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GALT MUSEUM RECEIVES GRANT FOR BUDDHIST SHRINE PROJECT

TABER BUDDHIST SHRINE TO BE READIED FOR EXHIBITION AT THE GALT

The Galt Museum & Archives has received \$12,000 from the Alberta Museums Association to document and register the Taber Buddhist Church Shrine formally added to the Galt's permanent collection earlier this year.

The donation of the Shrine was a result of the closure and sale of several regional Buddhist churches, including the Taber, Raymond and two Lethbridge-based churches, as the congregation prepares to consolidate under one new roof in Lethbridge. The shrine requires documenting and cataloguing before it can be put on display.

Collections Technician Kevin MacLean will lead the project with the assistance of a term-position Collections Assistant beginning May 5, a Glenbow-employed Conservator, an accredited Appraiser, a team of volunteer assistants, and the Buddhist community for information sources and support. A 14-year employee at the Galt, MacLean has led dozens of Collections' registration and preservation projects. Most recently, he and his Department were recognized with an AMA Collections Management award.

"Our Collections department has never undertaken a project of this scale or scope," shares MacLean about the artifact. The Galt more commonly receives objects of a personal nature. In order to conduct this work, the Galt will be seeking the expertise and guidance from members of the regional Japanese Canadian community as well as multi-disciplinary views from teaching faculty at the University.

The Shrine project is two-fold. First, members of the Japanese Canadian community and Buddhist Church will be located in order to learn more about the origin of the population and the church, their historical existence and culture. "No time can be wasted with regards to documenting this artifact," says MacLean. Church founders from the 1940s and those who acquired the Shrine in the 1960s are now in their senior years, and some have already passed away.

"We'd like to know who came, where they came from, why they stayed, how the Church got started and the importance of the Church to the overall Taber Japanese-Canadian population, and more," says MacLean. "We'd also like to secure copies of as much relevant archival material as possible, including moving film and photographs."

The second aspect of the project is the registration and cataloguing. All parts must be identified, their symbolism and use interpreted, and Japanese characters translated. The Shrine must be labeled, conserved, cleaned and prepped for exhibit. An appraiser will be sought out to ensure that it is properly appraised.

The Galt is privileged to have been asked to be a steward of the Taber Shrine. The Shrine compliments the Galt's existing Japanese Canadian collection which is of national significance. It totals over 1000 objects ranging from materials referenced in Joy Kogawa's acclaimed book *Obasan* to artifacts associated with the area's Japanese pioneers. Based on the strength of the collection, the Galt was able to develop the 2002 temporary exhibit *Nikkei Tapestry* highlighting the story of the Japanese in southern Alberta. This exhibit is the basis of a traveling exhibit, *Nikkei Journey*, currently under development at the Galt.

Following restoration, the Shrine will be made available to the public in the Galt's permanent gallery. This will further visitor appreciation of Japanese Canadian culture and the region's rich human diversity, and enhance the Museum's reputation as a topical research, study and educational centre. People conducting research on Japanese Canadians in western Canada already look to the Galt as a centre of knowledge.

Japanese pioneers settled in the Lethbridge area as early as 1901. During World War Two, a second, larger wave of Japanese Canadians arrived in southern Alberta after the Federal Government uprooted them from BC's West Coast. Thousands of "evacuated" persons were relocated to the Lethbridge area where they were sent to work on sugar beet farms near towns such as Taber. After the war, a great many of the evacuees remained in southern Alberta.

As a result, the area developed a national reputation for Buddhism and Buddhist Temples and Churches. In recent decades, however, Buddhist Church attendance has declined, resulting in the closure and sale of regional Temples such as the Church in Taber.

For more information please call Collections Technician **Kevin MacLean** at 403.320-4064 or send an email to info@galtmuseum.com. Information on Galt Museum & Archives activities is available at www.galtmuseum.com.

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The Galt Museum is located at the west end of 5 Avenue South, off Scenic Drive, Lethbridge, Alberta
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