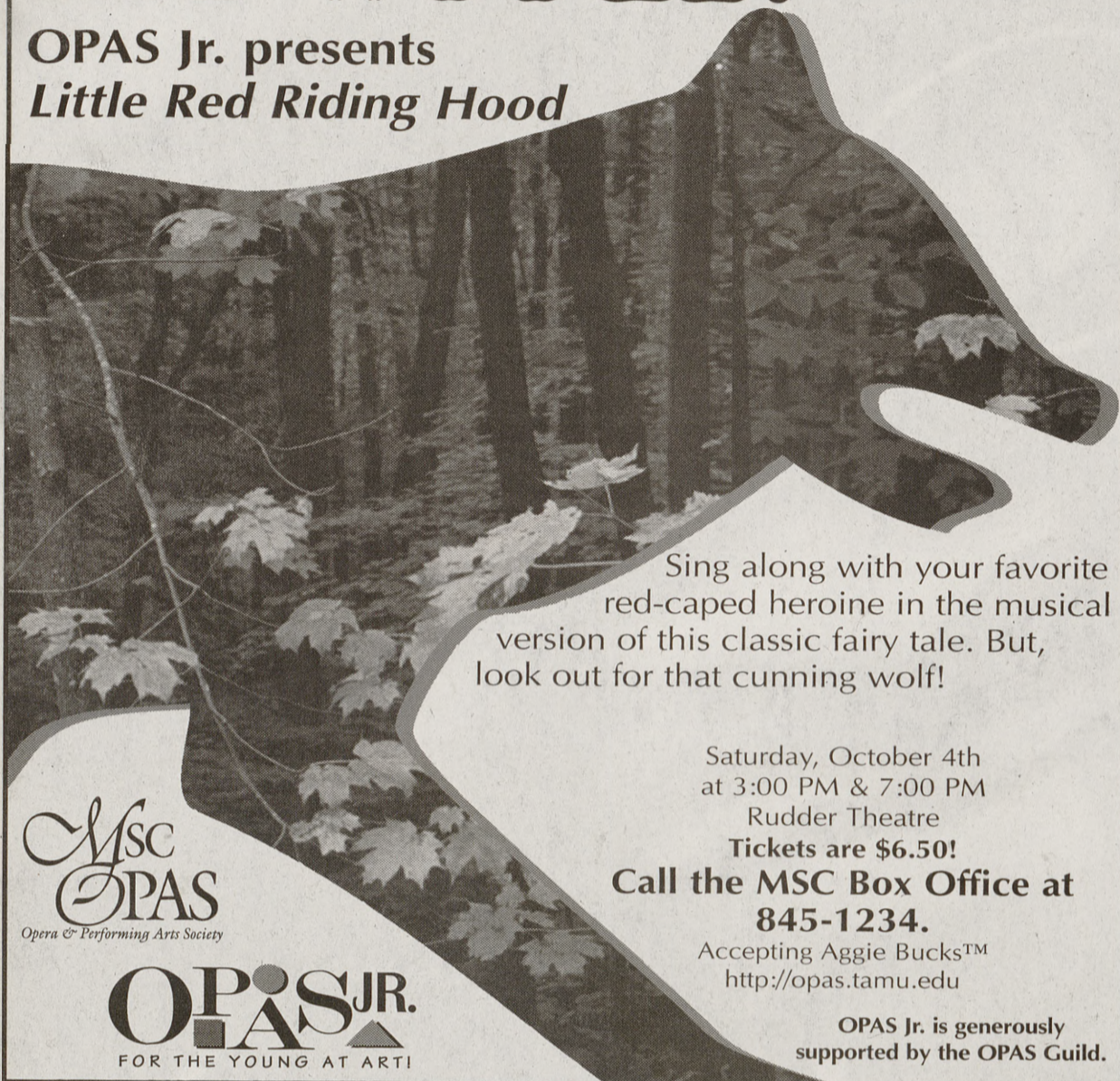


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6 THE BATTALION LIFESTYLES

Friday • October 3, 1997

Cushing Library collection offers students a step back in time

By CHRIS MARTIN
Staff writer

Deep in the bowels of Texas A&M lies a treasure trove of art, books and historical artifacts. Perhaps it is buried under years of cobwebs and cobblestones, patiently awaiting discovery. Maybe one student will stumble upon the secret switch, triggered with a tap upon old Sul Ross' nose, and lay claim to the precious prize.

In truth, this treasure lies underneath a more obvious nose — the one that guides thousands of students past the second floor of Sterling C. Evans Library every day, temporary home to the Cushing Library collection.

The Cushing Library is named in honor of Colonel E.B. Cushing, who served as president of the Texas A&M Board of Directors in 1912. Texas A&M faced severe financial trouble that year, and was almost absorbed into the University of Texas system.

Dr. Donald Dyal, director of Cushing Library, said Cushing led a campaign to save A&M from closing down.

"Cushing gathered a bunch of significant legislatures and showed them the important things the school was doing," said Dyal. "He heated up the telegraph wires explaining to others the powerful role that the agriculture and mechanical college played in the development of the state of Texas, and was able to turn the tide."

Dr. David Chapman, university archivist, said Cushing is a special library that holds materials not available in the regular Sterling C. Evans Library stacks.

"Cushing has closed stacks of rare and valuable books, which can only be used in the reading room," Chapman said. "It's a unique place in the library. We are preserving the rare and expensive books from the destruction that can happen in the regular stacks. Sometimes we require readers to wear white gloves."

