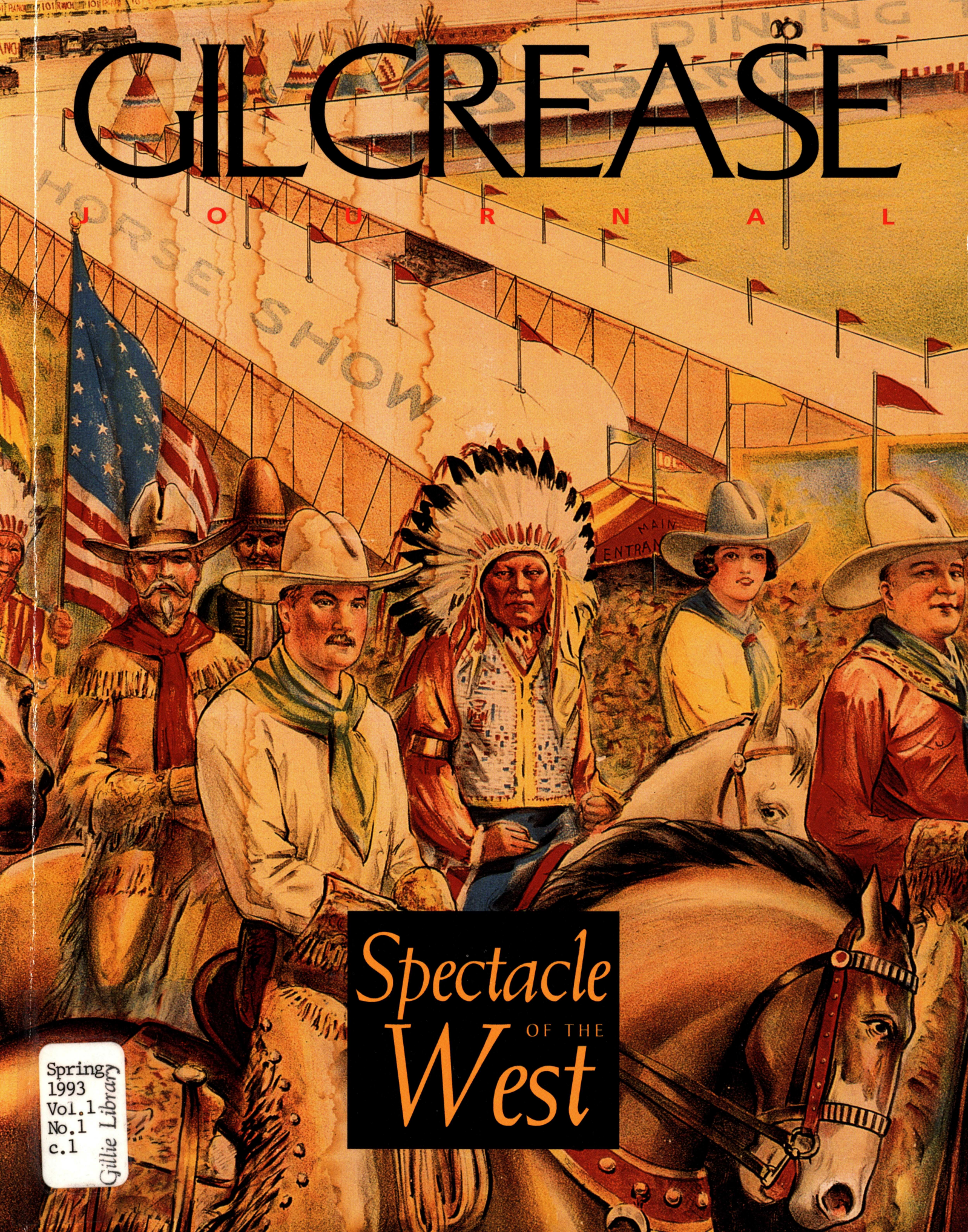


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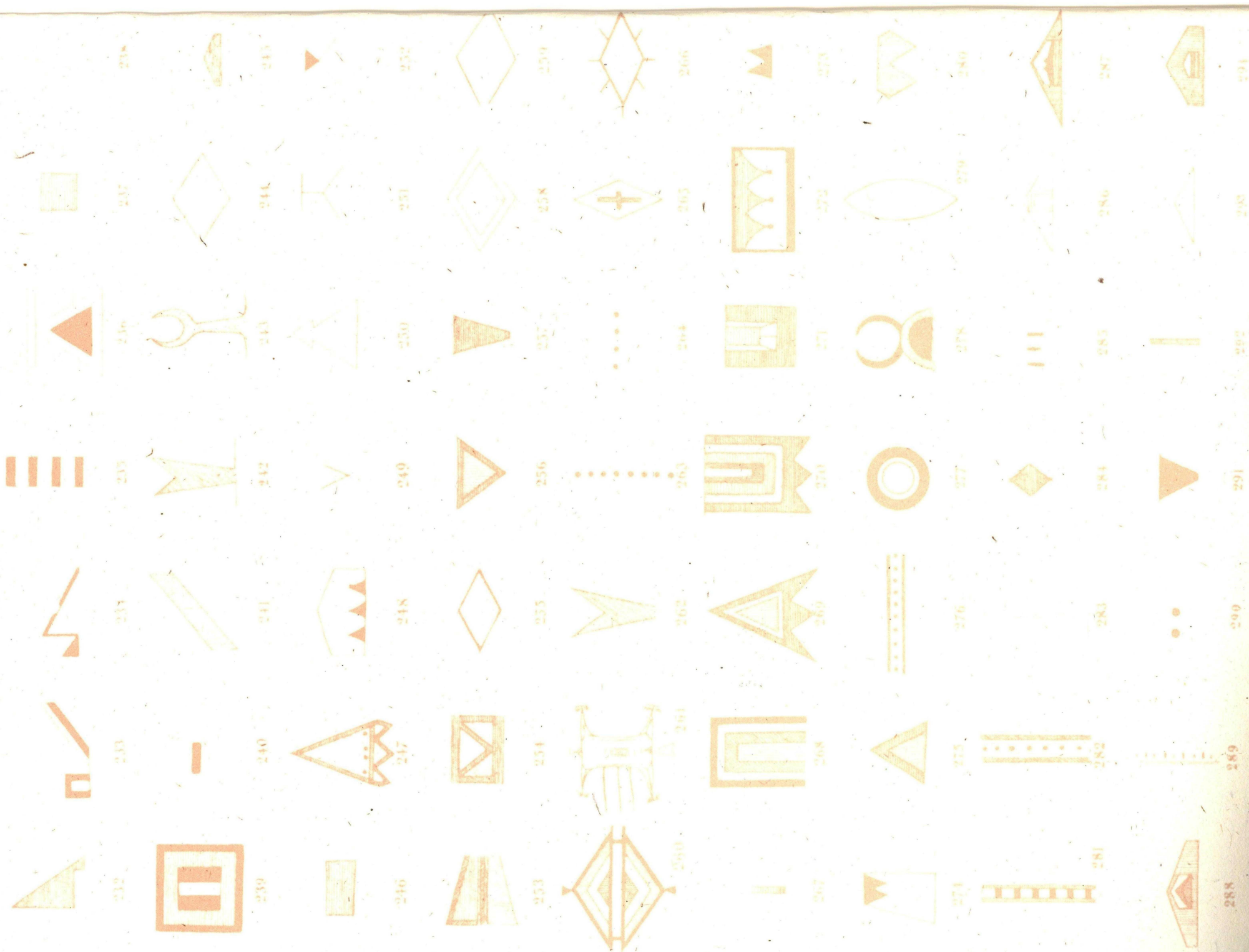
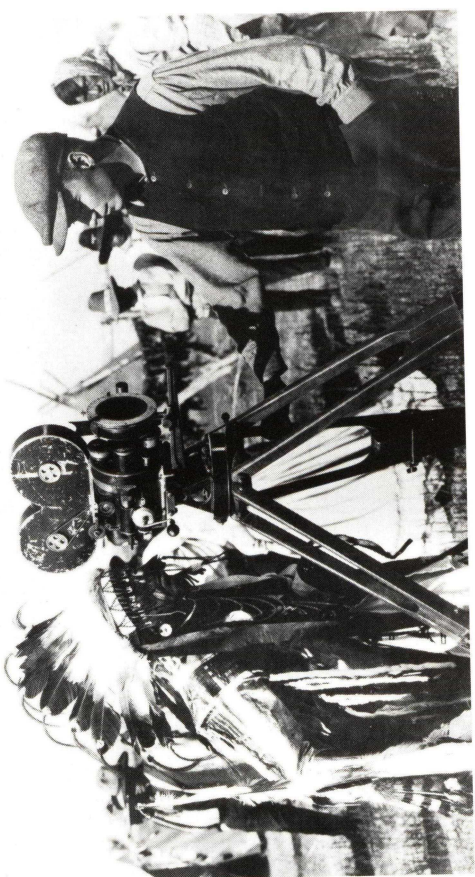
JOURNAL



Spectacle
OF THE
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Contents

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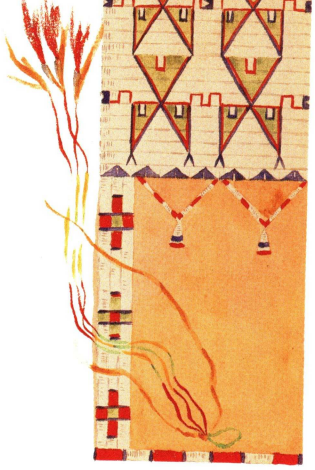


VOLUME ONE NUMBER 1 / SPRING 1993

6 The Miller Brothers and the 101 Ranch

In the far reaches of north-central Oklahoma at the turn of the 19th century the Miller brothers built an empire based on cattle, oil, and dreams. For one moment the Old West of the popular imagination coalesced with a New West — perhaps equally fantastical — that would reverberate all the way to the borders of that new field of dreams, Hollywood.

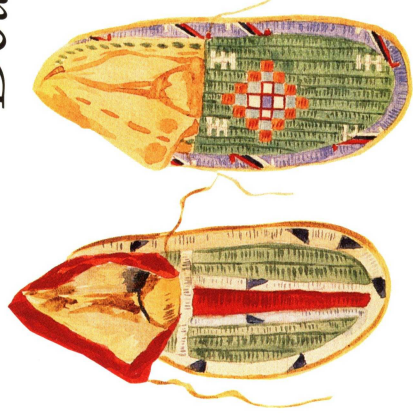
MICHAEL WALLIS



30 The Sketchbooks of Emil Lenders: Down to the Soles of the Moccasins

Emil Lenders, a 19th-century German emigrant, amassed an extraordinary collection of Native American artifacts. He preserved it in a series of lyrical watercolors published here for the first time. That the Lenders sketchbooks could as easily have come to rest in the prop department of a movie studio as in the collection of Gilcrease Museum shows just how close the documentary images of the West can be to the visions of popular culture.

JOAN CARPENTER TROCCOLI



P O R T F O L I O

48 Streaming Glory: Warbonnets from the Gilcrease Collection

Are they real or “for show?” The dramatic feathered headgear of the Plains has emerged as the single most identifiable icon of the American Indian. With commentary by Dan McPike.

V I G N E T T E

52 Tom Mix: The King of the Cowboys Makes His Last Ride

Michael Wallis

54 Authenticity and the Western Movie

What American who grew up in the mid-20th century can forget the feeling of settling down in a dark theater with a sack of hot popcorn to watch a “Western” at the Saturday matinee? A curator and film critic explores the interaction between paintings, literature, and film in the development of the Western film genre.



JAMES A. NOTTAGE

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ILLUSTRATIONS: *Halftitle page*, from photo scrapbook “Snapshots of the Making of The Covered Wagon” by Jimmie Murray, assistant camera, Courtesy Gene Autry Western Heritage Center, Los Angeles. *At left*, details from a sketch by Emil Lenders, Gilcrease Museum, 1827.25.43. *Above right*, warbonnet, Gilcrease Museum, 8426.270; *above left*, detail from a movie still, eyes of silent Western film star William S. Hart. Courtesy of the Gene Autry Western Heritage Museum, Los Angeles.



Gilcrease Journal Spectacle of the West

The current issue of the *Gilcrease Journal* introduces a new format for a long-treasured publication of Gilcrease Museum. The publication, now to appear biannually, has been expanded to over twice its previous length in order to allow space for a more broad-ranging exploration and development of issues and topics related to American art and history, particularly that of the American West. Also, because of its length and binding, the new format allows for more convenient shelving and thus greater ease of preservation, both by general readers and by librarians.

Within an extended format, the much respected collection of Gilcrease Museum — which will continue to be showcased in the *Gilcrease* publication — can be shown in a wider context. Rather than looking primarily inward to focus on specific works, we hope to look outward at the continuously changing landscape of American art and culture and there find fresh contexts for Gilcrease Museum's collections, which can illuminate them anew. In the process we hope to throw open the doors to new appreciations and insights, to new observations about the interconnections between history, art, science, and literature.

The inaugural number of the *Gilcrease Journal* explores the West as spectacle — from the early Wild West extravaganzas staged by showmen such as the Miller brothers and Buffalo Bill Cody to the infant Hollywood movie industry they influenced, looking at ways in which 19th-century painting and literature interacted with both.

The fall 1993 number will look south of the United States border to focus on Gilcrease Museum's Meso-American collection and its seldom-seen 20th-century Mexican paintings. Planned for later issues are articles on the idea of wilderness in 19th-century art and its relationship to the birth of the national park system; environmental history; and a view of Gilcrease artworks in the context of science and technology. We will continue to trace new connections between the treasures of the Gilcrease collection and the rich complexities of the world at large. We look forward to sharing our discoveries with you.

THE AUTHORS

MICHAEL WALLIS is the author of *Oil Man: The Story of Frank Phillips and the Birth of Phillips Petroleum; Route 66, The Mother Road; Pretty Boy: The Life and Times of Charles Arthur Floyd*; and an upcoming biography of Wilma Mankiller, principal chief of the Cherokee Nation. He is working on a book on the 101 Ranch, to be published by St. Martin's Press.

JOAN CARPENTER TROCCOLI has been director of the Gilcrease Museum since 1992. She was formerly a curator of art at Gilcrease Museum, an adjunct professor at The University of Tulsa, and a freelance curator and lecturer. Dr. Troccoli received her M.A. in 1977 and her Ph.D. in 1984 from the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University.

JAMES A. NOTTAGE, chief curator of the Gene Autry Western Heritage Museum in Los Angeles, California, was previously associated with the Kansas State Historical Society. He is particularly interested in the study of how various media affect our perceptions of the past.

WILLIAM HENRY JACKSON
*California Crossing, South Platte
River (detail)*

Oil on canvas

Gilcrease Museum, 0136.1208

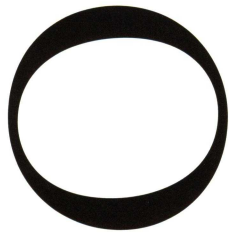
MICHAEL WALLIS

THE MILLER BROTHERS AND THE 101 RANCH

Mamas, don't let your babies grow up to be cowboys. . . .

WILLIE NELSON

Once upon a time in the far reaches of north-central Oklahoma prospered a ranch empire of cattle, oil fields, and grasslands. This remarkable spread, although long vanished, remains the stuff of legends.



101 RANCH

THIS MAP shows locations pertinent to the story of the 101 Ranch. The ranch reached its zenith near the time of Oklahoma statehood in 1907 when it sprawled across several counties in north-central Oklahoma. Lands owned or leased by the Millers shifted rapidly and tended to fall into a checkerboard pattern rather than occupying a single area with a clearly demarcated boundary. The city of Bliss is now known as Marland; it was renamed in 1922 to honor oilman E. W. Marland. The dotted line shows the approximate trail that 101 Ranch founder George W. Miller took on his first trip to San Saba County, Texas, to swap hogneat for cattle.

Map by Jack Bugg

At the formidable two-story 101 Ranch Store, everything from “a needle to a Ford car” could be bought. A combination department store and trading post, the store catered to ranch employees but attracted customers from a radius of over 100 miles. Hired hands were paid with 101 folding money and coins. The money purchased clothing and groceries at the ranch store, bought food and drinks at the concession stands, and even paid off gambling debts.

