Samuel Colt and His Revolving Weapons

At first glance, Samuel Colt: Arms, Art, and Invention might appear to be just an historical firearms exhibition. It is that - but it also explores Samuel Colt’s life, not to mention the Rosetta Stone of his invention and the means he used to sell it.

The exhibition comes to the Durham Western Heritage Museum from the Wadsworth Athenium Museum in Hartford, Conn., which has never before exhibited the collection outside of the city. The Durham is the first venue on this historic national tour that includes numerous personal items from artist, promoter, innovator Samuel Colt.

Inspired by a ship’s wheel as a 16-year-old sailor, Colt invented a revolver cylinder that would automatically rotate as the hammer was cocked, enabling the user to fire multiple shots with the pistol quickly (the cylinder previously had to be manually turned). Colt didn’t stop there – he emphasized the quality of his product, creating a durable revolving pistol that was pleasing to the eye and touch. A century before “focus group” became a popular term in marketing, Colt brought customers together and asked them their opinions on colors and materials, using that information to create a product he knew people would buy.

Colt then created manufacturing processes that allowed him to turn out guns quickly and inexpensively. Decades before Henry Ford used mass production to make automobiles affordable and available to all, Sam Colt did the same for firearms. Little wonder that a popular saying during the Civil War was “Abraham Lincoln freed all men, but Sam Colt made all men equal.”

Some call Colt the Bill Gates of his day. His name and product were immediately recognized virtually everywhere and he had immense wealth. Colt had little difficulty in getting doors opened for him around the world – he offered gifts to government officials and royalty alike to persuade them to adopt his guns. Many of the presentation pieces offered by Colt will be on exhibit at the Durham, along with gifts Colt received such as presentation rings, a gold and diamond snuffbox from Czar Alexander of Russia and a sword from the shogun of Japan.

The quality of his guns made Colt rich, but it was his promotional ability that made him famous. He was almost ruthless in promoting his product and himself, and constantly sought new ways of doing so. During the 1850s he commissioned the well known artist George Catlin to create a series of paintings showing Catlin holding or firing a Colt firearm, including one in which he’s on horseback chasing down a buffalo (that and three more of the paintings are included in the exhibit). Unusual, yes, but that was the promoter in Colt. He loved reports about himself in the newspapers, especially those criticizing his ethics or education.

(continued on page 2)

Durham Draws on Byron Reed for Historic “Signers”

The Durham draws on its own resources for the creation of The Signers, a new exhibit opening April 28 in the Velde Gallery examining the lives of the 56 men who signed the Declaration of Independence.

The Signers tells the story of each of these men, all of whom risked their careers, their land and fortunes, their families, and possibly even their lives had the Revolutionary War swung in the way of the British. As a physical link to the 56, the exhibit includes 46 of the original signatures of the signers on varying documents, ranging from letters to land deeds that are a part of the museum’s Byron Reed Collection. They include a letter from Thomas Jefferson inquiring about the purchase of a book, a document signed by John Hancock as governor of Massachusetts relating to a divorce, a presidential land grant signed by John Adams, and a letter from Benjamin Franklin describing the formation of a society in Philadelphia. The remaining 10 signers are represented by facsimile documents acquired from the Library of Congress.

Byron Reed is widely known for his coin collecting, but he also enjoyed collecting rare and unusual documents, including those signed by our founding fathers. Only a fraction of the Byron Reed Collection is actually on permanent display at the museum, so The Signers is a great opportunity to see even more of this world-class collection.

(continued on page 4)
Executive Director’s Letter

Our first exhibits of the year proved to be very popular, with Fashion in Film drawing the greatest attention. Visitors with interests in history, costume design, fashion and just celebrities in general were offered a rare glimpse into the exquisite detail that is a part of every successful film presentation.

The companion exhibit, Omaha: A City with Style, was warmly received. It documented, in photographs and artifacts from our collections, the styles that were a part of the Omaha scene for nearly one hundred years.

Pressing Matters complemented both with its emphasis on wine and wine art. This exhibit provided our audience with a very intriguing look at more than 400 years of wine-related art expression, from ceremonial to advertising.

Our upcoming exhibits are very different but equally compelling and begin with The Signers, an extraordinary offering from the Byron Reed Document Collection. The opportunity to view original documents signed by more than three quarters of the original signers of the Declaration of Independence is unique. The oldest document available for viewing is a receipt for a bill of purchase of goods penned by George Taylor in 1741. This is truly a must-see exhibit with unusual historical content.

Window on the West will follow with a surprising twist to the theme of western art. These glimpses of life on the frontier were painted by artists who personally explored the west and visually documented what they discovered. This evocative compilation of poetic artwork depicts the western frontier in a pristine manner, long before the scenes you may have experienced in movies.