Chapman said one strength of the Cushing Library is its collection of rare military and Texas history books.

"We have one of the best military collections in the United States," Chapman said. "The collection begins at the Spanish-American War, since that was the first war that people from A&M were involved in."

Nestled within the library's collection of valuable paintings is a cu-

riously unrefined composition with an interesting history.

"The painting, 'The Alamo Mission,' is by an artist named Russell Roberts. The painting is full of historical and compositional errors. However, it was used as a background for the credits in a John Wayne movie. A couple of cadets found it and traded one of their ceremonial swords for it."

Steven Smith, special collections librarian, said most of the library's collections came from donations by former students.

"A former English professor donated his collection of Rudyard Kipling books," Smith said. "We have the first editions of every Kipling book, as well as second and third editions, strange editions, manuscripts, drafts and correspondence."

Smith said the Cushing Library collection is utilized by various researchers, authors and scholars.

"We correspond with campuses around the nation and even around the world," Smith said. "We get everything from advanced scholars

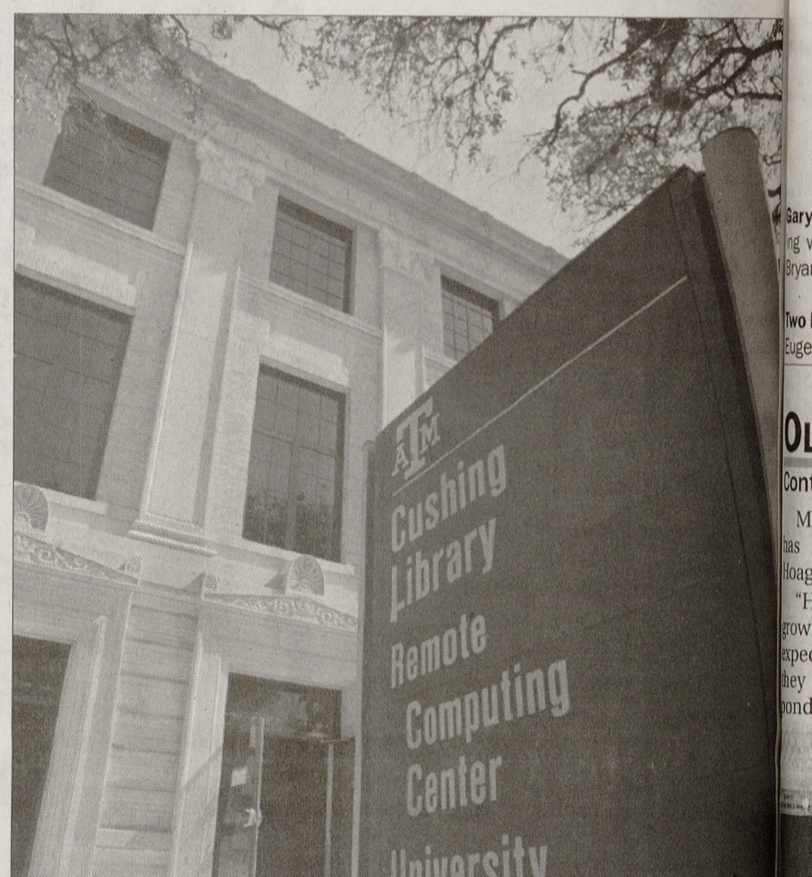
using our books as research, to people looking for a historical photo to put in their restaurant."

Chapman said The Cushing Library building, built in 1930, is currently undergoing renovation to restore many of its original features.

"The original building has unfortunately been empty and unused in past years," Chapman said. "Right now the collection is practically in a closet. The renovations will give us a new stage to present the collection. The renovated space will have large exhibit areas, and restore the original reading room."

The new construction will also update the library with modern features.

"We are going to complete things within the library that would have been done, I believe, if they had more money," Chapman said. "The building is being updated with air conditioning, water sprinklers to meet fire code and computer terminals, but they will be hidden. When you walk into the reading room, it will be like stepping back into 1930."



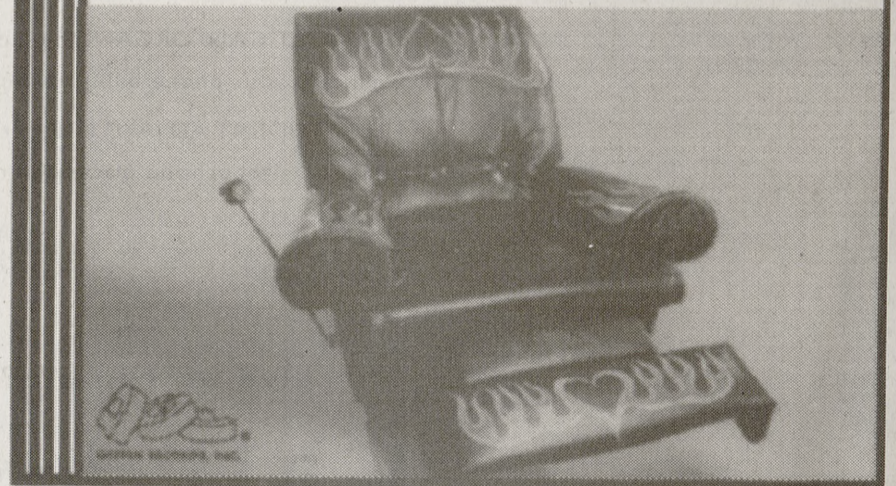
AMY DUNLAP/THE BATTALION
The Cushing Library connects to the Sterling C. Evans Library on main campus.

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