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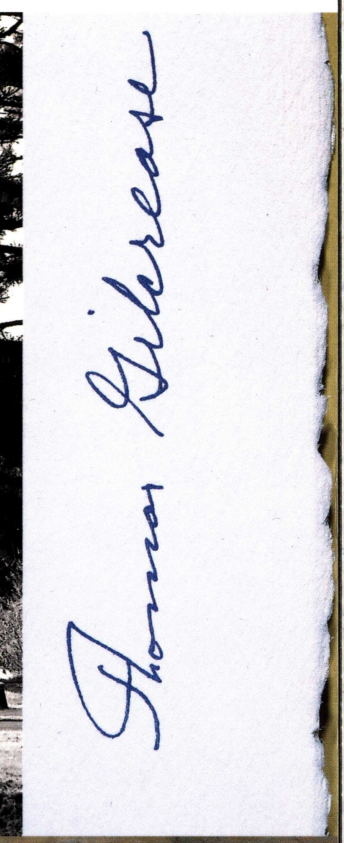
GILCREASE

JOURNAL







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Gilcrease Journal
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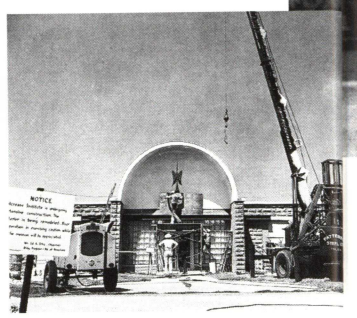
GILCREASE JOURNAL

VOLUME SEVEN ~ NO 1 SPRING/SUMMER 1999

Millennium

MAKING THE MUSEUM:
IN CELEBRATION OF
GILCREASE MUSEUM'S
FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY







LIFE in 1954 at Gilcrease

4

WHEN LIFE CAME TO TULSA AND GILCREASE (ALMOST) WENT TO CLAREMORE

When Life Magazine took an admiring look at Thomas Gilcrease and his growing collections, they were slated for a new museum in the planning phase in Claremore, Oklahoma. But the Tulsa Chamber of Commerce had a different idea.

All in Good Time

17

A GILCREASE CHRONOLOGY

The story of a man's life may be told not in his words but in his deeds. Thomas Gilcrease was a quiet man, but his actions spoke volumes.

Sarah Erwin
Curator of Archival Collections, Gilcrease Museum

The Western Museum in 20th-Century America

39

Style or content? Which matters most? Art historian Peter Hassrick traces the development of the cultural strongholds of western art—and the attitudes toward the genre—throughout the past decades.

Peter Hassrick *Charles M. Russell Memorial Chair, University of Oklahoma School of Art*

The fiftieth anniversary issues of Gilcrease Journal are made possible through the generosity of The Maxine and Jack Zarrow Foundation and the Lorene Cooper Hasbrouck Charitable Trust.



Thomas Gilcrease was photographed near the top of Mont Brevent, an Alpine peak in southeast France on the border of Italy in September of 1950.

PAGE ONE: Thomas Gilcrease, 1951.

FACING: Letter from Willard Stone to Gilcrease; renovation of the entrance of Gilcrease Museum, in progress during August 1963.

ABOVE: The original Gilcrease Museum building in Tulsa included the library on the left, the gallery in the center (on the lower level), and the print room on the right; *Creek Chiefs,* Acee Blue Eagle, Gilcrease 0227.469.

Printed in Canada

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GARY F. MOORE *Assistant Director*
DANIEL C. SWAN *Senior Curator*
MICHAEL SUDBURY *Director of Development*
ANNE MORAND *Museum Collections Manager*
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GILCREASE JOURNAL
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KEN BUSBY *Assistant Editor*

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LIFE in 1954 at Gilcrease

Life Magazine was the country's gazette of choice long before the term "lifestyle" was in common use, and certainly long before it had become popularized in its current casual one-word form. In 1954, the magazine ran an eleven-page story on Thomas Gilcrease and his growing art collection. Cover and selected editorial pages reprinted by permission of *Life* Magazine, copyright Time, Inc.

It was 1954. Dwight D. Eisenhower was president of the United States. The post-World War II baby boomers were toddling toward primary school. The famous golden arches of the McDonalds hamburger chain were one year old and the signs they bore still expounded the exact number — not the "millions and millions" it would later read — of hamburgers sold.

In Tulsa, the economy was good. Utica Square was two years old. Sears was preparing to move onto what looked like acres of newly paved parking at Twenty-first and Yale. Southland Shopping Center was under construction two miles away.

When people flipped open their copies of *Life* Magazine for the week of March 8, 1954, they read that the new Boeing 707 was slated for its maiden flight that summer, that Shell Oil had made a fabulous strike in Nevada, and that Senator Joseph McCarthy was continuing his vitriolic exposure of Communist-leaning Americans. Interspersed with these was an eleven-page article on the extraordinary art collection of Tulsan Thomas Gilcrease, which was about to be ensconced in a new museum in — yes, Claremore, Oklahoma.

Eliot Elisofon/Life Magazine. ©Time, Inc.



Saving a Vanishing Frontier

PART-CREEK OILMAN SPENDS MILLIONS ON ART OF INDIAN DAYS

"A man," says Thomas Gilcrease, "should leave a track of some sort." Gilcrease, an oil millionaire, is one-eighth Creek Indian, and the track he is leaving behind him is the best collection of art and literature ever assembled on the American frontier and the Indian. The paintings Gilcrease has housed in Tulsa, Okla. document a tragic part of American history—a story of no-quarter war which ended only when one side had virtually wiped out the other. The very names of the men in the paintings—Red Jacket, Black Hawk, Cunne Shote—have the beat of war drums and their stern faces show the determination and defiance which kept the U.S. frontier ablaze for 300 years.

Gilcrease, brought up in Oklahoma territory, got his first oil from land given to him by the government as an Indian allotment. In 1912 he bought a pretty painting of a boy and girl in wooden shoes which provoked him to learn more about art. Visiting galleries in Europe and the U.S. he soon "began to realize that not only the European galleries were full of European masters—the American galleries were too." From that point on he devoted his own collecting efforts to American art. He bought the best work of the famous frontier artists: George Catlin, Charles Russell, Frederic Remington and 250 others. He branched out to collect rare books and manuscripts on American history.

Gilcrease, at first glance, seems the antithesis of some of the fierce Indians in his paintings. He is shy, modest, and while he believes the Indians got a raw deal from the whites, he does not want to dig up any tomahawks. Rather, through his collection, he hopes to give viewers "some knowledge, some pleasure, some new thoughts" about Indians.

In his sentiment for Indian art, however, Gilcrease has run into an ambush. He bought $2,100,000 worth more than the Gilcrease Foundation, which he had already endowed with $4,500,000, could afford. Citizens of Claremore, Okla. offered to pay the obligations if the collection would be moved from Tulsa to Claremore. But when Gilcrease was about ready to accept, a group of roused Tulsans, realizing what they might lose, came riding to the rescue. Gilcrease now had to decide what to do (*see text following the color pages*).

RARE DOCUMENTS before Gilcrease include the earliest authentic pictures of American Indians (*foreground, left*), published in 1590; Mohegan chief Owanako's protest (with bird mark) to queen against eviction of his people; earliest known American verse (with ship and warrior illustrations), "Good News from Virginia," dated 1623; "Globus Mundi," 1509, with map drawings, in which word "America" is mentioned for first time. Gilcrease holds only certified copy of original Declaration of Independence known to exist outside Library of Congress.



RED JACKET, Seneca chief painted by Catlin, was a great orator who urged Indians not to sell land to whites, fought with British in Revolutionary War.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



A GOOD TREATY, one of few that the whites did not break, was made in 1682 by William Penn who agreed to give Delaware Indians fair price for land. Edward Hicks did painting about 1830.



A BAD TREATY, painted by C. C. Nahl, offered Indians $80,000 in 1866 for Idaho land. But U.S. never ratified treaty and Governor Caleb Lyon (*center*) was charged with mishandling $50,000.



THE END for Indians was brought closer when first train of Central Pacific, painted by Joseph Becker, reached Utah in 1869 to join Union Pacific and give settlers a transcontinental link.



A SIOUX ON THE WARPATH, riding a wild-eyed pony with a buffalo skin draped over its back, sets himself to hurl a lance at three Snake braves advancing over rough Dakota terrain. The artist, Alfred Jacob Miller of Baltimore, traveled with Sir William Stewart, a Scotsman who went west in 1837 to trade for furs and to investigate the possibilities for investing foreign capital.



TALENTED COWBOY at 18, Gilcrease could twirl a rope, shoot a squirrel through the eye, was raising his own cattle on land bought with oil money.

Tom Liked Books and Gushers

HE GREW WISE AND WEALTHY

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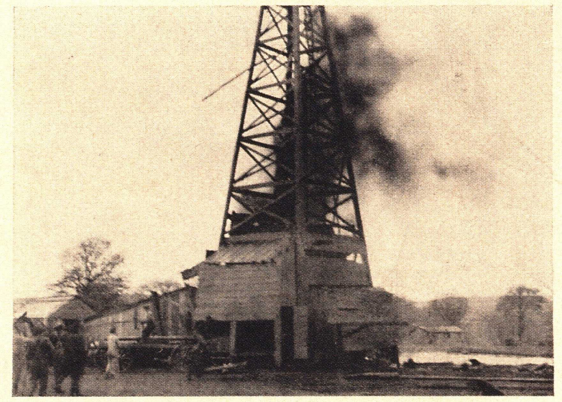

A GILCREASE STRIKE in Hughes County, Okla, in 1923 opened up a new field. During his career Gilcrease estimates he has drilled about 300 wells.

Alabama to Oklahoma. A quarter of them died from mistreatment or neglect by U.S. soldiers in the middle of winter.

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Gilcrease has never lived like the legendary rich oilman. He does not drink, smoke or play cards. An omnivorous reader, he plows endlessly through books of biography, history, geography and natural history. But back in 1912, when he knew little about art, he must have seemed a soft touch to the New York art dealer who set up shop in the Hotel Tulsa and sold him his first painting (*p. 84*). Gilcrease would probably not look twice if a dealer showed him the painting today, but he bought it then because he thought it "wholesome."

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GILCREASE'S first trip to Europe was a spur-of-the-moment decision, aboard the *Leviathan*, and he arrived without a hat. He went where he wanted to and stopped at any place that seemed pleasant or rewarding. At the ancient town of Carcassonne, where he had gone for a day, he remained a month, walking the old stone ramparts, enjoying the blossoming almond trees. He made himself learn French and Spanish, and wherever he went he bought paintings and art objects. He worked quietly assembling his collection, talking as little about it as he did about the location of his drilling rigs. Art dealers came to find him a tough customer. "When I'd show him a painting," says one dealer, "he would just sit there quiet and Indianlike. Believing he didn't like the picture, I'd lower the price. It took me a long time to catch on that he was just thinking."

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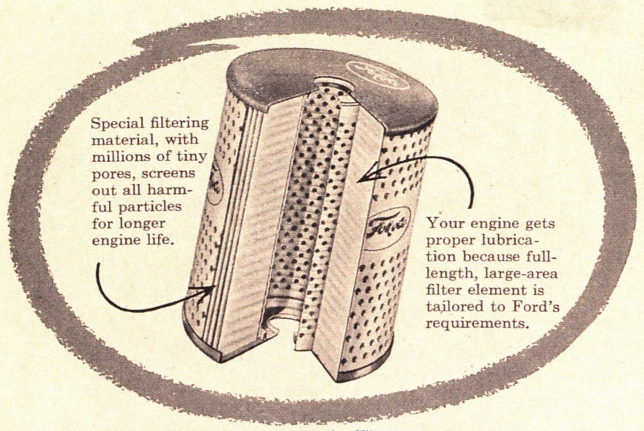

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84

FRONTIER CONTINUED

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ORIGINAL ART PURCHASE made by Gilcrease was *Rural Co*
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TRANSCRIPTION: FROM LIFE MAGAZINE, MARCH 8, 1954

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In the fall of 1950 Gilcrease was again traveling in Europe. Here he is seen across the valley from Mont Blanc, the tallest mountain in the Alps.

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This studio portrait of Thomas Gilcrease was taken in the late 1940s.

THE ARTICLE CLOSED WITH A GLIMPSE OF THE FUTURE — A FUTURE THAT NEVER HAPPENED, TO TULSA'S GOOD FORTUNE.

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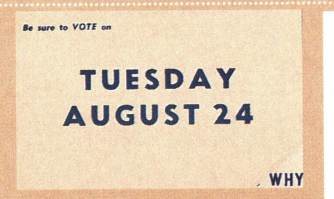
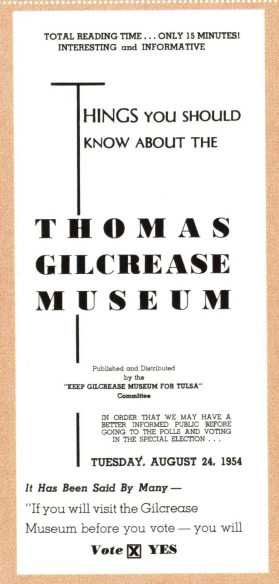
The Rest of the Story . . .





Tulsans were not willing to let Claremore, or any other city, become home to the Gilcrease Museum. Once it was apparent that Claremore had serious intentions ($75,000 had been pledged and a site selected), it was time for action. Tulsan Alfred Aaronson called a meeting at his home on March 9, 1954. Interest developed rapidly and funding for a bond issue soon followed. By August a special election was called to keep the Gilcrease Museum in Tulsa. The measure was overwhelmingly approved.

All in Good Time: A Gilcrease Chronology



William and Elizabeth Gilcrease moved to the Creek Nation in 1890, soon after the birth of their oldest son, Thomas, shown at far right behind his father. The other children pictured here are Edward, Ben, Florence, and Lena. This photograph was probably taken around the turn of the century. Nine more children were later born into the family.

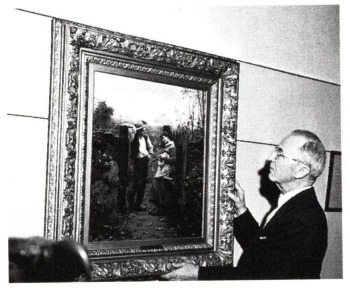
1890, FEBRUARY 8	1890	1899	1905, NOVEMBER 22
Thomas Gilcrease was born in Robeline, Louisiana.	The Gilcrease family moved to Creek Nation.	Gilcrease, because of his one-eighth Creek Indian lineage, was entered upon the Creek Tribal Rolls. Within the coming years this enrollment would allow him to receive a land allotment of 160 acres when tribal lands were disbursed by the Federal government.	Oil was discovered in Oklahoma's first major oil field, the Glenn Pool. Gilcrease's allotment in this vicinity soon came to be included in this rich oil field.

1908-1926	1912	1913	1922, JANUARY 5
Gilcrease married Belle Harlow. The couple had two children—Thomas, Jr. and Barton.	Gilcrease purchased his first painting, *Rural Courtship* by Ridgeway Knight, from a New York art dealer at the Hotel Tulsa.	Gilcrease purchased land in the Osage Hills, northwest of downtown Tulsa. At the time of the purchase, a house of native sandstone quarried on the property was under construction.	A charter was issued to establish Gilcrease Oil Company in Oklahoma.



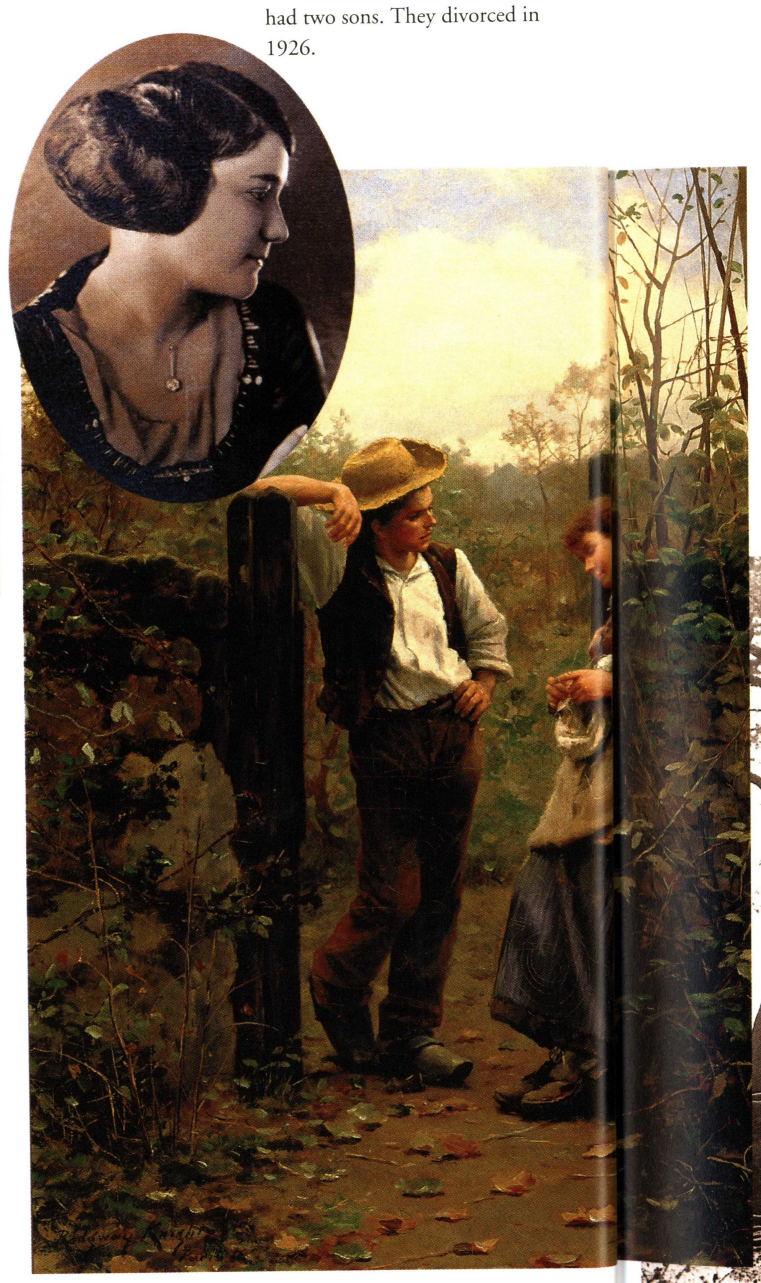
The Gilcrease family first lived in a rural area near the community of Twin Mounds and in 1904 moved to Wealaka. From his youth, Thomas assisted with the livestock and farming and later worked in the family's general store. Here, at about the age of fifteen, he displays his roping skills.