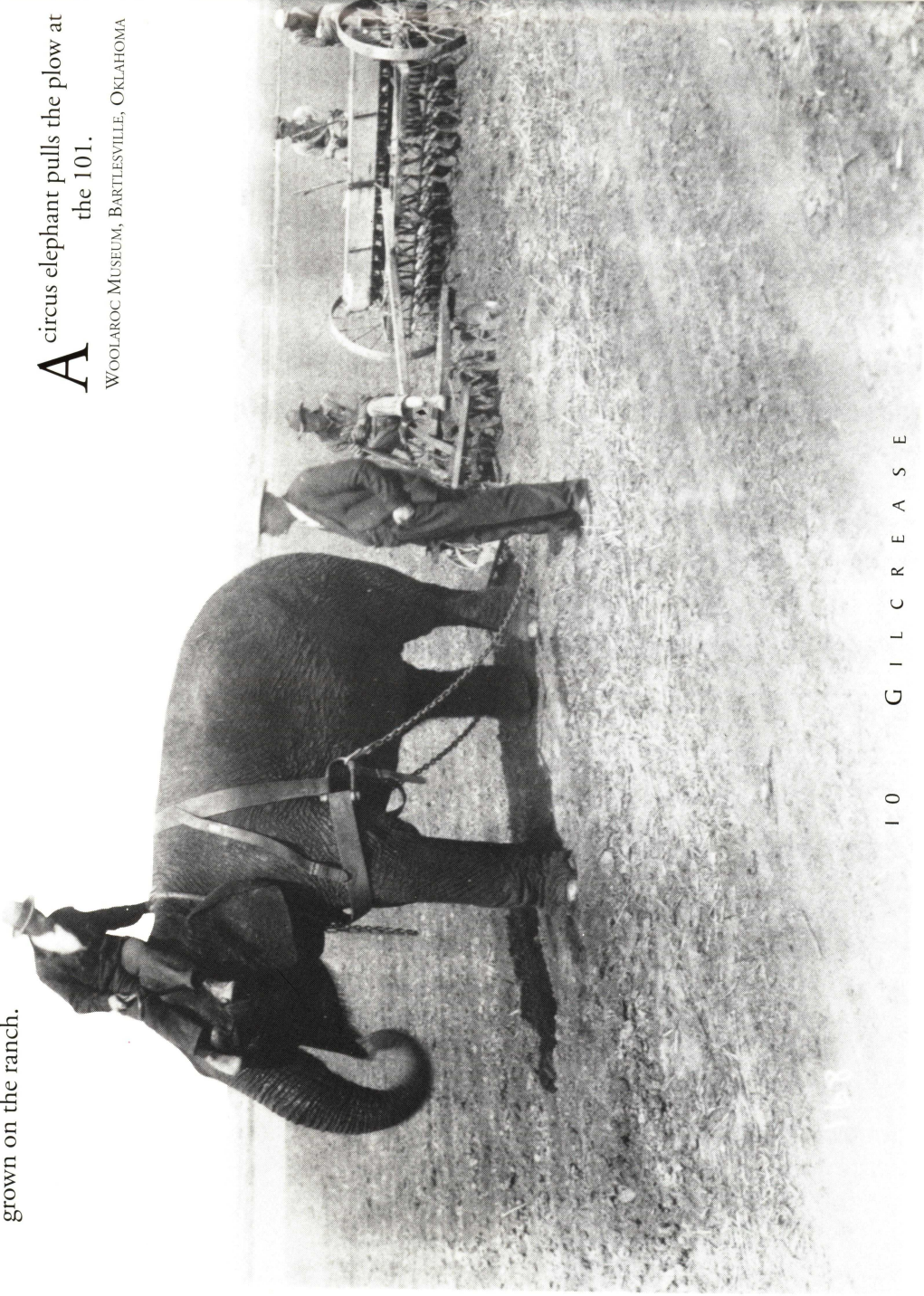
Will Rogers twirled a rope and sang cowboy songs all night when he came calling at the ranch. Geronimo was brought to the 101 by soldiers to shoot and skin a buffalo for the benefit of a horde of ogling white folks. John Philip Sousa became an honorary member of the Ponca tribe during a visit. Admiral Richard Byrd rode an elephant over the 101 Ranch prairie. The nation’s premier horticulturist, Luther Burbank, studied crops grown on the ranch.

William Jennings Bryan and Theodore Roosevelt were guests. So were Warren G. Harding, John D. Rockefeller, General John Pershing, Pawnee Bill, and William S. Hart. Others who came to see what the 101 was all about included Mary Roberts Rinehart, Jack Dempsey, William Randolph Hearst, Edna Ferber, and one of the most mythologized Western figures of all — William F. “Buffalo Bill” Cody. They sat down to beefsteaks bigger than saddle bags and so tender they cut like pie. Dinner was served at the imposing stucco ranch headquarters, dubbed the White House, near the banks of the meandering Salt Fork river.

It was also the home of the Miller Brothers 101 Real Wild West show, known halfway round the globe in the first decades of the 20th century. The show featured as many as 1,000 performers — cowboys and cowgirls, Indian warriors in bright paint and flowing headdresses, clowns, sharpshooters, bucking horses,

A circus elephant pulls the plow at the 101.

WOOLAROC MUSEUM, BARTLESVILLE, OKLAHOMA



10 G I L C R E A S E



fancy Russian cossacks, equestrian acrobats, bull riders, trained buffaloes, and musicians. Many of the 101 Ranch alumni were rough-and-tumble luminaries whose names became household words. A few leapt from real life to film just as the Western motion picture business was beginning. Tom Mix, Hoot Gibson, and Buck Jones drew wages from the 101 paymaster before they became moving picture stars.

During the ranch’s glory years, movie crews moved freely around the property amongst the working cowboys. On Sundays, free rodeos were held. What was not so well known, especially abroad, was that the show originated from an authentic working ranch that truly rivaled all the other great cattle operations in the folklore of the West. On this ranch the West of imagination collided and merged with the West of reality and made for a spectacle that will not be seen again.



A B O V E

101 RANCH POSTER

Chromolithograph on paper mounted on board

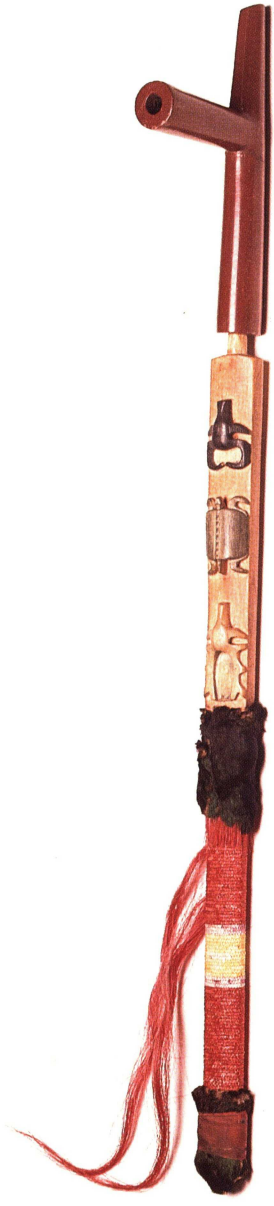
GILCREASE MUSEUM, 1627.235

B E L O W

A movie still from “On the Show.” Fred Burns (left) gives advice to star Jack Mulhall.

WOOLAROC MUSEUM, BARTLESVILLE, OKLAHOMA

G I L C R E A S E 11



A modified Santee Sioux pipe with a catlinite bowl and carved plank stem, wrapped with quillwork, feathers, and horsehair. The pipe was used at the 101 Ranch.

GILCREASE MUSEUM, BOWL 8426.39A; STEM 8426.105B

It all began long ago with a shrewd Kentucky trader named G. W. Miller, the man who actually launched the 101 and set the stage for the drama that his boys — Joe, Zack, and George — would play out so well. Born in 1842 to George and Almira Fish Miller on his father's ancestral plantation in central Kentucky, George Washington Miller was a pure child of the South.

Soon after his birth, Miller's parents separated and divorced. The baby and his mother went to live on the prosperous nearby plantation of his maternal grandparents. Young Miller's grandfather, like other Southern gentlemen, loved livestock, especially thoroughbred horse flesh. In this atmosphere of lush bluegrass, bumper crops of Burley tobacco, and genteel manners, Miller learned to share his grandfather's passions.

When the Civil War erupted, Kentucky was divided in its sentiments and became a true border state. By 1861 it joined the Union side, although it was drawn to the South through cultural and family ties and was repulsed with a star in the Confederate flag. Certainly, there was never any question about which side young G. W. Miller was on. He was a diehard rebel. During the bloody conflict he traded mules to the Confederate government and with his earnings he purchased a portion of the plantation.

About this time Miller, who by then bore the title "Colonel" as was customary for Southern men of prominence, also embarked on his courtship of Miss Mary Anne Carson, a Southern Belle known simply as

Molly. George and Molly recited their marriage vows in Louisville on January 9, 1866, and Miller brought his bride to the family plantation where his grandfather, wishing to retire from active farm management, turned over the reins to his grandson. Little more than nine months after their wedding, Molly gave birth to the couple's first child. The proud father named the baby Wilkes Booth after the late assassin of Abraham Lincoln. In 1868, another son, Joseph Carson, was born. A third son, John Fish, arrived in 1870.

Like other surviving gentlemen of the Confederacy, Miller soon recognized that his future in Kentucky was grim. Without the reliable and cheap work force that slavery had provided, Miller and his associates were left with only broken dreams and ruined countryside. The time had come for them to roll up their sleeves and go to work for themselves. Further embittered when his eldest son, Wilkes Booth, succumbed to illness just before the boy's fourth birthday in 1870, Miller decided to leave Kentucky for greener pastures. He sold off his share in the family plantation and prepared to move west where he hoped to rediscover a way of life that had been lost.

Miller packed some belongings and started overland for California with his wife Molly, two-year-old Joseph, and infant John. As they bounced along the trail through Missouri, Miller, always the entrepreneur, kept his eye peeled for business opportunities. When the family paused to pitch a winter camp at the prairie village of Newtonia in southwest Missouri, Miller



CHARLES M. RUSSELL
Through the Alkali, 1904

Oil on canvas

GILCREASE MUSEUM, 0137.903

"Wild, long-horned Texas steers five or six years old might be sold to the . . . government under beef contracts to feed the Indians, but. . . . Much of the American public, particularly in the East, insisted upon better beef than the coarse, stringy product derived from the longhorns. As a result the ranchmen of northern Oklahoma soon began to bring in large numbers of registered or high grade bulls from the corn belt states and even . . . from Europe."

EDWARD EVERETT DALE
AMERICAN HEREFORD JOURNAL, 1936

found a way to bring in some income by doing what he knew best — trading.

The economy in the small frontier town of 200 souls, mostly former citizens of the South like the Millers, was almost solely based on raising hogs and trading with the residents of nearby Indian Territory. Miller immediately saw that although there were plenty of pigs, there were few cows. Instead of idling away his time until warmer weather returned, he spent the long autumn and winter acquiring hogs from settlers in the area and converting the hogs into bacon and hams.

Through conversations with cowboys fresh off the Texas cattle trails, Miller learned that herds of longhorn

steers could be fattened on sweet grass in Indian Territory and Kansas enroute to northern markets. Before spring returned, Miller had changed his plans. On February 16, 1871 — "a pretty winter day" — he left his family in Newtonia, saddled his best horse and set out for Texas.

With him were hired hands, a camp cook, and teamsters. Their work was cut out for them. Miller had ten large wagons groaning under the weight of 20,000 pounds of cured hog meat to swap for a herd of lively Texas steers. According to trail gossip, cattle were so plentiful and cheap in the Lone Star state that a full-grown steer could be had for 100 pounds of bacon.

The Miller crew, in a photograph made upon their return from Texas in June, 1887. Joe Miller is third from the right.

WOOLAROC MUSEUM, BARTLESVILLE, OKLAHOMA

B O T T O M

WILLIAM S. PRETTYMAN
Cowboys and Chuckwagon, ca. 1885

Photograph

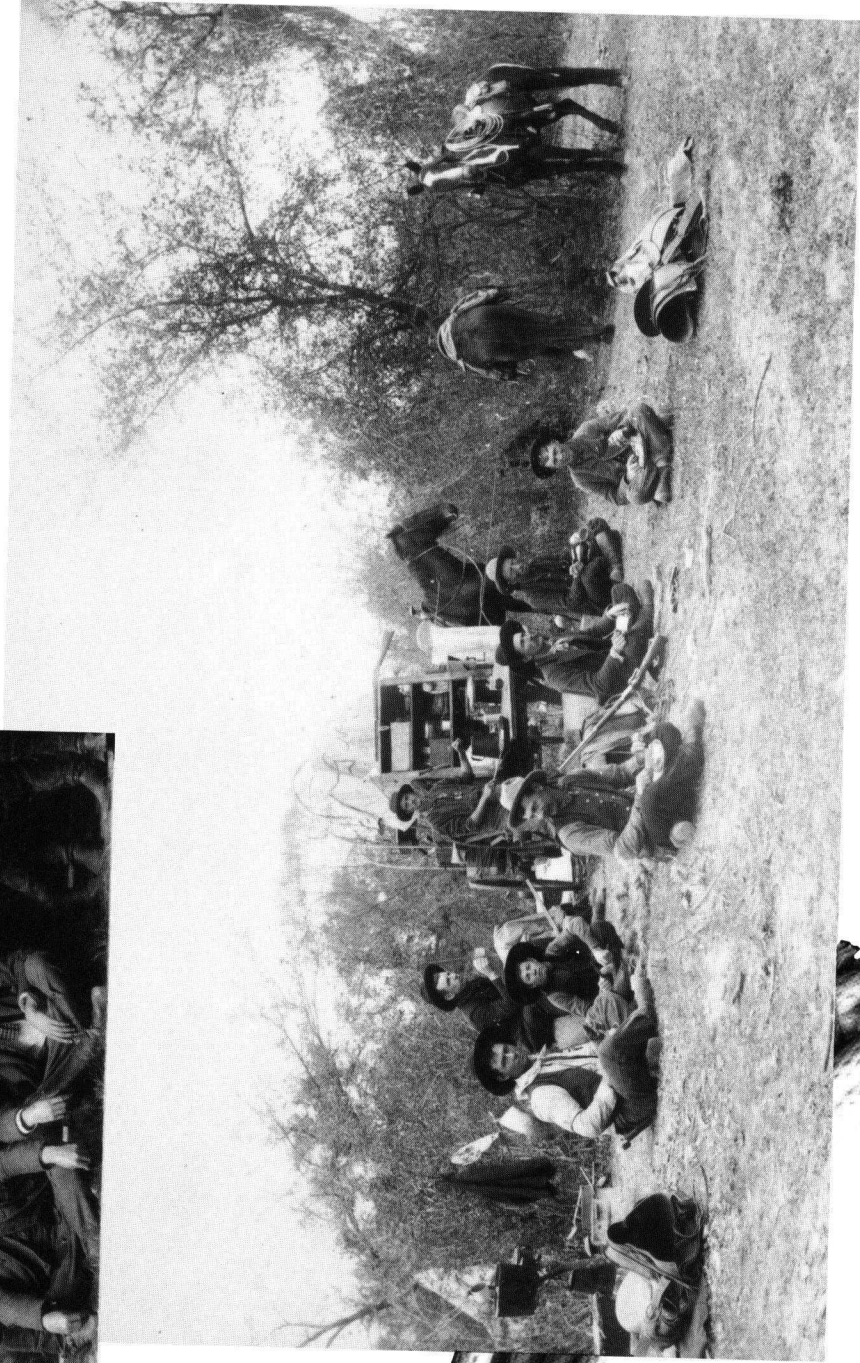
GILCREASE MUSEUM, 4326.3539



The trip to Texas took the Miller bunch across the Missouri-Arkansas border, near the site of the Pea Ridge battleground. There the riders spied trees that had been shattered by cannon fire. As they rode below the broken limbs, Colonel Miller doffed his hat. Perhaps he thought of the trees as mute memorials to the thousands of men, especially those in gray, who nine years before had fought and died on that scarred plateau.

Finally, Miller and his men reached their destination — San Saba County, Texas. There they encountered hardened cowboys, many of them Confederate veterans, who carried Winchester rifles and six-guns. There were also great herds of longhorns — so many, in fact, that the deft trader was able to swap fifty pounds of meat for every steer. He rode off with a herd of 400 bona fide Texas longhorns.

Throughout the long ride home, the cowboys had few creature comforts other than a rare slug of strong drink or a plate of greasy bacon and beans served up around the evening campfire and washed down with gallons of bitter coffee. Life on the trail was lonely, dirty, and,



WILLIAM S. PRETTYMAN
A View from the Parlor
Photograph

GILCREASE MUSEUM, 4326.3501



except for the extremes of climate and weather and the constant risk of tangling with brigands and cut-throat thieves, monotonous. They couldn't have known that they, like other early trail riders who prodded, cussed, and coaxed tens of thousands of cattle hundreds of miles to market, were shaping the image of the mythical cowboy.

Miller's first journey to Texas took about three months. It ended at the cattle town of Baxter Springs, Kansas, just above the Indian Territory boundary, with most of the herd intact. Permission was granted by the nearby Quapaw tribe to graze the longhorns on their land. Miller immediately established his first ranch a few miles south of Baxter Springs.

the ranch pastures. As he climbed off his horse, Miller was told that his youngest son, John Fish, had died after a brief illness at the Miller home in Missouri. Molly had taken the body back to Crab Orchard, Kentucky, to be buried near Miller's grandparents and their first-born, Wilkes Booth. Miller turned to work to lessen his sorrow. Any thoughts of going to California disappeared as he plunged into the cattle business with a vengeance.

Once the ranch was in operation, Miller mustered more cowboys, including some from the first journey. On March 6, 1872, they started for San Saba County on a second cattle buying trip. This time, as they moved due south through Indian Territory to Texas, there was no procession of creaky wagons filled with smoked pork. Instead of hog meat, Colonel Miller carried saddlebags filled with gold. He learned from his first visit that the Texas ranchers had no use for paper money, as most had been paid in worthless Confederate scrip after the war. Gold coin was more to their liking, and gold was easier than bacon to transport. Best of all, three dollars' worth of gold fetched a steer priced at six dollars.

