

**A REPORT ON MY OBSERVATIONS ON
THE NORSIGIAN GLASS PLATE NEGATIVES
BY
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ON THE 19TH OF OCTOBER I WAS CONTACTED BY JESSICA KANTOR, AN ASSOCIATE OF ATTORNEY ARNOLD PETERS AND WAS ASKED TO JOIN THE TEAM OF EXPERTS TO EVALUATE 61 GLASS PLATE NEGATIVES FOUND BY RICK NORSIGIAN TO DETERMINE THE AUTHORSHIP OF THIS WORK. AT THAT POINT, MANY YEARS OF RESEARCH HAD ALREADY BEEN DONE AND THERE WAS MUCH CIRCUMSTATIAL AND DIRECT EVIDENCE TO POINT TO THESE NEGATIVES AS HAVING BEEN CREATED BY THE FAMOUS PHOTOGRAPHER, ANSEL ADAMS. IT WAS MY TASK TO BRING THE KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE OF A WORKING LARGE FORMAT PHOTOGRAPHER AND THE WEALTH OF INFORMATION I HAD ACCUMULATED IN 40 YEARS OF BOTH MAKING IMAGES AS WELL AS STUDYING THE HISTORY OF PHOTOGRAPHIC TECHNOLOGIES AND THE HISTORY OF PHOTOGRAPHY. I HAVE PARTICULARLY BEEN A STUDENT OF ANSEL'S WORK FOR MANY YEARS, HAVING READ MOST OF HIS BOOKS AND SEEING HIS WORK IN PERSON IN MANY EXHIBITIONS OVER THE YEARS. IT IS MY OPINION, THAT THROUGH THIS EXTENSIVE STUDY, I HAVE ACQUIRED AS THOROUGH A KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF ANSEL'S WORK AS ANY LAYMAN.

ON THURSDAY OCT. 15 I TRAVELED TO FRESNO, CA, WHICH COINCIDENTLY WAS WHERE I GREW UP, TO MEET ALL OF THE PEOPLE INVOLVED AS WELL AS TO SEE THE WORK FOR THE FIRST TIME. I ARRIVED AT A HOTEL CONFERENCE ROOM SWARMING WITH PEOPLE AND AFTER INTRODUCING MYSELF, GOT MY FIRST GLIMSPE OF THE WORK. DIGITAL PRINTS HAD BEEN MADE OF ALL OF THE NEGATIVES AND THE PRINTS WERE ALL LAID OUT OVER TABLES SET UP FOR THIS PURPOSE. MY RESPONSE TO SEEING THE WORK WAS PALPABLE AND OVERWHELMING. STYLISTICALLY AND EMOTIONALLY I FELT THESE WERE INDEED ANSEL'S IMAGES, EVEN IF I HAD NOT KNOWN ANY THING ELSE ABOUT THEM. ANSEL HAD A VERY DISTINCT AND SINGULAR STYLE OF COMPOSITION THAT HE USED PRETTY MUCH HIS ENTIRE LIFE. HIS COMPOSITIONAL STRATEGY WAS ALWAYS VERY CLASSIC AND STRAIGHT FORWARD. HE RARELY IF EVER TRIED TO PLAY VISUAL GAMES WITH HOW HE ARRANGED HIS PICTURES. HE USED PHOTOGRAPHY AS A MEANS TO DOCUMENT THAT WHICH HE LOVED SO PASSIONATELY, THE NATURAL WORLD, PARTICULARLY YOSEMITE AND THE HIGH SIERRA.

IN ALMOST ALL OF THE PHOTOGRAPHS, THE COMPOSITIONS ARE VIRTUALLY FLAWLESS, TRULY BEING MADE BY A PHOTOGRAPHER OF SINGULAR VISION AND TALENT. THESE WERE NOT WORKS BY AN AMATUER UP FOR A WEEKEND VISIT TO YOSEMITE. COMMENTS

HAVE BEEN MADE THAT MANY PHOTOGRAPHERS TOOK PICTURES OF YOSEMITE. AND WHILE THIS IS TRUE, BY THIS TIME MOST PEOPLE WOULD HAVE USED KODAK BROWNIES. GLASS PLATE NEGATIVES WERE NOT FOR THE AMATUER AS A DARKROOM WAS NECESSARY AND EXTENSIVE DARKROOM SKILLS WERE REQUIRED TO PROCESS THESE VERY FRAGILE PLATES. TO MY KNOWLEDGE THERE IS NO HISTORICAL RECORD OF ANYONE DURING THIS ERA TO HAVE THE SKILLS AND TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE TO WORK WITH THIS COMBINATION OF EQUIPMENT NOR HAVE THE REFINED EYE THAT WAS BROUGHT TO BEAR ON THE SUBJECT MATTER.

HE WAS ALSO VERY CAREFUL TO INCLUDE IN MOST OF HIS WORK SOME FORM OF ATMOSPHERICS, SUCH AS CLOUDS, DAPPLED SUNLIGHT, AND EVEN FOG. THIS, AS EVERY LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHER KNOWS, IS AN ESSENTIAL COMPONENT TO BRINGING OUT THE MOST EXPRESSIVE QUALITIES OF THE SCENE THAT IS BEING PHOTOGRAPHED. VIRTUALLY ALL OF HIS CLASSIC IMAGES ARE NOTED FOR THE EXTRAORDINARY GOOD FORTUNE HE HAD IN FINDING IMAGES THAT HAD THIS QUALITY. FROM *MOONRISE* TO *CLEARING WINTER STORM*, HIS SENSITIVITY TO THESE COMPONENTS OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT MADE HIS IMAGES KNOWN THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. HE WAS TRULY ONE OF THE GREAT PHOTOGRAPHIC GENIUSES OF THE 20TH CENTURY.

