Center Brings Mexican Revolution Era Photography to Campus

The outbreak of the Mexican Revolution in 1910 coincided with a period of rapid technological change in the area of professional and amateur photography. For more than 50 years, photographic equipment had been cumbersome, expensive, and limited largely to the studio of the commercial photographer. By the turn of the century, however, the Kodak "box" camera—and its even more popular successor, the "folding camera"—made "Kodaking," as it was often called, an activity widely enjoyed by the middle class. At the same time, the development of halftone printing technology made photojournalism a staple feature of metropolitan daily newspapers. Largely as a result of these changes, the Mexican Revolution was the first major political and social upheaval of the 20th century to be extensively photographed. Leaders on every side of the conflict saw propaganda value in the new medium, allowing Mexican and American photographers almost unfettered access to document the war.

A sampling of these images was on display on the sixth floor of the Central Library from February to the end of April as part of the Center for Greater Southwestern Studies' Mexican Revolution centennial program. February 17 marked the opening of *Mexico, The Revolution and Beyond*, a touring photographic exhibit on loan from the Mexican government. The Central Library's sixth floor Parlor was the venue for more than 90 images of Mexican life during the early decades of the 20th century, a selection of works from the photo agency established by Agustín Casasola. Today the collection, known as the Archivo Casasola, consists of more than 500,000 images and is part of the Fototeca Nacional in Pachuca, Mexico. Described as "in every way extraordinary" by the *New York Times*, the exhibit has appeared in cities throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe.

Based in Mexico City, where he worked for several major newspapers, Agustín Victor Casasola was one of the most prominent photographers in Porfirian Mexico. Soon after the outbreak of the Revolution, Casasola and his brother Miguel established a photo agency to document the upheaval, ultimately collecting the work of more than 480 photographers. The exhibit featured not only the most famous figures of the Revolution, such as Francisco Madero, Pancho Villa, and Emiliano Zapata, but also the anonymous faces of the decade-long struggle that transformed the Mexican nation-state.

In the 1920s, the Casasola brothers focused their lens upon everyday life in Mexico City, a rapidly changing metropolis with a population of half a million by the middle of the decade. As Mexicans by the thousands left the ravaged countryside in search of new opportunities in the nation's capital, they created an urban world far removed from the one in which a landless peasantry had erupted with cries of "Tierra y Libertad." The exhibit's post-revolutionary images capture the pulse of a vibrant city, as well as the loneliness and alienation of urban life. In the process, they provide a comprehensive visual record of Mexico's transformation from agrarianism to modernity.

This spring the Center also brought to campus *La Tierra*...
In Memoriam
Jenkins Garrett, 1914-2010

The Center for Greater Southwestern Studies lost a great friend this past January with the passing of Jenkins Garrett at the age of 95. A graduate of the University of Texas and Harvard Law School, Jenkins Garrett was a prominent Fort Worth attorney, philanthropist, and champion of higher education in North Texas. A former regent of the University of Texas System and a founder of the Tarrant County College System, Mr. Garrett will be remembered at UT Arlington chiefly for his generous support of the Central Library’s Special Collections and the history department, which spanned four decades. Former UT Arlington president Wendell Nedderman summed up Mr. Garrett’s contributions simply but accurately: “He was the greatest benefactor UT Arlington has ever had.”

Students of the American Southwest owe a special debt of gratitude to Mr. Garrett, who was an avid collector of Texana and U.S.-Mexican War materials. In the 1950s, while serving as general counsel to Fort Worth department store owners Marvin and Obie Leonard, Jenkins began collecting materials relating to the history of early Texas. He soon became convinced, however, that any Texana collection would be incomplete without materials on the American Southwest. He became especially interested in the war with Mexico, at a time when the conflict was not even listed as a separate category by collectors. In the years that followed, he amassed the largest collection of books, broadsides, song sheets, military documents, lithographs, maps, and ephemera on the U.S.-Mexican War.

In 1973 Mr. Garrett donated his collection, then more than 10,000 items, to UT Arlington, a bequest that formed the core of the Central Library’s newly created Special Collections division. Since that time, due in part to the continued support of Jenkins and his wife, Virginia—an avid collector of cartographic materials in her own right—Special Collections has grown into a major repository for researchers interested in the American Southwest and its cartographic history.

