

“A man cannot live off his community; he must live with it.” –Amon Giles Carter

“You can’t keep taking presents off the tree unless you put some on.”
–Amon Giles Carter

“I was born in Crafton, Texas. As a boy I sold chicken sandwiches at the railroad station platform at Bowie [Texas]. I waited tables at a hotel, sold soda-pop at the ball games and races on Saturdays, sold newspapers, worked for a doctor for two years taking care of his horse and buggy, sweeping out his office, and, in addition, milked a cow — all for my board to enable me to go to school. I am not ashamed of my early efforts to earn a living.” –Amon Giles Carter

“I wish them, and all the world, to know that my father was a tailor, and that I am ‘a showman’ by profession, and all the gilding shall make nothing else of me. When a man is ashamed of his origin, or gets above his business, he is a poor devil, who merits the detestation of all who know him. The idea that a shoemaker or a tinker cannot be a gentleman, is simply ridiculous.” –Marked passage from Amon Carter’s copy of *The Life of P. T. Barnum*

“Some say, ‘They cannot afford to advertise;’ they mistake – they cannot afford to not advertise. In this country, where everybody reads the newspaper, the man must have a thick skull who does not see that these are the cheapest and best medium through which he can speak to the public.” –Marked passage from Amon Carter’s copy of *The Life of P. T. Barnum*

“They are coming into Chicago by plane, Fords, buckboards, and burros. The Texas delegation arrived by burros headed by that fearless old statesman Amon G. Carter, the genial dirt farmer of Shady Oaks [sic] Post Office, Texas. Amon is national committeeman, delegate, alternate, steering wheel, banker, receiver and wet nurse for the Texas delegation.” –Will Rogers at the 1932 Democratic National Convention

1879

Born on December 11 in a one-room log cabin in Crafton, Wise County, Texas, the son of William Henry (1854–1915) and Josephine Ream Carter (1859–1892).

1893

Carter's family moves to Bowie, Texas, where the young Carter washes dishes and waits on tables at the Jarrott Hotel; works for the Chicken and Bread Boys serving sandwiches to railroad passengers.

1900

Begins work as a traveling salesman for the American Copying Company, a Chicago-based firm that specializes in oil-colored portrait photographs.

1901

Becomes national sales manager for the American Copying Company; works in their San Francisco office. Develops a sales philosophy for the traveling salespeople based on "strong talk": "It is not what you say to a man that impresses him, but it is the way you say it. . . . Never lose your nerve, get discouraged or homesick—and never give up the ship."

1902

Marries Zetta Thomas Carter on November 6 in Montague City, Texas.

1904

Begins work for Barnhart & Swasey, an advertising firm in San Francisco.

1905

Turns down a number of lucrative job offers to move to Fort Worth, where he establishes a one-man business that he names the Texas Advertising and Manufacturing Company.

1906

Serves as advertising manager for the *Fort Worth Star*, a new newspaper to rival the larger *Fort Worth Telegram*; first issue is published on February 1. Starts out as advertising manager at \$35 per week; is promoted to business manager a short time later and cuts his own salary to \$20 per week. Sells peaches from his small farm to local grocers to support the operations of the struggling newspaper.

1908

Convinces an investor to buy the rival *Fort Worth Telegram*. The newspapers are combined to create the *Star-Telegram*, with Carter as business and advertising manager. Keeps a motto over his desk: "Most anybody can get results when kindly encouraged, but give me the man that can get there in spite of hell."

Over the next few years, Carter begins to identify archrival Dallas as part of “East Texas” and Fort Worth as the place “Where the West Begins.” Under his direction, the newspaper staff fans out over some ninety Texas counties to consolidate Fort Worth and the *Star-Telegram* as the region’s true representatives.

1911

Carter is instrumental in bringing the first airplane to Fort Worth; becomes the youngest individual ever to serve as president of the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce.

