



For Immediate Release

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**Corbis® to Build Premiere Sub-Zero Photographic
Film Preservation Facility**

*Efforts ensure preservation and accessibility of the Bettmann Archive®
and other historical images for thousands of years*

SEATTLE (April 16, 2001) — Embracing its role as cultural steward, Corbis® (www.corbis.com), a global leader in digital photography and imagery, today announced it plans to build a state-of-the-art, sub-zero film preservation facility in western Pennsylvania to store and preserve the massive and aging collection of the Bettmann Archive® and other historical images for centuries to come. To accomplish this goal, Corbis is constructing a 10,000 square foot underground storage facility and film digitization lab that will preserve and make accessible worldwide the millions of photographs in the Corbis collections in their original form for countless generations. Construction of the facility, and movement of the Bettmann Archive into it, is expected to be completed by winter 2002.

“This is a momentous occasion for photography,” said Corbis CEO Steve Davis. “Along with the digitization of much of the Bettmann Archive and other historic collections that we’ve already completed, the storage facility and lab ensures that precious imagery from American history will not only be preserved, but that it be accessible to people for the long term.”

“It is a wonderful thing that in the final chapter of the 150-plus years of traditional photography—now rapidly being replaced by digital imaging technology—such a major effort is being waged to preserve this large and important body of original material so that it will remain available in its original form for future generations,” said Henry Wilhelm, president of Wilhelm Imaging Research, Inc., the company assisting Corbis in the preservation project.

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Prior to its acquisition by Corbis in 1995, leaders at the Bettmann Archive recognized that significant deterioration due to heat, humidity and handling, had occurred in many of the nation's historical photography collections, including the 17 million-image Bettmann Archive itself, and others such as United Press International, International News Photos and Acme. A preservation team was assembled and plans implemented to care for the Bettmann Archive photographs where they resided in New York. When Corbis purchased the Bettmann Archive, these initiatives were expanded to include exploring facilities that would provide permanent preservation.

As the search for a permanent home went on, Corbis digitized more than 250,000 of the Bettmann Archive images—most of which are currently available through Corbis to creative professional, editorial, business or personal customers. Eventually, working with a number of outside consultants—most notably Wilhelm Imaging Research of Grinnell, Iowa—Corbis selected Iron Mountain/National Underground Storage in Pennsylvania as the site for the new, long-term storage facility. As the collection is moved from New York to Pennsylvania, the Bettmann Archive will be temporarily unavailable only as Corbis packs and ships it over the next 10 months. Prior to, and after the move, access will be the same as it has been.

The facility will be environmentally controlled with specific conditions (minus 4°F, relative humidity of 35%) that have been calculated to maintain photographs in an essentially unchanged state for thousands of years. These conditions preserve the inherently unstable cellulose acetate film base used with the great majority of photographic films, as well as the generally very unstable dye images of the color transparencies and color negatives found in historical collections. Although the effects of degradation already present cannot be reversed, the goal is to arrest color fading and film deterioration so that the original images will be preserved for future access and, when necessary, digital restoration. Failure to preserve the images in this way would ensure their destruction and disappearance forever.

Coinciding with the preservation process and the move, Corbis is pursuing an overall corporate goal to build an all-digital business model and work flow. For the Bettmann Archive, this meant the development of a sophisticated cataloging and on-line digital archive system, as well as the installation of a high-

resolution film digitization lab at the Pennsylvania facility. So, by transferring all available Bettmann Archive caption cards into a globally accessible text database and being able to digitize and fulfill orders through an on-site lab at the storage facility, Corbis will be able to achieve its two key goals—preserving the collection and providing worldwide access to the photographs.

“The preservation of these photographs will also make certain that the original negatives and transparencies will continue to be available in the best condition possible for future digital color restoration, film grain reduction, and image sharpness enhancement technologies. For photographers whose images are contained in the Corbis collections, the new preservation facility will help preserve their life’s work—and their place in photographic history—far into the future,” said Wilhelm. “The Corbis facility will set new preservation standards for both museum and commercial photographic collections worldwide.”

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