Upcoming WCG Meetings 2004/2005

Monthly meetings for the 2004/2005 season begin October 2004 and run through May 2005. The meetings are usually held on the first Thursday of each month. Most meetings begin at 5 p.m. with a reception, followed by the guest speaker's presentation. Please check individual meeting announcements for exact times and locations.

January 5
Note: this meeting is on a Wednesday. The Three-Ring Circus will be held at the Smithsonian's Ripley Center on Independence Avenue.

February 3
Tour of conservation labs and ongoing projects. Baltimore Museum of Art, Art Museum Drive, Baltimore, MD 21218.

March 3
Intern Talks. The talks will be held at the National Archives building downtown.

April 7
Wine Tasting and Martin Frost, “The Curious Art of Fore-Edge Painting”. The meeting will take place at Hillwood Museum and Gardens, 4155 Linnean Ave., NW.

May 5
Annual Business Meeting, Raffle and NMAI presentation “X-treme Installation in Hard Hats and Steel-Toed Shoes: NMAI’s Inaugural Exhibitions”. This meeting will be held at the new National Museum of the American Indian at 4th St. and Independence Avenue, SW.

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From the Desk of the President

We have started things off with a BANG!! The first two meetings of the 2004-2005 season were extremely successful. More than 75 people attended the October meeting at the U.S. Capitol and we ended up having to turn people away due to space limitations. The November meeting at the Folger Shakespeare Library, featuring a presentation by antiques dealer Sumpter Priddy, was attended by 55 members. WCG’s Board has worked hard to find speakers that will appeal to all specialty areas and we think the high attendance rate this season reflects this. Summaries of the first two presentations can be found inside this newsletter.

For the second year in a row, WCG held a September meeting for our intern, fellow and student members. The event was hosted by the National Gallery of Art and included a tour of the conservation labs and a reception. The WCG has a large number of intern members, many whom are already very active in WCG writing meeting summaries, participating in the Angel’s...
project and volunteering at WCG’s outreach booth. Read Howard Wellman’s summary of intern activities on page 5. and please contact WCG at our email address with questions about intern events.

After two years without a WCG Outreach Booth coordinator, I am happy to announce that Nancy Pollak has agreed to take this position. Nancy was instrumental in organizing WCG’s participation at the Treasured Heirlooms event hosted by the Historical Society of Frederick County, Maryland on Saturday November 6, 2004. I would like to thank Nancy and the other volunteers, Lizou Fenyesi, Joanne Klaar and Loa Ludvigson, for volunteering their time to work at this event. If you are interested in volunteering at one of the next Booth events, or know of a good venue for WCG to set up its Outreach Booth, please contact Nancy Pollak directly at 301-845-1010 or NR POLLAK@aol.com.

Michele Pagan organized and supervised a very successful Angels Project event at the historic Congressional Cemetery on Capitol Hill on October 30, 2004. Over 25 volunteers worked inside on archival materials and outside on gravestones, and completed a great deal of work. Thanks to Brenda Bernier and Catherine Dewey, who supervised and coordinated the two teams. For more details on this very successful project see Michele’s summary on page 5. There are already plans about setting up a second Angel’s day at the Congressional Cemetery in the spring. If you are interested in this spring project, please contact Michele at 202-546-5439 or Michele_johnpagan@yahoo.com.

Rachel-Ray Cleveland, Public Lecture Coordinator, organized a very well-attended lecture at the National Museum of Women in the Arts on Monday, November 8, 2004. More than 65 people attended the lecture by WCG member Polly Willman entitled A Costume Conservator as Detective, focusing on the First Ladies’ gowns. This lecture was funded by an FAIC Lecture Grant and was free to members of the National Museum of Women in the Arts and WCG. This was the second FAIC-funded lecture that Rachel-Ray has organized as part of our public outreach program to educate people outside of conservation about our profession.

You may have noticed that meeting announcements by mail and e-mail have been arriving very close to the actual meeting dates. Unfortunately, we have been experiencing difficulties with U.S. mail and e-mail. The postal mail delays are related to our recent change to non-profit mail status. We were not informed, and only recently learned, that non-profit mail takes significantly longer to be delivered than first-class mail. Additionally, there are charges that we now incur for mail sorting and labeling that we had been unaware of. All of these problems have led WCG’s Board to agree to revert back to first-class mailings on a temporary basis. We will keep you apprised as we determine the efficacy of the non-profit mailing status.

