Hecho en Mexico: Special Collections Acquires Rare Lithographs

By Ben Huseman

M exican printmaking antedates all other printing in North America. An Italian immigrant in the service of Spain brought the first printing press in the Americas to Mexico City in 1539. Immigrant printmakers produced woodcuts there in the early 1540s and copper engravings by 1598. Obviously, this not only predates the printing activities of some of the more familiar British colonial printmakers such as Ben Franklin and Paul Revere, it predates the existence of the British colonies. In 1781 the mint at Mexico City held its first formal engraving classes and by 1783 New Spain even had its own art academy in Mexico City where printmaking became part of the curriculum.¹

Even with the political and social chaos wrought by Mexico's insurrections and political infighting of the 19th century, printing in Mexico City continued to reflect technological changes elsewhere. For example, in 1826, Italian artist Claudio Linati introduced the printmaking medium of lithography, which had been invented in Europe in 1798, to Mexico.² By the early 1830s Mexicans were forming lithography firms and producing excellent examples of the art themselves. The lithographic revolution in printmaking that swept the United States at this time also came to Mexico.³

Given this history and the large number of lithographs produced in the United States during the U.S. War with Mexico of 1846-1848, one might expect Mexican printmakers to have produced more lithographs relating to the war from a Mexican perspective. However, this apparently did not happen, and much of their relatively small production was actually intended for U.S. soldiers of the occupation.⁴ This raises a number of obvious questions. Was the potential Mexican middle class market indeed smaller? Did the fact that there were fewer Mexican victories to celebrate play a role in this? How did Mexican middle class tastes differ from those in the U.S.? Did war conditions and the U.S. Naval blockade affect the market and the availability of supplies before the U.S. Army's occupation of Mexico City? How did political conditions inside Mexico affect this output? How did U.S. printmakers influence Mexican printmakers, and vice versa? All of these questions cannot be answered here but are worth studying.⁵

Special Collections recently acquired several rare Mexican lithographs produced around the time of the war that may aid in this study. Four of them are battle images, each of which bears the cryptic inscription "Lit. de R. C. de Tacuba no. 14"—denoting that they were lithographed by the firm of José Severo Rocha, a pioneer Mexican lithographer, whose establishment was located in the Calle de Tacuba No. 14 in Mexico City.⁶ A fifth lithograph is a map illustrating the battles around Mexico City.

One of the battle images was completely unknown to us and actually predates the war. Entitled Heroica Defensa de Puebla, 1845, the composition, by H. Mendes ("H. Mendes inbtr." i.e., inventar) and drawn on stone by Ortega ("Ortega dibu." or dibujar), is similar to images of Mexican citizens suffering during the bombardment of Veracruz in 1847 or defending the garitas or fortified gates of Mexico City during the final assault of the U.S. Army under General Scott later that year. Although there was fighting in and around the city of Puebla in 1847, the date of 1845 is apparently accurate. The print actually pertains to a siege of the city by forces loyal to the mercurial Mexican General and President Antonio López de Santa Anna of Alamo infamy, who was sporadically in and out of office for much of the mid-19th century. At this time, a government headed by General

[After Bvt. Major Joseph H. Eaton], Battle of Buena Vista, lithograph, by the firm of José Severo Rocha, Mexico City, ca. 1847.
Staff Spotlight

Erin O’Malley began work as Special Collections’ New Exhibits and Outreach Assistant on December 3, 2007. She holds a Master of Arts degree in history from the University of Missouri-St. Louis, with a graduate certificate in museum studies. Her Bachelor of Arts degree is from the University of Missouri, Columbia, where she majored in anthropology and minored in art history and archeology. Before coming to UT Arlington, Erin completed internships at the Mercantile Library in St. Louis and at the Western History Association.

After Christian Clark’s resignation in July 2007 from the position Erin now holds, we were fortunate to be able to expand it from half-time to full-time. This enabled us not only to attract a larger pool of applicants, but also to increase the responsibilities assigned to the position. In addition to having designed the stunning online exhibit, The Reeder Children’s Theatre Presents… Memories of Fort Worth’s Reeder School, Erin also has created a wonderful online Reeder School exhibit (http://library.uta.edu/exhibits/spco/reeder/) and has been working with the Virginia Garrett Lectures planning committee to arrange the 2008 conference. She also serves on the Library’s exhibits committee and has assisted with several Library displays, and is working with the curators of our fall exhibits for 2008. Erin has brought talent, enthusiasm, and technology skills to our staff, and we are delighted that she is here.

