William Curry Holden & ADOBE 101
Give A Brick
The Millennial Collection
Upcoming Project: Hispanic History and Culture on the Llano Estacado
Materials for Educators
So there’s nothing to do in Lubbock...

Photograph from the Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library
William Curry Holden

ADOBE 101

BY STEVE DOGEME

William Curry Holden's name is virtually unknown today outside of a small group of historians and academicians, mostly in Texas and the Southwest. Beyond this group, few realize the major contributions the man brought not only locally but nationally to the fields of history, anthropology, archaeology, and to the humanities generally, but also in the role of championing countless programs and projects for Texas Tech and West Texas. Holden was an unparalleled visionary in those early days at Tech, beginning in 1929, and although countless thousands of students have passed through the halls of the building which today bears his name, most have no idea why his name is there.

Among his many accomplishments, Holden established the West Texas Museum, the precursor to the Museum of Texas Tech University; built the Department of History and Anthropology; gained accreditation for a PhD program in various departments during his tenure as graduate dean of the school; and laid the groundwork for establishing what have become the Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library and National Ranching Heritage Center at Texas Tech. Holden's enduring and steadfast vision created a legacy to build on well into the future. Beyond the rigors of teaching, administration and sponsoring archaeological field schools across the American Southwest, one of Holden's fondest projects was adding to his adobe properties on 20th street, just off the Texas Tech campus. His familiarity with and respect for adobe as a building material led the professor of history and anthropology to tout its advantages whenever he had the chance. As a staunch advocate of the material, the professor built a series of structures on his Lubbock property in the 1930s, convincingly demonstrating that adobe would work in West Texas.

In 1930, William Curry Holden and his wife, Olive, purchased two lots in the 3100 block of 20th Street in Lubbock and constructed an adobe building, Casa Grande. It was later singled out for designation in the National Historic Register of Places. During construction and after its completion in 1931, the adobe house witnessed a trial of cars streaming past, all trying to get a look at this unusual house. Many wandered up to the construction site to gawk through the windows.

Olive Holden hired James Atcheson, a senior architecture student at Texas Tech to help with drawings of the house, noting the Santa Fe design motifs which they wanted incorporated into their own home. Following Pueblo building techniques, Olive built walls with a wide base of two feet, narrowing to ten inches at the parapets. The result was a rounded, terraced effect with irregular, handmade walls.

Local laborers mixed topsoil and caliche in equal amounts, then added water, patted the mixture with their feet, and added prairie hay to the mixture as a binder. Holden scavenged steel pipe, rods, cables, and front axles from Model T Fords to use as reenforcement in the foundation, which he poured in March, 1931. He imported logs from New Mexico for the vigas, or supporting roof beams. The total cost of the logs was $81.02. When a copper mine near Pecos, New Mexico was selling out, the Holdens bought timber to be used as lintels.

On June 26, 1931 Casa Grande was completed, serving as a focal point for countless students over the years who accompanied Holden on his many archaeological field schools. It was also the jumping off place for the much heralded Yaqui Expedition to Sonora, Mexico in 1934. The Holdens hosted at their home some of the nation's leading scholars, as well as a multitude of students and faculty from Tech. The home became an extension of Holden's work, a casual, relaxed place to socialize and discuss many of the topics important to Holden's growing group of acolytes--in history, anthropology, and archaeology.

Following Olive's death, Holden erected a second house, La Casita in 1937. Two years later, he built Casa del Gallo y Sirena and an attached apartment called El Chico, with his second wife, Frances Mayhugh Holden. The complex of adobe structures became known as Adobe Row. Very few additional adobe structures existed anywhere in Lubbock.

In 1944, with plenty of experience using adobe, Holden published a Tech Research Bulletin, "Why Use Adobe", where he championed the material over wood frame construction because it was plentiful and cheap, as opposed to lumber, and its insulation properties were far superior. Totally sold on the old fashioned Mexican way of mixing adobe, Holden nonetheless experimented, using a cement mixer to make adobes for an apartment and garage for his mother, and a planetarium behind the West Texas Museum (today's Holden Hall) on the Tech campus when the University couldn't raise funds for the structure. Holden also built out of adobe a kiln for Tech students to fire their ceramics projects. As late as 1975, Holden was demonstrating the versatility of adobe when he constructed an adobe oven capable of cooking enough meals for forty-five workers at the Lubbock Lake Archaeological Site.
The Millennial Collection

She's 11 years old, so almost a teenager. I look back on my life when I was her age, and things are different for her. She is more "grown up" than I was at her age, yet she is still young and irresponsible.

Photographer:
Veronica Mora
Untitled. Spring 2004
MC 435

The Millennial Collection is a joint documentary project between Texas Tech University's School of Art and the Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library. The collection consists of work from students enrolled in the School of Art's documentary photography class. This project is ongoing and includes several images by students and some professional portfolios.