Additionally, our e-mail announcements are not getting through to a large number of our members. All members who would like to receive e-mail announcements need to add the WCG email address (wcg@washingtonconservationguild.org) to your computer address book. If you work at a large institution please contact your computer services personnel and ask them to allow our messages through the organizations’ firewall. To avoid missing out on meetings or announcements in the future, we recommend that you bookmark our website and check there for the most up-to-date information on meeting dates and times: www.washingtonconservationguild.org,

The 2nd edition of Conservation Resources for Art & Antiques is now on sale and we have already sold over 75 copies!! It is now being carried at the bookstores of the Smithsonian, the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Hillwood Museum & Gardens, the Jefferson Patterson Park Museum, and the City Museum of Alexandria. It will also be sold at the December and January WCG meetings. Buying a copy at the meeting will save you $3.00 in postage and handling. More information, a picture and order forms for the 2nd edition of Conservation Resources for Art & Antiques can be found on our website.
Finally, please continue to donate money for food and drink when you come to each WCG meeting. We try hard to supply a tasty and thirst-quenching spread, but need your help to supply quality refreshments. Don’t forget! I’m looking forward to seeing you at our next WCG meeting.

Emily Jacobson, WCG President
ejacobson@ushmm.org or
washingtonconservationguild@hotmail.com

October Meeting

Conservation on the Hill: From Painted Murals to Gilded Frames, Recent and Ongoing Conservation Projects at the US Capitol

The first meeting of the WCG’s 2004/2005 season was a great success. It took place at the US Capitol starting with a reception courtesy of ARTEX Fine Art Services. Dr. Barbara Wolanin, Curator and Architect of the Capitol, gave a brief overview of the presentations, which took place in the meeting room. Following the presentations, tours were given of the projects discussed, giving the attendees the unique opportunity to both hear about the projects and then see them first hand.

Discussion and Tour of Murals by Constantino Brumidi

Christiana Cunningham-Adams, Fine Arts Painting Conservation: Christiana and her husband George (see below) have worked on the restoration of the Brumidi Corridors for the past ten years. Using Raphael’s decoration of the Loggia at the Vatican as inspiration, Brumidi began leading the execution of his designs for the Brumidi Corridors in 1856 and continued to work on them until his death 25 years later. The range of media he used included tempera, oil, and true fresco. Over the years since Brumidi’s paintings were completed, the murals underwent a number of overpainting campaigns. The result was a build-up of several layers of overpaint and a muddy and crude appearance. After a thorough examination and year-long study, the Adams determined that the original paintings were still intact and largely in good condition beneath layers of overpaint that could be removed.

Scalpel removal was determined to be the safest method for removing the layers of overpaint and revealing the aesthetic character of Brumidi’s paintings. The use of solvents threatened to stain the porous surfaces and, since the overpaint layers were of variable thickness, the scalpel offered greater precision in targeting material to be removed. Small losses and scratches were left as they were unless they were distracting and disruptive to the balance. This maintained the quality of age and time, keeping the murals in their historic context. Christiana referred to Joyce Hill Stoner’s philosophy of “doing good by doing little” in describing the conservation team’s objectives in the Brumidi Corridors.

George Adams, Fine Arts Painting Conservation: While Christiana discussed the project in terms of the painting and aesthetics, George addressed the plaster problems at the Capitol. He described the manual acoustic techniques used for detecting and mapping defects, and the development of a remote acoustic technique using a scanning laser Doppler vibrometer. In this method, the plaster is excited using a shaker or a speaker, and the vibrational response throughout a panel is measured and recorded by the vibrometer. This information is mathematically processed into a map of the mechanical characteristics of the panel. An advantage of this technique is that it requires no contact with the painting surface.

