



UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING
American Heritage Center

American Heritage Center Self Guided Tour

CENTENNIAL COMPLEX
ELEANOR CRATTERTON KENNEDY UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING
JOE AND ARLENE WATT
AMERICAN HERITAGE CENTER **ART MUSEUM**

American Heritage
Center, University of
Wyoming

The American Heritage Center (AHC) is the University of Wyoming's (UW) repository for historical manuscripts, rare books, and university archives. It is among the largest and most heavily used non-governmental repositories in the U.S., drawing approximately 5,000 researchers every year from all 50 states and a dozen nations. Internationally acclaimed, the Center is a resource for the students of UW and Wyoming, and our state's citizens. Access is free and open to all. The AHC's award-winning website is www.uwyo.edu/ahc.

In 2010 the Center received the Distinguished Service Award from the Society of American Archivists, the highest honor possible for a US historical repository.

In the years since it was established in 1945, the AHC has grown its collections to 75,000 cubic feet (the *equivalent of 18 miles!*) of historically important documents and more than 60,000 rare books, almost all by donation.

- **Major areas of the manuscript collections** are Wyoming and the American West, the mining and petroleum industries, Western politics and leadership, conservation, journalism, transportation, and 20th century entertainment such as popular music, radio, television, and film. The AHC collects both regionally and nationally in select areas.
- **The Toppan Library is the University's rare book center.** More than 60,000 items from medieval illuminated manuscripts to the 21st century. Subject strengths are the American West, British and American literature, early exploration of North America, religion, hunting and fishing, natural history, women authors, and the book arts. Unlike most rare book libraries, it is an active teaching site.

Educating students is vital to the AHC, a mission the Center supports through annual instruction to a wide variety of UW classes on conducting archival research, and through work with UW faculty to develop student projects using AHC collections. The AHC also hosts many public school classes each year. The Center administers Wyoming History Day, a national program to introduce students in grades 6-12 to the rigors and joys of doing original research.

History does not simply sit on a shelf at the AHC. It is considered and debated through symposia and speakers series. It is collected through major oral history projects, primarily under the auspices of the AHC's Alan K. Simpson Institute for Western Politics and Leadership. It is analyzed via research performed through travel grants for scholars and prizes for the best primary source research by UW undergraduate and graduate students.

OUR BUILDING

In 1993 the Center and the University Art Museum began occupying this facility, the multiple-award-winning Centennial Complex. The AHC occupies 60% of the building's 127,000 square feet. The complex was named for the University of Wyoming's centennial anniversary (1986), when planning began, and it was designed by internationally-acclaimed architect Antoine Predock. Predock says of the building's unique design:

- Throughout Wyoming there is a sense of landscape in formation.... The appearance of this "archival" mountain can be thought of as parallel to the slow but certain geologic upheaval.... The art museum is reminiscent of a village at the foot of a mountain.
- This archival mountain is axially linked to Medicine Bow Peak to the west and Pilot's Knob to the east. Site-specific alignments anchor the building into the campus and landscape. The building...recalls the gathering of Native Americans, French trappers, and early European settlers. Now it is a place of intellectual and social rendezvous.
- At the core of the mountain is a hearth with a timber armature that guides the flue up through the mountain to the sky [this space is called the "Loggia"]. The floor levels wind around the hearth, each level rotating, creating a spiraling ascent to the sky-lit aerie.

The AHC's portion of the complex is named for Eleanor Chatterton Kennedy, daughter of a former Wyoming governor, and for Joe and Arlene Watt, cattle ranchers and descendants of Wyoming pioneers.



left, Joe H. and Arlene
Watt.

right, Eleanor
Chatterton
Kennedy.



OUR EXHIBITS: THE 2nd and 3rd FLOORS

The AHC is not a museum, but rather a primary source research center. Even so, we create exhibits for the same reason a museum does, to give visitors a glimpse into our vast and diverse collections. Exhibits cover a wide range of topics and even of purposes. The AHC and Art Museum have distinct policies concerning photography. The AHC permits photography for personal purposes but only **without flash**.

On the **2nd floor** at the entrance to the **Mary Storer Loggia** is a small, changing display featuring a variety of our collections. During each summer, it marks the entrance to Coat Couture, an exhibit of wearable art created by faculty and students from UW's Family and Consumer Sciences department—it is one of our most popular events.

Over the years and for a variety of reasons, the Center permanently displays the premier collection of Western art at UW. This collection is also on the 2nd floor in the Loggia and in the **George A. Rentschler Room** (off the left of the Loggia as you enter) and on the **3rd floor just outside the public elevators**. The Rentschler room is a replica of the New York City library of this industrialist and philanthropist.



Looking down, from the fifth floor, to the Mary Storer Loggia.

In the Loggia, notice displays of original saddles used by cinema stars **Hopalong Cassidy (William Boyd)** and the **Cisco Kid (Duncan Renaldo)**, as well as smaller displays introducing you to our wide variety of archival collection material. The collections are available to visitors in our fourth floor reading room, highlighted later in this brochure.

The AHC's collection of Western art includes paintings by

- **Henry Farny (American, 1847-1916)**
- **Frederic Remington (American, 1861-1909)**
- **Alfred Jacob Miller (American, 1810-1874)**

and an original bronze by Remington. The works were contributed by Rita Cushman in memory of her husband, George Rentschler; by the Everett D. Graff Family, Robert Graff, and Charles B. Nevins; and by Arthur Lafrentz.

