

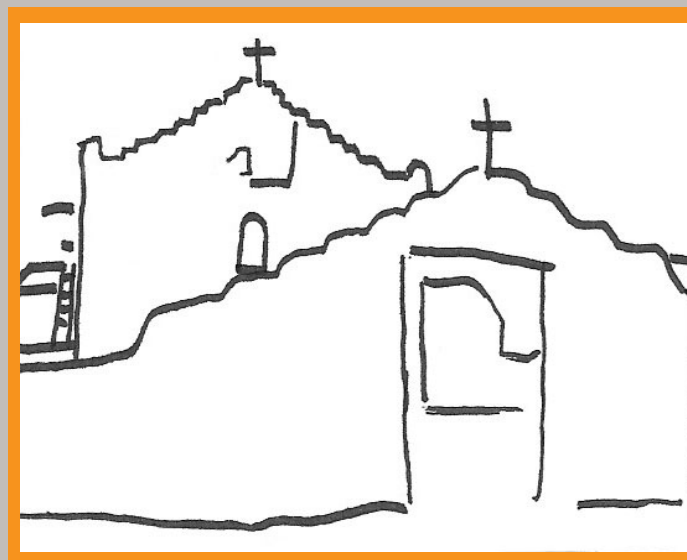


Canyon de Chelly  
(canyun duh shay)

# ANSEL ADAMS: AMERICAN MASTER

## SELECTIONS FROM THE DAVID H. ARRINGTON COLLECTION

**Light in a Photograph:** A camera records light: it captures light reflected from objects and records it on light-sensitive film. The word “photograph” stems from a Greek word for light (phot), and the word for writing (graph). You could say that a photograph is a form of “light writing”—and Ansel Adams was a master at “light writing”! In the photo of *Canyon de Chelly*, Adams took advantage of how the clouds above him filtered the sunlight. While photographing outdoors, Adams sometimes had to wait patiently or act quickly to capture the light just as he wanted.



*New Church at Taos*

**The “viewfinder”:** Looking through a camera to “frame” an image means that one decides what will be in the photograph. By moving the camera a little bit to the left, right, up, or down, causes the features of an image to be included or left out of a photograph. In *New Church at Taos*, you can see some of the choices that Adams made. If he had moved the camera down, just a bit, he would not have included the crosses on top of the gate and the church, and if he had moved the camera a bit to the right, we would not see the ladder that is to the left of the church.

**Distance in a Photograph:** Photographers, like other artists, can reveal near, middle, and far distance in their finished landscape images. In the photo, *The Tetons and the Snake River*, the river guides our eye “into” the photograph from the front of the photo to the far distance. If you block your view of the river, it will be difficult to judge how far you are from the mountains. Adams has defined distance for us, and this helps us to realize just how big and majestic the mountains are in this photograph.

*The Tetons and the Snake River*



## Ansel Adams Biography

Ansel Adams was born on February 20, 1902 in San Francisco, California. His family came to California from New England after immigrating from Ireland in the early 1700s. Adams was known as a hyperactive and sickly child with few friends, but after leaving school to work with private tutors he taught himself to play the piano, which would become his early passion.

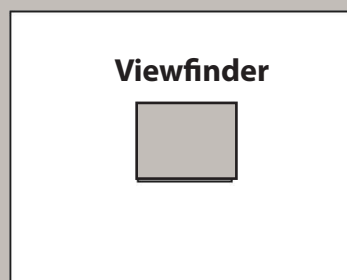
In 1916, following a trip to Yosemite National Park, he began experimenting with photography. In 1928, Adams married Virginia Best, the daughter of the Best’s Studio proprietor. Virginia inherited the studio from her artist father upon his death in 1935, and Adams continued to operate the studio until 1971. The business, now known as the Ansel Adams Gallery, remains in the family.

Adams’ professional breakthrough came with the publication of his first portfolio, *Parmelian Prints of the High Sierras*, which included his famous image *Monolith, the Face of Half Dome*. The portfolio was a success, leading to a number of commercial assignments. Between 1929 and 1942, Adams’ work and reputation developed. Adams expanded his repertoire, focusing on detailed close-ups as well as large forms, from mountains to factories. During this period, Adams joined photographers Dorothea Lange and Walker Evans in their commitment to affecting social and political change through art. Adams’ first cause was the protection of wilderness areas, including Yosemite.

In 1941, Adams shot a scene of the moon rising above a village in New Mexico which became known as *Moonrise, Hernandez, New Mexico*. For nearly four decades, Adams made over a thousand unique prints of that image to achieve financial stability. Adams spent much of the 1970s printing from negatives in order to satisfy the demand for his iconic works.