In order to treat the areas of damage, the Adams developed a low-pressure consolidant delivery system. The adhesive was injected into the panels by applying air pressure to the top of a wash bottle filled with consolidant. Flexible tubing connected the bottle to the injection site and the amount of pressure was controlled through a gas pressure regulator individual to each bottle. The system allowed them to force a considerable amount of adhesive into a small hole while never exceeding the applied pressure. Frames built around a panel made it possible to support the plaster during injection.
Barbara A. Ramsay, Director of Conservation Services, ARTEX Fine Art Services: Barbara continued the discussion of the Brumidi murals and described the collaboration between ARTEX and Cunningham-Adams Fine Arts Painting Conservation in the treatment of the oil on plaster Maiden Panels in the Senate Appropriations Committee Hearing Room. She outlined the condition assessment and research that were undertaken and the treatment that is currently underway, involving consolidation, removal of overpaint and varnish, re-varnishing, and reintegration.

Examination of the murals showed that Brumidi continued to use various media in his paintings, including oil, distemper, and true fresco. As with the corridors, the murals in the Senate Appropriations Room had been overpainted multiple times, resulting in a crude, dark appearance and the loss of illusion that was an integral part of the design. Mechanical means again proved to be the best method for removing the overpaint layers and discolored varnish layers. The uncovered murals were generally in good condition, with the exception of some lower areas that had suffered varying degrees of flaking and paint loss. Treatment of the Maiden Panels will be completed by the end of 2004.

Discussion and Tour of Gilt Frames in the Rotunda
Bill Lewin, William A. Lewin, Conservator LLC: The gilded frames for the paintings in the Rotunda are part of the larger architectural scheme for the room. Charles Bullfinch designed the interior in 1824, drawing on Benjamin Latrobe’s earlier designs. One of the major changes from the earlier design included adding columns to the ends of the frames. The columns are set into the wall so that the frame can take the curve of the circular room, while the paintings are allowed to remain planar. They were gilded between 1826 and 1828. The frames then had two major re-gilding campaigns in 1890 and 1905, as well as other repairs and touch ups.

The current treatment is still in its pilot phase. It aims to bring the aesthetic back to the 1905 surface. Treatment will include the removal of a water based toning layer, which was damaged during a past steam blasting treatment of the adjacent stone. Any repairs to the gilding will be done using a polyvinyl alcohol (PVOH) based gesso and bole. This can then be water gilded and toned to match the rest of the frame.

Nina Owczarek
Objects Conservation Intern, Freer/Sackler Museums

November Meeting
Sumpter Priddy American Fancy: The Exuberance in the Arts 1790-1840

On November 4, as night fell, I emerged from work into a frigid tempest drenching the white classical buildings along Capitol Hill. As I ran to the Folgers Shakespeare Library, I could not help being struck by the blustering of golden butterscotch and burgundy leaves that seemed electrified against the dark sky. This natural kaleidoscope of movement and color would help me understand what Fancy meant.

When I thought of the word Fancy, I imagined a lace doily or a high-end intricate decoration. However, this concept of Fancy, as an adjective, was uncommon until 1860. In Sumpter Priddy’s lecture, I learned that the original use of Fancy in the early 1800’s was about more than doilies. Fancy referred to a feeling, an action, a first impression, something awoken inside of you. Fancy was your imagination. In the 18th century, reason, classical concepts and good taste dominated the perception of the fine arts. Creative ideas were logical and concrete unlike the fleeting sensation of Fancy.

After the Revolutionary War, prosperity allowed the middle class to see things with hope and imagination. This perception opened the doors for a fluid modern alternative to classical philosophy and reason. The accidental creation of the kaleidoscope in 1818 played into this outlook by enabling more Americans to be creative. One twist of the kaleidoscope and someone had the layout for a new colorful mosaic or quilt.
Spotless white teacups were replaced with vibrant painted shapes. Stagnant household items such as looking glasses became stages where Fancifully affixed candles created Fancy shadows and Fancy movements. Wit and humor were important ingredients as well. Fancy illusions or trompe l’oeil were popular in American paintings and furniture. Some furniture had hidden figures painted in the wood grain or false drawers that never opened.

Like the vibrant autumn leaves framing Capitol Hill, Sumpter Priddy’s enthusiastic exploration in the world of Fancy revealed how fleeting moments can create lasting impressions.

Manda Kowalczyk

WCG Sponsors Intern Events

On September 14, the National Gallery of Art and the Washington Conservation Guild hosted a tour and reception for new student and intern members of the WCG. Approximately 20 new members and members of the WCG Board of Directors attended.

