

Photographer Donates Copyrights

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Did you know that an author can dispose of a copyright in just about any way that he or she chooses? A copyright can be kept, sold, willed to someone, or given away. Or, an author can store a copyrighted work in a secure vault and not allow anyone to see or use it.

The American people are the beneficiary of a generous author's gift of her copyrights in thousands of photos. Noted photographer Carol Highsmith is documenting 21st-century America in her "This Is America" project by photographing all fifty states. Highsmith is donating her photos to the Library of Congress

without copyright restrictions. These photos are in the public domain, and the public may access them on the Library of Congress website at www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/highsm/.

The first state Highsmith photographed was Alabama, where she took pictures of places, events, buildings, and the minutia of life.

In May 2012, Highsmith began taking photos in California. This part of the project is being financed by Capital Group Companies, an investment management organization headquartered in Los Angeles, with the understanding that the photos are being donated rights-free to the Library and are not works made for hire. Neither are they owned by Capital Group. Said Helena Zinkham chief of the Library's Prints and Photographs Division, "The copyright-free aspect has appealed to donors as a way to ensure immediate broad and general use of the photographs."

Highsmith has been donating her photographic archive copyright-free to the Library since 1992. Enjoy her gorgeous shots of California, a gift to the nation, at www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/highsm/. Search for "California." ©

In California, Highsmith shot photos of the Magic Kingdom (top left), San Francisco (bottom left), and the San Diego harbor.