Rare Lithographs

José Joaquin Herrera, supported by a civilian militia, deposed and replaced the well-known dictator.7

Unfortunately, the image has no accompanying text and is difficult to interpret. The “heroic defense” probably refers here to the Puebla garrison and citizen militia who successfully resisted Santa Anna between January 1 and 10.4 However, artists at the time often depicted Santa Anna himself in the cockpit and frock coat of a Mexican general, similar to the figure in the center of the print, so it is possible, though unlikely, that the “defense” here actually refers to Santa Anna’s “heroic attempt to defend the city from traitorous usurpers”– as he might well have styled it himself. It would be helpful to know the political inclinations of the Rocha firm in order to know for sure.

A curious exchange that took place later during the war might hint at these politics, which could be presumed to be moderate. The artist H. Mendez is undoubtedly the same “H. Mendez” who signed on stone an 1847 lithograph by the Rocha firm with the bilingual title: Vista de Chapultepec y el Molino del Rey. Tomada en la Casa de Mata. / View of Chapultepec and Molino del Rey. From Casa Mata. In the foreground of this print, Mendez included himself sketching on a parapet after the
The Rocha firm's lithograph depicting the Battle of Buena Vista in northern Mexico offers a fairly accurate view of the actual geographical site and the engagement itself. This print and the following two prints have an inscription that indicates they were sold in the Mexico City business establishment of Luis Meunier. For the Buena Vista view, the Mexican printmaker apparently copied another larger lithograph of the battle published months earlier in New York, based on a detailed sketch sent there by Zachary Taylor's aide-de-camp Captain Joseph Horace Eaton. The Mexican print is quite faithful to the American eyewitness print and not a bad representation of the actual battlefield given that – unlike artist Eaton – the printmaker himself had probably never been there.10

A third Rocha lithograph, drawn on stone by Joaquín Heredia, depicts the Battle of Contreras. The topographical features in the image are improperly placed and suggest that the artist – perhaps Heredia himself? – was not actually present at the battle. At the very least, the Mexican printmaker probably did not witness the scene from behind the American lines as shown.11

Like the Buena Vista print, the Contreras print has titles in both English and Spanish, indicating that it was intended not just for a Mexican audience, but also for troops of the U.S. Army of occupation and their friends back home in the U.S.

A fourth Rocha lithograph, drawn on stone by “Reinaldo,” portrays the Battle of Churubusco. It was probably the print announced on November 16, 1847 by the North American, an English-language newspaper published in Mexico City during the U.S. occupation: “We notice a print in the shops of calle Francisco, purporting to be designs of the battle of Churubusco. The plate may look like some part of the place we have not seen – certainly not like any portion of it we have seen.”12 Despite this criticism, the print does bear some similarity to other views of the battle, which was fought in and around a convent. Again the view is from behind the attacking Americans, but the gory dead and wounded in the foreground would have hardly cheered American customers, some of whom possibly lost friends in the bloody battle.

Mexican lithographic production around the time of the war also included maps. A fifth lithograph, recently acquired by UT Arlington, probably represents the earliest printing of a famous map of the final battles for Mexico City based on field surveys by U.S. Army Topographical Engineers Major William Turnbull, Captain George B. McClellan, and Lieutenant Edmund Hardcastle. The large-scale lithographed map was produced in Mexico City by the well-known Mexican lithographer, Hipólito Salazar, sometime during the American occupation. The title credits the American topographical engineer officers, includes the lithographed signature of Major Turnbull, and states that McClellan drew the map, but a small credit at the bottom reads “Lit. de Salazar.”13