The tour was led by Michael Skalka of the NGA, and included most of the conservation facilities at the Gallery. The NGA conservators discussed issues of the conservation and analysis of paintings and works of art on paper, and demonstrated specific works currently being treated in the studios and laboratories. Several of the new intern members are working at the NGA, and they contributed to the discussions.

The NGA provided food and beverages at the reception after the tour. WCG President Emily Jacobson thanked the NGA staff for their generosity, and welcomed the interns to the WCG. A lively evening of discussions and conversation followed.

Following on the success of this event, new intern member Joanne Klaar (now the Social Director of the intern group) and Intern Coordinator Howard Wellman organized a happy hour October 21 at Jaleo, a tapas bar in Washington on 7th St NW. About 10 interns showed up and a good time was had by all.

There will be future happy hours and other social opportunities through the year. Please send email to washingtonconservationguild@hotmail.com to get on the intern mailing list. Also check the calendar of events on the WCG website www.washingtonconservationguild.org.

Angels Project 2004

On a beautiful autumn day, October 30, 2004, twenty-seven members of the Washington Conservation Guild volunteered their conservation services to Historic Congressional Cemetery on Capitol Hill. The Cemetery was of interest for this year’s Angels Project because of its significance as one of America’s Treasures.

Under the general supervision of the site manager, Bill Fecke, the conservators and conservation interns performed work in two general categories: re-housing selected archives in the office building, and cleaning and re-setting stone monument markers outdoors.

The indoor archival work was coordinated and supervised by Brenda Bernier, Senior Photo Conservator at the National Archives. This group of 8 volunteers made custom acid-free enclosures for each of 51 ledger books; consulted on 2 works of art on paper, and reduced mold spores on 8 books.

The outdoor stone marker work was supervised and coordinated by Catherine Dewey, an objects conservator with the National Park Service. The outdoor work began with an orientation to the survey form which Catherine had devised for use throughout the day. The group then moved outside for a demonstration by Catherine of the proper way to gently clean the stone markers, all of which were either made of marble, granite or sandstone. The volunteers then broke into three teams, and rotated through each of 3 work stations: survey work, excavation and re-setting of stones, and repair of broken markers. In
this way, everyone had a chance to experience all 3 types of conservation work.

In all, seventeen volunteers cleaned 31 stones, using D-2 biocide in a weak aqueous solution, which had been donated by Cathedral Stone Works, of Hanover MD. The group also surveyed additional stones, using Catherine's form. Additionally, 8 stones were excavated and re-set, some of which also received new mortar, also donated by Cathedral Stone Works. Howard Wellman, of the Maryland Archaeological Conservation Lab, performed the huge job of excavation supervisor for each group which rotated through that work station. Guy Munsch, representing The Association for Preservation Technologies, also participated in the excavation work and in brainstorming future cooperative activities with WCG.

Almost $1000 in grant money was given by the American Institute for Conservation to support the work. The cemetery now has a good supply of the archival board it needs for the archives, as well as mortar, biocide, and related tools, for cleaning the monuments outdoors.

Michele Pagan
Angels Project Coordinator

The Adam Thoroughgood House in Virginia Beach, Virginia, was awarded $150,000. Constructed on the 1635 land patent of the founding settler of the Virginia Beach area, this post-medieval style brick house is one of the oldest in Virginia and a National Historic Landmark. Grants funds will be used to repair moisture damage to the exterior.

Howard University, in Washington, DC, was awarded $260,000 for the Mary Church Terrell Home. An educator and civil rights leader, Mrs. Terrell was the first African American woman to serve on an American school board and the founding president of the National Association of Colored Women. Her home is a National Historic Landmark, and this grant will be used to stabilize it in preparation for a complete restoration.

The Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library Foundation was awarded $200,000 for the Woodrow Wilson Birthplace. This Greek Revival house served as the manse of the local Presbyterian Church where Wilson’s father was the pastor. The grant will be used to address moisture-related damage to the masonry and foundation of the building, which is a National Historic Landmark.

WCG Public Lectures

With the creation of the Public Lecture Coordinator, WCG has focused on arranging conservation lectures, demonstrations, and an occasional lab tour for the public. Our purpose is to connect with other organizations interested in conservation and to provide speakers who will tailor presentations to the needs and interests of those groups. In this way, we hope to increase knowledge about the conservation profession and develop closer ties with allied professions.

