GUIDE

STEVE AND MAY BENNETT COLLECTION

C. 1898 - 1973 & n.d.

ARCHIVES OF THE BIG BEND
BRYAN WILDENTHAL MEMORIAL LIBRARY
SUL ROSS STATE UNIVERSITY
ALPINE, TEXAS
The Bennett Collection was donated by May Chandler (Mrs. Steve) Bennett in 1978. The collection comprises 273 photographs, the report cards of Patsy Beth Bennett and a price list for furs.

James S. (Steve) Bennett was born March 19, 1895 in Llano County. In the twenties, after service in World War I, he was a hunter and trapper in the Big Bend, apparently the time and place he met Bessie May Chandler. May Chandler was born April 15, 1901, attended school in Plainview, Texas, then taught school in Mercury and San Vicente, Texas. May Chandler and Steve Bennett married July 10, 1928 and set up house in the Big Bend at Glenn Springs, Texas.

A significant number of the photographs were taken in the Big Bend in the twenties. Some Big Bend personalities pictured are Juan and Maria "Chata" Sada, "Uncle" Tom Miller, his son Ranger Arch Miller, Ranger Bob Poole and the photographer W. D. Smithers.

About half of the photographs appear to be photographs made by and/or acquired from Smithers. According to his Chronicles of the Big Bend, Smithers made frequent trips to the Big Bend while he was a photographer in San Antonio in the twenties and while a freelance photographer based in El Paso in the thirties. He built a darkroom at Johnson Ranch in the Big Bend in 1930. In 1937 he moved to Alpine where he lived until his death in 1981. Based on Chronicles and other sources on his work, aerial shots, the photographs of San Antonio, Mexico, traveling circuses, aviators, and of Big Bend have been grouped in the collection and attributed to Smithers.

From obituaries and internal evidence in the collection, it appears that the Bennetts' only child, Patsy Beth Bennett (Mrs. Robert Boyd), was born in 1931, then attended the Pecos (Texas) Public Schools from 1938 to 1944, at which time the family moved to Fort Davis, Texas. There Steve and May Bennett ran the Red Rooster Cafe from 1958 until his death in 1978. The Bennetts had four granddaughters, Donna Boyd Yadon, Bobbi Boyd Sledge, Becky Boyd Leaf and Roxy Boyd Sandidge. May Chandler Bennett died in 1990.

The collection is arranged in five archival albums. Photographs of family and friends of the Bennetts precede the photographs of W. D. Smithers that were apparently collected by the Bennetts.

Gaylan Corbin, Archival Assistant, April 14, 1995

Rehousing and guide revision by Amelie Goodwin, Photography Assistant, March 27, 2002.
With the exceptions noted, the following are photographs. All are undated unless indicated. Names and dates in brackets were established by Archives staff.

STEVE AND MAY BENNETT, FAMILY AND FRIENDS (137 photographs)

ALBUM 1 (MSS60.1 - MSS60.6)

MSS60.1: Roy and Addie Chandler and Families 
c. 1898 - c. 1945 (24 photographs)

MSS60.2: Unidentified Family and Friends 
c. 1900- c. 1940 (16 photographs)

MSS60.3: School Days (May Chandler), 1915-- c. 1925 (7 photographs)

MSS60.4: May Chandler [Bennett], c. 1925 (3 photographs)

MSS60.5: Steve Bennett, 1962 & n.d. (2 photographs)

MSS60.6: Social Activities, c. 1910- 1930 (7 photographs)

Reunions? Camp Meetings? (Junction, Texas?)
Steve Bennett (among others) at Longhorn Caverns, Burnet County, Texas

ALBUM 2 (MSS60.7 - MSS60.10)

MSS60.7: Life in the Borderlands, 1925 - 1929 (62 photographs)

Steve and May Bennett at San Vicente and (mainly) Glenn Springs; School teacher Iva Lee Bales, student Marie Landrum, Rangers Arch Miller and Bob Poole at Glenn Springs (many in this subseries are by W. D. Smithers); Steve Bennett, Peggy, and Mr. Horehound at Hot Springs and Glenn Springs; Otis Wilburn and Ethyl (Davis Mountains?); Steve Bennett with Juan Sada, Sr. Luna, Davis and Hatten on deer hunt in Mexico; Steve Bennett and Mr. Tom Wade in the Dead Horse Range; Luna jacal?

MSS60.8: Big Bend Neighbors, c. 1920 - 1930 (4 photographs)

Rosie Sada; Maria "La Chata" Sada; Chata's Place, Boquillas, Texas; Barker Hacienda, Boquillas, Texas
MSS60.9: The Bennetts, 1931-1973 (12 photographs; 31 leaves)

Patsy Beth Bennett (at 4 months) with "Uncle" Tom Miller and Leona Worly; Patsy Beth Bennett; rodeo; Steve and May Bennett with unidentified couple [Fort Davis]; unidentified man; granddaughters Becky and Donna [Boyd] with "Red Rooster dahlias"; Steve Bennett with 52-inch gourd; Steve and May Bennett at the Red Rooster cafe in Fort Davis.

Patsy Beth Bennett's report cards, Pecos Public Schools, 1938-1944 (25); Maas and Steffan Furs price list (6 leaves)

SAM BASS

MSS60.10: Sam Bass, n.d. (1 photograph)
W. D. SMITHERS, PHOTO-JOURNALIST (134 photographs)

Following are the photographs apparently acquired by the Bennetts from W. D. Smithers. Many can be attributed to Smithers, but some appear to be copy prints by Smithers of the work of other photographers or prints passed along by Smithers (such as one by Albert Friedrich). In Chronicles, Smithers relates that he worked for photographer Charles Archer in San Antonio and there is some evidence he bought out Archer's business. At least one of the series taken in Mexico is by Archer, but Smithers also traveled and photographed in Mexico. Most of the photographs are undated but appear to date to the decade of the twenties. See the summaries of Smithers work in Archives Reference File titled "W. D. Smithers." Some of the photographs in Box 2, MSS60.7 also are by Smithers. (See especially the sub-series with schoolteacher Iva Lee Bales and Texas Rangers Miller and Poole.)

ALBUM 3 (MSS60.11- MSS60.13)

MSS60.11: Aviation and the Military (21 photographs)

MSS60.12: Mexico (25 photographs)

MSS60.13: San Antonio (10 photographs)

Scouts at Alamo, 1918; Courthouse and river; store interior [Hall of Homs; Terrell Wells; ice plant generator; chickens

ALBUM 4 (MSS60.14 - MSS60.20)

MSS60.14: Old Trail Drivers Assn. Meeting (San Antonio) 1925 (2 photographs)

Will Rogers pictured.

MSS60.15: Gutzon Borglum (3 photographs)

MSS60.16: Rodeos, Stock Shows, etc. (6 photographs)

Includes 1926 Turkey Trot (Brady, Texas?), Ruth Thalmann before West Texas Sheep and Goat Meet at Kerrville.

MSS60.17: Ku Klux Klan (2 photographs)

MSS60.18: Traveling Circuses (22 photographs)
ALBUM 4, cont.

MSS60.19: Girl Scouts (4 photographs)

MSS60.20: Alpine, Texas (4 photographs)

ALBUM 5 (MSS60.21 - MSS60.23)

MSS60.21: Big Bend/Davis Mountains (16 photographs)

MSS60.22: Wildlife/Hunting/Fishing (15 photographs)

MSS60.23: Unclassified (5 photographs)

Brick building, mansion, International Bridge, Laredo, TX; Port Isabel, TX?