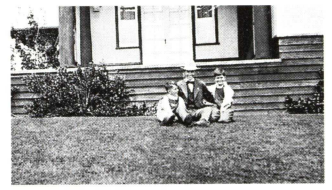




Rural Courtship by Ridgeway Knight was the first painting Gilcrease acquired. Gilcrease later described the painting's appeal as "wholesome." The painting was purchased at the Hotel Tulsa. Located at 3rd and Cincinnati, the elegant hotel opened in May 1912 and quickly became a center of oil-related activity in the region.

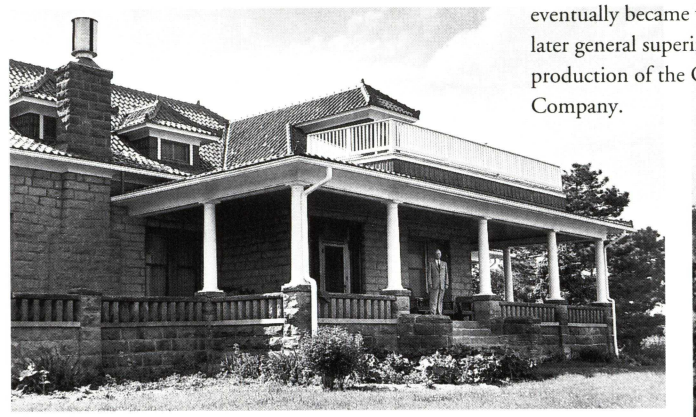
Gilcrease married Belle Harlow (1893-1979), a member of the Osage tribe, in 1908. The couple had two sons. They divorced in 1926.



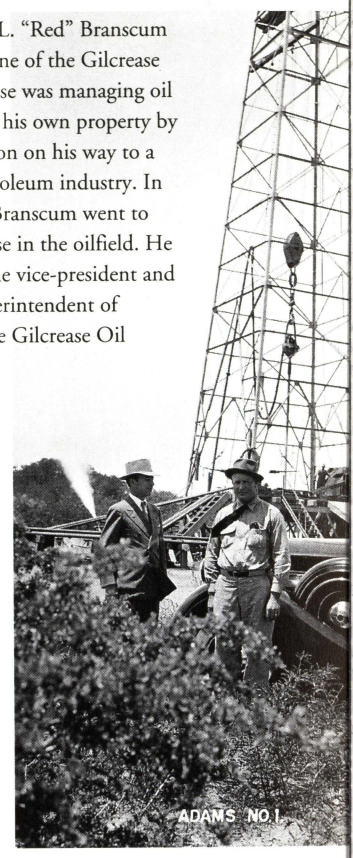


Gilcrease is shown with his sons Thomas, Jr. (1909-1967) and Barton (1911-1991) in a photograph from 1915.

Gilcrease posed for this April 24, 1958 photograph on the steps of his home in the Osage Hills. The Gilcrease family moved into the home in 1914.



Gilcrease and H.L. "Red" Branscum are shown near one of the Gilcrease oil leases. Gilcrease was managing oil and gas leases on his own property by 1909 and was soon on his way to a career in the petroleum industry. In the early 1920s Branscum went to work for Gilcrease in the oilfield. He eventually became vice-president and later general superintendent of production of the Gilcrease Oil Company.





An early view, looking south toward the Gilcrease house, reveals the beauty of the grounds. The land on which the house and museum stand was part of the Louisiana purchase, belonged to the Cherokee Nation, was sold to the Osage tribe, and passed into private ownership as part of the allotment process just before Oklahoma statehood.

1925	1925-1939	1928	1937
Gilcrease made his first trip to Europe.	Gilcrease made frequent trips between the United States and Europe. He also traveled extensively throughout Europe, until the outbreak of World War II. During this time Gilcrease began to acquire material for his collection.	Gilcrease married Norma Smallwood. Smallwood was Miss America of 1926. A daughter was born—Des Cygne.	Gilcrease Oil Company moved to San Antonio, Texas.



Gilcrease realized his love of traveling early on. This photograph shows a youthful and formally dressed Gilcrease.

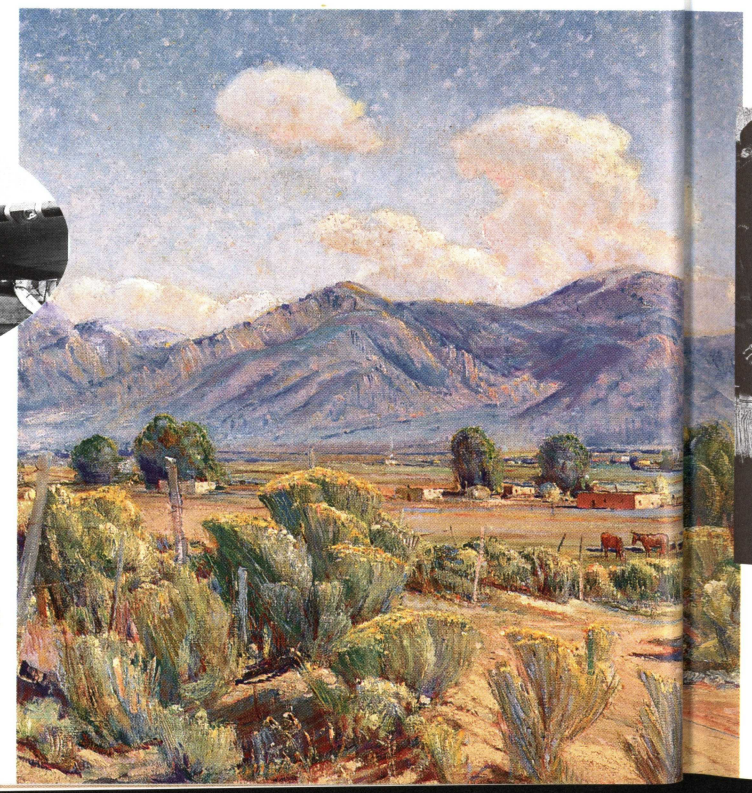


In 1928 Gilcrease married Norma Smallwood (1909-1966), who in 1926 became the first Oklahoman to win the Miss America pageant. The couple had one daughter before their marriage ended in divorce in 1933.



Gilcrease's daughter, Des Cygne (1929-1968) often traveled with her father. During the difficult economic times of the late 1920s and throughout the 1930s, Gilcrease faced many business challenges, but whenever possible he spent time with his young daughter.

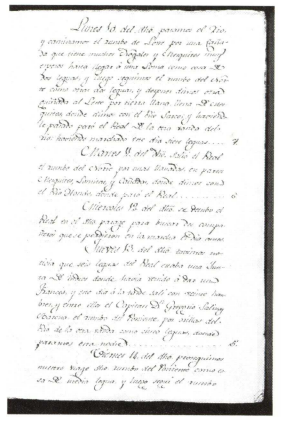
Chamiso Along the Roadside
by Oscar Berninghaus.





In 1950 Gilcrease was preparing to depart from New York City for Europe on his DC-3.

1940, APRIL 17	1942	MID-1940S-1954	1943, MARCH 18
Gilcrease Oil Company was incorporated in Texas.	The Thomas Gilcrease Foundation was established in Texas in September and incorporated in Oklahoma in November. The foundation was formed to assist in the development of the Gilcrease collection.	Gilcrease acquired the G.R.G. Conway collection of Hispanic Documents. These include several thousand pages of 16th- to 18th-century manuscripts. The exact date of this acquisition is unknown.	The Gilcrease collection was available for public viewing in San Antonio. It was open for about two years.



Interested in the history of the entire Western Hemisphere, Gilcrease purchased numerous items relating to Mexico and Mesoamerica. This document is the diary of a journey undertaken by Alonso de Leon in 1690.



This Hopi ceramic jar was acquired as part of the Lloyd Bolles collection.

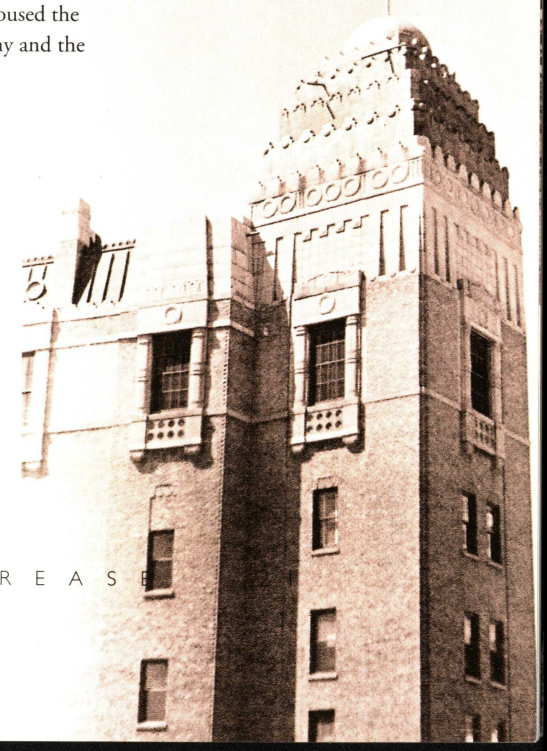


Des Cygne Gilcrease, Thomas Gilcrease, and Jean Devlin (right) enjoy a festival held at Gilcrease Museum in August 1953. In 1967 Mrs. Devlin became the first president of the Gilcrease volunteer organization, the Gillies.

The Gilcrease collection as it was exhibited in the Gilcrease Building in San Antonio. This photograph was taken about 1943.



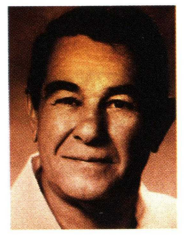
The building known as the Casino Club in San Antonio became the Gilcrease Building in 1941. The building housed the Gilcrease Oil Company and the Gilcrease collections.



1944, JANUARY 18	1945-EARLY 1950s	1946	1940s-EARLY 1960s
An agreement was signed to purchase the Philip Cole collection of western art.	Numerous paintings were acquired directly from several of the Taos artists, including Oscar Berninghaus, Ernest Blumenschein, Bert Phillips, and Joseph Henry Sharp.	The final of four payments was made for the Philip Cole collection, which included works by William R. Leigh, Frederic Remington, Charles Russell, Charles Schreyvogel, Olaf Seltzer, and Joseph Henry Sharp.	Gilcrease became a patron of American Indian artists, most notably Acee Blue Eagle, Woody Crumbo, and Willard Stone.



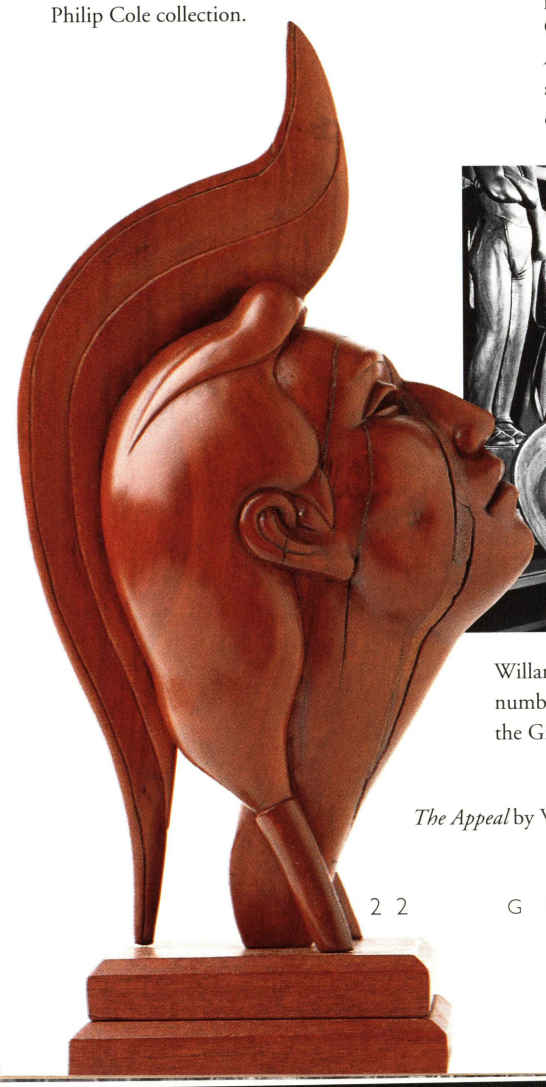
On the Flathead by Charles Russell was one of many important works acquired as part of the Philip Cole collection.

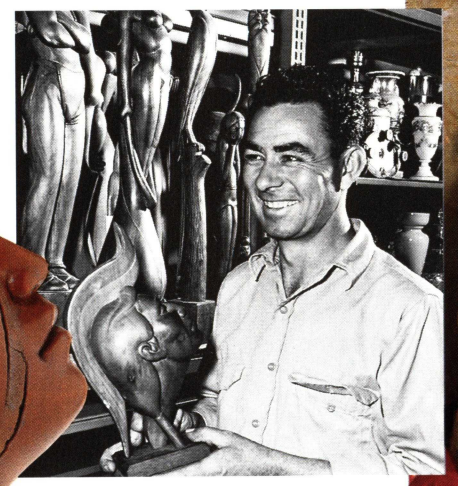


Woody Crumbo met Gilcrease in the mid-1940s. Gilcrease purchased a number of the artist's paintings and established him as an artist-in-residence. The two also traveled extensively, inspecting and purchasing art. Crumbo advised Gilcrease on the purchase of American Indian art and successfully suggested exhibitions of Native artists.



Philip Cole displayed his immense collection of western art at his Hudson River estate in New York. Gilcrease purchased the entire collection from Cole's widow.





Willard Stone, ca. 1948, with a number of the works he carved for the Gilcrease collection.

The Appeal by Willard Stone.