1913

Becomes vice president and general manager of the *Star-Telegram*. R. M. Davis, Fort Worth’s chief of police, writes a tongue-in-cheek letter about Carter to the chief of police in Baltimore, Maryland, that states in part: “I deem it my duty to warn you against this man. He is one of the ring leaders of our most dangerous element in Fort Worth, the newspaper fraternity. He frequently visits other cities in various parts of the country and has been known to abduct prominent citizens of these cities, bringing them to Fort Worth and causing them to remain permanently with us, by persuading them that we have the best place in the country for investment.”

1918

About this time, Carter meets humorist Will Rogers during a vaudeville show; the two men begin a lifelong friendship. Divorces first wife, Zetta Thomas Carter, and marries Nenetta Wiess Burton on April 17.

1919

A son, Amon Gary Carter Jr., is born on December 23.

1920

Elected president of the Fort Worth Club, an organization founded in 1885. Begins the process of raising funds in order to build a twelve-story, \$2 million structure for the club’s new location.

1922

Establishes radio station WBAP, the first in Fort Worth.

1923

Becomes president and publisher of the *Star-Telegram*, and on October 19 daughter Ruth Carter Stevenson is born. The newspaper begins lobbying for a “great state college on the plains,” and Texas Technical College in Lubbock is established with Carter as its first board chairman.

1924

After battling with the rival *Fort Worth Record* for the past two years, Carter buys the newspaper from William Randolph Hearst and merges it with the *Star-Telegram*. Honored by the Exchange Club as Fort Worth's most valuable citizen, he is the first to have his name inscribed in the club's "Book of Golden Deeds." Travels to London, where he presents a 5X beaver Stetson hat to the Prince of Wales on behalf of the Governor of Texas and "five million happy people."

1925

Purchases 780 acres of land along the shores of Lake Worth from the heirs of George Reynolds, a pioneer rancher. Builds a house and names the property Shady Oak; eventually installs other buildings and historical artifacts on the property to recall his early years. Over the next thirty years, Shady Oak is visited by some of the world's richest and most famous people, including Charles Lindbergh and Dwight D. Eisenhower. Carter becomes famous for presenting his visitors with short-brim Stetsons that he dubs the "Shady Oak Hat." If the visitor already has a hat, Carter performs a trade; in this way, he builds a collection of hats for himself.

1927

Purchases the Parker family cabin, where in 1860 Cynthia Ann Parker (mother of the famous Comanche chief, Quanah Parker) lived after being recaptured by American soldiers after twenty-four years with the Comanche Indians. Carter has the cabin moved and reassembled on his property at Shady Oak.

1928

Elected a director of the Aviation Corporation, later a component of American Airlines.

1929

In May, Reg L. Robbins and James Kelly set a new world endurance flight record—over 172 hours—when they land their plane named "Fort Worth" at the Fort Worth Municipal Airport. The city gives a dinner in their honor, with Carter as toastmaster.

1930

As one of Texas Technical College's founders and first board chairman, Carter is awarded the college's first honorary degree. Begins serving on the executive committee of the Trinity River Canal Association, an organization dedicated to making the Trinity River navigable to connect Fort Worth with the Gulf of Mexico. His friend Will Rogers suggests that it would be cheaper to pave the river.

As the Depression worsens, there is a run on the First National Bank of Fort Worth on February 18. Carter arrives and talks to the frightened depositors for a few hours while the bank is held open. He has two bands brought in and leads in the singing,

then sends out for sandwiches and coffee. He encourages the depositors to leave their money where it is, and the next morning the bank has more deposits than prior to the run.

1931

Will Rogers raises more than \$225,000 for the American Red Cross; raises \$18,500 of it in Fort Worth at a benefit hosted by Carter. Carter presents Rogers with a pair of locally made Justin boots, a gift from “Fort Worth, where the West begins.”

1932

Travels as the only passenger on a harrowing flight from Texas to New York, piloted by the well-known speed pilot Frank Hawks. Even though the plane encounters severe weather conditions and mechanical problems, Carter echoes his friend Will Rogers in extolling the virtues and promises of air travel. Serves as a leader of the John Nance Garner for President campaign; secures a special train, takes along the Old Gray Mare Band from Brownwood, and steals the show at the Democratic Convention in Chicago. Garner, later Vice President under Franklin Roosevelt, is credited with saying of Carter: “That man wants the whole government of the United States to run for the exclusive benefit of Fort Worth, and, if possible, to the detriment of Dallas.”

