

Millicent Rogers Museum sees largest donation in over two decades

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Writer



A double-necked wedding vase by Maria Martinez and her daughter-in-law Santana of San Ildefonso Pueblo was donated to the Millicent Rogers Museum by Jim and Dody Hoffman. (Courtesy of Peter Seibert)

TAOS – A flurry of significant gifts is swelling the Millicent Rogers Museum’s collection of Native American pottery, textiles and Fred Harvey rarities.

The donations and acquisitions are the largest the museum has seen in more than two decades, executive director Peter Seibert said.

The haul includes 35 pieces of pueblo pottery, including eight by Maria Martinez (San Ildefonso Pueblo), considered the founding mother of its 20th-century revival; a plate by her grandson Tony Da and five by Blue Corn. The collection includes a pot by Marie Chino, considered one of the most important potters at Acoma Pueblo.

The gifts came from Los Lunas' Jim and Dody Hoffman, who had no previous history with the museum, Seibert said.

The couple were inspired to give their collection after a relative spotted an article about a donation of works by Taos Pueblo painters in the Journal, Seibert said.



This plate by Tony Da of San Ildefonso Pueblo was a gift to the Millicent Rogers Museum from Jim and Dody Hoffman.

Blue Corn worked as a de facto apprentice to Maria, who taught her to make pottery.

"It's very much like Maria," he said of Blue Corn's style. "But her forms are a little different; the wedding vases spread out more and the decorations on her plates have more corn on them. She's putting her own spin on them."

Mark and Linda Winter of the Toadlena Trading Post gave the museum 35 examples of pueblo ceremonial clothing worn in the 20th century. The group includes hand-woven sashes, dance kilts, wearing blankets and more.

"We went from nothing to having a really cool collection," Seibert said.

A close look at the fabric reveals sweat stains and body paints, proving they were worn, he added.

South Carolina resident David Stinson donated five Navajo textiles to the museum, including a weaving created to honor the memory of John F. Kennedy. Likely produced between 1964-66, it incorporates an image of the late president between an American flag and the Statue of Liberty.

The piece poses several questions to museum researchers.



A Navajo weaving of President John F. Kennedy was made by Fannie Benally, working in Aneth, Utah. It probably dates from 1964-65.

“The pattern of the weaving is probably a copy from a print source or a design source,” Seibert said. “It’s very stylized. It poses a lot of questions. What was the relationship of the Navajo to JFK? Did they make this to sell to us or did they make it for their own use? If anything, it shows the importance in New Mexico of JFK.”

Albuquerque’s Bob and Cyndy Gallegos added a group of Fred Harvey materials. Harvey essentially invented Southwestern tourism through his chain of rail-side restaurants and his “Indian Detours” tours of New Mexico. The collection includes rare paper ephemera and a beer bottle with “Fred Harvey” impressed into the glass.

“I’ll be honest, I’ve never seen one,” Seibert said of the latter.

A paper tent card used to place on tables with the name of the “Harvey Girl” waitress is the kind of ephemera that almost never survives the decades, Seibert said. There’s also a silver table vase with the Harvey monogram.

The clothing and weavings will be featured in the exhibit “Stepping Out: Clothing from the American Southwest,” opening in August 2015. The Harvey items will be added into the museum’s current Fred Harvey exhibit that closes Dec. 31.