HOWEVER, AS CLEAR AND OBVIOUS TO ME THAT THESE IMAGES WERE INDEED ANSELS, THIS PERCEPTION ON MY PART CANNOT BE QUANTIFIED AND THEREFORE CAN ONLY BE VIEWED AS CONJECTURE. UNLIKE PAINTING, WHICH OFTEN HAS INSTANTLY RECOGNIZABLE FEATURES AS A RESULT OF EACH PAINTERS SIGNATURE BRUSH STYLE, NOT UNLIKE A WRITTEN SIGNATURE, PHOTOGRAPHS DO NOT HAVE THIS CHARACTERISTIC. BEING MADE BY A MACHINE, THE INDIVIDUAL MARKINGS OF A PAINTER ARE NOT AVAILABLE TO A CURATOR FOR DETERMINATION AS TO THE AUTHORSHIP OF A PHOTOGRAPH. ONE CAN DO NUMEROUS COMPARISONS BETWEEN WORKS BY THE SAME PHOTOGRAPHER, BUT ULTIMATELY IT STILL COMES DOWN TO AN OPINION, HOWEVER WELL INFORMED THAT OPINION MAY BE.

SO IT NOW BECOMES NECESSARY TO TIE IN OTHER BITS OF EVIDENCE TO ASCERTAIN THE TRUE IDENTITY OF THESE NEGATIVES BY LOOKING AT THE OTHER PIECES OF THE PUZZLE THAT CAN BE KNOWN AND VERIFIED. I WILL LIST THEM IN SECTIONS IN ADDRESSING OTHER ASPECTS AND FACTS AS TO THEIR VERACITY.

THE GLASS PLATES

THE SIZE OF THE NORSIGIAN GLASS PLATES ARE KNOWN TO BE A FORMAT THAT ANSEL USED THROUGHOUT THE 1920'S AND INTO THE 30'S. ON PAGE 3 FROM ANSEL'S BOOK, *EXAMPLES. THE MAKING OF 40 PHOTOGRAPHS*, HE TALKS ABOUT USING HIS 6 ½ x 8 ½ INCH KORONA VIEW CAMERA TO MAKE ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT IMAGES IN HIS CAREER. THIS IMAGE, *MONOLITH, THE FACE OF HALF DOME*, WAS FOR HIM THE FIRST

TIME HE USED A PROCESS WHICH BECAME FOR HIM, AND MANY OTHERS THAT FOLLOWED, A SEMINAL EVENT THAT HE USED FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE. THIS WAS THE CONCEPT OF PREVISUALIZATION, WHICH FOR HIM MEANT THAT WHILE HE WAS LOOKING AT THE IMAGE ON THE GROUND GLASS OF THE CAMERA, HE IMAGINED WHAT HE WANTED THE FINISHED PRINT TO LOOK LIKE. HE THEN PROCEEDED TO EXPOSE, AND USING OTHER TOOLS AS NECESSARY, TO CREATE A NEGATIVE THAT WOULD GIVE HIM A PRINT THAT CORRESPONDED TO THE FEELING HE HAD AT THE TIME OF EXPOSURE. HIS MASTERY OVER ALL OF THE TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF PHOTOGRAPHY ULTIMATELY RESULTED IN THE CREATION OF THE FAMOUS ZONE SYSTEM. THIS SYSTEM ALLOWED HIM AND MANY OTHER PHOTOGRAPHERS, INCLUDING MYSELF, TO CREATE NEGATIVES THAT WOULD MAKE PRINTS OF THE DESIRED QUALITY AND EXPRESSIVENESS. IN THE LIST OF EQUIPMENT HE CARRIED ON THAT FATEFUL DAY WERE 12 WRATTEN GLASS PLATE GLASS NEGATIVES. SO FROM HIS OWN WRITING WE HAVE CONFIRMATION THAT DURING THIS PERIOD HE DID INDEED SHOOT GLASS PLATE NEGATIVES OF THE SAME SIZE AS THE NORSIGIAN NEGATIVES. THIS FACT CANNOT BE DISPUTED.

AN INTERESTING ASIDE IS THE STORY OF HOW THE SIZE OF THE 6 ½ X 8 ½ INCH NEGATIVE CAME INTO BEING. WHEN ONE OF THE 2 COMPETING PHOTOGRAPHIC PROCESSES WERE INVENTED IN 1839, THE MOST POPULAR AND WIDESPREAD OF THESE WAS THE FRENCH DAGUERREOTYPE. 6 ½ X 8 ½ INCHES BECAME KNOWN AS A FULL PLATE. THE SIZE WAS DETERMINED BY THE FACT THAT THIS WAS THE SIZE FOR THE FRENCH STANDARD FOR CASTING INGOTS. THIS WAS THEN USED TO MAKE THE COPPER PLATES ON WHICH A COATING OF SILVER WAS APPLIED TO CREATE THE IMAGE. THIS SIZE PERSISTED WELL INTO THE 20TH CENTURY IN BOTH WET PLATE, DRY PLATE SUCH AS THE NORSIGIAN NEGATIVES, AND THEN INTO FILM. BY THE 1930'S, HOWEVER, FULL PLATE WAS SUPERCEDED BY 8 X 10 WHICH HAS BECOME THE INDUSTRY STANDARD TO THIS DAY. ANSEL MENTIONS IN THE SAME BOOK, *EXAMPLES*, ON PAGE 19, HOW IN 1932 HE RETIRED HIS KORONA 6 ½ X 8 ½ CAMERA AND REPLACED IT WITH AN 8 X 10, WHICH BECAME HIS PRIMARY CAMERA FOR MOST OF THE REST OF HIS LIFE.

