

**HETAG Newsletter No. 53, December 2021**



Rodolfo Guzzardi [*Abundance*] mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century.

This is the season we dedicate to giving thanks for ABUNDANCE – with Thanksgiving, abundance of lovely food, enjoyed with family and friends; and with the December holidays – Christmas, Hanukkah and others – the abundance of joyous gifting and spiritual sharing. It's also a time for remembering that not all our fellow Houstonians partake of that blessing of abundance, and of spreading the blessing as we can, perhaps through the [Houston Food Bank](#), or other means of our choice. As lovers of Earlier Houston Art, we can be pleased that one way or another all Houstonians can share in the abundance of art that our city has produced over the decades – either by living with it at home, by enjoying it on public display, or by seeing (and sometimes buying) it in the galleries in our city. Of all the many things we can be thankful for this season, our own HOUSTON art, made and shown by our own HOUSTON artists and galleries, surely ranks toward the top. In keeping with the theme of abundance and thankfulness, I'm starting this issue of the newsletter with Rodolfo Guzzardi's (1903-1962) overflowing cornucopia, above; and some of the Real Faux Food made by our good friend and Houston artist, [Henri Gadbois \(1930-2018\)](#), for Bayou Bend (below) and many other museums and individuals.

Enjoy the season; enjoy the sharing and abundance; enjoy the Earlier Houston Art!



Henri Gadbois with his faux dessert display, Bayou Bend



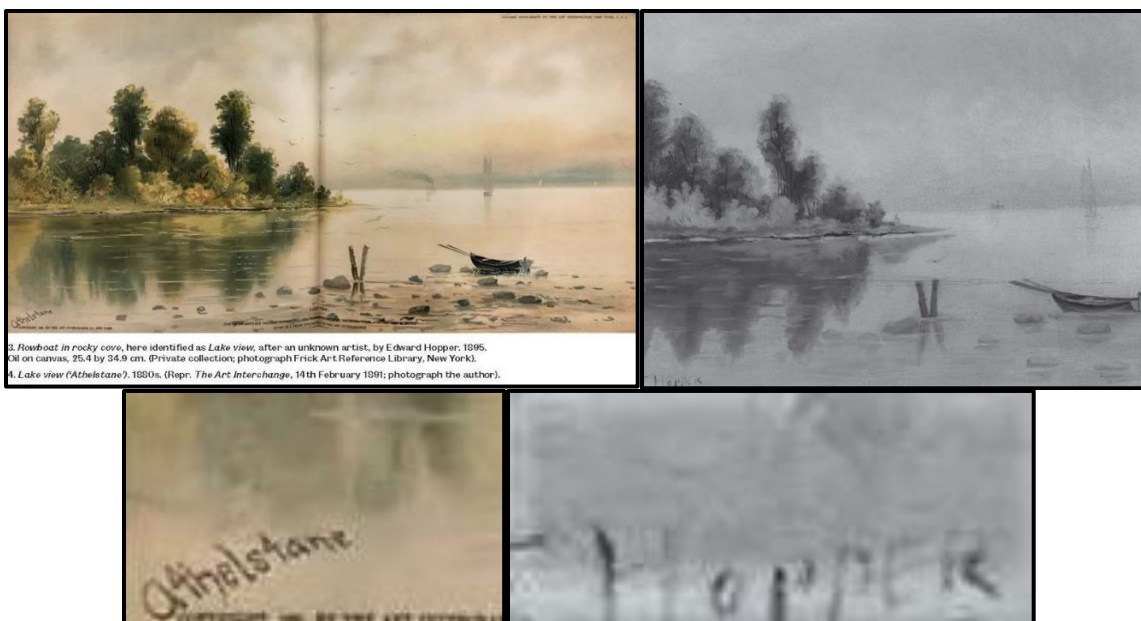
Henri's faux Fruitcake, Christmas Pye, and Oysters on the half-shell.

