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The American West: A Portfolio of Photographs

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The American West: A Portfolio of Photographs

Creators

Wynn Bullock, Arnold Gassan, Ken Spector, Edna Bullock, Oliver Gagliani, DeWayne Williams, Aaron Siskind, Richard Garrod, Paul Dix, Raymond Gehman, Philip Maechling, Jerry Uelsmann, Harrison Branch, and Ansel Adams

THE AMERICAN WEST

A PORTFOLIO OF PHOTOGRAPHS

Our first National Park was created in part as a result of photographs made by W. H. Jackson in the late nineteenth century. The images of waterfalls and geysers presented a view of the West unknown to eastern legislators. As the story goes, they saw Jackson's large, glass plate photographs, went back into session, and created Yellowstone Park. Early photographers in the American West pulled whole darkrooms in horsedrawn trailers, and carried heavy view cameras, and heavier glass plates to make their prints. They followed the Civil War, and after that, the railroads, mining surveys and expeditions, and finally the homesteaders who settled out here. They recorded the western landscape in a direct and uncomplicated manner, often eloquent, always sharp.

The photographs we see here represent the American West from a number of graphic viewpoints. Ansel Adams and the late Wynn Bullock are recognized as masters at recording accurately the detail and full tonal quality of reflected light. Aaron Siskind and Oliver Gagliani compose natural and man-made objects as abstract forms and patterns. Arnold Gassan and Jerry Uelsmann carefully construct images from nature, recombining reality. Edna Bullock's work comes from the heart, and from a fine understanding of light and space. What makes this portfolio special is that more than half of these plates were made by using the same type of wood and metal view cameras that were used to document the West 120 years ago. Most of these photographs are not "cropped," but are printed exactly as the photographer saw them on the ground glass of the camera. In this day of Polaroids and Instamatics, *CutBank* is proud to reintroduce the tradition of fine photography and documentation, and we will continue to feature the work of distinguished photographers in future issues.

*Philip Maechling
DeWayne Williams*

The American West

A Portfolio

Wynn Bullock	67
Arnold Gassan	68
Ken Spector	69
Edna Bullock	70
Oliver Gagliani	71
DeWayne Williams	72
Aaron Siskind	73
Richard Garrod	74
Paul Dix	75
Raymond Gehman	76
Philip Maechling	77
Jerry Uelsmann	78
Harrison Branch	79
Ansel Adams	80



