For the first event this fall, Frank Mowery, Head of Conservation at the Folger Shakespeare Conservation Lab, received twenty rare book experts on October 20, 2004. The tour was attended by members of the Washington Rare Book Club. The focus of the presentation was the conservation treatment of research materials.
intended for hands-on accessibility. The tour included examples of historic paper-based objects that had undergone the paper-splitting process. In addition, examples of the leaf casting process were presented and discussed. Cutting-edge equipment for microscopy and digitized leaf casting were featured along with a special tour of the rare book lab.

The second event this fall was Polly Willman’s public lecture “The Costume Conservator as Detective.” The talk was attended by sixty-three participants at the National Museum for Women in the Arts (NMWA) on November 8, 2004. Polly presented case studies of costume conservation projects, including work on the First Ladies Collection from the National Museum of American History, where her role went beyond the traditional role of stabilizing the garments. Each article of clothing was regarded as a primary source providing information about its provenance, personal fashion decisions, and technological development. Polly is an independent costume conservator who was Senior Restorer in the Costumes and Textiles Department at the Brooklyn Museum and Senior Conservator of Costumes at the National Museum of American History.

WCG applied for and received funding for the public lecture at the NMWA from the new FAIC Public Lecture Fund. We are encouraged that AIC supports our effort to reach and connect with other organizations and pleased that it allows us to offer funding to our speakers.

The WCG Public Lecture Coordinator is looking for capable speakers who would like to be called upon for future public speaking events. She is also very interested in help from the membership to identify organizations and associations of allied professionals who might be interested in hosting a conservation speaker. If you would like to discuss these possibilities, please call Rachel-Ray Cleveland, WCG Public Lecture Coordinator, at 301-210-3731 or e-mail conservationofpaper@erols.com

Rachel-Ray Cleveland
WCG Public Lecture Coordinator

Recently in the Media

Are photographic slides headed for obsolescence? Last October, Kodak produced its last slide projector and shut down its last factory amidst a great deal of nostalgic celebration. Kodak has promised to continue manufacturing parts for their projectors for the next seven years. You can still find labs that will process your slide film but these are starting to disappear, too. What does this mean for the conservator? Color transparencies are still the de facto choice for treatment documentation with digital images still considered too risky in terms of objectivity and archival longevity. It appears that we need to begin looking to develop standards for digital imagery in documentation.


Sidney S. Williston Memorial Fund

The WCG is still accepting donations to the Sidney S. Williston Memorial Fund.
NOAA and the Preserve America Initiative

In March, 2003, President Bush signed Executive Order 13287, otherwise known as the “Preserve America” initiative. This order instructs federal agencies to inventory and take the lead on preserving and conserving their historic holdings. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has mounted a response to this initiative that includes the preservation of historic properties as well as archival materials. NOAA has created a website advertising this initiative and soliciting volunteers for their NOAA Heritage Resource Team to help “inventory NOAA heritage resources or promote NOAA’s heritage resources at the office or in your community”.

For more information, go to NOAA’s website: http://preserveamerica.noaa.gov

Kendra Lovette Fund

Please consider making a donation to the Kendra Lovette Fund. Donations will be used to sponsor continuing education activities in her honor. For those of you who are not familiar with her, Kendra was a long time Washington area conservator. In 1977, she began working at the Library of Congress where she was the conservator in charge of treatment for the architectural drawings for the US Capital. Four years later she accepted the position of paper conservator at the Baltimore Museum of Art where she worked for five years. After that Kendra was in private practice until the mid 1990s when ill health forced her into early retirement. Kendra died March 6, 2003 after a prolonged struggle with multiple sclerosis. Donations can be made by check to WCG with a note in the memo line that it is for the Kendra Lovette Fund. Send your donation to:

WCG
Kendra Lovette Fund
PO Box 23364
Washington, DC 20026

People

Erin Blake, WCG Web Guru, was featured in the September Southern Living Magazine’s “Bonus Section for Mid-Atlantic Readers”, (pp. 6-10), under the headline “The Folger’s Finest: They may not be actors, but the director and curators of D.C.’s Folger Shakespeare Library bring the Bard and his times to life for thousands of visitors and scholars.” The main photo showed the Folger’s three curators, Heather Wolfe (Curator of Manuscripts), Rachel Doggett (Curator of Rare Books) and Erin (Curator of Art).