## HETAG: The Houston Earlier Texas Art Group

### Houston Art History Notes: Did famed American artist, Edward Hopper, copy from an Earlier Houston Artist?

In October 2020, Courtauld Institute of Art graduate student, Louis Shadwick, created something of a sensation in certain circles when he published his findings that the earliest paintings by famed American artist, Edward Hopper, produced in the 1890s, while he was still in his teens, were, in fact, copies of works by other artists (“[The origins of Edward Hopper’s earliest oil paintings](#),” *The Burlington Magazine*, October 2020). In a near head-spinning feat of art-historical sleuthing, Shadwick proved that at least three of the six or seven known early Hoppers (works created before he went to art school) were copied directly from prints, intended for copying and including copying instructions, published in the popular art and decoration periodical, *Art Interchange: An Illustrated Guide for Art Amateurs and Students, With Hints on Artistic Decoration*. The author reasonably speculated that the Hopper family, whose matriarch, Elizabeth, was an amateur artist who encouraged the artistic leanings of her one-day-to-be-famous son, subscribed to the publication, retaining the issues in question so that they were ready at hand when the talented young Edward found himself ready for them.

Shadwick identified two of the originals from which Hopper copied as works by Edward Moran and Bruce Crane, published in *Art Interchange* in 1886 and 1890, respectively. A third Hopper copy, signed by him, and dated 1895, also exists. Though Hopper did not title his copy, others have variously titled it [Rowboat in rocky cove] and [Rowboat on Hudson] since his death. The print of this work, from which Hopper copied, appeared in the February 14, 1891, issue of *Art Interchange*, with the type-printed title "Lake View" in the lower center of the plate, but with no artist identified. In the lower left corner, where an artist signature often appears, and in the same location in which Hopper signed his copy, is the hand printed word "Athelstane," which Shadwick speculated might refer to the town of Athelstane, Wisconsin, though with no specific evidence to suggest it. As he noted "several other contemporaneous copies of" the Crane work are known, but no other copies of the "Lake View" print, aside from Hopper's, are known (according to Shadwick via email correspondence).



"Lake View" *Art Interchange*, February 14, 1891 (l);  
Edward Hopper [Rowboat in rocky cove] 1895, signed lower left (r).

So wasn't I surprised when I realized that I had bought a copy of that very "Lake View" at The Guild Shop, a Houston resale shop, 20 years ago! A copy in a period frame, and with a Bute Paint Company framer's sticker on the back, indicating that it had been framed in Houston sometime in the late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Surprised and curious as to how such an oddity, and an oddity with even the most tangential of connections to that towering figure of American art, Edward Hopper, had got to a Houston resale shop, on the way to our

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collection of Earlier Houston Art. Though a definitive solution to that mystery may never be possible, searching for one has been a challenge too compelling to pass up – and as a result of the search, a "new" Earlier Houston Artist has come to light.



Guild Shop copy of "Lake View" unsigned, n.d., in period frame as purchased, with an early James Bute sticker on the back. The paper on which the watercolor is painted has a New York watermark.

As soon as I realized my striking thrift shop find, the word "Athelstane" appearing in the lower left of the *Art Interchange* plate immediately peaked my interest. Indeed there is a town in Wisconsin named Athelstane, as Shadwick pointed out, but my only previous encounter with the name – or at least a very close variant – concerned the Houston cellist, Athelstan Charlton, stepfather of Earlier Houston Artist, [Gene Charlton](#), about whom I've written so much in the HETAG Newsletter over the years. What a coincidence that such an uncommon name, with only a minor variation, should appear both on the *AI* print and as the name of a real person long associated with the city (Houston) in which the only known copy of that print has come to light. Surely it had to be more than a coincidence (maybe).