The area on the map extends from the Rio Churubusco (just north of the pedregal or lava fields) in the south to the causeway of the Garita de San Cosmé in the north, and from the Casa Mata of the Molino del Rey in the west to the Garita del Peñon in the east. This area includes much of Mexico City and its southwest approaches.14 Appearing prominently on the map and in an inset at the lower left are the Molino del Rey and the Casa Mata (stormed by the Americans September 13, 1847), and the military college of Chapultepec (stormed by the Americans September 13,
probably later) prints of the map produced exceeds that found on nearly identical (and canals, and aqueducts. The level of detail (including the cathedral), the Alameda, agricultural fields, buildings, churches Mexico City's famous surrounding lake, that of detail, showing American artillery batteries. Most intrigu-
ing, perhaps is the level of detail, showing the routes taken later on September 13th by the divisions under Generals William Jenkins Worth and John A. Quitman and the route of the premature charge made on August 20th by U.S. Army dragoons. The map also indicates locations for American artillery batteries. Most intriguing, perhaps is the level of detail, showing the standing waters still left from Mexico City's famous surrounding lake, agricultural fields, buildings, churches (including the cathedral), the Alameda, canals, and aqueducts. The level of detail exceeds that found on nearly identical (and probably later) prints of the map produced by American printmakers.5 These five new acquisitions demonstrate the high skill level of mid-nineteenth century Mexican printmakers. They also show that military subjects held some popularity in the Mexican market even when—or rather, especially when—that market included American soldiers of the occupation. Mexican lithographers and artists apparently did not fear political or physical retribution enough to refrain from signing their works even when working for questionable or sometimes politically unpopular patrons. This is either proof of economic necessity, bravery, poor judgment, or a little of all of these traits, depending upon one's point of view. Such prints may prove useful in studies relating to Mexican political history, nationalism, and economics, as well as U.S. military history and U.S.-Mexican cross-cultural contacts, influences, and collaboration.

Endnotes
2 Mathes, Mexico on Stone, pp. 3, 7-14. In the most basic form of the process, the printmaker draws upon a polished high-quality limestone with an oily ink, crayon, or grease-pencil. Next, he or she spreads a solution of diluted nitric acid and gum arabic to fix the oily drawing, and then washes the surfaces of the stone with water. The printmaker then rolls ink across the surface and the ink sticks only to the oily image and not to the limestone, since the oily surface repelled the water. After placing the inked stone on a press, the printmaker lays paper on the stone's surface, runs it through the press, and then pulls the paper with the image transferred in reverse. By repeating the whole process, thousands of copies of a print can be produced cheaply from the same stone, which can also be reground and used later for a different image.
3 In addition to Mathes, Mexico on Stone and Iturriaga de la Fuente, Litografía y Grabado en el México del XIX, cited above, see the beautiful exhibition catalog by Roberto L. Mayer, Antonio Rubial Garcia and Guadalupe Jimenez Codinach titled Mexico Ilustrado: Mapas, Planos, Grabados e Ilustraciones de los Siglos XVI al XIX. (Mexico City: Fomento Cultural Banamex, A.C., 1994).
4 Some of the research for this article derived from my work on two earlier projects. The first was an exhibit catalog I wrote with Martha A. Sandweiss and Rick Stewart titled Eyewitness to War: Prints and Daguerreotypes of the Mexican War, 1846-1848 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, for the Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, 1989). The second was for the exhibit "Images of New Spain: Treasures from the DeGolyer Library, SMU" at the Meadows Museum, SMU, Dallas, September through December 2004, for which I had the fine assistance of Gabriel Martinez Serna.
5 In addition to Eyewitness to War, there are other good studies on the graphic production of the war, such as Ron (Ronnie C.) Tyler's The Mexican War: A Lithographic Record (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1973), with its greater focus on American popular prints. The TSHA's 1994 reprint of George Wilkins Kendall's and artist Carl Nebel's The War Between the United States and Mexico Illustrated has an in-depth introduction by Ron Tyler to what is arguably the finest lithograph album of the war. Robert W. Johannsen's To the Halls of the Montezumas: The Mexican War in the American Imagination (Oxford University Press, 1985, 1987) gives great insights into prints as part of the broader popular culture of the period.
6 In 1836 Rocha and a French partner named Fournier had established the first lithographic workshop for sales to the public. Their equipment came from Paris. Mathes, Mexico on Stone, p. 17.
7 I am grateful to Maritza Arrigunaga of UT Arlington Special Collections for referring me to the article by Pedro Santoni, "A Fear of the People: The Civic Militia of Mexico in 1845" in Hispanic American Historical Review 68:2 (May, 1988), pp. 269-288. See also the latest biography of Santa Anna by Will Fowler, Santa Anna of Mexico (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), especially p. 240. During this particular fall from power, angry Mexican citizens actually dug up Santa Anna's severed leg, which had been ceremonially buried after his heroic defense of Veracruz against the French in 1838.
8 According to Fowler in Santa Anna of Mexico, p. 7, the fighting during this siege "did spread into the city on a number of occasions, with Santa Anna's men taking a convent and several houses, including a baker's near the main square" before Santa Anna realized that his support was dwindling. Also see Wilfrid H. Callcott, Santa Anna: The Story of an Enigma Who Once Was Mexico (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1964), pp. 210-211.
9 Eyewitness to War, pp. 319-321, cat. nos. 142, 143.
10 Eyewitness to War, pp.162-163, cat. no. 37, fig. 37. The New York print after Eaton, published by H.R. Robinson, was drawn on stone by Frances Flora Bond (Fanny) Palmer, a famous woman lithographer who is best known for
her work for Currier & Ives. For an in-depth discussion and reproduction of the Eaton/Palmer print, see pp. 158-161, cat. no. 36, plate 8. Interestingly, while Rocha’s Buena Vista print was derived from an American-made image, the influence could work in the other direction. As examples, the New York printmaking firm of Nathaniel Currier copied prints of the Military College of Chapultepec and the Garita of Belen by Rocha’s contemporaries Pedro Gualdi and Ignacio Cumplido, respectively. Also, Currier copied at least one composition from a Rocha print signed on stone by Heredia. See Eyewitness to War, cat. nos.142,143,150, 154,155,156,158.