You will see Miller paintings on three of the Loggia's four walls, and detailed brochures about the artwork are available. Most lighting has been directed away from the paintings for preservation purposes; however, white buttons throughout the Loggia permit visitors to temporarily highlight each painting. The Farnys and the Remington occupy the Rentschler Room. The room contains a state of the art fiber optic lighting system wired to motion sensors to reduce harmful effects of light to the paintings. Inside the Rentschler Room is a more detailed brochure about the room and its artwork.



George A. Rentschler Room.



Tour group viewing some of the Loggia's Alfred Jacob Miller paintings.

Adjacent to the Rentschler Room on the **2nd floor** is the **Clara and Frederick Toppan Rare Books Library**. The Library is open to the public, though



Toppan Rare Books Library.

appointments are suggested because the curator is often teaching classes. The Library is home to more than 60,000 items. The majority of the materials are printed books from the 1400s to the present, although there are also hand-illuminated manuscripts. You will probably see dozens of items from the collections set out for a class on topics ranging from art to zoology and from exploration to world religions. If no

class is present and if the curator or one of her assistants is available, don't hesitate to ask to see the table displays. *Outside the Library are three cases filled with a changing variety of examples from the rare books collection.*

At the back of the Library is **the Colket Room**. Charles Howard Colket (1859-1924) traveled the world beginning in 1879 when he journeyed



A few of the artifacts from the Colket Collection in the Colket Room, adjacent to the Toppan Library

by horseback from Beirut to Bagdad. Select artifacts acquired during these travels, sometimes with his his wife, Almira, are on display in colorful Egyptian-style cases. Everything was donated to the University of Wyoming by the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Tristram. C. Colket, II., who originally brought the items from the family home in Philadelphia when they moved to Sheridan, Wyoming.



Wyoming Stock Growers Association exhibit in the Wyoming Stock Growers' Room, 2nd floor.

Also off the Loggia is the **Wyoming Stock Growers Association Room (WSGA)**, which is used as both a classroom and an events room. The room contains an exhibit on the history of the WSGA.

The AHC's **3rd floor** is open to the public, but contains only administrative offices and work areas. However, to the right of the public elevator is a small exhibit of **Alfred Jacob Miller** field sketches and drawings, donated

by Robert Graff. Dedicated spaces include the **C. Paul Johnson Upper Loggia** and the **Terry Roark Administrative Suites**.

RESEARCHING AT THE AHC: THE 4th FLOOR

An important public space in the AHC is the **Owen Wister Western Writers' Reading Room** through which students, scholars, and members of the



Owen Wister Western Writer's Reading Room.

public are able to use our original collection material. No appointment is necessary, though for first-timers we recommend arranging a formal meeting with a reference archivist who can help get you started. In addition, more than 100,000 items (photos, documents, maps, recordings, etc.) from our collections

have been digitized, and are accessible 24/7/365 at <http://digitalcollections.uwyo.edu/luna>.

The **Alfred Jacob Miller Classroom** is primarily used for classes of students—it contains reproductions of Miller

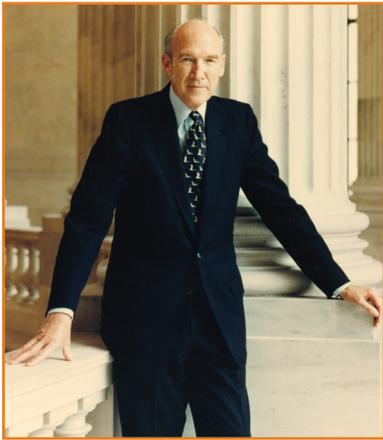


Alfred Jacob Miller Classroom

paintings and a chronology of his life. Please call in advance to arrange for a visit to the Classroom. The Classroom was built for the AHC through the generosity of **Robert Graff**.

OUR OTHER PUBLIC AREAS: THE 5th FLOOR

The upper loggia of the 5th floor is dedicated to **George and Linda LaBarre** and the history of business. Across from the public elevator is a photograph of the founders of Cheyenne-based national business Taco Johns. The **University Archives** office and the **Albert Gordon Wyoming Sheep Room** (which serves as a classroom and meeting room) are on this floor.



Senator Alan K. Simpson

The walls of the Center's 5th floor loggia display photos of Wyoming political leaders and businesses, as well as a small exhibit honoring retired U.S. Senator Alan K. Simpson. Next to the Simpson exhibit is the office of the **Alan K. Simpson Institute for Western Politics and Leadership**. Contact the Simpson Archivist for a visit by calling 307/766-2557. The Institute acquires new collections, conducts major oral history projects, produces symposia and other public programs, and supports student research in the history of Western politics and business.

WHAT YOU DON'T SEE

Most of the 1st floor of the AHC is not accessible to the public. By far the largest portion of this floor is storage areas for collection material. The storage areas are climate controlled and protected against fire, as well as having a three-tiered security system. Also behind the "Employees Only" sign is our Accessioning unit, the AHC's photo lab, and our **Toni Stabile Conservation Lab**.

Many people ask if it is possible to be taken into the storage areas? Of course. However, we ask that such requests be made by appointment. While we can accommodate more for special occasions we ask that most tours comprise no more than six individuals. Call the AHC director (307/766-2474) or associate director (307/766-6385).

Also on the 1st Floor (but not behind so much security) are the offices within

the **Abner Luman Reliquary** that include the **Wyoming History Day** headquarters and the AHC's **Digital Programs** department. Visits to either office can be arranged easily, often the same day by calling down from the Information Desk (**2nd floor**).



AHC state-of-the-art scan lab.



A student worker retrieves collections materials from an AHC storage room.

AMERICAN HERITAGE CENTER

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Location

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307-766-4114
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ahc@uwyo.edu (General)
ahceref@uwyo.edu
(Reference Dept.)
www.uwyo.edu/ahc

Room Reservations

307-766-5066



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