Ansel Adams. (2015). The Biography.com website. Retrieved 11:31, Jul 18, 2015, from <http://www.biography.com/people/ansel-adams-9175697>.

**How To Make a Viewfinder:** You can make a simple viewfinder with a 3 x 5 index card or piece of paper. Cut a 1 x 1.5 rectangle right in the middle of the paper (as shown below). Hold the paper/card in front of your eye and look at your subject while looking through the rectangle in the paper/card. You can move the viewfinder around until you find the “view” that best shows your chosen subject. This is the way that a viewfinder works on a camera.



## Questions...

Can you determine from which direction the sun is shining in *The Tetons and the Snake River*?

Do all of Ansel Adams' photographs show near, middle, and far distance?

How does a drawing differ from a photograph?

February 20, Ansel Easton Adams is born in San Francisco, CA

**1902**  
Ansel decides to become a pianist

**1931**  
Has an exhibition of 60 photographs at the Smithsonian Institution

**1937**  
His darkroom at Yosemite burns, destroying 20 percent of his negatives

**1949**  
Becomes a consultant for the Polaroid Corporation

**1965**  
Appointed to President Johnson's environmental task force

**1916**  
He receives his first camera, the Kodak Brownie Box camera

**1927**  
First acknowledged photograph, *Monolith, The Face of Halfdome*

**1928**  
He marries Virginia Best

**1933**  
Opens his own gallery in San Francisco

**1941**  
Develops the “Zone System” for developing film

**1963**  
Ansel receives the John Muir Award

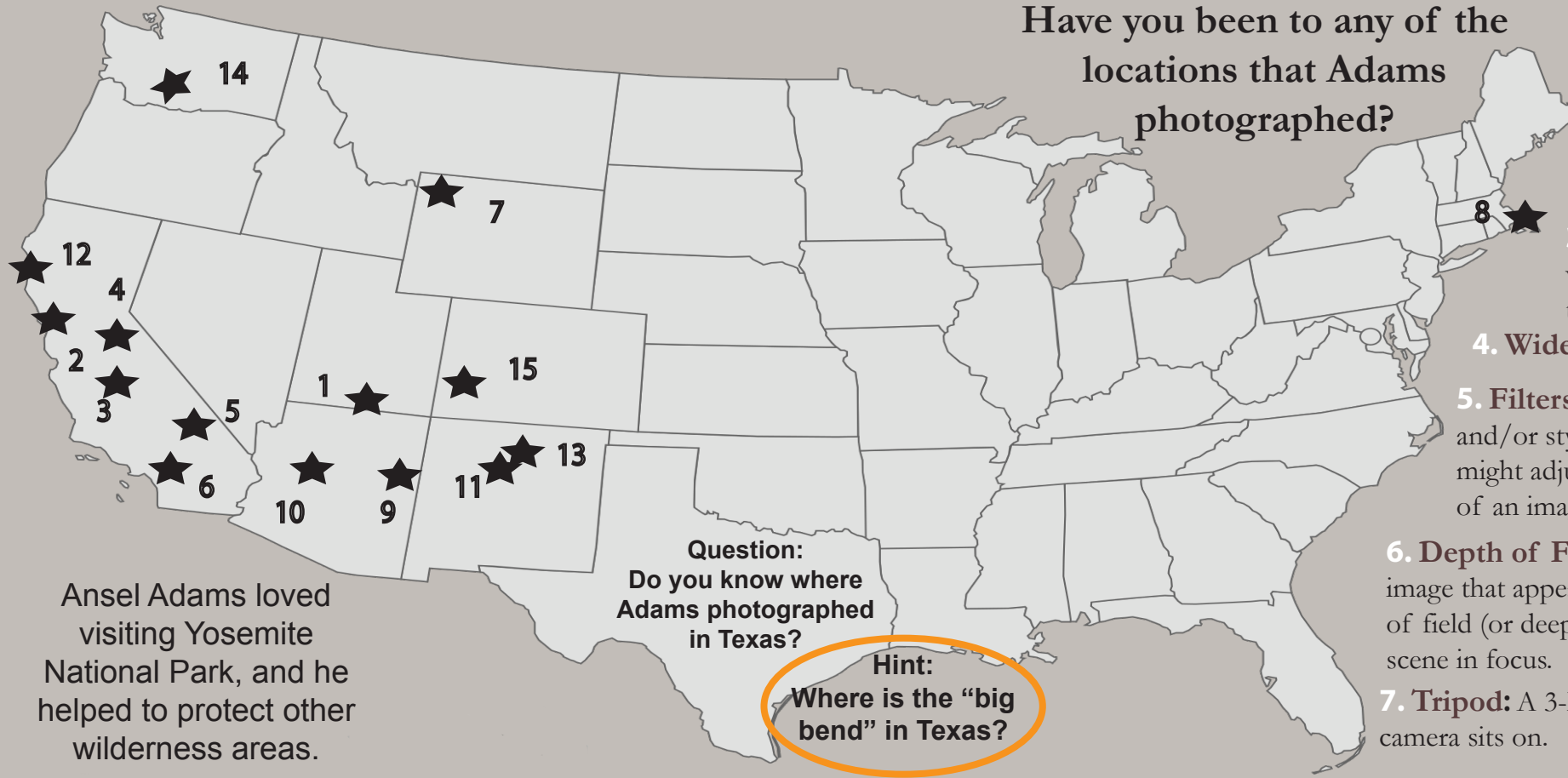
**1980**  
Ansel receives the Presidential Medal of Freedom

