

THE GILCREASE

MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN HISTORY AND ART



Front Cover: "Prowlers of the Prairie" by Olaf Seltzer.

Rear Cover: "The Trapper" by Olaf Seltzer. This Issue of The Gilcrease spotlights the Danish born-Montana artist, Seltzer. Mildred Ladner, author of a definitive biography of this fascinating artist has contributed a special insight into Seltzer's illustrated letters. The Gilcrease houses the world's largest collection of Seltzer's work.

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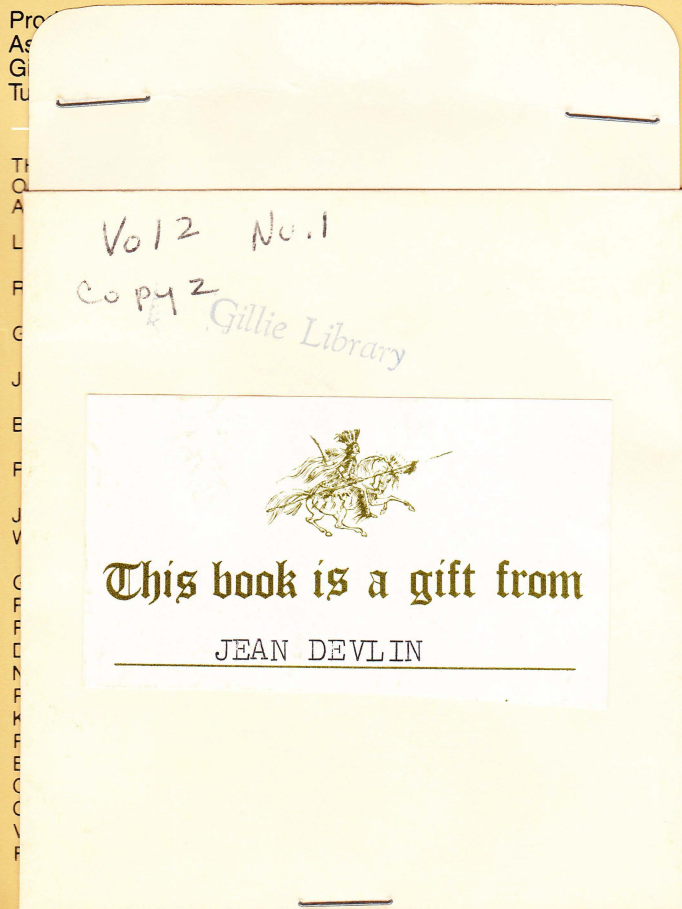
MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN HISTORY AND ART

Vol. XX, No 1 of The Gilcrease Magazine of American History and Art is the successor of the American Scene. It is published & copyrighted by the Thomas Gilcrease Museum Association, an Oklahoma corporation. All material produced in this issue of The Gilcrease was derived from the art, artifacts and library collections of the Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art. All illustrations are taken from the collection.

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The illustrated letters of Olaf Seltzer

by Mildred Ladner

In moments of exuberance, vocalists tend to burst into song, poets to compose sonnets, and painters to pen letters ornamented with sketches. During the century culminating in the 1920's, the use of the illustrated letter as a mark of affection grew increasingly popular. Joshua Reynolds and his

Western Travelog

"The Canoe"

Great Falls

Montana

January 30 - 1933

Dr. Phil. S. Cole

New York

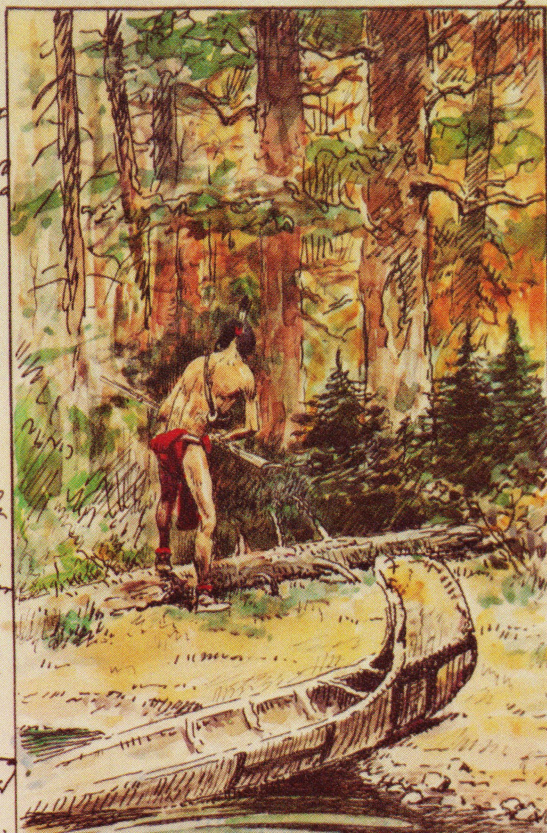
Dear Doc: -

I am very

The Canoe pic

That you like very much
afraid you'd turn it down. The deer in the canoe
is a blacktail buck, very plentiful in that beauty
spot, The Bear-Tooth Mountain Range, which I
used in this picture, showing The Bear-Tooth itself,
and as you well know the general outline of the
horizon silhouette is known as "The Sleeping Giant."

Sincerely yours friend
Olaf.



This illustrated letter by Olaf Seltzer was written to the artist's patron, Dr. Philip Cole, a Montana native who moved to New York to manage his family's business. This note explains the detail in "The Canoe", a painting in Seltzer's Western transportation series.



contemporaries of the Late Georgian school exchanged such letters. Thackeray fancied them. James McNeill Whistler touched up his correspondence with sketches and frequently signed his letters, as he did some of his work, with a strange little butterfly. Van Gogh used rough sketches to explain what he was working on to friends and relatives.

The foremost Western artists, Frederic Remington, a polished Yale man, and Charles M. Russell, a rough-and-tumble school dropout, both wrote illustrated letters. Russell's atrocious spelling and rustic expressions reflect the uninhibited enthusiasm of an adopted son of the West who articulated well in spite of his faulty

syntax. (*Good Medicine*, published in 1929, is a posthumous collection of the cowboy artist's letters).

It remained for the Danish-born Montana artist, Olaf Carl Seltzer, to add a new dimension to the art of the illustrated letter by paralleling his work at the easel with a group of letters setting forth his concept for a series of oil paintings to depict the development of transportation across the Western wilderness.

Seltzer's letters and the accompanying envelopes, beautifully illuminated with water color and ink sketches, comprise more than half of the framed communications in the collection at Tulsa's Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art.

All are addressed to Seltzer's friend and patron, Western art collector Philip Gillett Cole of Tarrytown, New York.

What makes this illustrated letter collection unique is the personal quality, the warmth and affection displayed in the desire to please the recipient through the use of three or four delicately drawn and colored sketches in each missive. The contents attest to a mutual dedication on the part of artist and patron to perpetuating the fading history of the Old West, as well as respect for one another's artistic views.

The sixteen letters which Olaf Seltzer launched on May 25, 1932 with the fanciful title, "Early Western Travelogue —

Just a friendly note from artist to patron. This letter, sent to Cole when he was vacationing in California, simply outlines the day's events and posts the progress on the sale of art. Details of illustrations such as this were always carefully researched before Seltzer put brush to paper.

Dr Philip. S. Cole
Forest Hills
Long Island. N.Y.

Great Falls, Montana.

Dec 21-1926

Dear Doc:—

In thinking over a conversation we had some time ago regarding our mutual friend, the late Charley Russell and his early life in Montana, I am sure he came out of the little Belt Mountain about 1882 after living there with old Jake Hoover, the trapper, their stamping grounds in those mountains being around and near old Yogo, later famous for the sapphires mined there. In leaving the little Belt Mountain Charley dropped down into the upper Judith River country around the old cow town Utica and the Pigeye Basin, where he struck the N-N Cow Outfit. He was hired by the Trail boss of this outfit, Horace Brewster, as horse wrangler, and he was known to the N-N in general, and Gros Ventres Johnny, the cook and Brewster in particular, as "The Buckskin Kid," due to his straw

his bleached
also due to a pair
riding pants. When
he went north
line, this same pair
to be named by the
- "Aw-a-kos" -
these Indians figuring
simple way that the
in his riding pants
flagging his danger



coloured hair, and
complexion, and
of buckskin seated
sometime after that
across the Canadian
of pants caused him
Bloods and Piegan
- "The Antelope" -
in their picturesque,
rear view of Charley
looked like an antelope
signal in full retreat.



AW-A-KOS.

AW-A-KOS.



