



The Old West Revisited

THE PRIVATE
WORLD OF
DOCTOR PHILIP COLE



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The American Scene

The American Scene

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The Old West Revisited

The following article has been compiled from reports made during the writer's recent investigations into the life and activities of the late Dr. Philip G. Cole of Tarrytown, New York, whose collection of western paintings and sculpture now constitutes one of the most important features of the collection of art housed by the Thomas Gilcrease Institute. The article itself deals with Dr. Cole as a collector, and reviews in particular his relationships with some of those artists and writers whose efforts over the last forty years to preserve the records of the past have contributed much to our present knowledge of America's history. Devoted primarily to a presentation of the paintings of a western regional artist and historian, Olaf Seltzer, this issue publishes for the first time some of the best of Seltzer's works from among those included in the Gilcrease collection.

All illustrations featured in this issue of the *American Scene* are reproduced from specific works in the Gilcrease Collection.

The
Old West
Revisited

Written especially for the
American Scene by David C. Hunt,
publications editor and art
curator of the Gilcrease Institute.



Zeeview garage and stables.

During his long career as a collector Thomas Gilcrease accumulated a vast inventory of primary and secondary materials documenting the history of this hemisphere. From about 1910 through the 1950's he traveled in search of works of art, artifacts, and manuscripts relating to this country's earlier development, gradually enlarging the scope of his quest to include nearly the whole range of American achievements and experience.

If a picture or a report told a story about America, he promptly bought it, especially if the story made reference to the settlement of the trans-Mississippi West or to the history and traditions of one or another of the native Indian tribes. Buying single items and sometimes whole collections from other collectors, dealers, or the heirs of artists or other adventurers on the early day frontier, Thomas Gilcrease built a collection of his own which stands today for one of the finest of its kind in the world.

One of the largest of his many acquisitions was a collection of western art and books on frontier history which he purchased from the private estate of Dr. Philip G. Cole of Tarrytown, New York. Representing the lifetime activity of a man who, like Gilcrease, had been primarily interested in the history of the Old West, this remarkable catalog of paintings and other items came to Tulsa in 1947. The affidavit of appraisal made at the time Mr. Gilcrease was negotiating for the purchase of this collection lists all the items which subsequently came to the Gilcrease Institute from Cole's Hudson

River estate. Featured in this inventory are sixty-two pieces of sculpture, including seventeen bronzes by Frederic Remington and twenty-six by Charles M. Russell, and more than 560 paintings of western scenes and subjects—almost half of which are the work of Olaf Seltzer, whom Cole commissioned to paint several related series of pictures pertaining to characters or events in Montana history.

Fourteen paintings by Frank Tenny Johnson, twelve by Remington, and forty-five oils and watercolors by Russell make up the bulk of the remaining works in this collection; sixty-eight Indian portraits and southwestern scenes by Joseph Henry Sharp and a number of paintings by William R. Leigh and Charles Schreyvogel are also included. Many illustrated letters and cards from Russell, Seltzer, Will James, and others also came with the Cole acquisition, together with a large number of books, private papers, folios, and related reports. Forty-eight letters from F. W. Benteen to Theodore Goldin are a significant feature of this latter listing, as are several original Custer documents and other published or unpublished items relating to the frontier wars of the 1870's.

A large and varied listing, to be sure, this collection until now has been almost virtually unknown outside certain museum or western art circles, having passed without benefit of publicity from the privacy of Dr. Cole's estate to the Gilcrease galleries in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Because of this fact, and because of the nature and extent of the Cole Collection itself, the



Interior of the Zeeview library.

Gilcrease Institute considered it important during the past year to try to find out something more about it: where its individual pieces originated, how they were acquired, and something about the character of the man who spent much of his lifetime and a great deal of his personal fortune in acquiring them.

Almost nothing was known of the activities of Philip Cole before his younger daughter Kay, now Mrs. Fred Worden of Los Angeles, California, visited the Gilcrease Museum in the summer of 1966. In October of that year an investigation into the life of Dr. Cole was launched by the writer who met with Mrs. Worden in Billings, Montana, to obtain interviews with a Miss Alice Ralston living in nearby Bozeman. Known as "Aunt" Alice to Kay Worden, Miss Ralston had lived with the Coles for a number of years during a period when Dr. Cole's activities as a collector occupied the greater part of his time.

Background information on a great many of the works in the Cole Collection was obtained from these interviews, and many interesting recollections regarding the businessmen, artists, and writers with whom Cole dealt were thus recorded. Questions of a more reflective nature were also explored at this time, particularly those having to do with what moves a man of wealth and position to become a "collector," what makes the works of certain artists or writers sought after by such men—and what determines the unbelievably high evaluations which are sometimes placed upon the works of these artists.

Both Alice Ralston and Kay Worden emphasized in their respective interviews that Philip Cole had loved Montana, where he was born and spent the early years of his life.

"Dr. Cole loved the West," remarked Miss Ralston, "and collected things about the West, whether it was art or what it was. He loved Montana particularly, and everything about Montana that he could lay his hands on, he bought."

According to his daughter, Dr. Cole graduated from Princeton in 1906 and from there went on to Columbia Medical School. Following his internship in the East he practiced medicine in Helena, Montana, until the United States became involved in the First World War. Returning to New York in 1918 from his service as a reserve medical officer in France, he did not resume his practice in Montana, but at his father's insistence joined him as a partner in his thriving auto parts manufacturing firm in Brooklyn. Upon the death of his father, Philip Cole was elected president of the company and in time became a very wealthy man.

In 1930 he retired from business and purchased an estate on the Hudson River which he named Zeeview. Here he spent the remaining years of his life in building, collecting, and creating what he believed to be a "perfect world" for himself and his children.

"He lived in a world of his own," commented Kay Worden, "always promoting plans for the estate or buying books, paintings, and other things that seemed to remind him of the 'Good Old Days' back in Montana. He always told us that we were 'Montana blood' and reared us to be just 'simple Montana folks.' None of us had ever seen Montana though, and living at Zeeview—which was like living in Buckingham Palace—it was sometimes difficult to believe."

Kay thinks that her father may have regretted his youthful decision to remain in the East and that perhaps this was one of the reasons for his many activities relating to western history and his memories of Montana. She also remarked, however, that whereas her father's collection of western art was one of his favorite enterprises he was not an "investor" in art, as such, and seldom showed his acquisitions publicly:

He didn't show the collection often; but it pleased him enormously. It was his. He bought or he didn't buy, according to whether he liked the particular work up for sale, or he commissioned works that represented to him the world out West he had known as a boy. He didn't seem to care about the possible value of the collection, or think about its future worth or importance.