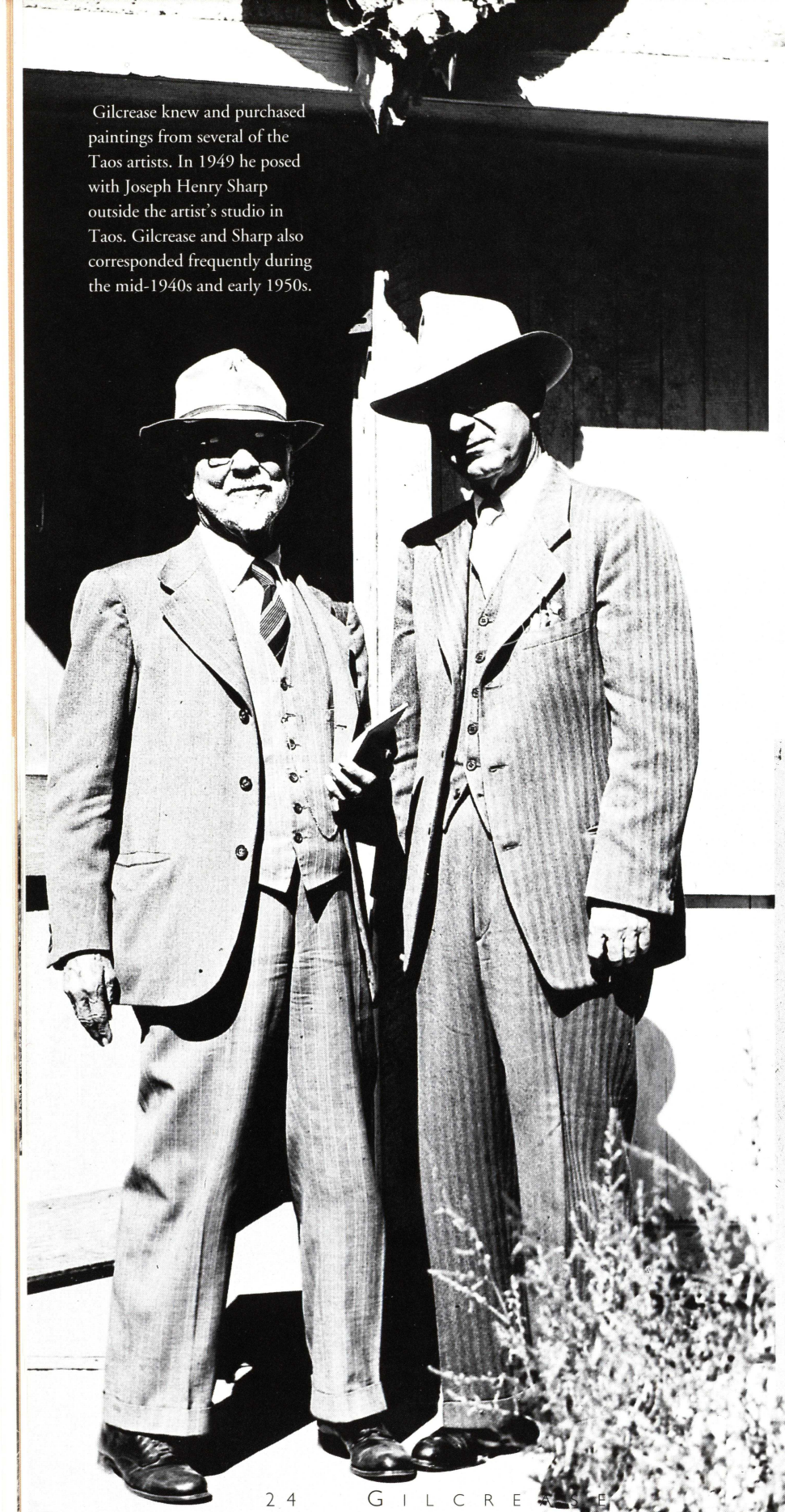
Crucita—Taos Indian Girl in Old Hopi Wedding Dress and Dry Flowers was among numerous works by Joseph Henry Sharp purchased by Gilcrease from the artist.



In recreating the American West at his eastern estate, Zeeview, Philip Cole became a patron of Montana artist Olaf C. Seltzer. This illustrated letter from Seltzer to Cole provides details of the painting *The Iron Trail,* which was part of a series relating to western transportation.

See pages 62 and 63 of this journal for a transcription of the correspondence pictured here.

Gilcrease knew and purchased paintings from several of the Taos artists. In 1949 he posed with Joseph Henry Sharp outside the artist's studio in Taos. Gilcrease and Sharp also corresponded frequently during the mid-1940s and early 1950s.



J. H. SHARP
TAOS, NEW MEXICO

Studio, Thurs. Aug.

Dear Mr. Gilcrease!-

"Blue Door" Just told me You expected to be in Taos around July 15 final- as you left- last time you mentioned costumes + other stuff I had in storage- my vault- in the Chapel - Dinner there & I considered seriously letting you have any + all you want- of it- There is a good deal real Museum Stuff. A Sioux war shirt- was bonnet- used in Custer Battle secured a Crow- during + after the Indian retreat I have every reason to believe authentic. Crow were Govt- scouts + spies for Govt. Several old Hopi dresses that simply cannot- be had - all in Museums - The last- buffalo hide war shield the Taos Indians had, + many other such things. The Foundation is a glorious place for them. I do not- think I will paint- any more Indians - if so, made OK if you can have them all- a very reasonable part that- part- don't matter to me. If interested let me known if + when you are coming up and we will dig them all out- ready for you to see. You can write or air mail.

I have to go to Santa Fe' every Thurs., + back around 3. P. M. if Car goes O.K.!

2 - 3 other good pictures Crumbo + I failed to locate around wall -

I'm rushed for the departing mail, so "Excuse, please",

Truly J. H. Sharp.

26 September 1945

Mr. J. H. Sharp
Taos, New Mexico

Dear Mr. Sharp:

It was, indeed, a great pleasure to visit again with you in your studio, also to view many of your works as well as in purchasing the very interesting paintings, thereby adding greatly to our collection of your good works. I am sure these paintings will be enjoyed by many people visiting our gallery in the future. I will mail you check as indicated in your letter of September 18th.

I have enjoyed very much knowing you as well as dealing with you, and shall always be most happy to visit with you when it is possible.

Wish to thank you wholeheartedly for the fine picture which you so kindly gave to me as a personal present. It will be enjoyed more fully by me than any picture I have. I think you have done more to preserve the spirit of the Indians in your paintings than any other artist who has painted them. Each and every picture I have seen done by you has been very pleasing to me.

I wish to thank you for giving me the descriptions and interesting information concerning each one of the paintings purchased from you, as this will add greatly to their value and interest.

When we receive these paintings in our gallery, it will give us more than 160 of your valuable works and will make a real display as the works of an individual artist. In fact, no greater display of one man's work on the Indians can equal this work.

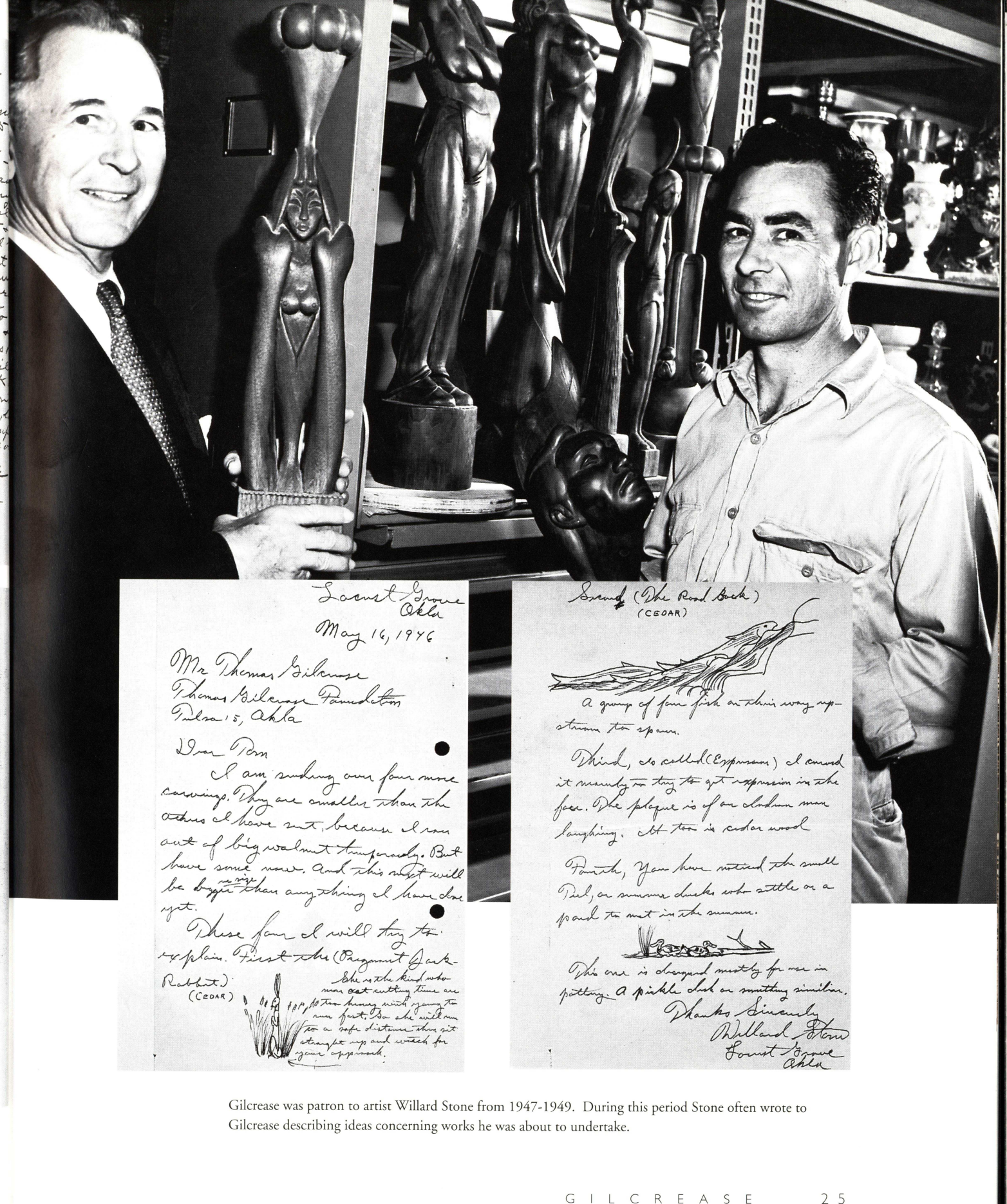
Hoping to have another visit with you before long, and with very best wishes to you and Mrs. Sharp, I remain

Sincerely yours,

Thomas Gilcrease

THOMAS GILCREASE

TG:t



Forest Grove
Okla
May 16, 1946

Mr Thomas Gilcrease
Thomas Gilcrease Foundation
Tulsa 5, Okla

Dear Tom

I am sending over four more carvings. They are smaller than the others I have sent, because I ran out of big walnut temporarily. But have some more. And this next will be bigger than anything I have done yet.

These four I will try to explain. First the (Pregnant Jack-Rabbit) (CEDAR)

She is the kind who runs out cutting time and runs front. Then she waits on him a safe distance when get through up and watch for your approach.

Forest Grove (The Road Back)
(CEDAR)

A group of four fish on their way up-stream to spawn.

Third, so called (Expression) I carved it merely to try to get expression in the face. The plaque is of an Indian man laughing. Material is cedar wood

Fourth, You have noticed the small Owl, or summer duck who settle on a pond to nest in the summer.

This one is designed mainly for use in putting a pickle dish or something similar.

Thanks Sincerely
Willard Stone
Forest Grove
Okla

Gilcrease was patron to artist Willard Stone from 1947-1949. During this period Stone often wrote to Gilcrease describing ideas concerning works he was about to undertake.

19 March 1948

Mr. Willard Stone
Locust Grove, Oklahoma

Dear Willard:

I have just returned from Washington, D. C. and San Antonio. While I was away, a letter arrived from you concerning your contemplated purchase of a house in the country. It would seem to me that after you moved to the country, you will soon be worried for the reason that your children will need to go to school and you will be isolated more or less from the town schools. This would necessitate moving back to town. Since you are well located where you are and have your workshop, it would appear that you probably will be better off there than you would if you move to the country, however, these things are for you to decide because they concern you and your family and not my way of thinking. We might discuss this matter upon your next visit to the Foundation.

Received a letter from Acee Blue Eagle yesterday written on the opposite side of a skin painting. He is still in New York.

Charles Wilson and his wife came by yesterday. He had an oil painting which he is taking to Philbrook for the Oklahoma exhibition.

We don't see much of Woody, since he evidently is working; painting and writing.

The gallery is nearing completion. We hope to start uncrating and hanging pictures by the middle of April and expect to have it open sometime in May.

Wishing you and yours the best of health and hoping to see you soon, I remain

Sincerely,

TG:t

Thomas Gilcrease



The Mighty Colt by Willard Stone.

1946-1947	1947-1949	1947	1948
Gilcrease purchased more than sixty George Catlin paintings and manuscript items from the estate of Sir Thomas Phillips.	Gilcrease purchased the majority of the Alfred Jacob Miller works (oils, watercolors, and sketches) acquired in segments from several members of the Miller family.	Gilcrease acquired the Thomas Moran watercolors of Yellowstone, which had been commissioned by Sir William Blackmore.	Gilcrease purchased the majority of the Thomas Moran studio collection, which included oils, watercolors, sketches, prints, and documents.



Burial Ceremony—Spirit Ascending by Woody W. Crumbo. Crumbo's style, in both painting and printmaking, reflects his commitment to Native American traditions and a great concern for modern social influences.

This photogravure of Thomas Moran was done by Napoleon Sarony about the time Moran was undertaking his first western travels.

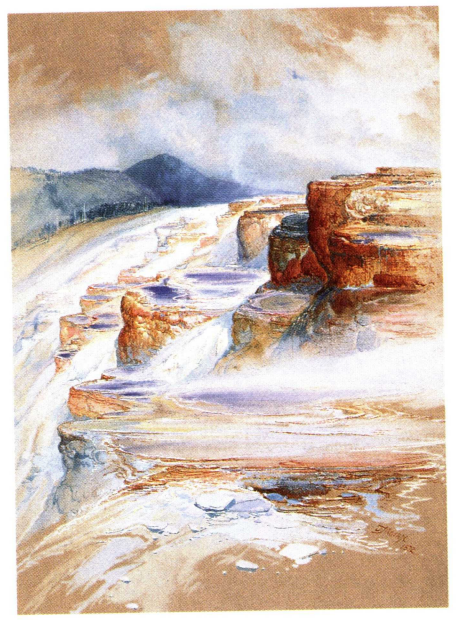


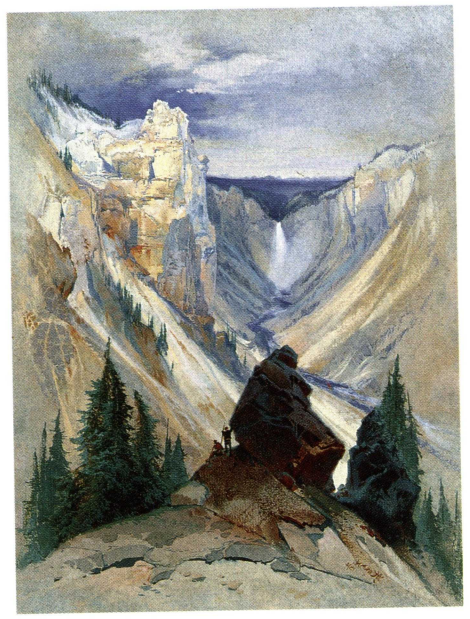


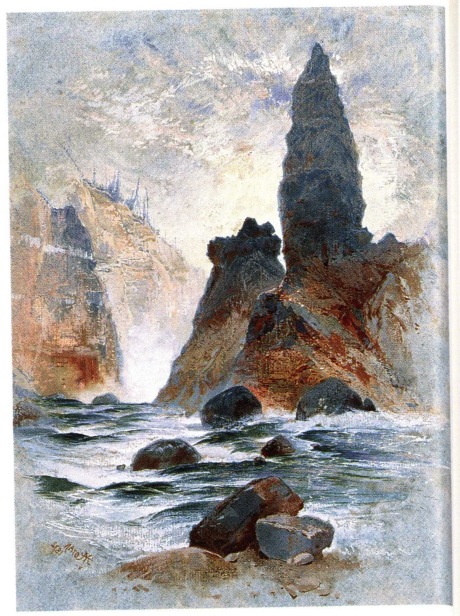
In 1946, Gilcrease was made an honorary member of the Sioux Tribe and given the name of Wicarpi Wakatuya, or High Star. On the left is George Whirlwind and on the right is Henry Standing Bear, Chief of the Sioux tribes.

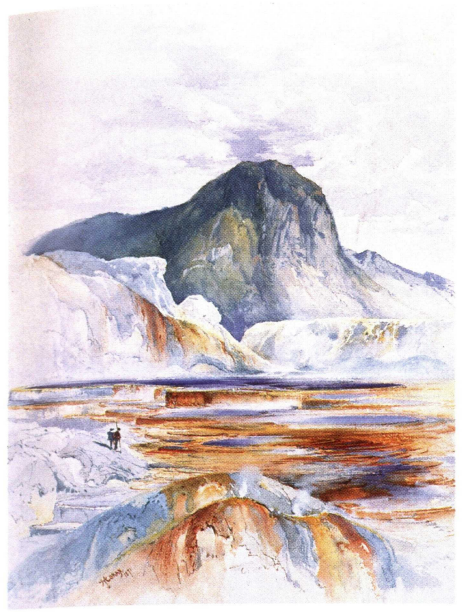
Acee Blue Eagle was a prolific painter and tireless promoter of American Indian art and culture. He was instrumental in establishing and advancing the renowned art department at Bacone College in Muskogee, Oklahoma. Gilcrease was a friend who offered encouragement and occasional financial assistance to Blue Eagle.



