



Museum Musings

Building a Legacy: The E.A. Limmer, Jr. Collection

Inside this issue:

- ❖ ¿Qué Pasa?
- ❖ Memberships, Memorials, Honoraria
- ❖ Who is Phasaelus Bell?
- ❖ Big Bell County Garage Sale
- ❖ Community Grants Awarded
- ❖ Expansion News

As we open our beautiful expanded facility on Saturday, May 20, 2006, we highlight a special collection of over 1,800 artifacts donated by one very special museum supporter, E.A. Limmer, Jr. The Limmer Collection remains a benchmark collection for the museum, due to the high quality, sheer range, and remarkable provenance of the objects.

Now 86 years young, "Mr. Limmer" was born in Alligator, Bell County, Texas. An avid genealogist, he claims kin with so many folks, *you* might in fact be related to him. Mr. Limmer graduated from Southwest Texas State Teachers College with a degree in history in 1941. He worked for Shell Oil for 38 years, as a financial assistant in Houston for 30 years, and for eight years in the oilfields of West Texas and New Mexico, where he met Theresa Del Cont. They married in 1954.

Throughout his life, Mr. Limmer has collected artifacts; from fine art pieces by local and statewide artists to butter molds and quilts, his collection expanded into the garage, the historic Messer-Limmer Farmhouse in Alligator, and into his Temple home. With the museum's restoration completed in 1991, Mr. Limmer donated the first of many, many objects to the museum. Why? "Because I didn't have any children to give them to, and my wife isn't that thrilled with old things; I was just delighted to give them away so they could be seen by everyone." Mr. Limmer served as chair of the Bell County Historical Commission for several years, and was the editor-in-chief for the two-volume *Story of Bell County* (he says he didn't know what he was getting himself into!). He was instrumental in the renovation of the Carnegie Library Building, helping to raise \$400,000 to restore the building, now home to the Bell County Museum. He has served on its Board of Trustees, and on many other boards of historical and cultural persuasion. We are proud to showcase this wonderful collection that will be on view until October 7, 2006.

Recovered Views: African American Portraits, 1912-1925

Recovered Views: African American Portraits, 1912-1925, presents 40 photographs from a truly extraordinary collection. An African American photographer who lived and worked in Lincoln, Nebraska, in the early part of the 20th century made the black-and-white portraits. These portraits are more than just stunning images; they document life in a vibrant black community in a small Midwestern city, a society rarely depicted in any medium. The vitality depicted in these images mirrors that found in many African American communities in the Bell County region. The story of how these photographs came to light is fascinating: in the spring of 1999, local researchers learned of a group of glass-plate negatives held by a prominent black family in Lincoln. It was immediately obvious from both the subject matter of the negatives and their exceptional artistic quality that the images were truly unique. Local and national publicity about the find led to another huge cache of negatives by the same artist. Over 300 negatives have surfaced thus far.

The photographs are attributed to John Johnson, son of a black Civil War veteran and a lifelong resident of Lincoln. Community elders remember his travels through Lincoln by horse and buggy with camera and tripod, taking photographs. He was unquestionably skilled; a thorough understanding of pictorial composition is evident throughout the exhibition. The photographs give evidence of a striking ability to make his subjects feel at ease in front of the camera. This was a period of great racial tension in the United States; nevertheless, a sense of calm and dignity permeates the subjects.

Recovered Views is curated by John E. Carter, Special Projects Coordinator at the Nebraska State Historical Society in Lincoln. The exhibition is organized by the Nebraska State Historical Society in Lincoln and is toured by ExhibitsUSA, a national division of Mid-America Arts Alliance, a private, nonprofit organization founded in 1972. The exhibit will remain on view through August 12, 2006.