12. Mexico City, North American, Nov. 16, 1847, p. 2, quoted in Eyewitness to War, p. 314. See also p. 313, fig. 137, for an illustration of another impression of this print, located at the Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis.


14. For those not familiar with Mexico City, the garitas were fortified gates, through which the Americans fought to enter the city.

15. This includes the maps printed by P.S.Duval of Philadelphia that appeared in Message from the President of the United States to the two houses of Congress, at the commencement of the first session of the Thirty third Congress, 30th Congress, 1st Session, Senate Executive, No. 1 and No. 8, as well as similar maps printed by C. B. Graham and Sherman & Smith. These are cited in Jenkins Garrett and Katherine R. Goodwin, The Mexican-American War of 1846-1848: A Bibliography of Holdings of the Libraries, the University of Texas at Arlington (College Station: Texas A&M Press for The University of Texas at Arlington), pp. 426-431.

Update from the Coordinator

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will accompany this year’s Lectures. In addition to the fall meeting of the Texas Map Society, traditionally held on the Saturday following the Lectures, the Society for the History of Discoveries and the Philip Lee Phillips Society will hold their meetings in conjunction with the Lectures. Also, the Amon Carter Museum will display a selection of our maps in an installation complementary to the Lectures and our own exhibition. Richard Francaviglia, Dennis Reinhartz, and Ben Huseman provided the descriptive text for the Amon Carter show. We encourage you to visit the Virginia Garrett Lectures web site at http://library.uta.edu/spco/Garrett2008/main.html. Registration will open this summer.

Special Collections has an accomplished staff. Maritza Arrigunaga co-founded the Instituto de Investigación Juan Alvarez, a new organization formed to help nontraditional researchers in Mexico study Mexican history. She also facilitated an exhibit about the integration of indigenous cultures in Mexico. Set to take place in Oaxaca or Yucatán, it uses facsimiles Special Collection items. Brenda McClurkin was elected vice president of the Society of Southwest Archivists, so her succession to president in May 2009 will give UT Arlington back-to-back SSA presidents and a third president (Gerald Saxon held office 1996-1997).

