

# Counter Revolution

*Honoring the Civil Rights Movement's Fight for Open Accommodations*

In the heat of the Civil Rights Movement, some of the most dramatic moments were in the most common settings: schools, diners, buses, train terminals—unremarkable places, part of the background of public life. But in the South, what was public for some was not public for others, and the most indelible images from the period came from struggles over where one sat, ate, or waited for the bus. The Freedom Riders of 1961, risking violence at the hands of armed mobs, were attacked in the name of rights today taken for granted. The struggle was fierce because the stakes—basic human dignity—were so high.

At the behest of Congress, the National Park Service recently surveyed places that figured prominently in this part of the civil rights struggle, canvassing for potential national historic landmarks at the actual places where the fight to integrate altered history. The result, *Racial Desegregation of Public Accommodations*, assesses the importance of the surviving sites.

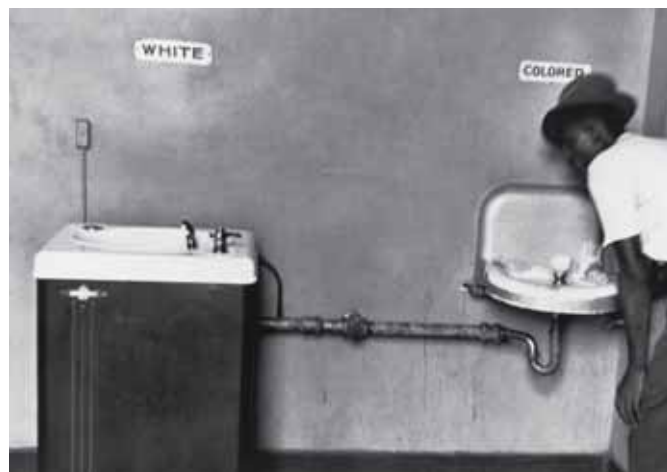
**SOME OF THE MOST DRAMATIC MOMENTS WERE IN THE MOST COMMON SETTINGS: SCHOOLS, DINERS, BUSES, TRAIN TERMINALS—UNREMARKABLE PLACES, PART OF THE BACKGROUND OF PUBLIC LIFE.**

A host of places have already been memorialized as part of the fight to integrate accommodations, including Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site and Preservation District—scene of King's early years and the formation of non-violent protest—and the Lincoln Memorial, where contralto Marian Anderson, barred from Constitution Hall by the Daughters of the American Revolution, sang for 75,000 on Easter Sunday, 1939. The Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, site of the 1963 bombing that killed four girls and spurred the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, has already achieved landmark status as a result of the study. However, many places that were once the battle lines have since been forgotten.

From colonial times to the Civil War, accommodations was primarily an issue in the North, where freed persons of color, though better off than their southern counterparts, remained second class citizens. In 1841, abolitionist Frederick Douglass was removed from a Massachusetts train after refusing to move to the “Jim Crow car.”

**ABOVE:** Fountains, North Carolina, 1950. **RIGHT:** Waitresses pointedly ignore a Saint Augustine College student during a sit-in protest at a counter reserved for white customers, Raleigh, North Carolina, February 10, 1960.

**contact points** **web** *Racial Desegregation of Public Accommodations Study* [www.nps.gov/nhl/themes/Public%20Accom.pdf](http://www.nps.gov/nhl/themes/Public%20Accom.pdf) *National Historic Landmark Theme Studies* [www.nps.gov/nhl/themes/themes.htm](http://www.nps.gov/nhl/themes/themes.htm)



Between 1941 and 1954, the Supreme Court—owing largely to pressure from the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and the U.S. Justice Department—ruled that segregation on trains and buses was unconstitutional. However, some states circumvented the rulings with their own laws, and a 1953 Baton Rouge bus boycott ushered in the era of protests. The study identifies the city's Mount Zion Baptist Church, where boycott meetings were held, as a potential landmark, although its state of preservation is uncertain.

The movement's flowering came with the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision, which rendered public school segregation unconstitutional. The logic was soon extended to public accommodations. Throughout the 1950s, black church leaders organized bus boycotts modeled after the Baton Rouge example. The study notes a number of places figuring in this chapter of the story—among them Trailways stations in Richmond, Virginia, and Birmingham, Alabama—as well as buses where individual acts of courage played out. Many of the stations have been demolished or remodeled, the buses lost to history.