Miller kept the family residence in Newtonia, Missouri, a little more than twenty miles from his Indian Territory ranch. Alma, the Miller's only daughter, was born at the Newtonia house in 1875. In 1878, another son, Zachary, was born there. In 1880, Miller uprooted his family and moved them to a new ranch headquarters at Baxter Springs. At this home site on September 9, 1881 — a date that fell between the shooting death of the legendary Billy the Kid and the well-known gun battle at the OK Corral in Tombstone — the youngest Miller son, George Lee, was born.

Primed to expand the family's holdings, Miller had already turned his sights on grazing lands farther to the west. In 1879 he leased 60,000 acres of Indian land in the famous Cherokee Strip. One of his pastures, Deer Creek Ranch, was situated about twenty miles south of

Weeks later, Colonel Miller and his exhausted men finally returned home with more steers to turn loose in



The 101 Ranch began on land leased by G. W. Miller from the Poncas. When Joe Miller married Mary Verlin in 1926, he arranged a Ponca wedding ceremony.

WOOLAROC MUSEUM, BARTLESVILLE, OKLAHOMA

BELOW

WILLIAM S. PRETTYMAN

Ponca Indian

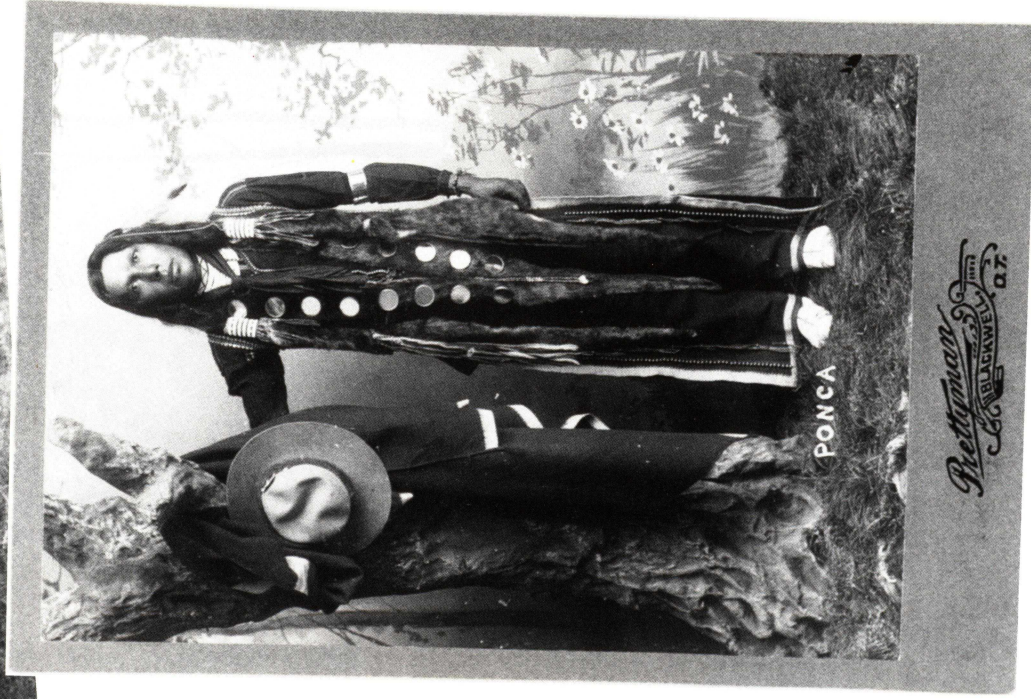
Photographed in Prettyman's studio in Blackwell, Oklahoma Territory, this Ponca Indian likely wears articles of costume kept on hand by the photographer for his patrons' portrait sittings.

GILCREASE MUSEUM, 4326.3488

Hunnewell, Kansas. The other was located on the Salt Fork River. The Salt Fork operation, west of Ponca City, became Miller's primary headquarters. It consisted of little more than a sod roof log cabin with a dirt floor, a horse corral, a branding pen, some storage sheds, and a barn. Miller and his cowboys were also proud that they erected the first barbed wire fence in the Cherokee Strip. The Salt Fork Ranch was the beginning of what would become famous as the 101 Ranch.

At Winfield, Kansas — close to the ranching operations in the Strip — Colonel Miller bought an elaborate, two-story brick residence and moved in the family. It was a mansion compared to some of the family's previous dwellings. There were servants, fruit trees, a squawking parrot, and a fancy carriage pulled by strutting bay horses to carry the Miller brood around town.

At about the same time Miller also bought out the holdings of his Texas partner, Lee Kokernut. That meant he had to choose a new brand for marking his cattle. There are many versions of the tale of how Colonel Miller selected his particular brand. Some are outrageous yarns undoubtedly dreamed up by cowpokes hunkered around an evening fire and enjoying a liquid supper provided by their local bootlegger. What is known is that as early as 1881, the brand Miller's cowboys were burning into the horns and eventually the hides of all his cattle was the one that would one day become world-famous — the 101.



Although some ranchers and cowboys claimed the 101 brand represented the acreage of the ranch, at the time it came into use the Miller spread only covered 60,000 acres. Others said Colonel Miller purchased the brand from another cattle company or that the 101 was an adaptation of the brand used by the Bar-O-Bar ranch, which Miller bought, with the bars turned upright so they could be seen more easily at a distance.

When he was an old man, Zack Miller furnished Fred Gipson, author of *Fabulous Empire*, with by far the most colorful version of the 101 brand story. According to Zack, during one of his father's many cattle buying trips to south Texas, the Miller cowboys got a bit out of hand when the outfit laid over at San Antonio. It seems the boys headed out to an infamous watering hole dubbed "The Hundred and One."

Before the long night was over, Colonel Miller's bunch managed to sample all the whiskey, women, and gaming tables in the joint. They participated in several big-time fist fights to boot. It supposedly took a frustrated and angry Miller four round trips and the assis-

three numerals for a name.

Soon the 101 name flashed like rolling prairie flames throughout the Indian Nations, as the Millers continued to pasture Texas cattle and sell them to northern ranches and in Kansas rail towns. Miller, now joined by his trio of growing sons, continually expanded not only his herds but his leased acreage. Much of their land belonged to the Ponca Indians, a tribe with



CHARLES M. RUSSELL
When Guns Speak Death Settles Dispute
Oil on canvas
GILCREASE MUSEUM,
0137.911



UNKNOWN PHOTOGRAPHER
White Eagle, Ponca
Photograph

GILCREASE MUSEUM, 4326.4482

which Miller had forged a working relationship during the early years as he set up his first cattle depot on the Quapaw reservation. Miller was sympathetic to the plight of the Poncas, but he also smelled a chance to improve his own lot.

Colonel Miller and his eldest son Joe became more friendly with the Poncas, especially the famous Ponca chief White Eagle. With the Millers behind them producing all the way, the Poncas finally consented to be

moved westward to the lands the government set aside for them on the eastern edge of the Cherokee Outlet. As a consequence, 60,000 acres of Ponca pastures became the grazing lands for the fledgling 101. Miller was allowed to feed his cattle on the tall bluestem grasses for an incredibly low sum.

When the Cherokee Strip was finally opened to white settlement in 1893, the Poncas leased Colonel Miller thousands of additional acres of their tribal land. All Miller had to do was move his cattle down to the Salt Fork. Molly and Alma Miller stayed at the family home in Winfield.

The year was significant for the Millers for yet another reason. The devastating Panic of 1893 caused the 101 Ranch to make the critical transition from a pure cattle operation to a diversified farm. This all came about when the commission house in Kansas City, which the Millers used for cattle transactions, failed and closed its doors. The Millers immediately lost \$300,000 due them for cattle already sold.

To make matters even worse, the bankers back East — their own backs against the wall — called in their notes. They demanded that Colonel Miller pay off his outstanding loans of \$100,000. They wanted the money immediately. Without the cash needed to pay the loans, Miller was forced to let the bankers take all but his crippled livestock. "The eastern bankers sent in men who took all our cattle," Zack Miller said years later. "When they got through, all we had left was eighty-eight old horses and a handful of cows. We were as flat as the prairie."

But the Millers did not admit defeat. That was not in Joe's, Zack's, or George's nature. Nor was it characteristic of Colonel Miller, the patriarch of the clan. A council was called in the front parlor of the Winfield residence. The entire family, including Molly and daughter Alma, sat down to plan its future. Finally,

after much discussion, they struck upon a solution.

They would alter their approach to business and, instead of just raising livestock, they would also become farmers and plant cash crops. It called for a roll of the dice but the Millers had few alternatives. Because of the family's reputation in the community, local financial institutions took a chance and underwrote the Millers' purchase of plows, seed wheat, and 500 calves to be fattened for market. Old hands, accustomed to rounding up strays and branding dogies, pretended their cow ponies were draft horses in order to plow thousands of acres of rangeland for a wheat crop. It proved to be a wise maneuver. In 1894, the Millers brought in more than 70,000 bushels of quality wheat, which they immediately sold for a lucrative \$1.20 per bushel. This gave them seed money for rebuilding their depleted herds and expanding their fields for more crops.

For the next decade the 101 Ranch grew and prospered. All the while, Colonel Miller continued to teach his sons the fine points of entrepreneurship and risk-taking. They proved to be able students. All three adhered to a basic business philosophy: "It is just as bad to go broke in a little way as it is in a big way." These were words that the Miller brothers would live and die by over the next forty years.

By 1903, after a decade of successful ranching and farming, the Millers were prepared to make a total commitment to the land they had been leasing from the Ponca tribe. The federal government was breaking up various Indian lands and doling out allotments to individual tribal members. Now the tribes could sell property with federal government approval. When White Eagle received the government's permission to sell Ponca land, the Millers were finally permitted to buy



The seed barn at the 101 Ranch, above, its roof marked as if the ranch were seen from the air — suggestive of the Miller brothers' sweeping view of their spread.

Below, Joe Miller, here down to earth, holds a pig. In the 1890s the Millers diversified their operation to include farming and ranching. The pig Miller holds harks back to the way his father G. W. Miller got his first foothold: swapping bacon for steers in San Saba, Texas.

COURTESY OF BOB KERR



thousands of acres they had been leasing from the tribe. By and by, the Miller's property holdings extended throughout the lands of the Ponca, Otoe, Pawnee, and Osage Indians in four different counties. No longer burdened with uncertainties, restrictions, and government red tape, the Millers at last felt comfortable about making permanent improvements. They were anxious to draw up plans for a large headquarters to take the place of the sod dugout on the bank of the Salt Fork.

Colonel Miller wanted the 101 headquarters house to be the finest in cow country. Influenced by his love of the fine plantation homes back in Kentucky, he had plans drawn up for a three-story prairie palace to be built on the north side of the Salt Fork and furnished with the best things from the house in Winfield. Work commenced at once.

Unfortunately, the elder Miller never set foot in the completed residence that came to be called the White House. That spring the old rebel was stricken

with pneumonia. Almost as soon as he was diagnosed, Miller recognized that he would not recover, but his manners remained constant to the end. Only a few hours before his death, he made sure that friends who rode out to see him were fed a proper meal. Then Colonel George Washington Miller, founder of the 101 Ranch empire, quietly died inside the old dugout headquarters on the Salt Fork. He was sixty-one.

Brief services were held the next day on the ranch. They washed and dressed the old man and laid him in a coffin packed with ice so the body would keep while being shipped by rail to Crab Orchard, the old family home in Kentucky. An escort of the Colonel's favorite cowboys rode beside the hearse as it rolled from the ranch headquarters toward the train depot at the nearby town of Bliss. Many Ponca Indians also accompanied the hearse.

The Ponca chief White Eagle and other tribal leaders paid their last respects at the dugout but did not go to the railroad station. A *Kansas City Star* reporter heard

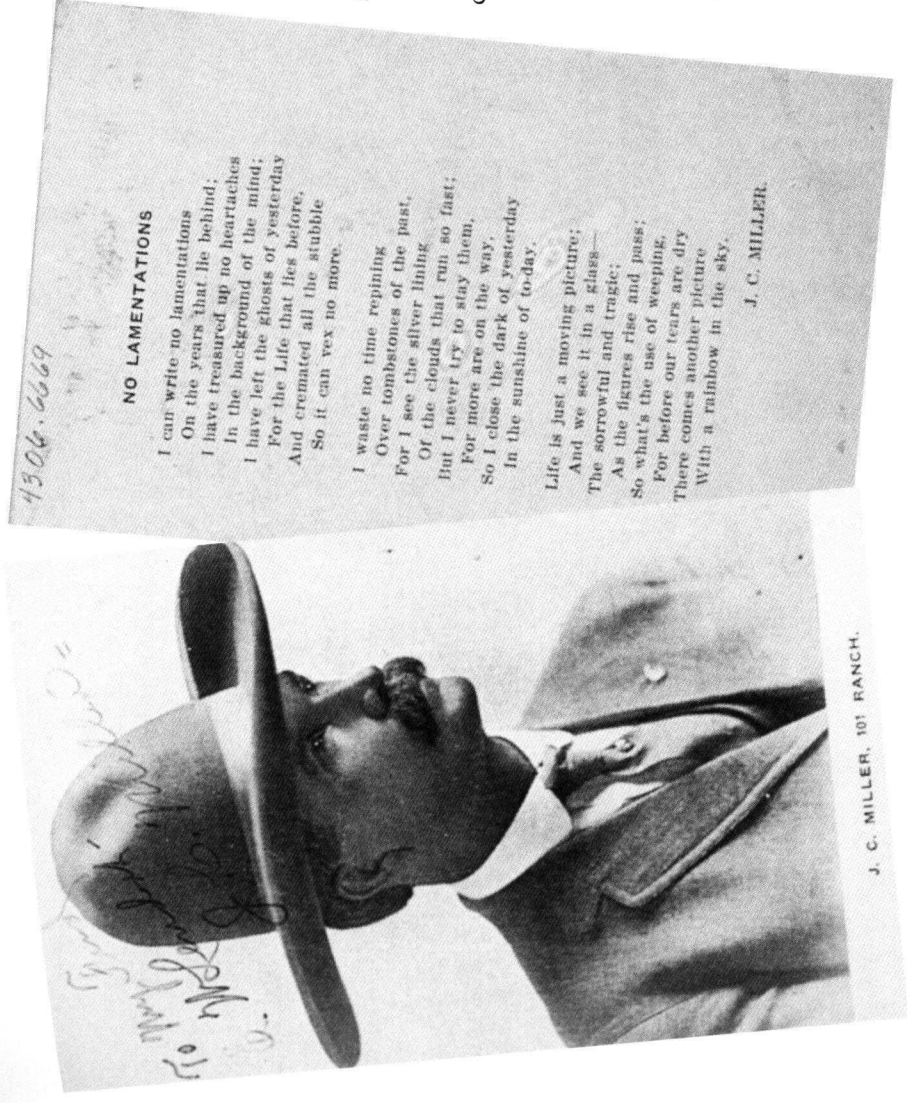
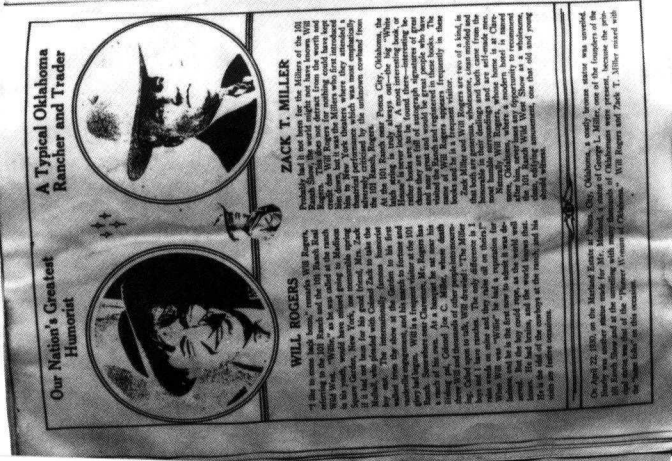
White Eagle explain: "I would not weep where men and women could see me." All day and into the night, Ponca mourners wailed death chants and butchered cattle for a big feast to honor their departed friend.

Colonel Miller left no will. Instead, he decreed that the 101 Ranch should remain intact and forever stay in the Miller family. His widow received \$30,000 from a life insurance policy. The Miller boys saw to it that work continued on the new ranch headquarters residence. The family place in Winfield was sold.

On Halloween Day of 1903, Miller family members and friends turned out at the still unfinished residence for the wedding of Alma Miller to Henry England, a young up-and-coming lawyer from Winfield. On Christmas Day, the family sat down to the first meal ever served in the new house.

COURTESY OF MICHAEL WALLIS

A program from the 101 Ranch Real Wild West.



The front and back of a card sent by Joe Miller to friends declared his philosophy in a poem he penned. This card is inscribed to the artist Emil Lenders, whose sketchbooks are featured in an article beginning on page 30.

GILCREASE MUSEUM,
4306.6669

The Miller brothers, Joe, Zack, and George, at the entrance to the 101 Real Wild West Show tent.