**1984**  
Ansel Adams dies at the age of 82

**1985**  
Mount Ansel Adams is dedicated, at Lyell Fork, in Yosemite, in his memory

# Ansel Adams Vocabulary Words

Have you been to any of the locations that Adams photographed?



Ansel Adams loved visiting Yosemite National Park, and he helped to protect other wilderness areas.

Question: Do you know where Adams photographed in Texas?

Hint: Where is the "big bend" in Texas?

- 1. Photography:** Greek origin, and literally means, "painting or writing with light."
- 2. Shutter Speed:** The length of time the camera's shutter is open. The speed determines how long the film is exposed to light.
- 3. SLR:** Single Lens Reflex is a camera with one lens that involves a mirror and prism. The viewer looks through this lens when shooting photos, as opposed to a "point and shoot", where the viewer looks through a separate viewfinder.
- 4. Wide Angle:**... a lens that makes it possible to include more of the scene or subject.
- 5. Filters** adjust the color, texture, and/or style of photographs. Filters might adjust one or multiple aspects of an image.
- 6. Depth of Field:** The portion of an image that appears sharp. A large depth of field (or deep focus) places the entire scene in focus.
- 7. Tripod:** A 3-legged stand that the camera sits on.

## Who is the Collector?

David H. Arrington is a native Texan, born and raised in the South Dallas community of Oak Cliff. Reared by educators, his father was a principal with the Dallas ISD and his mother was a teacher at Kimball High School. David attended Texas Tech University and earned a finance degree in 1983.

After graduating from Tech, David's interest for the oil and gas industry led him to the Permian Basin. He moved to Midland in 1984 and began a career as an independent oil producer.



David has been married for 22 years to his wife, Shelley, also an educator. He is a devoted father of five and upholds an active role in his community. David enjoys fly fishing and names many of his wells after trout flies. He also enjoys photography and jokes that he is, "a photographer trapped in an oilman's body."

David has been a collector of Ansel Adams since 1993 and has aggregated the largest privately owned collection with over 600 photographs. His collection has grown more from passion than intent. He has shared his collection with the public through a series of exhibitions at museums in the United States and several other countries. He also showcases Adams' work in his corporate offices located in Midland, Texas.

With education in his blood, David enjoys accompanying the photographs on tour and teaching and speaking on Ansel Adams' talent and creativity.

## Here are some of the locations where Ansel Adams photographed.

1. Monument Valley, Utah
2. San Francisco, California
3. Yosemite, California
4. Sierra Nevada Mountain, California
5. Owens Valley, California
6. Sequoia National Park, California
7. Grand Tetons National Park, Wyoming
8. Gloucester, Massachusetts
9. Canyon de Chelly, Arizona
10. Grand Canyon, Arizona
11. Ghost Ranch, New Mexico
12. Redwood Forest, California
13. Taos, New Mexico
14. Mt. Rainier National Park, Washington
15. Silverton, Colorado

Have you traveled to any wilderness areas? Did you take a photograph there?



Ansel Easton Adams c. 1942

23 ALPHABETICAL  
PARK SERVICE

ANSEL ADAMS

The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration

Filed by A.W.M.

## Museum Objects!

A museum has a plan for selecting and accepting items into the collections. The objects that are accepted are included through a process called "accessioning". This means that each object is given a unique number, called the accession number, which helps museum staff keep track of its location.

## The Sierra Club

Ansel Adams loved nature and was very involved in the Sierra Club. The Sierra Club is an environmental organization in the United States. It was founded on May 28, 1892 in San Francisco, California by the Scottish-born American conservationist and preservationist John Muir, who became its first president.

The club was one of the first large-scale environmental preservation organizations in the world and currently engages in lobbying politicians to promote green policies.