The Greensboro, North Carolina, Woolworth's was the site of a famous 1960 sit-in, part of a wave of demonstrations intending to force integration of lunch counters and restaurants throughout the South. The store has since been remodeled and the counter is now on dis-









**THE FREEDOM RIDERS OF 1961, RISKING VIOLENCE AT THE HANDS OF ARMED MOBS, WERE ATTACKED IN THE NAME OF RIGHTS TODAY TAKEN FOR GRANTED. THE STRUGGLE WAS FIERCE BECAUSE THE STAKES—BASIC HUMAN DIGNITY—WERE SO HIGH.**

play at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History. In Anniston, Alabama, buses no longer roll into the Trailways station where Freedom Riders were attacked in 1961; it has been converted to other uses. But the exterior is still much the same.

The Freedom Riders, black and white, were some of the most effective protesters, with the Kennedy administration having to call out the National Guard to protect them against angry mobs. Civil disobedience, led by figures such as Martin Luther King, Jr., and Ralph Abernathy, played a larger role, with strategies mapped out in various



**LEFT:** Freedom Rider bus with National Guard escort, Montgomery to Jackson, May 24-26, 1961. **ABOVE:** Burning bus, Anniston, Alabama, May 14, 1961.

churches. Among these, Montgomery, Alabama's First Baptist Church is largely intact and could qualify as a national historic landmark. Others, such as Mount Zion Church in Albany, Georgia, while on the National Register of Historic Places, need further research to assess their state of preservation.

The report also discusses discrimination against Asian and Hispanic Americans. Their struggle largely followed a slightly different path from that of African Americans, whose highly visible protests were well-documented and led to major legal decisions. Although the prejudice took similar forms, there have been few accounts dealing exclusively with segregation in public accommodations against these groups, and therefore no potential landmarks identified by the study.

The report is part of a broader effort to identify potential landmarks connected with civil rights, with the National Park Service partnering with the Organization of American Historians to develop an overview of the subject. In addition to the report on public accommodations, two other studies—one covering places associated with voting rights and the other with the desegregation of public schools—have been conducted.

# Framing Nature

*Preserving the Legacy of a Photographer Who Stirred the Nation*

No photographer has elevated wilderness in the public consciousness like Ansel Adams. His images conjure up nature's often inexplicable spirit, depicting wilderness as shrine, ethereal at times, full of silent drama and ambiguous mood. Adams is so well known the mere mention of his name suggests windswept spaces and the Sierra Nevada.

When he died in 1984, a large part of his legacy was already housed at the University of Arizona's Center for Creative Photography. Today, the center houses the definitive Adams archive, with some 2,500 prints, over 40,000 negatives, and the photographer's correspondence, personal papers, and equipment. With a grant from the NPS-administered Save America's Treasures program, the center has established optimum conditions for the collection, ensuring its survival for future generations. The grant—awarded in cooperation with the National Endowment of the Arts, which participates in the program—allowed for the purchase of a large cold storage unit to preserve the negatives and the sink matting of over 2,000 photographs to preserve the original mounts.

**BY THE 1970S, ANSEL ADAMS WAS A LEGEND. "DEAR MR. ADAMS," AN ADMIRER BEGAN HER LETTER. "IN WRITING TO YOU, I ALMOST FEEL THAT I AM WRITING TO JOHN MUIR, OR TO YOSEMITE VALLEY ITSELF."**

While Adams produced some of the most-loved photographs of the American West, he was also an exacting technician who expanded the science behind capturing images on film. And his influence ranged beyond photography. Adams was a force in promoting awareness of conservation when the concept was still relatively young.

Ansel Adams was born in 1902, the son of a successful lumber merchant. He grew up on the heights facing San Francisco Bay, and spent much of his time outdoors, drawn to nature. His father was of similar temperament, and the young Adams—exposed to the ideas of Ralph Waldo Emerson—was instilled with a sense of social responsibility and stewardship of the natural world. His first visit to Yosemite determined the course of his career, "a culmination of experience so intense as to be almost painful," he wrote. "From that day in 1916 my life has been colored and modulated by the great earth gesture of the Sierra." His first images of Yosemite came from that trip, and when he returned to San Francisco he was consumed not only with the valley's



**ABOVE:** Leaves, Glacier National Park, Montana, 1942. **RIGHT:** Manly Beacon, Death Valley National Park, circa 1952.

**contact points** **web** Center for Creative Photography [www.creativephotography.org](http://www.creativephotography.org) Save America's Treasures [www.nps.gov/history/hps/treasures](http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/treasures)

beauty but also with his newfound craft. He got a job as a photo finisher, returning the next year with upgraded equipment. The park was a Mecca for him, with multiple visits honing his technique.