Finally, Samuel Colt: Arms, Art, and Invention will open on May 12th. This exhibit displays not only weapons but addresses the life of a unique American entrepreneur and philanthropist. Besides firearms, it presents paintings, sculpture, photographs, medals, prints and additional decorative arts. These artifacts have never been displayed outside of Hartford, Connecticut, and offer rare insight on the life of an unusual American icon.

Please visit our web site and watch your mail for notice of visiting Smithsonian Scholars as well as other programs that will expand and enhance the experience of viewing our exhibits. We are excited about the envelope and the immersion we are developing to bring increased depth to each and every exhibit.

As always, we welcome your observations and suggestions. Your continued membership and patronage is important to us as we expand and refine our offerings.

Until next time,
Leo W. Smith II
Executive Director

Corporate Sponsorships

With summer right around the corner, the Durham Western Heritage Museum’s education department has worked diligently to finalize this year’s summer education program offerings. This is the department’s busiest time of year, serving nearly 10,000 students each summer. With a wide variety of classes, more than 150 workshops, and our always popular day camps, this summer is sure to be one of our most successful to date.

We are currently looking for summer education program sponsors. Your contribution will help the Durham Western Heritage Museum continue to offer these worthwhile programs for students from all over the region. If you or your business is interested in becoming a summer program sponsor, please contact me at (402) 444-5071 Ext. 577, or at muher@dwhm.org.

Mary Uher
Director of Development

Thanks for your support!

The Durham Western Heritage Museum would like to express its deepest gratitude to the following supporters of our exhibitions and educational programming:

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Exhibit Explores the Man Behind the Colt Revolver (continued from page 1)

Rich in rare firearms, original artwork, sculpture, documents, advertisements, drawings, medals, jewelry and objects d’art, Samuel Colt: Arms, Art and Invention is a truly unique exhibit. The exhibition runs from May 12 through August 12 in the Velde Gallery.

Samuel Colt: Arms, Art and Invention is sponsored locally by Northern Natural Gas, the Carmen and John Gottschalk Foundation, the Peter Kiewit Foundation, The Hawks Foundation, The Durham Society, the Durham Foundation, George and Sally Haddix, and Cabela’s, with additional support of the Hawkins Charitable Trust.

TIMELINES is a quarterly newsletter published for the members and friends of the Durham Western Heritage Museum.

EDITOR: Melissa Aden, Marketing Associate
Exhibit Gives Visitors a Window to the American Frontier

What was it like to be one of the first settlers in the West? What did people see on their travels? Experience the expansion of the West firsthand through art from the upcoming exhibit, *Window on the West: Views from the American Frontier*, on display at the Durham Western Heritage Museum from May 3 to July 15.

An exhibit of 60 images from the private collection of Arthur J. Phelan, *Window on the West* contains original paintings and prints by artists who personally explored the West and visually documented a dominant culture’s conquest of an untamed land and its earlier inhabitants.

When most people think of “the West,” their favorite TV or movie western quickly comes to mind. *Window on the West* does not provide a view typical of the Hollywood western, but provides a historically accurate cross-section of what really happened, from the gradual transformation of the West to the inevitable disappearance of the frontier.

“This is fine art work that pre-dates the movies and later imagery from Hollywood,” says Luis Vasquez, curator for the Durham Western Heritage Museum. “These were artists at their best, trying to portray forces of nature and the true beauty of what they saw. They didn’t know that what they were producing would eventually become historical documentation, which is what makes this exhibit so unique.”

Emphasis is placed on the views of lesser-known artists who personally recorded what they observed in this raw new country, rather than a modern artists’ intentional interpretation of what the West was like.

*Window on the West* is sponsored locally by the Douglas County Commissioners and the Whitmore Charitable Trust.

Soda Fountain and Candy Shop

Stop by our Soda Fountain and Candy Shop while visiting the museum and indulge yourself in an old fashioned phosphate or ice cream soda. We’ve also expanded our Candy Shop to include more of your favorite sweets “from days gone by.”

Moms can delight in a free one-scoop sundae on Mother’s Day (May 13th). Dads can take pleasure in a free phosphate of their choice on Father’s Day (June 17th). Visit us before you leave the museum— we’re at the east end of the Main Waiting Room.

Volunteer Corner

Our dedicated volunteers are involved all over the museum! You can find them giving tours, teaching classes, and preserving pictures in the Photo Archives. You’ll find their friendly faces at the front desk, helping guests with their selection in the gift shop, and even making malts at our Soda Fountain. Volunteers also participate in helping out with special events, especially during our busy holiday season.

