixteen hundred dollars and hired Nancy Newhall, a talented writer experienced in arranging exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, to design an exhibit that would help people to see that the land is part of their heritage and system of values. The exhibit would not be just about parks, nor use only Adams’s photographs. Newhall and Adams borrowed negatives from leading photographers—including the socially concerned. Cartier-Bresson, Margaret Bourke-White, and Werner Bischoff were included, as were Weston, William Garnett, Eliot Porter, and others. Adams made most of the prints, donating his time, and prepared the show’s fourteen 7-by-4-foot panels. Most of the Adams photographs were taken in national parks. Newhall wrote a lyrical text in free verse to accompany each panel. They called the exhibit “This is the American Earth.”

The result was a sweeping panorama of human and natural scenes with both the text and the photographs inspiring appreciation of the values underlying democracy and freedom. The exhibit attracted large crowds to the Le Conte Memorial building in the summer of 1955, and was also shown at Stanford University and at the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco. It was then displayed at the Smithsonian Institution,

which sent the exhibit throughout the United States over the next seven years. Distribution to a number of cities overseas was arranged by the United States Information Service.

Finally, the photographs and an expanded text were reproduced in a handsome 10¼-by-13½-inch Sierra Club book under the guidance of Brower. *This is the American Earth* became a huge publishing success that one reviewer said “may become one of the most nationally significant books of the decade, for more powerfully than a thousand technical works could, it pleads for man’s understanding that the wild earth is his home.”

THIS IS THE AMERICAN EARTH spawned a whole new outlet for landscape photographers in a series of large “Exhibit Format” environment books published by the Sierra Club, and in a similar series, “The Earth’s Wild Places,” produced by Brower after he left the Sierra Club and founded Friends of the Earth. Combining the written word with photographic art, both black-and-white and color, in publications of quality and beauty that gained wide circulation, the books provided an opportunity for the public to expand its understanding of the environment. They helped to build awareness of vital environmental issues of the day and appreciation of the nation’s natural heritage. Many, but not all, of the books were based in national parks.

In 1962 *This is the American Earth* was followed by *In Wilderness is the Preservation of the World*, with color photography by Eliot Porter accompanied by passages he selected from Henry David Thoreau’s writings. With his photographs of New England nature scenes, Porter sought to complement the feeling and spirit of Thoreau’s thoughts. As with *This is the American Earth*, publication of Porter’s book was preceded by a Smithsonian traveling exhibition of the Porter color prints and Thoreau passages. Many hardcover copies of the book were sold and a paperback edition reached an even larger audience.

“Eliot Porter makes no attempt merely to document the selected passages,” wrote nature author Joseph Wood Krutch in his introduction to *In Wilderness*. “To have done so would have been to produce no more than documentary illustrations. Instead—guided by sure artistic instinct—he realized that the way to add to what Thoreau had written was to catch Thoreau’s spirit, to see with his eye the kind of thing he saw and loved. As a result Porter’s pictures are truly in the spirit of Thoreau. . . .”

“The photographer does deal in representations of the actual, whether it be the actuality of an external Nature or the actuality of a human portrait. Yet it is very far from true that he need be merely mechanical, that he can have no personal vision. He cannot, like the painter, impose upon Nature a pattern or design which isn't there. But he can select and frame his picture in such a way as to reveal the pattern and design which the merely casual observer has failed to see, either because he did not look closely enough or because it was confused by adjacent irrelevancies. The more the painter invents, the farther he takes us from the world which actually exists and to that extent he may even encourage us in an alienation from the real. The master photographer, on the other hand, discovers rather than invents, and in that way he may (as Porter so strikingly does) second Thoreau in Thoreau's most insistent injunction, namely, 'Be not among those who have eyes that see not and ears that hear not.' ”

Whereas Adams had been a pianist before turning to photography, Porter had been a medical scientist, teaching bacteriology and biochemistry at Harvard Medical School for ten years while continuing his lifelong side interests in nature and birds and amateur photography. His career took a sharp turn in 1939, when Alfred Stieglitz exhibited Porter's black-and-white studies of birds and landscapes. The exhibition and Stieglitz's support so encouraged Porter that in 1940 he left medical research to devote his full time to photography. His work had been entirely in black-and-white until a publisher suggested that Porter ought also to work with color film in order to make identification of the birds more precise. He received two Guggenheim fellowships to support his color photography of birds, and his work took him to southern Arizona, Texas, and Michigan. In addition, he began to use the color film to record nature detail and landscapes as well as birds.