The documentary class, and the resulting images that make up the Millennial Collection, is in part a response to the history collected at the Southwest Collection. In studying this collection students begin to understand how photographs function as historical documents. It is from this collection that students are prompted to begin to question and experiment with the variables of time, place, representation, contextual information (included or excluded), personal experience, changing frames of reference, and the challenges inherent in assigning meaning to photographic images. The public is invited to view these photographs anytime at the Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library. For more information visit the Millennial Collection website at www.art.ttu.edu/mc.

UPCOMING PROJECT

HISPANIC HISTORY IN WEST TEXAS

The exhibits & outreach team at the SWC/SCL is requesting historical photographs and materials for review for possible use in a future exhibit that will display the history of Hispanics and culture on the Llano Estacado.

Photographer: Jaime Tomás Aguilar
Viva Cesar!

SO THERE'S NOTHING TO DO IN LUBBOCK...

CURRENT EXHIBITS

Icon: The Legend and Legacy of William Curry Holden
This thirty-panel traveling exhibit featuring the life and work of William Curry Holden, will be on display during Texas Tech University's homecoming weekend, October 14-17, at Jones SBC Stadium Club & Suites. The exhibit will then be on display in the University Library's Krohlin Room after October 16th.

SWC/SCL Exhibits at TTU Main Library
Science Fiction at the Library, located on the 3rd floor
Celebrating the Spirit of Texas Tech: Treasures from the University Archives, located in the Krohlin Room

Exhibits at the Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library
Hidden Treasures:
Frances Philips Indigenous Art: Pottery & Paintings
Natural History Broadsides
Sports History Collection
60,000 Books
Rare Books: Features Artists' Books
All of the above are located in the Coronelli Rotunda

EDUCATORS

HISTORY TRUNKS
In order to foster a "hands on" appreciation of the history of Texas and the West Texas region, the SWC/SCL has assembled materials for use by educators in teaching about the ranching frontier. Our history trunks offer a variety of materials including, maps, photographs, slide presentations, clothing, recipes, music, transparencies, video presentations, worksheets, quizzes, games, and other items to enhance the learning experience of students and teachers. http://swtc.ttu.edu/history_trunk/trunkindex.html

FREE EXHIBIT
The Working Life of a Writer, is a traveling exhibit featuring the work and life of natural history author Barry Lopez. This exhibit is currently traveling to schools in the Texas Panhandle, and will be scheduled for travel to Region 17 Junior High and High Schools during spring 2006. If you are an educator in Region 17 and would like information on scheduling this exhibit for your students please contact Emily Nash or Steve Bogener at the SWC/SCL 742-3749.

I don't care what you think Chico. The man was a genius.

Sure Jimmy Dale, and I'm a talking armadillo!
William Curry Holden and the Museum of Texas Tech are inextricably linked. In 1925, Holden attended the first ever football contest played by Texas Tech. He rooted for the opponent, McMurry College, of Abilene, where he was head of the history department. Three years later, John C. Granberry, head of Tech's history department, paid a visit to McMurry's museum, a collection of materials gathered by Holden and a group of his youthful charges known as the IHR, or Independent Hill Raisers.

Prior to Holden’s arrival, in March of 1929, Dean Mary Doss, along with Granberry and other Tech faculty members organized the Plains Museum Society, began holding meetings, and accepting donations. S.K. Bynum, an old cowhand, donated the first artifact—a son of a gun pot, a Dutch oven, an old pack saddle, and several branding irons. From meager beginnings, the society gathered other materials, often from their own attics or from those of their friends.

Bolstered by artifacts yielded by the Yagqui expeditions in 1934, and the possibility of gaining state funds allocated for the Texas Centennial, the society changed its name to the West Texas Museum Association in 1935. Lubbock physician, Charles J. Wagner, and Holden embarked on a sixty-seven county tour across West Texas to secure support for a new museum. No funding came from the state until a delegation from the sixty-seven counties arrived in Austin and appeared in front of Lieutenant Governor, Walter Woodul, chairman of the historical commission allocating funds for the centennial. With the resulting $25,000 in seed money from the state, local contractor WC McMillan began work on the basement, or “ground floor unit” of what would become the West Texas Museum, in September of 1936. Officially opened in March 1937, the peculiar hole in the ground attracted an estimated 35,000 patrons a year.

In 1940, Holden and the Museum Society launched the “Give-a-Brick” campaign to raise funds to complete the two additional floors of the museum building. At two and a half cents per brick, the society set a goal of 230,000 bricks with some local businesses opting to give cash instead. Through 1948, political wrangling in Austin yielded no state support for completion of the building. In that year, however, the Texas Tech Board of Directors allocated $180,000 from surplus in the veterans’ program. That amount, combined with $50,000 raised locally was enough to complete the building, and on November 19, 1950, a formal opening took place to coincide with Tech’s Silver Anniversary celebration.

On July 9, 1972, former students and friends of Holden gathered to see the original West Texas Museum building dedicated as Holden Hall.