

# What's Happening

IN CALIFORNIA ?

BY LAWRENCE GABLE

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**I**n September a new museum and arts center opened in downtown Turlock. It is called the Carnegie Arts Center. The building is beautiful, and most of it is brand new. However, it has a strong connection to the past.



## The Arts Get a New Home

Part of the building was originally a Carnegie library. One of the wealthiest Americans ever was a man named Andrew Carnegie. Late in his life he paid for the construction of many libraries. They were in English-speaking countries. Turlock's library was one of 1,689 in the U.S. alone. It opened in 1916.

Over time the city needed a larger, more modern library. When Turlock built its new library in 1968, the old one became a youth center. Then in 1982 it became an arts center that offered classes and exhibited art. In 1993 the U.S. government put the building on its National Register of Historic Places.

A turning point came in 2005 when someone set fire to it. Only the building's four outside walls remained standing. The city could have torn the walls down. Instead it decided to build the Carnegie Arts Center. The walls are still there, but the inside is new. A new wing gives the Center additional room for galleries, offices and studio classrooms.

The new Center opened on September 10 and celebrated for two days. Admission to the

Center was free. Local performers danced and sang, and several groups played jazz and classical music. The Center also gave visitors art demonstrations. In addition, visitors got their

first look at the Center's art exhibits.

The Center is showing 120 photographs of the famous American photographer, Ansel Adams. He worked in black-and-white, and he helped to discover a way to make his images extremely clear. He photographed the American West, but he was a Californian. The exhibit in Turlock shows only photos of California, from Yosemite and fields to cities and portraits.

The Carnegie Arts Center's mission does not just include famous artists. It will exhibit the work of local artists too. Its programs will offer education classes and lectures. They also will offer activities in art forms like music, dance and puppetry. Another of its goals is to bring art to children and teens. As an example, it has found a way to provide free bus transportation for grade school classes that want to see the Ansel Adams exhibit. The Center also gives free admission to children under 12.

Turlock's new arts center is making a good first impression. The new building and the Ansel Adams photos are attracting lots of visitors. From the place that began as a library 95 years ago, it will be reaching out to serve the Central Valley for years to come.

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## BIOGRAPHY

### REBECCA PHILLIPS ABBOTT

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND CURATOR, CARNEGIE ARTS CENTER

Rebecca Phillips Abbott grew up in Germany and in many U.S. states. She thinks of all of them as home. Now, though, home really is in Stanislaus County. There she is executive director and curator at the Carnegie Arts Center in Turlock.

As a girl Rebecca loved to read biographies and study history. When she saw portraits in museums and castles in Europe, she wanted to know who the people were. She also read a lot of novels. Not surprisingly, History and English were her favorite subjects in high school.

Rebecca also learned about photography from her father. He taught her how to work with a camera. He also built her a little darkroom in one house where they lived. In other houses they figured out how to darken a bathroom enough for developing photos. That interest in photography continues to this day.

In college Ms. Abbott studied Philosophy and History. She was not thinking at all about working in museums. That changed when she started working at American University in Washington, D.C. As an employee she could take classes for free. After many years of working and taking classes, she earned her Master's degree in Art History. One of her special interests was women artists.

In 1987 Ms. Abbott took a job at a new museum in D.C. It was the National Museum of

Women in the Arts. Quickly she became the museum's director. For Ms. Abbott it was a great pleasure to discover new women artists and exhibit their work. She also made sure that the museum reached out to children. About 20,000 boys and girls visited in the nine years that she was there.

After that she took a job at another new museum in Washington. It was the John Paul II Cultural Center. Her job was to work closely with people at the Vatican Museums in Rome. Of course she got to go to the museums. Ms. Abbott calls them a wondrous place. While there she got to pick out art for exhibits in D.C.

In 2006 Ms. Abbott and her husband moved to California. He got a job at CSU Stanislaus in Turlock, and she began to volunteer for the

Carnegie Arts Center. In 2009 the Center hired her as the executive director. She wanted the Center's first exhibit to be something new. This exhibit is the first one ever to show Ansel Adams' photos just of California.