1933

In his newspaper column on January 29, Will Rogers calls Carter “by far Texas’ most public spirited man” and predicts he will be tapped for the cabinet of the newly elected President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Says Rogers: “He is mighty well-liked by the Democrats and 50 percent of the Republicans. Well, I will say a dozen anyway.”

1934

American Airlines is created out of a number of smaller firms. Carter’s close friend Cyrus Rowlett “C. R.” Smith (1899–1990) becomes president. After fierce lobbying efforts, Carter succeeds in having the American Airlines Air Transportation offices moved from Dallas to Fort Worth. “Amon Cartered Again,” headlines one of the Dallas newspapers.

In August/September, Carter makes the first flight of the “Brazilian Clipper” to South America. In Rio de Janeiro, he changes planes and flies over the Andes. A Dallas newspaper reports: “Amon Carter is returning by airplane from South America. Annexation of that continent to Fort Worth has not been announced yet, however.”

At the beginning of the Depression, the salaries of *Star-Telegram* employees had been cut 10 percent; now they are restored, and by 1937 the employees would enjoy another increase of 5 percent. Carter later stated that no employee was let go during the Depression.

1935

Will Rogers makes the first reservation for the “Pan American Clipper” flight and has Carter’s name added to the passenger list as well. Before he can make the flight, Rogers is killed in a plane crash in Point Barrow, Alaska. At the request of Mrs. Rogers, Carter flies to Seattle to make the arrangements to have the body flown to California for burial. Carter then becomes vice chairman of the Will Rogers Memorial Commission, a national organization made up of many individuals.

Carter strikes his first oil in the Mattix Pool in New Mexico. He claims afterward that he was involved in drilling ninety dry holes before he struck his first oil.

Through his friendship with Will Rogers, Carter had learned about the paintings of Frederic Remington (1861–1909) and Charles M. Russell (1864–1926). He takes out a loan to buy Remington’s oil painting *His First Lesson*; for the rest of his life, the painting occupies a special place in his office. He also purchases an important group of nine Russell watercolors from the Niedringhaus family in Saint Louis, some of whose members were boyhood friends of the artist. He also purchases the Russell watercolor *Indian Fight* from Gump’s Department Store in San Francisco.

1936

The Texas Centennial Exposition is held in Dallas. Not to be outdone, Carter arranges the “Fort Worth Frontier Centennial,” hiring entertainment entrepreneur Billy Rose at \$1000 per day for 100 days to produce an extravaganza. The highlight is Casa Mañana, a blue-and-white amphitheater that seats 3500 people in a cafe/theater setting that features the world’s biggest revolving stage over which floats a “mellow Texas moon” designed by Rose. The program is billed as a “cavalcade of world’s fairs”; Sallie Rand and Ann Pennington dance, while Everett Marshall sings songs especially written for Fort Worth. Bandleader Paul Whiteman stands on a platform in the middle of the space waving an illuminated baton, while full-size bands located in shells at opposite ends of the space play “The Eyes of Texas” to an enthralled crowd. One reviewer proclaims: “The Grand Canyon and Casa Mañana are the only two things that come up to the claims of their press agents.”

Carter becomes president of the Texas Big Bend Park Association, an organization formed to have the region established as a national park.

In October Carter makes the inaugural “Pan American Clipper” flight (without his late friend, Will Rogers) to Midway Atoll; Wake Island; Guam; Manila, Philippines; Macao; and Kowloon, Hong Kong.

