



staff photo Micheke Rowland

John M. Carroll, a military frontier historian, looks at this Custer chess set he had custom made in Montana.

## A&M may be home for military institute

by Lezlee Smith  
Battalion Reporter  
Texas A&M University may become the home of a unique Military Research Institute, says University President Frank E. Vandiver.

Vandiver said the idea, first introduced by John Carroll, a local historian, has attracted a great deal of attention, including that of Gov. William P. Clements.

Vandiver, who already has formed an advisory committee, said the next step probably will be a meeting of that committee, which he hopes will take place sometime within the next few weeks.

One of the primary functions of the committee, he said, will be to raise money for the institute, which will be funded solely through private endowments.

Carroll, who has written and edited more than 150 books and articles about General Custer and the Western frontier, said he hopes a military research institute will put the military of frontier times in a more truthful perspective.

"So many people believe that the soldier's primary duty after the Civil War was to kill Indians and steal land — all of which is absolutely contrary to the living records," Carroll said. "The military on the frontier

was primarily a pathfinder, a road builder, a trailblazer, a fort builder, a protector of immigrants, and if in the process, they had an Indian battle, then so it was."

Carroll's collection, valued at more than \$500,000, probably will become the cornerstone for the institute. "There is nothing yet on paper, but the intent has been fully subscribed to by all the concerned parties," he said.

Members of the committee include: Carroll, Clayton W. Williams Sr., of Fort Stockton; Dr. Eli Whitely, of College Station; Lt. Gen. Herron Maples, of Bonham; Wilburn J. Butler, of River Ridge, Louisiana; Maj. Gen. Andrew Rollins, of Dallas.

## Custer mementos make last stand in collection

by Larry E. Baggs  
Battalion Reporter

Some of his detractors — the nice ones — call him a Custer apologist and a fanatic.

But John Carroll, 53, said he is a man searching for truth — the truth about frontier military history.

Carroll is most noted for his writings about Gen. George Armstrong Custer. Any conversation with him inevitably centers upon Custer.

In addition, he has a large collection of Custer memorabilia. In fact, Texas A&M University is negotiating to purchase Carroll's collection, valued at more than \$500,000, for a proposed Frontier Military Institute.

One of the more unusual pieces of his collection is a hand-made chess game, one of only a dozen of its type in existence. It is a set of kings and bishops, and the pieces represent Custer and the 7th Cavalry, and Sitting Bull and the Indians.

Carroll said he can trace his interest in military history to Errol Flynn's portrayal of Custer in the 1941 movie, "They Died With Their Boots On."

Carroll's quest began in the 1950s when, as a history teacher in New Jersey, he noticed the scarcity and prejudice of the books available.

"I am particularly incensed at the oversight of the black contribution and have published five books on that subject myself," Carroll said.

Since his first book was published in 1971, Carroll has written or edited more than 150 books or pamphlets, including books on American Indians and Orientals.

Carroll's work takes two forms: he uses the old documents he has collected and edits them into book form or he uses the documents to analyze and interpret historical events.

He researches painstakingly, spending as much as two hours documenting five footnotes. Or, he may spend weeks waiting for answers to his questions before finishing a chapter.

Carroll said he has a dozen more books that he wants to write. "I want to leave a legacy of truth about the military history of that time period," he said.

Carroll said he has two major goals that he wants to achieve.

The first is the establishment of the Texas A&M frontier military institute.

The second goal is the establishment of a Texas Academy of Arts and Science. Its purpose would be to reward the excellence of writers and artists from Texas — possibly with an annual award for the best project in each category.

"It's a shame we reward athletes while ignoring these people who also give so much to our culture and heritage," Carroll said.

His drive to accomplish these goals and writings is a simple one — fear. He said he is afraid that all the documents, mementos, artifacts and personal correspondence of the past will be lost or destroyed and he wants to save these items for future generations.

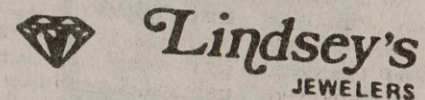
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