Porter was often drawn to national parks because of their magnificent visual qualities. He had camped out with his father in the Grand Canyon at the age of ten, and later took his own sons to Phantom Ranch on the Colorado River within Grand Canyon National Park. He was not interested in the river as a serious photographic subject, however, until friends invited him on a rafting trip in 1961. They floated down the Glen Canyon area, where a huge Bureau of Reclamation dam that was being built would soon back up the Colorado for miles, creating Lake Powell. Porter says he became “addicted” to the mystique of the Glen Canyon area that was soon to be submerged by the waters rising behind the dam, and returned seven times. Brower asked

to borrow some of the resulting color prints for an exhibit in the Sierra Club library. They became another Exhibit Format book, *Glen Canyon on the Colorado: The Place No One Knew*. The photographs of the glens and spectacular rock formations about to be drowned, the sandbars, the mossy rocks, the waterfalls and rills and pools, the striped canyon walls, captured a last view of a part of the national park system that present and future generations will never have the chance to know, the areas now under water or forever altered by Lake Powell in Glen Canyon National Recreation Area.

The Porter photographs and passages from a number of observers of the natural scene combine in the book in a way that enunciates the park idea and the land ethic. With Porter's abstract view of the golden glow of a low sun reflected on Aztec Creek as it flows through massive rock are Krutch's words: *“There are always rival claims to every unexploited area, and even the parks cannot stand up against such claims unless the strength of their own claim is recognized. Unless we think of intangible values as no less important than material resources, unless we are willing to say that man's need of and right to what the parks and wildernesses provide are as fundamental as any of his material needs, they are lost. . . .*

“The generation now living may very well be that which will make the irrevocable decision whether or not America will continue to be for centuries to come the one great nation which had the foresight to preserve an important part of its heritage. If we do not preserve it, then we shall have diminished by just that much the unique privilege of being an American.”

With the photograph that Porter calls “Cathedral Canyon in re-reflected light,” A. Starker Leopold's words stand like a sermon: *“The only possible force that could be motivating the effort to preserve natural areas is the moral conviction that it is right—that we owe it to ourselves and to the good earth that supports us to curb our avarice to the extent of leaving a few spots untouched and unexploited. . . .*

“I think that when future philosophers scan back through the records of human history and human thought they may put their finger on this century as a time of outstanding advance in man's feeling of responsibility to the earth. Whether man can succeed in preserving an attractive and livable world is the problem that lies ahead.”

And with the rich, deep ocher of Porter's abstract view of a sheer sandstone wall, Leopold's father, Aldo Leopold, warns of mankind's proclivities: *“To enjoy he must possess, invade, appropriate. Hence the wilderness that he cannot personally see has no value to him. . . . (Is my share in Alaska worthless to me because I shall*

never go there? Do I need a road to show me the arctic prairies, the goose pastures of the Yukon, the Kodiak bear, the sheep meadows behind McKinley?) . . . Recreational development is a job not of building roads into lovely country, but of building receptivity into the still unlovely human mind.”

Porter did two other books in American national parks, *Down the Colorado*, photographed primarily in Grand Canyon National Park, and *Appalachian Wilderness*, about Great Smoky Mountain National Park. And he extended his interests to national parks of other nations with his color photography for *Galápagos: The Flow of Wildness* in Ecuador's Galápagos National Park, and *The Tree Where Man Was Born: The African Experience*, photographed in national parks of Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya. The two-volume Galápagos work was published in the Exhibit Format series by the Sierra Club; the other three were published by E. P. Dutton.

MORE THAN half of the Exhibit Format and Earth's Wild Places books have dealt with proposed or existing parks or have included photographs from within the national park system. A photographer who has contributed extensively to the series is Californian Philip Hyde, who has devoted all of his three decades as a professional to efforts aimed at preserving and protecting national parks and other wilderness areas. Hyde's 1951 work for the Sierra Club, photographing in Dinosaur National Monument around areas that could be flooded or harmed by the proposed Echo Park and Split Mountain dams, provided much of the photography for a 1955 book, *This is Dinosaur: Echo Park Country and Its Magic River*, which preceded the Exhibit Format series. Copies of the book went to all members of Congress and played a role in preventing the dams from being built. The victory was vital in upholding the strict protections afforded by the 1916 National Parks Act and prevented a harmful precedent from being set, inasmuch as no dam had been built in a national park since the Hetch Hetchy, which was constructed before enactment of the 1916 law.