WOOLAROC MUSEUM, BARTLESVILLE, OKLAHOMA

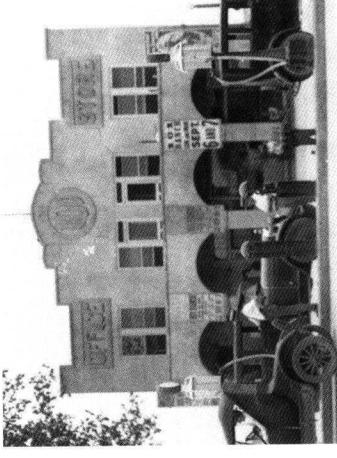
Below, the Apache warrior Geronimo at the 101. Joe C. Miller and William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody are in the back seat in this picture by an unknown photographer.

GILCREASE MUSEUM, 4306.6668



The program included parades, rodeo events, and Indian raids on stagecoaches and wagon trains. Lucille Mulhall, billed as "America's first cowgirl," thrilled onlookers with daring stunts performed while dashing around the arena on her galloping horse. Bill Pickett, the illustrious black cowboy from Texas who was credited with "inventing" the rodeo event known as bulldogging, or steer wrestling, made a lasting impression on the audience by using his famous teeth to best a feisty steer. Pickett would go on to ride with the Miller brothers for many years before his life ended on the ranch after a kick from an unruly horse in 1932.

Thousands of guests also watched as the aging Apache warrior Geronimo, brought to the 101 by a military escort from Fort Sill, killed a buffalo during a mock hunt. Publicity for the event billed the appearance as a chance to see Geronimo stalk and shoot his last buffalo. When the dust finally settled, the resulting editorial coverage, with every major newspaper and magazine reporting on the colorful blow-out, catapulted the 101 into the public's imagination. Encouraged by the overwhelming response, the Miller brothers



A picnic at Woolaroc on September 27, 1930. Seated in the front row are Pawnee Bill, host Frank Phillips, founder of Phillips Petroleum (in the hat and glasses), and Osage chief Fred Lookout. Chief Lookout's grandson is on Phillips' lap. Zack Miller, wearing a huge hat and white shirt, kneels at the base of a tree. Phillips and the Miller brothers were close friends. The photograph immediately above shows the gas station at the 101. Oil and gasoline were produced and refined on the ranch and marketed at the ranch store.

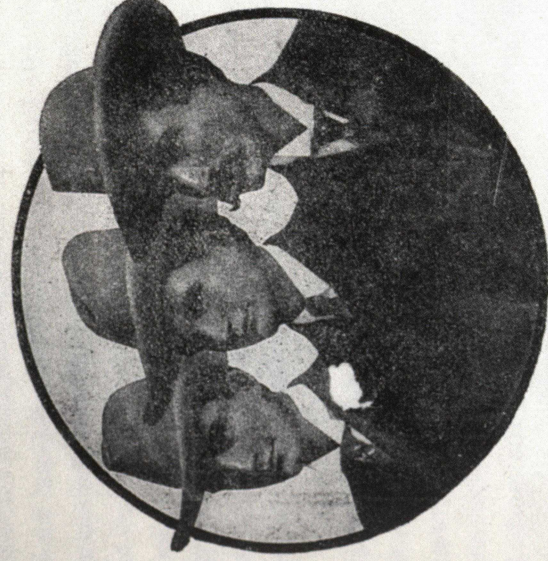
WOOLAROC MUSEUM, BARTLESVILLE, OKLAHOMA

decided to put the show on the road. "Boys ten years old and younger have never seen a genuine Wild West show, and we are going to make it possible for them to see one," bragged Joe Miller, who along with his two brothers put the honorary title of colonel before his name just as their father had long before them.

In the years that followed, it became a common sight to spot the Millers and their company of cowboy and Indian performers departing Oklahoma in a train of Pullmans and freight cars. They played to capacity audiences in Norfolk, Oklahoma City, Kansas City, Wichita, St. Louis, and New York. Everywhere the Millers took their show, they were greeted with eager throngs of fans and rave reviews. Despite catastrophes such as the disastrous fire that destroyed the ranch headquarters in 1909, the Millers did not miss a beat. They rebuilt an even bigger and better White House, complete with every modern convenience.

Tom Mix, who had first encountered the Millers years before when he was pushing drinks across a mahogany bar in Guthrie, signed on and spent several years with the 101 Ranch. It was at the ranch that he learned his best cowboy stunts. He put them to use later as a moving picture star in California. In 1926, many years after he left their employ, Mix recalled his time with the Millers in a feature story written for the 101 Magazine. "In the old days, with the blue sky above me, a good horse under me, the vast acreage of the old 101 Ranch rolling green about me and a bacon-filled atmosphere from the chuck wagon calling me, I was the richest of men," wrote Mix. "To me there has always been

101 RANCH WILD WEST



MILLER BROTHERS

Miller Brothers

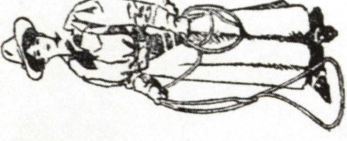
101 Ranch

PICTURE DEPARTMENT

"Days of The Buffalo"

Latest-Greatest Western Feature Ever Produced
Largest Lobby Display Carried By Any Show

W. R. COUCH & SON, Mgrs.
P. E. STATER, Advance



an inspiration in the broad expanse of . . . prairie, the ranch houses and the low corrals of the 101."

The 101 Ranch inspired a host of others who also went on to fame and fortune as Western motion picture heroes and heroines — Buck Jones, Mabel Normand, Neal Hart, Hoot and Helen Gibson, and many others. The early Western films shot on the 101 Ranch may have been crude compared to their modern counterparts, but they helped stir the nation's imagination.

W. A. Brooks, a cousin to the Millers, acted as the primary film director for the 101 Ranch when they decided to break new ground in California. By 1911 the Millers wintered their performers not far from Venice on the Pacific, just west of Los Angeles and the little town of Hollywood. Thomas Ince and his Bison Motion Picture Company joined forces with the Millers, and Ince went on to hire many of the men and women from the 101 to appear in his popular Western films. He eventually purchased almost 20,000 acres of land in southern California where he built a movie studio. At first called the Miller 101 Bison Ranch, the property became known as Inceville and remained in constant use until the early 1920s.

All the time the early film work was being pro-

duced, the 101 Wild West Show continued to travel through the United States, Canada, and Mexico, thrilling audiences wherever it went. In 1914 the show went abroad and played to enthusiastic crowds in Great Britain. At a memorable matinee performance in London, Queen Mary along with the Czarina of Russia and the queens of Greece, Rumania, and Spain, sat in the royal boxes applauding what was described as "the most marvelous Wild West performance ever seen."

Above, a poster for the Miller brother's film company. In the same way that the working cowboy's life was transformed into Wild West show performances, the Wild West shows became the basis for early Western movies. It was a natural progression — and a further step from reality toward myth. James Nottage discusses Western film in an article beginning on page 54.

WOOLAROC MUSEUM, BARTLESVILLE, OKLAHOMA

FACING PAGE

101 Ranch poster

Chromolithograph on paper mounted on board

GILCREASE MUSEUM, 1626.340

But when World War I erupted the British government cut short the 101's European tour by commandeering the show stock and equipment for its army. Only some fast talking allowed the Millers to salvage their best horses from being pressed into military service. Despite the great losses, the Millers tried again to put fine shows on the road during the 1915 and 1916 seasons. Jess Willard, the world champion prize fighter known as the "Great White Hope" was hired to help attract crowds and, in 1916 Buffalo Bill Cody, at one time the idol of every red-blooded American boy, joined the show. Although by that time he was unable even to mount his famous white stallion, the old showman and scout delighted his fans as glass balls were tossed into the air for him to shatter with his rifle. Shortly after that the United States entered the war. The Millers disbanded their show as many of the 101 performers went off to fight in France.

Actors from the 101 Ranch Picture Department, photographed in August, 1913 in Santa Ynez Canyon, California.

WOOLAROC MUSEUM, BARTLESVILLE, OKLAHOMA

They tried a comeback in 1924 under a new name — the 101 Ranch Real Wild West and Great Far East. It was the age of the circus, and there was serious competition from the moving pictures. The Millers relied more and more on spectacular stunts and less on the authentic Western skills that had brought them glory years before. Accidental fires and cyclones ravaged their tents, and train wrecks and other misfortunes added to the Miller's woes.

On October 21, 1927, Colonel Joe Miller — the oldest of the Miller brothers — died. His death, ruled accidental, was due to carbon monoxide poisoning sustained while he was working on an automobile in the garage at his new home just north of the ranch. Joe's sudden passing not only stunned his brothers but undoubtedly marked the start of the downfall of the 101 empire. More bad news was soon to come in the form of severe drought and crop failures, a horrendous flood, and a sharp decline in oil royalties. Ranch finances were strained to the limit.

On February 1, 1929, George Miller returned from a trip to Texas to find dismal weather all across

Oklahoma. Around midnight he was returning home when he lost control of his Lincoln roadster on an icy curve near Ponca City. The car skidded on the pavement before it overturned, pinning Miller's head beneath a front wheel. He died before reaching the hospital. The 101 Ranch had not only lost another of the Miller brothers but the one who was the best when it came to business dealing. Only Zack Miller survived.

Zack and his nephews tried their best to keep the operation afloat. But by late 1929 the bottom fell out of the stock market. The grim years of the Great Depression had begun. In little time, the once lucrative oil business was clobbered, as were the Millers' agricultural ventures. Livestock prices dropped to the lowest level on record. Zack tried to stop the bleeding by securing a new mortgage, but it did not help. No matter what he tried, the economic situation only grew worse. In 1930, the ranch suffered a net loss of more than \$300,000.

No cash reserve remained to curb the mortgages, bank notes, and taxes. In 1931, a court-appointed receiver stepped in, and liquidation was started. The

Millers' beloved Wild West Show was dismantled and sold off. Zack still made desperate attempts to save his family's historic ranch, but before long much of the ranch equipment and the livestock went on the auction block. Finally, despite Zack's protests and his attempts with a six-shooter to halt the proceedings, everything had to be sold. In a poignant story published March 25, 1932, the *Daily Oklahoman* described the scene at the 101 Ranch:

There were sad doings here Thursday, marking the passing of a great Oklahoma institution, the 101 Ranch, internationally famous symbol of a young state that rides 'em cowboy. A picturesque crowd of more than 3000 persons turned out for the receiver's sale of all the property of the Miller brother's 101 Ranch Trust . . . a vast majority simply to . . . watch with calm solicitude the disintegration of the greatest show place in the west. Over in the historic White House of the ranch, Colonel Zack Miller, sole survivor of the trio of brothers which made the place famous, roared defiance to the world, threatening to blow up the mansion, and even fired a shotgun in the direction of attorneys seeking a conference with him. He termed the sale a "legal robbery."



“The West vanished for the Indian and the drover; it vanished for the cowboy. Simultaneously it reappeared in all the same places, and in movies and rodeos. It’s like fire. Hollywood, calf tables, and depreciation schedules can’t kill it.

THOMAS MCGUANE

Zack, ever defiant and painfully aware of all that his father and brothers had sacrificed to create the 101 empire, finally had to be hauled off to the county jail. There he remained until Oklahoma Governor William “Alfalfa Bill” Murray, through his state militia, saw to it that Zack was released.

The last of the Miller brothers still was not ready to stop his battle to save the 101. Later that year, news stories surfaced that in order to keep at least a portion of the spread going, Zack was negotiating with Chicago gangster Al “Scar Face” Capone. The plan was for Capone and his brother Ralph to purchase several thousand acres of the 101. A Ponca City real estate broker suggested that the Capones would manage the ranch after Al gained release from the federal penitentiary. The Capones would then divide the 101 into forty- and eighty-acre farms to be worked by a colony of Italian immigrant families. The scheme was short-lived.

Soon all that remained was the White House and its furnishings. Then, in 1936, the entire contents of the twenty-two rooms, including antique guns, buffalo overcoats, Indian rugs, and a prized Lenders portrait of White Eagle, the Ponca chief, were auctioned off. A *Daily Oklahoman* reporter described the occasion on that hot July day:



Gloves from the 101 Ranch

GILCREASE MUSEUM, 8437.638 A/B

famed Strip. Years later two old 101 veterans — Jack Webb, a trick roper and sharp shooter, and Sam Stigall, a 101 cowboy and foreman from 1902 to 1929, were laid to rest nearby. Just up the road a short distance, near the town of Marland, are the graves of White Eagle and Bill Pickett.

Hardly any physical trace of the 101 Ranch remains. The land was divided into scores of privately owned farms. Through time all the buildings, even the White House, were burned down, razed, or left to decompose.

But sometimes if the morning light is just right, or late at night when the moon makes puzzling shadows, those who know what was once there pause along the two-lane road that runs by the old spread, and to them the wind in the sumac sounds like cow ponies on the move, or chanting, or the faraway beating of drums.

Grim, gray-haired Zack T. Miller stood in the shadows of the old White House Saturday and watched the last of his vast empire crumble under the hammer of an auctioneer. He stood without visible emotion, although his face set in hard lines as one by one his personal belongings went on the block, ending another epic of the Old West.

The sale ended, and bargain hunters scattered. The last of three famous sons of a famous father stood on the steps of the big white mansion, and gazed over what once was a 110,000-acre ranch. Perhaps he saw another time, when 50,000 persons gathered in 1905 to cheer the first annual round-up that later grew into the wild west circus. . .

Over the years, Zack tried to make a comeback by riding with Wild West shows. He even bought back the old 101 Ranch Store building and set up a curio shop but it didn’t last. He died in 1952 in Texas, the state where so many years before his father had swapped hog meat for steers to start the 101 Ranch.

They brought Zack home to Oklahoma. He was buried close to the banks of the Salt Fork, on Cowboy Hill, a plot of land given by Zack to the Cherokee Strip Cowpunchers Association as a place for annual reunions of those who had ridden the range in the

The Sketchbooks of Emil Lenders Down to the Soles of the Moccasins

To depict cowboys and Indians correctly the painter has to know intimately all their half forgotten accoutrements and equipment, tools, utensils etc The same holds good in costume designs etc, which was distinct and different in every tribe even down to the soles of the moccasins.

The soles of the moccasins of an Indian differed in shape and cut in each tribe. In other words the imprint of an Indian foot left in the sand found by another Indian coming that way told him what tribe his predecessor belonged to.

EMIL W. LENDERS, "RANDOM SKETCHES OF THE OLD WEST"¹

EMIL LENDERS WAS MOST FAMOUS IN HIS OWN time as a painter of Indians and Western animals, especially buffalo — Gordon W. "Pawnee Bill" Lillie called him "the best painter in the world of our national animal, the buffalo."

Although he never enjoyed the renown of such contemporary painters of the West as Charles Marion Russell and William Robinson Leigh, Lenders was, at his death in 1934, one of Oklahoma's most prominent artists. He counted among his patrons the Miller brothers of the 101 Ranch and oil magnate E.W. Marland; his pallbearers included Robert S. Kerr and Frank Phillips, as well as Pawnee Bill.



THE SKETCHBOOKS OF EMIL LENDERS ARE AT ONCE A PICTORIAL INVENTORY, AN ETHNOGRAPHIC DOCUMENT, A COMPENDIUM OF MOTIFS FOR PAINTINGS, AND A PATTERN BOOK FOR COSTUME DESIGN. THEY REVEAL LENDERS AS A COLLECTOR IN LOVE WITH HIS PRIZES AND AN ARTIST IN LOVE WITH HIS SUBJECT.

FACING PAGE

Photograph of Emil Lenders

Goldberg and Vigus Studio, Wichita, Kansas
GILCREASE MUSEUM, 4327.5968



November 25, 1931.

CONCERN:

Emil W. Lenders is the best of our national animal artists world of the few outstanding a one of the West intimately. the old West experience that Lenders, from actual experience and made died cowboys and Indians now-a-days present with all their torments, and equipped ways, accounts, etc., and the strenuous



G. W. Lillie.
"Pawnee Bill"

EMIL LENDERS
In the Face of the Blizzard

Oil on canvas
NATIONAL WILDLIFE ART MUSEUM

Gordon W. ("Pawnee Bill") Lillie wrote this letter of endorsement for Emil Lenders November 25, 1931.

GILCREASE MUSEUM, 4027.4848

Lenders was also a performer in Wild West shows and at least one early Western film, a dealer in Indian artifacts, an amateur ethnologist who planned to produce an illustrated book about Native American crafts, and an Oklahoma rancher. The impact on his art of each of these pursuits can be seen in three albums of watercolors illustrating articles of Native American costume that constitute what may be his most beautiful — and are certainly his most delightful — works.

Emil William Lenders was born in London on May 11, 1864. His father was an Englishman who died four years after Emil's birth, whereupon his mother returned to her parents' home in Stuttgart. Thanks to his grandfather's position as court librarian, little Emil attended the court school, and later he would claim that he studied with Karl von Piloty, the most successful German academic painter of his day. Like many of his German contemporaries who eagerly consumed the frontier novels of Karl May, Lenders developed an enthusiasm for American Indians in early childhood and determined to visit them in their homeland. He emigrated to the United States sometime after May 14, 1887, and became a naturalized citizen in March 1906, in Philadelphia, where he lived until the early 1920s.