When anyone asked "Where's Dad?" you could bet that he was out on the grounds somewhere digging a new pond or planting a new tree, moving

a shrub... He bought Zeeview from Whitney and built it up just for the fun of it. Building was his hobby. Maybe more—a creative activity—something he could have a part in bringing about or helping to take shape.

His collection was the same sort of thing. When he commissioned Seltzer to do that first Montana series I think he was happy about it because in that way he could participate in a genuine, original effort, recreating scenes and characters in the history of the Old West he loved.

None of us thought about the collection as being valuable—that is, in terms of money...

"The children never heard the word 'money' used," affirmed Miss Ralston. "Nor did anyone in the house think of Dr. Cole as an important collector, particularly. But he knew each and every painting and personally selected them."

"They were his," reiterated Kay—"part of his Private World".

Caught in a Stampede, a detail of which is indicated below, is one of the more famous bronzes by Frederic Remington which came to Tulsa as part of the Cole purchase in 1947.



Philip Cole grew up during the latter decades of the nineteenth century, at a time when the United States' final phase of its westward continental expansion was drawing to a close. A great many changes had already come about out West in those days. The occupations of the trader, trapper, and Indian fighter had given way to those of the ranger, the cattleman, and the lawman. Railroad and mining industries dominated the economic life of the western plains and mountain states before the turn of the century and the wild, free life of the mountain man and the buffalo hunter had gone forever.

This was a period of some uncertainty and not a little self-consciousness on the part of many Americans and a considerable number of artists and writers, attracted by what seemed to them to be the more stable culture of the Old World, went to Europe to study and work. Some went abroad for other reasons also, or ventured westward into the disappearing wilderness in pursuit of the Indian and the frontiersman: those who were searching for new subjects or experiences to paint or write about, or who hoped perhaps to escape the turbulence that typified American society during the long years of reconstruction and national readjustment that followed the end of the Civil War.

Then, as now, accounts of western frontier life enjoyed a wide readership among the general public. American journalists in particular became increasingly aware of the unique features of life as it was lived in the western states and territories, and throughout the 1880's and 90's free-lance writers, reporters, photographers, and illustrators continued to travel by rail and stagecoach to Kansas, Colorado, Wyoming, and Montana to observe activities in the already fabulous American West.

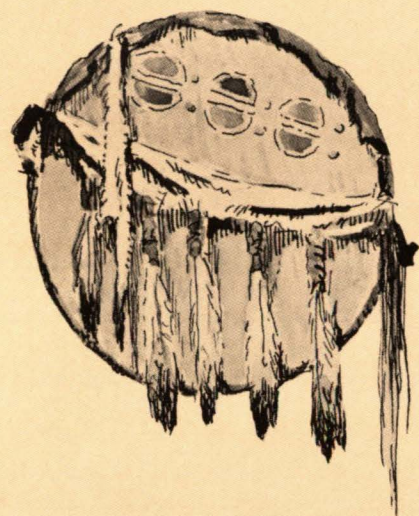
Frederic Remington found what he was looking for out West in the 1880's. Successful painter, magazine illustrator, and sometimes war correspondent—Remington captured some of the last glimpses of the action-packed life of the U.S. cavalry on the western plains before it passed into the annals of American military history.

Charlie Russell also portrayed the fast-fading romance of those times. During his lifetime, even as the automobile, the airplane, and the technological advances that followed in the wake of World War I changed forever the world he knew, Russell held fast to his memories of the old days on the open range; and in his steps followed other cowboy artists and latter day western historians, men such as Edward Borein, Will James, William R. Leigh, and Russell's life-long friend, Olaf Seltzer.

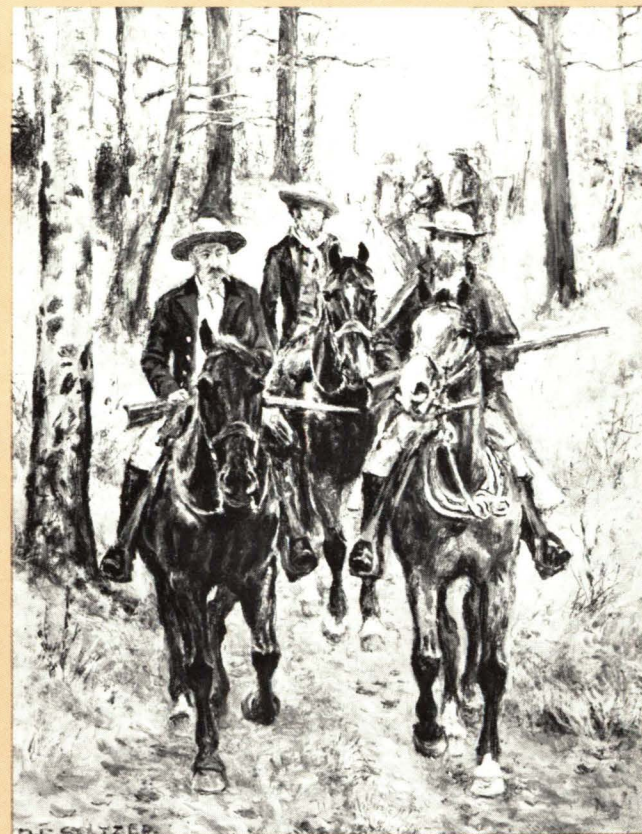
Few Americans at this time gave much thought to native cultural achievements, much less to their own more recent past. Business was now the chief challenge for aggressive Americans and a number of men throughout the United States became fantastically wealthy. Demonstrating their good fortune in all manner of extravagant ways, some built palatial town houses and suburban mansions where they entertained on a scale rivaling the magnificence of the courts of Europe. As had monarchs and merchant princes in earlier centuries, many of these same men began to acquire grandiose collections of works of art or other objects indicative of lofty social attainment.

Europe was considered the place to buy works of art at this time and rich Americans traveled widely in England, France, and Italy in search of paintings, statuary, and other treasures. Art clearing houses were soon operating all over the Continent and in several eastern U.S. cities, and dealers in cultural antiques realized respectable fortunes catering to the whims of restless and acquisitive American millionaires. William R. Leigh recalls, however, in his autobiographical account of life as a struggling young artist in New York, that at the time of his return to the States from his studies abroad in 1905 "There was only one art dealer in all of New York who handled pictures painted by American artists"

A surprising number of documents pertaining to the early history of settlement in this hemisphere remained in European archives at this point, ignored by the majority of Americans who were looking



Vigilante Ways (right) is one of the miniature oils by Olaf Seltzer originally included in Philip Cole's vast inventory of western art. Russell's *Buffalo Hunt* (below), the first painting acquired by Dr. Cole, was a wedding present from his father.



for more sensational items to take back home to Boston, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh. There were some, however, who realized the significance of the American documents they came across in their travels: men such as A. S. W. Rosenbach, who became in his day the most successful dealer in rare books and manuscripts in the United States.

