

New exhibition at the Bullock Museum highlights Masonic and Odd Fellows folk art

Mystery and Benevolence explores the symbolism and imagery of the secret societies

NOVEMBER 17, 2021 (AUSTIN, TX) — An exhibition opening this Saturday, November 20 at the Bullock Texas State History Museum highlights the art and imagery associated with Masonic and Odd Fellows folk art. *Mystery and Benevolence: Masonic and Odd Fellows Folk Art from the Kendra and Allan Daniel Gift to the American Folk Art Museum* explores the symbolism and rich histories that have fascinated and influenced American culture for hundreds of years.

"We are excited to bring this meaningful collection to the Bullock. One only has to look at the cornerstones of buildings throughout Texas to see how important the Masons were to our built environment, but in this exhibition visitors will also see the traditions and symbolism related to how Masonic and Odd Fellows benevolent societies have supported their communities," said Bullock Museum Director Margaret Koch.

The Masons and Odd Fellows trace their roots back to Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries before reaching America by the 1700s. By the early 1900s, Freemasonry and the Independent Order of Odd Fellows had reached a popularity where it is estimated one in five men belonged to one of the secret societies. Masonic and Odd Fellows lodges began in Texas in the 1830s and continue today. There are currently 914 Masonic lodges in Texas with more than 122,000 members and 36 Odd Fellows lodges that serve 1,600 members. Both societies were formed as benevolent groups that serve their communities through the charitable support of orphans, the sick, and the poor.

Mystery and Benevolence guides visitors through the fraternal ideals of Passage, Wisdom, Fellowship, Labor, and Charity, and artifacts within each section demonstrate the ways Freemasons and Oddfellows teach these concepts and values through secretive iconography. Objects in the extensive collection include carpentry, paintings, lithographs, regalia, and more. Visitors will also discover artifacts from the Museum's namesake and founder, Bob Bullock, who was a dedicated Freemason and received an honorary degree for outstanding service in 1981.



Chest Lid with Masonic Painting, 1825–1845. Courtesy American Folk Art Museum, Gift of Kendra and Allan Daniel, 2015.1.28

Mystery and Benevolence: Masonic and Odd Fellows Folk Art from the Kendra and Allan Daniel Gift to the American Folk Art Museum is on view November 20, 2021 through March 27, 2022. For more information, visit thestoryoftexas.com.

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The exhibition is supported in part by Joyce Berger Cowin, Kendra and Allan Daniel, the David Davies and Jack Weeden Fund for Exhibitions, the Ford Foundation, and the Leir Charitable Foundations.

The Bullock Texas State History Museum is a division of the State Preservation Board. Additional support of exhibitions and programs is provided by the Texas State History Museum Foundation.

ABOUT THE BULLOCK MUSEUM

The Bullock Texas State History Museum, a division of the State Preservation Board and an accredited institution of the American Alliance of Museums, illuminates and celebrates Texas history, people, and culture. With dynamic, award-winning exhibitions, educational programming for all ages, and an IMAX® theater with the largest screen in Texas, the Museum collaborates with more than 700 museums, libraries, archives and individuals across the world to bring the Story of Texas to life.

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