



## **PAUL DYCK AND HIS COLLECTION**

### **Paul Dyck biography:**

Paul Dyck (1917 – 2006), a descendent of Flemish painter Sir Anthony Van Dyck (1599 – 1641), was born in Chicago. The collection was started by Dyck’s father in 1886 and was, according to family sources, “systematically *collected*, rather than haphazardly *acquired*.”

The young Dyck lived with his family in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, near Blackfeet reserves. Later, Dyck was sent to Europe to apprentice with an uncle who was a successful artist. By age 15, he was on his own, studying at the Munich Academy. He served in World War II, and then settled onto an Arizona ranch where he became an author, illustrator, lecturer, and painter of western subjects. Over time, Dyck developed many friendships with Blackfeet, Crow, Cheyenne, Lakota, and other Plains Native people.

### **History of the Buffalo Culture Era:**

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Plains Native people were living as buffalo hunters and farmers, pursuing the resources of the region through seasonal migration. In the previous century, their lives had been enhanced through the acquisition of horses which allowed for longer and more extensive travel, and provided greater opportunities for trade. Tribes formerly living in the Great Lakes region, such as the Lakota and Cheyenne, had moved into the Plains, and they became full-time buffalo hunters.

The Crow had earlier left their Hidatsa relatives and farming traditions in the Upper Missouri River region of present North Dakota, and began a migration and eventual settlement in southern Montana and northern Wyoming. By the end of the nineteenth century, the major resource of the Plains—the once great buffalo herds—had been destroyed, and tribes were no longer able to travel beyond reservation boundaries to hunt or collect other traditional foods.

### **The Collection’s Archives:**

Along with the Historical Center’s acquisition of the Dyck Collection, the Paul Dyck Foundation donated Dyck’s library and archives. Those materials included photographs of tribal members with whom he worked, as well as other historical images and his own research and documentation of collection objects. Project planners consult these resources along with those available through other libraries and archives, including the Historical Center’s own McCracken Research Library. In addition, the Plains Indian Museum curatorial staff has completed extensive curatorial research on Plains cultural materials.

### **The Dyck Center:**

With the understanding that many museum visitors will be interested first in the artistry and quality of the Dyck collection, planners of the gallery and the program will develop multi-layered interpretations of the collection objects to provide opportunities for visitors to develop deeper understandings of Plains arts, cultures, and philosophies within a period of dramatic historical changes.

The proposed project builds upon the research, documentation, and cataloguing of the Dyck collection undertaken with the Save America’s Treasures grant beginning in January 2009 and completed in June 2012. An ongoing aspect of the Save America’s Treasures project involves research on the collection supported through consultation with scholars in Plains Indian arts and cultures, valuable information that makes the Dyck Center possible.