This obscure kid became through evolution an interesting and well-known character throughout the Northwest and even further.



EVOLUTION.
(VIA THE DARWIN ROUTE.)

I am now about to pull the old timeworn bromide; but there seem to be but one formula as here goes; - Wishing you, your family and Miss Balston a merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year, I am

Sincerely your friend

Olaf.

Seltzer and Cole shared an affection and admiration for Charles Russell. The humor in Russell's art was testimony to his quick wit and lack of affectation. This letter, which Seltzer wrote to Cole shortly after Russell's death, traced Russell from his early days. Along with the narrative, Seltzer's delicate illustration shows the development of the Buckskin Kid. The nickname presumably came from the rearview visual impact of Russell in a pair of riding pants.

Opus 1", comprise a choice bit of Americana. The artist included in them tidbits of information gleaned in his research on Western transportation and submitted, in miniature-sized watercolor sketches, details he hoped to include in fifteen (11x16 inch) oil paintings for Dr. Cole. Each was mailed in an elaborately decorated business-size envelope.

Seltzer, the immigrant who rode and sketched with Charles M. Russell for a quarter of a century, is one of ten Western artists who took the pains to send illustrated letters to the Montana-reared doctor. Cole, who practiced medicine in Helena until the United States became embroiled in World War I, left after the

war to operate the family business of manufacturing tire valves and automotive parts in Brooklyn. Retiring early, he devoted a large portion of his wealth to perpetuating his memories of the West in a singular art collection.

Dr. Cole's framed letters, greeting cards and envelopes — eighty-one in all — range from Joe Scheurle's broad-humored cartoons to the long and poignant letter Russell wrote just a month before his death:

*Iv got no kick coming Iv been
trimed my self but the medicine
men at Rochester onely took from
me things I didn't need and was
glad to get rid of I look and feel*

better but I'm still verry weak (1)

Will James, of whom Russell wrote in the same letter, "when it comes to horses nobody can beat James," made an open sales pitch in a letter embellished with a pen and ink sketch. It shows a rider leading a pack horse burdened with a picture-shaped objects out of the mountains:

*I'm coming to market, not with beef
... but with a stock of prime,
range-made paintings — I'm leaving
the tall peaks of Montana for the
peopled peaks of New York. I'd like
to show you my pictures and see the
great collection you have.*

1 Good Medicine, p. 161

Seltzer's portraits often depicted rapsallions and stereotypes of cowboys and townspeople. Here, however, Seltzer contemplates the passing of the West and its people. The medicine man captures the essence of the loss.



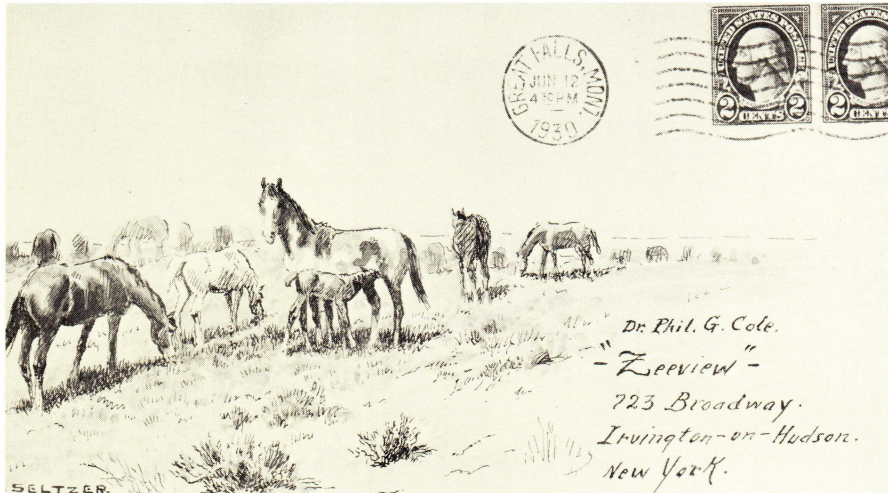
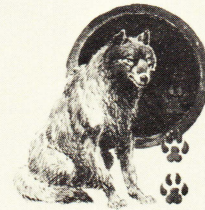
To

Dr. Philip G. Cole

*This silent, weird and purple vast
Where trails of men were dim and few,
Will soon be but a hazy past:—
For step by step the struggling world,
Is slowly pushing into space
Each feature of the dying west,
From blood-shot Indian summer moon,
Down to the lonely nightcall of the loon.*

Sincerely your friend

Olaf C. Seltzer



Dr. Phil. G. Cole.

"Zeeview"

723 Broadway.

Irvington-on-Hudson.

New York.

As though startled by the reader, the mare keeps a protective lookout posted while her colt enjoys a little lunch.

Seltzer's are the only letters continuing over a period of years and indicating the old shoe easiness of a long and trusting friendship.

The two men met in 1926 at the Helena home of Dr. W. T. Butler, Montana state veterinarian. Their friendship was cultivated through their shared affection for Charles Russell.

In his first communication with Cole, Seltzer set forth the philosophy behind his work in eight lines of free verse inscribed beneath a watercolor of a somber Indian chief seated on a hide and holding a calumet. Bead work panels ornament both sides. In the lower left corner is a sketch of a wolf against a dark circle, marked with three red paw prints, details characteristic of Seltzer's meticulously researched and delineated work.

After the formal salutation, Seltzer writes:

*This silent, weird and purple vast
Where trails of men were dim and few,
Will soon be but a hazy past:—
For step by step the struggling world
Is slowly pushing into space
Each feature of the dying West
From blood-shot Indian summer moon
Down to the lonely nightcall of the loon.*

Obviously not a poet, Olaf Seltzer was

a sensitive and perceptive man. The son of a German cigar sorter and a Danish mother, he was born in Copenhagen in 1877. Thanks to an alert drawing master in the fee-paying public school he attended until he was fourteen, Seltzer was admitted to art classes at the Technical Institute before he and his mother emigrated to Montana in 1892. At the Institute, he was exposed to the work of Danish painters known for their wealth of detail, draftsmanship and luminous use of color.

In the West, Young Olaf spent a year night-herding horses before becoming a machinist's apprentice in the locomotive shops of the Great Northern Railroad at Great Falls. For nearly thirty years he worked in the locomotive shops, generally on the night shift, painting in the morning light and reporting to the public library for his painstaking research. At the time of his fateful meeting with Dr. Cole, he was supervisor of the locomotive shops.

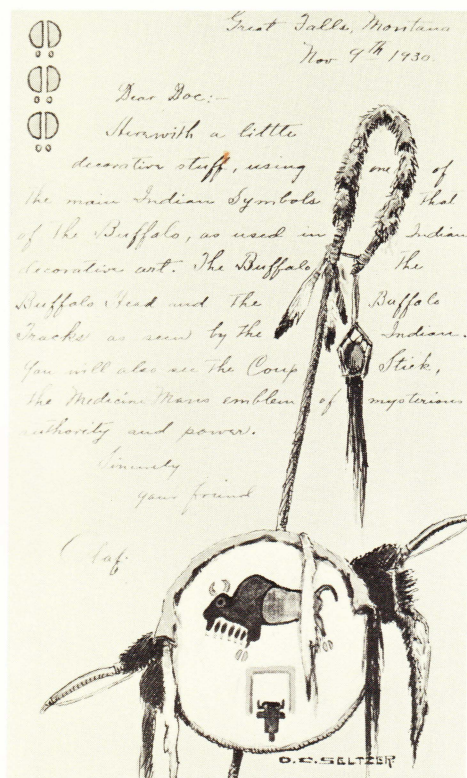
The immediate rapport between the two men was the spur for Seltzer's initial illustrated letter to Cole. The death of Russell in 1926 at the age of sixty-two brought them closer.

It occasioned the artist's tender memorial letter of December 21 featuring one of the dozens of sketches he did of his colleague, always with Russell's unruly hair hanging over his eyes, cigarette in hand,

his western garb disheveled.

"Dear Doc," Olaf began:

In thinking over a conversation we had some time ago regarding our mutual friend, the late Charley Russell and his early life in Montana, I am sure he came out of the Little Belt Mountain about 1882 after living there with old Jake Hoover, the trapper, their stomping grounds in those mountains being around and near old Yogo... Charley dropped down into the upper Judith River Basin, where he struck the N-N Cow Outfit. He was hired by the trail boss of this Outfit, Horace Brewster, as horse wrangler, and he was known to the N-N in general and Brewster in particular as 'The Buckskin Kid'—due to his straw-coloured hair and his bleached complexion, and also due to a pair of buckskin seated riding pants. When sometime after that he went north across the Canadian border line, this same pair of pants caused him to be named by the Bloods and Piegiens—'Aw-a-Kos' (The Antelope)—these Indians figuring in their picturesque, simple way that the rear view of Charley in his riding pants looked like an antelope flag-



If the availability of abundant energy is the driving force of today's society, then the availability of buffalo served the same function in Indian society. Here, Seltzer shows buffalo's role in Indian art.

ging his danger signal in full retreat. This obscure kid became through evolution an interesting and well known character throughout the Northwest and even further.