FIRE DAMAGE

ON SEVERAL OF THE GLASS PLATES THERE IS SIGNIFICANT DAMAGE AROUND THE OUTER EDGES. IN THE WORKING AND DEVELOPING THE TENS OF THOUSANDS OF NEGATIVES I HAVE HAND PROCESSED OVER THE YEARS, THERE IS NOTHING IN MY EXPERIENCE OR IN ANY OF MY COLLEAGUES THAT CHEMICALLY OR PHYSICALLY WOULD CAUSE SUCH DAMAGE AS IS ON THESE NEGATIVES. THE BLISTERING AND PEELING ARE, IN MY OPINION, THE RESULT OF INTENSE HEAT. IN SEVERAL OF THE BOOKS ON ANSEL'S LIFE, HIS STUDIO FIRE IN 1937 WAS A TRAGIC AND IMPORTANT MOMENT IN HIS CAREER. HE TALKS ABOUT IT IN DEPTH IN HIS AUTOBIOGRAPHY. THIS STORY IS ONE OF THE IMPORTANT FACTS THAT ALL STUDENTS OF ANSEL'S LIFE ARE AWARE. THE RESULT OF THIS FIRE CAUSED THE LOSS OF OVER 5000 NEGATIVES, MANY OF WHICH WERE FROM HIS

FORMATIVE YEARS DURING THE 1920's. IN LOOKING AT THESE NEGATIVES IT IS VERY EASY TO IMAGINE HIM, EDWARD WESTON, AND OTHERS HELPING HIM SAVE MANY NEGATIVES FROM DAMAGE BY THROWING THEM IN A BATHTUB FILLED WITH WATER AS HE STATES IN HIS AUTOBIOGRAPHY. IT TOOK DAYS TO CLEAN AND DRY THEM. IT IS HERE, I BELIEVE, THAT VIRGINIA ADAMS HELPED BY WRITING THE NAMES ON THE PAPER SLEEVES AS EACH ONE WAS SAVED. IT IS INDEED HER WRITING ON THE SLEEVES AND THIS HAS BEEN VERIFIED AND CONFIRMED BY INDEPENDENT HAND WRITING ANALYSISISTS. THERE WOULD BE NO OTHER INSTANT I CAN THINK OF WHERE VIRGINIA WOULD BE WRITING ON HIS NEGATIVE SLEEVES AS SHE HAD VERY LITTLE INTERACTION WITH HIS PHOTOGRAPHY, ESPECIALLY IN THE DARKROOM. SO, THOUGH NOT COMPLETELY VERIFIABLE, THIS EVIDENCE IS VERY COMPELLING AND LOGICAL GIVEN THE PHYSICAL EVIDENCE OF THE NEGATIVES.

SILVER TARNISHING AND AGING

THERE HAVE BEEN QUESTIONS RAISED AS TO THE DATING OF THIS MATERIAL. THERE ARE 2 STRONG INDICATIONS THAT THE NEGATIVES ARE INDEED FROM THIS TIME PERIOD. THE FIRST IS THE EXTENSIVE TARNISHING OF THE NEGATIVES EMULSION AND THE SECOND IS THE DETERIOATION OF THE PAPER SLEEVES THE NEGATIVES WERE STORED IN. ON THE EMULSION SIDE OF THE NEGATIVES, THERE CAN PLAINLY BE SEEN A METALLIC SHEEN WHICH IS A RESULT OF THE OXIDATION OF THE SILVER IN THE EMULSION. THIS OCCURS OVER A LONG PERIOD OF TIME AS THE SILVER MOLECULES REACT WITH AIR. THE PROCESS CAN ALSO BE SEEN IN PRINTS FROM THIS TIME PERIOD AS IT APPEARS TO TAKE 70 TO 100 YEARS FOR THIS TO MANIFEST ITSELF. THIS HELPS PLACE THESE NEGATIVES IN THE RIGHT TIME PERIOD. WHEN THE UNEXPOSED SILVER HALIDES, WHICH THROUGH DEVELOPMENT CREATES THE IMAGE, HAS BEEN PROCESSED, THE SILVER HALIDES BECOME A MOLECULAR COMPOUND OF SILVER SULFIDE. THIS MOLECULE IS WHAT IS TARNISHED IN THE EMULSION BY OXYGEN. IT WAS LATER WHEN IT WAS FOUND THAT BATHING THE PROCESSED NEGATIVE OR PRINT IN A SOLUTION OF SELENIUM THAT ELIMATED THE PROBLEM. SELENIUM TRANSFORMED SILVER SULFIDE INTO SILVER SELENIDE, A MOLECULE RESISTANT TO OXYDATION. THIS HAS BECOME AN INTREGAL PART OF ALL MODERN SILVER PRINT PROCESSING TO BE CONSIDERED ARCHIVAL OR LONG LASTING.

THE SECOND FACTOR IN THE DETERMINATION OF THE AGE OF THE IMAGES IS THE SERIOUS ACID DAMAGE OF THE PAPER SLEEVES. THESE SLEEVES WERE MANUFACTURED IN THE ERA WHERE THERE WAS NO WIDE SPREAD KNOWLEDGE OF PAPER CONSERVATION AND ARCHIVAL PRESERVATION. THE SLEEVES WERE MADE FROM A WOOD FIBER BASED PAPER, SIMILAR IN CONTENT TO NEWSPAPER STOCK. THERE IS A VERY COMPLEX COMPOUND IN WOOD CALLED LIGNIN. THIS IS THE FIBER THAT MAKES WOOD HARD. IN

TIME, THIS COMPOUND DETERIORATES INTO SULFURIC ACID, NITRIC ACID, AND HYDROCHLORIC ACID. THIS WITCH'S BREW OF CORROSIVE COMPOUNDS LITERALLY EATS THE PAPER OVER TIME. THE RESULT OF THIS REACTION IS PAPER THAT TURNS A DARK TAN/YELLOW AND BECOMES SO BRITTLE THAT IT HAS LOST ALL OF IT'S ORIGINAL FLEXIBILITY. FINALLY, THE PAPER JUSTS CRUMBLES WHEN TOUCHED. THIS IS THE STATE THE SLEEVES ARE CURRENTLY IN, AGAIN POINTING THE MATERIAL TO THE RIGHT TIME FRAME AS THIS PROCESS, LIKE THE SILVER TARNISH, TAKES YEARS TO MANIFEST ITSELF.