In March, Lea Worcester, Ben Huseman and I attended the annual Texas State Historical Association meeting in Corpus Christi. Ben and Josh Been of the UT Arlington Library’s Information Literacy Program Area, along with Joan Kilpatrick of the Texas General Land Office, made presentations in a session I organized on behalf of the Texas Map Society. Jeff Dunn, TMS president, chaired the session. Ben and Brenda each submitted proposals for joint sessions at the 2009 TSHA meeting—Ben for TMS and Brenda for SSA.

Ben, Brenda, Carolyn Kadri, Gerald Saxon, and I attended the spring meeting of TMS in Houston. Ben has working on the exhibit and gallery guide for the 2008 Virginia Garrett Lectures and serving on the conference planning committee. Carolyn coordinates the conference logistics and acts as the committee’s “wrangler”—making sure that the rest of its members fulfill their responsibilities. The committee’s other members are Richard Francaviglia, Kit Goodwin, Erin O’Malley, Dennis Reinhartz, and Gerald Saxon. Carolyn also serves as chair of the American Library Association’s Maps and Geography Round Table (MAGERT). The workbook created for the map cataloging workshop given by Carolyn and her colleagues from the Library of Congress and the New York Public Library, reported in the Fall 2007 Compass Rose, has gone into a second printing because of demand from libraries across the U.S. and Europe.

Lea Worcester, who runs the service desk and supervises students, also serves on the Texas Library Association’s College and University Libraries Division as newsletter editor. She attended the April TLA annual meeting in Dallas. Lea also has worked all year, with Brenda, Cathy, and me, to completely overhaul the Special Collections’ reprographics policy and forms. The revisions should result in better service to researchers and will simplify Cathy’s work to provide fast, high-quality image reproductions that respect the intellectual rights appertaining to the original materials. Cathy’s challenging responsibilities were recognized recently via a promotion to the newly-created position of Library Assistant IV. She was one of only six people in the Library to be awarded the rank.

I ended my term of service as steering committee chair of the Texas Heritage Digitization Initiative in February, but continue to serve on the THDI board and in strategic planning. I began serving as vice president of the Society of Southwest Archivists in May 2007 and my primary responsibility is chairing the annual meeting program committee, an experience both rewarding and educational. Ann Cammack remains a core of stability in our operations. We benefit greatly from her steady work adding new materials to the collections, making sure things are in their proper places, and performing countless other unglamorous and unpublicized, but essential, functions. Gary Spurr resigned in December to become the archivist at Tarleton State University’s Dick Smith Library and W. K. Gordon Center. At last report he is enjoying his new challenges.

We invite you to visit our summer exhibit, “Mapping the Red Menace: British and American News Maps in the Early Cold War Period, 1945-1955.” Its curator is former Library employee and recent UT Arlington history Ph.D., Jeff Stone; Erin O’Malley is responsible for its design and installation. It will be open June 2 through August 11, 2008.
On a night in spring, the curtain goes up in a small theatre in Fort Worth. The voice of a child sounds clearly from the stage, and the annual Reeder School play has begun.1

Children’s theater is usually defined as plays intended for an audience of children, but for 13 years the Reeder School, a children’s school of theater and design in Fort Worth, turned that definition on its head. Instead of producing plays aimed at youngsters, the children of the Reeder School, some as young as three and others as old as 15, presented works of sophistication, beauty, and precision for amazed adult audiences. Fort Worth artists Dickson and Flora Blanc Reeder headed the eponymous school and modeled it after New York’s King-Coit School of Acting and Design, which Flora had attended as a child.

Dickson Reeder was born in Fort Worth on February 6, 1912. He discovered his artistic talents early in life and, as an elementary student, began studying drawing and painting with Fort Worth artist Sallie Blythe Mummert,2 a teacher at Texas Christian University and arts writer for the Fort Worth Star-Telegram.3 Dickson graduated from Fort Worth’s Central High School (now Paschal) in 1930, then traveled to New York City to study at the Art Students League. Later, Dickson studied art in Mexico and Europe. In 1937, while in Paris, Dickson met the bright and talented Flora Blanc, a fellow art student. They married that December.