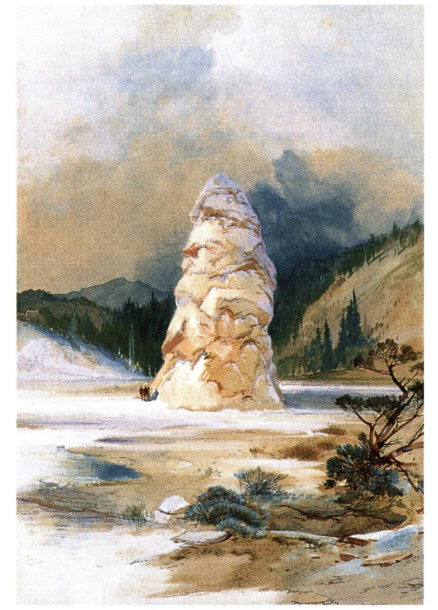






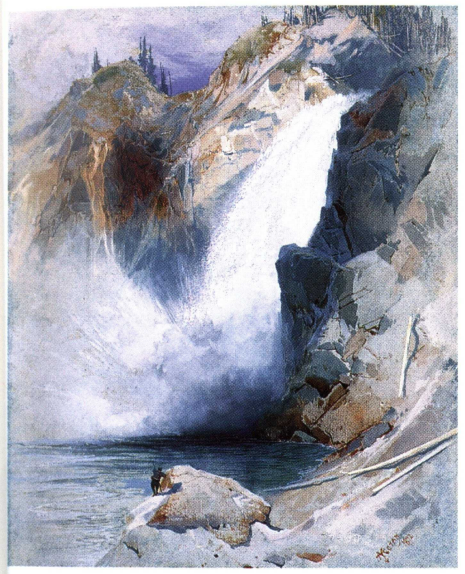


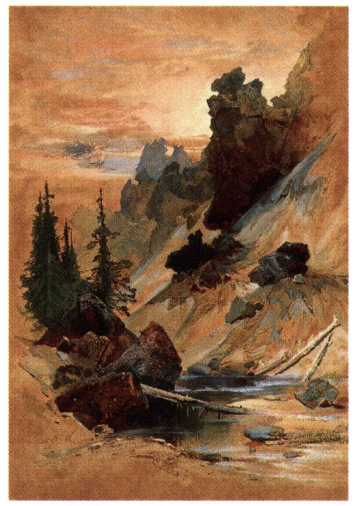






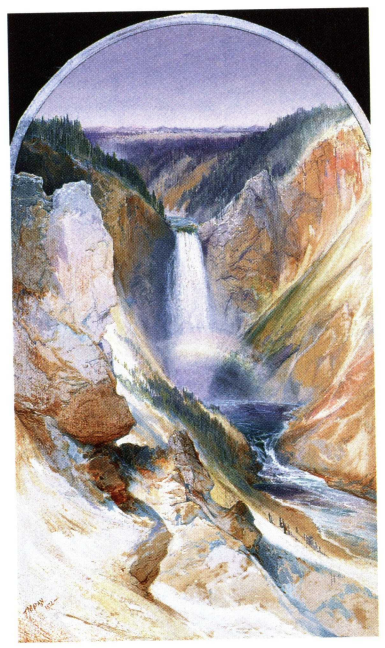


















The Blackmore Watercolors by Thomas Moran

Sir William Blackmore, who traveled to the Yellowstone region in 1872—just a year after Thomas Moran had been there—commissioned the artist to paint a series of watercolors of the area. The works remained in England until Blackmore's death. The collection passed through the hands of several American owners, then was purchased by Thomas Gilcrease in 1947. It remains a valued part of the Gilcrease Museum collection.

1949. MAY 3

The Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art opened on the grounds of the Gilcrease estate in Tulsa.

1949

Gilcrease purchased a group of American documents from the Rosenbach Foundation. This group included a letter from Benjamin Franklin and Silas Deane, certified copies of the Declaration of Independence and Articles of Confederation. Also purchased was Joseph Warren's certification of Paul Revere as a member of the Committee of Safety.

LATE 1940s-1962

In the later years of his collecting career, Gilcrease became interested in American Indian artifacts, eventually accumulating more than 250,000 items. Significant objects were acquired from numerous collectors, among them T. Hugh Young, Harry J. Lemley, Madge Hardin Walters, Frank J. Engles, Lloyd Bolles, Joseph Henry Sharp, and the estate of Emile Lenders.

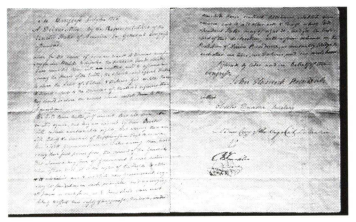
1952

Gilcrease was named to the Oklahoma Hall of Fame.

Gilcrease Museum as it appeared soon after opening in May 1949.



During the American Revolution, a delegation of three men served in France as Commissioners Plenipotentiary. Benjamin Franklin, Silas Deane, and Arthur Lee—at the direction of the Continental Congress—presented this certified copy of the Declaration of Independence to a minister of Frederick the Great of Prussia. A letter accompanying the Declaration and Articles of Confederation requests the consideration of a treaty of friendship and commerce with the newly founded United States of America.



In 1954 Morton Harrison, Nick Schuler, Will Rogers, Jr., and Mary Rogers visited with Gilcrease. It is possible the gathering had to do with the campaign to move Gilcrease Museum to Claremore.





By January 1948, the shape of the Longhouse-style main entrance was becoming apparent.

With the museum nearing completion in 1949, workmen and members of the Gilcrease Oil Company pause to document the occasion. On the back row, from the left, are longtime Gilcrease employee Cephas Stout, artist Woody Crumbo, brother Ed Gilcrease, and museum director Lester Hargrett. Thomas Gilcrease is fifth from the right.



1953

Gilcrease was named Oklahoma's outstanding citizen of the year by the Salvation Army.

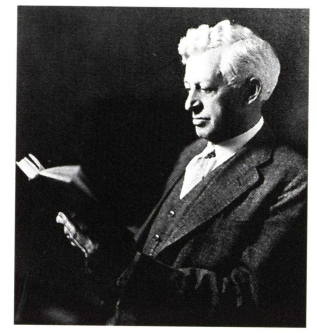
Grant Foreman worked with the Dawes Commission (created for the purpose of land allotment) upon his arrival in Indian Territory in 1899. He established a residence in Muskogee and a career as a historian. Following Foreman's death in 1953, the research papers for many of his publications were purchased by his friend, Thomas Gilcrease.

The collection of Madge Hardin Walters included many beautiful and elaborately decorated items such as this Northern Plains dress. Walters worked with numerous tribes and gained acclaim as both a collector and author.



1953

Gilcrease acquired the papers of Oklahoma historian Grant Foreman.



The Frank J. Engles collection was the source of most of the Eskimo items in the Gilcrease collection. Some of the material is ancient, but this incised walrus tusk dates from the early 20th century. Eskimo scrimshaw was usually done on ivory with lampblack worked into the incised lines.

The Creek Tribal Council recognized Gilcrease in a ceremony on January 28, 1954. Gilcrease's membership in the Creek Nation brought him the land that started his career as an oilman. Gilcrease is second from the right; artist Acee Blue Eagle is fourth from the right.

1954, AUGUST

Tulsans approved (by a three to one margin) a $2.25 million bond to meet Gilcrease's debts incurred while acquiring the art, artifacts, and documents in the Gilcrease collection. In return, the City of Tulsa received the collection. Gilcrease committed oil revenues to the City until the original bond amount was reimbursed.

1954

Gilcrease was honored by the Creek Tribal Council for his skill in developing the Gilcrease collection.



These Archaic period spear points were acquired from Dr. T. Hugh Young of Nashville, Tennessee. Both are made of Flint Ridge chalcedony from Miami County, Ohio. Quarried at one of the largest prehistoric flint sites, the stone was easily worked and traded to both the East and to the trans-Mississippi West.



Gilcrease acquired this 16th-century bottle from Arkansas collector Judge Harry J. Lemley. It is an outstanding example of Mississippian pottery, produced in what is now southern Arkansas and Oklahoma. Only about seven inches in height, the bottle is incised and has a smudged tortoise shell finish.



1955	1955, JULY	1955	1956
Gilcrease received an award from Bacone College for his outstanding contribution to the advancement of Christian Education among American Indians.	The City of Tulsa assumed control of the Gilcrease Museum collection.	Gilcrease made his first archaeological excavation. Eventually he worked at sites in Arkansas, Missouri, Illinois, Tennessee, and Mississippi.	Gilcrease received an Honorary Doctor of Arts and Letters Degree from the University of Tulsa.



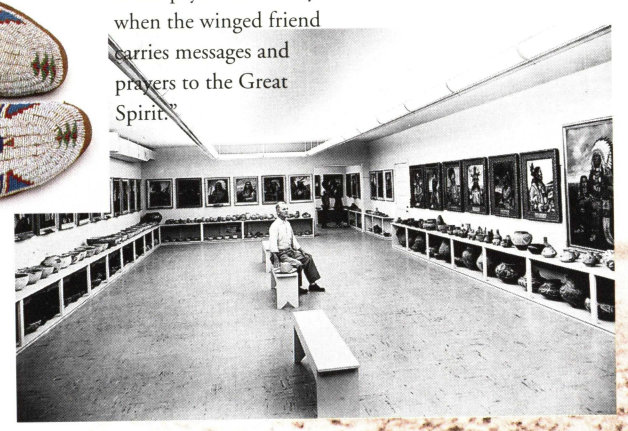
Gilcrease stands at the museum entrance, ca. 1950. The painting above the door was designed by Woody Crumbo. Gilcrease biographer David Milsten quoted Crumbo, "With the approval of Mr. Gilcrease I selected the 'Peyote' bird. It was a symbol of the messenger bird, derived from the concept of the peyote ceremony when the winged friend carries messages and prayers to the Great Spirit."

This beaver effigy platform pipe is one of the finest artifacts of prehistoric North America. It is from the Bedford Mounds, Pike County, Illinois, and was created by the Hopewell people about A.D. 200. The beaver is presented with its tail tucked under in a fighting position. It is made of black steatite with inlaid teeth carved from real beaver tooth. The eyes are symmetrical pearls.



Emil W. Lenders was a cowboy and artist, born in London and trained in Germany. He painted at the 101 Ranch in the 1890s and was later associated with "Buffalo Bill" Cody. His collection included many items relating to the material culture of numerous Indian tribes. These moccasins were acquired from the Lenders estate.





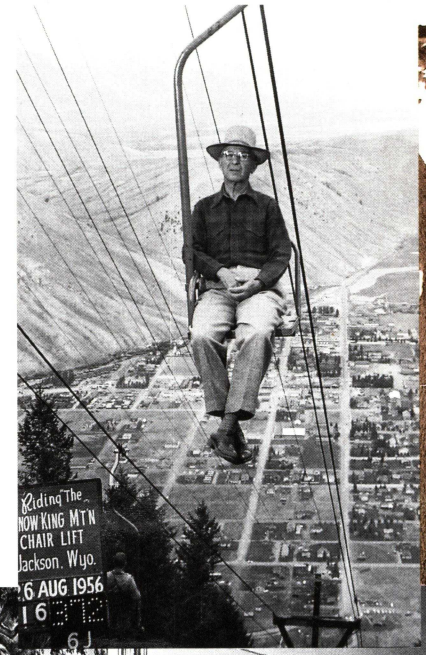
Gilcrease employed Gregory Perino, seen here on the left, to advise him in the purchase of prehistoric artifacts and to work with him on excavations. It was Perino who unearthed the beaver effigy platform pipe.



Gilcrease's large collection of paintings by Henry H. Cross was originally amassed by Thomas B. Walker. Following his death in 1951, Gilcrease purchased the entire group of more than 100 works. The Indian portraits were displayed, along with numerous items from the anthropological collection, in what was once the garage near the Gilcrease house. Gilcrease is seated on the bench in the center of the gallery.

1956	1958	1961, NOVEMBER	1962, MAY 5
Gilcrease was cited for outstanding and distinguished service to the state by the University of Oklahoma.	The museum building and grounds were donated to Tulsa by the Gilcrease Foundation.	A bond issue passed to fund an expansion of the museum facility.	Thomas Gilcrease died in Tulsa.

After the resolution of his financial problems and the transfer of his collection to the City of Tulsa, Gilcrease spent more time near Jackson, Wyoming. He had maintained a rustic cabin on the Hoback River near Jackson since about 1918. In 1956 he was photographed on the Snow King Mountain chair lift.





A portrait of Gilcrease by Oklahoma artist Charles Banks Wilson was dedicated on January 12, 1959. Gilcrease views the painting; his daughter, Des Cygne, watches her father.



Thomas Gilcrease's funeral was held on the museum grounds May 9, 1962. Chief Wolf Robe Hunt honored Gilcrease's request for a traditional Native American ritual at his funeral service. Many of Gilcrease's friends, in ceremonial dress, took part in the ancient ritual.

1963

A building addition of about 35,000 square feet was completed using 1961 bond money. It included galleries and the Vista Room. The October dedication was officiated by Governor Henry Bellmon. At the dedication the Gilcrease children, as trustees of the Gilcrease Foundation, presented the City with additional land and the Gilcrease house. They also donated art and artifacts.

1964

Gilcrease acquired the William R. Leigh studio collection, which contained oil paintings, sketches, prints, documents and artifacts.

1975-1976

A building addition was undertaken which included an auditorium, a special events gallery, and education offices.

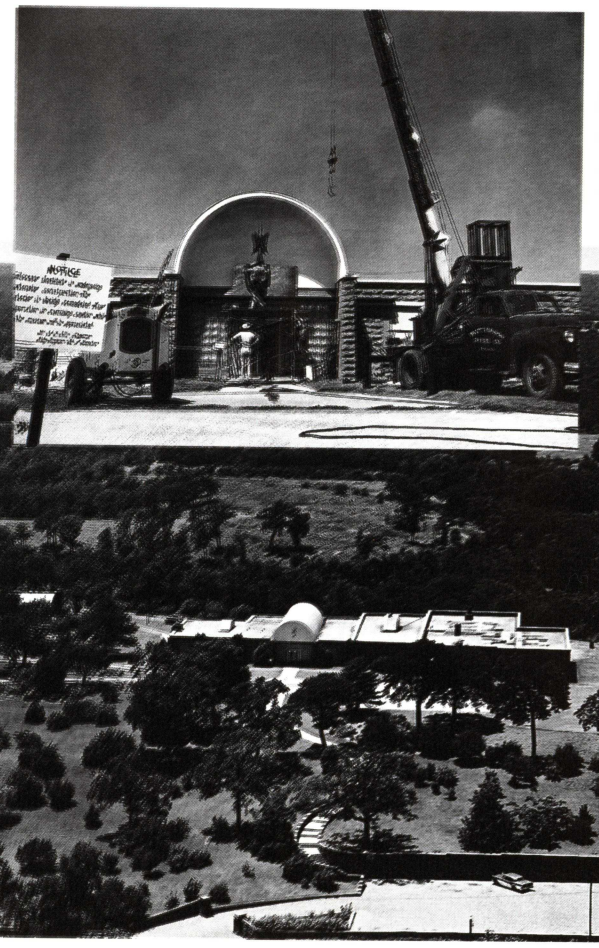
1976-1977

A donation of Mexican masks was made to the museum by a longtime friend of Thomas Gilcrease, David Harner.

By the summer of 1963 renovations were well underway expanding galleries and constructing a larger entrance. Sandstone for the facade, like that of the original museum and Gilcrease house, was quarried on the hillside west of the museum.

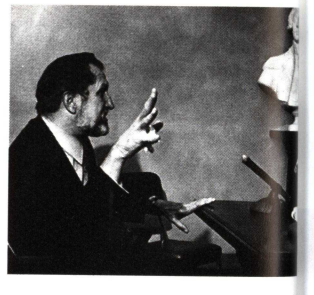


Study for Water Pockets by William R. Leigh. The thousands of finished paintings and preparatory sketches in the Leigh studio collection offer an unusual view into the creative process.





Professor Edward Dumit of the University of Tulsa and Gilcrease curator Anne Morand with *Appeal to the Great Spirit* by Charles Humphriss, 1977.



Actor Vincent Price, an avid Gilcrease supporter, at the dedication of the newly refurbish Des Cygne Gilcrease Denney Vis Room in 1970. In the backgroun is a marble bust, *General Lafayett* by French sculptor Jean Antoine Houdon.

An aerial view of the Gilcrease grounds taken before the 1963 building program began.

Capital improvements in 1963 resulted in the refurbishing of a gallery featuring Russell and Remington works.



1979

A building expansion added a new museum entrance and a museum shop to Gilcrease.

1982

The Gena Gilcrease Gallery was constructed as part of a building addition.

1985

The final payment was made to the City of Tulsa by the Gilcrease Foundation, fully reimbursing the 1954 bond issue. The Gilcrease collection thus became a gift from Thomas Gilcrease to the citizens of Tulsa.

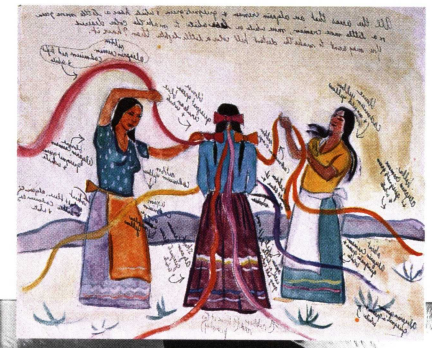
1985-1986

The Solomon McCombs studio collection was acquired. This collection includes paintings, sketches, manuscripts, artifacts, and personal memorabilia.



David Harner of Springdale, Arkansas often accompanied his friend Gilcrease on archaeological excavations. He later gave the museum a collection of Mexican masks. The masks were carved (from balsa, cedar and pine) in the 20th century, and most came from Guerrero. Shown here are a santiago mask, above, and an iguana mask.