At 17, Adams joined the Sierra Club, taking a summer job as custodian of Yosemite lodge. Over several summers he met some of the most important conservationists, including Stephen T. Mather, first director of the National Park Service. He made increasingly arduous climbs into the Sierra, photographing as he went. Adams was inspired by an "exceedingly pointed awareness of the light . . . there are no words to convey the moods of those moments."

It was during a 1927 trip that Adams captured one of his most famous images, standing precariously on a ridge with his unwieldy camera and glass plates, looking out on Yosemite's famous Half Dome. He took one photograph, then reconsidered, wanting more emotional gravity. Picturing in his mind what that might look like, he put a red filter over the lens. "I really wanted to give it a monumental, dark quality," he wrote. *Monolith—The Face of Half Dome* was the origin of his "visualization" technique—seeing an image in all its detail before snapping the shutter.

Adams' predecessors were the 19th century romantic landscape painters such as Alfred Bierstadt and Thomas Moran, who por-













**WITH EACH OF HIS TRIUMPHS, THE WILD PLACES HE SO LOVED EARNED MORE STATURE. PEOPLE WERE NOT SIMPLY LOOKING AT MOUNTAINS AND FORESTS ANYMORE. THEY WERE LOOKING AT AN IDEA: WILDERNESS AS ESSENTIAL TO THE NATION'S SOUL.**

trayed the wilderness as a spiritual idyll from which industrial, urban America had become alienated. Romanticism still held sway when Adams picked up his camera, but the unadorned photograph was considered more documentary than aesthetic. To render it less literal, some used soft focus, painted negatives, or textured paper. Edward Weston took the opposite approach, emphasizing sharp focus and contrast. Adams was a disciple. And, having once entertained a career as a concert pianist, his discipline as a musician found its way into his craft.



**LEFT:** *Early Morning, Merced River, Yosemite National Park.* **ABOVE:** *Sugarpine Boughs and Lichen, Yosemite National Park, California, 1962*

A wealthy art patron, Albert Bender, was so taken he supported Adams financially, providing an entrée into San Francisco's art world and encouraging his first portfolio, *Parmelian Prints of the High Sierra*. A Smithsonian exhibition followed. A *Washington Post* reviewer wrote, "His photographs are like portraits of the giant peaks, which seem to be inhabited by mythical gods." During the 1930s, troubled by the increasing commercial development in Yosemite Valley, Adams produced the limited edition *Sierra Nevada: The John Muir Trail*, published with the Sierra Club to draw support for the creation of Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park. The club sent Adams to a Washington conference with Interior Secretary Ickes and other officials, his photographs a powerful argument. Ickes sent the images on to President Roosevelt, and both lobbied for the park, designated in 1940.

As Adams' visibility rose, so did the Sierra Club's. With each of his triumphs, the wild places he so loved earned more stature. People were not simply looking at mountains and forests anymore. They were looking at an idea: wilderness as essential to the nation's soul.



In 1936, *An American Place*, his first New York solo exhibit at legendary photographer Alfred Stieglitz's gallery, was a hit with critics and public alike. In 1940, he curated *A Pageant of Photography* to critical acclaim, a show at San Francisco's Golden Gate Exhibition that also featured other photographers. After World War II, he got a Guggenheim fellowship to photograph the national parks. A host of books followed.

**In the 1950s, with unprecedented interest in the parks and an explosion of cars, visitation skyrocketed. Adams called for moderation in meeting the influx. "The imposition of commercial 'resortism' violates the true function of national parks," he wrote. "Things are appreciated for size, unusuality, and scarcity more than for their subtleties and emotional relationship to everyday life," with the parks becoming "gargantuan curio[s] to be seen, not experienced."** In 1955, he and longtime collaborator writer Nancy Newhall produced the exhibit, *This Is the American Earth*, which toured internationally with a companion book published to stellar reviews. It was one of the critical influences in the rise of the environmental movement. By the 1970s, Ansel Adams was a legend. "Dear Mr. Adams," an admirer began her letter. "In writing to you, I almost feel that I am writing to John Muir, or to Yosemite Valley itself." He was a perennial guest of presidents at the White House, where he was not afraid to tell them they should be doing more.

In 1975 he helped found the Center for Creative Photography, a research institution including a museum, photographic archives, and a library. His negatives are now in cold storage, with the photographs conserved so scholars and public can view them in a renovated research space.

In his lens, the landscape became a "symbolic destination," as described in an exhibit at Washington, DC's Corcoran Gallery. Its closing lines captured the essence of his images: "Adams made art that embodied a dream of unbound nature—a sphere where mystery and wonder give way to peace and a sense of one's place in the firmament."