We love our volunteers and are always looking for more to add to our great team! To join our team, please call Volunteer Coordinator Audrey Labens at (402) 444-5071. Find out how YOU can be a part of all the excitement happening at the Durham Western Heritage Museum today!

**Upcoming Volunteer Events**

Volunteer Appreciation Dinner: April 25th,
Brown Bag: May 1st and June 5th

**Volunteers of the Month**

January: Jean Granlund
February: Dan Walburn
March: Janey Dann

Audrey Labens
Volunteer Coordinator
Emil Brandeis was born March 15, 1864 in Wisconsin. It wasn’t until he was 17 that his family moved to Omaha and founded the Boston Store. Emil worked in the store for three years until becoming a full partner along with his brothers Hugo and Arthur. After their father’s death, Hugo, Arthur, and Emil built Omaha’s famous “J.L. Brandeis and Sons” retail store.

On January 17, 1912, Emil left for his annual trip abroad. He joined his niece Ruth Stern and her husband, Irving, and the trio traveled through Europe and Egypt. Emil was expected to return to Omaha in early May, however the luxury and opulence of the Titanic was too great for him to resist. Emil wrote a letter to Arthur from Paris explaining that “I am not traveling with any friends, but there are a great many people going on this boat that I am well acquainted with.” Indeed, the first-class passenger list for Titanic’s maiden voyage included some of the richest and most prominent people in the world, such as millionaire John Jacob Astor, industrialist Benjamin Guggenheim, and Macy’s department store owner Isidor Straus.

Measuring in slightly over 882-feet long and 92-feet, 6-inches wide, the Titanic was the largest moving object on the planet and the most luxurious. Emil spent much of his time onboard entertaining department store buyers in his private suite. At dinner, he chose from a menu of filet mignon, lamb with mint sauce, roast duck, and exotic desserts. Considered the pinnacle of modern naval architecture, the Titanic was said by The Shipbuilder to be “practically unsinkable.” However, on the night of April 14, 1912, the unsinkable Titanic struck an iceberg - two hours and 40 minutes later, the Titanic was underneath the ocean.

According to a source identified as “Mr. Greenwald,” Emil was in the smoking room at the moment of the collision. A fast friend of Emil Brandeis, Mrs. Harris, claimed that “when the Titanic struck the iceberg, Mr. Brandeis, Mr. Harris, and myself rushed to the deck only to be assured by officers that nothing serious had happened to the vessel and to go back to our staterooms. We were standing together discussing the trouble when informed by a steward to get life belts and go on deck.”

“Mr. Brandeis insisted on Mr. Harris accompanying me aboard the lifeboat, saying that I had a broken arm and would need the assistance of Mr. Harris…Mr. Harris informed me that the women-first rule was prevailing under all circumstances. He joined Mr. Brandeis on the ill-fated ship…Mr. Brandeis kept saying encouraging words to me as our boat was being lowered, saying that they would join us later…I seem to see both men now standing side by side, smiling and waving to me as our boat drew away. Then, the band was playing ‘Nearer My God to Thee,’ I could see that they had joined in the sacred hymn. But all the while they kept smiling and waving at me.”

Lost in the tragedy were 1,517 lives, Emil Brandeis among them. Mrs. Harris remembered Emil as “a hero, a great, noble man. He assisted the women aboard our lifeboat and with a smile on his face assured them that the vessel was unsinkable.” On April 20th, a dispatch arrived from New York to alert the Brandeis family of the loss of their beloved Emil. A memorial service was held for him the following day at the Brandeis Theater.

Emil Brandeis’s body was recovered from the ocean by the steamship Mackay-Bennett and brought to Halifax, where inventory of items on his body were taken. Records show he was wearing a dark suit, black shoes and silk socks. Also recorded was money, a gold knife, a match box with his initials, and a gold pocket watch. His belongings were sent to his family in Omaha.

The watch was acquired by the Durham Western Heritage Museum in 1991, donated by Mrs. Loyal Brandeis Cohn.
The Perfect Gift for Any Occasion

Like being a member of the Durham? Share the experience with your friends and family by giving the gift of membership! Gift memberships are perfect for all occasions, including weddings, birthdays and graduations. Each purchase comes with a gift card neatly packaged in a customized Durham Western Heritage Museum greeting card and envelope. It’s unique, it’s fun and it’s a gift that lasts all year long! Purchase your gift membership today by calling (402) 444-5071 or online at www.dwhm.org.

Save the Date for Member Preview

We invite you to celebrate the much anticipated arrival of the summer’s new exhibit, *Samuel Colt: Arms, Art and Invention!* Mark your calendars for May 12th, 8 to 10 a.m. for a sneak-peek. Not only was Samuel Colt the genius behind Colt firearms, but his creativity and inventions were legendary. This unique collection will travel to only four venues on its nationwide tour, and the Durham is its very first stop. Join us for the opportunity to preview the exhibit and enjoy refreshments. Look for additional information in upcoming mailings.