UNFORTUNATELY, THERE IS NEITHER A WAY TO DETERMINE WHAT THE PLATE TYPE WAS AND WHO WAS THE MANUFACTURER. IN LARGE FORMAT FILM, EACH FILM HAS A SPECIFIC NOTCH ARRANGEMENT INDIVIDUAL TO EACH FILM. THIS NOT ONLY TELLS WHAT KIND OF FILM IT IS AND WHO MADE IT, BUT ALSO ALLOWS THE PHOTOGRAPHER TO KNOW HOW THE FILM IS ORIENTED SO THE EMULSION CAN BE PLACED IN THE HOLDER IN THE CORRECT POSITION WITH THE EMULSION SIDE FORWARD. I AM NOT CURRENTLY AWARE OF ANY WAY IN WHICH THE PLATES CAN BE SPECIFICALLY DATED, BUT PERHAPS ANALYSIS OF THE PAPER CAN ACHIEVE A DEFINITIVE DATE. HOWEVER, WITH THE CONDITION OF TARNISHING OF THE PLATE EMULSION AND THE ADVANCED STATE OF ACID DAMAGE TO THE SLEEVES, THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT THAT THESE ARE OLD ENOUGH TO FALL PERFECTLY INTO THE PROPER TIME FRAME.

PICTORIALISM

ONE OF THE FIRST THINGS I NOTICED IN THE IMAGES OF THE BOATS WAS HOW PICTORIALIST THEY WERE. PICTORIALISM WAS A MOVEMENT IN PHOTOGRAPHY BEGUN IN THE LATE 1800'S AND ENCOMPASSED MANY DIFFERENT STYLES. THE COMMON MISCONCEPTION OF THE STYLE WAS THAT ALL OF THE IMAGES WERE SOFT FOCUS. SOFT FOCUS WAS ONLY ONE VARIANT OF THE MOVEMENT, ESPECIALLY INTO THE 20TH CENTURY. ANOTHER WAS THE USAGE OF MORE HAND MADE PRINT MAKING PROCEDURES SUCH AS PLATINUM, BROMOIL, AND GUM BICHROMATE. THE OTHER WAS CHOICE OF SUBJECT MATTER. SHARPER FOCUS WAS EQUALLY A PART OF THE MOVEMENT. THE MOVEMENT PERSISTED WELL INTO THE MID 20TH CENTURY. IN LOOKING FURTHER INTO THE 2 BOOKS I HAVE ON THE PICTORIALIST MOVEMENT, "*PICTORIALISM IN CALIFORNIA-1900-1949*" AND "*AFTER THE PHOTO-SECESSION. AMERICAN PICTORIAL PHOTOGRAPHS 1910-1955*", BOTH HAD NUMEROUS EXAMPLES OF IMAGES SHOT WITH NON SOFT FOCUS LENSES, INCLUDING ONE BY ANSEL, "*MT. ROBSON FROM MT. RESPLENDENT, 1928.*" THIS IMAGE IS ALSO IN THE BOKK "*ANSEL AT 100*" ON PAGE 16, THE VERTICAL VERSION ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE PAGE. PICTORIALISM WAS EXCISED FROM HISTORY WHEN BEAUMONT NEWHALL, WHO HATED PICTORIALISM AS DID ANSEL, WROTE HIS SEMINAL BOOK ON THE HISTORY OF PHOTOGRAPHY. BUT PICTORIALISM EXISTED SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH MODERNISM ALL THE WAY TO MIDCENTURY AND WAS EQUALLY ACTIVE WITH NUMEROUS SALON EXHIBITIONS,

ARTICLES IN THE LEADING CAMERA MAGAZINES, AND VARIOUS OTHER PUBLICATIONS. ONE OF THE GREAT STORIES IN THE HISTORY OF PHOTOGRAPHY WAS THE RUNNING VERBAL BATTLE BETWEEN THE 2 LEADING PROPONENTS OF THE TWO COMPETING SCHOOLS OF PHOTOGRAPHY. ANSEL WAS THE MAIN CHAMPION OF MODERNISM AND WILLIAM MORTENSON, THE PRIMARY SPOKESMAN FOR PICTORIALISM. BOTH HATED EACH OTHER'S WORK AND THERE WAS A CONTINUOUS RANKEROUS DEBATE BETWEEN THEM THAT WAS PLAYED OUT IN THE PAGES OF THE ERA'S MAIN CAMERA MAGAZINES.