This unparagraphed two-page letter has back view sketches of Russell and an antelope with "Aw-a-Kos" lettered between. There are five tinted sketches across the page entitled "EVOLUTION". The first features a cup of paint with a broom-like brush poked into it. By the final sketch, this has become a rear view of the straw-mopped Charley, cigarette in hand.

Shortly after this, Seltzer quit his job with the Great Northern and moved his family to Elmhurst, Long Island. Supported by restoration work for Cole and other Western art collectors, he planned to paint, visit art galleries as a means of independent study, and acquire commissions.

In a progress report to Cole who was vacationing in La Jolla, California, in February of 1927, Seltzer illustrated the top two-thirds of his letter paper with a vacquero on a glistening black horse. This was enclosed in an envelope almost covered with a watercolor of a mounted Indian against a desert background. Both sketches are finely drawn with great finesse.

On the first anniversary of Russell's death, Seltzer sent Dr. Cole a letter



Seltzer's illustrated letters sometimes drove a point home with undeniable logic. Here, for instance, is a response to Cole's apparent cool enthusiasm for Latin proverbs. Seltzer proves the impact of "It's the Little Things That Count." The art deco border at the top of the letter adds an interesting movement to the letter.

Seltzer...

Seltzer's subtle sales techniques show up in a transmittal letter regarding "Bull Boats," another painting in the Western transportation series. Not only does the Danè explain his work but he also ties it in with two other paintings Cole had already purchased.

Western Travelogue
(Opus 2)
"The Bull Boat"

Great Falls
Montana
Oct. 17th - 32



Dear Doc:-

I think that by this time you must have received The small 11"x16" Oil "The Bull Boat." This picture is quite romantic, and with the "Last Chance or Bust" and the "Red River Cart" pictures tell more of a story apart from the transportation view-point, than do some of the other paintings of that transportation series.



your friend,
Claf.



Dr. Phil. G. Cole.
Suite 2502.
551 Fifth Avenue.
New York City.



The son of a German cigar sorter and a Danish mother, Olaf Seltzer worked in the machine shops of the Great Northern Railroad for many years. His early art instructors recognized his talents and encouraged him to take up the brush as a regular profession. Although born in Denmark, Seltzer spoke English without a discernable accent.

dominated by a subtly-shaded watercolor of the natural boulder used as Russell's monument. A faded wreath rests against it. A detailed scene of cattle grazing against a background of majestic snow-capped mountains completes the picture.

On this night of Oct. 24th just a year ago, our mutual friend Charles Marion Russell, crossed the great divide.

*In part he sleeps; —
He'll wake within the whole.*

Between the Russell memorial letters, the friendship between artist and art collector deepened and became more relaxed, particularly after Cole wrote that Olaf should forget "that d--- drip about inequalities" and graciously expressed how much he treasured the artist's friendship. It is implied that Seltzer, who bore no trace of a foreign accent, still harbored the Old World views on class distinction.

Probably the artist was thinking ahead to a series of paintings which would celebrate the westward movement when, on October 6, 1928, he sent Cole a letter featuring a close-up of the upper portion of a river boat and the greeting, "Just a little breeze from the far west." The accompanying envelope bears a "smoke boat" in watercolor.

On January 7, 1931, Olaf Seltzer wrote to Dr. Cole to acknowledge the "beauti-

ful gift you sent me for Christmas, the book 'Good Medicine' by our late friend, Chas. Russell. As a speller he is not so good, but as a humorist and artist — 'Ah-wah-Kos' is hard to beat."

Three Indians with horses on a headland overlooking the sweep of the prairie dominate this letter, followed by Seltzer's lines:

*I pity those who never knew
That wide and open space: —
That wide and open space which
lies,
Between the sunset and the dawn, —
The Prairie.*

Below, along with two sketches of animals, is a more elaborately detailed water color of a stagecoach drawn by six horses, again presaging the incipient transportation series.

Seltzer welcomed his art collector friend back from a European trip on June 9, 1931, with a letter embellished with two vivid sketches, one a toreador being charged by a bull, and the second a senorita on a delicately wrought balcony.

"It looks to me that you got out of Spain just in time," he wrote, referring to the outbreak of revolution. "The national pastime of Spain is playing the guitar and Bull-fighting, while in this U.S. of A. spearing dollars and Bull-Peddling are more in vogue."

The letter of May 25, 1932, is the

first one entitled "Early Western Travelogue — Opus 1: with 'The Travaux' written behind it. Although he later used the more acceptable spelling, Seltzer here depicts an Indian woman with a horse-drawn "travaux" with smaller vignettes of a dog pulling a lighter burden and a papoose in a carrying board.

Dear Doc: — This letter is the forerunner of my next small Travelogue oil — 'The Travaux', depicting a very early mode of Prairie travel . . . With The Travaux and its broom-tail Indian cayuse are always associated, in my mind, Rawhide Parfleche Bags, dogs with small travaux packed with lodge pegs, and many bead-eyed children.

Seltzer had come to Montana a decade too late for the true wilderness, but his 1892 arrival was in time to watch whole tribes of Indians drifting north across the border into Canada. Like Russell, Olaf spent some months on the Canadian side, working on a narrow gauge railway near Lethbridge, Alberta. It was during this period, ending in 1897, that the Dane made innumerable pencil sketches to record details of a primitive life he knew was doomed to extinction.

Seltzer may have realized the potential value of his illustrated letters, for on

June 21, 1932, he entitled his letter "Travelogue of the Prairie — 'The Iron Trail'" and beneath the watercolor of an approaching locomotive startling four horses and a colt he wrote:

Dear Phil: —

Referring back to the small oil painting — "The Iron Trail" — I am sending you this little token in appreciation for your purchasing the picture, which means 'Good Medicine' to me. The Indian in the foreground of the picture giving (sic) 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 man's devil work as 'Bad Medicine.' Throwing the switch on this little Railroad scene and closing with kind regards . . .

That the artist was aware of Dr. Cole's nostalgia for the West of his boyhood is evidenced in the "Last Chance or Bust (Opus 31)" letter which features two prairie schooners. "Last Chance" was the name given originally to Helena by some desperate prospectors.

Regarding your close to home picture, namely — 'Last Chance or Bust' — which must bring to you some memories of the past; Old Helena, Wood Street, Rodney Street, Etc. . . . I hope you'll enjoy these few simple little sketches pertaining to that particular little oil painting.

In spite of his orderliness, Seltzer did not paint his transportation series in chronological order.

"Herewith some rough sketches pertaining to your first Travelogue picture — 'The Smoke Boat' —" he wrote on July 6, 1932.

By first I mean the first one painted but the fourth in line of history and evolution of western methods of travel.

Half of the sheet is covered with a watercolor and ink sketch which Seltzer referred to as a "mezzo-tint", showing a buffalo herd crossing a broad river as a steam boat nears the ford. Below is a

listing, deserted boat with the motto "tempus edax rerum" (time destroys).

The meagerly-educated Scandinavian seemed to enjoy flaunting Latin phrases before Dr. Cole, a Princeton graduate who held a medical degree from Columbia. "The Prairie Schooner" letter bears a pretentious heraldic shield with the words "Festina Lente." (Make haste slowly.) There are three turtles emblazoned on the shield and a long line of prairie schooners snakes down the page beneath it.

"Latin proverbs, such as 'multum in parvo', is not to your liking, I see," wrote Seltzer on September 22, 1935, in a letter illustrated by a sketch showing a confrontation between a bear and a skunk. *It just means Much in Little, or for a broader meaning, 'it's the little things that count' . . . Old Bruin is just about to turn a back somersault and be going places, away from there, far away in fact from the little thing with his tail at half mast.*

Dr. Cole had an insatiable appetite for background information to accompany the nearly three hundred watercolors and oil paintings Seltzer executed for him over a fifteen-year period. He was cognizant of the fact that his probing questions and frequent commissions spurred Seltzer to research and paint works which would form a significant pictorial record of the Old West. Indeed, Cole put into typescript his text for a book consisting of one hundred and ten (4½ x 6 inch) miniature oil paintings Olaf Seltzer did for him, each one accompanied by several descriptive paragraphs on which artist and collector collaborated. Cole's untimely death in 1941 at the age of fifty-seven ended that dream.