In addition to his love for collecting, Mr. Garrett supported endeavors that allowed others to share his passion for history and historical research. He was instrumental in the founding of the Center for Greater Southwestern Studies in the early 1990s and served as chair of its first advisory board. He also helped to create an endowed chair in the history department, the Jenkins and Virginia Garrett Chair in Southwestern Studies and the History of Cartography. To honor his contributions to UT Arlington, his children funded the Jenkins Garrett Award, which recognizes the best undergraduate or graduate history research paper that draws upon the Special Collections archives.

“We will miss him,” said former director Richard Francaviglia, “but take pleasure in knowing that his legacy is secure.”

Center Fellow Updates


Sonia Kania was recommended for promotion to Associate Professor with tenure to the Board Regents. She presented her research on the Spanish future subjunctive at the 2010 Kentucky Foreign Language Conference in April; her paper was entitled “The Use of the Future Subjunctive in Colonial American Texts.” She presented a paper, “Documenting Veismo in Medieval and Colonial Spanish Texts,” at the 45th International Congress on Medieval Studies in Kalamazoo, Michigan, in May. Her article “The Prohombres de mérito de Vicente de Zaldívar: Edition and Notes to Part 1 (1601-1602)” appeared in Summer 2009 issue of the *Journal of the Southwest*.

When the University of Texas Press published *Historic Texas from the Air* in the summer of 2009, it was the culmination of a project that David Buissere, Richard Francaviglia, Jack Graves, and I had worked on for several years. The book is a UT Arlington product from start to finish. It includes six chapters covering the land itself, the Indian presence, French and Spanish settlers, Anglo forts and communications in the 19th century, Anglo settlements and industries in the 19th century, and 20th-century Texas.

The purpose of the book is to document 73 historical and geographical sites from the air, in hopes of giving the reader a new and different perspective on both little-known places (like Alibates flint quarries) and world famous ones (like the Alamo). With each site we include an aerial photograph taken by UT Arlington alumnus and collaborator Jack Graves; a narrative about the historical significance of the location; related images from old postcards, antique maps, and other primary resources from the Library's Special Collections; and suggested sources for further reading.

*Historic Texas from the Air* was a project that drew upon the unique talents of four individuals who came together at the University over the past 15 years. In the mid-1990s, Jack Graves enrolled in three independent studies history classes with me while he was completing his BA in Business Administration. In these classes, Graves, a pilot, photographer, and local businessman, conducted projects to document from the air the U.S.-Mexican War battle sites in southern Texas and northern Mexico dating from 1846-1848, and also the U.S. military forts built on the north and central Texas frontier from 1849 to 1889. These projects were hugely successful for Graves, who learned a great deal about researching, documenting, and photographing historical sites. The photographs, research materials, aerial maps, and narratives that Graves created have all been deposited in Special Collections, where they are available so that other researchers can benefit from his work.

David Buissere joined the history faculty as the Jenkins and Virginia Garrett Endowed Chairholder in Greater Southwestern Studies and the History of Cartography in 1995, bringing with him the experience of having written and published two seminal aerial books, *Historic Jamaica from the Air* (1972) and *Historic Illinois from the Air* (1992). Richard Francaviglia, then serving as Director of the Center for Greater Southwestern Studies and the History of Cartography, not only brought the eye and perspective of a cultural geographer to the project, but his usual boundless energy and enthusiasm as well. As a Texas historian and Dean of the Library, my knowledge of the state and its past helped to identify sites and sources for inclusion in the book.

Our discussions about the project began in earnest in the summer of 2002. The four of us met a few times and began hashing out a list of sites for possible inclusion. As the authors, Buissere, Francaviglia, and I wanted to make sure that the expanse and diversity of Texas were well represented in the book. We considered literally hundreds of sites where
"All of this reminds us how intricately people have worked the land here in Texas. These patterns may be interesting and even beautiful, but even more importantly they confirm that landscapes are also artifacts."

important events and developments took place, such as battles, migrations, treaties, disasters, and discoveries.

There were challenges, of course. One of the biggest Graves faced was trying to capture the “view” of the site that the authors wanted. We addressed this issue when Graves developed a form for us to use for each site that noted the description of the proposed photo, location of the site, information about the type of site it was, orientation, identifying marks, and other objects to be included and excluded from the site photograph.