As a result of his efforts many rare folio editions of the works of early American naturalists and illustrators found their way back to their respective points of origin, and numerous manuscript journals and reports relating to discovery and exploration in the New World were retrieved from forgotten corners of England and Spain. Accounts of conquest or archaeological investigation in Central and South America were delivered into the hands of collectors whose interests were of a more scholarly bent; and upon the private occupations of such men some of the most important museum collections in the United States were thus founded.

Thomas Gilcrease was among the less flamboyant collectors with whom Rosenbach dealt over the years. Prospering on the proceeds from his mineral-rich Oklahoma Indian lands, Mr. Gilcrease was a man interested in his country's rich heritage. Others too were developing similar interests in materials documenting American life, and the painters who were active during this period found an increasing market for scenes of early Western action and pageantry. Thus the works of artists such as Remington, Russell, and Schreyvogel were soon scattered far and wide, ending up in private collections in such distant points as New York, Tulsa, Denver, and Los Angeles where there were men of sufficient wealth and the particular interests to accumulate them.

According to Alice Ralston, Philip Cole's collection of western art was begun in 1919, or about the time of his marriage. Russell's large canvas entitled *Buffalo Hunt*, as she recalls, was the first piece to be acquired.

"All the dealers in New York soon discovered that Dr. Cole was collecting," she remarked. "He inspected all his purchases, however, whether books or paintings. He was often called away to look at Russells or Remingtons, but he did not always buy them."

When asked for her opinion about what made the works of certain western artists so popular with Cole and a few other collectors at this time, Miss Ralston was uncertain.

"At the time Dr. Cole was collecting," she replied, "critics in New York said that Russell's pictures were just 'illustrations'. Almost all the western artists except for Leigh or Schreyvogel were held in small regard by the art world at this time. But Dr. Cole said he didn't care: he 'liked 'em'."

Concerning the prices Cole paid for many of his acquisitions, Miss Ralston had this to say:

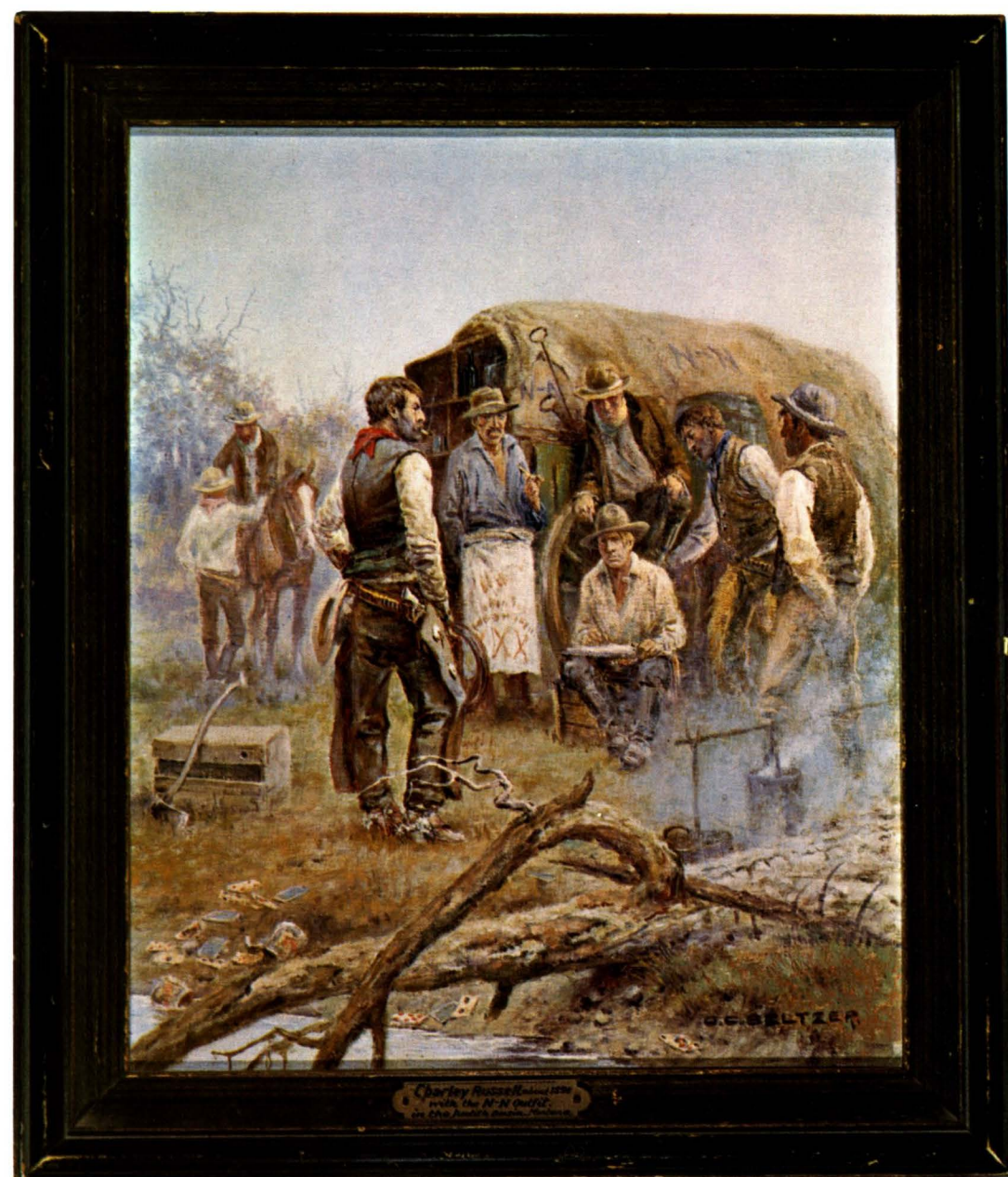
Nancy Russell first put the prices up on Russell's pictures. On something of a take-em-or-leave-em basis. Will Rogers, the Duke of Windsor, and some others besides Dr. Cole bought some from her.

The Russells had a studio in Pasadena briefly. But Russell didn't like California. He didn't like anyplace away from Montana very much. Nancy was very ambitious for him, but he wouldn't study art—just wasn't interested in it. Only his own pictures, his own subjects. He never cared apparently what anybody paid him.

During subsequent conversations with Miss Ralston she referred to several other artists represented in Dr. Cole's collection. She remembered Olaf Seltzer in particular, describing him with much apparent interest.

"Seltzer first came to Dr. Cole's attention as a friend of Charlie Russell's," she recalls. "I believe he was doing work for several people in New York at that time repairing Russell's pictures, some of which were found to be in very poor condition even though quite recently painted."