A November 21, 1937, article in the Fort Worth Star-Telegram gushed over their engagement, noting that Flora was part of “Gotham’s blooded aristocracy.” While Flora wasn’t exactly “aristocracy,” she did grow up in privileged circumstances. She was born on November 14, 1916, in New York City to Edward Blanc, a lawyer from New Orleans, and Martha (Elliott) King of New York, the daughter of a well-to-do merchant.4

Flora grew up with an Irish cook and a French nurse,5 and made several trips to France with her family.6 She attended the elite Brearley School in Manhattan and debuted into New York society in 1934. As a child, she attended the King-Coit School in the afternoons and, at age 11, acted in the King-Coit production of “Kai Khosru”—a play she later directed at the Reeder School.

The Reeder School started in 1945 after Flora staged a production of “Aucassin and Nicolette,” a medieval French romance, for Texas Christian University’s Bryson Literary Club using neighborhood children in all the roles. By the fall of 1945, the school was incorporated and enrolling students for its first production, “The Rose and the Ring.”

The Reeder School, like the King-Coit School, chose one play to perform each spring. For eight months prior to the production, children studied art, music, dance and literature related to the play. The students immersed themselves in the culture of the time represented by the play “in such a way that the subject becomes alive for the child—rather than a chore of memorizing facts and figures from dusty school books.”8

It would be hard to imagine a more perfect couple for this task. Flora’s mother “was an active hostess and patroness of the arts, frequently using the family home for social gatherings involving the performance of music.”9 Flora and Dickson carried on this tradition while in Fort Worth, turning their home into a lively gathering place for the Fort Worth Circle, a close-knit group of Fort Worth artists working in diverse styles. The Reeders freely shared their ideas and knowledge with others and were deeply committed to the idea of encouraging culture, whatever form it took.

“We offer a special school for education in the arts,” Dickson wrote, “because we believe so strongly in their direct relation to culture.” He declared his and Flora’s goal was “the development of
the individual child into a person of sensitivity and understanding who has acquired some taste for quality and some distaste for cheapness and superficiality.”

Producing each play was a year-long task. In the summers, Dickson and Flora would select next year's play and begin research on it. W. E. Chilton, Jr., Reeder School advisory board chairman, described preparations for the fall classes:

In addition to the necessary adaptations [of the script], much research must be devoted to find suitable contemporary music, proper costumes, set designs, dances and songs. Then, of course, there is the physical aspect, whereby a written play is translated to a specific stage, entrances and exits timed, stage movements blocked out, etc.

When classes began in the fall, the children studied the play and read other stories that illustrated the time and culture depicted. As the child was immersed in the play's atmosphere, Dickson and other Reeder instructors helped the student interpret the story through painting, pantomime, and dance.

After months of exposure to the relevant colors, images, music, dances, and props of the time represented in the play, the Reeder School students had a deep understanding of the play. The headline on Rual Askew’s 1952 review of “The Happy Hypocrite” in the Dallas Morning News read, “Reeder Cast ‘Hypocrite’ Draws Raves.”

Volunteers played a crucial role in the Reeder School productions. Students' mothers painted sets, sewed costumes, and made props. Dickson’s and Flora's own mothers helped, too. On June 2, 1950, the Fort Worth Star-Telegram reported, “Mrs. [Dean] Reeder's normally orderly house has been overflowing with vats and containers of assorted dyes. It has been her task to dye hundreds of yards of material.” Flora recalled that her mother “arrived every year a month before the production to coach some of the children, privately, who needed help.”

Along with people skilled in visual arts, the Reeder School called upon the services of renowned musicians and dancers. In 1949, the Reeder School mounted an ambitious production of Shakespeare’s “The Tempest”—the first time the play had ever been presented in Fort Worth. To choreograph dance sequences for “The Tempest,” the Reeders brought in Leon Varkas, the lead dancer in New York's Metropolitan Opera. Varkas spent four weeks working with the Reeder students and found them “wonderfully refreshing. You start to tell them and they run ahead of you with their own ideas, in exactly the mood you want.”

For music, the Reeders used an original score by Lukas Foss written specifically for “The Tempest.” Foss, who was 26 in 1949, wrote the score at age 19 for a King-Coit production of the play. As Foss, the “official” pianist of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, held the only complete copy of the score, Joseph Hawthorne, associate conductor of the Dallas Symphony and the conductor for “The Tempest,” met with Foss and copied the orchestral parts by hand.