Disappointed that the streets of America were not "crowded with braves wearing feathers and . . . war paint," Lenders finally discovered the object of his passion at a performance of Buffalo Bill's Wild West in Madison Square Garden in New York. According to an article published in the *Oklahoma City Times* in the early 1930s, Lenders "spent long hours with the show, until finally Cody persuaded him to return with them to Oklahoma. Here, Lenders found the life he had been searching for always. He settled down with the Indians, lived among them: he was given an Indian name, Wambli Oyuspa, and the honor of being treated as one of their kind."

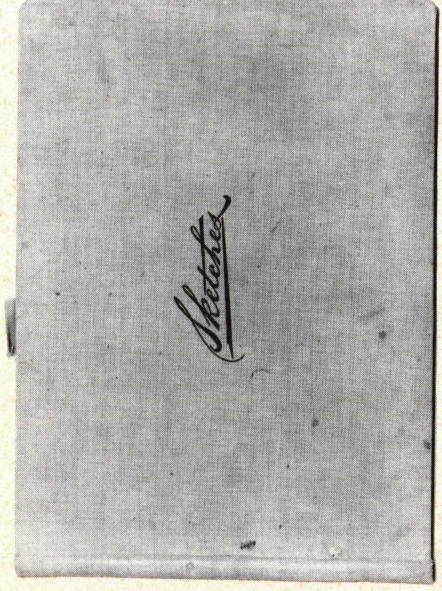
Lenders claimed that he made his first visit to Oklahoma in 1887. However, Buffalo Bill toured England, not Oklahoma, after his 1887 engagement in Madison Square Garden. And Lenders himself contradicted this tale when he stated in his "Random Sketches of the Old West" that "I was. . . adopted in the Ogalala Sioux tribe at the Pine Ridge

Agency in South Dakota. . . They eventually came to give me the Indian name of Wambli Oyuspa which means in English 'Caught-the-Eagle.'" Yet another source, a Sunday supplement feature published in 1926, offers this version of Lenders' early years in America:

When Lenders decided to make western animal life the basis of his future work he traveled for several years with the Wild West shows, mingling with and studying cowboys and Indian horses, cattle and buffalo, both on the northern plains and in the semi-arid regions of the Southwest living among the Indians and in cow camps and exchanging his Philadelphia studio every summer for a strenuous life in order to be near the types he desired. This brought him to Oklahoma, upon the invitation of Col. Joe C. Miller, to study the specimens of buffalo on the 101 Ranch.²

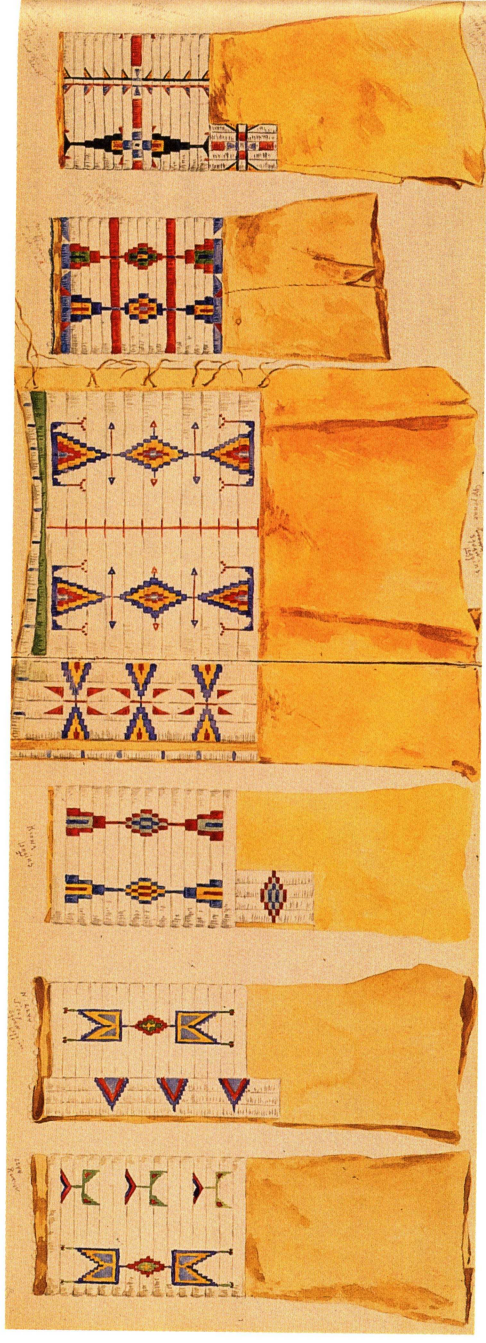
Each of these stories contains a grain of truth. Buffalo Bill, who recognized opportunities for self-promotion wherever they presented themselves, had long given artists free access to his Wild West. Artists ranging from Frederic Remington and Cyrus Dallin to Rosa Bonheur depicted the show and its stars, with Cody pre-eminent among them. In its appeal to painters and sculptors, Buffalo Bill's Wild West might, in fact, be likened to the artists' colonies founded in the late 19th century in rural Connecticut and New Hampshire, in the high desert of New Mexico, and along the coasts of Maine and eastern Long Island. Artists were drawn by the singular local landscapes and cultures of these places. Buffalo Bill's show, though it was constantly on the move, was no less distinctive in character, and it exerted a similar pull on artists who shared an interest in the West.

The earliest evidence in the Gilcrease archives of Lenders' involvement with Buffalo Bill is a photocopy of a season pass, signed by Cody, for 1907; Lenders was also issued passes in each of the following four years, the last one inscribed "Good forever." In 1908, Cody took time out from a hectic touring schedule to tell Lenders where to obtain "photographs of my self taken



Three of the five Lenders sketchbooks, featured here, are of the same type. They are clothbound, commercially produced books measuring ten by fourteen inches, with the word "Sketches" stamped on the front cover. The order in which they were made is unknown, although the large number of blank pages in the book designated "Sketchbook I" suggests that it may have been executed last rather than first. Inside its faded blue cover, Sketchbook I (1827.23) is inscribed in pencil, "E. W. Lenders/420 W. 11th St./Apt. 22/Oklahoma City/Okla." It contains 24 leaves, of which nine are blank. Lenders filled the last five pages with sketches of cattle brands in pencil and in ink (1827.23.26-1827.26.30); he also drew diagrams in pencil of the single diamond hitch, squaw hitch, and bedding hitch on a double-page spread (1827.23.22-1827.23.23). Sketchbook II (1827.24) has a stained tan cover; it also contains 24 leaves, all of which are filled with watercolors. It carries a stamp on its inside front cover indicating that it was purchased from the shop of Henry M. Taws, Artist and Desk Material, 920 Arch Street, Philadelphia. Across the upper edge of the inside front cover is the penciled inscription "E. W. Lenders 3809 Poplar St. Phila Pa." "Phila Pa." has been crossed out and "Marland, Okla./Thunder Bird Ranch" has been added to the inscription. Sketchbook III (1827.25) is also covered in tan cloth. In the upper left corner of its inside front cover is a sticker reading "F. Weber & Co./Sketchbook/10 x 14 - Each 1.00." "420 W. 11th St./Apt. 22/Okla. City" is written in pencil over the sticker. In ink in the upper center of the inside cover appears the signature "Col. E. W. Lenders/Marland, Bliss,/Okla./Thunder Bird Ranch."

Sketchbook III contains 21 pages, none of them blank. All inscriptions in the sketchbooks are in Lenders' hand.



EMIL LENDERS

Studies of Pipe Bags

Watercolor on sketchbook leaf

GILCREASE MUSEUM, 1827.23.11

Below, "Buffalo Bill" Cody inscribed a photograph to Lenders in 1913. Photographer unknown.

GILCREASE MUSEUM, 4317.3065



in my younger days," assuring the artist that "should you paint anything where I am the central figure, you and I wouldn't have much trouble making a deal." When the portrait arrived, Cody decided to "keep it a day or two before passing judgement. But it grows. And I believe I will like it." Cody seems to have developed a genuine affection for Lenders, offering to take him along on a Wyoming hunting trip — "you can paint me a picture for what the trip will cost you. . . and it will give you new ideas to paint from." He presented Lenders with a valuable saddle in 1910 and promised at the end of his 1912 season to "hunt up some nice momento before the close of the season, which I have worn myself" and send it to him. Cody, whom Lenders described as "a man of highly artistic temperament and perceptive taste," was also generous with professional counsel, advising him, "Lenders, if you want to paint sunlight, go to Oklahoma."

Although the date of Lenders' first visit to Oklahoma is unknown, and it is unlikely that it was as early as 1887, he was probably not far off the mark when he described his initial impressions of the territory as "pretty near in a virgin state, some parts a regular wilderness." It was also, Lenders recognized, utterly lacking in patrons for his work. However, the growth of the oil industry changed all that, and the presence in the state of such prosperous and flamboyant businessmen as E. W. Marland and Cody's erstwhile partner Gordon W.

Lillie, who also befriended the artist, encouraged Lenders "to move to Oklahoma for good."

Above all, it was thanks to the Miller brothers that Lenders settled in Oklahoma. In 1922, their 101 Ranch Trust granted a mortgage on forty acres in Noble County near the town of Bliss — now Marland — to Lenders and one Lillian Smith. (Lillian Smith was not Lenders' wife; he had married Eva Day in Philadelphia in 1898 and would divorce her in 1928, a year before he married Carrico Vigus.) The forty acres became the site of Lenders' Thunder Bird Ranch.

Besides being good customers—Lenders made seven paintings of buffalo for the 101 Ranch's headquarters³—the Millers furnished the artist with convenient access to his two favorite subjects, buffalo and Indians. On their ranch south of Ponca City, the Millers kept a large herd of bison, of which Lenders made close and careful study. The Millers' prairie empire was located near the reservations of a dozen Indian Nations, which made it easier for Lenders to realize his desire "to sketch every outstanding Indian Chief of the different tribes" in Oklahoma, and their recruitment of Native American performers from other parts of the country for their 101 Ranch show would have enabled him to meet members of tribes not resident in Oklahoma.⁴

The Millers maintained what was, for their time, a respectful attitude toward Native Americans, but they felt no compunction about displaying Indians to a curious public. In 1883, Joe Miller arranged for a group of Poncas to reside in an "Indian village" set up at the Alabama State Fair; fair-goers paid 25 cents to stroll among their tipis and watch their dances. The Alabama State Fair "exhibit" was the precursor of the Indian villages that accompanied the 101 Ranch Show on its tours. Here, it was advertised, Indians could be seen "as they were in the wilds," although conditions were far from natural. Members of traditionally hostile tribes coexisted in close quarters, with guards posted to keep the peace.⁵

By the time Emil Lenders arrived in America, herds of buffalo

Buffalo Bill's Wild West

E. W. Lenders' signature
3609 Popular
Pub.



EMIL LENDERS

Portrait of Joe Miller, 1923

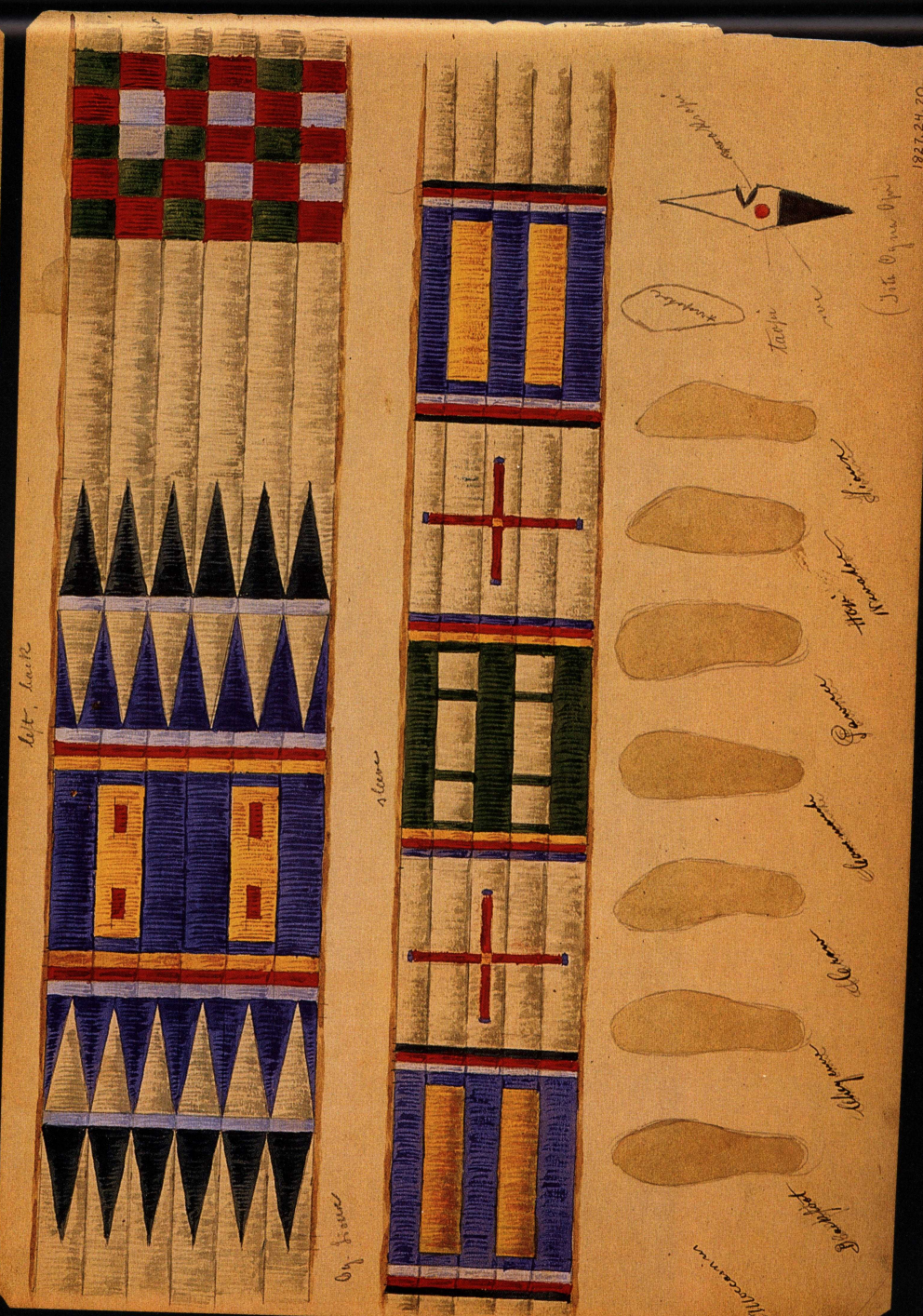
Oil on canvas

GILCREASE MUSEUM, 0127.1992

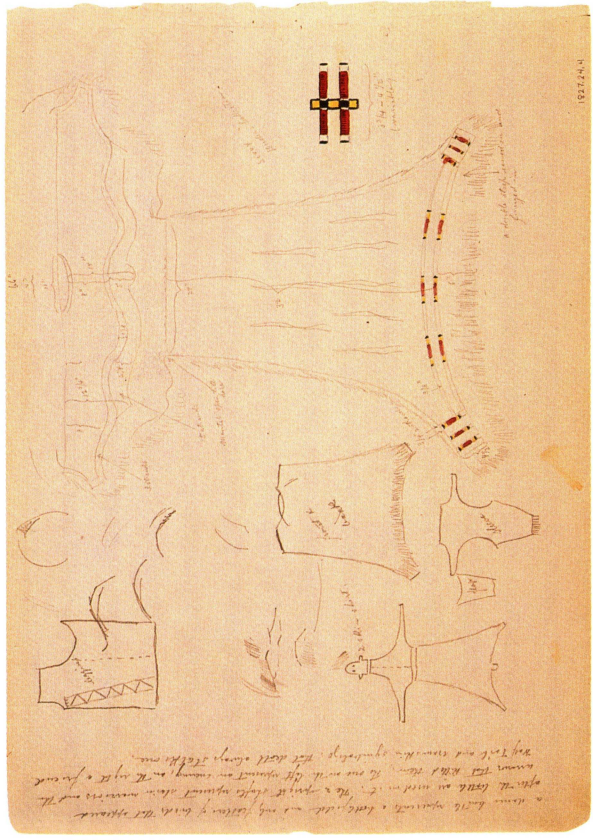
Joe Miller and Pawnee Bill were friends and supporters of Lenders, who was commissioned to paint Miller's portrait for the 101 Ranch. The imprinted envelope shown behind (Gilcrease Museum, 4017.2381) is dated June 8, 1909.



1827.24.3



1827.24.20



1827.24.4



EMIL LENDERS
Study of Clothing Design
Watercolor on sketchbook leaf
GILCREASE MUSEUM, 1827.24.4

BELOW
GEORGE CATLIN
Three Blackfoot Indians
Watercolor on paper
GILCREASE MUSEUM, 4776.5.20

Lenders' complete absorption in the details of Indian dress calls to mind the creator of another watercolor portfolio in the Gilcrease collection. In George Catlin's *Souvenir of the North American Indians as They Were in the Middle of the Nineteenth Century*, dated 1849, Indian models with no more individual character than store mannequins turn away from the viewer in order to display the glorious designs on their backs. Yet the evident seriousness with which Lenders applied himself to his task, seen in his fastidious reproduction of quills, beads, and even individual stitches, implies an admiration for the makers of these objects that gives the watercolors a profoundly sympathetic human tone, their lack of figures notwithstanding.