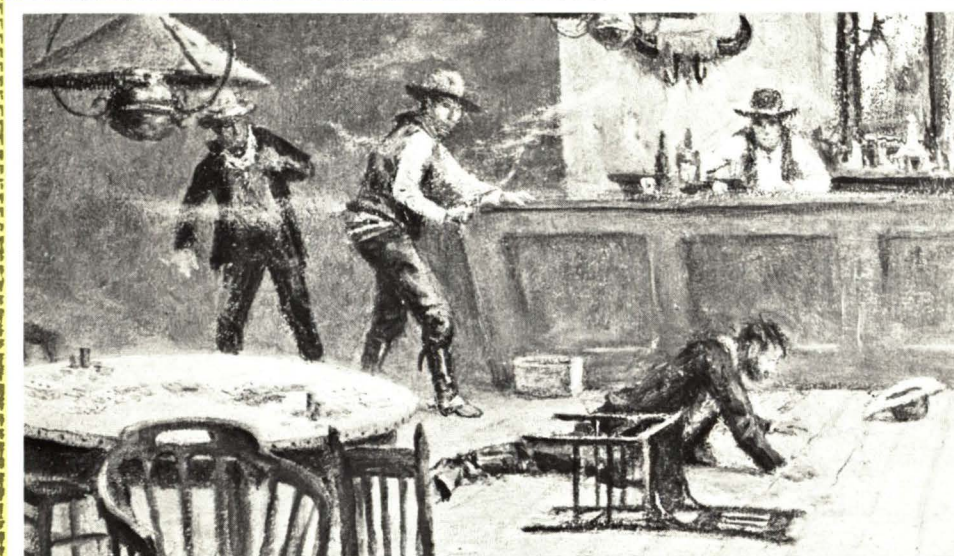
Seltzer had been a machinist for the Great Northern Railroad in Great Falls, Montana, before coming to New York, and as a youth had done a lot of drawing and sketching in his spare time. Originally from Denmark, he had come to American in 1892 at the age of about fifteen. Introduced to Charlie Russell on Russell's birthday in 1897, Seltzer thereafter often visited him at his studio in Great Falls where he developed a great regard for the older artist's style. Russell himself seems to have taken to the young immigrant who demonstrated such natural ability as a draftsman, and according to friends in Montana the two men took frequent field trips together in those days,

traveling up and down the Missouri River and across the sand hills east of Great Falls to sketch and paint.

In a newspaper interview published shortly before his death in 1957, Seltzer mentioned that he did not attempt painting in oil or watercolor until after he met Russell. "Charlie was an interesting fellow," he is quoted as having said at that time. "There was always something fascinating about him. We used to have a lot of fun together . . .

"Those were the good old days," he adds, echoing a sentiment voiced frequently by those who remembered the Old West before the turn of the century.

Seltzer and Russell remained close friends until



Reproduced on these pages are the following works by Olaf Seltzer:

Charlie Russell with the N N Outfit, oil, (opposite page)

Twin Cottonwoods Hanging, oil, (top)

Kid Curry Killing Pike Landusky, oil, (center)

The First Furrow, oil, (bottom)

The three latter paintings were commissioned by Cole as part of his "Montana in Miniature" project in the early 1930's.

Russell's death late in 1926, although Russell was away from Great Falls for much of the time after 1921. By this time Seltzer's work was beginning to attract attention and sometime in 1925 or '26 he decided to retire from his railroad job to devote his full time to painting. Because of the increasing demand for Russell's type of picture, Seltzer too resolved to concentrate on Western scenes and subjects.

In 1926 he went to New York where he worked on commissions for several Western "buffs" in the big city. He visited or stayed during part of this time at Philip Cole's estate along the Hudson where he began work on the first of a series of miniature paintings illustrating Old Montana history which Cole was interested in creating.

"He stayed at Zeeview on at least two separate occasions," commented Alice Ralston, "working on that miniature series out in Mrs. Cole's little studio. He went back and forth to New York City a lot, too, doing work for Malcomb McKay and some of the New York galleries."

In the last letter he ever wrote to Philip Cole, Charlie Russell remarked: "If you see Olaf Seltzer, give him my regards. I suppose by this time he's a real New Yorker."

Seltzer did not remain long in New York, however. Disliking city life, he promptly returned with his family to Montana where he continued to work on the miniatures for Dr. Cole. During much of the time that he was engaged in their production he worked with the aid of a powerful reading glass, completing more than a hundred of the tiny paintings before the strain on his eyesight forced him to give up the project. Uniformly five by six inches in size, these pictures are now included in the collection of the Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art.

Seltzer was especially interested in episodes having to do with the settlement of the West, and the investigation that he and Cole made into the background of the many events represented in this series makes it indeed a unique record of achievement relating to the history of the frontier. Describing scenes from Lewis and Clark's first glimpse of the Rockies to the final, bitter days of the Indian wars on the northern plains, these miniature oils document some of the most important landmarks in the history of the Old West.

Although the initial idea for creating this series was Dr. Cole's, it seems that Seltzer determined for the most part what specific scenes he would depict.

According to several accounts he also compiled much of the descriptive commentary which accompanied each of these pictures.

"Dr. Cole had his secretaries type up these scripts," says Alice Ralston. "Seltzer knew the history of Montana, and he and Dr. Cole did a lot of research before starting a picture."

Dr. Cole in particular corresponded frequently with business friends and fellow collectors in his search for information which might pertain to his "Montana in Miniature" project. Many of these letters are presently preserved in the Cole files in the Gilcrease Library, and some contain enlightening references to Dr. Cole's activities at this time. A letter from author and western historian, E. H. Brininstool, is very descriptive on several points regarding Dr. Cole's investigation of facts and historical data. Frequent advisor to Cole concerning his various purchases, Brininstool considered himself an authority on the history of the Old West—especially that of General George Custer and the events surrounding Custer's defeat at the hands of Sitting Bull in 1876.

