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Star Of The Republic Museum

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Texana and Texans: Famous and Infamous

What do a 1587 world map, a letter from the celebrated actress Lily Langtry, a Kelsey two dollar currency note, and "Swartwouting" have in common? They are all associated with the Texana Collection of Mr. and Mrs. L. Cletus Brown, Jr. of Brookshire, Texas.

Native Texans, the Browns began seriously collecting Texana in the early 1970's. Cletus Brown notes that "often items get lost in family attics for 150 years. . . . I felt they could be better preserved in a public institution where they would be properly cared for and displayed." On Sunday, March 4, 1984, as part of the Texas Independence Day festivities, the Museum will officially open the Showers-Brown Texana exhibit highlighting this collection, which extends over five centuries and a variety of mediums — art, sculpture, documents, and other artifacts.

Several excellent maps are contained in the exhibit, beginning with the 1587 Typus Orbis Terrarum by Abraham Ortelius, a Flemish map collector and publisher. This world map was included in Ortelius' compilation considered to be the first modern atlas. Perhaps of more interest to Texans is Stephen F. Austin's 1840 Map of Texas. Used to encourage immigration to Texas and to fulfill a promise to the Mexican government to produce a detailed map, Austin's map was first printed in 1830 and, because of its popularity, was reissued five times before 1840. An 1847 edition of John Disturnell's Mapa De Los Estados Unidos De Mejico is also on exhibit. A prolific publisher of handbooks, maps, gazettes, and guidebooks, Disturnell capitalized on the demand for information generated by the popular interest in the Mexican-American War by issuing twenty-three editions of this map over twelve years. Because of its ready availability, the map was used during the peace negotiations of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo which ended the Mexican-American War.

Cattle have been part of the Texas landscape since their introduction in the New World by the Spanish. Within the exhibit, the "Texas Longhorn Bull" bronze sculpture by K. R. Hamorszky embodies this association. By 1845 over



"Texas Longhorn Bull"

300,000 cattle were running wild in Texas. The Longhorn was a rangy breed, able to survive off brush and prickly pear. Initially they were sold mainly for their tallow and hides and not as meat. In the days of the open range a rancher simply branded or marked cattle to claim them and drove them to market. The heyday of open range ranching and trail drives to cattle markets came after the Civil War when Americans began preferring beef to pork. A quarter of a century later, with the fencing of the open range and improved breeding techniques, both the Longhorn and the cowboy culture it reflected would be almost extinct.

The Showers-Brown Texana Collection presents a variety of documents pertaining to the cattle industry. The fencing in of the "open range" tradition had a tremendous

impact on ranching in Texas. In the early years, fencing had been mostly Bois d' arc (osage orange) hedges as wood and rocks were scarce. The processing and selling of this seed was actually a thriving industry with the hedges being advertised as "horse high, bull strong and pig tight." Yet nothing could compete with barbed wire. Of the dozens of barbed wire types patented after the Civil War, Joseph Glidden's 1874 wire became the standard, and within a decade 120 million pounds a year were being sold. Yet fencing created a conflict with a tradition of open range. Cattlemen often fenced in public land, fenced out the other nearby ranchers from waterholes, and fenced across roads and trails. In response fence-cutting became rampant, causing feuds and deaths. Reflecting the controversy surrounding the introduction of barbed wire and its impact, the exhibit includes a petition to the Texas State Legislature to define a legal fence. In 1884 Texas declared fence-cutting a felony, but also required a gate for every one-third mile of fencing. In a more positive sense, fencing provided an incentive to improve land and breeding stock, thus forever changing the landscape of the American West.

From a military perspective, the Showers-Brown Texana Collection encompasses a variety of documents and artifacts highlighting the role Texas played in its own Revolution, the Mexican-American War, and the Civil War. The collection contains a handbill printed in Brazoria in 1836 which attempts to reassure the people that they could return to their homes. After the fall of the Alamo, the threat of an advancing Mexican army helped cause the "Runaway Scrape";

people all over Texas fled their homes and sought refuge on Galveston Island and in Louisiana. In their panic the refugees were ill-prepared for the hardships of disease, hunger, rain, and lack of transportation which they would encounter. Consequently, many lives were lost in the flight which continued until news came of the victory at San Jacinto.

The Mexican-American War was called by Ulysses S. Grant "one of the most unjust [wars] ever waged." It was also the first war to be quickly illustrated for mass distribution as lithographs in Harper's Weekly and other publications. The major battles of the war – Molino del Rey, Buena Vista, and Chapultepec – are illustrated by colored prints within the exhibit.

One of the more interesting documents from the Civil War period is a Harper's Weekly print of Camp Ford near Tyler, Texas. The largest prison in the state, Camp Ford enclosed a ten acre field and held about 5,000 Union prisoners. It was a stockade, fenced with long poles set close together; prisoners provided their own dugouts or wooden houses called "shebangs." They had a hand-printed newspaper called the "Old Flag." The exhibit includes several Harper's prints, documents, and artifacts from the Civil War period, as well as a Confederate sword and an 1851 Starr revolver widely used by both Confederate and Union troops.