1937

Carter is honored at the dedication of Fort Worth International Airport (later Midway Airport). He helps organize the “Fort Worth Frontier Fiesta,” another celebration of the Texas Centennial. He again strikes oil, this time in the famed Wasson Pool in Gaines and Yoakum counties. He purchases a group of seven

Russell paintings and watercolors from the descendants of John A. Sleicher, chief editor of *Leslie's Weekly*. He also purchases the Russell watercolors *The Posse* from Newhouse Galleries and *Indian Fight* from the David B. Findlay Gallery.

1938

Texas Christian University is undefeated in football; Carter, a major TCU booster, makes up to forty long-distance calls a day in an unsuccessful effort to get the team chosen for the Rose Bowl. TCU instead defeats Carnegie Tech in the Sugar Bowl. The TCU quarterback, Davey O'Brien, wins the Heisman Trophy and several other awards. Carter flies O'Brien and some TCU fans to New York City, where he drives the group in a stagecoach with six white horses down Wall Street to City Hall.

Purchases Remington's *Cavalryman of the Line, Mexico*. He also purchases a small group of Remington works that turn out to be spurious. He learns an important lesson from this, and henceforth requires personal guarantees in writing from every source from whom he buys a work of art.

1939

Honored by the Fort Worth Club on his thirty-fifth year as its president. Signs a letter of agreement with the Texas sculptor Electra Waggoner Biggs to create four small bronzes depicting his late friend, Will Rogers, on his horse Soapsuds. He also discusses a contract for a life-size version of the statue to be placed in front of Will Rogers Coliseum at a later date.

Purchases the Russell watercolor *Bronco Buster* from Newhouse Galleries.

1940

Aids in successful efforts to get a Consolidated Vultee Aircraft Corporation (later Convair) plant located in Fort Worth. In September, Carter and Fort Worth host the world premiere of the movie "The Westerner," starring Gary Cooper. The celebration includes a parade and parties at Shady Oak.

1941

On May 10 a group of Carter's friends present him with a 38-foot Chris-Craft luxury cabin cruiser appropriately named the "West Texan." Divorces his second wife, Nenetta Burton Carter.

Carter's close friend C. R. Smith purchases a large group of Russell artworks from the estate of Nancy C. Russell (1878-1940), the artist's widow.

1942

Travels to the British Isles as a war correspondent.

1944

On June 6 presents deeds for 800,000 acres for Big Bend National Park to President Roosevelt. The park is established by Congress.

1945

Carter establishes the Amon G. Carter Foundation on June 23. A non-profit corporation, the foundation is established to further charitable, religious, and educational undertakings through the use of funds and properties given by Amon G. Carter and his former wife, Nenetta Burton Carter.

Purchases Remington's masterwork in oil, *A Dash for the Timber*, for \$30,000 from the David B. Findlay Galleries; the painting had come from the collection of Washington University in Saint Louis. Purchases the Remington bronzes *The Mountain Man* and *The Savage* from C. R. Smith.

1946

Elected first chairman of the board of the Southwestern Exposition and Livestock Show, having been vice president of the organization for thirty years.

Purchases the Nancy C. Russell estate collection of Charles M. Russell bronzes from C. R. Smith, telling him that he is in the process of "working out a collection for a Remington and Russell museum." Also purchases the Remington bronze *The Cheyenne* and two smaller Russell oils from Smith. Purchases two major Remington oils, *Old Stagecoach of the Plains* and *Through the Smoke Sprang the Daring Soldier*, along with the Russell masterpiece *The Medicine Man*, from the Graham Galleries in New York. However, negotiations for the latter painting come close to faltering when Carter complains that the "hazy" and "smoky" colors of the painting "are not distinctive enough."

Works with Newhouse Galleries in New York to purchase the famed Mint Saloon collection of Russell's art, but nothing comes of it.

1947

Carter and his former wife, Nenetta, sell their Wasson oil holdings to the Shell Oil Company for \$16.5 million—the largest oil deal in Texas to that time; part of these funds (\$8.5 million) begin the active operation of the Amon G. Carter Foundation. On September 16 marries his third wife, Minnie Meacham Smith.