As if to avoid wasting any of his laboriously won knowledge, Lenders presented the fullest, most informative view of the objects he illustrated. Dresses and shirts are extended across double-page spreads rather than draped on figures, which would have disguised their true form and obscured the decorative designs worked upon them. As we look through the sketchbooks, we feel the absence of the makers and owners of these objects, who are long since separated from their creations and

possessions; Lenders, in fact, labeled some of the artifacts incorrectly, because he recorded the tribe of the individual from whom he obtained the object rather than that of its origin.⁹ Lenders would have maintained, however, that his greater interest in how these pieces of clothing were decorated than in who wore them was justified by the Indians' own customs. "An Indian," he wrote, "wore clothing not for protection but only as an ornament, and very sensibly decorated the back of clothing more than the front for the very good reason that in passing a person he might look at you in the face, or he might not look at you at all, but after passing you, like Lot's wife, he would look back at you."

The provenance of Lenders' collections is not well-documented, but the good condition and elaborate decoration of the artifacts recorded in the sketchbooks suggest that he may well have obtained them from Indians who performed in Wild West shows or worked in the "Indian villages" that accompanied them. By the 1880s, when Buffalo Bill founded the first of the great western shows, Indians were largely confined to

EMIL LENDERS
Shirt Study
Watercolor on sketchbook leaf
GILCREASE MUSEUM, 1827.24.21



reservations. Many individuals devoted their free time to beadwork, which was raised by some to a high art during this period. The Plains tribes were identified in the popular mind as American Indians *par excellence*, and, no matter what their tribal affiliation, the Indians who performed in the Western shows wore costumes embroidered with complex Plains-style beadwork. They were gorgeously dressed, right down to the beaded soles of their moccasins, which could easily be seen when they were on horseback. Lenders may have purchased the clothing illustrated in the sketchbooks from employees of Cody, the Millers, and Pawnee Bill, who had his own "museum" of Native American artifacts.¹⁰ Lenders may also have acquired a wardrobe of Plains clothing and accessories during his own brief fling in the Western show business.

As impressive as many of Lenders' artifacts are, the quality of the composition and execution of the watercolors must ultimately be credited to him. A checkered moccasin retreats from the ranks of its companions to accommodate the tasseled ties of a pipe bag (page 46); a Sioux

EMIL LENDERS
Shirt Study
Watercolor on sketchbook leaf
GILCREASE MUSEUM, 1827.24.34





EMIL LENDERS

Studies of Moccasins and Pipe Bag

Watercolor on sketchbook leaf

GILCREASE MUSEUM, 1927.25.43

dress with an elliptical, halo-like collar spreads its sleeves like the wings of an angel (page 40). In some of these still lifes, such as the images of shirts and moccasins shown below, Lenders superimposed his subjects on backgrounds of dark-colored wash that simultaneously show them to better advantage and add a note of drama.

It hardly needs emphasizing that all 19th- and early 20th-century art of the West was produced during changing times. From Catlin forward, artists of the West have confronted landscapes and cultures in transition and have endeavored to preserve, on canvas, paper, or film, an image of what was, to them, the "Real West." Lenders, who tried out, among other titles, "Sketches of a Fast Disappearing Period of American History" for his book project, was no exception. He fashioned his career during that period between the 1880s and 1920s when the last celebrities, both Indian and Anglo, of the historic Old West participated in the transformation of their world into the most enduring myth of the

American identity, not to mention a major segment of the entertainment industry.

It is completely fitting that at one point it was suggested to Lenders' widow that she attempt to sell his collection in Hollywood, a proposition that, had it been successful, would have brought Lenders' career full circle. Just as Lenders' watercolors could well pass for costume designs rather than illustrations of artifacts, so the uses to which his collection might be put blur the line between art and life, between anthropology and show business.

Almost all artists of the West collected Native American artifacts which they used, like set designers, as props in their pictures. And, just as some of Remington's paintings became models for scenes in John Ford's westerns, so could the artifacts end up in the movies. Lenders' relationship with the Millers makes it quite possible that some of his pieces actually did appear in early Western films. The shirts, dresses, and moccasins that Lenders collected are masterpieces of decorative art that represent a final brilliant efflorescence of Plains culture. The artifacts, as well as the watercolors that depict them, both create and fulfill our expectations of what Indian costume should be. That they could as easily have come to rest in the prop department of a movie studio as in the ethnographical collection of a museum shows just how close our notion of the authentic West is to the vision of the mythical West promoted by popular culture. In Lenders' watercolors, as in his collection, spectacle and reality are one.

1 Emil W. Lenders, "Random Sketches of the Old

West/Sketches of the Western Frontier/My Sketches of the Forgotten Old West/ Sketches of a Fast Disappearing Period of American History." Typescript. This and all subsequent quotations from Lenders' manuscripts are reproduced verbatim, except for obvious typographical errors. No attempt has been made to correct grammar or punctuation. "Random Sketches of the Old West" can be found among the Lenders Papers in the archival collections of Gilcrease Museum. Unless otherwise noted, this article is based on those documents; a list of specific references is on file in the Gilcrease library.

2 C. M. Sarchet, "He Lives as a Cowboy to Paint the Wild West," *The Kansas City Star Magazine*, 13 June 1926, 8.

3 Label in framed group of unidentified newspaper clippings, Woolaroc Museum.

4 Ellsworth Collings and Alma Miller England, *The 101 Ranch*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1937 (Third printing with Foreword by Glenn Shirley, 1971), x, 168.

5 Collings and England, Op. cit., 136, 170.

6 Collings and England, Op. cit., 161-162.

7 Collings and England, Op. cit., 121.

8 Alfred L. Kroeber, The Mrs. Morris K. Jesup Expedition. The Arapaho, *Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History*, XVIII, Part I, New York: September 3, 1902; Clark Wissler, *Indian Costumes in the United States: A Guide to the Study of the Collections in the Museum*, New York: Museum of the

American Indian, July 1926. Clark Wissler's *Riding Gear of the North American Indians, Costumes of the Plains Indians, and Structural Basis to the Decoration of Costumes Among the Plains Indians* (Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, Vol. XVII, Parts I-III, New York: American Museum of Natural History, 1915-1916) also include illustrations analogous to Lenders', although none compares in artistic quality to his. I thank Dan McPike for guiding me to these publications.

9 Dan McPike.

10 Shirley, *Pawnee Bill*, Op. cit., 135. Dan McPike made these suggestions about the provenance of Lenders' collection.

P O R T F O L I O



Streaming Glory

HEADRESSES FROM THE GILCREASE COLLECTION

Many contemporary artists of the American West paint Indians, no matter what their tribe or era, engaged in war, hunting, or simply going about from place to place dressed in beaded or quilled moccasins, decorated clothing, and, often, a warbonnet. However, as Clark Wissler comments in his *Indian Costumes of the United States*, "... nowhere was feathered headgear the regular costume but, rather, it was worn as regalia or insignia."

In the West, the design of the earliest noted headdresses may have included an upright feathered form as well as a form which did not include a feathered headpiece. The

form that is popularly associated with Plains Indians — and by extension with American Indians in general — probably made its first appearance among the Sioux and has been called the Sioux or flared style. Contrary to popular belief, it probably did not appear until around the 1850s. In the 19th century it was never everyday wear but was associated with "medicine," or special powers. Sioux Warriors became eligible to wear a warbonnet only after performing particular acts and reaching a certain level of maturity.

The Cheyenne were the other tribe most notable for the wearing of warbonnets in the days just before and just after the creation of the reservations. The Cheyenne came late to the Plains, arriving around the beginning of the 19th century from the area that is now Minnesota. Yet they became the one tribe of the eleven "typical" Plains tribes that most typified Plains culture, with well-developed religious practices and societies of warriors. The warbonnet became medicine to the Cheyenne as it had to the Blackfeet and Sioux. No Cheyenne could purchase or make his own warbonnet. When he was deemed ready to receive a warbonnet, he was given one by his fellows in one of the warrior societies to which all males were required to belong.

Once made with eagle feathers, warbonnets are now made with trimmed and dyed turkey feathers. Once reserved for Plains warriors of proven valor, they are now worn by members of many tribes at powwows, art exhibitions, and religious ceremonies. They are given as symbols of appreciation to foreign dignitaries and visiting politicians and can be found in tourist galleries, Indian stores, and airport gift shops throughout the country. And of course they continue to adorn the heads of mounted warriors in the paintings of some contemporary artists. This spectacular headgear, whose true protocol was misinterpreted early and continues to be rewritten by both Indians and whites, has acquired a new place and a transformed authenticity in the 20th century as a popular icon of the American Indian.



This warbonnet was given to Gilcrease Museum in 1987 by Dr. and Mrs. D. McLeod Stewart of California. They acquired it from a Nebraska Sioux Indian who told them that it dated to approximately 1890. The Sioux advised the McLeods not to clean the bonnet as the soot clinging to it from was from tipi smoke.

GILCREASE MUSEUM, 8426.2330



The warbonnet shown above belonged to the Creek artist Fred Beaver. The Creeks did not traditionally wear flared feathered headdresses, but in the 20th century it became customary for such headgear to be part of formal attire for Native Americans of many tribes, including the Creeks.

GILCREASE MUSEUM, 8427.241



A Cherokee teenager named Tom Whitehead owned and wore this headdress, appearing in it at many powwows during the 1960s. He was killed in Vietnam in 1969 at age nineteen. His mother Lydia Whitehead donated the headdress, along with Tom's other powwow paraphernalia, to Gilcrease.

GILCREASE MUSEUM, 8427.869



The feathered bonnet above was the personal headdress of the Creek artist Solomon McCombs. It was made in the 1970s and was donated to Gilcrease by the artist's wife Margarita.

GILCREASE MUSEUM, 8427.2281



Emil Lenders probably acquired this headdress from a Pawnee Indian. Although Lenders identified it as Pawnee, it is more likely a Blackfeet, or possibly Crow, bonnet which the Pawnee had acquired by purchase or as a gift. The cap of tanned hide may indicate considerable age. Most bonnets of the late 19th and 20th century have felt caps.

GILCREASE MUSEUM, 8426.255

T O M M I X

OCTOBER 12, 1940, WAS A SATURDAY — the day reserved for the movie matinee that had made Mix famous. That morning Nazi troops invaded

Bucharest. In New York, Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland

rested up after opening “Strike up the Band”

on Broadway. Baseball fans in Cincinnati

nursed hang-overs after the triumph of the

Reds over the Detroit Tigers in the World

Series. And Tom Mix was in Arizona — the

land that he and other early Wes-tern film

stars had helped make indelible in the minds

of moviegoers around the world. He wore an

immaculate white suit, a ten-gallon hat, and fancy tooled boots. Fans who

saw him that day when he paused for a bowl of chili never guessed that he was in his sixtieth year. He

drove a lemon-yellow custom-built Cord with his initials printed in relief on the tread of the tires.

Millions of movie fans had adored his trick horse,

Tony, but Mix also took pride in the fact that he was the first cowboy star to introduce the automobile to Western films. By twilight the heavens over the Arizona desert were deep red.

There was a

bite to the air and from the foothills

came the coyote’s first evening

songs.

“God’s dogs,” Mix told the

grease monkey pumping gasoline

into the Cord at a ramshackle filling

station. “That’s what the Indians

call them.” The man filled the car

and then picked up a clean rag and

carefully wiped a few drops of gas

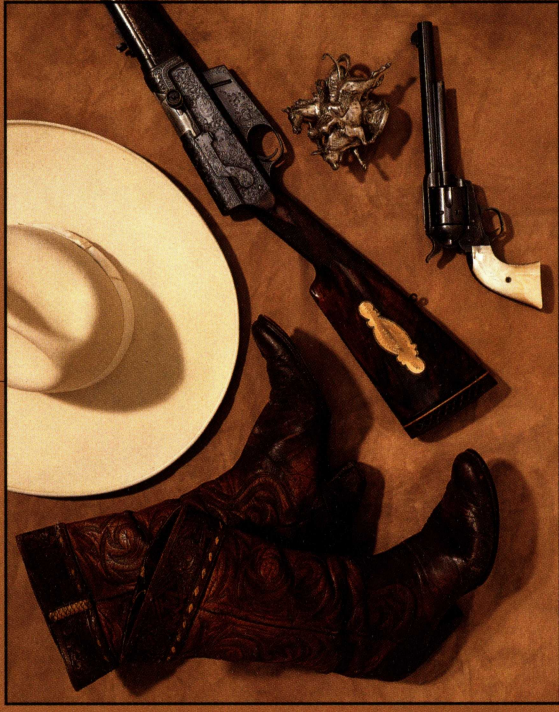
off the lip of the tank. Mix peeled off some bills, including a five

spot tip.

“That’s for you, partner. Take your missus to the picture show.” Mix slipped behind the wheel of the

shiny car and turned the key.

“There’s a bridge out and some detours near



The King of the Cowboys makes his last ride.

Florence, Mr. Mix. Be careful,” said the attendant. Mix grinned and doffed his hat and the Cord roared away toward Hollywood, leaving a long trail of “TMs” imprinted in the dust.

His imagination fired by dime novels and visits to Buffalo Bill Cody’s Wild West Show, the young Mix had tended bar, hired on as a cowhand, and even worn the star of a peace officer. Technically he was an Army deserter but that didn’t stop him from joining “The Cowboy Brigade” that rode up Pennsylvania Avenue to celebrate Theodore Roosevelt’s inauguration in 1905. But his finest early days were spent on the Miller Brothers’ 101 Ranch. He started cowboying there for \$15 a month and board, became foreman and a rodeo star, and was noticed by movie maker William Selig. Twenty years later, he was earning \$17,500 a week in Hollywood.

He had earned and lost millions, married and divorced five times, and tried to revive his career with another Wild West circus tour that didn’t work. His speaking voice was never very good and talkies with “Singing Cowboys,” like Autry and Rogers, were the rage. Earlier that same year, he had paid a visit to his old studio, now Twentieth Century Fox, to seek out John Ford. Ford was busy shooting *The Grapes of Wrath*, but he took the old star to lunch. Ford had looked Mix in the eye and told him the hard truth. The picture business had passed him by.

Photograph of Tom Mix artifacts courtesy of the Gene Autry Western Heritage Museum, Los Angeles.

On the lonely desert road, evening approached. Pairs of Inca doves fluttered to the telephone lines that stretched alongside the narrow road. South of Florence on Highway 89, a work crew was about to knock off after a long day repairing a bridge over a dry wash. They had just put up detour signs when they spied a cloud of dust and then saw the Cord speeding along. The car never slowed down. It crashed through the barrier and flipped over in the wash. Workmen found Mix impeccably dressed, unmarked by wounds, and stone dead. His neck was broken, apparently by a metal suitcase. Hollywood legend soon filled the suitcase with twenty-dollar gold pieces.

They put up a plaque at the studio. Years after Mix’s death, it was occasionally noticed by youngsters with stardust in their eyes hurrying toward a casting call or an audition. Few asked about Mix. Those who did might be answered by a grizzled stagehand who happened to be nearby.

“You don’t know who Tom Mix was, kid? He was hot stuff around here. He was ‘King of the Cowboys.’”

MICHAEL WALLIS

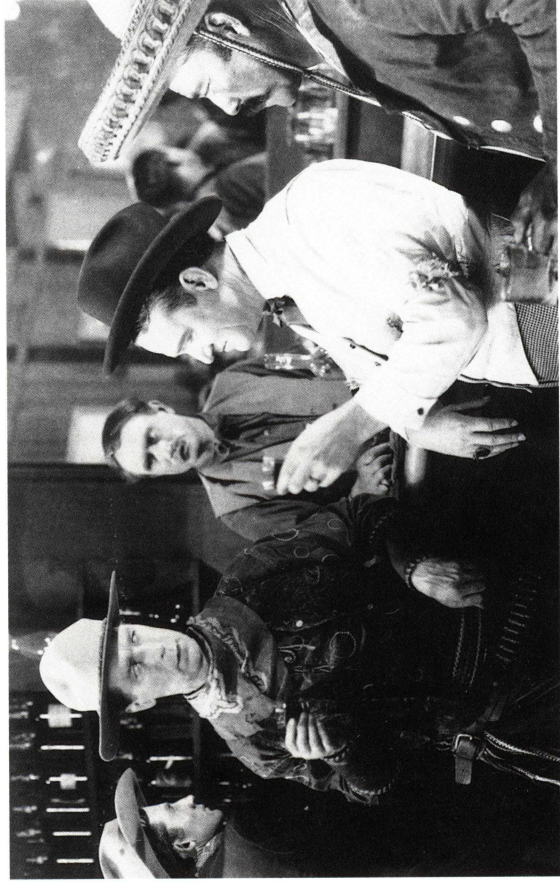
Authenticity and Western Film

EARLY WESTERNS BORROWED SHOWMANSHIP FROM THE WILD WEST SPECTACULARS AND HISTORICAL INFORMATION FROM THE ART AND LITERATURE OF THE WEST, BUT BOTH THEY AND THEIR CONTEMPORARY DESCENDANTS SHOULD BE SEEN AS NOT ONLY ARTIFACT BUT ART.