Another very interesting aspect of Texas history is the tremendous variety of documents which were used as legal tender, ranging from the worthless treasury notes of a bankrupt government to stock certificates in promising towns made rich



"Camp Ford, Texas," Harper's Weekly, 1865

by the coming of railroads. In the Republic period the legal tender issued by the government was often nearly worthless. At the time of issue by the government in 1841, a Republic of Texas two dollar change note was worth only four cents. Yet, this was only one of several currencies "floating around." Nacogdoches merchant Kelsey Douglas privately issued currency in denominations of one, two, three, and five dollars. Redeemable in New Orleans, they were freely circulated and accepted. When Douglas died in 1840, the bills were discontinued.

The issuing of certificates of stock in towns was a common practice. One of the more interesting stock certificates from the collection is for the town of Swartwout, Texas. Swartwout was laid out along the Trinity River in 1838 as a project of New York financier, Samuel Swartwout. Because of his successful promotion of Andrew Jackson as a presidential candidate, Swartwout was rewarded after the election with the lucrative appointment of U. S. Customs Collector in the port of New York City. Also at this time he became active in Texas land speculation and development. In 1838 Swartwout left suddenly for Europe, and a subsequent investigation revealed that between one and two million dollars was missing from the customs account. For some time thereafter, "Swartwouting" was synonymous with embezzlement. In 1840 he returned to the United States and the government finally agreed to accept in payment whatever Swartwout could realize from the sale of his Texas lands. The town of Swartwout, of which Sam Hosuton was a stockholder, continued as a river port until the 1870's.

The exhibit also contains a varied selection of documents about famous people who have been associated with Texas, including letters and documents concerning Lily Langtry and Cynthia Ann Parker. The beautiful daughter of a New Jersey clergyman, Lily Langtry rose to become the toast of London in the 1870's. Called the "Jersey Lily," she used publicity and photography to take society by storm. At one time the mistress of Edward VII, the Prince of Wales, she went on to become a celebrated actress. Even Texan Judge Roy Bean knew of her and invited Lily to visit him at Langtry, which he claimed was named after her. Actually the town was called Langtry after a railroad contractor by that name who had been in charge of construction in the area. She wrote her regrets and instead offered to present the town with an ornamental drinking fountain. Judge Roy Bean's quick reply was that "it would be quite useless, as the only thing the citizens of Langtry did not drink was water." Several years later Lily did visit Langtry on her way out to California, but unfortunately the Judge was already dead. The collection includes a letter from Lily to William Waiter of New York.

Another important Texana document in the collection is a court order placing Cynthia Ann Parker under the guardianship of her uncle James W. Parker, in absentia. In 1836 at the age of nine she was captured by Comanches

during a raid on Fort Parker, Texas. She spent the next twenty-five years among her adopted tribe and eventually married a Comanche chief, Peta Nocona. Of their two sons, Pecos and Quanah, the latter was destined to become an important chief in his own right. Apparently she was once contacted by a trading party, but claimed to be content with no desire to return to her white family. Yet in 1860, Cynthia and her two-year old daughter, Prairie Flower, were recaptured in a raid and brought back to her relatives. She was despondent in a white man's world; she never smiled and even tried to escape several times. Four years later, devastated by the death of her daughter, Cynthia Ann supposedly starved herself to death.

A Texas Ranger sword, Schuetzen percussion rifle, and guns belonging to "Billy the Kid" and William "Billy" Dixon can also be viewed. The Showers-Brown Collection presents a diverse assortment of Texana reflecting the heterogeneous composition of Texas and the Texans who influenced and determined its destiny. This distinctive exhibit will be on display through November 1984.



Mr. and Mrs. L. Cletus Brown, Jr.

NOTES

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This year's celebration of Texas Independence Day will be held Sunday, March 4, 1984. The Showers-Brown Texana exhibit will open at the Museum, highlighting the extensive collection of Mr. and Mrs. L. Cletus Brown, Jr. In addition the Museum theatre will exhibit the winning entries in the fourth annual Republic of Texas Art Contest. Sponsored by the Museum for the fourth grades from Alton Elementary in Brenham and Navasota Intermediate in Navasota, the exhibit will run through May 25, 1984. The art contest awards ceremony will be held in the theatre at 1:30 p.m. The Park program features Jack Maguire from the Institute of Texan Cultures in San Antonio as the keynote speaker along with television personality Doug Johnson, and author Nath Winfield who will tell stories of Old Washington. The Texas Army will recreate the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Do come and join us for the festivities.

of Independence. Finally Col. William Orbelo of San Antonio has loaned the Museum a Tennessee rifle inscribed "John Bull for Wm B. Rodgers for Texas." John Bull was a Tennessee gunmaker and William Rodgers moved from Tennessee to Nacogdoches in the mid-1820's, making this artifact possibly the first rifle for Texas. The Museum is sincerely appreciative of the contributions made by these generous individuals.

Individuals who have contributed artifacts to the Museum recently deserve our recognition. Mr. Robert M. Hannum of El Paso donated a Republic of Texas \$100 Government Bond dated 1841 and signed by David G. Burnet. An early twentieth-century book on Freemasonry was given to the Museum by Mr. Charles H. Ingram of Kingsland. Mrs. Anna Kathryn Holbrook of San Augustine donated a photograph and documents of Charles S. Taylor, one of the signers of the Texas Declaration

MUSEUM SCHEDULE

Open Daily

10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

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