The studio collection of artist Solomon McCombs (shown in the photo below) was donated to Gilcrease by his widow Marguerite. The preparatory work for *The Ribbon Dance* includes notations concerning color and composition. McCombs, a cousin and student of Acee Blue Eagle, faithfully painted many straightforward scenes of Creek Indian life.







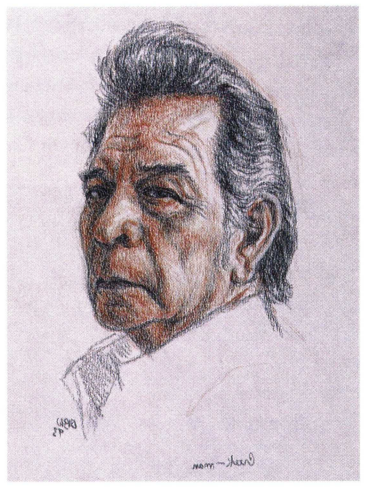
Eudotia Teenor and Cephas Stout were longtime employees and close friends of Thomas Gilcrease. Mrs. Teenor was Gilcrease's secretary for 25 years. Following his death, she continued working for the Gilcrease Foundation. Stout was employed by Gilcrease in 1927 and worked extensively on construction of Gilcrease Museum. This picture was taken upon his retirement in 1970.



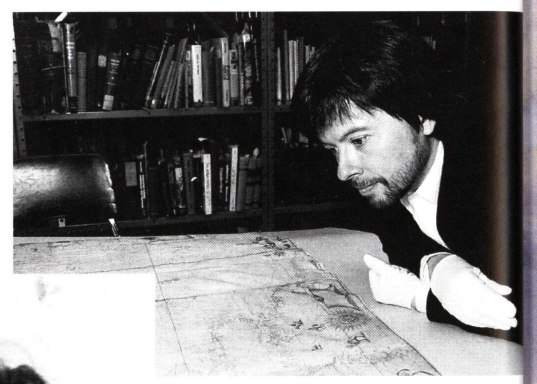
1985-1987	1988	1992	1994
A building expansion and renovation of all galleries were completed. The gardens around the museum were also greatly expanded. This 12.5 million dollar expansion was accomplished through joint private and public funding. Dedication was held in November 1987.	The Olaf Wieghorst studio collection was acquired as a gift of the artist's family. The studio installation was completed in September 1990.	Gilcrease Museum acquired Charles Banks Wilson's *Search For the Purebloods* series of more than 125 drawings of American Indians. This was a gift of the artist and the Thomas Gilcrease Museum Association. The Vista Room was renovated.	The Gilcrease Museum Shop was renovated and expanded.

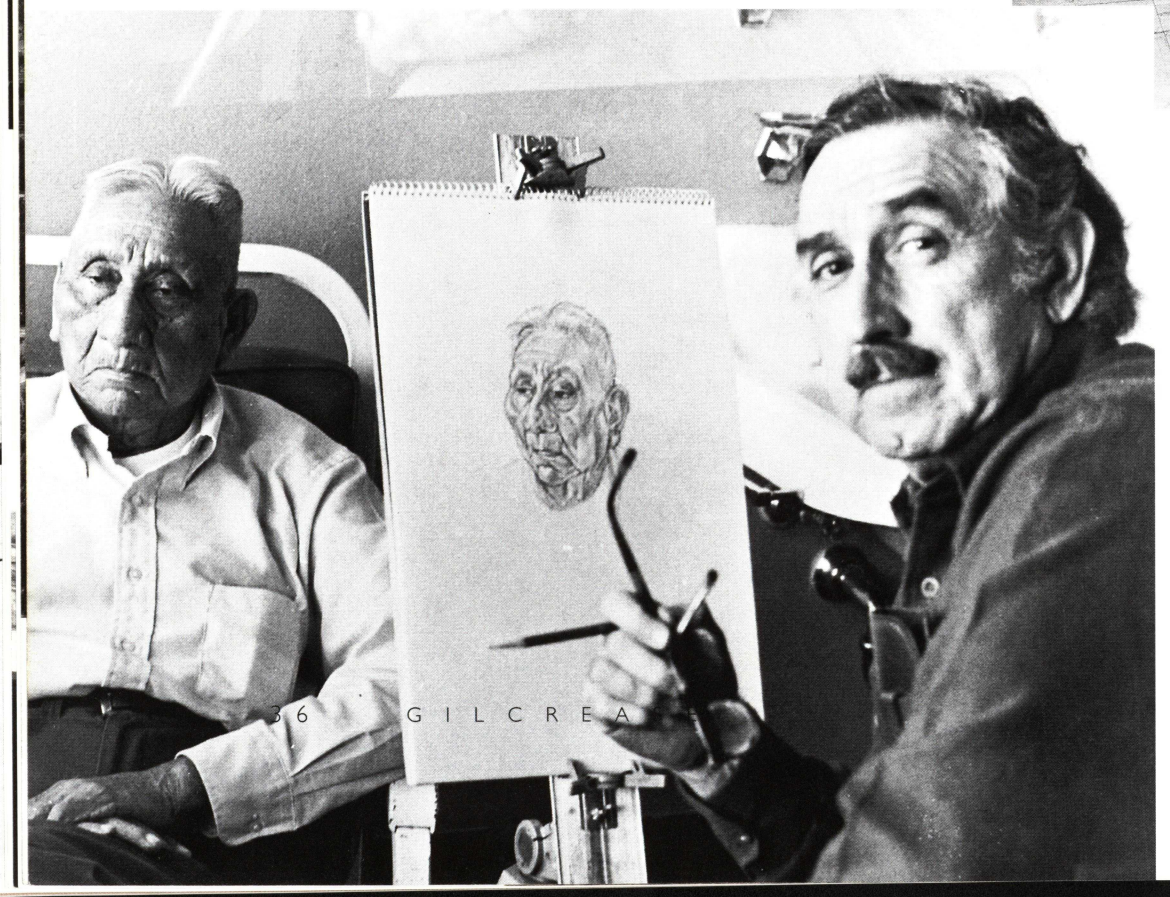
1995	1997	1999	2000 AND BEYOND
Renovation of galleries and of the restaurant area were undertaken, followed by installation of the Mexican collections in the exhibition *Las Artes de Mexico.*	Renovation of galleries for the *Thomas Moran Exhibition* was completed. This national presentation was the first major exhibition of Moran's paintings.	Additional land acquisition extended the Gilcrease Museum grounds to almost 500 acres.	Gilcrease Museum continues the legacy established by Thomas Gilcrease for the preservation, presentation, acquisition of collections, and enlightenment of those who use them.



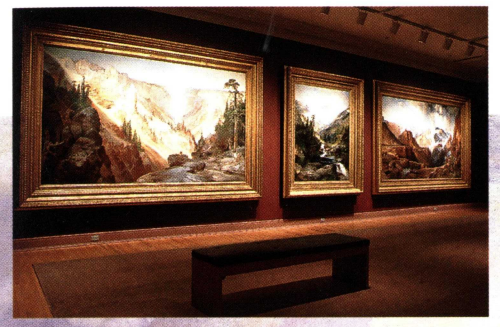


In 1996 Ken Burns, the producer of numerous television documentaries, visited Gilcrease Museum. Of special interest to Burns was the 1654 Carta Nautica, Del Mar. Portolan charts such as this were made by seamen for the use of other seamen. This one, drawn by a Spanish draftsman, delineated much of the Atlantic Ocean and shores of the Western Hemisphere.

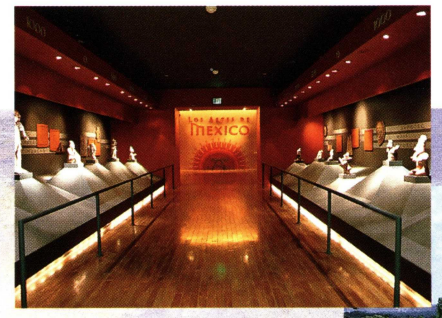




Charles Banks Wilson has documented American Indians for almost fifty years. Earlier artists worked to capture tribal cultures, but Wilson seeks to record individuals, particularly purebloods (Indians of one tribal heritage). Wilson was photographed in 1982 as he sketched a Seminole man. The subject of *Kiowa Man,* shown above on the left, is a singer. *Creek Man,* on the right, is the portrait of Joe Chalakee, an employee of Thomas Gilcrease and the Gilcrease Museum since 1953.



A dramatic vista in the Moran exhibition.



Hispanic artworks are featured in the recently developed exhibition *Las Artes de Mexico.*

The gardens and grounds of Gilcrease Museum have been extensively renewed with freshly designed plantings over the past few years.



Acoma by Thomas Moran



The Western Art Museum in 20th-Century America

PETER H. HASSRICK

Pictures are essentially "affaires de gout"—one man likes a color scheme, another wants a crass recitative of facts.

HENRY F. FARNY (1902)
QUOTED IN FRONTIER SPIRIT, WILLIAM C. FOXLEY

PETER H. HASSRICK was director of the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in Cody, Wyoming, from 1976 to 1996, and subsequently director of the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum in Santa Fe, New Mexico. He is presently Charles M. Russell Memorial Chair in the School of Art at the University of Oklahoma, Norman. This article is adapted, with permission, from a prize-winning article Hassrick published in *Montana, The Magazine of Western History* in the summer of 1992, entitled "Western Art Museums: A Question of Style or Content."

FACING

CHARLES BIRD KING
Terre Rouadne, 1829, oil on panel
Gilcrease 0126.1196

It was announced in *Time* magazine on March 10, 1961 that a new kind of museum was taking shape in America—a museum devoted to a regional form of aesthetic expression, one focused on the West. *Time* referred to the founding of the Amon Carter Museum of Western Art in Fort Worth, Texas. The headline read "Museum of Yippee-Yi-Yo." The writer seemed more impressed with architect Philip Johnson's deviation from the linear austerity of the International Style of architecture than with the directions of either Mr. Carter's collecting passions and genius or the implications such a museum might have for the study of American art. As the headline suggested, the artworks themselves were not taken very seriously either.

The origins of the dozen or so museums that, like Gilcrease, are today devoted to collecting, exhibiting, and publishing on western American (non-Indian) art can be traced to Philadelphia and Charles Willson Peale's museum. America's first serious museum, the Peale Museum was sustained through the first half of the 19th century as an eclectic showroom for art, history, and natural history. It combined the Enlightenment's penchant for an ordered cosmos with an ample measure of Romanticism. Peale's museum housed much early art and many artifacts brought east from expeditions into the far West. Artist-naturalist Titian Ramsay Peale, director of the museum in its waning years, himself accompanied two major western expeditions.[1]

Other artists of the time shared the younger Peale's penchant for exploration, science, art, and museology. The most notable was George Catlin, who produced his famous "Indian Gallery" in the 1830s with the intention of providing the core collection for a national museum



JOHN MIX STANLEY
Scouts in the Tetons, oil on canvas
Gilcrease 0126.1143

constituted almost exclusively of western images. Catlin's contemporary Charles Bird King produced another Indian portrait gallery, and a third painter of the day, John Mix Stanley, joined the ranks of artists who strove to compete with Catlin for official patronage. Stanley promoted his own "Indian Gallery," and it too was supposed to become the heart of a national museum collection. The aspirations of both King and Stanley were partially sated after 1859 when their collections were exhibited as a feature presentation of the Smithsonian Gallery of Art.[2]

Around the turn of the century a number of large, public expositions elevated popular enthusiasm for American frontier art and history to a fever pitch. The World's Columbian Exposition (1893), Omaha Trans-Mississippi Exposition (1898), Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis (1904), and Portland's Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition (1905) are exemplary. Heroic-sized replicas of

Frederic Remington's famous bronze, *Coming Through the Rye,* and epic landscapes like Thomas Moran's *Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone* complemented the broad array of displays that decorated the grounds and the galleries of the marbled art pavilions in those expositions. For those who liked their *tableaux vivant,* there were Buffalo Bill's Wild West and similarl entertainments outside the exposition gates.[3]

Appreciation of western art was sustained during the teens, especially in Montana with Charles Marion Russell's ascendancy; in New York with the engaging popularity of western illustration; and in the Southwest where the Taos Society of Artists, Fred Harvey, and the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad combined to promote a nostalgic, quiescent West.

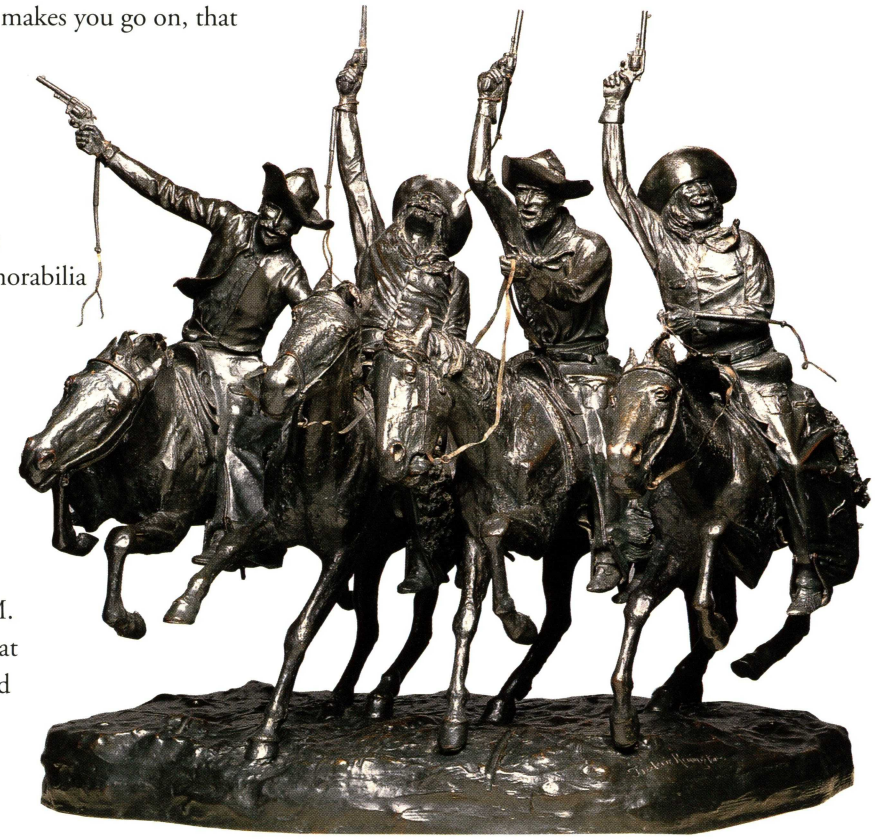
In Wyoming, during the last years of his life, Buffalo Bill began to direct his focus from Wild West dramatizations to a consuming dream of someday converting his TE Ranch outside Cody, "into a home ranch-museum. Something to show people exactly how the western pioneer lived and worked." Cody died in 1917, and shortly after World War I Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney produced a commissioned work titled *Buffalo Bill—The Scout* for a newly formed Buffalo Bill Memorial Association in Cody. In this sculpture, Whitney took Buffalo Bill's vision one step further. As her private secretary Juliana Force commented at the dedication of the figure in 1924, "If that work does not say something to you that makes you go on, that 'quickens' you, then this is not a work of art; it is just a historical document." Thus, Whitney had introduced an element of life into that history through the application of aesthetic energy. In 1927 the Buffalo Bill Museum was founded in the town of Cody. It featured a potpourri of historical western memorabilia that was indeed quickened by the spirit of Whitney's art.[4]

Russell and Remington also enjoyed recognition during these years with the founding of hometown museums in their honor. The Remington Art Memorial (known today as the Remington Art Museum) was established in Ogdensburg, New York, in 1923. Seven years later the C. M. Russell Museum took nascent form when Great Falls, Montana purchased the artist's home and accepted a gift of Russell's studio from his widow, Nancy. Although these two artists had commanded national prominence in



GEORGE CATLIN
The Bear Dance, oil on canvas
Gilcrease 0176.2171

The Bear Dance was purchased from the estate of Sir Thomas Phillips.



FREDERIC REMINGTON
Coming Through the Rye, bronze
Gilcrease 0827.42
This sculpture was purchased as part of the Philip Cole collection.

THE GRADUALLY INCREASING POPULARITY OF WESTERN HISTORY FUELED AN AWAKENED, POST-WORLD WAR II APPRECIATION. . . . THE MORE ATTENTION PAID TO HISTORY, THE MORE ITS ASSOCIATIVE ART FORMS PROFITED FROM PUBLIC AWARENESS AND PRAISE.

their lifetimes, they were supported and eulogized primarily by a local audience in 1930. The museums founded in their names helped sustain Remington and Russell's public images until the 1950s when their popularity enjoyed a national resurgence.[5]

The gradually increasing popularity of western history fueled an awakened, post-World War II appreciation. As in the mid-19th century, the art was lauded as a function of its subject matter. Thus, the more attention paid to history, the more its associative art forms profited from public awareness and praise. Nowhere is that trend more readily observable than in the story of Alfred Jacob Miller's "rediscovery" in 1935.