IMAGINE THE WEST! With the help of literature, Wild West shows, theater, and the visual arts, 19th-century Americans were invited to do just that. Although not all the writers, performers, and artists portraying the region had experienced it firsthand, many succeeded in conveying a strong sense of its reality to their audiences. Their media depended on creative vision and the power of imagination; in essence they were interpreters.

Beginning with the earliest films, documentary scenes of the West made by Thomas Alva Edison, movies began to promote the region and its history. Many thousands of feet of film have been devoted to every possible element of the West since, but the most resounding expositions have been epic statements—sweeping essays of vision, chronology, and human sacrifice.

Borrowing at first from the showmanship of Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West, the spectacular in Western films has been described



William S. Hart in a typical silent era Western.

COURTESY GENE AUTRY WESTERN HERITAGE MUSEUM, LOS ANGELES

and sold using common adjectives—thrilling, grand, breathtaking, and above all authentic! Yes, authentic. The use of historical locations, props, and players has always generated an aura of authenticity, giving Western film the edge and immediacy of drama associated with historical truth. This truth, however, is often carried in the arms of melodrama.

In part, film producers have attained an edge of authenticity through the use of Western art and other historical sources as the basis for scripts, costumes, and sets. Sometimes in creating illusions of history in film, the borrowing has come from sources which were themselves based upon imagination. Art imitates life. Film imitates art. Film imitates life.

There is no doubt that Frederic Remington, William F. Cody, John Ford, and many other creative chroniclers of the West imprinted their own sense of style and artistry on their products. In each case, however, there have always been both purposeful and accidental links with history, resulting in impressions of accuracy and realism. Cody stressed the idea that his audience viewed real cowboys and Indians. His Deadwood stagecoach was the real thing, and all of his performers were programmed in what amounted to performance as the plausible. Photographs of his performers as cavalry troopers have been mistakenly collected by archivists as actual images of frontier soldiers.

This lesson was not lost on the creators of Western film. As Kevin Brownlow masterfully pointed out in his book *The War, The West, and the Wilderness*, in the first several decades of Western film, shooting locations often were real Western towns such as Sonora, California, or Tombstone, Arizona, places that as yet had no gas pumps, store signs, paved roads, or electrical wires to be removed or concealed. Actors were often working cowboys and American Indians. Props were real 19th-century stagecoaches, weapons, Indian objects, and saddles. In the earliest days of the movies, real historical Westerners might star as themselves. Lawmen Bill Tilghman, Chris Madsen, and John Slaughter made appearances, as did outlaws Al Jennings, Henry Starr, and Emmett Dalton. In the early days of film the "Old West" wasn't all that far away.

In fact, film people loved associating with "real" Westerners. The actor-filmmaker William S. Hart collected paintings by Charles Russell and Frederic Remington and cultivated friendships with Russell, Bat Masterson, Wyatt Earp, Charles Siringo, and others. Hart and Tom Mix were both pallbearers at Earp's funeral in 1929. One of Hart's most prized paintings was a Russell portrait showing himself as a working cowboy on his beloved film horse, Fritz. Hart made pretensions about the historical accuracy of his films, but he also had to admit that "Truth is so

HENRY H. CROSS
Buffalo Bill

Oil on canvas

GILCREASE MUSEUM, 0126.1749

Cody had a genuine sense of drama. His spectacular live performances had all the elements of historical anecdote and historical reenactment which would become basic conventions of film.



frequently stranger than fiction, only you'll never get people to believe in it." While he complained bitterly about the lack of accuracy in other people's films, he took numerous liberties with his own.

Early Westerns built upon the patterns created by showman William F. Cody many years before. For his Western spectacles, Cody had employed Sitting Bull and Chief Gall along with a wide range of cowboys and others who had lived the real Western life. Cody made the transition into the new media and was photographed for the Edison Kinetoscope in 1894. Fifteen years later, the Buffalo Bill and Pawnee Bill Film Company was formed. It was only logical that Cody would then film an almost epic movie on the Indian wars, complete with a cast that included General Nelson Miles, Cody as himself, and other historical figures. In it, Cody re-created on film his own involvement in the Battle at War Bonnet Creek.

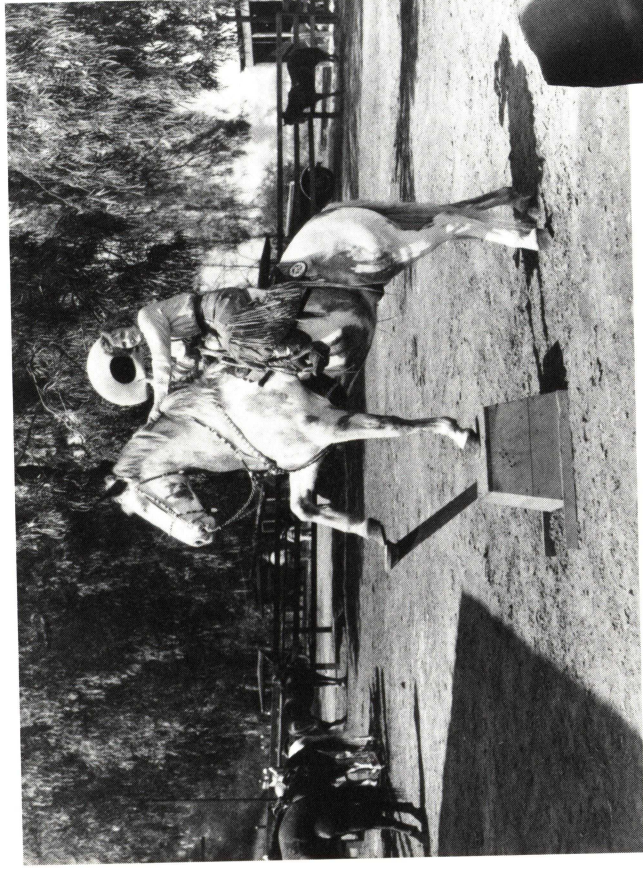
Cody's Indian war film was promoted for its accuracy by none other than General Charles King, who had written the film's scenario and was himself a veteran of War Bonnet Creek. He endorsed the authenticity of the film and promoted it as a source of the lessons of history and as "the most wonderful spectacle ever produced since motion pictures were invented." The veteran soldier and author of numerous novels about the frontier military testified that the film was "war itself, grim, unpitying and terrible; and it holds your heart still as you watch it and leaves you, in the end, amazed and spellbound at the courage and folly of mankind. No boy or girl should be allowed to miss these pictures."

Cody was not the only Wild West performer to make movies. The



An original one-sheet poster for *The Life of Buffalo Bill in Three Reels*, Buffalo Bill-Pawnee Bill Film Co.

COURTESY GENE AUTRY WESTERN HERITAGE MUSEUM, LOS ANGELES



Dell Jones, shown at left, was a 101 Wild West performer turned Hollywood stunt double. Buck Jones, below, learned to cowboy in Oklahoma and, like Tom Mix, Art Acord, Hoot Gibson, Neal Hart, and many others, was one of the real cowboys who gained experience with the Miller Brothers 101 Wild West show and then populated Western movies in the first several decades of the 20th century.

COURTESY GENE AUTRY WESTERN HERITAGE MUSEUM, LOS ANGELES

Miller Brothers 101 Ranch Real Wild West Show ultimately sought the sunshine of California as well. W. A. Brooks became film director for the 101 at a variety of locations, including the sleepy little town of Hollywood, in 1910 and 1911.

A few short years later, an enthusiastic young girl saw the Miller Brothers' 101 Ranch Real Wild West Show troupe performing live in New York. Today, she looks toward you with the same sparkling eyes that took in the excitement of the show arena in 1914. Odille Dorothy Osborne ran away from home at age thirteen and became a star performer for the Miller brothers, a trick rider of uncommon ability. She was entranced by the skills of the show's cowboys, and a romance grew between her and one of the performers, Charles Gebhardt. Marriage followed and the young couple later sought work in Hollywood during the off-season. Soon Odille was serving as a stunt double for Douglas Fairbanks and others under the name Dell Jones. Her husband became a leading man, the original "King of the Cowboys"—Buck Jones.

Scores of cowboys followed the annual circuit between





Buck Jones in a familiar role, always the defender of the right.

COURTESY GENE AUTRY WESTERN HERITAGE CENTER, LOS ANGELES

FACING PAGE

JOSEPH H. BECKER

Snow Sheds on the Central Pacific Railroad in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, May 1869

Oil on panel

GILCREASE MUSEUM, 0136.1212

A movie still from John Ford's *The Iron Horse*. For this 1924 film, Ford re-created a scene based on the famous Charles Savage photograph of the joining of the rails at Promontory Point.

COURTESY OF THE ACADEMY OF MOTION PICTURE ARTS AND SCIENCES

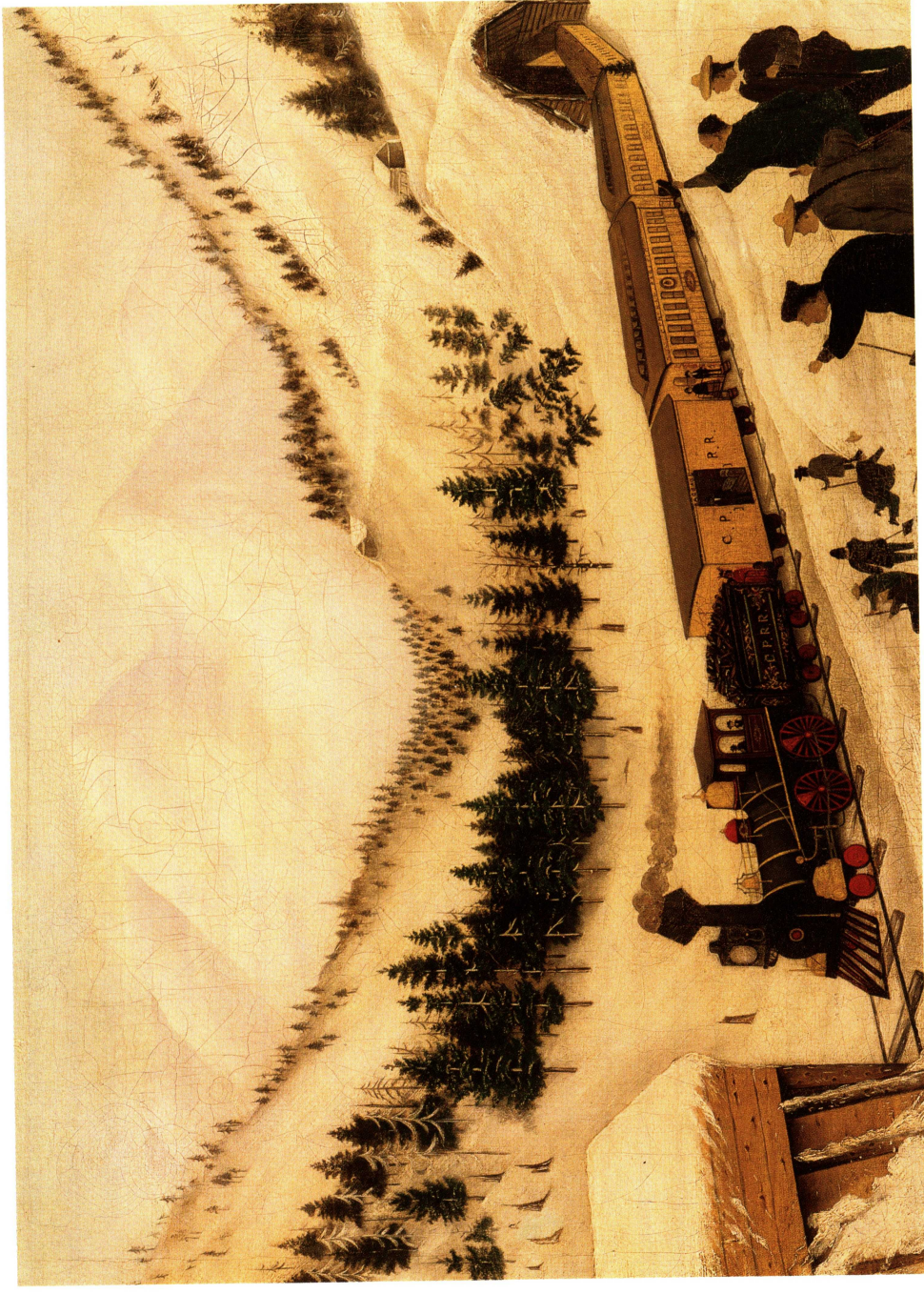
rodeos, fall roundups, and movie making. But those with acting talent could make the most money in Hollywood, where many sacrificed their working cowboy dress to take on the imaginative mantle of movie cowboy regalia. The roles they played were not necessarily Western. Any good cowboy could also sit a horse as a Russian cossack, Arabian or Mongolian warrior, or European knight. Any one of them could have appeared in costume a generation earlier as a member of Buffalo Bill Cody's Congress of Rough Riders of the World.

Near the time of William F. Cody's death in 1917 a young Hollywood director by the name of John Ford began his life's

work, which would become closely identified with the West. As a creator of epic Westerns he knew no equal. If we look back to the earlier days of his career, we can see that Ford's visions on film even then owed something to an awareness of art. In 1918 Ford directed *Hell Bent*, which he co-wrote with Harry Carey, Sr., his leading man. A reviewer described the film as a "typical Harry Carey picture, which means that thrills and excitement are plentifully distributed about, and that speed and more speed is the keynote."

In the opening scene of *Hell Bent*, Carey gazes at Frederic Remington's painting *The Misdeal*, which shows the aftermath of a gunfight between cowboys disputing a poker game. The painting comes to life and is transformed into the story of Carey (as Cimarron) and his relationships with the other painted figures, now characters in the film. As Remington's painting was familiar to viewers, the result for some movie fans must have been an intensified sense of familiarity and plausibility. (It is fun to note that the original oil was in the collection of Mrs. Douglas Fairbanks and later belonged to director Hal Wallis.)

Hell Bent has been largely forgotten since 1918. However, *The Iron Horse*, an epic Ford produced in 1924, is still remembered for its greatness. While Ford jokingly called the picture "*The Metallic Mustang*," the public and critics found it to be a "splendidly conceived . . . dramatization of the great West." One on-screen caption claimed that it was "accurate and faithful in every particular of fact and atmosphere" and another even insisted that the original locomotives were used in the scene of the joining of the rails at Promontory Point.



In truth, the original engines had long since become scrap iron and brass. Ford did use the C. P. Huntington (the Southern Pacific's prized relic, an 1863 passenger engine actually used along the Central Pacific Railroad) and locomotives from the Northwestern Pacific Railroad painted to resemble the original Union Pacific engines and fitted with crude "old time" smokestacks. As if thinking in reverse of the technique used with *The Misdeal*, Ford used the engines to painstakingly re-create the scene in the famous Charles Savage photograph of the golden spike ceremony. At the original joining of the rails at Promontory Point, Savage had helped to stage the visual document which he fixed on film. By replicating the scene from the photograph in 1924, Ford lent both authenticity and drama to



his story. Indeed, this was the climax of what the *New York Times* concluded was an “instructive and inspiring film, one which should make every American proud of the manner of men who were responsible for great achievements in the face of danger, sickness and fatigue. . . . who spanned the continent with steel.” Such a national spectacle which could still touch upon living human experience. “Gray-haired men, whose fathers had constructed railroads in the pioneer days, were much moved by the spectacle in shadows that passed before their eyes.”

Yes, there were elements of reality in Ford’s epic. He used real Indians and real Chinese laborers, some of whom were claimed to have helped build the original railroad. His crew constructed a Western town which, with minor changes, represented North Platte, Cheyenne, and other rail towns. Like Remington with brush and canvas, Ford painted an image of the West on film. The result was both illustration and story.

Just as Remington surrounded his primary figures with indefinite and impressionistic backgrounds, Ford created the illusion of towns and track construction sites. In his role as an artist of film Ford could even use Remington paintings as source material — not for fact, but for historical mood.

Many comparisons between John Ford and Frederic Remington can be made and Ford’s use of the artist’s work is well known. In one instance a Remington painting of black soldiers on campaign in the Southwest inspired Ford to bravely address issues of racism in the West. *Sergeant Rutledge* (1960) starred Woody Strode as a black soldier on trial for rape and murder. In other films, Ford took more than inspiration from Remington. *Downing the Nigh Leader*, painted by Remington in 1907, was practically replicated in a scene in Ford’s 1949 film *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*, and Remington’s *Indian Warfare* of 1908 finds expression in a variety of Ford’s battle scenes. Ford was no more a historian than was Remington. Both were impressionists, leaving out as much as they put in. Both were creating moods of authenticity with color, light, and shadow.