Not being overly interested in the music history of Houston, as distinct from our art history, I had never delved too deeply into the life and career of cellist, Athelstan Charlton. It was his artist stepson who interested me more. I knew that Athelstan had been a long-time member of the Boudreaux Quartet, named for its principal, Josephine Boudreaux, and that both had been associated with an early iteration of the Houston Symphony Orchestra, organized and conducted by New Orleans native, Paul Berg, Athelstan's brother-in-law. I had heard from Charlton family members, that Athelstan and his stepson, Gene, had an uneasy relationship; and I had noted that Athelstan appeared as an exhibitor in the Houston Annual Exhibitions of 1945 (*Clouds Over Appalachian Chain*) and 1946 (*Farm, Worcestershire, England*), showing one oil painting each year (present location of both unknown). But could there be more to find about him as an artist – and perhaps even as an artist with a connection to both the Guild Shop watercolor and the *AI* source of Hopper's copied painting? Was it even possible – perhaps - that my Guild Shop find was the original of the *AI* "original" that Hopper copied, brought to Houston by its real maker, Athelstan Charlton, and had nothing at all to do with Athelstane, Wisconsin? Or was my imagination flying too close to the sun? Definitely worth exploring, I decided.



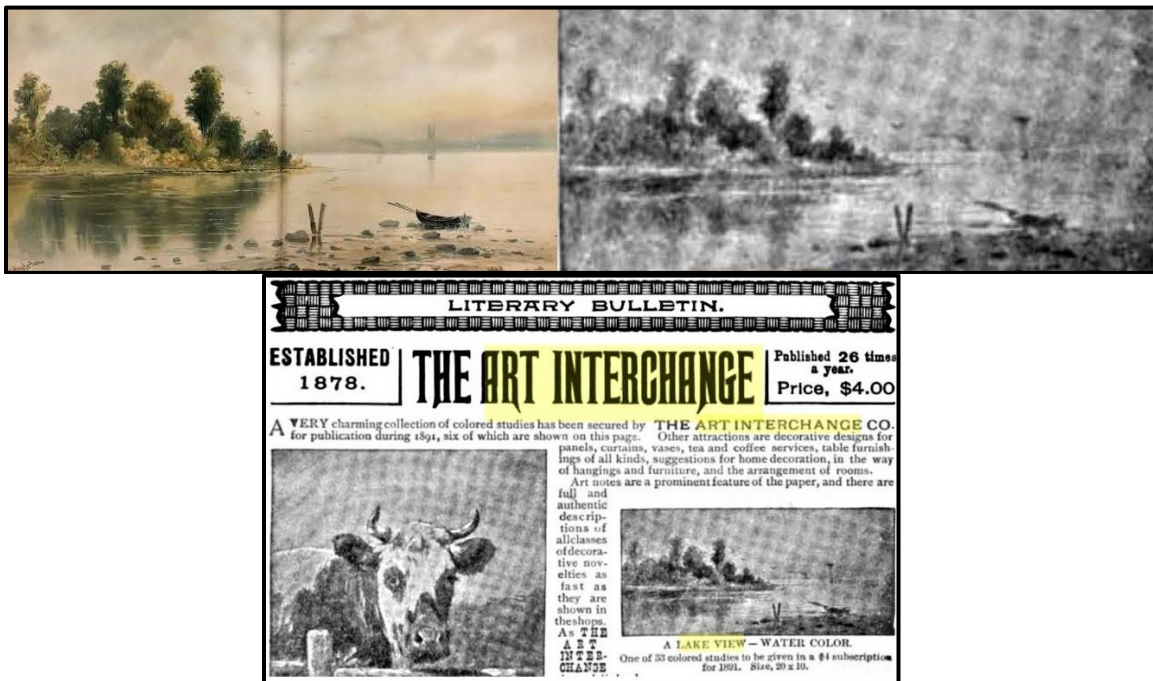
The Boudreaux Quartet : Josephine Boudreaux, director and first violin; Octave Pimbert, second violin; **Athelstan R. Charlton**, cello; and Grace Keller, viola. Photos courtesy of Houston Symphony Archives, courtesy of Sandra G. Matthews.