THE TENENTS OF PICTORIALISM WERE COMPLEX AND ENCOMPASSED MANY DIFFERENT VIEWPOINTS, BUT THE PRIMARY PURPOSE WAS TO BRING PHOTOGRAPHY INTO THE MAINSTREAM OF ART BY MAKING IT LOOK LIKE THE ART OF IT'S TIME BY EMULATING THE CHARACTERISTICS OF MORE TRADITIONAL MEDIA SUCH AS PAINTING AND DRAWING. THIS WAS ACHIEVED IN MANY DIFFERENT WAYS INCLUDING SUCH RELATIVELY SIMPLE CHARACTERISTICS AS COMPOSITION, TRYING TO MAKE THE SUBJECT MATTER, IN THE CASE OF ANSEL'S BOATS, LOOK LIKE THEY WERE PREPARATION DRAWINGS FOR PAINTINGS TO BE MADE LATER. THERE WAS ALSO A SENTIMENTALITY AND EFFORT TO ACHIEVE A TIMELESSNESS THAT WAS A CONSTANT ELEMENT IN MOST PICTORIAL WORK. ANSEL'S EARLY PRINTS WERE PART OF PICTORIALISM AS THERE WAS NOTHING ELSE TO EMULATE AT THE TIME HE WAS BEGINNING TO MAKE HIS IMAGES AS MODERISM AND HIS EMBRACING OF IT DIDN'T HAPPEN UNTIL THE EARLY 1930'S. WITH THE INFLUENCE OF PEOPLE SUCH AS PAUL STRAND AND EDWARD WESTON WHO ALSO SWORE OFF PICTORIALISM, HE JOINED THE MODERNIST MOVEMENT IN THE EARLY 1930'S BY BEING ONE OF THE FOUNDERS OF THE F/64 GROUP. THIS GROUP OF YOUNG PHOTOGRAPHERS ABANDONED ALL COMPONENTS OF THE PICTORIAL STYLE AND EMBRACED THE MODERNIST MOVEMENT OF PHOTOGRAPHY, SO CALLED STRAIGHT OR PURE PHOTOGRAPHY. ONE OF THE METHODS IN ACHIEVING THIS WAS THROUGH SHARP FOCUS IMAGES. THE OTHER WAS PRINTED ON PURE BLACK AND WHITE PAPER WITH A GLOSSY SURFACE. THE PRIME CHARACTERISTIC OF MODERNISM WAS TO KEEP PHOTOGRAPHY PURE TO ITSELF.

ANSEL EVEN STATES IN HIS AUTOBIOGRAPHY HOW, WHEN ALBERT BENDER COMMISSIONED ANSEL'S FIRST PORTFOLIO, "*PARMELIAN PRINTS OF THE HIGH SIERRAS*" (SIC), THAT HE HAD WILLIAM DASSONVILLE MAKE THE PAPER FOR IT. DASSONVILLE WAS NOT ONLY A WORLD RENONWED AND EXHIBITED PICTORIALIST, BUT MADE ONE OF THE FINEST PHOTOGRAPHIC PRINTING PAPERS AVAILABLE TO ALL OF THE PICTORIALISTS OF THIS ERA, ESPECIALLY IN CALIFORNIA. THIS WAS THE PAPER KNOWN AS "DASSONVILLE BLACK." DASSONVILLE'S WORK WAS PUBLISHED QUITE FREQUENTLY IN SOME OF THE CAMERA MAGAZINES AT THE TIME, ACCORDING TO THE BIOGRAPHY OF HIM, AND AS SUCH HIS IMAGES WERE WELL KNOWN IN THE PHOTO COMMUNITY. BY THE FACT THAT ANSEL KNEW OF HIM AND HAD HIM MAKE THE PAPER ESPECIALLY FOR THIS PORTFOLIO SURELY MEANT ANSEL WAS VERY AWARE OF THE PICTORIALIST MOVEMENT AND MADE EARLY IMAGES IN THIS STYLE, INCLUDING SOME BEAUTIFUL SOFT FOCUS

IMAGES FROM EARLY IN HIS CAREER. I BELIEVE ANSEL'S EVOLUTION AS AN ARTIST BEGAN WITH A SHORT BUT SIGNIFICANT EXPLORATION OF THE TENANTS OF PICTORIALISM, INCLUDING THE USAGE OF TEXTURED WARM TONE PAPER, BEFORE HE SETTLED ONTO HIS SIGNATURE STYLE OF SHARP FOCUS AND GLOSSY BLACK AND WHITE PAPERS. HE MENTIONS HIS TRANSITION FROM THE PICTORIALIST STYLE PAPER INTO THE GLOSSY PAPER AGAIN IN HIS AUTOBIOGRAPHY. THIS TRANSITION BEGAN AROUND 1930.

IMAGE COMPARISON-JEFFRIES PINE

IT HAS BEEN MY BELIEF THAT IF JUST ONE OF THESE NEGATIVES COULD BE FOUND TO MATCH AN EXISTING PRINT, THEN THIS WOULD BE CONCLUSIVE AND IRREFUTABLE PROOF THAT THESE LOST NEGATIVES WERE INDEED MADE BY ANSEL. AND SUCH PROOF WAS FOUND. BOB MOELLER, INDEPENDENT CURATOR AND OTHER MEMBER ON THE TEAM SHOWED ME PRINTS THAT HE BELIEVED WERE SHOT ON THE SAME DAY. ONE WAS FROM THE 6 ½ X 8 ½ NORSIGIAN NEGATIVE AND THE OTHER CAME FROM THE CENTER FOR CREATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY IN TUCSON, AZ. THE CENTER HAS VERIFIED THAT THERE ARE IN FACT 2 NEGATIVES THAT CORRESPOND TO THE NORSIGIAN NEGATIVE, BOTH SHOT ON 5 X 7 FILM. THE OTHER PRINTS ARE PART OF ANSEL'S ACHIVE AND AS SUCH IS IRREFUTABLY MADE BY HIM. IN INITIALLY EXAMINING THE 2 IMAGES SIDE BY SIDE, THE OTHER NEGATIVE WAS DONE IN A DIFFERENT FORMAT OR SIZE, WHICH HAD BOB QUITE MYSTIFIED. HOWEVER THERE ARE 2 VERY LOGICAL AND EASY ANSWERS TO EXPLAIN THIS SIZE DISCREPANCY. EITHER HE BROUGHT AN ADDITIONAL CAMERA WITH HIM, WHICH IS EASY TO IMAGINE, OR HE HAD WITH HIM WHAT IS KNOWN AS A REDUCING BACK. THIS WAS A BACK THAT FIT ONTO THE REAR OF THE CAMERA, BUT WAS DESIGNED TO SHOOT A DIFFERENT AND SMALLER FILM FORMAT, SUCH AS IN THIS CASE 5 X 7 INCHES. THIS WOULD HAVE MEANT HE COULD TAKE A LARGER QUANTITY OF FILM HOLDERS AS 5 X 7 HOLDERS WERE SMALLER AND LIGHTER. HE WOULD HAVE USED THE BIGGER NEGATIVE FOR THE BEST OF HIS SHOTS AND USED THE SMALLER ONES FOR VARIANTS, SUCH AS IN THE OTHER SHOTS OF THE JEFFRIES PINE. IN LOOKING AT BOTH IMAGES SIDE BY SIDE, I BELIEVE THE 6 X 8 IS THE STRONGER OF THE 2.

