La Tierra y su Gente: The Rio Grande Photographs of Robert Runyon, Spring 2010

In the spring of 2010 the Center for Greater Southwestern Studies will bring to campus "La Tierra y su Gente: The Rio Grande Photographs of Robert Runyon," a photographic exhibit on loan from the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

The exhibit is a selection of the more than 8,000 items in the Robert Runyon Photograph Collection of the South Texas Border Area, a unique visual resource documenting the Lower Rio Grande Valley during the early 1900s. Runyon’s photographs document the history and development of South Texas and the border, including the Mexican Revolution, the U.S. military presence at Ft. Brown and along the border prior to and during World War I, and the growth and development of the Rio Grande Valley.

Runyon’s first images recorded urban life in Brownsville and the Rio Grande terrain. Then, during the summer and fall of 1913, he turned his attention to political events in Mexico as the Mexican Revolution reached the Texas border. Runyon’s images of the conflict between Rebels and Federals in Northeastern Mexico and into Texas has gone largely undocumented. His photographs provide a unique record of this important event.

As the Revolution intensified, the United States responded by activating Ft. Brown and transferring soldiers from across the country to the Brownsville camp. Runyon minutely recorded this military build-up and the subsequent preparations for U.S. entry into World War I. His photographs show the transition from animal to mechanical power that occurred during this time period as well as the soldiers’ camp life and leisure activities.

The exhibit of 31 framed photographs will be displayed on the Sixth floor of the Main Library from February to April, 2010. For more information contact Center secretary Ann Jennings, 817.272.3997, jennings@uta.edu.