

Loaned by library

Wild West art

Cowpokes offer a spooky-eyed pony to the Eastern dude decked out in Boston cap, riding jacket, breeches and special boots.

In the next Charles M. Russell illustration, the dude — wide-eyed and perplexed — is on the seat of his fancy britches in the dust. Hooves overrump, the horse bucks off, stirrups and reins flying. The cowboys guffaw.

"Initiated," says the caption under the pen and ink drawing. It's one of 3,500 items in a Western Illustrators Collection acquired by Texas A&M University Libraries.

Another scene has a different emotional impact. Painted by Charles Schreyvogel, "The Last Drop" shows a cowpuncher on his knees, ten-gallon hat inverted from which his horse drinks.

The artist who became famous almost overnight for his "My Bunkie" is also represented in the collection by "Custer's Demand." The illustration faces Gen. George Armstrong Custer and several subordinates on horseback against a group of Indians.

Painted just into the 20th Century, the Schreyvogel historical rendering was viciously attacked by another painter whose works appear throughout the collection. Frederic Remington, in letters to a newspaper, charged Schreyvogel with historically inaccurate elements in the painting.

Remington traveled the West extensively, arming his brush, pen and palette.

Sniffing controversy, reporters related Remington's barrage to Schreyvogel. "I've no comment," he was reported to have said. "Mr. Remington is the expert. He knows the West."

Remington blasted Schreyvogel's painting again. When Schreyvogel said he acquired data from the general's uniform trunk, courtesy of Custer's widow, Remington snorted: "Hiding behind a woman's skirts."

Expert opinion was invited by Remington, and it vindicated Schreyvogel.

The famous "My Bunkie" shows a trail rider getting his horse shot from under him by Indians. His bunkmate and another cowpoke protect him from the marauders.

Complementing the library's Jeff Dykes Range Livestock Collection, the recently acquired illustrators' works can be viewed April 17 to May 17 in a Sterling C. Evans Library Exhibit.

The collection includes works by artists in the bibliographic checklist, "Fifty Great Western Illustrators." It was started by Texas Aggies, Louis P. Merrill, Class of '26 and Dykes, a 1921 A&M graduate.

Along with many famous illustrators, the collection assembled by Dykes also contains Jerry Bywaters, Dan Muller, Charles H. Ownes, W. S. Phillips and Remington Schuyler, according to Evelyn King, assistant director for special collections.

It is available to students, faculty,



Western Illustrators Collection pieces are viewed by Dianne Longly of Wichita Falls and Don Dyal, special collections division head. The 3,500-item collection will be exhibited in the Sterling C. Evans Library, April 17 through May 17.

friends of Texas A&M and scholars from other institutions.

"As an art form, illustrating has changed, radically," said Don Dyal, head of the special collections division. "Except for paperbacks and children's books, illustrations are no longer used in books. There used to be a whole school of illustrators. Now they are doing other things."

But even in their heyday, they did other things. James M. Flagg went afield to do the "I Want You" recruiting poster.

The collection goes beyond the bibliographic list. A Jose Cisneros work, printed in Juan, Mexico, is the leather bound History of the Church of the Virgin of Guadalupe.

Another uniquely bound volume contains World War II sketches by the famous Tom Lea. He made the Peleliu landing with U.S. Marines. The book is bound in Marine combat fatigue cloth.

A unique rarity is Remington's "Done in the Open." The collection copy has a "k" on the end of Frederic, an error that was not caught until the press run had started. "The inclusions were recalled," Ms. King said, "but some got away."

"Because Mr. Dykes has been collecting so long, the collection includes some early, early things," she added. "It's quite comprehensive with each artist, but we'd always like to have more."

Strip mining doesn't hurt land, prof says

Strip mining Texas lignite should be viewed as a "deep plowing" operation that will make agricultural land more productive, a Texas A&M University geologist says.