Eager to please his benefactor, Seltzer often passed along bits of colorful information in his illustrated letters, such as the common use for the "Red River Cart":

As the Buffalo in early days was the most important factor in the necessities of life of the Plains Indian, in fact his whole existence, so has this grand animal, in later years and after he vanished from the prairies, through his bleached bones, contri-

buted to the livelihood of the Halfbreed, who gathered and sold these skulls and bones and done his work so well that today you couldn't find a Buffalo skull anywhere on the prairies of Montana.

Again, under a vignette of the "Diamond R Mule Outfit":

Above you see an important member of the old Diamond R outfit of years ago. This veteran of the prairie roads of Montana may have been born — 'Off Leader' — or perhaps the — 'Near Wheeler', but whatever place he filled he was an aristocrat of Spanish blood, and his usefulness as a transportation factor in Montana can not be over-estimated.

In the final Travelogue letter, "The Sled," the painter explains that: *In leading up to the sled I herewith depict the three main winter pastimes of such cowhands as winter on the big stock ranches, and where they earn their grubstakes as Feeders, Fence Riders or Corral Men, sometimes known as Woodchucks. My picture shows a cowhand bringing out corral posts for repairing the various open range corrals against the heavy spring roundup.*

Not long after Dr. Cole's death, his widow sold the entire collection of Western art, which included forty-three Remington and Russell bronzes as well as more than five hundred and sixty paintings and watercolors from the palettes of Joseph Henry Sharp, William R. Leigh, Charles Schreyvogel, Remington, Russell and Seltzer to Tulsa oilman Thomas Gilcrease. They were moved to the native stone museum Gilcrease built along the brow of a rise in the Osage Hills of eastern Oklahoma, on the edge of Tulsa. Before his death, Gilcrease transferred his collection to the City of Tulsa.

The charm of the Seltzer illustrated letters attracts students of Americana, their curiosity whetted to learn more about the Danish-born Montana painter and the Montana-born New York collector who together memorialized the Old West. ♦

people & personalities



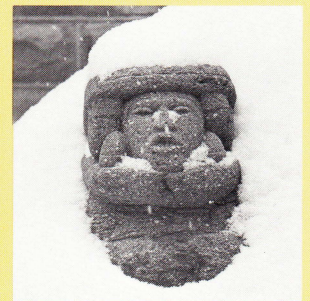
CHINA DELEGATION VISITS GILCREASE

A delegation of representatives from the Peoples Republic of China visited the Gilcrease Institute this winter as they travelled throughout the United States. The group was in Tulsa on a business trip arranged by Amoco Oil Company, a subsidiary of Standard Oil of Indiana. Gilcrease

photographer, Mark Haynes took this picture, the only photograph taken of the group while they were in the country. Mike Starr, whose article concerning the relationship of some paintings in the Gilcrease collection to pictographs shown on buffalo hide paintings appears in this issue, was the group's guide. He is pictured here, fifth from the left.



BRRR! A pre-columbian sculpture on display outside the Museum gives silent testimony to the bitter winter of 1978-79. Heavy snows and ice storms reduced visits to the museum but even on the worst days, a steady trickle of visitors made their way to the Museum.



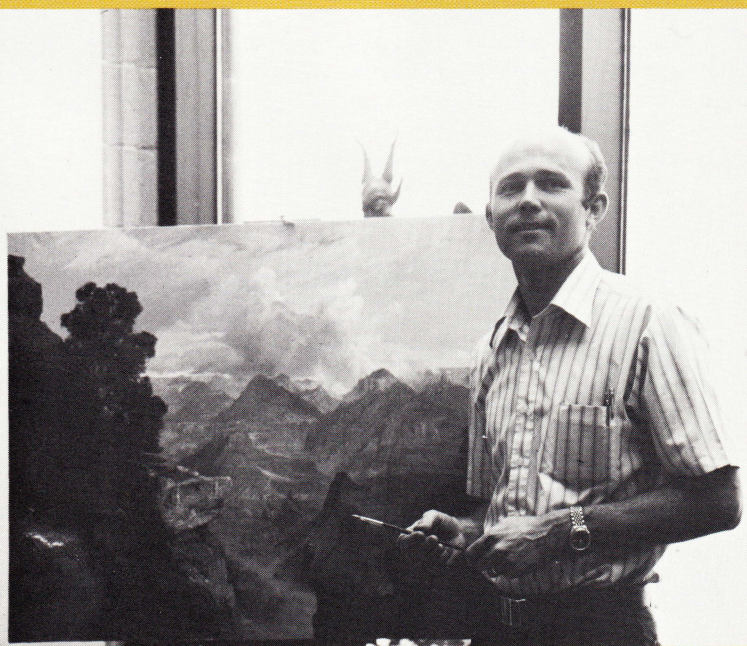
JAMES M. INHOFE, Mayor of Tulsa, right, accepts a Remington sketch from John H. Williams, Jr., and James Sharman on behalf of the Thomas Gilcrease Museum. The sketch, one of several donated to the Museum, was part of the estate of Alice Sharman.



WOODY CRUMBO, noted American Indian artist, recently gave a lecture at the museum on the subject of Spiritual Values in Indian Painting. He is shown here autographing lithographs following the lecture. Members of the Gilcrease Association receive advance notices of such lectures. Details on membership applications are available by writing to the editor.



JIM WILCOX, Western artist, is shown here using a technique of the old masters. Wilcox learns the secrets of great American artists by copying their works. Here, he is shown putting the finishing touches on his copy of The Grand



Canyon by Moran. Although Wilcox clearly labels his works as copies, permission to copy the painting was given on the condition that the copy not be the same size as the original.

On Blumenschein

by Jeanne Snodgrass King

Ernest Blumenschein, a member of the Taos art community, has provided an insight into some of his works through a series of letters to Thomas Gilcrease.

Gilcrease had written to Blumenschein asking for information about "Moon, Morning Star and Evening Star," which he had purchased from the artist.

Blumenschein's reply was dated January 6, 1948:

"I do not claim to be a writer but this is some idea of how the painting came to be. The Taos Deer Dance is one of the really great events of the Pueblo. I have seen it at least six or seven times and am always fascinated by its rich, deep quality. I could not term that quality theatrical, as it is much more than that. As a dance it is very beautiful; as a story or legend, it will always live; as a work of art, it is the American Indian at his top. The complicated weaving of these fifty or sixty figures, the intricate counter play of the "Chifonetes," (or clowns), the nobility of slow dance movement and the accompaniment of the singers and drummers produce a whole that, in my mind, equals any folk dance in the world.

It is a very moving experience to witness the Deer Dance at Taos. One that can never be forgotten by any man or woman who really appreciates art.

So it is very natural that I should be inspired to produce my best when I painted this marvelous subject.

Simply, the process was this: As the Indians do not wish artists to sketch at these religious or semi-religious festivals, I had to memorize the scene. Many others of my top ranking works have started the same way. On returning from the dance late in the evening, I got to work on my first (and most important) impression of the dance. It



Moon, Morning Star and Evening Star and the letters from Blumenschein to Gilcrease provide valuable insights into the artist's intention.

must convey the character and the sentiment of the scene and of course the emotional reactions of the artist. Without these emotions, the genuine feelings aroused in the creative man, a picture becomes just a mere statement of a reporter and not a work of art.

My sketch was completed in oils about 10 x 16 inches in size, in probably an hour or two. No effort or thought was made to alter any of the facts of the dance. (This is an important item, as I later did alter some facts, which I felt interfered with putting across the big emotion I had received.)

The next day I made many drawings of individual dancers all from memory, to be used in the detail of executing the large picture.

Thoroughly determined to go ahead, I decided on a fairly large canvas, probably about 50 inches by 42 inches.