Did you know that the Computer game company Electronic Arts is using the name Kendra Lovette as one of the characters in their golf simulator “Tiger Woods PGA Golf 2005”?

Eleanor MacMillan donated her 1965 Ford Mustang to the Smithsonian’s American History Museum this month. She had owned the powder blue classic for 40 years.

Grant Deadline

2005 Save America's Treasures Deadline and Guidelines Announced

Applications for 2005 Save America’s Treasures funding must be submitted by February 1, 2005.

The National Park Service in partnership with the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services is seeking applicants for its Save America’s Treasures 2005 grant program. Save America’s Treasures makes critical investments in the preservation of our nation’s most significant cultural treasures. Grants are awarded for preservation and/or conservation work on nationally significant intellectual and cultural artifacts and nationally significant historic structures and sites. Grant amounts range from $50,000 to $1 million to conserve collections, and from $250,000 to $1 million for historic property
and sites projects. All the awards must be matched 1:1.

Complete guidelines, applications and information, as well as a database of previous Save America Treasure’s awardees, can be found on the National Park Service Web site http://www2.cr.nps.gov/treasures/index.htm

Deadline for applications is 1 February 2005. For general information contact Kimber Craine at the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities <kcraine@pcah.gov> or call 202/682-5661.

For Additional Information
Applicants can address questions to and obtain electronic versions of application material from these agencies.

For Collections Projects
National Endowment for the Arts
Telephone 202.682.5516
E-mail mclaughm@arts.gov
Web www.arts.gov

National Endowment for the Humanities
Telephone 202.606.8570
E-mail bpaulson@neh.gov
Web www.neh.gov

Institute of Museum and Library Services
Telephone 202.606.4641
E-mail shwartzman@imls.gov
Web www.imls.gov

For Historic Property Projects
National Park Service
Telephone 202.513.7270, ext. 6
E-mail NPS_treasures@nps.gov
Web www2.cr.nps.gov/treasures

How to reach WCG
Web site: www.washingtonconservationguild.org or http://palmipsest.stanford.edu/wcg
Email: washingtonconservationguild@hotmail.com
Address: PO Box 23364, Washington, DC 20026.

News from the Editor

WCG Newsletter is printed quarterly (September, December, March, June). Items for inclusion in the WCG Newsletter should be directed to:

Jayne Girod Holt
21 Grant Avenue
Takoma Park, MD 20912
Tel: (301) 891-2957
Fax: (301) 891-2471 (call first)
E-mail: editor@girodholt.com

Email submissions are preferred. Please note that articles should be sent at least two weeks before publication. The editor reserves the right to edit copy to fit available space. Special thanks to proofreaders Brett Holt and Emily Jacobson.

Next issue: March 2005
Deadline for submissions: February 15, 2005

Membership

WCG dues are $25 per year, $15 for students and interns, payable to the Washington Conservation Guild or WCG.

The membership year runs from May 1st through April 30th. Membership forms can be requested by mail from the Membership Secretary at P.O. Box 23364, Washington D.C. 20026 or can be downloaded from our Web site. Changes of address or telephone numbers, corrections to the directory, and dues payments should be sent to the Membership Secretary at the address listed above or to washingtonconservationguild@hotmail.com

The membership schedule is as follows:
• Early March: membership renewal notice mailed
• Mid-April: 2nd and last renewal notice mailed
• May 1st: New membership year begins (verify your status*)
• July 1st: Deadline for membership renewals**
• Aug/Sept: Publication of membership directory
*Members can check their status by looking at the address labels of WCG mailings. PD following your name indicates that you have paid for the membership year. NPD indicates that you have not paid for the current year and should do so as soon as possible.

**Members who join after July 1st will not be included in the membership directory, but in an addendum to be mailed out in December.
Disclaimer: The Washington Conservation Guild (WCG) does not recommend particular individuals, businesses, products, services or conservation treatments. WCG’s Newsletter and Web site are simply vehicles for presenting information from various sources. The publication of such information in either medium should not be construed as an endorsement of it by WCG. All opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of WCG, its Board of Directors or membership.

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“To the complaint, 'There are no people in these photographs,' I respond, 'There are always two people: the photographer and the viewer.'” – Ansel Adams, photographer (1902-1984)

WCG Board of Directors
2004/2005

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