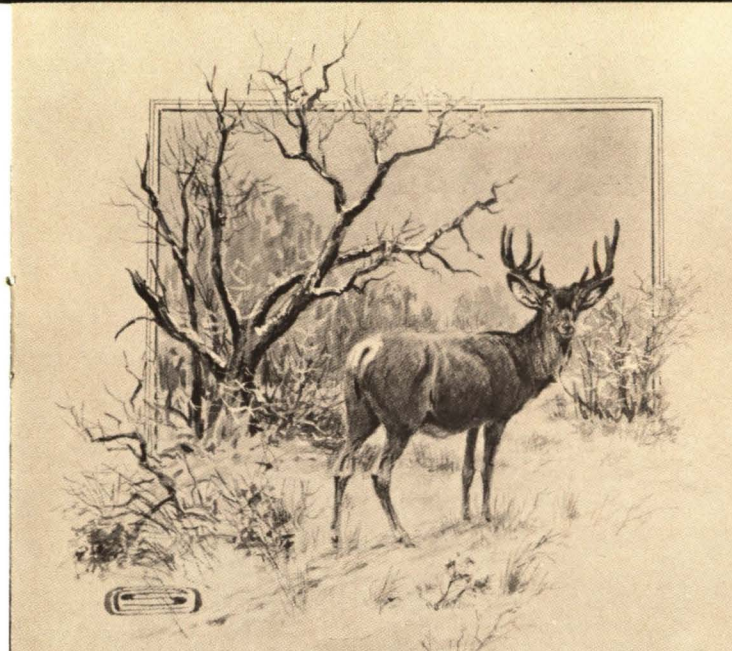
In a letter written to Dr. Cole from Los Angeles in May of 1933, Brininstool seems to be answering certain inquiries from Cole about the Battle of the Little Big Horn and a subsequent episode depicted in one of Seltzer's pictures entitled *Curley, Crow Scout, Bringing the News of the Custer Massacre to those aboard the steamer, Far West*. Brininstool writes:

Now about the Custer battle:

The first information aboard the "Far West" was, as you say, brought by Curley—that is, of course, it was all guess-work on the part of those on the boat, as none could speak the Crow language. The first AUTHENTIC information to the Far West came by Muggins Taylor, a scout with Gibbon's troops...

A very untrue and unreliable yarn appeared lately in the N.Y. Sun to the effect that by "Indian telegraph" (whatever that means) Mrs. Custer and the others at Fort Lincoln knew all about the fight a day or so after it happened; also that Crook knew about it, through this "Indian telegraph" the same day.

That is absolutely nothing but ROT—an attempt on the part of some bright (?) Sun reporter to spring a sensational yarn as an aftermath of Mrs. Custer's death. You can absolutely depend upon it that none of those women (or anybody else) at Fort Lincoln knew anything about the Little Big Horn fight until the news came down on the Far West.



The telegraph operator who sent out the first news to the world was J. M. Carnahan, operator at Bismarck. He still lives in Missoula right now, or did two or three years ago. Some of his letters were in that material I sent you just before you left for Europe... I knew there was stuff there you ought to have—first-hand information.

Brininstool makes reference in this same letter to other scenes which Cole is thinking to incorporate into his miniature series. He comments at great length for instance upon Buffalo Bill Cody's alleged duel with Chief Yellow Hand, which he says never happened:

Let me give you one tip right now before you make a big mistake. You say you are having Seltzer paint you a picture depicting Bill Cody killing Yellow Hand. IT NEVER HAPPENED. Bill Cody had no more to do with the killing of Yellow Hand than you or I did... Several troopers with the 5th Cavalry also claim that THEY killed Yellow Hand. Gen. King himself—whom I knew mighty well—told me "I did not see any duel between Cody and Yellow Hand."

I can give you no information regarding the other events you mention that Seltzer is to paint for you—but gee, don't let him have Bill Cody doing something which never happened!!... Cody was a great showman—all will concede to that... He was genial, open-handed, a "good feller" and a royal entertainer. Beyond that, well, the less said, the better. Ask any old timer like Cook or Luke North. Remember—don't take MY word for any of this.

Featured on this page is a Seltzer watercolor sketch of a mule deer, a miniature oil depicting Custer's Last Stand, and the artist's interpretation of Captain Meriwether Lewis at the Great Falls of the Upper Missouri.



Scouting the Trail, watercolor by Olaf Seltzer.



Mule Skinner, watercolor, one of the "Characters of the Old West" by Olaf Seltzer.



Cattle Rustler, watercolor, another "Character" in this interesting series.



Wood Hawk, watercolor, an additional portrait included in Seltzer's "Characters of the Old West" series.



The Foreman, is another "Character of the Old West" by Seltzer.

Seltzer continued to regard Cole as his chief patron for a number of years, working on other series of pictures which Cole commissioned him to do. Seltzer found it difficult to achieve widespread recognition, however. The American Lithographic Company reproduced some of his paintings in the thirties, and others of his works were collected by such men as William Marks of Seattle, who exhibited them in the galleries of the Washington Athletic Club. But despite his success as an artist, Seltzer remained little known among his contemporaries, overshadowed perhaps by the more outstanding successes of Russell and Remington.

In 1943 Seltzer returned to his former trade as a



The Red River Cart, is an oil included in the artist's "Western Transportation" series.

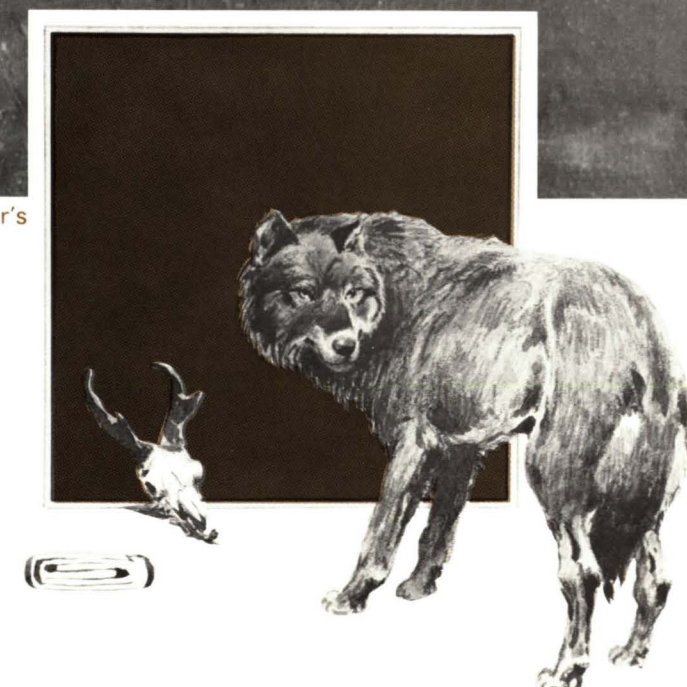
machinist to aid the war effort, working at Malmstrom Air Force Base until the end of World War II. He remained at his easel during much of this time, and also found time to teach a manual training course at the Great Falls High School. Following the death of Philip Cole the larger part of Seltzer's works were acquired by the Gilcrease Institute. This collection alone includes over 234 paintings, now adjudged by many to be one of the finest single aggregates of western art in this country.

Several groups or series of paintings are included in this collection of Seltzer's work. Perhaps the most popular with people who come to Gilcrease is a colorful gallery of seventy-nine watercolor studies of



One of the sketches included in Seltzer's "Wild Critters of the West" series.