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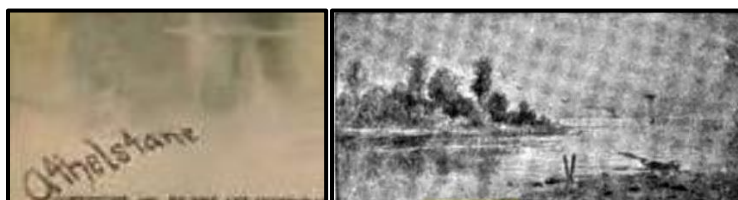
First, what to make of the Athelstane/Athelstan discrepancy? Probably not much. Athelstane, as well as Athelstan, Athelston and Athelstone appear as both given and surnames in the north of England where our Athelstan Charlton was christened (as "Athelston" Richard Charlton), at Kidderminster, Worcestershire, on 11 July 1869. By the time of the 1871 census of England and Wales, his family had relocated to Mirfield, Yorkshire, and he was listed as "Athelstan," which is the spelling in most records thereafter – though he once again became "Athelston" in the US Census of 1900. As genealogists know, such minor variations in the spelling of an unusual name, even in "official" records, is not uncommon, and should not be taken as definitive – though, of course, it must be taken into account. So the "e" itself, is probably not a major factor.

As I mentioned, that lower left-hand corner of a painting is a much more likely location for an artist's signature, than for a title – especially when the title is listed squarely in the center. For the print in question, that center title is "Lake View." But surely an artist signing his work would know how to spell his own name – and, though the spelling of our Athelstan's name appears a couple of different ways, no known records throughout his life spell it with a final "e."



"Lake View" as printed in *Art Interchange*, Feb 14, 1819 (top left); "Lake View" as printed in "Literary Bulletin" advertisement, *Arena Magazine* May 1891 (top right and bottom). Note that the *Arena Magazine* image does not appear to include "Athelstane" in the lower left corner.

How, then, to explain the final "e" on the print, if "Athelstane" is our Athelstan Charlton and not the place? One possibility: someone other than the artist added the "signature" to the AI plate during the publication process, to give credit to the artist, but someone who did not know exactly how the artist spelled his name. This hypothesis would seem to be supported by the appearance of "Lake View" in advertisements for the *Art Interchange* print series of which it was a part, in contemporaneous magazines such as *Arena Magazine* (May 1891, above), all apparently without the "Athelstane" in the lower left corner – but all noting the title "Lake View."



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This is, of course, only a hypothetical explanation, but one that is further supported by the actual printed title, "Lake View." Though this would at first appear to be a generic title, I would suggest that in fact it is very specific, and that it identifies the image as a view of [Lake View Park on Lake Mascuppic near Lowell, MA](#), opened in 1889, and which, as it turns out, was only a short trolley ride away from the childhood home of our Athelstan Charlton.



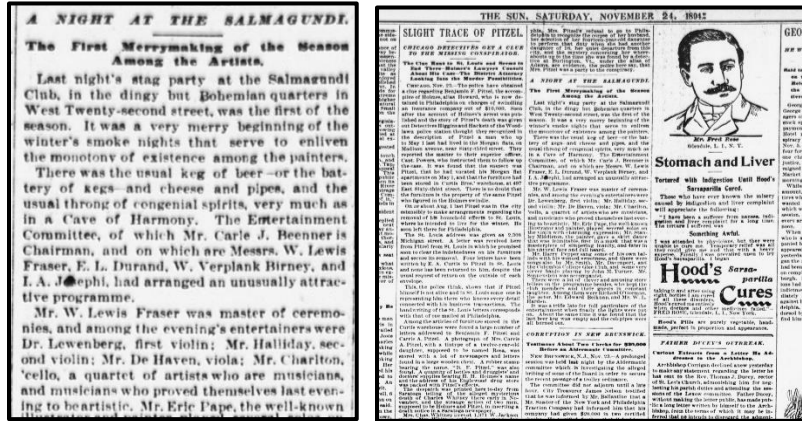
"View of Lake at Lake View, near Lowell, Mass." Two vintage postcards, c.1912. One including the steamer "Willow Dale," which may be the steamer included in the background of the AI version of "Lake View."