The story goes back to the Peale family—this time in Baltimore. The place was the residence of Titian Peale's brother, Rembrandt Peale. In that year Mae Reed Porter, a student of the fur trade from Kansas City, discovered a remarkable collection of Miller watercolors in the basement of the Peale Museum. She acquired them four years later, and with her encouragement they became the pictorial heart of one of the truly great works of western history, Bernard DeVoto's *Across the Wide Missouri* (1947). Miller's paintings visually recounted the story of America's fur trade. DeVoto's book won a Pulitzer Prize for scholarship.[6]

Post-World War II pictorial magazines, such as *Life* Magazine, which featured the story on Tom Gilcrease reproduced at the beginning of this publication, also did much to elevate public enthusiasm in the 1950s.[7]

Early writings and museum exhibitions tended not to be art historical. Rather, they were either biographic or episodic, using the artworks to fill their pages or galleries with pictorial analogues to western history.



The Gilcrease Museum anthropological storage, before the renovation in 1987.



EMANUEL G. LEUTZE
Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way, oil on canvas
Gilcrease 0126.1615

This historicizing was conscious and deliberate for at least some of the authors of these early efforts. Perry Rathbone in his catalog introduction to the Saint Louis Art Museum's exhibition *Westward the Way,* pointedly acknowledged this approach as both timely and innovative. Following the "modern" methodology, Rathbone explored "a new type of scholarship, consisting of the selection and interpretation of pictures as a visual-literary form." *Westward the Way,* he wrote, exemplified the new approach by combining art, literature, and social history. The Denver Art Museum's exhibit *Building the West* was motivated by a similar impulse. Royal Hassrick wrote in his introduction to the catalog that the exhibition had been assembled "to bring the people of this region a visual interpretation of their own heritage."

By the mid-1950s, the historical analogue approach had become the standard method of considering western art. The historical veil had cloaked the art for a number of reasons. The first might be attributed to regional bias. The eastern establishment more or less had concluded that western art deserved little serious attention aesthetically (a prejudice from which it continues to suffer today). The second reason



The Gilcrease collection as it was displayed in San Antonio, Texas, ca. 1943.

THE HISTORICAL VEIL HAD CLOAKED THE ART FOR A NUMBER OF REASONS. . . . WESTERNERS PREFERRED NOT TO HAVE THEIR ART CRITICALLY ANALYZED AS ART, HOPING COULD STAND ON ACCURACY ALONE.

stems from the obverse, that westerners preferred not to have their art critically analyzed as art, hoping it could stand on accuracy alone. A third explanation may be found in the efforts of early western art museums and their directors, who tended to link western art with western history and regionalism.

Eugene Kingman, director of Omaha's Joslyn Art Museum, offered a counterpoise to this historical viewpoint. Kingman was vitally concerned with the relationship between history and art, and while he sought to recognize the aesthetic element of his Joslyn collections, he also strove to wed the two disciplines. In 1954 Kingman, who enjoyed a reputation as an artist as well as a museum director, was quoted as saying, "Art cannot get away from its period and time. Art and history are inseparable and dependent on each other." Yet in a 1954 article, Kingman also appealed for art on its own terms. Acknowledging the reporter's role of many early western artists, he added: "Yet they were basically artists after all: and some of them added that strength of individuality and character that is the substance of art, producing work that has found a rich place in the story of Nineteenth Century painting."[8]

Kingman was something of an anomaly. What emerged for most observers of western paintings and sculpture, drawings and prints was not a critical sense of the art or its creators but rather an expanded appreciation of the social history as illuminated by pictorial manifestation. Such an approach was a relief to the academic art historical community who, for the most part, could safely disregard western art as unworthy of serious aesthetic study. Art as social history was also vitally important as an underlying concept in the formation of the premier western art museums.



FREDERIC REMINGTON
Battle of War Bonnet Creek,
oil on canvas
Gilcrease 0127.2310

The first of the real western art museums (that is, art museums devoted entirely to depicting western themes) was established in San Antonio in 1943. The collection had been assembled by a successful oilman from Oklahoma who had been gathering important art holdings for about five years and dreaming of founding a museum for the previous fifteen years. Although intrigued by European art treasures in museums from Paris to New York, he had early realized that his fortunes would not compete with those of the Andrew Mellons of his day and that his true inclinations were, in fact, for American art anyway—especially that which portrayed his native West. His name was Thomas Gilcrease.

Gilcrease was not alone in the impulse to amass such a collection of western art as might be worthy of a museum. Houston oilman William C. Hogg had been buying Remington works since 1920, Malcolm S. Mackay of New Jersey had acquired Russell's art with the same alacrity and success that he bought and sold stocks on Wall Street during the teens and twenties, and a retiring doctor from Tarrytown, New



A part of the Philip Cole collection as it was displayed by Cole prior to its acquisition by Thomas Gilcrease.

"WHY DID TOM GILCREASE COLLECT? . . . BECAUSE HE COULDN'T STAND NOT TO ACQUIRE THE STUFF OF ART WHICH HE CONSIDERED. . . IMPORTANT, AS ART OR AS A DOCUMENT OF THE GREAT ADVENTURE OF AMERICA!"

York, Philip Cole, had, between 1919 and 1941, assembled a vast array of valuable works (636 of which would be purchased by Gilcrease from Cole's estate in 1944). Unlike those contemporaries, however, Gilcrease was the only one to found a museum.[9]

Gilcrease's Texas venture, named the Thomas Gilcrease Collection, lasted only two years. Audience apathy invited demise. But the idea proved to be sound. Four years later, in May 1949 and in Tulsa, his hometown, Gilcrease opened another museum, the Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art.[10] Today known as the Gilcrease Museum, it boasts the largest and most comprehensive collection of western American art in existence.

Gilcrease's collection combined an aesthetic and a historical foundation with a mission focused on personal cultural fulfillment. The museum's third director (and really its founding inspiration as a national institution), James T. Forrest, expressed it this way. "Why did Tom Gilcrease collect? . . . he did so because he couldn't stand not to acquire the stuff of art which he considered. . . important, as art or as a document of the Great Adventure of America!"[11]

"Many of the books, most of the pictures and bronzes and carvings and artifacts of his collection became a part of him," wrote historian J. Frank Dobie in 1962. Gilcrease, Dobie added, "valued the



The Frederic Remington gallery at Gilcrease Museum in Tulsa, before the 1987 renovation.





The studio of artist William R. Leigh as it was installed in facsimile at Gilcrease Museum. A photo of the artist appears at left. Leigh did not travel to the American West until 1906 when he was forty years old.

beautiful. The values of art are also the values of humanity." That Gilcrease's art collection was meant to be valued by humanity is proven in the museum he founded. That his collection was perceived both aesthetically and humanistically is apparent in the comments of the museum's late director, Fred Meyers. "The internal harmony of the collection was derived from Mr. Gilcrease's view of history," Meyers observed in 1982. "Mr. Gilcrease did not explain his collecting intentions. . . .The objects themselves, however, demonstrate his deep interest in the culture of the American Indian."[12]

In the early years of the museum's existence Forrest and his staff published the first magazine in America devoted to western art. Issued originally in the spring of 1958, it was titled *The American Scene,* and in its pages some fundamental and formative perceptions of that regional art form found nascent articulation. Whether consciously or not, the staff developed through the magazine a pervasive tendency to treat western material for its storytelling value and narrative essence. But along with his western art, Gilcrease had collected other representative examples of American art from the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries, and this art received aesthetic



JOHN SINGLETON COPLEY
Portrait of Mrs. John Apthorp, Nee Hannah Greenleaf, oil on canvas
Gilcrease 0126.1012

CHARLES M. RUSSELL
Running Buffalo, oil on canvas
Gilcrease 0137.2266

Russell depicts here a hunt which took place in honor of the Russian Grand Duke Alexis in 1872. The Western Division of the Army had to search for enough bison to form a herd near North Platte, Nebraska. During the five-day hunt the Grand Duke's party, accompanied by General Philip Sheridan, Buffalo Bill Cody, and 1,000 Sioux, killed almost 300 bison.



description.[13] Thus Remington, Russell, Moran, and others are discussed as social documentarians and Vanderlyn and Copley as artists—part of a broad American aesthetic tradition. An incipient divergence began to take shape between the two groups of artists.

In the summer 1959 issue of *The American Scene,* Gilcrease curator Charles Proctor wrote an essay on "The Art of the American Cowboy." So popular and ubiquitous were the images of the cowboy, Proctor claimed, that "we can safely refer to a 'cowboy school of art.' " This conclusion, this mental fix, marks an important step in the perceptual separation of western (read cowboy) art from the mainstream of American art. Proctor expanded those ranks beyond the cowboy painters in the next issue when he denied landscape artists Albert Bierstadt and Thomas Moran places in the American art hierarchy. Neither man, he argued, had any real "impact on the course of American art from a purely aesthetic point of view. Neither started an important trend or profoundly altered the philosophy of American artists. They were physical rather than intellectual explorers."[14] This was something of a defensive posture intended perhaps to protect these western artists from the type of critical analysis to which their eastern contemporaries might be exposed.

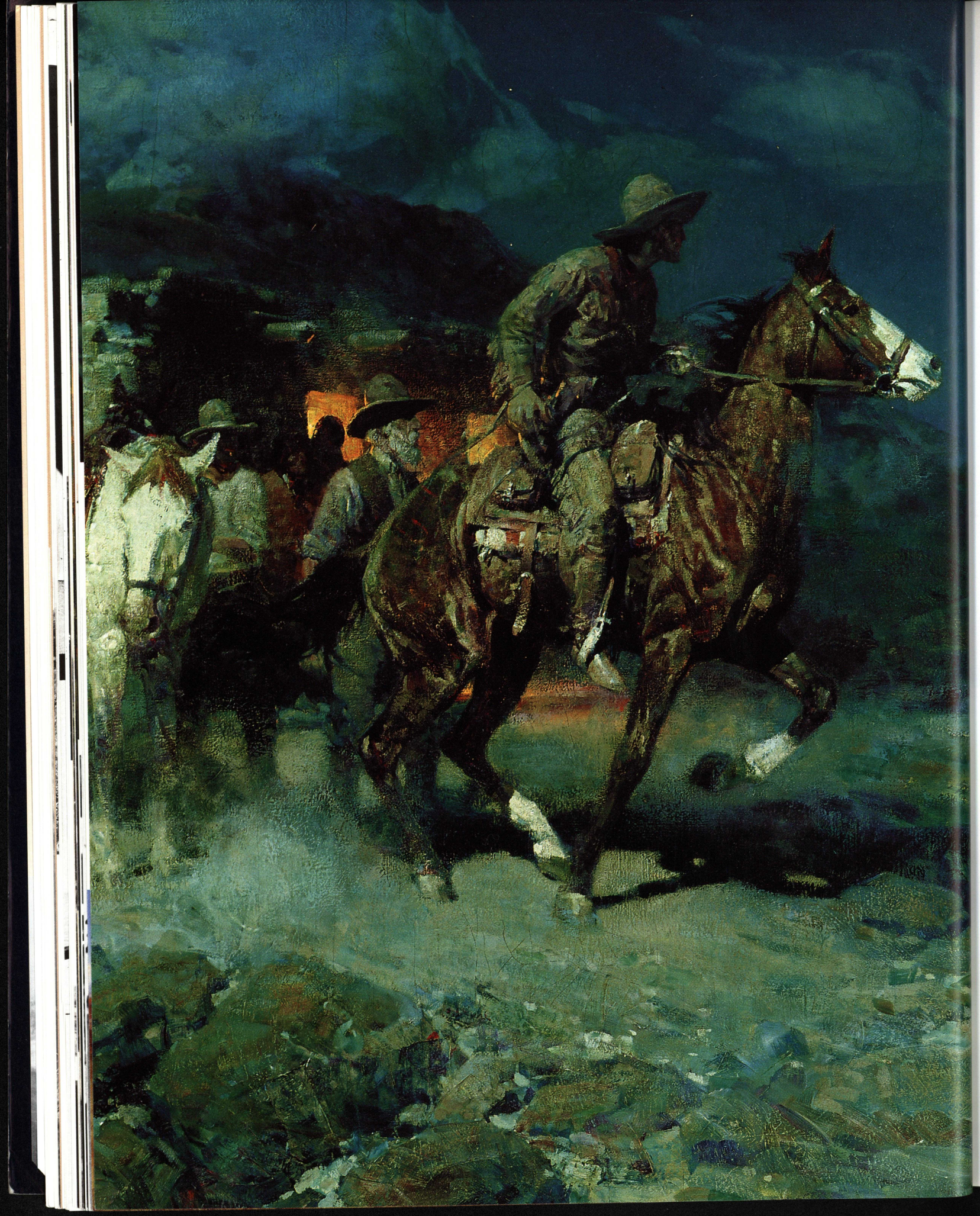
What emerged was a pervasive documentary bias leveled at the western segment of the Gilcrease holdings and linked with a call for separation of this body of work aesthetically and philosophically from the broader traditions of American art. Such sentiments echoed those manifest in the works of DeVoto and others popular in the historical and ethnological communities.[15] Although eschewing the aesthetic was not an institutional mandate, it somehow carried forward into the museum's historically thematic gallery displays and publications well into future years.[16]

If the Gilcrease Museum was instrumental in its role of separating western art from the broader national canon and making western art a servant to the themes of social history, it was not alone. A second large western art museum, founded in June 1959, contributed to the trend. In honor of its benefactor Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, the newest museum was the Whitney Gallery of Western Art in Cody, Wyoming. It represented the final chapter in the story that began in 1924 with the commissioned monument of *Buffalo Bill—The Scout.* [17]

This was a prepossessing facility, born to nurture a bellwether role and a guise of purely western spirit. Its director, Harold McCracken, knew what function a "Western Americana



ALFRED J. MILLER
Crow Indian on the Lookout, watercolor on paper
(detail)
Gilcrease 0236.1016



Art" museum was meant to play, and it must not, he was convinced, pander to aesthetics. In fact, it must not even be considered an art museum in the regular sense. "Our emphasis," he wrote, was "on documentary art [which] means that the artist's meticulous accuracy as to the scene he portrayed is of primary importance rather than the artistic way in which he presents the picture." The Whitney Gallery would serve real truth as McCracken saw it, and the director saw and selected well. He picked a remarkable sampling of artworks to open the new museum in 1959: Miller watercolors, Russell bronzes, and Russell paintings along with an exemplary collection of works assembled by William F. Davidson of M. Knoedler and Company in New York.[18]

McCracken's pioneering efforts to define, preserve, and proselytize about western art won many converts, a few even among the rather lofty art museum circles, by the end of the decade. John Walker, then director of the National Gallery of Art, commented at a public dedication in Cody in 1969 that McCracken had boldly resisted the "tyranny of abstraction," to which most other art museums in America had succumbed. McCracken was to be lauded as a "dissident museum director," who refused to condone the abandonment of figurative traditions and the disregard for the fundamental symbols of westward expansion. "Here is the bone and marrow of our heritage," claimed Walker. "The good and the bad are woven together in these relics of the old West. No American can understand his country unless he knows what is here symbolized."[19]

When, in early 1961, the Amon Carter Museum of Western Art was founded in Fort Worth, there was every indication that it would follow the course already set by the Gilcrease Museum and the Whitney Gallery—extolling the preeminence of historical analogue for western art. As if unconsciously resistant to acknowledging the value of the art beyond its historical associations, Amon Carter's friend and fellow collector, C. R. Smith, in the introduction to the museum's inaugural catalog wrote that the collections here presented were worthy primarily insofar as they were able "to record and interpret history." The works of Russell and Remington, which constituted the core of the museum's initial holdings, reflected the taste and motivations of the institution's benefactor. Carter had amassed his considerable art treasure because he "admired the intellectual curiosity . . . determination and . . . courage" of the two artists, all traits which he, according to Smith, had also evidenced "in abundance." This art embodied for Carter the quintessence of America's frontier spirit.[20]

Yet under the guidance of its new director Mitchell A. Wilder, the Amon Carter Museum moved quickly beyond the parameters of a now standard historical paradigm. Rather than focusing on the region

"OUR EMPHASIS," MCCRACKEN WROTE, WAS "ON DOCUMENTARY ART [WHICH] MEANS THAT THE ARTIST'S METICULOUS ACCURACY AS TO THE SCENE HE PORTRAYED IS OF PRIMARY IMPORTANCE RATHER THAN THE ARTISTIC WAY IN WHICH HE PRESENTS THE PICTURE."