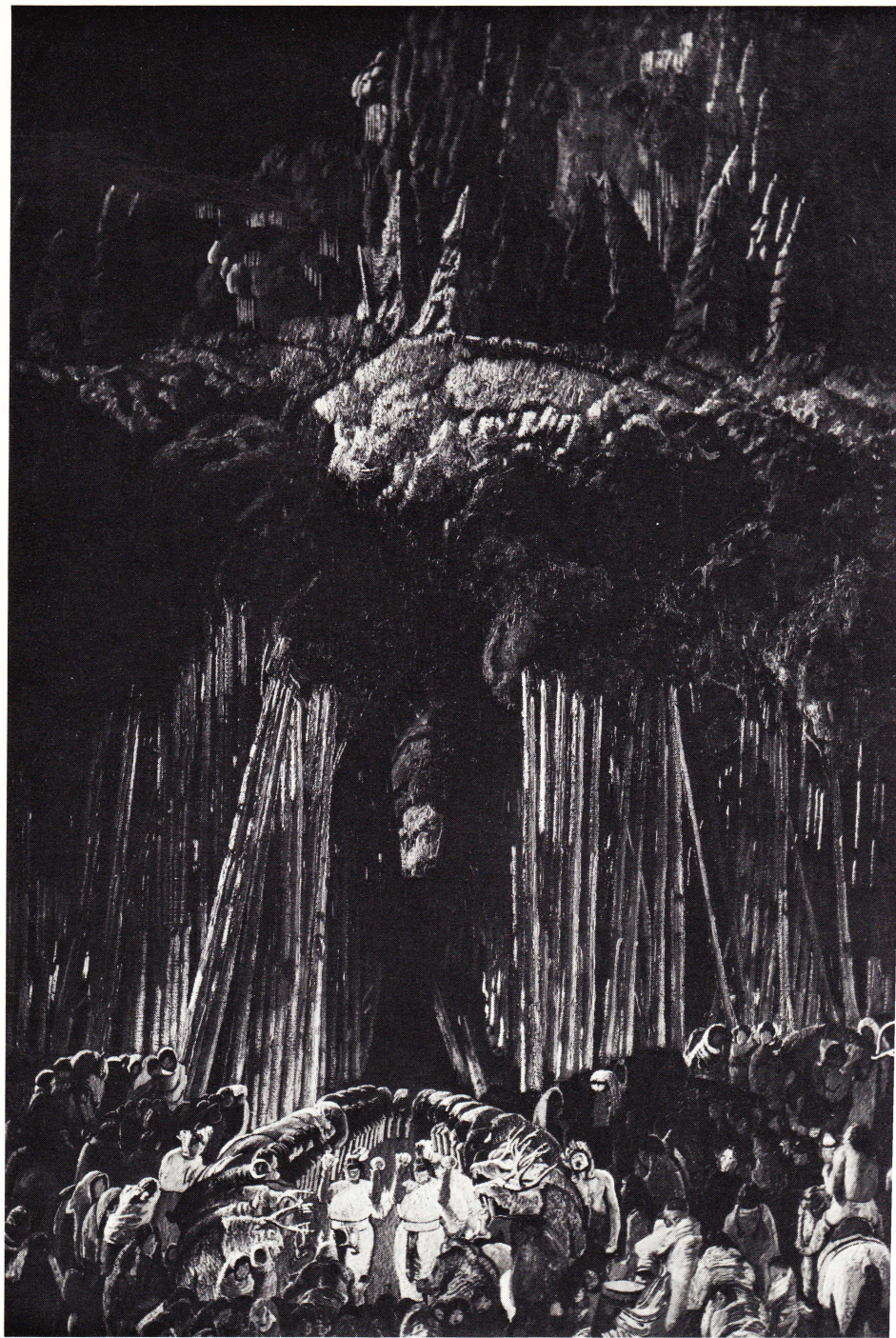
At this point the artist comes in as a technician. He must coolly study his composition from all angles, not blindly dash into painting, and to me, the composition must in itself be a beautiful visual structure in form and color. Also not a commonplace visual reaction that the great majority of the people would have. The picture must be a work of distinction. And there is where the artist's taste and most intelligent judgement comes in. Nearly all of the structural details must be conceived before the painting begins, and carefully adhered to during the several months of execution.

Very soon in the work I realized the big oval of the dancers must be the predominating figure. Then came the realization that I must sacrifice the two perpendicular "Deer Mothers", as their perpendicular movement was too static to convey the primitive sentiments of this great Indian Dance.

So out came the "Deer Mothers"! It was a bold sacrifice — but I am sure it was necessary to keep the large movement of the whole scene.

Then followed several months of painstaking execution of the details. This was a pleasurable part of the painting, but I had to be very careful to hold the details in place and maintain the rhythm.

Eventually it was completed. The Moon, Morning Star and Evening Star were added early in the work, as I felt the need of those forms and lines to play against the big oval.



Enchanted Forest

They were taken from crude Indian drawings, and I believe add a great deal to the character.

Blumenschein wrote to Gilcrease several times, usually in response to a request for information regarding one of Gilcrease's acquisitions.

One such letter was about a painting of his entitled "Enchanted Forest":

There is little to write, as I believe it is all very evident that I combined the Deer Dance (this time including

the Deer Mothers, as their perpendicular lines harmonized with the Aspens) and the beautiful background of Aspens, and above, Spruce and Pine, because it was a great setting for a primitive festival.

Many of the artists think this is my best painting. It is a little finer in color perhaps, but there is virility in the "Moon, Morning Star and Evening Star" that I believe will live a long time.



Self-Portrait



Superstition

Gilcrease wanted a self portrait of the artist to hang among his other paintings. He wrote to Blumenschein requesting one. "Blumy", as he was known, replied:

Mar. 4th — 51

Dear Mr. Gilcrease:

Yours of Feb 19th still unanswered. But here is my reply. Will certainly be happy to do my portrait to go in the group at the foundation... There will be no expense to you. But will have to ask you to wait for a while before I can find time to tackle the work....

Gilcrease's correspondence with artists was often simply sociable. In reply to one of these letters from Gilcrease, Blumenschein wrote:

Taos N.M., Aug. 7 '51.

Dear Mr. Gilcrease:

Many thanks for your article honoring the Taos Pioneer Artists and for showing our works so prominently....

I certainly feel honored — and am sure the others do also....

Do not see much of the old boys. We are all just as busy as ever — and expect to die in harness. What a blessing to have the great pleasure of painting as you grow older! Sharp at ninety-something; Phillips at eighty-two; "Berny" and "Blumy" at seventy-seven. I am still fascinated by Indian life and its wonder-

ful subjects of a hundred years ago."

(The reference to "Berny" is to the artist Berninghaus).

Blumenschein's self-portrait which is now in the Gilcrease Collection, was finally shipped to Gilcrease. The following day, Blumenschein wrote:

Taos, New Mexico, Aug. 29, '51

Dear Mr. Gilcrease:

Sent yesterday, by express pre-paid, a portrait in gouache and pen executed over a period ending in '48. It is a good job, taking me more than a month of actual work, (but unfortunately just before I had my operation).

It is not flattering as a consequence, but am pleased with it as a work of art — and exhibited it in my one man show at Santa Fe Museum in 1948.

Am happy to present it to you for the Gilcrease museum.

Later that year, Blumenschein responded to another one of Gilcrease's requests for more information about a painting. Blumenschein wrote:

Regarding my painting "Superstition," I can't say any more with words than I have with paint. In fact I have tried — and all I do is

confuse more than ever.

I just wrote a description of why this, why that, and — tore it up...

My experience helped me in forming this picture; a medicine man from a distant tribe who swallowed a ribbon to determine whether a patient would live, or die. If the ribbon came out of the Medicine Man's navel, patient would live.

And my experience with a priest who like the above Medicine Man used his religious power to make a little money outside his salary.