ALMOST ALL VIEW CAMERAS GOING BACK TO THE BEGINNING OF PHOTOGRAPHY HAD A REMOVEABLE BACK AS TO ALLOW A CHANGE IN THE ORIENTATION OF THE COMPOSITION FROM HORIZONTAL TO VERTICAL WITHOUT THE CUMBERSOME AND FRANKLY DANGEROUS OPTION OF TURNING THE ENTIRE CAMERA ON IT'S SIDE. THIS ASPECT OF VIEW CAMERAS IS STILL IN OPERATION TO THIS DAY. THE WOODEN BACK PART OF THE CAMERA, CALLED THE BACK STANDARD, IS PRIMARILY JUST AN OPEN 4 SIDED BOX WHERE THE BELLOWS GOES INTO ONE END AND THE REMOVEABLE BACK IS ATTACHED TO THE OTHER END. THIS BACK IS A SOLID FRAME OF WOOD WITH AN OPENING THE SAME SIZE AS THE FILM IT IS MEANT TO USE, WHICH IN THE CASE OF ANSEL'S CAMERA AND NEGATIVES, WAS THE FULL PLATE SIZE OF 6 ½ X 8 ½. THE

HOLDER IS INSERTED INTO A 3-SIDED LIGHT TIGHT POCKET UNDERNEATH THE GROUND GLASS FRAME. THIS IS ANOTHER FRAME WITH THE GROUND GLASS ATTACHED. IT IS THROUGH THE GROUND GLASS THAT THE IMAGE IS SEEN AND VIEWED THROUGH THE LENS MOUNTED TO THE FRONT STANDARD. LEAF SPRINGS SECURE THIS SECOND FRAME AND WITH PRESSURE HOLDS THE PLATE HOLDER IN PLACE WHILE THE DARK SLIDE IS REMOVED AND THE IMAGE IS TAKEN. THE TENSION OF THE LEAF SPRINGS ON THE GROUND GLASS FRAME PRESSING DOWN ONTO THE HOLDER IS HOW THE HOLDER IS SECURED INTO THE BACK OF THE CAMERA.

A REDUCING BACK IS DESIGNED TO GIVE THE PHOTOGRAPHER THE OPTION TO SHOOT OTHER FILM FORMATS WITHOUT THE ARDOUS TASK OF CARRYING AN ADDITIONAL COMPLETE CAMERA OUTFIT WITH HIM. ALL THAT IS REQUIRED IS A MATCHING OUTSIDE FRAME THAT IS FIT TO MATCH THE PIN SYSTEM THAT HOLDS THE BACK ON, BUT THE POCKET FOR THE FILM HOLDER IS FOR A DIFFERENT AND SMALLER FILM SIZE. SO WITH THE 6 ½ X 8 ½ BACK, ONE COULD SHOOT 5 X 7, 4 X 5, AND EVEN 3 ¼ X 4 ¼, ALL STANDARD SIZES AT THE TIME. THIS PIECE OF EQUIPMENT WOULD HAVE BEEN PART OF ANY FIELD PHOTOGRAPHER'S KIT AND THEREFORE COULD EASILY EXPLAIN THE FORMAT CHANGES BETWEEN THE 2 *JEFFRIES PINE* IMAGES. AN EXAMPLE OF JUST SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT WAS FOUND ON EBAY, ITEM NUMBER [220504640668](#), SHOWING A KORONA 5 X 7 CAMERA WITH A 4 X 5 REDUCING BACK.

I RECENTLY ACQUIRED FROM A COMPANY WHO SPECIALIZES IN REPRINTING COPIES OF OLD CAMERA MANUELS AND CATALOGS. ONE OF THE CATALOGS OFFERED BY THEM WAS AN EXACT REPRODUCTION OF A 1926 KORONA CALALOG BY THE GUNDLACH OPTICAL CO. OF ROCHESTER NEW YORK. AND THERE IT WAS, A PAGE LISTING REDUCING BACKS FOR ALL OF THEIR DIFFERENT SIZE CAMERAS. NEXT TO THE 6 ½ X 8 ½ SIZE CAMERA WAS A LISTING FOR A 5 X 7 REDUCING BACK. IT'S COST WAS \$12. SO ALREADY THERE IS PHYSICAL, HISTORICAL, AND PHOTOGRAPHIC PROOF THAT KORONAS DID COME WITH REDUCING BACKS AS PART OF THEIR ACCESSORIES. REDUCING BACKS WERE ALSO OFFERED BY OTHER COMPANIES TO FIT A VARIETY OF DIFFERENT CAMERAS, KODAK WAS ONE SUCH COMPANY TO OFFER VARIOUS BACKS FOR OTHER BRANDS AS WELL AS BURKE AND JAMES OUT OF CHICAGO. THIS CONFIRMS WITHOUT A DOUBT THAT SUCH A POSSIBILITY COULD EXIST.