"Characters of the Old West" which includes portraits of such celebrated frontier citizens as the cowboy, the town marshal, the gambler, the miner, the dance hall queen, and many others. A number of smaller sketches describing the "Wild Critters of the West" and a group of oils depicting modes of travel on the frontier—which Seltzer called his "Transportation Series"—were also part of Cole's large inventory, together with several letters from Seltzer to Cole which comment upon the history or development of the use of the various boats, wagons, or animals represented in this latter group of paintings.

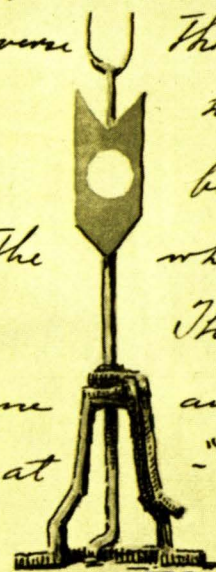


Travelogue of the Prairie
 "The Iron Trail"
 (opus 7)

Great Falls, Montana
 June 21st 1932



Dear Phil:-
 Referring back to the small oil painting
 "The Iron Trail", I am sending you this little
 token in appreciation of your purchasing the picture,
 which means "Good Medicine" to me. The Indian
 in the foreground of the picture, giving the track
 a careful once over, will sure render the Good
 Medicine verdict when he reports to the wise men waiting in the
 and will sure give a decision on the devil work as "Bad Medicine".
 switch on this little Railroad scene with kind regards to you all at
 I beg remain
 Sincerely your friend
 Olaf.



These letters Seltzer styled "Western Travelogues," numbering them "Opus 1, 2, 3, and so on, according," as he says in one of them, "to the line of history and the evolution of western methods of travel." All feature one or more delightful sketches or delicately colored drawings which by way of illustrating the subject are quite as descriptive as the larger pictures to which they relate.

Some of these illustrations are further embellished with original titles or Latin quotes of doubtful meaning, such as that to which Seltzer refers in a letter written from Great Falls in September of 1935:

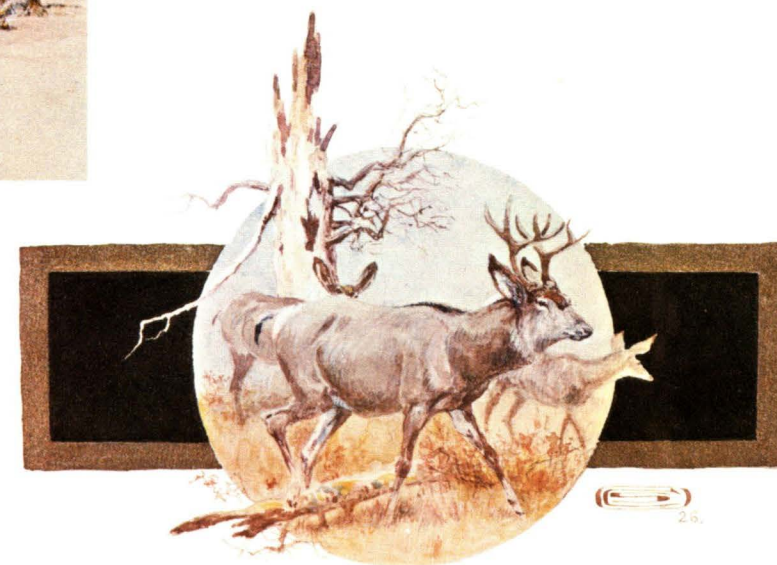
"Dear Doc," writes Seltzer, "your long letter and check are at hand, and many thanks again to you . . . Latin proverbs such as 'Multum in Parvo' are not to your liking, I see. It just means 'Much in Little,' or for a broader meaning, 'it's the little things that count!'"

In another letter Seltzer refers to several pictures which he has sent Cole to be included with his transportation series, mentioning that "I think by this time you must have received the small 11 x 16 oil 'The Bull Boat'. This picture is quite romantic, and with the 'Last Chance or Bust' and the 'Red River Cart' pictures tells more of a story, apart from the transportation viewpoint, than do some of the other paintings of the transportation series . . ."

"Referring back to the small oil painting 'The Iron Trail,'" he says yet another time, calling Cole's attention to the illustration which heads the letter, "I am sending you this little token of appreciation of your purchase of the picture . . ."

And he goes on to explain the details of the sketch and how it relates to the picture Cole has purchased, closing with a reference to Dr. Cole's family with whom he became acquainted during his stay in New York nearly ten years before:

"Throwing the switch on this little railroad scene, and closing with kind regards to you all at 'Zeeview' —
 "I remain, sincerely, your friend: Olaf!"



More than thirty letters and cards from Seltzer to Dr. Cole are included in the Gilcrease collection — part of a larger assortment of such material from many of the artists and writers with whom Cole dealt over the years. These letters for the most part are illustrated with interesting sketches or brief, graphic commentaries which often provide enlightening references to Dr. Cole's relationships with those with whom he worked or corresponded.

Because Dr. Cole was described by both Kay Worden and Alice Ralston as having been an unpretentious man, the question naturally arose during the interviews in Montana as to why he bought such a place as his Tarrytown estate or indulged himself in such extravagant hobbies as his art, book, and stamp collections. Miss Ralston suggested that it was because Dr. Cole had "a penchant for beautiful things—he loved possessions." Kay Worden enlarged upon her father's character however by suggesting that, as a man of great wealth and no particular outlets for it, he loved projects.

"Dad's whole life revolved around his various projects," she commented, referring to his building of an exact replica of a Montana ranch at Lake Placid as being typical. "He built Zeeview to be a wonderland for us, and the ranch at Placid because the whole idea of building it fascinated him. Building and collecting were almost—his life."

"He was a shy man," she insisted, "more at home with his own workmen than his society friends. He didn't travel in a 'set,' attended few parties—hated night clubs. He loved rather to be out on the hillside at Zeeview on a building project or grounds development..."

"Some of his best friends were the workmen around the place."

"Dr. Cole seemed to feel uncomfortable in society," agreed Alice Ralston, "or in 'dude clothes' as he called them. I think sometimes he imagined he were still just a country boy come to live in the big city."

"We got anything we wanted," resumed Kay, remembering her childhood days at Zeeview—"and sometimes things we really didn't want, things Dad thought we ought to have. Maybe it seems ungrateful to say it, now, but many times I wished

Reproduced on these pages are interior and exterior views of Philip Cole's Hudson River estate, Zeeview, which housed his magnificent collection of western art and books on frontier history. The paintings shown on the walls of the library are now part of the Gilcrease Institute's collection.



he wouldn't try so hard to give us everything... I was always conscious of what we had that other children didn't have."

"Living at Zeeview was like living at the Hilton," she continues. "I never went into the kitchen. I was afraid of the chief cook, but the waitresses were nice to me. Our meals were prepared below and brought up to us in the playroom. Only Mother, Dad, and Aunt Alice ate below, in the dining room."