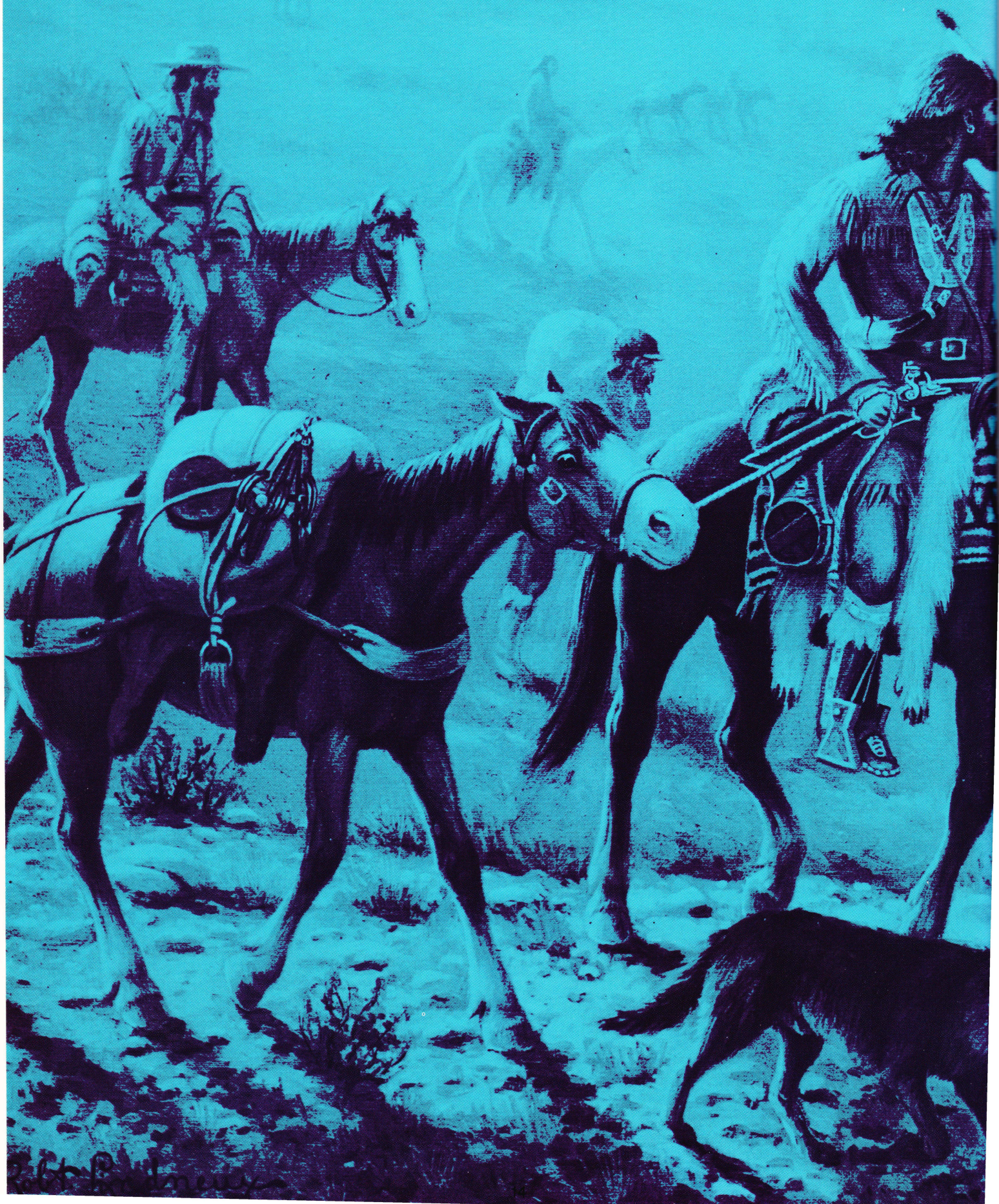
So I tried to paint the Indian friend's feelings — and maybe my own — It grew into this picture, which will be interpreted according to the intelligence of the onlooker. I hope he will enjoy the character.

Sincerely,

Ernest L. Blumenschein

Blumenschein's observation that the painting will be interpreted according to the intelligence of the onlooker is probably correct. And his reluctance to interpret his paintings is understandable in the light of his feeling that interpretation is reserved for the onlooker. Nonetheless, it is rewarding to find Gilcrease's correspondence regarding the artists whose works he bought. Their insights into the activities depicted on the canvasses add a dimension to the works which would otherwise escape some onlookers. ♦

"TRAPPERS RENDEZVOUS" by Robert Lindneux



FIRST ANNUAL

GILCREASE RENDEZVOUS

In the same way that Tom Gilcrease thrilled to the vitality and exuberance, the majesty and excitement of the American Indian's lifestyle when he attended the Rendezvous of the Crow, the Cheyenne and the Sioux, you can experience the robust and heady character of the Gilcrease collection at the First Annual Gilcrease Rendezvous.

- * Mildred Ladner, author of the latest biography of Olaf Seltzer, will be autographing her book.
- * The Museum's complete Russell and Seltzer collections will be on display. This is the first time this has happened.
- * The first sale ever in the history of the Gilcrease Museum gift shop will take place. Reductions of up to 75% on many stunning items. Take advantage of remarkable savings on magnificent Indian jewelry.
- * Special exhibits and displays.
- * Meet the director and museum staff. Relax and get special insights into the Gilcrease, the largest collection of Western art and artifacts in the world.
- * Special previews and social hours for members of the Gilcrease Association. Naturally, there is a meaningful savings for members of the association.

Member Preview:
June 14, 1979

Open to the Public:
June 16-17
1979

Watch for more details



Perhaps the greatest excitement on the expedition was the problem they had with buffalo. Catlin noticed in 1835 that the buffalo's numbers were diminishing. This picture is one of the few pictorial records of the Dragoons' activities while stationed at Fort Gibson.

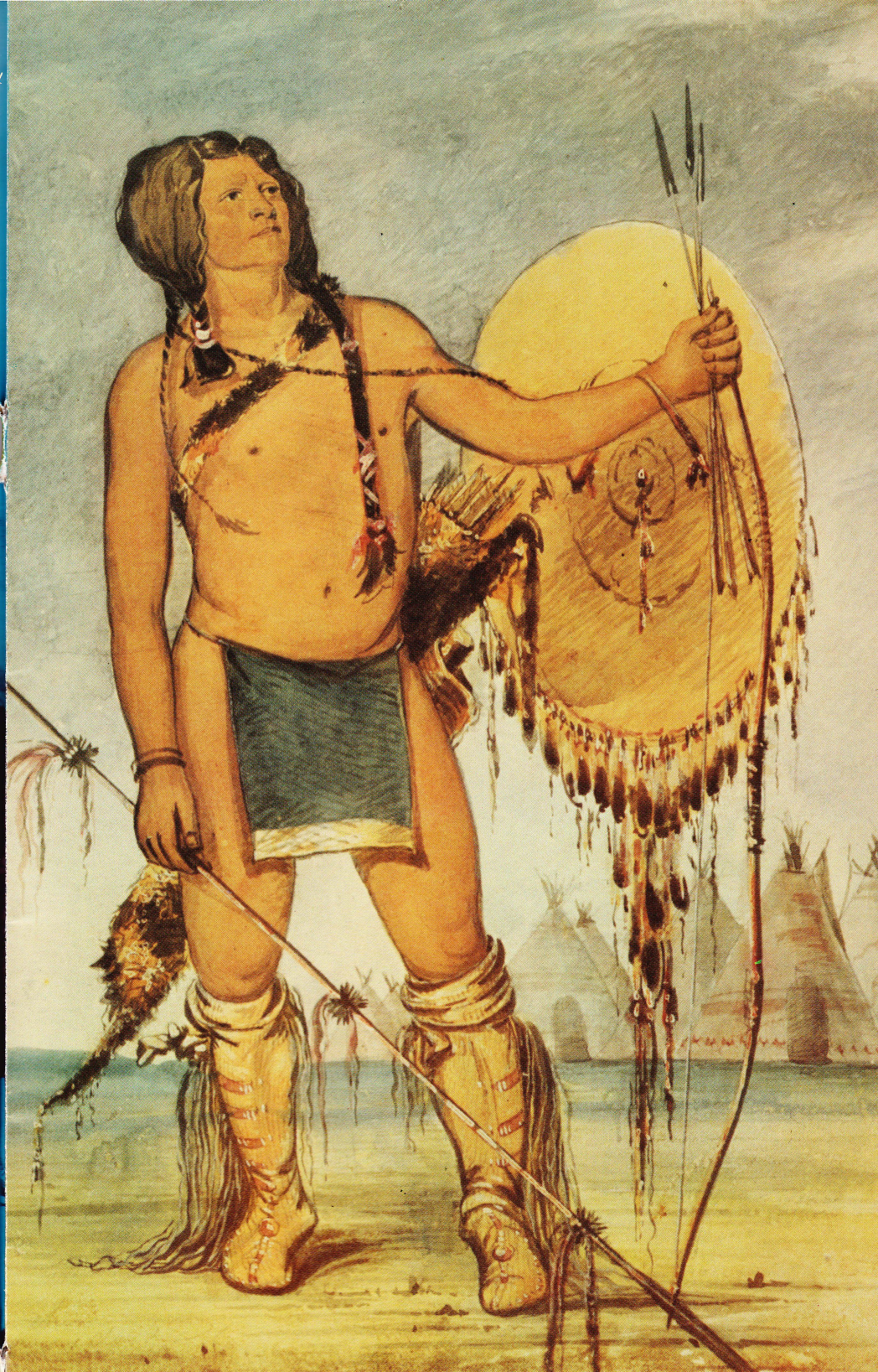
Artist...

these noble mounds, in company with my friends Lieut. Wheelock and Joseph Chadwick . . . from this elevated spot, the horizon was bounded all around us by mountain streaks of blue, softening into azure as they vanished, and the picture veils that intermediate lay, were deepening into green as the eye returned from its roamings. Beneath us, and winding through the waging landscape was seen with peculiar effect, the "bold dragoons", marching in beautiful order, forming a train a mile in length. Baggage wagons and Indian "engages" helped to lengthen the procession. From the point where we stood, the line was seen in miniature, and the undulating hills over which it was bending its way, gave it the appearance of a huge black snake, gracefully sliding over a carpet of green."