Mother Nature also provided her share of challenges. In a studio environment, a photographer can move the subject, adjust the light, and shoot at various stationary locations. Not so for aerial photographers, who must deal with days that can be less than perfect, causing him or her to adjust on the fly. As Graves writes in the Photographer’s Preface, “Heat, cold, wind, thermals, turbulence, smoke, haze, fog, clouds, sun, terrain, ground obstacles (towers, buildings, etc.), and FAA air space restrictions are just a few variables that we must deal with.” On a couple flights, the actual sites themselves proved difficult to locate, while some sites no longer existed or just didn’t make for a compelling photo.

Overall, Graves photographed 111 sites, some multiple times, to get the 73 photographs used in the book. It took 39 individual photo flights totaling 81.2 hours of flight time and covering close to 8,000 miles. Graves flew in fixed-wing aircraft like Cessna 172 Skyhawks for photo flights in rural and outlying areas, and Schweizer 300 and Robinson R22 helicopters for photo flights in the congested metropolitan areas of Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston, and San Antonio. He took a total of 4,176 individual photographs using a 35mm Canon EOS1-N camera with either a Canon 70-200mm 2.8L zoom lens or a 24-85mm wide-angle lens. He used Kodak Professional Extachrome transparency film, E100 VS most of the time, but there were occasions when he used Fujichrome color reversal film, Velvia 100F. While Graves is a pilot, he did not fly the plane and take photos at the same time; instead, he used professional pilots and friends (especially his close friend Lt. Col. Francis X. Cantwell, USAF Ret.) to pilot the various aircraft while he concentrated on taking the photos. Most of the photographs were taken while flying “low and slow” from 300-800 feet above the ground and at speeds of approximately 60-70 knots in the helicopters and 90-100 knots in the fixed-wing aircraft.

We specifically wanted photos from a low vantage point—some have labeled these perspectives as “birds-eye views”—to provide an intimate but unfamiliar look at the historical sites and geography. Like maps, these views reveal the spatial relationships of features—buildings, topography, trees, rivers, and so on—to each other. Unlike maps, however, the perspective captured in these photographs is oblique; that is, the Earth’s surface is seen at an angle rather than planimetric, where the view is as if you are looking straight down.

The aerial photos are also pictures in the best sense of the word. In some photographs, the landscape takes on the quality of a painting, sometimes an even abstract or surreal painting. Take as an example the chimneys of the long-abandoned Fort Phantom Hill (north of Abilene) that stand like eerie sentinels of a time long forgotten. Or the remains of 10 or more millennia of incessant human gnawing at the Alibates flint beds in the Texas Panhandle. As we state in the book’s conclusion, “All of this reminds us how intricately people have worked the land here in Texas. These patterns may be interesting and even beautiful, but even more importantly they confirm that landscapes are also artifacts.”

We believe that Historic Texas from the Air offers a unique perspective of the state’s history and geography. Where else will you find pictures and narratives reflecting the rich history of such diverse sites and places as the Big Thicket, Chisos Mountains, Comanche Peak, the Camino Real in Nacogdoches, Fort Davis, the Galveston seawall, the Fort Worth Stockyards, and the Astrodome, to mention only a few? The book is a survey of the state’s heritage taken from the air, and has been a labor of love for the four of us since 2002. We hope readers will enjoy their aerial tour of the Lone Star State as much as we enjoyed producing it.
Taming the Land: The Lost Postcard Photographs of the Texas High Plains

John Miller Morris

The rise of the photo postcard during the early 20th century made the photographic image particularly ubiquitous in the lives of Americans and Europeans. The large volume of postcards produced in this period, with their everyday messages and snapshots of long-vanished places and vistas, make them an invaluable tool for learning about and vividly experiencing the past.

Taming the Land: The Lost Postcard Photographs of the Texas High Plains by John Miller Morris (Texas A&M University Press, 2009) makes an indelible contribution to both the history of photo postcards and of the Texas panhandle. This handsome oversized book, profusely illustrated with photo postcards spanning the first few decades of the new century, invites us to envision the history of the Texas panhandle and its forgotten photographers in new, evocative ways. Lovingly assembled by Morris, a historical geographer, Taming the Land combines the best of regional history with photographic miscellany, merging both in a rich narrative about place, identity, and social change.