Hyde spent many months among the redwoods of the California coast, doing much of the photography for the Exhibit Format book *The Last Redwoods: Photographs and Story of a Vanishing Scenic Resource*, which appeared in 1963, during the campaign for a Redwood National Park. He was the sole photographer for *Navajo Wildlands: As Long as the Rivers Shall*

Run; Island in Time: The Point Reyes Peninsula; and *Slickrock: The Canyon Country of Southeast Utah*, which includes photographs taken in what are now Capitol Reef and Canyonlands national parks. His photographs constitute a large part of *Time and the River Flowing: The Grand Canyon*; *Not Man Apart: Photographs of the Big Sur Coast*; and *The Wild Cascades: Forgotten Parkland*, which supported the campaign to create a North Cascades National Park. And his work is also represented in *This is the American Earth*.

The American photographer's kinship with national parks has continued, while adapting to the times and to evolving conditions. Landscape photographers are now able to find subject matter and inspiration—their sense of place—in many areas outside national parks. Locales with outstanding visual qualities have been preserved through the work of land-saving organizations such as The Nature Conservancy and The Trust for Public Land. The national forests now afford a great variety of wilderness areas under provisions of the 1964 Wilderness Act. Yet consciously or not, a great many of today's photographers, even those applying the most innovative techniques and abstract approaches, still are drawn to America's natural crown jewels for some of their work.

The national park system itself has reached beyond the purely natural areas and now includes some of the nation's most significant historical and cultural sites. Thus a photographer like William Clift can find himself photographing the White House Ruin in Canyon de Chelly National Monument, Arizona, as well as the Old St. Louis County Courthouse in Jefferson National Expansion Memorial National Historic Site, both parts of our nation's heritage under the stewardship of the National Park Service.

“I go to national parks because there I can work and be relaxed, and I don't have to ask anybody's permission. And it is preserved,” says Clift. “I can really feel at home.”

William Garnett, whose thirty years of aerial work has given an added visual dimension to the art of landscape photography, says that he often photographs national park areas simply because they have such unique geology and vegetation. “I don't purposely set out to photograph national parks,” Garnett says. “My purpose is to show as much as possible how fantastic this land is. And that can usually be done best by avoiding the mark of man. On the other hand, national parks are not free from human intrusion, because their footpaths, buildings, roads and campgrounds interrupt the natural systems.”

In Death Valley National Monument, the National Park Service put a campground right by one of the great dunes, and I haven't been able to photograph around it for years because of the footprints all over the dune."

Paul Caponigro says that "some places in national parks are like cathedrals where one can go to worship." But he adds that some park areas can present a great deal of hubbub. So he also works in other public natural areas. Like many other artist-photographers, he goes to national parks because of the feeling he gets while there. "There is a deep-seated communication that man wants and needs with his land," Caponigro says. "I use the subjects and objects within the landscape for a chance to arrange something on a piece of film that has meaning for me, and hopefully I can share that with others. I am looking for myself, constantly. It is all happening right here anyway."

Dave Bohn, a photographer with an intensely metaphysical approach, works in national park areas as the result of a personal compulsion to be in wilderness and to be one with it. He spent from 1956 to 1962 mountain climbing and photographing in the Himalayas and in the ranges of California, Oregon, Washington, and Alaska. But the results with his camera left him dissatisfied. Then in April of 1962, at the end of a climbing expedition in the Fairweather Range of southeast Alaska, he flew over other parts of Glacier Bay National Monument. Gazing down at the fjords, tidewater glaciers, floating ice, and the great wilderness seemingly stretching to infinity, he felt a deep desire to get "inside" the place. Subsequently, every year from 1964 through 1976 he returned to Glacier Bay to make long forays into the wild land.

"How could I ever get a handle on all those square miles, forty-four hundred total, or even a good portion of them?" he wrote in his 1974 book, *Back Country Journal: Reminiscences of a Wilderness Photographer*. "Fortunately, at some point during those first Glacier Bay years I realized that the question was a phony because it meant the camera was starting to get in the way of the landscape. So I threw the question out the window and put the cameras back where they belonged; somewhere out there in the landscape but never the landscape in front of the cameras."