FACING

FRANK TENNEY JOHNSON
The Pony Express, oil on canvas
Gilcrease 0127.1088

ACCORDING TO WILDER, "MANY OF THE BEST PAINTERS OF THE WEST WERE EASTERNERS" AND THE "'WESTERN' THEME CANNOT BE ISOLATED IN TIME, SINCE THE FRONTIER STARTED IN THE EAST, AND IN A SENSE, THE EAST ITSELF WAS ONCE 'THE WEST.'

of the West, Wilder sought to explore the *process* of westering and the *concept* of frontier. Pure art history was also explored. In one of the museum's first large-scale art exhibitions, "Taos and Santa Fe: The Artist's Environment" (1963), Wilder clearly expressed his desire to emphasize the aesthetic contributions made by the New Mexico artists of the early 20th century.[21]

What had previously been sacrificed to the limited concentration on surface facts, which the historical community rarely considered sufficiently empirical for credible use anyway, was now gradually regained as the works began to find recognition for elements of design, symbol, and viewer/image relationships.[22]

Wilder wanted to confirm that all American art, including that referred to as western art, was interrelated. Thus, despite admonitions to the contrary from several of his board members, he would persist in expanding the museum's program. In 1967 the Amon Carter Museum formally announced a new statement of policy: "that the museum's work no longer will be limited to western art." According to Wilder, "Many of the best painters of the West were easterners" and the " 'western' theme cannot be isolated in time, since the frontier started in the East, and in a sense, the East itself was once 'the West.' Similarly, in studying the West, influences of the common American experience must be studied, even down to the present day."[23]

When Wilder organized a pivotal retrospective exhibition of Georgia O'Keeffe's paintings in 1966, he was recognized nationally for his move into provinces outside the traditional western narrative aesthetic. The San Francisco art historian and critic Alfred Frankenstein took the opportunity to make a vaguely paradoxical observation. "Like most of the museums in the Southwest, the Amon Carter is forced for one reason or another to devote space to the Remington-Russell nonsense, but it is mainly committed under Wilder to more mature expressions of the profound relationship that can exist between the artist and the Southwest."[24]

If Remington and Russell were not sufficiently profound for Frankenstein's taste, there existed a regional school well west of Texas that would sate his appetite. This he found in his home state of California, where in 1969, the Oakland Museum opened to the public with a mandate to focus singularly on the history of California art.

The Oakland Museum has made significant contributions to an appreciation of a regional art form and its development. As Frankenstein later wrote, "a new state had been added to the artistic union." [25]

While the genesis of the Oakland Museum dates from the mid-1950s, a similar regional institution, the Fine Arts Museum of the Museum of New Mexico, dates from 1917. Established originally as an



ALBERT BIERSTADT
Mountain Scene and River,
oil on canvas
Gilcrease 0126.1179

"Art Gallery," it was for many years "responsible in large part to the community of artists" in New Mexico. In 1962, the year the museum hired James T. Forrest from the Gilcrease Museum to head the fine arts division, that branch took on the formal stature of an art museum. This change from an art gallery to an art museum came partly as a result of recommendations set forth by Mitchell Wilder in a formal study of the museum's operations. At the same time, the Fine Arts Museum also established a priority to collect and exhibit art of New Mexico and the Southwest.[26] Forrest would ultimately move north to teach art history at the University of Wyoming and direct the Bradford Brinton Memorial in Big Horn, which remains one of the gems of the western art museum fraternity.

During the 1960s two other important western art museum collections took shape, although neither institution is exclusively western in mission. One was the R. W. Norton Art Gallery of

GEORGE CATLIN
Red Jacket, watercolor on paper
Gilcrease 0226.1566



Shreveport, Louisiana, opened in the fall of 1966. The other was the Joslyn Art Museum in Omaha. In November 1961, the Joslyn opened an exhibition called *The Early Western Collection,* organized by M. Knoedler and Company, Inc., of New York with the guidance of the museum's director, Eugene Kingman. The exhibition featured three elements, each remarkable in itself: the Karl Bodmer collection; the Mae Reed Porter collection of Alfred Jacob Miller paintings; and a general assemblage of other western 19th-century works. Although the museum did not have the wherewithal to purchase these collections, the Northern Natural Gas Company of Omaha did the honors, loaning the pieces on a long-term basis to the museum. Over subsequent years, Kingman and his successors designed an active public display and educational program around these holdings.[27]

What Kingman and others did not foresee, or at least were not able to protect against, was the loss of an important part of the collections during the 1980s. Northern Natural Gas never gave the collections to the Joslyn. As a result, through a number of business vicissitudes, the collections became the assets of a variety of corporations. The Enron Corporation of Houston ended up with the three collections, eventually giving the Bodmer holdings to the Joslyn, selling the Miller collection to the Joslyn, and liquidating the general western collection in a sale to the Gene Autry Western Heritage Museum, which was founded in Los Angeles in 1988. In its magnificent new California quarters that third segment of the art now pays homage to history. In accordance with the museum's mission to complement "Gene Autry's abiding interest in the history of the American West," the artworks are employed effectively in the elucidation of theme displays on frontier history and mystique.[28]

The year 1965 saw the formation of the National Cowboy Hall of Fame and Western Heritage Center in Oklahoma City. According to founding director Dean Krakel, it had neither a collection nor a particular mission, but "a concept, an ideal of the West and of free enterprise." The institutional title suggested that its mission was one of memorial, a cowboy reliquary. Yet Krakel, an early director of the Gilcrease, proclaimed it to be "at the apex of an awesome art triangle formed by Gilcrease at one corner and Fort Worth's Amon Carter Museum on the other." With this statement he subsumed the Cowboy Hall of Fame within the fraternity of western art museums, and he set out to build a collection which would complement the holdings of the two sister institutions. After years of incredible manipulations, wheelings and dealings, Krakel eventually built a substantial western art collection. He also encouraged contemporary figurative traditions within the genre, which ultimately resulted in the formation of two well-known groups, the Cowboy Artists of America and the National



KARL BODMER
Beaver Hut on the Missouri River,
hand-colored aquatint engraving
Gilcrease 4576.91.18

Academy of Western Art. Subsequently, under the leadership of Byron Price (now director of the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in Cody), the Cowboy Hall's artistic vision broadened considerably.

Over the decades, both western artists and the public have widely assumed that accurate observation of detail leads naturally to "truthful" representation of the West. Not unexpectedly, however, "truth" has not been a constant quality but a variable attribute conditioned by specific historical forces. The "statement of facts" was always qualified, and the purpose and nature of the "truth" in western landscapes, Indian portraits and scenes of Indian life were continually redefined by artists' responses to developing art trends and the expectation of patrons and audiences.[29]

OVER THE DECADES, BOTH WESTERN ARTISTS AND THE PUBLIC HAVE WIDELY ASSUMED THAT ACCURATE OBSERVATION OF DETAIL LEADS NATURALLY TO "TRUTHFUL" REPRESENTATION OF THE WEST. NOT UNEXPECTEDLY, HOWEVER, "TRUTH" HAS NOT BEEN A CONSTANT QUALITY

From the time of Peale's museum to today, western art and the museums that house and present it have changed in function. The western materials in Peale's museum were presented as elements of a larger American picture and, in fact, of the cosmos itself, all working in unison to combine nationalistic impulses with the Linnaean order of things. In the big expositions, western art became part of the marble-enshrined cabinets of curiosity and of broadly expansionist theme pavilions that promoted the West's potent human and natural resources as the nation's promise and potential fortune. After World War II, a large and impressive number of private collections began to build. The art thus assembled was essentially a reflection of its collector's personality and motivation (Amon Carter's focus on the unrestrained, free-spirited cowboy in the art of Russell and Remington and Tom Gilcrease's concentration on the Native American in national history). The museums that evolved from these collections originally applied the art to exploring visual portrayals of historical themes. They also tended to separate western art from the broader traditions of American art and to focus on the documentary elements of the work rather than aesthetic concerns.

Because of its concentration on regional themes and because of elements within the eastern establishment and intellectual community who perceive the West as culturally deficient, western art is often regarded as an exaltation of yokels—that stuff of yippee-yi-yo. It is usually criticized for its content rather than its quality and is sadly referred to in some quarters today as an "idiot-cousin, exiled to the dusty attic of American art." More recently, the artists and their works have been dragged into the quagmire of political correctness, returning them once again to the service of historical (and, of course, ideological) illustration.

The National Museum of American Art's 1991 exhibition, *The West as America,* raised some provocative new questions about the nature and role of western art. The genre seems destined to be viewed as the ultimate manifestation of Manifest Destiny, and the art museums (especially western art museums) could become battlegrounds for reenacting the winning/losing scenarios of the West. Just as earlier generations of western art museum directors emphasized connections between the art and the glorified adventure of the western epic, some contemporary scholars seek to denigrate the material through application of a reverse ideology, pointing to western imagery as the embodiment of racist or colonial attitudes. In such perverse contests, aesthetics are relegated to the sidelines.[30]

Back in 1945, Francis Henry Taylor called upon American art museums to abandon aestheticism and to think of their collections not so much as a group of masterpieces to be placed on pedestals "beyond

FACING

CHARLES M. RUSSELL
A Doubtful Handshake, watercolor on paperboard
Gilcrease 0237.1450





WILLIAM R. LEIGH
Afterglow Over the Zuni River,
oil on canvasboard
Gilcrease 0137.629

THE ART IS LARGER THAN ITS REFLECTION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY AND MORE UNIVERSALLY APPEALING THAN ITS FORMAL AESTHETIC LIMITATIONS.

the reach of the man in the street," but "rather as a visual reference collection of cultural history."[31]

Early western art museums did this. They made their art accessible to the general audience by making it a servant to the historical construct. Now the fashion calls for another abandonment of the pedestal in hopes of revealing the raw truth behind the images, the hidden agendas behind the artists, and the failed social and political systems under which they operated.

Western art museums are proving to be powerful vehicles in today's society. They are driven by a broadly pervasive, common demand for public actualization of historical experience and artistic expression through heuristic devices such as exhibitions and publications. These museums fashion and order our general understanding of the western past and its significance. Thus, great care must be taken by these purveyors of cultural norm to assure that past traditions of interpretation, in this case historical analogue and aestheticism, are offered due credence and regard. It is these traditions, after all, that have become the standard models shaping popular perceptions of the West and its art for contemporary American audiences. At the same time, those time-honored precepts do embody a host of hidden assumptions that tend to narrow our view of the art these museums house.

The art is larger than its reflection of national identity and more universally appealing than its formal aesthetic limitations. New directions must find encouragement just as traditional approaches are reevaluated. Perhaps a balance of aesthetic, historical, and political focuses will prevail in coming years, and museums of western art such as Gilcrease will play a role in effecting that balance.

NOTES

1. See Brooke Hindle, "Charles Willson Peale's Science and Technology," in Edgar P. Richardson, et al., *Charles Willson Peale and His World* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1982), 106-69; Charles Coleman Sellers, *Mr. Peale's Museum* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1980); and Jessie Poesch, *Titian Ramsay Peale and His Journals of the Wilkes Expedition* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1961).

2. See William H. Truettner, *The Natural Man Observed: A Study of Catlin's Indian Gallery* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1979), 61-68; Brian W. Dippie, *Catlin and His Contemporaries: The Politics of Patronage* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990); Harold McCracken, *George Catlin and the Old Frontier* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1959); and Andrew F. Cosentino, *The Paintings of Charles Bird King* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1977).

3. On William F. Cody's Wild West and other such shows associated with the great exposition, see Don Russell, *The Wild West; or, a history of the Wild West Shows* (Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum, 1970), 42-44, 62-65.

4. Mary Jester Allen, "Colonel Cody's Dream of Pioneer Center—A Reality, " *Annals of Wyoming,* 14 (January 1942), 20-24; *Cody Enterprise,* April 12, 1924. On the Taos artists, see Keith L. Bryant, Jr., "The Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway and the Development of the Taos and Santa Fe Art Colonies," *Western Historical Quarterly,* 9 (October 1978), 437-53; and Sherry Clayton Taggett and Ted Schwarz, *Paintbrushes and Pistols: How the Taos Artists Sold the West* (Santa Fe: John Muir Publications, 1990).

5. On the founding of the Frederic Remington Art Museum, see "The Remington Bronzes and Paintings," "Museum Formally Opened" (July 19, 1923) and Margaret Fitzhugh Browne, "Frederic Remington's Wild West Comes East," unidentified clippings, and Eva Remington's will, all in Frederic Remington Art Museum, Ogdensburg, New York. On founding of C.M. Russell Museum, see Mrs. R.M. Leslie, "Charles M. Russell—Interpreter of the Old West," unidentified clipping in C.M. Russell Museum archives, Great Falls, Montana.

6. Bernard DeVoto, *Across the Wide Missouri* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1947), 393-96; Bernard DeVoto, "The Only Man to Paint the Rocky Mountain Fur Trade," *New York Herald Tribune,* July 22, 1951. On DeVoto's discounting of artistic merit for some western art, see his review of Lloyd Haberly, *Pursuit of the Horizon* (1948) in Alfred H. Barr, Lloyd Goodrich, John I.H. Baur, and Dorothy C. Miller, *New York Herald Tribune, Weekly Book Review,* January 2, 1949. On discovery of the Alfred Jacob Miller watercolors, see Mae Reed Porter and Odessa Davenport, *Scotsman in Buckskin: Sir William Drummond Stewart and the Rocky Mountain Fur Trade* (New York: Hastings House, Publishers, 1963), 275-86. On their influence on Bernard DeVoto, see Wallace Stegner, "Historian by Serendipity," *American Heritage,* 24 (August 1973), 92-93.

7. See also "How the West Was Won " *Life,* April 6, 1959.

8. Eugene Kingman, as quoted during a session titled "Can Art and History be Wedded?" at the annual meeting of the American Association of Museums in Santa Barbara, California, in an article titled, "Relationship Between Art History Told," (Santa Barbara newspaper, May 1954), graciously supplied me by Betty Kingman; Mildred Goosman, ed., *Life on the Prairie* (Omaha: Joslyn Art Museum, 1966); and Eugene Kingman, "Painters of the Plains," *American Heritage,* 6 (December 1954), 41. Kingman also organized an exhibition, "Phases of Western History: The Artists' Record," at the Philbrook Art Center in Tulsa in 1941, where he was director at the time.

9. The Gilcrease acquired most of Philip Cole's Collection. Malcolm Mackay's widow, Helen Raynor Mackay, sold his collection to the Montana Historical Society for a bargain price in 1952. The William C. Hogg collection was given to the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, by his daughter, Ima Hogg. See Mildred D. Ladner, *O.C. Seltzer: Painter of the Old West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979); David C. Hunt, "The Old West Revisited: The Private World of Doctor Philip Cole," *American Scene,* 8 (number 4 1967); and Vivian A. Paladin, *C.M. Russell: The Mackay Collection* (Helena: Montana Historical Society, 1979).

10. David Randolph Milsten, *Thomas Gilcrease* (Tulsa: Coman & Associates, 1991), 172-73.

11. James T. Forrest to Peter H. Hassrick, December 18, 1991, in the author's possession.

12. J. Frank Dobie, "Thomas Gilcrease, 1890-1962." *American Scene,* 4 (number 4 1962), 3; and Fred A. Meyers, *Art Treasures of Gilcrease Museum* (Tulsa: Thomas Gilcrease Museum Association, 1982), 3.

13. James T. Forrest, "The Storytelling Value of Art," *American Scene,* 1 (Spring 1958), 1, 2; and James T. Forrest, "The Story Behind the Painting," *American Scene,* 1 (Fall 1958), 1-2.

14. Charles Proctor, "Interpreters of the Western Scene: From the Hudson River to the Rocky Mountains," *American Scene,* 2 (Fall 1959), 7.

15. DeVoto, *Across the Wide Missouri.* John Ewers concludes that Catlin's paintings are "preferred . . . as historic documents or

scientific illustrations rather than as works of art." John C. Ewers, *George Catlin, Painter of Indians and the West* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1956), 505.

16. David C. Hunt to Peter H. Hassrick, December 19, 1991, in author's possession. Hunt was curator of art at Gilcrease from 1965 to 1972.

17. See Harold McCracken, *Roughnecks and Gentlemen* (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1968), 414-19. See also Harold McCracken, *Frederic Remington* (1947); *Portrait of the Old West* (1952); *A Catalogue of the Frederic Remington Memorial Collection* (New York: Knoedler Galleries, 1954); and *The Charles M. Russell Book* (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1957).

18. *New York Times,* May 24, 1959; *The Land of Buffalo Bill: A Loan Exhibition of Paintings, Watercolors and Sculpture Commemorating the Opening of the Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney Gallery of Western Art* (Cody: Buffalo Bill Historical Center, 1959), [3].

19. Transcript of a speech by John Walker, May 31, 1969, at dedication of a new wing at the Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, Gallery Archives, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Permission granted by Mr. Walker.

20. [Thomas W. Leavitt], *Albert Bierstadt, 1830-1902* (Santa Barbara: Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 1964), [10]; Francis S. Grubar, *William Ranney: Painter of the Early West* (Washington, D.C.: Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1962), 4; C. R. Smith, "Introduction," Inaugural Exhibition: Amon Carter Museum of Western Art (Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum, 1961), [2, 3]; Ruth Carter Johnson, Foreword, in *Frederic G. Renner, Charles M. Russell: Paintings, Drawings, and Sculpture in the Amon G. Carter Collection* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1966). On C. R. Smith's collecting habits, see Richard H. Saunders, *Collecting the West: The C. R.. Smith Collection of Western American Art* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988).