"Every winter Mother and Dad went to Europe, and every summer to Lake Placid. At such times Aunt Alice took Jane, my brother Phil, and me to Fisher's Island in Maine, or maybe to Canada..."

Nancy Russell was a guest at Zeeview for a time following her husband's death and Alice Ralston recalls many conversations that occurred between Mrs. Russell and the Coles in the evenings when they gathered in the library about the large fireplace. Dr. Cole purchased several more of Russell's paintings from Mrs. Russell at this time, adding them to a collection which already covered the walls and crowded the downstairs hallways of his Hudson River home. He also acquired additional works by Remington, Leigh, N. C. Wyeth, and others, commissioning Wyeth as well to paint a scene above the mantelpiece in the children's rambling, two-story playhouse.

"The Lewis and Clark picture was about the last painting he bought, as I remember," says Alice Ralston, mentioning another of Russell's many canvases. "He paid about \$42,000 for it. It came from a private collection up for sale, and Dr. Cole had someone represent him at the auction!"



"I remember especially *Coming Through the Rye* and *The Stampede*," remarked Kay Worden, speaking of the Remington sculptures in her father's collection. "We were always sure to find jelly beans hidden in the horses' mouths or behind the saddles of the riders on Easter morning when we came downstairs to hunt for Easter eggs."

This remark, included here only as an interesting aside, perhaps demonstrates something of the general attitude which Dr. Cole's family exhibited towards his collection. At any rate it points up the fact that Cole himself was not too impressed with his acquisitions. Indeed, he seems not to have considered his collection as being of importance to anyone but himself.

Miss Ralston mentioned that she believes he did offer it at one time to the museum in Helena, Montana, with the stipulation that a special wing be built to house it. The Helena museum was apparently unable or otherwise reluctant to accept Cole's offer on such terms, however, and his vast assortment

of paintings, sculptures, books, and manuscripts remained at Zeeview until his death in 1940.

Mrs. Cole was responsible for the sale of the collection following Dr. Cole's death, authorizing the trustees of the estate to undertake its disbursement. No one in the family seems to have wanted anything from the collection at that point, and thus did not question its sale.

"Nobody ever asked me," commented Kay Worden.



The painting by Charles Russell depicting Sacajawea meeting with her long-lost kinsmen (reproduced below) was one of the last paintings purchased by Philip Cole before his death. It was listed on the affidavit of appraisal with the Remington bronze entitled *Coming Through the Rye* (featured on the opposite page) at the time Thomas Gilcrease brought the Cole collection to Tulsa.



The Horse Thief, bronze, by Frederic Remington.



Ms. Cole eventually remarried following Dr. Cole's death, and sometime before 1944 decided to sell her former husband's western collection. The trustees handled the business of the sale through a New York dealer by the name of Daniel Brown who in turn got in touch with Thomas Gilcrease. The agreement between Gilcrease and the Cole representatives for the purchase of the Cole Collection was signed on January 18, 1944. The collection itself was finally shipped to Tulsa in 1947 following receipt of Mr. Gilcrease's final payment, at which time the Gilcrease Museum took possession.

This transaction was one of the least publicized of its kind ever to have taken place. For years afterwards writers compiling commentaries on the works of some of the more important Western American artists were unaware of the existence of many of the pieces in this collection, or knowing about them did not know what had become of them. An interesting example at hand is that found in a small booklet compiled by H. L. Card entitled *The Collector's Remington*, published in 1946 at the time the sale of the Cole Collection to Thomas Gilcrease was still pending. In this very comprehensive catalog of the known works of Frederic Remington the author questions the existence of at least two bronzes which were among those in Cole's possession:

The truly rare ones are apparently not in any of the museum collections but in private hands. Some of these sound more like rumors of bronzes than real objects. There is said to be one, for instance, called "The Norther," of a mounted cowboy beset by a snowstorm. Inspection of the copyright files in Washington does not help the student here. True, there is a "work of art" carded under the title "The Norther," but it is a great fault of the copyright system that these cards do not always indicate whether said work is a painting, a bronze, or a pen sketch...

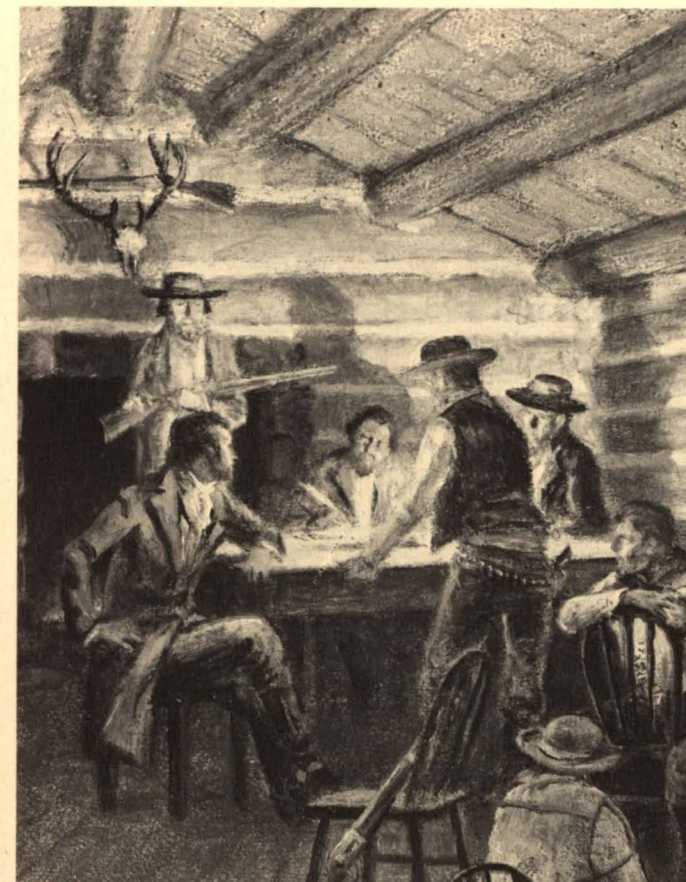
Another one which must be in the hands of some private collector is "The Horse Thief." This is described in some of the art critics' notes of 1908 as a statue of a nude Indian making off with a stolen pony, holding a buffalo skin with his arm so as to protect himself and obscure the identity of his pony as well. It was done in 1907, and Remington copyrighted it in May of that year.

Both these bronzes were in Philip Cole's collection; both are now to be seen on exhibit in the Remington Gallery at Gilcrease. The piece entitled *The Norther* is thought to be the only casting of this bronze in existence. Cole listed the latter work—*The Horse Thief*—as *The Signal* in his large illustrated catalog, which may possibly account for confusion on the part of some researchers.