Although Dickson designed the costumes, for many years it was Olive Phillips who brought them into reality. Phillips lived in Denver, but traveled to Fort Worth each spring to assist with the Reeder productions. No matter how unique the costume was—the savage Caliban from “The Tempest,” a Chinese warrior in “Lady Precious Stream,” or lions in “The Rose and the Ring”—Phillips made Dickson’s work wearable. “A child should never be conscious of the costume he is wearing when he is performing,” she said in a 1951 interview.
“One of the extremely important things about the Reeder costumes and headpieces was that they were hand-painted,” Flora wrote. “This took months. They were made of muslin dyed and then painted elaborately by all of us... Many a night was consumed by what seemed eternal gluing, painting, and building—accompounded by amusing stories and shouts of joy when something was finished and moans when something had to be started all over again.”

Under Flora’s direction and Dickson’s artistic vision, the school prospered and gained recognition across the country, but in 1958, their 13th year of being a school, the Reeders produced “Nala and Damayanti,” their final play. “After thirteen years,” Flora wrote, “a period of retrospection and assessment is necessary.”

The Reeders traveled to France in 1958 and Dickson focused his efforts on completing portrait commissions and preparing for a one-man show at the Fort Worth Art Center (now the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth). Both Flora and Dickson stayed busy with work throughout the 1960s, but Dickson’s health declined and he died on May 8, 1970.

Flora revived the Reeder school in 1981 with the help of her nephew, Jeff Reeder. This later school followed the same format and standards as the earlier one and continued until 1986.

Flora Reeder died on September 26, 1995. “Flora made a unique contribution to the early days of Fort Worth theatre,” William Garber, artistic director emeritus of the Fort Worth Theatre said in her obituary. “She brought people to the theater who had never been there before. And they came back.”

The Reeder Exhibit

The Spring 2008 exhibit in Special Collections, The Reeder Children’s Theatre Presents... walked visitors through the Reeder School experience. Drawing on the extensive Dickson and Flora Reeder Papers and Reeder School Records, the journey began with the origins of Reeder School and explored the selection, produc-
Endnotes

1 Pauline Evans, typescript, n.d. Dickson and Flora Blanc Reeder Papers, 97-12, Box 3, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Library.

2 Handbook of Texas Online, s.v. "Reeder, Edward Dickson."


4 Roger Blanc, A Brief History of the Northern Blancs, typescript, 1993. Reeder Papers, Box 14.

5 1920 U.S. Census.


10 Dickson Reeder, manuscript, n.d. Reeder Papers, Box 15.


13 Flora Reeder, manuscript, n.d. Reeder Papers, Box 3.


16 E. Clyde Whitlock, “Tempest With Special Score Given by Reeder Theater,” Fort Worth Star-Telegram, June 10, 1949, pg. 2.

17 “Reeder School has Sixth Production,” Fort Worth Star-Telegram, May 31, 1951, sec. 2.

18 Flora Reeder, manuscript, n.d. Reeder Papers, Box 3.

19 Flora Reeder, letter, n.d. Reeder Papers, Box 3.

The U.S. War with Mexico (1846-1848) has been a major collecting focus for The University of Texas at Arlington Library's Special Collections since Jenkins Garrett's initial gift in 1974 of the materials he had collected on the subject. The collection is comprised not only of books but also of manuscript materials, maps, sermons, speeches, government documents, newspapers, and sheet music that document both the United States' and Mexican points of view on the conflict. In the fall of 2007, Special Collections made two major acquisitions of manuscripts relating to the service of two Pennsylvania soldiers in the war with Mexico: the narrative of Jacobus Magendie Confer (1846-1848) and the diary of Thomas Lindsay (1846-1848).