Gives the city of Fort Worth a life-size bronze equestrian statue of Will Rogers on his horse Soapsuds, sculpted by Texas artist Electra Waggoner Biggs. The statue is placed in front of the Will Rogers Coliseum and unveiled on November 4 at a ceremony by Carter's friend, General Dwight D. Eisenhower. Miss Margaret Truman, daughter of President Harry S. Truman, attends the ceremony and sings Will Rogers' favorite song, "Home on the Range."

Purchases the Remington bronzes *The Scalp*, *The Wicked Pony*, *The Rattlesnake*, and *The Outlaw* from Graham Galleries; purchases the Russell watercolors *Approach of the White Men*, *Indian Signaling*, and *Roping a Wolf* from the David B. Findlay Galleries; purchases the early Russell oil *Wild Meat for Wild Men* from Newhouse Galleries; purchases the well-known Russell oil *In Without Knocking* from his good friend, Fort Worth oilman Sid W. Richardson.

1948

Purchases the major Russell oil, *Buffalo Hunt #39*, along with the oil *Following the Buffalo Run* and the important watercolor *Squaws with Travois* from Will Rogers Jr. and James B. Rogers, sons of the late Will Rogers. Of the *Buffalo Hunt* painting, James Rogers writes: "This painting has long been considered the finest buffalo hunt that Charlie Russell ever painted, and was my father's favorite painting. Mr. Russell personally selected this painting for my father as being one of his very finest works." Carter writes another collector on March 20: "Incidentally, Will Rogers and I were friends for many years. In fact, it was through Will that I became interested in Russell pictures, since which time I have accumulated a very interesting collection."

Purchases the Remington bronze *Coming Through the Rye* from Graham Galleries; purchases the important early Russell oil *The Silk Robe*, his masterwork *When Loops and Swift Horses are Surer than Lead*, and the autobiographical watercolor, *A Doubtful Guest*, from the David B. Findlay Galleries.

1949

The *Lucky Lady II*, a B-50 Superfortress bomber, takes off from Carswell Air Force Base for the first nonstop flight around the world. On its return, Carter and Fort Worth host ceremonies commemorating the event.

Fort Worth celebrates its 100th birthday. On October 30 the *Star-Telegram* publishes its centennial edition, a 480-page newspaper weighing more than seven pounds. Carter sells more than 220 full-page ads to friends and associates for this edition.

Carter writes in a letter dated January 14: "It is my intention to establish a Will Rogers-Charlie Russell museum at a later date in Fort Worth on our Centennial grounds, where the City of Fort Worth has built a beautiful coliseum."

Purchases the large Remington oil *The Grass Fire* and the important Russell oil *Smoke of a .45* from the David B. Findlay Galleries; purchases the Remington watercolor *Her Calf* from the Graham Galleries.

1950

On January 13, Carter is awarded the U.S. Air Force's Exceptional Service Award for distinguished patriotic service in a ceremony at the Pentagon. He gives land for YMCA's Camp Carter; establishes scholarships at Texas Christian University, Texas

Tech, and Texas Women's College. In June, the Fort Worth City Council names the Greater Fort Worth International Airport the Amon Carter Field in honor of Carter's efforts in the realm of aviation.

Writes A. O. Jones, the City Manager of Fort Worth, on October 3: "It is my purpose to erect and equip a museum and present it to the city of Fort Worth. There will be approximately 150 to 200 Charles M. Russell and Frederic Remington paintings, watercolors, and bronzes. Those now on hand and others should make it one of the finest collections of its kind to be found anywhere. The proposed museum of western art should be located in the same vicinity as the new art and children's museums and all three of the same architectural designs. The location I have in mind would be the block facing south on Lancaster, north on Camp Bowie Boulevard and bound on the west by the old Camp Bowie lumber yard, etc." Carter requests that the site be "definitely designated for this purpose." Within ten days, the City Council approves Carter's request.

Purchases the Joseph McCarrell collection of Remington-related materials from the Argonaut Bookshop in San Francisco. Purchases the very early Russell oil, *Lost in a Snowstorm—We are Friends*, the 1904 painting *The Broken Rope*, and an important group of five illustrated letters from the artist to Guy Weadick, all from the David B. Findlay Galleries. Purchases Remington's *Cavalrymen's Breakfast on the Plains* and eight other works by the artist from Newhouse Galleries.