HOWEVER, MORE INFORMATION HAS COME TO LIGHT IN ANSEL'S *EXAMPLES*. ON PAGE 15, HE WRITES:

"IN THE EARLY 1930'S MY EXCURSIONS WERE MORE CAUTIOUS, AND I USED MY CAMERA WITH SERIOUS INTENT. MY CAMERAS OF THAT PERIOD WERE 4 X 5 KORONA VIEW, 5 X 7 AND 3 ¼ X 4 ¼ ZEISS JUWELS, 5 X 7 LINHOF, 5 X 7 DEARDORFF, 4 X 5 SPEED GRAPHIC, 2 ¼ X 2 ¼ ZEISS SUPER- IKONTA B AND A 35MM CONTAX-NOT ALL POSSESSED AT ONE

TIME! MY WIFE, VIRGINIA PROPERLY APPROPRIATED THE SUPER-IKONTA B AND IT REMAINS A FINE CAMERA TO THIS DAY. I USED MOSTLY THE ZEISS JUWELS, ESPECIALLY THE 5 X 7 MODEL, ADAPTED TO OLD STYLE GRAFLOK BACKS. I USED GRAFLEX 3 ¼ X 4 ¼ AND 4 X 5 ROLL FILM HOLDERS, AND GRAFLOK MAGAZINES, SHEET FILM HOLDERS, AND FILM PACK ADAPTERS. I LATER HAD THE JUWELS AND OTHER CAMERS ADAPTED FOR STANDARD GRAFLOK BACKS. ADD TO THE LIST MY 8 X 10 VIEW CAMERA FOR STUDIO WORK AND AUTOMOBILE, PACKMULE, AND SHORT BACKBACK EXCURSIONS."

SO NOW WE HAVE NOT ONE BUT TWO EXPLANATIONS POSSIBLE FOR HIM MAKING DIFFERENT SIZE NEGATIVES. HOWEVER, IN LIGHT OF WHAT HE SAID IN *EXAMPLES*, IT IS MOST LIKELY HE TOOK THE 5 X 7 ZEISS JUWEL WITH HIM ON THAT DAY WHEN HE TOOK THE 3 SHOTS OF THE *JEFFRIES PINE*. THE GRAFLOK MAGAZINES WERE AN INGENIOUS FILM HOLDER SOLUTION AS IT WAS A HOLDER ONLY SLIGHTLY THICKER THAN A STANDARD HOLDER. THERE WERE INDIVIDUAL METAL SEPTUMS THAT EACH HELD ONE SHEET OF FILM. WHEN THE EXPOSURE WAS MADE, THE HOLDER WAS PULLED APART, THE EXPOSED FILM FALLING TO THE BACK AND A NEW SHEET PLACED IN FRONT. I BELIEVE THERE WERE 6 SHEETS OF FILM IN EACH HOLDER, ALLOWING A LOT OF FILM TO BE CARRIED WITHOUT A LOT OF WEIGHT, MEANING AN EXTRA CAMERA WOULD NOT HAVE ADDED THAT MUCH WEIGHT TO THE TOTAL LOAD.

AFTER SOLVING THAT MINOR MYSTERY, CAME THE CLOSEUP EXAMINATION OF THE 2 IMAGES SIDE BY SIDE. THERE WAS NO QUESTION THAT IT WAS THE SAME TREE AS THE BRANCHES AND ROOTS MATCHED PERFECTLY AS DID THE GRANITE BOULDER IT WAS GROWING FROM. SO THE QUESTION HAD TO BE, TO SOLVE THIS ONCE AND FOR ALL, WAS WHETHER THEY WERE SHOT ON THE SAME DAY. I EXAMINED THE CLOUDS AND THOUGH THEY LOOKED SIMILAR, THERE WERE NO EXACT CLOUD PATTERNS I COULD DISCERN AS BEING SHOT AT THE SAME TIME. AS HAVING SPENT YEARS PHOTOGRAPHING OUTSIDE AND SEEING HOW QUICKLY CLOUDS CAN CHANGE, THIS WAS NOT A SURPRISE. HOWEVER, THE CLOUDS LOOKED TO BE THE SAME TYPE, WHICH HAS BEEN INDEPENDENTLY CORROBORATED BY A METEOROLOGIST WHOSE REPORT IS PART OF THIS INVESTIGATION. WHAT FINALLY GOT MY ATTENTION WAS THE SNOW PACK PATTERNS ON THE DISTANT MOUNTAINS. HAVING SPENT MANY YEARS IN THE MOUNTAINS, IT IS COMMON KNOWLEDGE THAT SNOW PACK PATTERNS ARE NEVER THE SAME FOR VERY LONG. CONSTANTLY CHANGING STORMS THROUGHOUT THE WINTER MONTHS ARE CONTINUALLY REARRANGING HOW THE SNOW SITS ON ROCKS AND IN CREVASSES. IN CLOSE EXAMINATION WITH JUST MY NAKED EYE, ALL OF THE VARIOUS DETAILS OF THE DISTANT SNOWPACKS WERE IDENTICAL, EVERY ONE OF THEM. THEY WERE AN EXACT MATCH. THIS WAS WHAT I HAVE BEEN REFERRING TO AS THE "SMOKING GUN." THIS PROVES CONCLUSIVELY THAT BOTH IMAGES WERE SHOT ON THE SAME DAY, MINUTES OR HOURS APART.