Confer Narrative (1846-1848)
Confer's original unpublished narrative is entitled “An Account of the March of the American Highlanders from the Summit to the City of Mexico by Way of Pittsburg, New Orleans, Vera Cruz, Etc. Etc. Etc. Army Under General W. Scott. Battles and Other Thrilling Incidents.” The volume, containing 66 pages written in ink, provides an unusually detailed and articulate account of an enlisted man's journey into Mexico. The narrative begins with Confer's enlistment as a high private in the American Highlanders on December 25, 1846, in Hallidaysburg, Pennsylvania, and ends in Jalapa, Mexico on May 6, 1847. Most of Confer's journey to Mexico was aboard ship, first on the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers to New Orleans, then into the Gulf of Mexico to Tampico and Veracruz. Confer eloquently described the scenery along the river banks including neatly manicured plantations, some with as many as 90 slave cabins presenting "a view in the distance of a small village . . . ". Shipboard conditions are also discussed in detail, "The men generally were in good heart, since any other mood of mind would not relieve their conditions, they adopted all manner of amusements to forget their real situation and enjoy at least partial pleasure, singing Negro melodies, reading Books (the Testament) . . . playing cards and practicing the military tactics . . . ."

Lindsay Mexican War Diary (1847-1848)
Thomas Lindsay enlisted in the 1st Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteers on December 15, 1846. He was promoted to corporal on June 1, 1847, shortly after his journal begins. Entries in the 33-page
unpublished journal were recorded in ink and begin with the inscription, “Thomas Lindsay his Memorandum book, Jalapa 1847.” The following is an example of Lindsay’s descriptive text:

...the first and second Pennsylvania and the first and second Tennessee Regiments were put together to charge batteries through the chaparrals which was so thick that they could not see twenty yards ahead and the grape and canister shot poured down on them like hail but fortunately the canister it went over their heads...they [the Mexican Army] surrendered one of the strongest places in all Mexico together with about 110 pieces of artillery and about 8000 stacks of arms...General Santa Anna was so closely pursued that he had to leave a wagon loaded with money in the road which we took possession of. It contained about 70000 dollars. We had about 500 killed and wounded...the name of this place is called Cerro Gordo...

In addition to Cerro Gordo, Lindsay’s diary discusses Vera Cruz, Jalapa, Mexico City, Perote, Puebla, Atlixco, and Cholula. Eventually Lindsay “received news that the treaty had been ratified” and the troops began moving to the coast to make their way home. In the final two pages of the diary, Lindsay listed all of the men of his company who were “mustered out of service on Friday,” adding that only 62 of the original 96 in the company returned from Mexico. In addition to the journal, the collection includes Lindsay’s discharge certificate (a rarity), a poem entitled “To the Mothers of the Unfortunates,” and the Mayor of Philadelphia’s 1870 appointment of Lindsay as special watchman on Smilt’s Island. Special Collections also holds a manuscript transcription of the Lindsay journal. Comparison of the two reveals numerous errors and omissions in the transcription.

Researchers should find the Confer and Lindsay materials of great interest, as manuscript materials relating to Mexican War are quite rare. The J. M. Confer narrative offers extraordinary descriptions of travel conditions endured en route to the Mexican theater of war, while the Lindsay diary chronicles a foot soldier’s experiences. For further information on these Mexican War manuscripts, contact Brenda McClurkin at 817-272-3393 or mcclurkin@uta.edu.
Summer Exhibit: “The Red Menace” through News Maps

A new exhibit that examines maps published by the national news press in Britain and the United States opened in Special Collections on June 2. The summer-long exhibit Mapping the “Red Menace”: British and American news maps in the early Cold War period, 1945 to 1955 looks at how each nation put foreign affairs into a geographic perspective. News maps in this exhibit were pulled from journals such as Time, Newsweek, U.S. News and World Report as well as the British title Time and Tide.

The maps shown in these journals were a valuable medium for educating news readers on the dangers of the developing Communist threat and Cold War geopolitical events, while at the same time shaping public opinion of foreign places. Differing map portrayals often lead to powerful and often conflicting notions of Cold War geopolitics and national security in the minds of American and English citizens.

The exhibit is a collaborative effort between UT Arlington Special Collections and Jeffrey Stone, Associate Professor of History at Tarrant County College. Mapping the “Red Menace” is located on the sixth floor of Central Library and will be open from June 2 – August 11, 2008. It is free and open to the public. Special Collections hours are Monday 9am to 7pm and Tuesday – Saturday 9am to 5pm, July 21 – 25 closed morning until 1pm for inventory. For more information, call 817-272-3393 or email spcoref@uta.edu.