Bohn had not planned to put his Glacier Bay odyssey into a book and, in fact, resisted the idea until Brower convinced him that the wilderness character of the place would not be endangered as a result. Bohn's text consisted of Glacier Bay's history, notes from his own field journal, and sixty-one of his images. It was published in 1967 as the sixteenth Exhibit Format book,

Glacier Bay: The Land and the Silence.

In 1972 Bohn went to Katmai National Monument for four days, and it was the start of another romance with a vast wilderness area. He spent the next five summers in Katmai.

"If you enter a national park area and know it is owned by everyone, therefore by no one, the result can be a feeling of participation," says Bohn. "It is quite a different feeling from entering a large ranch and knowing it is owned by agribusiness, no matter how spectacular the scenery. I can walk into Katmai and become Katmai. I am Katmai and Katmai is me. The photography is absolutely secondary to the attempts to become part of the landscape."

"I don't want to interpret Katmai, or tell people they should go to this site or that one. And I don't want to push around the wildlife. They have more right to be there than I have. Somehow, when in Katmai or the other wilderness areas in which I have worked, I am trying, through my photography, to give back more than I take away."

Bohn believes that in some areas of the national park system, where the quality of wilderness is essential to the welfare of the land and the wildlife, visitation should be severely restricted. But he does not believe that human beings should be kept out of Katmai entirely. In his recent book *Rambles Through an Alaska Wild: Katmai and the Valley of the Smokes*, he writes, "If alone or with one or two others, you will not intrude, providing you treat the land and the critters with respect, providing you participate with the land rather than 'use' it as a consumer. Blatant tourism in the natural areas is violently consumptive and destroys what was there in the first place. You can visit Katmai, once you know it is there, with your mind," he adds. "For Katmai the most valuable 'use' by the public will be the knowledge that it is there—that the area remains wild and on its own because only a few go in and those few never intrude."

Will people accept the kind of drastic limitations that may need to be imposed on the use of areas such as Katmai? Bohn believes they will, and cites an informal discussion of the subject among some visitors and Park Service staff one summer evening at Katmai. Most of the visitors recognized that the land itself and the quality of a visit in the park would be seriously harmed if too many people came at one time. One woman, when asked whether she would forego coming back the following year if such a rule was applied, replied in the affirmative. Suppose the rules said she couldn't come back for ten years? After a long pause, she said, "I guess . . . I would be willing not to come back for ten years, if that would allow others to experience this wilderness."

AFTER a little over a century, the national park idea—the ethic that says a nation's outstanding natural areas should be protected for public use and for future generations—has come into its own. There are more than 330 units in the national park system, including 48 parks, 78 monuments, and 12 preserves, as well as seashores and lakeshores, historic sites, recreation areas, scenic parkways, wild and scenic rivers, and scenic trails. Some type of National Park Service unit exists in every state except Delaware. Between 1978 and 1980 the lands under Park Service protection doubled through the addition of Alaskan wild lands.

Meantime, America's national park idea has been adopted around the world. The first World Conference on National Parks, held in Seattle in 1962, brought together representatives of 64 nations. The third world conference, to be held in 1982 in Bali, is expected to attract most of the 123 nations that now have national parks or equivalent nature reserves.

A sobering note concerning the national park idea cannot be ignored, however. While the parks are at the peak of their popularity, they also face grave dangers. Information compiled by the National Park Service in a 1980 State of the Parks Report revealed that threats to national park resources and environments are more serious and widespread than ever before. The peril comes from a number of sources: land development pressures near and within park areas; air, water, and acid-rain pollution; gas, oil, geothermal and mineral exploration and development; and potential environmental impacts from coal mining and from a crash program to develop synthetic fuels.

As the national park idea has reached a pinnacle of acceptance by the public, the American photographer has also risen to unprecedented heights of recognition. The photographers who have maintained such a close relationship with the park idea, and whose work has always had popular appeal, are now receiv-

ing the honors and artistic status long due them. For the first time, in 1978, the White House exhibited a collection of photographs, and all of them were taken in national park areas. For the first time, in 1979, *Time* magazine featured a photographer on its cover, and it was Ansel Adams. The photographs of Carleton Watkins, which were little more than curiosities gathering dust a few years ago, are now treasured items: fifty-one of them sold for one hundred thousand dollars in a 1979 New York auction. The Museum of Modern Art has had a William Garnett photograph, made in Death Valley National Monument, in its permanent collection for more than twenty years—"Nude Dune," the same scene that Garnett cannot duplicate today because of footprints on the dune. Virtually all major museums in the United States now have photographic collections and are actively, even avidly, acquiring photographs. The photographic exhibitions put on by museums and galleries have broad public appeal and draw large crowds. In 1979, when the Museum of Modern Art exhibited 153 Adams photographs, nearly all of which were made in national parks, attendance figures were among the highest ever recorded by the museum.