Our Athelstan was indeed born in England, on April 15, 1869 (according to his death certificate, issued when he died in Houston, June 20, 1960), to a father who was a "carpet designer" (as listed in the England and Wales Census of 1871). By 1878 the family had relocated to Lowell, MA, where Athelstan's sister, Florence Jane, was born. On her birth record, their father, Richard Charlton, was again listed as a "designer," no doubt applying his England-learned skills in the thriving carpet manufacturing industry in Lowell. By 1886, when Athelstan was 17, father Richard Charlton was listed in the Lowell city directory as an employee of the Lowell Manufacturing Company, residing at 79 Dover Street. Summer visits to Lake View by the young Athelstan would have been both feasible and tempting. It's not unlikely that our Athelstan, a budding artist, as well as cellist, would have taken the opportunity to paint the scene.

Still, how would a youth of 21 (in 1891), from Lowell, MA, manage to get his watercolor included in the series published by *Art Interchange* in New York City? The answer may lie in the fact that by then Athelstan had decided to try his luck in the Big Apple. By 1890 he had moved to New York City (according to the 1890 New York City Police Census – detailed United States Census records for 1890 do not exist, having been destroyed by fire long before the internet age), where, by 1894 at least (and perhaps earlier) he had become a member of the Salmagundi Club, and where he formed a professional association with Arthur L. Halliday, a fellow Yorkshireman, of Athelstan's father's generation, and also a designer in the carpet industry (the two returned together from a trip to England in 1895, both listed as "designer" in the immigration record; and they are noted as having taken a 10-day trip to Georgia and Florida in the *Carpet and Upholstery Trade Review* for January 15, 1898). Clearly Charlton was continuing a family tradition that stretched back, through his textile designer father, to his English weaver grandfather, at least – but a tradition that was destined to stop with him.

As to how Athelstan's "Lake View" might have got into *Art Interchange* in 1891 – it is possible (though not in any way documented) that fellow Salmagundian, and future president of the Salmagundis, Bruce Crane, at the time a "famous" artist whose works had already been published for copying in AI, might have helped. After all, the Salmagundi Club was a "professional and social club, created in 1871 by artists and patrons to support one another." How better to support a young artist than to help get him even a small paying assignment?

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"A Night at the Salmagundi: The First Merrymaking of the Season Among the Artists,"  
*The Sun* (New York), November 24, 1894.

There is no question that by 1894, at least, Athelstan had become an active member of the Salmagundi. On November 24<sup>th</sup>, at the "stag party ... in the dingy but Bohemian quarters" of the club, Charlton, on cello, and his partner, Arthur Halliday, on second violin, made two of "a quartet of artists who are musicians, and musicians who proved themselves ... to be artistic." That announcement, coupled with the notice of Halliday/Charlton's tour south, foreshadowed the transition of Athelstan Charlton from New York/New England carpet designer to Houston professional cellist over the next 20 years.

Athelstan continued his work in carpet design and art for many years. As late as 1904 he was still listed as half of the firm of Halliday & Charlton in the *Polk's New York Copartnership and Corporation Directory*; and he showed a landscape in the Salmagundi member exhibition of 1909. But clearly the Gulf Coast and the cello became more compelling over time. By 1913, he is listed among the faculty (teaching cello) at a new music school founded in that year in Pensacola, Florida (*Pensacola Journal*, February 17, 1913), a position which may have lasted only through the spring, since the last mention of him, as "an artist of a very high order," appears in the Pensacola newspaper on May 14, 1913.

By April 1915 he was already playing his cello in Houston (*Houston Post* April 4, 1915); and by December 1916 he was principle cellist with the Houston Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Paul Berg (*Houston Post* December 1, 1916). There had also been a stop in New Orleans between Pensacola and Houston, at least long enough for him to join the New Orleans musicians' union, an affiliation he resigned in 1921, no doubt sensing that Houston was to be his home for the duration (*The International Musician* November 1921).

In 1927 he married Alleine Ralph (shortened from Rafalsky, the name of her first husband, and the biological father of her only son, Eugene "Gene Ralph" Rafalsky, from whom she was divorced). She was an accomplished pianist, who performed publicly from time to time, though she did not pursue a professional career. She, of course, and also her son, Gene, took the last name Charlton (though Gene Charlton would transform once again late in life, to Eugene Charlton-Rafalsky).