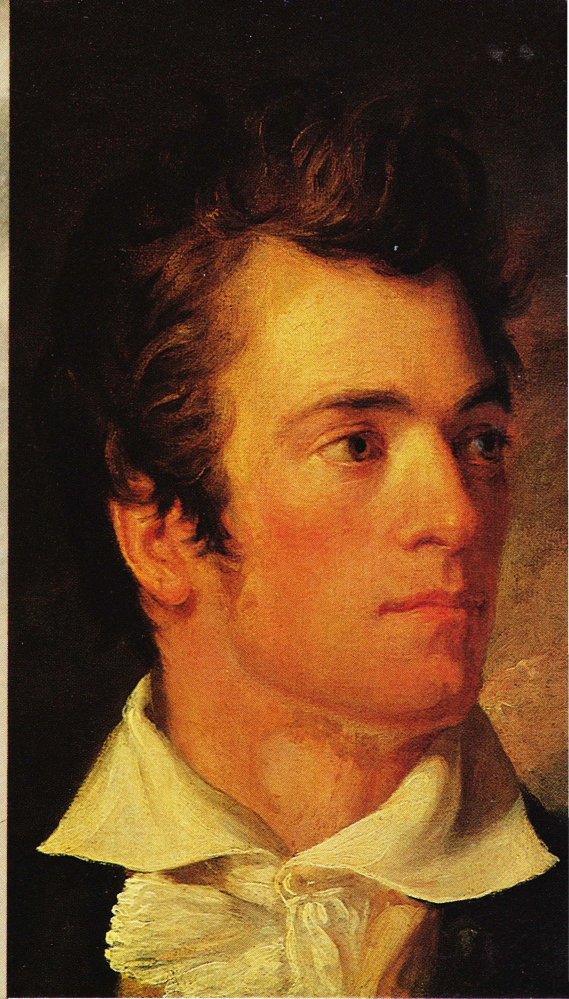
After eight days of travel, the column saw its first buffalo and according to Catlin, from that time on, the Indian hunters kept them well supplied with meat. At the Washita, fully half of the expedition became ill with fever. Eventually, a third of the 400 men regiment would die from the effects of the illness. One of the victims was General Leavenworth. Leavenworth first thought he would recover and told Colonel Dodge to continue on to Comanche country where he would catch up later. Catlin thought that Leavenworth was suffering from the effects of a fall he had taken from his horse a few days earlier, rather than disease.

The regiment proceeded on and was eventually greeted by a party of Comanche warriors several miles outside a village on Cache Creek. Rather than take a chance with a face to face confrontation by the two groups, the Indians decided to send forth an emissary. A small party, including Catlin, from the regiment rode forward under a white flag. The Indian spokesman was Jesus Sanchez, half Comanche, half Spanish. Sanchez apparently made a fine accounting of himself and friendly relations with the Comanche were quickly established. The Comanche party and the regiment proceeded on to the Comanche camp at Cache Creek.

As many years as the Dragoons would ultimately spend at Fort Gibson, Catlin's



Jesus Sanchez was half Indian, half Spaniard. He was also a complete diplomat. Sanchez' work with the Indians and the soldiers helped prevent a confrontation which would have made continuing almost fruitless.



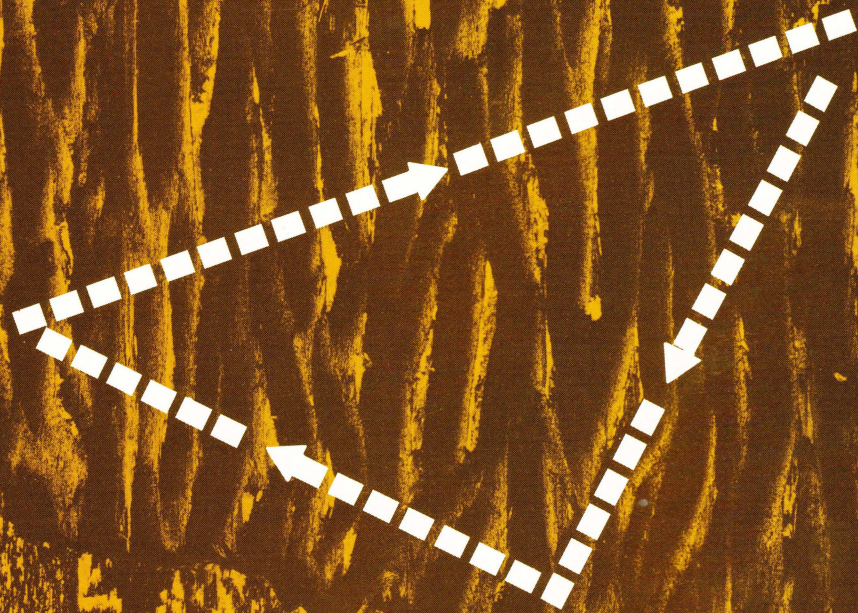
Self portrait by Catlin which hangs in the Gilcrease.



Great Camanchee Village

800 Buffalo Skin covered Lodges.

164.



The expedition proceeded to the Southwest, worked it's way to the north and then returned to Fort Gibson via the most direct fashion. Modern day travellers through the area continue to be favorably impressed by the beauty along the route.



The Osage Indians were feeling the scarcity of buffalo as early as 1835. Since the animal was the sum and substance of the culture, the Osage risked wars to hunt for these mighty beasts in the western part of the state.

painting of them meeting with Jesus Sanchez is one of the very few illustrations of their duty there. Another painting was of an incident as the groups proceeded to the village. A herd of wild buffalo passed through the column:

... upsetting horses and riders in the most amusing maneuver and receiving such shots as came from those guns and pistols that were aimed, and not fired off into the empty air.

After a number of days' travel, the Indians told the regiment that they were approaching the village. Hundreds of warriors mounted and advanced to meet them. The Indians rode in a column, cavalry style, and advanced within thirty yards of the regiment.

The two lines were drawn up, face to face, within twenty or thirty yards of each other, as inveterate foes that had never met; and to the everlasting credit of the Comanches, whom the world had always looked on as murderous and hostile, they had all come out in this manner, with their heads uncovered and without a weapon of any kind, to meet a party bristling with arms, and trespassing in the middle of their country.

Arriving at the village, the regiment began some hasty trading with the Indians, exchanging about four dollars worth of blankets and butcher knives for horses. Catlin estimated that each mount would be worth between \$80 and \$100 in Eastern cities.

Increasing numbers of the command became ill at the Village, Catlin fell victim also. He was restrained from trading his umbrella for a horse as he needed the umbrella for its shade.

Catlin was too sick to continue with the regiment to a Wichita Village. He turned his sketch book and notebook over to Joseph Chadwick who was still in



Claremont, principal chief of the Osage tribe posed for Catlin while the artist waited for the expedition to get under way.



good health. Catlin's paintings of the Wichita village were made from Chadwick's sketches and notes.

After visiting the Wichita village, the column returned to the Comanche village and then on to Fort Gibson.

Catlin's notes on the return trip are far less complete than the outbound portion of the expedition. He did comment on the scenery and the wasteful hunting of the bison herds. The illness among the troops became more severe. Many of the soldiers, by then unable to ride, were carried on litters slung between horses. Water also became a problem:

From the Comanche village to this place (the Canadian River), the country has been entirely prairie; and most of the way high and dry ground, without water for which we sometimes suffered very much . . . the only water we would find was in stagnant pools, lying on the highest ground, in which the buffalos have been lying and wallowing like hogs in a mud puddle. We frequently came to these lavers, from which we drove the herds of wallowing buffalos and mites, into which our poor and almost dying horses irresistably ran and plunged their noses, sucking up the dirty and poisonous draught, until, in some instances, they fell dead in their tracks — the men also (and often time amongst their number, the writer of these lines) sprang from their horses and ladled up and drank to almost fatal excess, the disgusting and tepid draught, and with it filled their canteens which were slung to their sides, and from which they were sucking the billious contents during the day.

Catlin wrote that the "poisonous and indigestible water with the intense rays of the sun" were the probable cause of the illness which overtook the regiment. Both horses and men died of a "slow and distressing billious fever, which seems to terminate in a most frightful and fatal affection of the liver."