Carter learns that Montana has failed to raise the money necessary to keep the Mint Saloon collection of Russell's art in the State. Both Carter and Thomas Gilcrease of Tulsa are interested buyers.

1951

Gives seventy-two acres of land in Arlington Heights for the construction of the Lena Pope Home; begins buying grand champion steers at the annual Southwestern Exposition and Livestock Show, donating the proceeds from their sale to the home. The football stadium at Texas Christian University is named in his honor.

Purchases the major Russell oil, *A Tight Dally and a Loose Latigo*—originally part of the estate of the artist's widow, Nancy C. Russell—from Homer E. Britzman of Pasadena, California. Purchases Remington's *Ridden Down* from the David B. Findlay Galleries and the major oil of *The Cowboy*—originally in the collection of the artist's boyhood friend, John Howard—from Graham Galleries.

1952

Assists in securing a General Motors plant for the city of Arlington.

On March 1 agrees to purchase the Mint Saloon collection of Russell art through the Knoedler Galleries in New York. This highly important collection contains nine paintings, including *Buffalo Hunt #26*, *Cowboy Camp During the Roundup*, *For*

Supremacy, The Hold Up, and The Price of His Hide; twenty-five watercolors and drawings; nine illustrated letters; and fourteen original painted wax and plaster models. A short time later, Carter is dissuaded by C. R. Smith from making an offer for the equally significant MacKay collection, then for sale in Montana.

Purchases Remington's 1895 painting *The Fall of the Cowboy* from the Grand Central Galleries in New York; purchases the Remington oils *Indian Trapper* and *Reconnaissance*, and a fine copy of the bronze *The Bronco Buster*—inscribed to the Italian tenor Enrico Caruso—from the David B. Findlay Galleries. Purchases the Remington bronzes *The Scalp* and *The Trooper of the Plains* from Graham Galleries; purchases the Russell painting *When Horseflesh Comes High* from Newhouse Galleries.

1953

Carter suffers three heart attacks in February and March. Becomes president and director of the Eisenhower Birthplace Foundation, Inc., established to acquire and restore the Dwight D. Eisenhower birthplace in Denison, Texas.

Purchases Remington's painting *The Smoke Signal* from the David B. Findlay Galleries; purchases the late Remington oil *The Long Horn Cattle Sign* and the bronzes of *The Wicked Pony* and *The Wounded Bunkie* from Knoedler Galleries; purchases the first cast of the Remington bronze, *The Old Dragoons of 1850*, from Graham Galleries.

1954

Purchases the Russell masterwork *Wild Horse Hunters*—originally in the collection of Richard Mellon, President of Gulf Oil and the brother of Paul Mellon—from the David B. Findlay Galleries.

1955

Dies at his home in Fort Worth, June 23. His will, which provides for the establishment of a public museum devoted to American art, says in part: "I desire and direct that this museum be operated as a nonprofit artistic enterprise for the benefit of the public and to aid in the promotion of cultural spirit in the city of Fort Worth and vicinity, to stimulate the artistic imagination among young people residing there."

1958

Philip Johnson (1906–2005) is engaged by the Amon G. Carter Foundation to design the new museum building on the site designated eight years earlier. He writes a foundation board member on December 1: "I am aiming for a timeless classicism and I feel you will like the approach."

1959

The designated land for the new museum is deeded to the Amon G. Carter Foundation by the City of Fort Worth; construction on the new building begins, with primary materials consisting of Cordova shellstone from a quarry near Austin; pink and gray granite from Maine; and a dark bronze with an applied matte coating. Johnson conveys the idea that “our building is small and therefore to make a proper showing to the town, the setting must be large”; he advances a design for broad terracing utilizing varied colors of plantings, with a large sunken grassy court as a centerpiece.

1961

The new museum opens to the public on January 21.