

# Institute of Texan Cultures

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## INSTITUTE OF TEXAN CULTURES SHARES IN FAMILY'S HOLIDAY TRADITION

### *Czech family's 1890s nativity scenes on display*

SAN ANTONIO – In the late 1890s and early 1900s, Ferdinand Pribyl, a Czech Moravian, painted a series of nativities of immense scale, brilliant color and painstaking detail. Through four generations, Pribyl's nativities have been passed to family members and close friends. This holiday season, Pribyl's descendents have chosen to share their family tradition with the Institute of Texan Cultures, which will display two complete Pribyl nativities, Nov. 21 – Jan. 3.

Ferdinand Pribyl's nativities stretch between 8 and 18 feet long. They were originally measured to fill entire walls in family members' homes. The Pribyl nativities use cardboard cutout figures, placed in a baseboard, to add a sense of depth to the panorama.

Pribyl built the nativities from cardboard scavenged from oatmeal boxes, post cards and shirt boxes. The figures stand between four and six inches in height and are painted in meticulous detail. The backgrounds draw on Pribyl's memories of Austria. Vibrant colors bring life to lush green hills, stone buildings, earthy farmhouses and wooden sheds. Central to each nativity scene is the Bethlehem stable, with Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus.

Presumably, there were seven Pribyl nativities, painted between the 1890s and early 1900s, each slightly different. Over the years, they have been displayed at various museums, libraries, churches and private residences in South Texas.

Ferdinand Pribyl and his family immigrated from his native Moravia in the 1880s and settled in Fayetteville, Texas. They moved to La Grange and then Hallettsville, before joining Ferdinand's brother, Jan, in Victoria. In his late sixties or early seventies, with no prior artistic training, Pribyl began work on the nativity scenes.

Bette Stockbauer of Victoria, whose family owns one of the Pribyl nativities, is a descendent of Pribyl's adopted son, Albert Stockbauer. She has had some success in locating other Pribyl nativities around Texas. In addition to the Stockbauer family's nativity, the institute will display a complete Pribyl belonging to the Staha family of Hallettsville; two partial Pribyl sets and a two-dimensional nativity painting, all belonging to other Pribyl descendents.

The Institute of Texan Cultures is located on the UTSA HemisFair Park Campus, 801 E. Durango Blvd., a short distance from the Alamo and the River Walk. Regular hours are 10 a.m. – 5 p.m., Monday through Saturday; noon to 5 p.m. Sunday. Admission is \$8 for adults (12-64); \$7 for seniors (65+); \$6 for children (3-11); free with membership, UTSA or Alamo Colleges identification. For additional information, call (210) 458-2300 or visit [TexanCultures.com](http://TexanCultures.com).

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The Institute of Texan Cultures is an agency of the Vice President for Community Services at The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA). The mission of the institute is to engage lifelong learners in the understanding and celebration of Texas cultural heritage. Located on the UTSA HemisFair Park Campus in downtown San Antonio, the 182,000-square-foot complex features 65,000 square feet of interactive exhibits and displays that tell the stories of Texans. The institute develops quality, accessible resources for educators and lifelong learners on topics of cultural heritage and strives to develop a rich and vibrant culture in the arts and humanities that will expand the community's awareness and appreciation of Texas through an engaging series of exhibits, programs, and special events. Resources for multiple audiences are available at the institute's Web site, [TexanCultures.com](http://TexanCultures.com).