Ansel Adams Photographs

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The University Library
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2013
Ansel Adams Photographs

Collection number: MS 2

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Santa Cruz, California

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Ansel Adams photographs
Dates: circa 1962-1975
Collection number: MS 2
Creator: Adams, Ansel
Collection Size: 12 linear feet (21 boxes)
Repository: University of California, Santa Cruz. University Library. Special Collections and Archives
        Santa Cruz, California 95064
Abstract: 485 black and white photographs by Ansel Adams documenting the land, building sites, and early activities of the University of California Santa Cruz campus.
Physical location: Stored at Special Collections and Archives.
Languages: Languages represented in the collection: English
Access
Collection open for research.

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Preferred Citation
Ansel Adams photographs. MS2. Special Collections and Archives, University Library, University of California, Santa Cruz.

Biography
Ansel Adams (Feb. 20, 1902 - Apr. 22, 1984), photographer and environmentalist, was born in San Francisco, California. In 1919 he joined the Sierra Club and spent four summers in Yosemite Valley. He became friends with many of the club's leaders, who were founders of America's nascent conservation movement. He met his wife, Virginia Best, in Yosemite; they were married in 1928. The couple had two children.
In 1927 Adams met photographer Edward Weston, and the two became increasingly important to each other as friends and colleagues. The renowned Group f/64, founded in 1932, coalesced around the recognized greatness of Weston and the dynamic energy of Adams. Adams developed the famous and highly complex "zone system" enabling photographers to
creatively visualize an image and produce a photograph that matched their visualization. He produced ten volumes of technical manuals on photography; the most influential books ever written on the subject.

Adams felt an intense commitment to promoting photography as a fine art and played a key role in the establishment of the first museum department of photography, at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The work at the museum fostered a relationship with Beaumont and Nancy Newhall, a historian and museum administrator and a writer-designer, respectively. Their partnership was arguably the most potent collaboration in twentieth-century photography.

His images became the symbols of wild America, and he fought relentlessly for the preservation of wilderness and against all manner of environmental shortsightedness. There is a vast amount of truly protected wilderness in America, much of it saved because of the efforts of Adams and his colleagues.

Adams died in Monterey, California at the age of 82.

Excerpt from Ansel Adams, photographer, by William Turnage.
http://www.anseladams.com/ansel-adams-information/ansel-adams-biography/

Administrative History
This photographic project was created in part, to document the building of the University of California Santa Cruz campus, known as the "Campus Site Project", and in part for the Fiat Lux commission.

The vast majority of the prints in this collection contain working photographs, which Ansel Adams termed "rough proofs". The rough proofs were used for layout and production purposes, and were not meant to be exhibited or used for publication, as they did not represent the fine print quality that Adams is known for. In addition, almost all of the images are untitled, and many of the prints are duplicated in several sizes.

The original provenance and order of this collection is undetermined. We know that all or part of the initial set of photographs perished in the Central Services fire on campus in 1972. Replacement prints were purchased with Chancellor's funds in 1975. When and how the rough proofs were acquired is not precisely known.

Some of the prints are matted on board, and were hung in various academic offices, some were used for architects' reference and planning. Many of these prints include irregularities that occur from handling, and some include printer's marks on the mattes. Almost all the matted prints have been signed by Adams.

Adams truly enjoyed documenting the early pre-campus: the historic Henry Cowell ranch buildings, the pristine, rolling meadows and deep redwood glades, the magnificent spreading oaks, and the initial campus buildings and construction scenes. Adams reveals his enthusiasm and passion for this natural setting in his charter address written in 1963, and delivered March 30, 1967. For the text of this address see, Additional Collection Guides.

The collection includes the earliest scenes of campus life, notably Dean McHenry standing amongst the trees with the new McHenry Library behind him, and giving a speech to faculty at their first luncheon. The students are documented on registration day of the very first academic year -- automobiles pull up to a simple folding table and campus volunteers assist newcomers. Later images show a group of students painting plein-air and walking past the Cowell College fountain.

Fiat Lux Project In 1963, Ansel Adams along with Nancy Newhall were given an assignment by UC President Clark Kerr to produce images on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the University of California. This work culminated in the centennial book, Fiat Lux: The University of California with bookmaker Adrian Wilson.

"For three years, Adams and Newhall toured the state, visiting nine campuses and dozens of the UC's scientific field stations, reserves, observatories, and agricultural outposts. Fiat Lux was intended not as a document of the university as it was, but rather a portrait of the university as it would be. UC President Clark Kerr asked the artists to project through words and photographs, as far as possible, "the next hundred years"- impossible, of course, but a provocative invitation that the artists embraced. The Fiat Lux project was a massive endeavor, producing 605 fine prints and over 6,700 negatives, far more than the 1,000 images stipulated in Adams's contract. After Adams's lifetime devotion to Yosemite, Fiat Lux was probably the biggest single project of his life". Excerpt, The Bancroft Library:
http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/omeka/exhibits/show/fiat-lux/

Scope and Content of Collection
The collection includes 31 polaroid prints, 9 postcard/offset reproductions, 387 silver gelatin proof prints, and 40 matted prints. The majority of the prints are stamped "rough proof" on the verso and are duplicated in various sizes. The proof prints range in size from 3 x 4" polaroid prints, up to 16 x 20" silver gelatin prints. Other prints are dry mounted on archival and non-archival matte board, ranging in total size from approximately 16 x 20" to 24 x 30". Nearly two thirds of the collection consists of duplicate prints.

Arrangement
Matted and unmatted photographs are separated, and arranged by image subject and size.

Indexing Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library’s online public access catalog.
Adams, Ansel
Photography
University of California, Santa Cruz

Other Finding Aids
MS 118 Patricia and Richard Shirk Collection of Photographs.

Related Material
Fiat Lux images available from the California Museum of Photography, University of California Riverside.

Additional Collection Guides
This list contains Adams' charter address and detailed inventories of the photographic prints.

Charter Address
Proof Prints
Matted and Signed Prints

box 1-15
Series 1 Proof Prints circa 1962-1968
Physical Description: 15 boxes
Series Scope and Content Summary
This series contains polaroid images and Adams' "rough" proof duplicates. Photographs are unmatted and stamped on the verso.
Click here for a detailed inventory.
Arrangement
Prints are arranged by size and subject.

box 1-15
Cowell Ranch buildings and land, Campus building sites, First registration, circa 1962-1968

box 16-21
Series 2 Matted and Signed Prints circa 1962-1975
Physical Description: 6 boxes
Series Scope and Content Summary
This series contains matted prints that were signed by Ansel Adams, including one print of Yosemite National Park (box 20).
Click here for a detailed inventory
Arrangement
Prints are arranged by size and subject.

box 16-21
Cowell Ranch buildings and land, Campus building sites, First registration, Yosemite, circa 1962-1975