Nothing more is heard from Athelstan as a visual artist, aside from those two mid-1940s works juried into the Houston Annual Exhibitions. No signed works by him have appeared, though it's worth keeping an eye out, since presumably any that existed at the time of Alleine's death, on July 31, 1960, only a little over a month after Athelstan's, were disbursed by Gene, who returned to Houston for the last time in order to settle his mother's estate. It's unlikely that he shipped anything from that estate to Rome, where he lived at the time, and for the rest of his life – so any Athelstan works in the estate probably stayed in Houston.

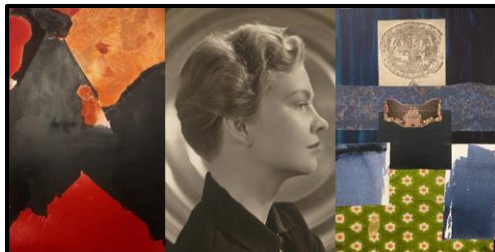
Including the Guild Shop watercolor? And is that watercolor the original, published in *Art Interchange* in 1891, and copied by Edward Hopper in 1895? "Could have," "perhaps," and "might have" are too ambiguous, of course, to make for a solid argument. But "what if" ... Wouldn't that be exciting!?



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Exhibitions of interest, in Houston and around Texas:



[\*Dorothy Hood: The Edge of Being\*](#), October 14th, 2021 – March 2023

University of Houston

Various Locations, see website for venues and times

The University of Houston is fast becoming the premier destination for scholars, students and others interested in the work of Dorothy Hood (1918-2000). This a chance to see selections of that material on view at multiple locations on University of Houston campuses.

[\*Texas Visions: Paintings by Noe Perez & Sculpture by Jason Scull\*](#)

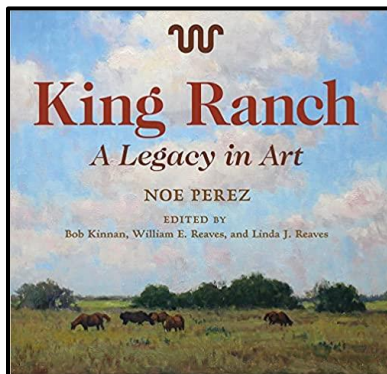
On view December 3, 2021 – January 22, 2022

[Foltz Gallery, Houston](#)

Opening Reception: Saturday, December 4th, 6 – 8PM

Book Talk & Signing Events: December 2021 & January 2022, TBD

Coinciding with the exhibition in Winter 2021, paintings by Noe Perez are featured in the newly released *King Ranch: A Legacy in Art*, published by Texas A&M University Press. This project was launched after Perez received a commission from King Ranch to create the painting commemorating the one-hundred-year anniversary of the historic Main House. By pairing original paintings by artist Noe Perez with insightful essays from curators Bruce Shackelford and Ron Tyler, this book celebrates the many ways “King Ranch culture” has enriched appreciation for the decorative, practical, and fine arts in Texas and the greater American West. Book talks and signings with the artist and the writers will take place in both December 2021 and January 2022.



Noe Perez [\*King Ranch: A Legacy in Art\*](#) Texas A&M University Press, 2021

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## GALVESTON



["Jose Cisneros: A Colorful World in Black and White"](#)  
[The Bryan Museum](#)

NOW - FEB 5, 2022

José Cisneros, the man, the artist, the illustrator, the historian, the friend – a life of almost 100 years, a talent that emerged at age 12. The Bryan Museum is excited to introduce the most extensive retrospective of the life and art of José Cisneros. The exhibition will include a representation of his home studio, and display artwork which include personal sketches, illustrations from history texts, numerous publications, calligraphy, cartography, and glass work. These various mediums that Mr. Cisneros worked with have left an enduring legacy to his adopted country.