Improving the landscape will require special dispensations from the federal government, said Dr. Christopher Mathewson, associate professor of geology at Texas A&M. He said once environmentalists and the federal agencies accept the idea that strip mining actually can improve Texas lands, then the mining companies may have a chance to mine the soft coal.

"What we really need to do is re-define strip mining as agricultural improvement," Mathewson says. "It's just some 80 feet of deep plowing. Mining in Texas does not destroy the land. If anything, it makes it more productive."

He prefers to call it a "no net volume loss" mining operation. There's more dirt after mining than before.

The increased volume of dirt does not make sense, Mathewson admits, until people realize the soil over the lignite areas is very compact. In tests at Texas A&M, as much as a 50 percent increase in volume was found.

"Federal law decrees that miners save the top soil, and put it back on top," Mathewson emphasizes. "The top soil around the highland coal mining areas of Texas is about as porous as a concrete slab."

Top soils range from 4 to 12 inches, depending on the area of the state.

"Our studies indicate that a one-year-old reclaimed strip mine is a far more productive pasture than unmined pasture land adjacent to it," he said. "When we get in there and break up the land as it is mined, we

also have a more porous land that is better suited to agricultural production."

Mathewson said the attitude that strip mining is raping Mother Nature is wrong. "Emotional presentations you see of mining operations decades ago are the worst view of strip mining imaginable," he said. "They have nothing to do with current mining operations, especially in light of today's governmental restrictions."

Approximately 100 billion tons of Texas lignite are at depths of 200 to 500 feet, uneconomical for strip mining but a potential for gasification. About 10 billion tons are at strip mining depth, in layers of less than 10 feet.

The major deposits occur in areas with no serious acidic water problems, no large rock formation and average to poor farmland.

Fred J. Benson, vice president for engineering and non-renewable re-

sources at Texas A&M, has predicted the rich lignite belt will attract major industry by the turn of the century.

"So much of American industry will have moved to Texas that parts of the state will be like Germany's Ruhr Valley or the midland area of England around Birmingham," Benson said.

"Texas lignite reserves constitute about 1 million surface mineable acres," explains Mathewson. "For some reason, people think that when lignite mining comes to Texas we are going to dig up the whole state," he said.

Use of coal throughout the United States is increasing. Since 1973, coal production has increased an average of 3.5 percent a year. Coal accounted for 18 percent of all energy consumption in 1973. It is up to 20 percent now.

Texas lignite is a low-energy member of the coal family.

Court blocks release of Nixon tapes

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court Tuesday blocked a plan to make available to the general public copies of the White House tapes that were played at the 1974 Watergate cover-up trial of Richard Nixon's top aides.

The 7-2 decision reversed a U.S. appellate court ruling that had cleared the way for release of about 40 hours of Nixon's presidential tapes.

While printed transcripts of the conversations have long been on shelves in stores, they have been played in public only at the conspiracy trial of Nixon aides H. R. Haldeman, John Ehrlichman, former Attorney General John Mitchell, Mitchell's aide Robert

Mardian and Nixon re-election committee counsel Kenneth Parkinson.

Haldeman, Ehrlichman and Mitchell were all jailed eventually for their roles in the coverup. Mardian's conviction was reversed on appeal and Parkinson was acquitted.

In this case, major networks and a recording company sought public distribution of the actual recordings — which include John Dean's warning to Nixon of "a cancer on the presidency."

They proposed a plan to have the National Archives sell cassettes of the tapes to the public at a modest price and for radio and television stations to broadcast the confidential Oval Office conversations.

But Justice Lewis Powell, speaking for the Supreme Court, rejected their argument that copies of the tapes in U.S. District Judge John Sirica's custody may be publicly distributed under a commonlaw right of access to court records.

That right is not absolute, said Powell. In this case there is an "alternative means of public access."

Today's ruling affects only the networks' plan to copy the Watergate cover-up tapes which are in Sirica's custody. A lawyer for Nixon said it has always been his understanding that these tapes eventually will be turned over to the National Archives. Thus, the Supreme Court decision does not

necessarily block them from one day being made available to the public. But it may be a long time.

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