Author H. L. Card also mentions another bronze found in Philip Cole's collection, perhaps the rarest piece of all:

It may be that the rarest of them all was in the famous Dr. Philip G. Cole Collection... He owned "Caught in the Stampede," of which there may have been only four or five made, and he had one which most dealers and collectors have never seen, which he called "Episode of the Buffalo Hunt." The painting which matched this bronze in subject and composition, also called "Episode of the Buffalo Hunt," was in the Cole Collection as well...

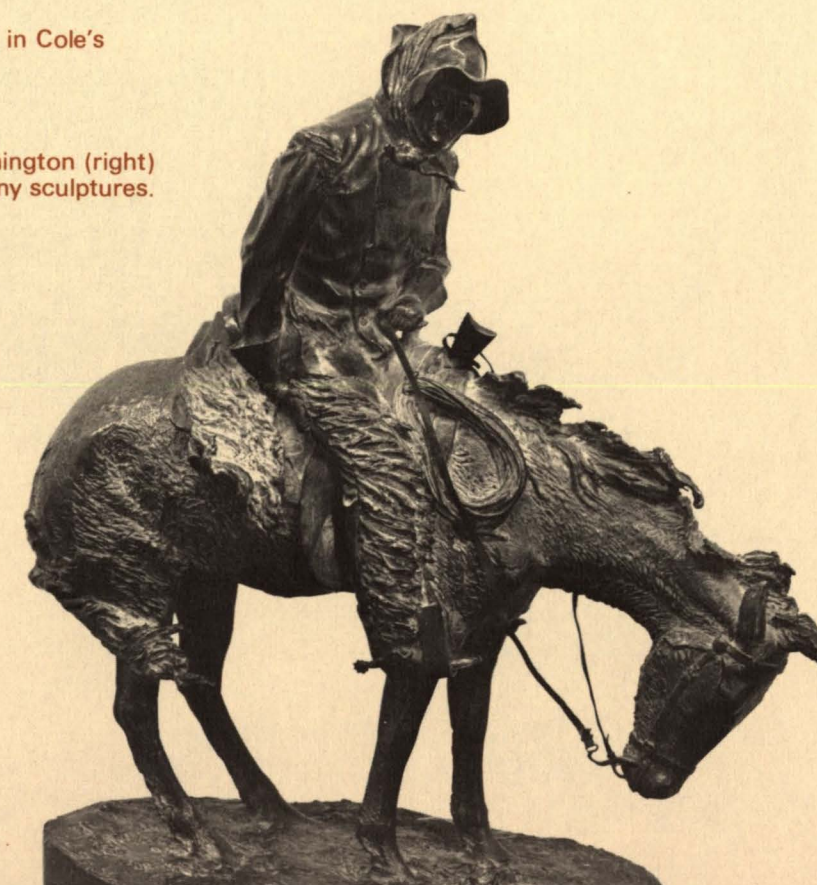
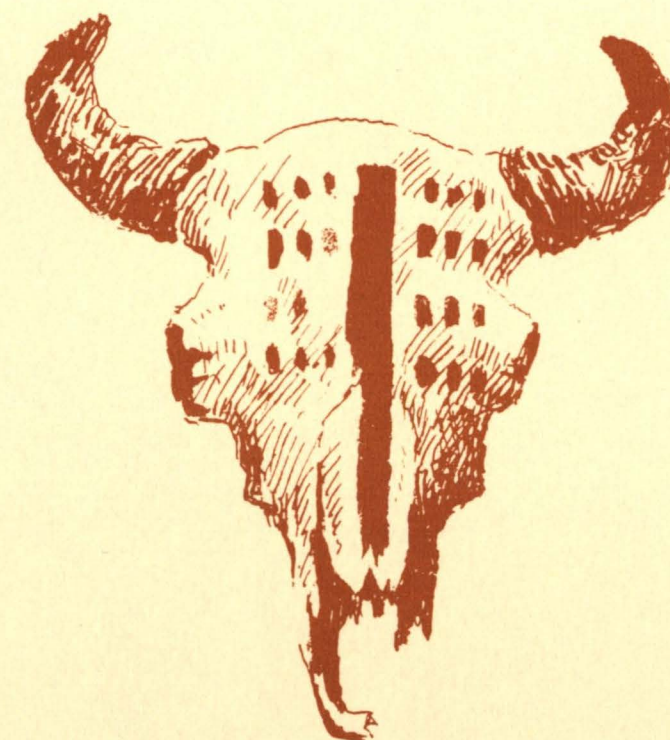
Charles de Kay, discussing a show at Knoedler's about the time of Remington's death, made the statement that only one casting had ever been made of this bronze, which is also called "The Buffalo Hunter." If it is really unique, the present owner is certainly to be congratulated on its possession.



Vigilantes' Oath by Olaf Seltzer (above)—one of the pictures included in Cole's "Montana in Miniature" series.

Sketch by Olaf Seltzer (top right)

The Norther, bronze, by Frederic Remington (right)—one of the rarest of Remington's many sculptures.



Dr. Cole seems to have been a genuine son of his native state, for Montana people's fondness for Montana is of a kind that, even today, frequently puts the more famous pride of Texas to shame. Kay Worden mentioned numerous times that her father often reminded his children of their Montana heritage, and it is apparent that his interests centered almost totally on Montana and the Old West as if no other place of equal importance existed, nor any picture or report of value other than those relating to western frontier history.

Most of the artists with whom he dealt were Montana artists or else those who painted western Montana subjects. By far the most interesting single feature of his collection of paintings was that series of pictures documenting events in Old Montana history which he and Olaf Seltzer produced. A single-minded collector, Cole surrounded himself with the things that reminded him of his western background, recreating for himself—and perhaps for himself alone—a world of western history and romance that continued to exist so long as he had the means to maintain or enlarge upon it. It pleased him, apparently, and satisfied him; and perhaps so far as he was concerned that was the end of it.

But whatever may have been his private reasons for building upon his memories of Montana, Philip Cole accomplished far more than he realized or doubtless even intended. For the records he accumulated remain yet today—independent of the man whose interests preserved them. Indeed, they have been passed along to us, now, to keep and to appraise in the light of present knowledge in our continuing efforts to gain an insight into the experiences of the past. Who we are and where we came from continues to interest us as Americans. Thus we might consider our indebtedness to those who, like Philip Cole, collected the scattered accounts of the artists and writers whose pictures and commentaries over the years have provided us with such a distinct vision of past times.

Philip Cole's collection is America's collection now, a part of one of the largest inventories of its kind in this hemisphere. It is a tribute perhaps to the man who created it, but not his memorial so much as our own: a significant part of our American heritage.



Blackfoot Chief, watercolor, one of the "Characters of the Old West" by Olaf Seltzer.

Crow Scout, right, watercolor by Olaf Seltzer