With photography now achieving recognition as the art that it is, the close relationship landscape photographers have had with the parks remains important. It may indeed be that the photographs taken in the parks in the coming century will, as they have in the past one hundred years, move the public to insist that this emblem of their natural heritage, the national park idea, must remain able to withstand the pressures exerted by technology and development. Americans will thus continue to support the goal enunciated in the 1916 National Park Act that the parks must be left "*unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.*"

*Curatorial Viewpoints and
Observations*

ROBERT GLENN
KETCHUM

THE USE of the natural landscape as a visual library and a source of aesthetic components is a tradition in photography as old as the medium itself. Images from this particular genre appear in virtually every collection ever assembled and are contained in all publications detailing photography's history. At least some interest in the natural landscape is evident in the portfolios of most individual photographers and in the hundreds of regional and national exhibitions that take place every year. Such studies appear again and again, variations on one of the great themes of the photographic art.

During the research that led to this exhibition and this book, a common bond that tied many of these photographers together was discovered. Apart from their general subject matter, their unconscious choice of similar subject locations—the recurrence of views within national parks—provided a unique perspective of both the artists and the places where they chose to work. While there is no doubt that historically some photographers went to previously recorded locations with the specific aim of making a “better” picture there than their predecessors, most photographers when questioned about their work in the parks responded that they did not have many photographs, and it was only when they began to look at the myriad of locations within the national park system that they realized how often they had sought artistic inspiration in them. Not only have millions of American families traveled to the parks yearly for enjoyment, but generations of artists have done so as well, and what they have taken away with them when they left has become part of the “American” in American art.

In all fairness to forms of artistic expression other than photography, those “generations of artists” also include painters, sculptors, writers, weavers, musicians, dancers, poets . . . the entire compendium of the arts. They have all valued the resource of the parks. At different times in their lives, artists of all types have rejuvenated themselves and their creativity through the solace and introspection these special environments provide.

From the very beginning, however, photographers have had a more special relationship with the parks than have any other artists because their work so directly resulted in not only the development of the park concept but also the way the public has continued to view the parks and interpret them. Before the idea of a park system was even established, it was the work of photographers that brought public attention to these areas of natural wonder and ultimately aided the political legislation that was to

preserve them in their undeveloped state for future generations to enjoy. As time brought the development and overdevelopment of nearly everything else, it was to these very parks, still in their “natural” state, that the people and the artists returned, hoping to remind themselves of a world that was possible without domination and disruption at the hands of man.

Photography has been recognized as one of the principal tools of communication in the twentieth century. A universal language, it transcends both the spoken and the written word. Accordingly, its allusion to reality has made it a resource of “believable” information to all who have looked at pictures. Although reality as represented by a photograph is arguable, it was its believability that gave photography such an important role during the formative years of the park concept. During surveys of the West, photographers were invaluable. Even in the company of painters, writers, and geologists, it was their pictures that brought “proof” to the public and the legislators that such extraordinary places did exist. Their images did more than just scientifically document new frontiers; as prints and reproductions appeared in newspapers, the visions provided by such artists were also the first contact that most people had with these distant wonders. It left them curious, awed . . . and wanting to see for themselves.

To this day, photographers have continued to keep the public's attention focused on these areas. As with all great themes, the landscape in the photograph has continued to serve as an educational tool, an aesthetic pleasure, a reminder of the grandeur and complexity of nature, and—as revealed by this book and exhibit—a foundation upon which artists have chosen to build their own styles of “seeing.”

When I discussed the idea behind this exhibition with the participants, Roger Minick said something that echoed the feelings of John Muir. He asked if the parks had become shrines to Americans in the same way that certain locales and architectural edifices, primarily churches, had attained symbolic and spiritual importance in other countries of the world. Perhaps the American tourist who frequently visits places with famous vistas is performing a kind of worshipful pilgrimage. Even in the face of financially difficult times and travel curtailment because of the gasoline crisis, travelers, like the faithful, cross the nation to stand quietly at their favorite overlook and ponder the natural realm preserved before them. It is impossible to know what each of them sees and absorbs from the experience, but perhaps by look-

ing through the eyes of the photographers whose work is assembled here, the collected images will serve as a distillation of the range of emotions that both Americans and foreign visitors experience when they view with wonder our shrines to nature.