**BELOW:** *Icicles, Yosemite National Park, 1950.* **RIGHT:** *Winter Sunrise, Sierra Nevada, from Lone Pine, California.*







# TAX CREDIT

F E D E R A L   D O L L A R S   I N   S U P P O R T   O F   P R E S E R V A T I O N

**REX GARMENT FACTORY** New Orleans' historic Bywater District encompasses a wealth of old commercial buildings and warehouses like the Rex Garment Factory, built in 1930 and once part of the city's thriving manufacturing base. But as the New Orleans economy moved away from industry, factories suffered, and the Rex closed in the 1980s. Today it is known as the Bywater Lofts, an \$8.2 million transformation done with the help of federal preservation tax credits that retains the mercantile look in apartments and studio spaces for artists. While the interior was reconfigured for new use, the masonry façade was restored and the historic sewing floor is now an atrium, vented via original clerestory windows with period fans.

**BLOUNT HARVEY DEPARTMENT STORE** In a time when a shopping trip was meant to be special, department stores were designed with flair, and not just in the big cities. In 1920, a Greenville, North Carolina, street corner saw the construction of the two-story Blount Harvey building, designed to be both functional and expressive, with large windows on the second floor, decorative brick work, terra cotta rosettes, and other details at the cornice. Its interior featured pressed metal ceilings and wooden floors. In the 1960s, the store fell victim to changing tastes and demographics, and the exterior was modernized with a solid brick veneer. After standing vacant since 1985, the building was purchased by a local family, who embarked on a painstaking rehabilitation in 2005. The brick façade was removed to reveal the original exterior, and historic features inside received much needed repairs. The \$2.4 million rehab, done with the help of tax credits, brought the structure back to life, which now houses retail shops and serves as the focus of a downtown revitalization.

**to qualify for tax credits** *The new use must be income producing, the structure certified as historic, and the renovation in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The credit equals up to 20 percent of the project cost. The preservation tax credit program is administered by the National Park Service with IRS.*

**contact point** **web** [www.nps.gov/hps/tps/tax/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/hps/tps/tax/index.htm)

## Wedding Cake Mansion >>

One of the nation's most architecturally rich cities, Savannah treasures its past. Restorations are not uncommon, since the built environment is so much a part of the city's identity. In a recent project supported by a federal historic preservation tax incentive, one of Savannah's most-photographed landmarks became a boutique hotel for well-heeled travelers. Popularly known as the Wedding Cake Mansion, the house at 14 East Taylor Street is an extravagant Second Empire Baroque structure built in 1869. The group Luxury Living Savannah, which offers historic houses for rent, put nearly \$2 million into the rehab, which—since the new use was in-

**THE GROUP LUXURY LIVING SAVANNAH, WHICH OFFERS HISTORIC HOUSES FOR RENT, PUT NEARLY \$2 MILLION INTO THE REHAB, WHICH—SINCE THE NEW USE WAS INCOME PRODUCING—QUALIFIED FOR THE INCENTIVE UNDER THE FEDERAL TAX CREDIT PROGRAM.**

come producing—qualified for the incentive under the federal tax credit program. The house is actually one of a pair—a duplex built for rich 19th century urbanites. Grand houses like this one were built with cheap labor and abundant, inexpensive materials, so extravagance was not difficult to achieve. The original resident of 14 East Taylor was then-mayor Daniel Purse. The house one sees today is not the one built in 1869. In the latter half of the 19th century, a new style emerged in France, migrating to these shores shortly after the Civil War. Called Second Empire Baroque because of its popularity in the Paris of Napoleon III, it was characterized by elaborate ornamentation. Washington, DC's Executive Office Building is a monumental example of the style, which caught on notably for post offices and railroad terminals around the country. It also became fashionable for urban homeowners to redo their facades with Second Empire flourishes, a hot trend in New York and Boston. German architect Detlef Lienau brought the style to Savannah in 1869. The bay windows on the Wedding Cake Mansion, its surface façade, and its mansard roof are part of a Second Empire renovation done in 1897, a time that saw a transformation of Savannah. According to the National Trust guide to the city, "Local builders were applying vivacious relief surfaces to the older staid [classical] buildings." Second Empire in particular created "an amusing and fanciful street scene." The Wedding Cake Mansion's windows look out over Monterey Square, made famous by the book *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*. Rehabilitation included window and plaster repairs, removing dropped ceilings, restoring the pressed metal above, and refinishing floors and interior woodwork.