Other filmmakers created different moods and expressed different attitudes, especially with reference to

Native Americans. While most portrayals are stereotypical and racist, a number of the earliest silent films were astonishingly sympathetic. For the sake of authenticity, however, sentiment was not as important as the

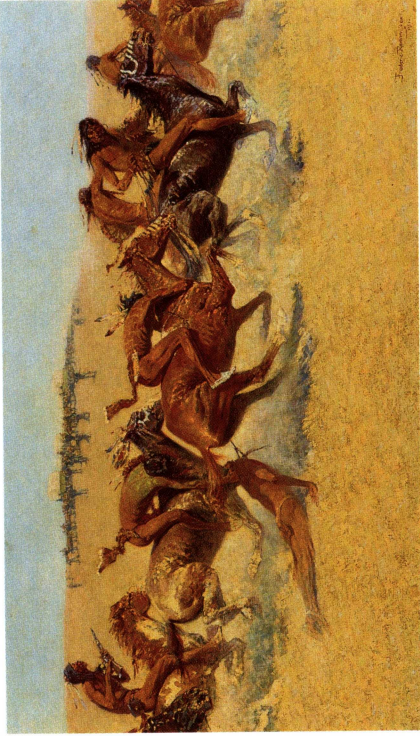
FREDERIC REMINGTON
Indian Warfare, 1908

Oil on canvas

GILCREASE MUSEUM, 0127.2307

Still from John Ford’s 1949 film *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*.

COURTESY OF THE ACADEMY OF MOTION PICTURE
ARTS AND SCIENCES

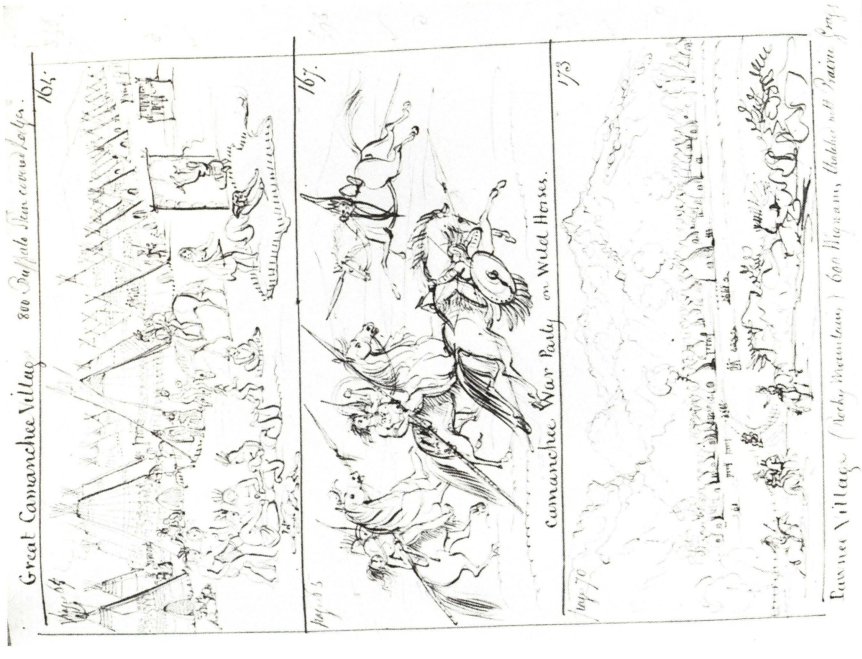


illusion of reality, and for most it was less important to interpret Indians fairly and honestly than to make them “look right.” Some filmmakers used real Indians as actors, but in the creation of epic imagery it was just as desirable to make sure that costumes, shooting locations, and story lines were believable. The sources of information used to arrive at this “accuracy” were quite basic.

Among the first white observers and recorders of the West in the 1830s were the artists George Catlin, Karl Bodmer, and Alfred Jacob Miller, and for generations their pictures have been consulted for information about the dress and customs of native peoples. Even in the mid-19th century, other artists such as A. F. Tait studied the prints of Catlin and Bodmer as authentic sources. Many of the paintings of these later artists are therefore derivative. Hollywood in turn used the art of both the original observers and of the painters who used the earlier work as resource. Hollywood used it to create romance and stereotype through interpretive scripting, costume, acting, and stage sets, all the while assuring viewers that its vision was authentic.

When Bernard DeVoto wrote *Across the Wide Missouri*, he contributed much to an understanding of the fur trade and gave great exposure to the work of Alfred Jacob Miller and other artists. The epic nature of DeVoto’s Pulitzer Prize-winning work was not lost on movie makers, and in 1951 MGM released William A. Wellman’s feature starring Clark Gable as the fictional trapper Flint Mitchell and Ricardo Montalban, J. Carrol Naish, and Jack Holt in featured roles as Native leaders. Moviegoers searched in vain for the eloquence and splendor of DeVoto’s story. One reviewer concluded that the main characters “are simply people in a film. They are not the giants who helped open the West.” There was spectacular scenery, but little else. DeVoto was a potential source of authentic background, but Hollywood failed to use his book for anything more than its title.

With costumes by Walter Plunkett and advice from “Indian expert” Nipo T. Strongheart, the film



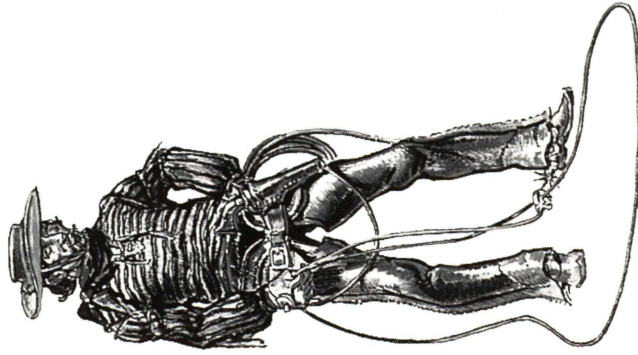
GEORGE CATLIN

Studies of Comanches and Pawnees, 1850s

Pen and ink on sketchbook leaf

GILCREASE MUSEUM, 4776.6.140

ALFRED J. MILLER
*Sir W. D. Stewart Meeting Indian
 Chief*, 1852
 Oil on canvas
 GILCREASE MUSEUM, 0126.738



Ricardo Montalban, top, in film *Across the Wide Missouri*. Below, a costume design by Joe de Yong, apprentice to Charles M. Russell.

COURTESY OF THE ACADEMY OF MOTION PICTURE ARTS AND SCIENCES; COURTESY THE GENE AUTRY WESTERN HERITAGE MUSEUM, LOS ANGELES



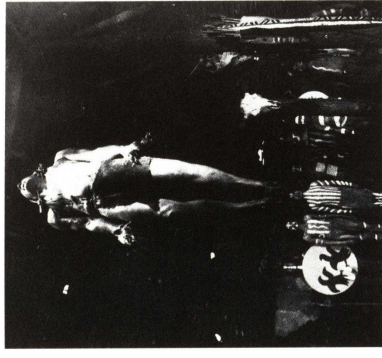
took on all the appearances that 1950s audiences expected. Costuming owed much to the images of Charles Russell, but the influence of Alfred Jacob Miller, so important in the DeVoto book, barely can be seen in the film. Hints of Miller's unique portraits of Fort Laramie are visible in the log trading post in the movie, although this setting bears greater resemblance to such paintings as Charlie Russell's *The Robe Traders*. Oddly, one of the fictional characters in the film, Captain Humberstone Lyon, is a Scottish sportsman traveling with his equally Scottish servant and artist. This nod toward Miller and his patron of 1837, Sir William Drummond Stewart, is carried throughout the film. Captain Lyon even gives a suit of armor to an Indian chief at a rendezvous (Jim Bridger receives this gift in the real story), and there is a belabored wedding scene between Gable and the chief's daughter. Miller's painting *The Trapper's Bride*, by some stretch of the imagination, could have provided inspiration. Other Miller views of the rendezvous probably did so as well.

Viewing hundreds of such films makes one suspect that film makers limited themselves to basic picture books as references for costume design and other appurtenances of authenticity, and a visit to the libraries of Paramount Studios, Western Costume Company, and other Hollywood repositories confirms this conclusion. Well-worn copies of works on and by George Catlin, Karl Bodmer, and others are always at hand. Russell protégé Joe DeYong designed Indian costumes for such Cecil B. DeMille films as *Union Pacific* (1939). His surviving drawings show the clear

influence both of Russell's work and of the standard reference volumes common to costume prop shops.

In 1970, National General released *A Man Called Horse*, starring Richard Harris. This story of a British nobleman captured by the Sioux is often gory, but in many ways seems sympathetic toward Native peoples. It was successful enough to lead to two sequels. The British Film Institute notes that in the film "a fetish is made of authenticity." The film replicates complete Catlin and Bodmer subjects, drawn directly from well-known paintings. A figure based upon Bodmer's *Mandan Dog Dancer* (page 64) is particularly striking and the Sun Dance ceremony — with imagery borrowed from Catlin — provides memorable screen moments. The opinions of reviewers that the acting lacked energy and the story lacked everything else was immediately contradicted with assurances that "it was authentic." *A Man Called Horse* simply did not possess the epic qualities of greater films. Authenticity is not enough if the script, acting, or filming are of lesser quality.

A more recent effort employed many of the same art and historical sources to greater advantage and combined them with a stronger story, better casting, finer scripting, and more refined technique to earn the kind of acclaim that few other spectacular films have garnered. Based upon the story by Michael Blake and starring Kevin Costner, the creators of the 1990 film *Dances with Wolves* went to great lengths to assure viewers of its authenticity. Real Native Americans performed, and English subtitles were translated from spoken Sioux. Because the historical scenario was a composite of places and times, it was not historically accurate. Costumes, equipment, and other props were carefully researched and the advice of outside researchers was generally heeded by the producers. Costume designer Elsa Zamparelli and her assistant Cathy Smith combined research and experience to produce sometimes startling images of Native Americans. Zamparelli noted that she "showed Kevin [Costner] some of the books we were using for research — the primary artists of the period were Karl Bodmer and George Catlin, and we relied on their depictions a lot, especially Bodmer. Kevin approved some early sketches, and we were off." Never mind that Bodmer painted Upper Missouri tribes in the early 1830s and Costner was depicting the Sioux of the 1860s. A work such as George Catlin's *Catching the Wild Horse* (page 66) did provide the kind of information needed for historical drama. The aura was one of authenticity and the emotions were sympathetic. Film art imitates fine art with a measure of accuracy thrown in. The public enthusiastically accepted the film as a spectacular historical narrative.



A still from *A Man Called Horse*, with Richard Harris, top, shows the Sun Dance ceremony scene. Immediately above, Graham Greene as Kicking Bird in Kevin Costner's *Dances With Wolves*. Greene's costume shows the influence of the filmmakers' research into works by Catlin and Bodmer.

COURTESY OF THE ACADEMY OF MOTION PICTURE ARTS AND SCIENCES



KARL BODMER
*Pebriska Rubpa, Minatarrre Warrior
in the Costume of the Dog Dance,*
1844

Handcolored aquatint engraving
GILCREASE MUSEUM, 4576.91.57

An earlier example of a Western film sold on the basis of its authenticity was the 1923 silent film *The Covered Wagon*, in which viewers read the following title: “The blood of America is the blood of pioneers—the blood of lion-hearted men and women who carved a splendid civilization out of an uncharted wilderness.” In fact, James Cruze went to great lengths to create a sense of accuracy. Four hundred covered wagons, many of them relics found in the West, became actors in the drama, with one critic expressing the opinion that “the wagon train curiously became the star, with a personality all its own.” Colonel Tim McCoy of Wyoming was hired to bring Arapaho Indians to Nevada to appear in the film, and many residents of the film location in the Snake River Valley of Nevada served as extras. State historical societies in Nebraska, Kansas, and Wyoming helped with the research. Several decades later, stills from the movie were mistakenly identified as historical 19th-century images of the real thing!

Oddly, former army officers protested the film’s lack of honesty, Jim Bridger’s daughter filed suit over the manner in which the film

depicted her father, and promoters responded by citing numerous authorities to prove that they were right in proclaiming the film to be “honest in its simplicity, in its fidelity, in its sincerity and in its regard for the importance of the theme.”



WILLIAM HENRY JACKSON
*California Crossing, South Platte
River, 1866*
Oil on canvas

GILCREASE MUSEUM, 0136.1208

A still from *The Covered Wagon*, based upon Emerson Hough’s novel of the same name and directed by James Cruze. The film was a phenomenal success, perhaps because of its epic story, apparent authenticity, and the degree to which it endorsed a generally held belief in American destiny. The same story was

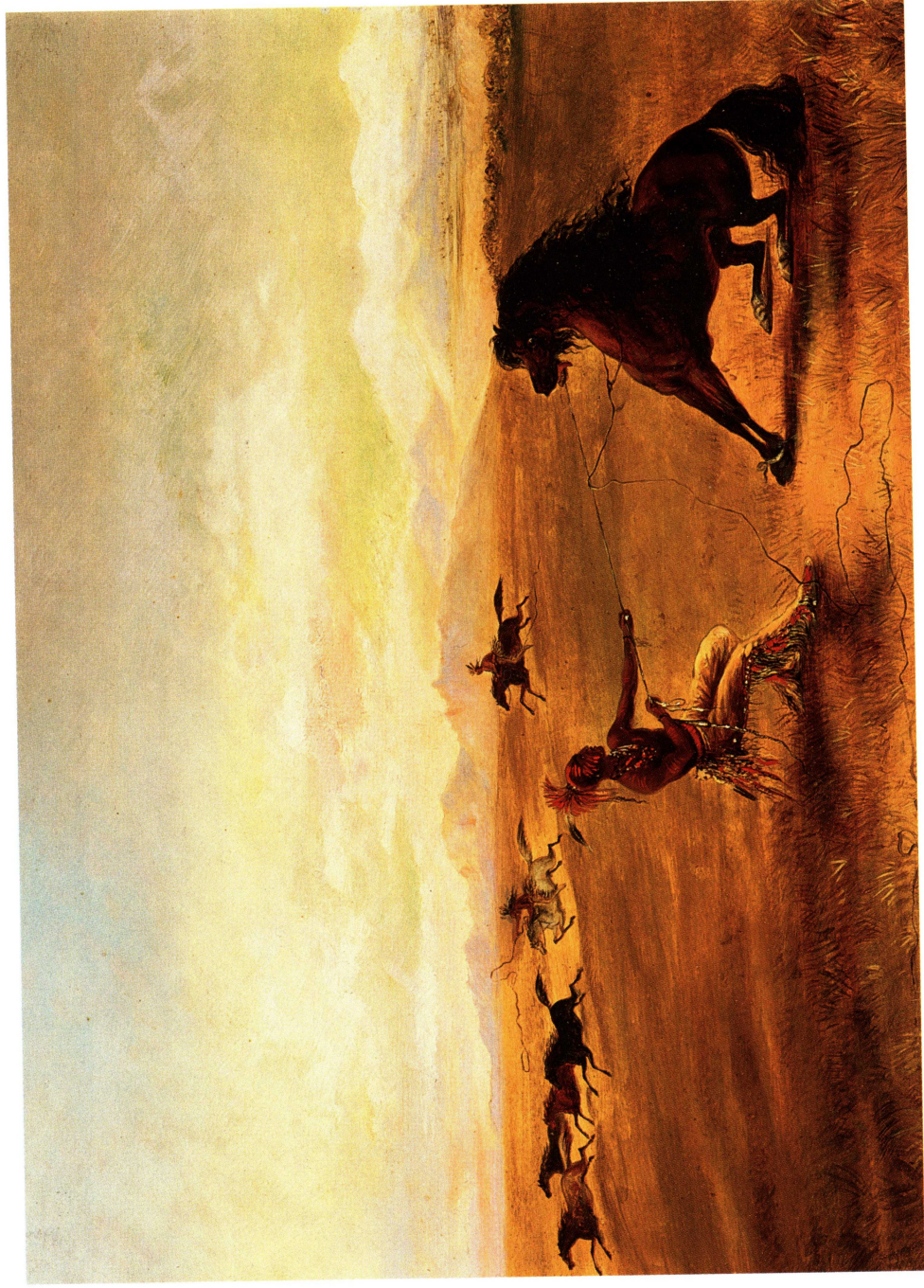
approached with similar attitudes in the nonfiction writings of historians of the time, such as Frederick Paxson and Douglas Branch. Both professors and filmmakers were describing history as epic. As an aside, the movie makers who created this scene learned a lesson familiar to settlers of a hundred years earlier — it is easier to ford a river with oxen than with horses.



The same kind of argument about accuracy that has affected Western film has plagued Western painting, with a resulting loss of vitality. It is ironic that some artists who began their careers in Hollywood painting posters and story boards have gone on to become highly regarded contemporary Western artists. While some have broken away from the illusions of Hollywood, others have persisted in using scenes from film itself as the basis for their "historical" compositions. Some have gone so far as to copy movie frames to create "authoritative" Western scenes.

Paintings and movies may be sold on the basis of authenticity, but they must be critiqued as both artifact and art. Viewers of art and film should not, of course, judge these media strictly as reflections of fact. Even though both reconstruct something of the past for the sake of aesthetics and entertainment, they are not fact. As visual illusion or representation of the West, both art and film must be judged for validity of their creators' sources, for bias of attitude, and for success in execution.

GEORGE CATLIN
Catching the Wild Horse
 Oil on canvas
 Gilcrease Museum, 0126.2174





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FRONT COVER: *101 Ranch Poster (detail)*, chromolithograph on paper mounted on board, Gilcrease Museum, 1627.235.

BACK COVER: Emil Lenders, *Pipe Bag and Warbonnet Studies*, watercolor on sketchbook leaf, Gilcrease Museum, 1827.24.43.

ENDLEAF: Design taken from apage from Alfred L. Kroeber's *The Arapaho*, Gilcrease Museum.

1927, 24, 43