## FORT WORTH

["Imagined Realism: Scott and Stuart Gentling"](#)  
[Amon Carter Museum of American Art](#)

NOW - JAN 9, 2022



Have you been to **Bass Hall** and marveled at the 80-foot mural adorning its dome? It was designed by Fort Worth artists **Scott and Stuart Gentling**. Brothers and lifelong artistic collaborators, their artistic interests spanned centuries and continents, resulting in a varied body of work that ranges from emulations of naturalist-artists like **John James Audubon** to imagined visualizations of the **Aztec** empire. In the first-ever comprehensive retrospective of the brothers' work, *Imagined Realism* explores their distinct style that defied the movements of their times. Featuring more than 150 works and archival objects, this exhibition marks a multiyear effort to situate their visionary artistic careers on the national stage of the larger art

world in which they worked.



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## ALPINE



*Mexico and Texas* by John Milton Miles

[Maps of the Republic of Texas, 1836-1846](#)

[Museum of the Big Bend.](#)

Ongoing

The Republic of Texas declared its independence from Mexico on March 2, 1836, and existed as a nation until it was formally annexed by the United States on February 19, 1846.

Mexico never recognized the Republic of Texas, considering it to be a rebellious province during its entire existence – this despite the fact that Mexican President General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna had recognized the independence of Texas following his defeat and capture at the Battle of San Jacinto on April 21, 1836. The Mexican Congress considered that Santa Anna's signature on the Treaty of Velasco had been obtained under duress, and there were intermittent conflicts between Mexico and Texas over the next decade.

The borders of the Republic of Texas were disputed throughout its existence, as reflected in these maps. These maps from the [Yana and Marty Davis Map Collection](#), all original from the Republic of Texas period, also reflect how little scientific cartography had been carried out in the region up to the time Texas was annexed by the United States.

The annexation of Texas in 1846 triggered the Mexican American War of 1846-1848. The US victory in that war greatly changed the political delineations in North America but also led to some of the first truly accurate maps of Texas.

## CANYON

[Southwest Abstractions of Emil Bisttram – From the Ladd Collection](#)

Panhandle Plains Historical Museum

Now-March 19, 2022

Emil Bisttram (1895-1976) was one of the leading painters in the Southwest. Though not an Earlier Houston Artist, himself, he had a decisive influence in our city through his students, who included Grace Spaulding John and Virgie Claxton. And on a visit here in 1933 he exhorted the artist-members of the cooperative Houston Artists Gallery to become so "modern" that they would "raise the devil in the town." (*Houston Chronicle* March 17, 1933). The works in this exhibition, drawn exclusively from an extensive collection of Bisttram paintings from the Ladd Family of Amarillo, are being exhibited together for first time in a museum or public setting.

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**Just in time for Holiday gifts, with no supply chain issues to worry about!**

## **Studio School Student Art Sale**

Glassell School of Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

December 10, 11 & 12

A unique array featuring jewelry, ceramics, paintings, sculpture, prints, and more, all made by budding Earlier Houston Artists of the future. Arrive early for the best selection. Proceeds from the sale benefit the students. Admission is free.

Looking ahead: Some Early Texas Art events are already on the calendar for 2022:

CASETA's 2022 Symposium

& Art Fair to be held *live* at the

Hilton Dallas Lincoln Centre, Dallas, Texas, June 10-12, 2022

*Texas Modernism(s): Houston/Dallas in the 1930s*

An Exhibition at the Julia Ideson Building of Houston Public Library

Opening August 2022

The mission of HETAG is to illuminate Houston's art history by providing viewing opportunities for art, by supporting and doing research on the artists and art communities working in Houston through the years, and by spreading the word.

Back issues of the HETAG Newsletter are available via the

[University of Houston Libraries Digital Library](#)

and

[The Portal to Texas History](#)

**Randy Tibbits, coordinator  
HETAG: The Houston Earlier  
Texas Art Group  
[tibbits@rice.edu](mailto:tibbits@rice.edu)**



Ending with Bonbons by Henri Gadbois, instead of bons mots.