BECAUSE the history of photography is being constantly expanded and revised, it is important to highlight this relationship now. Many curators, authoritative critics, and leading contemporary figures have chosen to ignore or view the work that is being done with the landscape as invalid. It is often said that landscape is a cliché subject and that for a contemporary image maker to work in that direction is redundant. It has also been said that there is no more wilderness to depict. Indeed! These comments are consistent with certain dogmatic viewpoints, and are voiced by people who have little contact with the world of nature themselves. There is no doubt that contemporary trends have emphasized man-made environments, which seems appropriate, since a great number of artists surround themselves with their own personal worlds. But it is inaccurate to assume that this is true for all artists, or that the concept of using nature as a subject no longer has any importance in artistic thinking.

Today, an artist's perspective of the natural world has greater value than ever before because man has removed himself so far from nature that an artist's work is often the only thing that keeps the observer in contact with it. There is no question that there is a lot of repetition—image and idea cloning, if you will—in this genre, but that is always the pitfall in any theme that has so much popularity. New ideas and new images live with the vitality and thinking that an individual brings to them; they are hardly dependent on whether or not previous work involving that particular subject matter has been done. Even the most over-used sources (such as sunsets, or, in this show, the vistas of Canyon de Chelly and Yosemite) can be rendered startlingly new by a photographer with a different mental set and a refreshing perspective. To ignore the importance of work done in this continually renewed field is to ignore an important and continuing part of American art. Nevertheless, in the course of looking at photographs for this exhibition, I would come across the same images again and again, seeing especially in the work of young photographers not only the same locations but also the same angles, as if the photographers had never seen earlier works, as if they felt that the stunning quality of the image were enough to make an

impressive photograph, regardless of what had been done before. It became clear to me that the field of landscape photography today had moved beyond first impressions, that the greatness of individual photographs was not dependent on the greatness of the site itself but on the photographer's vision of it.

In order to understand more completely the selection of work in this collection, it is necessary for me to define the parameters that were used in the curatorial process. They have affected the perspective presented here to a great degree, since any collection, regardless of its comprehensiveness, represents a curator's opinion.

It should be noted that it was a prerequisite that all the images be made within, or at least be thought to have been made within, properties protected under the national park system. This system includes monuments, seashores, designated historical sites, and recreation areas comprising about three hundred and fifty different locations and covering over seventy-five million acres of land and holdings. Emphasis was placed on artists who had worked in the parks at regular intervals or who had whole bodies of work dedicated to those environments. This knowledge is important in understanding the selection process, since so many photographers have taken at least a few pictures in these locations that almost everyone who has ever taken a photograph—amateur and professional alike—could have been considered. And although these guidelines were necessary to define a project with such a broad scope, they have caused the regretful exclusion of a few photographers whose visual evolution has been significant. In particular I refer to Wynn Bullock, Art Sinsabaugh, Emmet Gowin, Fredrick Sommer, and Robert Adams—all of whom have made important contributions in this photographic genre but who have not often worked in park locations. It should be clear from the collection presented in this book that all of the selections use the park setting as a prominent component of the image. Again, this subjective curatorial choice excluded many photographs that were taken in the parks but in whose composition the locations were less important to the picture's overall viewpoint or impact than were other elements. Hundreds of photographers have attended photographic workshops located in or near national parks, and it was through these classes that a number of significant image makers and their students had their first contacts with park environments. Interestingly, those who came with already developed styles seldom changed the direction of their work simply because of this introduction, choosing

instead to assimilate it into what they were doing. Judy Dater, long recognized for her stunning portraiture, exemplifies this; through the Yosemite workshops, her backgrounds became the natural environment, but the emphasis is still so strongly on the people and their interaction that the location is almost irrelevant. It is appropriate to mention Neal Slavin in this context as well; his group portraits include several images of park employees, but again the emphasis is clearly on the persons composing the group, not the backdrops.