21. Mitchell A. Wilder, Foreword, in Van Deren Coke, *Taos and Santa Fe: The Artist's Environment* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1963), [7]. "Westering" is an idea attributed to Bernard DeVoto, Ron Tyler, "The Print Collection," *Amon Carter Museum: 1961-1977* (Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum, 1977), 22. Others credit John Steinbeck in "The Leader of the People," *The Red Pony* (1938; New York: Bantam Books, 1988), 91. See also Walter Rundell, Jr., "Steinbeck's Image of the West," The America West, 1 (Spring 1964), 16-17.

22. Richard A. Bartlett, "The Historian and Western Art," *Colorado Heritage* (Issue 4, 1985), 24-31; John C. Ewers, "Fact and Fiction in the Documentary Art of the American West," in John Francis McDermott, ed., *The Frontier Re-Examined* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1967).

23. Board minutes, October 24, 1963, Amon Carter Museum Archives, Fort Worth, Texas. An Amon Carter Museum press release dated September 3, 1967, for the exhibition, "American Art, 20th Century: Image to Abstraction," made the policy public. See also Frederic S. Wight, *The Artist's Environment: West Coast* (Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum, 1962).

24. Alfred Frankenstein, "The Shapes of O'Keeffe's America," *San Francisco Chronicle,* April 17, 1966.

25. Alfred Frankenstein, Foreword, in Jeanne Van Nostrand, *The First Hundred Years of Painting in California, 1775-1875* (San Francisco: John Howell Books, 1980), xi.

26. K. Ross Toole and James Taylor Forrest, The Fine Arts Museum of New Mexico: A Policy Statement (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico, 1962), 9; Mitchell A. Wilder, *The Museum of New Mexico: A Study of Program and Operations* (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico, 1956), 100-101; Toole and Forrest, *Fine Arts Museums of New Mexico,* 16. See also Edna C. Robertson, *Handbook of the Collections, 1917-1924* (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico, 1974).

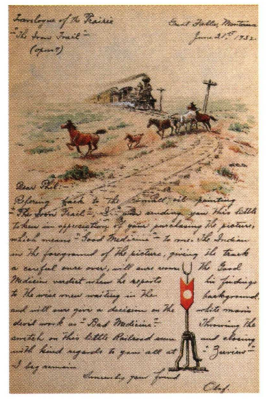
27. Eugene Kingman, "Omaha's Joslyn Museum of Art," *Museum News,* 38 (November 1959), 18-21. See also Holliday T. Day and Hollister Sturges, eds., *Joslyn Art Museum: Paintings & Sculpture from the European & American Collections* (Omaha: Joslyn Art Museum, 1987), 11.

28. Joanne D. Hale, *General Information: The Gene Autry Western Heritage Museum* (Los Angeles: Gene Autry Western Heritage Museum, [1989]).

29. Julie Schimmel, "Introduction: 'A Statement of Facts,'" *Stark Museum of Art: The Western Collection 1978* (Orange, Texas: Stark Museum of Art, 1978), 13-14.

30. David M. Lisi, review of *Frederic Remington: The Masterworks and Frontier America* in *Art & Auction,* 10 (June 1988), 114; Mathew Baigell, "Territory, Race, Religion: Images of Manifest Destiny," *Smithsonian Studies in American Art,* 4 (Summer/Fall 1990), 3, 20.

31. Francis Henry Taylor, *Babel's Tower: The Dilemma of the Modern Museum* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), 22, 26.



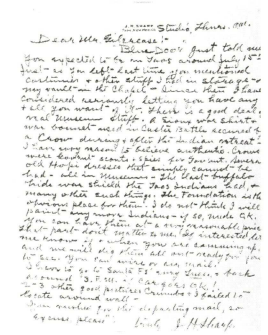
TO PHILIP COLE
FROM OLAF C. SELTZER

Travelogue of the Prairie Great Falls, Montana
"The Iron Trail" June 21st, 1932
(opus 7)

Dear Phil: --
Refering [sic] back to the small oil painting--"The Iron Trail" --, I am sending you this little token in appreciation of your purchasing the picture, which means — "Good Medicine"— to me. The Indian in the foreground of the picture, giving the track a careful once over, will sure reverse the Good Medicine verdict when he reports his findings to the wise men waiting in the background, and will sure give a decision on the white manís devil work as —"Bad Medicine." —Throwing the switch on this little Railroad scene and closing with kind regards to you all at —"Zeeview" — I beg remain

Sincerely your friend

Olaf.



TO GILCREASE
FROM J.H. SHARP

J.H. Sharp
Taos, New Mexico
Studio, Thurs. AM.

Dear Mr. Gilcrease: —

"Blue Door" just told me you expected to be in Taos around July 15th. Just as you left last time you mentioned costumes & other stuff I had in storage -- or my vault in the Chapel ñ Since then I have considered seriously letting you have any & all you want of it. There is a good deal of real museum stuff. A Sioux war shirt & war bonnet used in Custer Battle secured by a Crow during & after the Indian retreat — I have every reason to believe authentic. Crows were Gov'mt scouts & spies for Gov'mt. Several old Hopi dresses that simply cannot be had — all in museums — The last buffalo hide war shield the Taos Indians had, & many other such things. The Foundation is the obvious place for them. I do not thing I will paint any more Indians — if so, nude OK. You can have them at a very reasonable price.That part don't matter to me. If interested, let me know if & when you are comming [sic] up, and we will dig them all out ready for you to see. You can wire or air mail. I have to go to Santa Fe every Tues., & back Around 3.P.M. if car goes OK! 2-3 other good pictures Crumbo & I failed to locate around wall —I'm rushed for the departing mail, so"excuse, please"

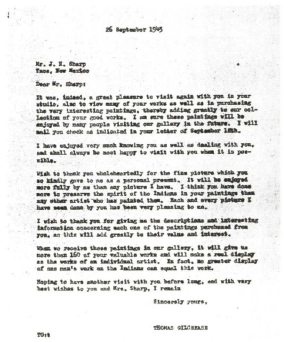
Truly
J.H. Sharp

TO J.H. SHARP
FROM GILCREASE

26 September 1945

Mr. J.H. Sharp
Taos, New Mexico

Dear Mr. Sharp:



It was, indeed, a great pleasure to visit again with you in your studio, also to view many of your works as well as in purchasing the very interesting paintings, thereby adding greatly to our collection of your good works. I am sure these paintings will be enjoyed by many people visiting our gallery in the future. I will mail you a check as indicated in your letter of September 18th.

I have enjoyed very much knowing you as well as dealing with you, and shall always be most happy to visit with you when it is possible.

Wish to thank you wholeheartedly for the fine picture which you so kindly gave to me as a personal present. It will be enjoyed more fully by me than any picture I have. I think you have done more to preserve the spirit of the Indians in your paintings than any other artist who has painted them. Each and every picture I have seen done by you has been very pleasing to me.
I wish to thank you for giving me the descriptions and interesting information concerning each one of

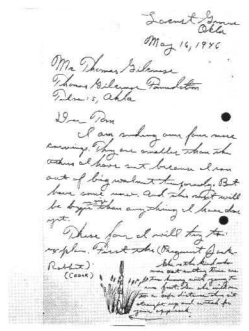
the paintings purchased from you, as this will add greatly to their value and interest.

When we receive these paintings in our gallery, it will give us more than 160 of your valuable works and will make a real display as the works of an individual artist. In fact, no greater display of one manís work on the Indians can equal this work.

Hoping to have another visit with you before long, and with very best wishes to you and Mrs. Sharp, I remain

Sincerely yours.
Thomas Gilcrease

TG:t



TO GILCREASE FROM WILLARD STONE

Locust Grove Okla
May 16, 1946

Mr Thomas Gilcrease
Thomas Gilcrease Foundation
Tulsa, 5, Okla

Dear Tom

I am sending four more carvings. They are smaller than the others I have sent, because I ran out of big walnut temporarily. But have some now. And this next will be bigger in size than anything I have done yet.

These four I will try to Explain. First the (Pregnant Jack Rabbit.) She is the kind who (Cedar) near oat cutting time are Too heavy with young to Run fast. So she will move To a safe distance then sit Straight up and watch for Your approach.

Second (The Road Back) (Cedar)
A group of four fish on their way upstream to spawn.

Third, is called (Expression) I carved it mainly to try to get expression in the face. The plaque is of an Indian man
laughing. It too is cedar wood

Fourth, you have noticed the small Teal, or summer ducks who settle on a pond to met in the summer.

This one is designed mostly for use in Pottery. A pickle dish or something similar.

Thanks Sincerely
Willard Stone
Locust Grove
Okla

TO WILLARD STONE FROM GILCREASE



19 March 1948

Mr. Willard Stone
Locust Grove, Oklahoma

Dear Willard:

I have just returned from Washington, D.C. and San Antonio. While I was away, a letter arrived from you concerning your contemplated purchase of a house in the country. It would seem to me that after you moved to the country, you will soon be worried for the reason that your children will need to go to school and you will be isolated more or less from the town schools. This would necessitate moving back to town. Since you are well located where you are and have your workshop, it would appear that you probably will be better off there than you would if you move to the country, however, these things are for you to decide because they concern you and your family and not my way of thinking. We might discuss this matter upon your next visit to the Foundation.

Received a letter from Acee Blue Eagle yesterday written on the opposite side of a skin painting. He is still in New York.

Charles Wilson and his wife came by yesterday. He had an oil painting which he is taking to Philbrook for the Oklahoma exhibition.

We don't see much of Woody, since he evidently is working; painting and writing.

The gallery is nearing completion. We hope to start uncrating and hanging pictures by the middle of April and expect to have it open sometime in May.

Wishing you and youíre the best of health and hoping to see you soon, I remain

Sincerely

Thomas Gilcrease
TG:t

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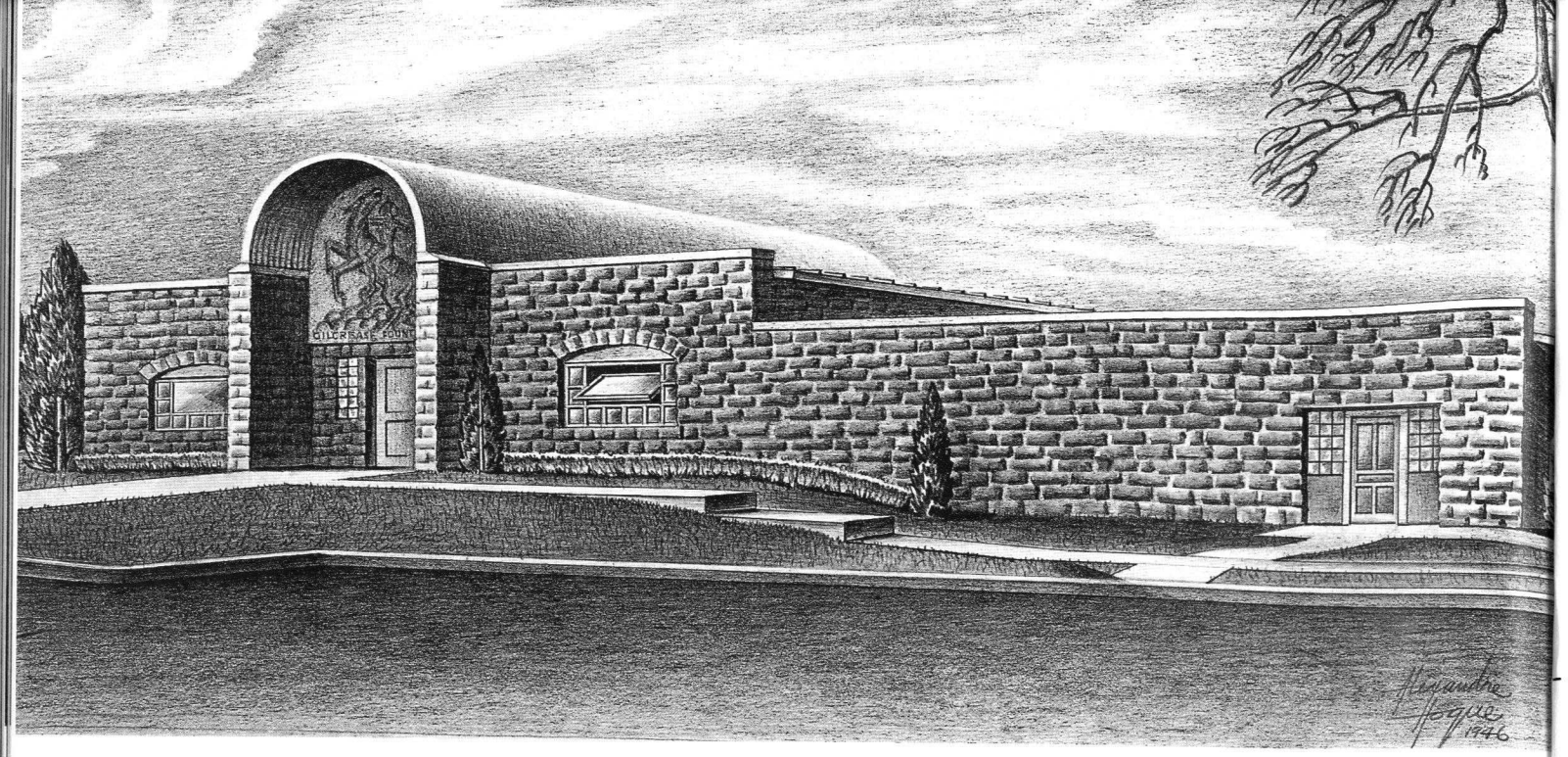

Gilcrease Museum, Alexandre Hogue, pencil on paper, 1327.366

Inspired by an Indian Longhouse

Alexandre Hogue, a notable regional artist and professor of art at the University of Tulsa, and Thomas Gilcrease were longtime friends. In the early 1940s Gilcrease, Hogue, and Martin Wiesendanger, curator of the Gilcrease Foundation collection, met often to discuss the shape the new Gilcrease Museum building should take. Eventually Gilcrease asked Hogue to make a sketch of the proposed museum. This is the drawing that resulted.

The building's form expresses its conceptual inspiration—the Iroquois longhouse. The traditional dwelling place of the Iroquois people was a communal structure housing several families, with separate fires and partitions for privacy. It was so clearly a symbol of identity that the Iroquois confederacy was called "the people of the longhouse."

Join the Thomas Gilcrease Museum Association today and enjoy the benefits of membership all year long.

Please mail to: Membership Office
Thomas Gilcrease Museum Association
1400 Gilcrease Museum Road
Tulsa, Oklahoma 74127-2100

Thank you for supporting Gilcrease Museum.

Benefits of a Basic Membership for a family of two adults and children under the age of 18 include:

Free admission to select special events and exhibitions.
A subscription to the twice-a-year ***Gilcrease Journal.***
A quarterly, members-only **newsletter and calendar** of events, with information about the Museum and advance notice of upcoming exhibitions and programs of interest to the entire family.
A 10% **discount on Museum Shop purchases,** including mail orders.
Exclusive, **members-only invitations** to exhibition preview parties, lectures and other special events.
Member discounts for educational programs.
Special travel opportunities.
And much more!

QUESTIONS? PLEASE CALL THE MEMBERSHIP OFFICE AT 918 / 596-2758.

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Yes! We'll join and enjoy the benefits and privileges of Membership in the Thomas Gilcrease Museum Association.

Mr./Mrs./Dr./Miss/Ms._____
(Please circle the title(s) and print your name(s) above as you would like them to appear in our records.)
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City_____ State_____ Zip_____
Daytime telephone_____
❑ My (our) check made payable to the Thomas Gilcrease Museum Association is enclosed.
❑ Please charge my (our) ❑ VISA ❑ MasterCard ❑ American Express
Card Number_____Exp. Date_____
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Category of Membership desired:

❑ Associate $45
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❑ Trapper $75
❑ Explorer $100
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❑ My company provides a matching gifts program. I have enclosed the necessary forms or information.

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We would like to share the benefits and privileges of Membership in the Thomas Gilcrease Museum Association as a gift to a friend.

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(Please circle the title(s) and print the recipient's name(s) above as they should appear in our records.)
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Gift recipient's city_____State_____Zip_____
Gift recipient's daytime telephone_____
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❑ Please charge my (our) ❑ VISA ❑ MasterCard ❑ American Express
Card Number_____Exp. Date_____
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My enclosure card should read:_____

Thomas Gilcrease Museum Association
1400 Gilcrease Museum Road
Tulsa, Oklahoma 74127-2100

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OKLAHOMA

Cover photos, left to right. Front: Mississipppian bottle, 16th century; Gilcrease home; *Crucita—Taos Indian Girl in Old Hopi Wedding Dress and Dry Flowers,* by Joseph Henry Sharp. Back: *Afterglow Over Zuni River* by William R. Leigh; *Portrait of Mrs. John Apthorp, Nee Hannah Greenleaf,* by John Singleton Copley; Warren/Revere certification; Thomas Gilcrease south of the Gilcrease house pointing to the cedar tree he transplanted in 1931.

In 1931, Thomas Gilcrease dug up a small pine tree on oil lease land in East Texas and brought it home to Tulsa. This is how it grew. In the final year of the millennium, we look back at all that has grown from Gilcrease's initial idea of a museum of western art and history.