Morris shows how the dramatic economic expansion and modernization of the Texas panhandle between 1900 and 1920 coincided with a vogue in local photo postcards. As a result, these postcards witnessed, participated in, and memorialized the regional transformation. Miller explains that photography was not merely a mirror to change, but one of its instruments, a form of marketing that sought to "visualize" the High Plains as an inviting, fertile space of renewal and opportunity.

To tell this story of the intertwining of place, history, and daily life in the Texas panhandle, Morris combines several interlocking narratives: the story of notable and less notable towns of the High Plains, such as Amarillo, Shamrock, Canyon, Oslo, Stratford, and Borger; the life stories of the most important amateur, itinerant, and professional photographers of the region; the "snapshots" of daily life and landscape of the panhandle captured on real photo postcards; and, to a lesser degree, the recovered fragments of individual self-expression embedded in the inscriptions that people wrote on photo postcards. In 1910, for example, a schoolgirl writes on a postcard: "Is the world better because God has let us live this year? We cannot tell but may live to good purpose in the welcome New Year." Morris's palimpsest of stories comes together brilliantly, recreating a powerful sense of place and wonder over the vanished ways of the past.

Morris divides his book into regions, beginning in the Trans-Canadian country, then moving southward through Red River Forks Country to the Central Golden Spread. For each region, he has identified key photographers with distinctive styles; their life stories add a rich layer of human interest to the postcards reproduced in the book. Albert Lawrence Wilson (1875-1954), for example, worked a homestead claim outside of Texhoma, ran a small studio in town, and became a Baptist Sunday school teacher. One of the most dynamic photo postcards in the book is Wilson's action shot of a potato race in Stratford, Texas. In this postcard, Wilson crisply combines a panoramic, deep view of crowds lining a street while horsemen race in the foreground.

While most photo postcards are not self-consciously "artistic," some of them stand out for their excellent composition and interesting point of view, revealing the great skill of the largely unknown photographers who documented the panhandle in the dawn of the 20th century. One of my favorite postcards is "Street Photographer at Work, Stratford, Texas" by the Irish born Thomas R. McQuillan. The postcard depicts a street scene transected by a horse-drawn buggy that is reflected in a pool of water. In the left background, McQuillan has also captured the small profile of another photographer at work. The doubling of the horse-drawn buggy in the pool of water and the doubling of the photographer, who is both author and subject of the postcard, provides a complex and playful commentary on the photographic arts and the act of seeing.

Enthusiasts of Texas history and postcards will find much to feast upon in Taming the Land: photographs of train col...

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Mexican Revolution Era Photography continued from cover

y su Gente, the Rio Grande Photographs of Robert Runyon, a collection of 32 photographs from the archives of the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas at Austin. A commercial photographer living in Brownsville when the Revolution broke out, Runyon photographed the conflict in northeastern Mexico, following Constitutionalist forces during their attack on Matamoros in 1913. He also documented the conflict from the United States as refugees fled across the Rio Grande to safety in Brownsville and as Fort Brown became an important site of U.S. military operations during the crisis.

Booknotes continued from page 5

lians, birds-eye views of small and large towns, ranching and farming scenes, photomontages, street scenes, ominous weather, disaster photos (particularly of fires), and scenes of leisure. For each photo postcard, Morris has written a helpful, historical, or geographical narrative, and has transcribed any handwritten messages that the featured postcard carried. In sum, this is an outstanding, rewarding book that invites repeated readings and perusal.

—Christopher Conway

To complement these two prestigious exhibits, the Center of Greater Southwestern Studies, working with the staff of the Central Library’s Special Collections, produced an exhibit of its own, entitled Images of Conflict: 1910-1921, a collection of 40 digitized photographs covering various aspects of the Mexican Revolution, from the fall of Porfirio Díaz to the Obregón years. Several of these images were taken by the El Paso photographer William Horne, who chronicled Pancho Villa’s attack on Columbus, New Mexico, and the intervention into Mexico of U.S. troops under General Pershing that followed.

Center Fellows

Stephanie Cole, Associate Professor of History; Chris Conway, Associate Professor of Modern Languages; Imre Demhardt (Ex-Officio), Professor & Garrett Endowed Chair in the History of Cartography; Robert Fairbanks, Professor of History; George Green, Professor of History; Sonia Kania, Assistant Professor of Modern Languages; David Narrett, Associate Professor of History; Douglas Richmond, Professor of History; Ken Roemer, Professor of English; Roberto Treviño, Associate Professor of History

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