Because the selections here were made for an exhibition of photographs to be mounted and hung on museum walls, print-making became an important criterion in the decision-making process. That is not to say that technical execution was used as a facet of judgment, but rather that many photographers of landscape were included here because the making of prints has been more important to them than, say, the publication of books or calendars. Many of the omitted photographers—such as Ernst Haas and Philip Hyde—do make prints, and a number of those included—such as Ansel Adams and Eliot Porter—also publish books, but those whom I have chosen have placed a primary emphasis on their prints rather than on their publications.

Although many people might object to my terminology as well as my selection criteria, I have also tried to make a distinction here between what I think of as exploitative work and what I would like to call creative vision. There are many beautiful full-color photographs published each year, reproducing familiar images in a popular format but bringing little to the progress of landscape photography as an art. The reason I have used the word “exploitative” is a personal one, reflecting my own dismay that these popular publications use the same locations over and over again and overlook lesser known, equally attractive areas, thus encouraging excessive visitation to popular sites, which often results in damage to the area itself.

For a number of reasons, I have also chosen to omit one important group of photographers: those employed over the years by the Department of the Interior to document park sites and the development of the park system. F. J. Haynes, J. C. Boysen, Herbert W. Gleason, and, more recently, Fred Bell, George A. Grant, Robert Belous, and W. Woodbridge Williams, among others, have amassed literally thousands of pictures, some of which have become familiar through government literature and commercial publications. Although their work has been extraordinarily valuable in a documentary sense, they did not

approach the process of image making with the same consistent intent or with the selectivity of the photographers whose work is included in these pages.

Not only is the thrust of this collection a recognition of those who took pains to think of the print as a viewable object, but the pieces selected carry this conviction even further. The bodies of work of over three hundred photographers were viewed before the photographs included here were chosen. Some twenty-five institutional collections were researched and personally viewed; the prints exhibited and reproduced in this book are those that were in the best condition and represented the artists' visions most clearly. Often several different collections had the same image, and in every case an effort was made to select the best example. I believe it is easier to understand an individual's artistic intent when you can look at a number of his works, rather than when he is represented by just one or two pieces. Therefore, instead of choosing one or two images from a hundred photographers, I decided to include just thirty-five artists and to show at least three or, where possible, more examples of their work.

I hope that this collection is somewhat special in that it affords the viewers a greater insight into the thinking of each artist than is usually possible in exhibits that do not concentrate on one artist alone. To achieve this deeper perspective on the selected artists, the show has brought together the resources of diverse individuals and institutions that will more likely than not never be assembled in this fashion again.

An additional note should be made regarding curatorial choices in the selection of specific images. In many cases the photographers included in this book are very well known, having been widely exhibited and widely published. Yet, my research revealed that most books and exhibitions tend to go with “the old favorites”—photographs that have been viewed again and again while superior works by the same artists remain unpublished and hence largely unknown. Many of the institutions that I researched possess vast bodies of work. Their collections are filled with magnificent prints, and many excellent pieces seem to have been passed over in favor of these safer “recurring” choices. For example, I found works of Ansel Adams and Edward Weston that have seldom, if ever, been exhibited, and have never to my knowledge been published. They are as good as much of the work that we are more familiar with—if not in some cases even better. So although a few well-known images have been included in this book, when new and exciting ones were “dis-

covered,” they were chosen instead. The greater part of the motivation behind the selection of the works shown here was an attempt to put before the public photographs that had not already been seen numerous times, and Adams’s photographs are particularly good examples of this. Having received so much attention from the media recently, certain of his images—many made within national parks—are now indelibly etched in our minds. Yet these works are missing from this assemblage. It seemed redundant to once again spotlight them, although they are very much a part of this book’s theme. They were excluded not because they lacked importance but because other images were just as significant and had been exhibited or reproduced less frequently.

