



CAPTURING  
*America*  
THE CAROL HIGHSMITH STORY

LPB  PBS



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*“In this time of conflict, disease and political unrest, Carol Highsmith’s very positive documentation of Americana is needed more than ever.*

*It unites us and instills a sense of patriotism and love for one another as Americans.”*

—Richard Lindstrom,  
one of Carol’s more than **32,000 followers**  
on Facebook



*F*or more than 40 years, Carol Highsmith wakes up every single day with one mission: to document every nook and cranny of the United States, from its majestic mountains and quirky roadside attractions to its most unforgettable characters, known and unknown. **Capturing America: The Carol Highsmith Story** is a PBS blue chip, 2-hour documentary pledge drive special celebrating the life and work of this maverick, 75-year-old female photographer. The film chronicles Carol’s tireless efforts to build an unparalleled legacy: A mammoth, living collection of images—65,000 at last count—documenting the people, places and things of late 20th and early 21st century America for The Library of Congress (LOC).

Filmmaker Kristen Akers Gozdecki and her team at KAG Productions, LLC have been filming with Carol since 2015, nearly seven years. Most recently, they filmed Highsmith in Louisiana covering Mardi Gras celebrations, including the traditional Courier de Mardi Gras in the town of Mamou (population 3,242). The filmmaking team is now partnering with Louisiana Public Broadcasting to bring Highsmith’s inspiring and uplifting story to households across America on PBS stations nationwide with a **target air date of July 4, 2023**.

Of course, LOC has supported Carol’s landmark work since she first began in the early 1980s. Now, the producers of this film are seeking a partnership with LOC in the funding, promotion and premiere of the film, as well as in creating audience outreach and educational materials for a wide national audience.

Each month, more than 100 million people watch their local PBS station, with more than 32 million watching the PBS website and apps. And in 2022, for the 19th year in-a-row, Americans named PBS the “most trusted media brand” in a nationwide survey.



**The film has a target budget of approximately \$1.3 million. This will pay for:**

- Filming of 75% of the film: 70 days at locations throughout the U.S., including Alaska and Hawaii, two of the last states Carol will be visiting to finish out her America project with the Library in 2022. Production costs include travel for our film crew of five, including the film’s director of photography, producer Kristen Akers and a locally-hired audio tech (where possible) and an associate producer to track releases and logistics in the field.

(To date, the filmmakers have ‘in the can’ roughly 25% of the film in locations including: New Orleans and Louisiana, Utah, Colorado, New York, DC, New Jersey and Massachusetts).

- Eight months of Post Production, including: editing, audio mix, color correction and finishing to PBS broadcast specifications.



- Licensing of key songs from American artists including: Willie Nelson (*On the Road Again*); John Boutte (*Treme*); Johnny Cash (*Down There By the Train*) and others.  
*(During Mardi Gras 2022, the filmmakers were lucky enough to film scenes with Carol and New Orleans singer/songwriter legend, John Boutte, seen in one of Carol’s photos at left. John showed Carol around the Treme neighborhood where countless musicians have come from and showed her the house his grandfather built, explaining the deep roots he and others have with this famous New Orleans neighborhood.)*
- The design and creation of an interactive website with behind-the-scenes content we are capturing/have captured during filming.
- The curation and editing of a 256-page glossy coffee table book featuring key photographs from Carol’s America collection, both covered in the film and from her archives. The book will be offered as a PBS pledge drive donor gift, as well as an educational tool that can be packaged along with supporting curricula to schools nationwide (Louisiana Public Broadcasting has already funded and Carol is actively in production on a coffee table book covering the state of Louisiana as a pledge drive gift the station can use across their programming efforts, to be published in December 2022). The America book can also be offered in the LOC bookstore.
- A limited series podcast featuring in-depth discussions with key representatives of LOC, Louisiana Public Broadcasting production team members and of course, Carol Highsmith and her husband (and driver/navigator/partner), Ted Landphair.

The filmmakers see this project as a natural alignment of LOC’s mission to “engage, inspire and inform Congress and the American people with a universal and enduring source of knowledge and creativity,” as well as PBS’ mission to offer programming that “expands the minds of children, documentaries that open up new worlds...[and] expose America to the worlds of music, theater, dance and art.”





These overlapping missions are absolutely vital, perhaps now more than ever, given the fluid and often troubling state of our country and the world today. Our film celebrates, with deep love and respect, the varied cultures and stories that make up our American melting pot.

The film's production timeline, again with a projected airdate of July 4, 2023, also aligns with LOC's planned rollout in the spring of 2023 of the 'Treasures' exhibit at The Thomas Jefferson Building. We would like to work in collaboration with LOC to support—in whatever means make sense, given the current plans in place—this planned exhibit, as well as creating other, additional events, including talks with Carol and the filmmakers, either in Washington, DC or in other appropriate locations around the country. We can also, of course, create Zoom invite-events for stakeholders that we would produce with clips from the film, special behind-the-scenes footage, etc.

Finally, the filmmakers wish to pursue a true partnership with LOC in the sense that additional programming—including audience engagement activities like building your own preservation archive of photographs (something LOC brilliantly rolled out to all Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic with 'American Experiences')—can be developed around Carol, her photographs and the scenes we film on the road.

We look forward to building the conversation around this project with the Library of Congress.

## THE FILMMAKERS



**Linda Midgett, Executive Producer, LPB.** Linda is an Emmy award-winning writer, producer, and showrunner with a proven track record of developing hit and critically acclaimed series. She has directed, written and supervised more than 600 hours of programming for networks such as NBC-Universal, History Channel, Discovery and National Geographic. Her 2018 independent documentary, 'Same God,' premiered at the Los Angeles Film Festival and was shown on PBS affiliates nationwide.



**Kristen Akers Gozdecki, Executive Producer, KAG Productions LLC.** Kristen is an Emmy-nominated developer, writer, and producer of cable documentary content with a focus on true crime, the global war on terror and 9/11 working across these subjects over more than twenty years. In 2015, she and her partner, producer Joan Ruppert, went looking for a documentary subject and stumbled upon Carol's work in a web search. Over nearly 7 years of filming with Carol, Kristen has been the sole financial backer of the film and is thrilled to be partnering with PBS, as public television programming inspired her career in TV.



**Joan Tortorici Ruppert, Producer, KAG Productions LLC.** Joan is a writer/producer/director specializing in documentary and lifestyle programming. Her shows have aired on Discovery, A&E, History Channel, HGTV, Travel Channel, Food Network, The Weather Channel, Animal Planet, PBS, CBS and others. Joan also brings documentary and content creation expertise to museum, educational and corporate clients.

Our 10 minute presentation reel may be viewed at:

<https://vimeo.com/523325678>

Password: Carol