Rebecca Phillips Abbott has plans and hopes for the Center's future. Every year it will show the work of a local artist, and present a Distinguished Artist Award. Every fall an exhibit will feature someone famous. More than anything, she has hopes for visitors. She wants them to see that art is not something exclusive, but rather a valuable part of everyone's life.



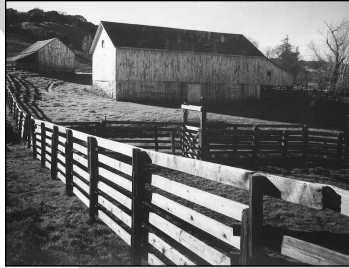
*"If you can point a child toward an interest, soon it may become a lifelong interest."*

# Background Information

The opening exhibit is called “Ansel Adams’ CALIFORNIA.” It remains there through January 8, 2012. A few of the photos have rarely ever been in an exhibit before.



*“Half Dome from Sentinel Bridge Winter 1938”  
—Ansel Adams*



*“Barn and Fence Napa”  
—Ansel Adams*

In addition to the photos, the exhibit includes memorabilia from Ansel Adams’ life. One of the items is the citation from when Mr. Adams received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Jimmy Carter in 1980.

Ansel Adams was born in San Francisco in 1902. He died in Monterey in 1984. His son and daughter-in-law personally delivered the pieces for the exhibit. She is the curator of the exhibit, and he gave a lecture as part of the opening celebration.

In addition to the Adams exhibit, the Carnegie Arts Center has an exhibit “Picturing California: Works by Regional Artists.”

The expanded Arts Center is now an 18,000-square-foot building. The new wing is set back from the front of the old library building, giving shape to an outdoor plaza.

Turlock’s Carnegie library is one of just two buildings in town on the National Register of Historic Places. The other is the Turlock High School Auditorium and Gymnasium, which was listed in 1991.

Andrew Carnegie was born in Scotland. During his lifetime he was probably the second-richest man in the U.S. after John D. Rockefeller. In total Mr. Carnegie funded about 3,000 libraries for cities and colleges.

The Arts Center is part of a program that allows people who donate \$100 or more to get free admission to more than 450 other museums in North America.

In 2010 a man in Fresno realized that the 65 glass plates in some boxes were photographic negatives of Ansel Adams photos. They were 80 years old, and the man had bought them ten years earlier at a garage sale. He had paid \$45 for them, but they are worth about \$200 million.

## Topics for Discussion and Writing

### Pre-reading:

- How does your community present and support the arts?

### Comprehension:

- Describe how the old building went from being a library to part of the new arts center.

### Beyond the Text:

- How do you think a place like the Carnegie Arts Center can change a city’s downtown area?
- Why do you think the Center left some smoke stains from the fire on the bricks of the old walls?
- Try to explain why some people prefer black-and-white photos to color photos.

## Vocabulary

*Article-specific:* wealthiest; national; register; historic; wing; gallery; portrait; mission; lecture

*High-use:* originally; construction; to exhibit; additional; local; demonstration; image; goal; to attract

## Sources

*Modesto Bee* September 9, 5, 2, February 25, 2011

*Turlock City News* September 2, 2011;  
December 31, 2010

*TurlockJournal.com* August 30, 2011

Carnegie Arts Center [www.carnegieartsturlock.org](http://www.carnegieartsturlock.org)

## CA Curricular Standards (4–12)

### English - Language Arts

*Reading* 1.0 Vocabulary Development

2.0 Comprehension (Informational Materials)

*Writing* 1.0 Writing Strategies

2.0 Writing Applications

### ELD—Intermediate and Advanced

Reading Vocabulary Development / Comprehension

Writing Strategies and Applications

Listening and Speaking

### History-Social Science

4.5; 8.2; 12.2

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