“In photography, the world is as much as an author as the photographer.”

Bill Parker

AMERICA ON VACATION traces its foundation to the time Americans first migrated westward in great numbers. Since the mid-nineteenth century, a period that began important changes in thought and perception of physical dimensions, photographers have pointed their cameras at the landscape. This nineteenth century advent coincided with a time where American interest in the outdoors was growing, artistically and scientifically. Artistically, landscape painting emerged in the 1840s, by the mid 1850s this genre became a fully evolved school of painting. In 1847, American literature begins to look to nature, with the publican of Ralph Waldo Emerson’s first book of poems. Mid-century scientists (John Tyndall, Louis Agassiz, Charles Darwin) became interested in the structuring of nature. In the same time period museums entered the American culture; to put structure to the collection of artifacts.

The westward construction of the railroad after the Civil War increased American production of landscape photography. In the 1860s photography became an important tool the railroad employed in their efforts to document the land. Geological surveys funded by the government occurred simultaneously with the construction of the transcontinental railroad, continuing after construction was complete.

The West produced to two types of photographs the document, and the picturesque. The document informs culture about the unknown, although used by the survey’s and the science’s in two slightly different ways. The government survey’s used landscape photography as fact, serving military and industrial expansion (to gain knowledge of the resources the west had to offer).
The picturesque's purpose was twofold: the images were used to influence potential colonizers, and as enterprise, sold at a profit by the photographer as multiple prints, albums, portfolios, and stereographs, to tourists and armchair travelers back east. Both of these types of photographs are still made by photographers and tourist alike, although most tend to focus on the picturesque.

To this day, while on vacation tourists in American document their experiences and the places they visited using the medium of photography. The photograph become the visual equivalent of memory. The typical tourist uses photography for its inherent values, the ability to collect information or detail. *America on Vacation* documents the interactions tourists have with their destinations, in the American landscape.

Exploring the interactions of the tourist in the American vacation landscape, this photographic project resulted in the production of a large series of color photographs (over 5,000 images). Using the conventions of photography to create a sense of objectivity through selectivity, the photographs document unique environments and experiences encountered by the vacationer. The verisimilitude of photography allows a seemingly objective image to make a subjective comment.
Our American landscape from our tourist destinations to our National Parks are dominated by and built for the automobile. A vernacular architecture that consists of high quality but low maintenance finishes (brick, concrete, etc.), attractive and comfortable surroundings, and convenient access has developed across the postmodern landscape.

As photographer and educator, the opportunity and ability to share my photographic images and ideas with others is important as making photographs. It is through the discussion and interaction with the photographs that one can gain insight and knowledge of not only the environment that surrounds us but the photographer. As a photographer and educator it is extremely important to create new photographs, exhibit and present the work at a professional level. Final product beyond the tangible photograph, in photography happen a little slower. In the spring of 2004, the eight images from *America on Vacation* were published and distributed in the 5,000 copy limited *Exponent* insert of *Alt. Arts*. Work from this series may also be seen at the Rountree Gallery in Platteville from September 11 to October 10, 2004. More work from this series will be shown later this semester in The All UWP Exhibition at the Nohr Gallery.