SO WITH DEDUCTIVE REASONING, IF ANSEL TOOK ONE OF THE PICTURES, WHICH IS A GIVEN, THEN ANSEL HAD TO TAKE THE OTHER. NO OTHER EXPLANATION IS REASONABLE OR POSSIBLE. THIS IS THE ONE NONDEBATEABLE FACT OF ALL OF THIS RESEARCH. AS TO WHETHER THE SPACING BETWEEN THE POINTS OF COMPARISON MAY NOT MATCH, THAT IS EASILY EXPLAINED BY HIS USING A DIFFERENT LENS, WHICH WOULD CHANGE THE SPACIAL RELATIONSHIPS BASED ON THE FOCAL LENGTH OF EACH LENS. ALONG WITH THE FACT OF VIRGINIA'S HANDWRITING AND ALL OF THE OTHER NONQUANTIFIABLE ASPECTS SUCH AS HIS PERSONAL STYLE, HIS USAGE OF THIS PARTICULAR CAMERA FORMAT, THE FIRE DAMAGE ON THE NEGATIVES, AND THE SUBJECT MATTER ALL TOGETHER HAS ME CONVINCED WITHOUT QUESTION OR HESITATION THAT THESE ARE INDEED EXAMPLES OF SOME OF HIS EARLY FORMATIVE PHOTOGRAPHS.

TWO QUESTIONS HAVE ARISEN REGARDING THE VERACITY OF THIS WORK. FIRST WAS THE POSSIBILITY THAT OTHER PHOTOGRAPHERS SUCH AS TABER AND FISK COULD EASILY HAVE TAKEN THESE IMAGES. WITHOUT ANY OF THE OTHER CORROBORATING EVIDENCE, THIS IS INDEED A VALID QUESTION. BUT THIS IS IMMEDIATELY DISMISSED AS A POSSIBILITY IN THEN HOW DID VIRGINIA ADAM'S HANDWRITING END UP ON THE NEGATIVE SLEEVES. THERE IS NO POSSIBLE SCENARIO THAT COULD BE IMAGINED TO ALLOW THIS TO HAVE HAPPENED AND AS SUCH IS NO LONGER SUBJECT TO CONSIDERATION.

THE SECOND, HOWEVER, TAKES A LITTLE BIT MORE TO RESPOND TO. THIS WAS THAT THE BEST STUDIO IN YOSEMITE, BELONGING TO VIRGINIA'S FATHER, MADE IMAGES OF YOSEMITE TO BE THEN HANDCOLORED AND SOLD TO THE TOURISTS AS THEY VISITED THE PARK. ANSEL SAYS IN HIS AUTOBIOGRAPHY THAT THE PHOTOGRAPHER WHO WAS HIRED TO DO THIS WORK WAS MEDIOCRE AT BEST AND THE MAN'S NAME HAS BEEN LOST TO MEMORY. AS A HANDCOLORIST FOR OVER 30 YEARS, IT HAS BEEN MY EXPERIENCE THAT ONLY CERTAIN IMAGES LEND THEMSELVES TO THIS PROCESS. THERE IS VIRTUALLY NOT A SINGLE ONE OF THE NORSIGIAN NEGATIVES THAT I WOULD EVER CONSIDER WORTHY OF COLORING. THIS, I AM AWARE, IS AGAIN A SUBJECTIVE EVALUATION AND CANNOT BE QUANTIFIED. BUT THEN THE QUESTION ARISES IS HOW DID THESE NEGATIVES BECOME FIRE DAMAGED AS THE BEST NEGATIVES WERE NOT PART OF ANSEL'S DARKROOM. SECONDLY, WHY WOULD THERE BE NOT ONLY BOAT PICTURES IN THIS GROUP AS THESE WOULD NEVER BE PUT UP FOR SALE IN A TOURIST GALLERY IN YOSEMITE NOR WOULD THE CARMEL PICTURES EITHER. LASTLY, UNDER WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD BEST IMAGES HAVE MADE IT TO LA. AGAIN, THERE IS NO SCENARIO THAT COULD POSSIBLY EXPLAIN SUCH A JOURNEY, ESPECIALLY WHEN IT WAS WELL KNOWN THAT ANSEL WAS HERE FOR SEVERAL YEARS TEACHING AT ART CENTER. SO BOTH QUESTIONS, VALID WHEN CONSIDERED BY THEMSELVES, COMPLETELY FALL APART WHEN EXAMINED BY BOTH LOGIC AND FACTS.

IN TALKING WITH MR. NORSIGIAN ABOUT WHAT HE FOUND OUT AS TO THE ORIGIN OF THESE NEGATIVES, HE FOUND THAT THE PERSON HE BOUGHT THEM FROM HAD ACQUIRED THEM IN THE 1940'S FROM A WAREHOUSE SALVAGE IN LOS ANGELES. IT IS KNOWN THAT ANSEL WAS IN LA IN THE EARLY 40'S TEACHING HERE AT ART CENTER, WHICH WAS WHERE THE ZONE SYSTEM WAS CREATED. IN THINKING ABOUT HOW THIS WORK GOT HERE, IT IS MY BELIEF THAT HE BROUGHT THESE NEGATIVES WITH HIM FOR TEACHING PURPOSES AND TO SHOW STUDENTS TO NOT LET THEIR NEGATIVES BE ENGULFED IN A FIRE. I THINK THIS CLEARLY EXPLAINS THE RANGE OF WORK IN THESE NEGATIVES, FROM VERY EARLY PICTORIALIST BOAT PICTURES, TO IMAGES NOT AS SUCCESSFUL, TO IMAGES OF THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF HIS WORK DURING THIS TIME PERIOD. HIS HUMOR WAS LEGENDARY AND IT WOULD NOT BE UNREASONABLE FOR HIM TO SHOW THE FIRE DAMAGED PLATES AND REGALE HIS STUDENTS WITH WHAT WAS SURELY A GREAT STORY. IT WILL NEVER BE POSSIBLE TO KNOW WHY HE WOULD HAVE LEFT THESE NEGATIVES IN STORAGE, BUT LEFT THEM HE DID. THEIR JOURNEY FROM HIS CAMERA, THROUGH HIS FIRE, DOWN TO LA, AND THEN TO BE FOUND IN FRESNO, OF ALL PLACES, IS TRULY ONE OF THE MOST REMARKABLE IN THE ANNALS OF ART AND PHOTOGRAPHIC HISTORY.