My research has afforded me some important insights into areas beyond those defining the scope of this exhibition and this book. Perhaps as an unfortunate reaction to the criticism of past generations that photographers were not artists because their method of working was too mechanical, many contemporary photographers downplay their technical interest and abilities. When they are queried about technique, statements such as “I would rather not talk about it” or “It is not important to the work” are heard repeatedly. This is unfortunate, since the art of photography is just as connected to the advances of technology as the copperplates, synthetic-based paints, and similar innovations that spur the technical development of other art forms. Technology and technological changes have played an important part in photographic history. The transition from collodion wet-plate glass negatives to more refined manufactured film was very significant and allowed greater photographic versatility. Methods of enlargement and mass reproduction brought photography to an ever-increasing audience and are thus primarily responsible for its popularity and impact today. Better optics and better meters removed guesswork from the craft, replacing uncertainty with a precision that gave photographers more control due to the new predictability of the basic method. This in turn allowed artists greater creative expression, since the end result could be visualized early in the creative process. Styles and techniques of printing gave prints stronger visual impact, and Ansel Adams especially helped to revolutionize photographic printmaking with his systems of technical control and his extensive books on the subject. As important as his individual images are, his texts on working in the medium are equally valuable and have changed the nature of photographic vision. He is occasionally criticized by

nontraditional image makers, who characterize him as a photographer whose work relies more on the technique of making the print than on the content of the picture. What such individuals fail to realize is that these very technical contributions liberated the entire medium, for any photographer who read Adams’s texts on technical capabilities such as the zone system of exposure control and the execution of the full tonal-range print was then able to improve his own method. Adams’s sharing of these technical improvements with others proved to be a great equalizer. The quality of the actual printmaking process no longer could be used as a prerequisite criterion for evaluating an artist’s work, since the knowledge was now within everyone’s grasp. These contributions possessed a value that greatly exceeds the recognition they have received, for the impact of such technical development has extended far beyond the world of photographers working with the natural landscape.

Similarly, improved equipment has brought monumental changes in the way artists see. As cameras and accessories became smaller and smaller, new environments became accessible and ways of locating vantage points became more diversified, thus leading to completely unexpected and startling views. Not all of these changes have been limited in application to just landscape photography—they have been tremendously important in the medium as a whole—but certainly their effect has been clearly seen and felt in the work of those who use the natural environment as a subject. Lens sharpness, color, and special lens coatings such as those Bill Garnett is working with to reduce flare—all of these things have had a strong impact. And though at times the changes are subtle, they should not be ignored, for such innovations are responsible for much of the photographer’s development of vision. It is the artist’s understanding of his tools—whether lithographic plates and oil mixtures or processing procedures and lens choices—that provide him with the method of creation that results in the work produced. The time has come to recognize these contributions and to link them with the images they have made possible rather than to downplay the significance of the technique.

The time has also come to consider the implications of the landscape photographer’s work in terms of the landscape itself. Every time a photograph of Yosemite or the Grand Canyon finds its way into the public eye, it evokes a response and frequently that response increases what environmentalists call the “use-abuse cycle”—overemphasis on and excessive visitation to a

popular site. If the photographers who find inspiration in these places do not think protectively about our environment and our ecology—and here I speak for myself as a photographer, not as a curator—who will? We should consider the amount of increasingly precious materials that we use simply in order to present our work. Is what we are producing valuable enough to justify the use of the silver and the paper fiber we must consume in order to create our art? Do our results in some way compensate for all of the potentially dangerous chemical compounds that we literally pour down the drain? These are not preposterous considerations. In a world of dwindling resources and disappearing natural environments, the equation of the value of the work to the costs of producing it becomes more real and more important each day. The same group of artists that helped to make us aware of our natural world now needs to think very carefully about the ramifications of their actions. We need to reflect in our work a continuing concern for the preservation of this source of visual information from which we have been drawing our inspiration and in some cases our living. Politics and conservation should consciously be part of our daily dialogues. Photographs live far beyond their initial creation and have repercussive effects; they need to be carefully considered in all of their uses and contexts,

so that their impact has positive and protective results. Far too many contemporary photographers dismiss these considerations and responsibilities. While their work circulates among an ever-growing population with constantly changing political attitudes, they should be aware that nothing is permanent, including those enclaves where they have worked. These photographers should be cognizant of the need to actively support the ethics of preservation and appreciation, which have provided them with a prime source of their creative inspiration.

It has been said that if you are not part of the solution, then you are part of the problem—a remark that is very appropriate to this discussion. To my thinking, the national park system is the greatest gift that America has given to the world, and it will only continue to exist as long as we value, protect, and assess our roles in relationship to it. From the beginning, photographers were instrumental in establishing the importance as well as the beauty of our parks, and their role is no less important right now. Photographers helped the parks come into existence. As time passed, the parks helped the photographers, serving as valuable—irreplaceable—sources of subject matter and inspiration. Perhaps now the roles have reversed, and it is once again our turn to nurture these enclaves through our insight and consideration.