Two New Programs for Moms and Seniors!

Interested in a more enjoyable museum experience? The membership department is excited to announce two new programs that will benefit members of the Durham.

The **Golden Spikes** has been created for senior members of the museum ages 62 and over. This unique group is invited to attend monthly meetings at the museum for activities, special guest speakers and discussion groups. The Golden Spikes will meet the first Tuesday of each month at 1 p.m. following the volunteer Brown Bag luncheon. The kick-off event is scheduled for April 3.

Members with pre-school age children or grandchildren won’t want to miss out on the **Caboose Club**. The Caboose Club provides a shared museum experience between adults and children and is a great learning and social opportunity. Club activities will vary throughout the month.

These programs are **free** to museum members. Call Ragan at (402) 444-5071 for additional information or to enroll!

Joining the Staff

The Durham Western Heritage Museum welcomes **Melissa Aden** as Marketing Associate. Heading up the museum’s Marketing Department, Aden is responsible for developing and implementing marketing and public relations programs for the museum.

Aden graduated magna cum laude from the University of Nebraska at Omaha with a bachelor’s of science degree in journalism with a concentration in public relations and advertising and an emphasis in nonprofit management.

She started at the museum last summer as a University of Nebraska Foundation intern assisting with museum marketing and education programs and continued that role throughout the fall.

Aden enjoys singing in her church’s choir, leading a women’s support group, watercolor painting, reading, and working on her first book. She and her husband also regularly volunteer at their church.

Members of the On Track Guild posed for a photo with the museum’s newly acquired fork lift. The Guild’s fundraising efforts in 2006 resulted in a $25,000 contribution which was used to purchase the lift. Members pictured (from left to right) are Julie Lasto, Laurette Hess, Julie Brewer, Nancy Wolf, Phyllis Choat, Chris Webster, Margaret Evans, and Nancy Hanson.
Smithsonian Scholars

T he Durham will host two nationally renowned Smithsonian scholars this spring presenting programs supporting the traveling exhibitions, *Samuel Colt: Arms, Art and Invention, Windows on the West* and the Byron Reed document collection *The Signers*.

On April 24th we will feature "An Evening with Thomas Jefferson," featuring Patrick Lee (left). Since 1990, he has inspired, entertained, and educated audiences with his authentic, first-person presentations as Thomas Jefferson, Daniel Boone, and William Clark, of Lewis-and-Clark fame.

On May 22nd, Jim Garry, a western humorist and storyteller, will present his program: "The View from the South End of a Cow," a worldview of old-time cowboys. Hear tales that bring to life the folks who spread the cattle culture, including some of their superstitions and beliefs.

Both programs will have an hors d’ouerve reception from 5-6:30 p.m. with the program following at 6:30 p.m. Reservations are required for these events and seating is limited. **Call Ashley today at (402) 444-5071 to reserve your tickets.**

We will also spotlight local western experts with speakers from the Nebraska Humanities Council. Leigh Anne and Ron Frame will be at the museum on May 8th presenting their program “Cowboy Rhythm.” Warren Rodgers will present "The Horse: Dominant Footprints through History" on June 19th. These programs start at 6:30 p.m. A dessert and coffee reception will follow. **Reservations are required for these events and seating is limited. Call Ashley at (402) 444-5071 and reserve your tickets today!**

2007 Summer Camps

This summer the Durham will provide a unique line-up of summer learning and fun! This summer’s camps are offered from June 4th to August 10th to children 5 to 12 years of age. This summer’s camps provide opportunities to experience science, art, history and to have lots of fun doing it! The highlight will be a camp from the Smithsonian, “Fur, Fangs and Footprints” that ties to Native American art and storytelling. Also featured: a camp that combines our most popular classes and the ever-popular day camp “Exploring Omaha.” Our camps are led by certified teachers and are guaranteed to make this summer one to remember!

Contact the Department of Education at (402) 444-5027 for more information or see our web site for a registration form.

Gritty City

The Gritty City is back! On May 13th we will kick-off the second season of the Gritty City with “sneak-peek tours” starting at 2 p.m. and running every 30 minutes. This year the tour will feature a different tour route with newer, juicier stories and photos to help tell the story of Omaha’s beginnings. Regularly scheduled tours will begin on May 29th and run through September. Check our web site for dates and times today!
### Coming up at the Durham Western Heritage Museum

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<td>Gritty City Dinner Tour 4 p.m.</td>
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Call (402) 444-5071 for more information, or log on to [www.dwhm.org](http://www.dwhm.org)

*June 5: Volunteer Brown Bag at 12 p.m.*