The regiment finally returned to Fort Gibson and Catlin stayed there for a lengthy recuperation. ♦



Captured by the Osages, these two Kiowa children, who were brother and sister, were purchased by the Federal Government for return to their own tribe. The purchase and return was supposed to be a goodwill gesture by the Federal government. The little boy never made it home. He was injured by a billy goat and died of the injuries.

STUBBEN UPCOMING

Patrons of American history and art will converge on Gilcrease Museum beginning June 14 for the **FIRST ANNUAL GILCREASE RENDEZVOUS**. High on the list of activities will be ground breaking ceremonies for the museum's new gift shop.

The Rendezvous, patterned after the gatherings around Jackson Hole which inspired Thomas Gilcrease, will be strictly a Gilcrease affair. Fred Myers, the Museum's director, plans to have the complete collection (the world's largest) of Olaf Seltzer, and the complete collection of Russell paintings and bronzes, also on display for the event.

Bill Fisher, marketing director of the Gilcrease Association, confesses that there will be a crassly commercial side to the affair. Merchandise in the gift shop will be substantially discounted for clearance as part of an effort to make way in the new gift shop for a rounder selection of merchandise.

Fisher says he wants the new gift shop to be a regular stopping place for discriminating shoppers. Too often, according to Fisher, art patrons totally ignore the joy of a gift from the Gilcrease collection would give a recipient on traditional gift giving occasions.

The Rendezvous will also feature a wide variety of lighthearted and enjoyable diversions on the grounds of the Museum. Members are encouraged to bring guests.



THE GILCREASE LECTURE SERIES

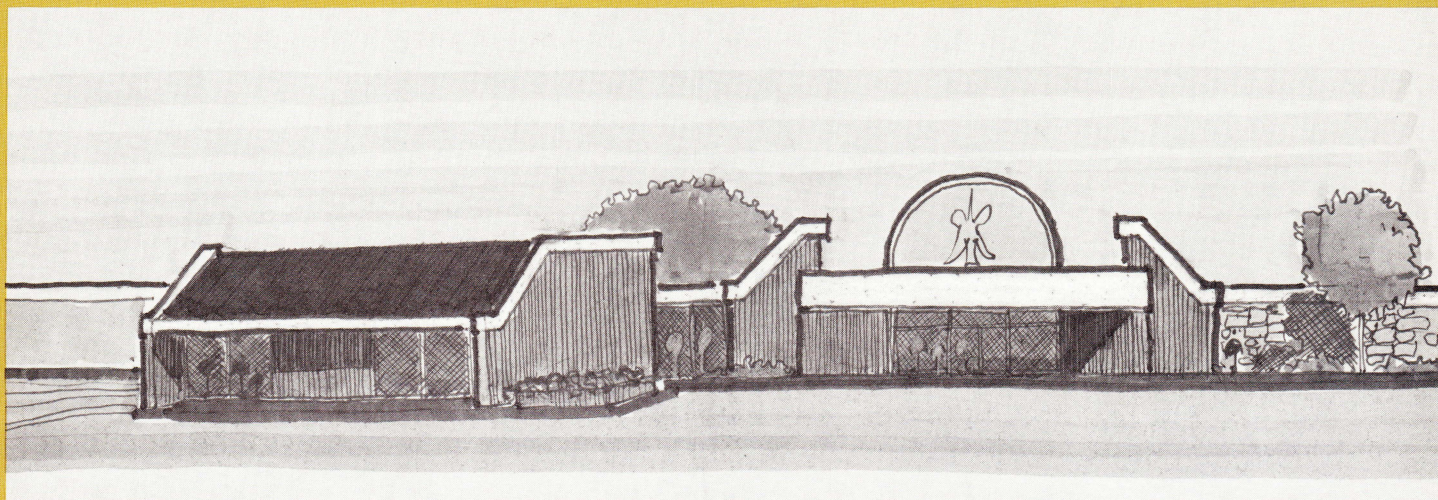
on collecting American Art continues with Mr. and Mrs. William Harmsen of Denver, Colorado, on April 26. The Harmsens travel in a specially outfitted vehicle which allows them to display part of their collection.

Larry Curry, formerly curator of the Los Angeles County Museum and Detroit Institute of Arts, will speak on May 24. Curry is presently a consultant in Western Art and advisor to the Gund Foundation collection of Western Art.

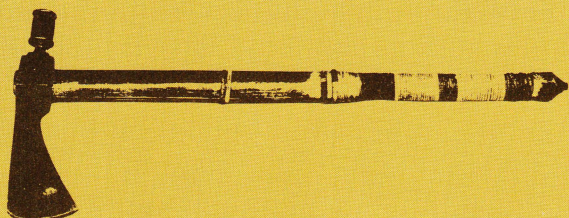


THE AMON CARTER MUSEUM

National Board of Trustees will visit Gilcrease May 24 and 25. This is a reciprocal visit after the Gilcrease Board was hosted in Ft. Worth earlier this year.

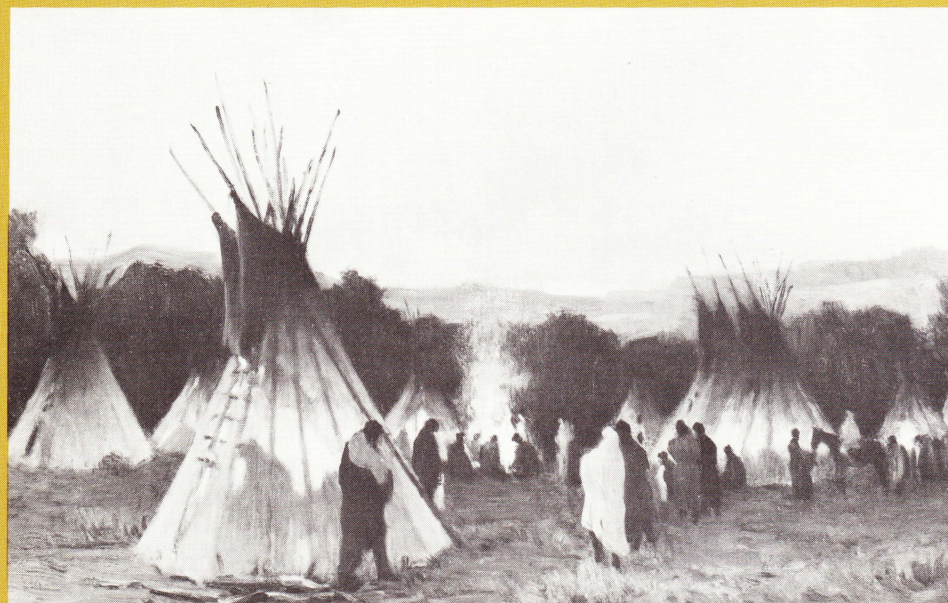


The new Gilcrease Museum Gift Shop as shown in architects delineations by Olsen, Coffey and Associates. The new gift shop will welcome mail order business.

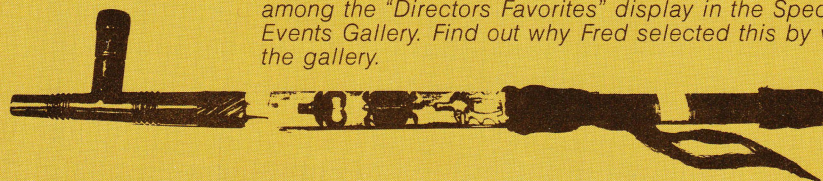


Selections of the **DIRECTOR'S FAVORITE GILCREASE PAINTINGS** will be shown in the Special Events Gallery through June 10. Each painting, according to Fred A. Myers, will have a card attached to it giving at least one good reason why it's Fred's favorite. "The

reasons may not convince anyone else but at least they assure me," Fred commented on the display. He said some of the paintings have not been on display in recent years and should prove interesting to regular visitors to the Museum.



Council Call of the Crows by Joseph Henry Sharp is among the "Directors Favorites" display in the Special Events Gallery. Find out why Fred selected this by visiting the gallery.



Institute officials announce that the contract is approved with the architectural firm of Olsen, Coffey and Associates for the final plans of the 3,100 square foot addition to the Museum. The addition will house the Museum's gift shop.

The \$175,000 project will be paid for by a combination of city and Museum Association funds. The enlarged gift shop will feature new gift items directly relating to the Collection. Patrons will have ample opportunity to browse around and examine the merchandise. A sizeable part of the addition will have the appearance of a painting gallery and will periodically be used for exhibitions/sales of works by contemporary artists.

The new construction will permit the Museum to develop a visitor orientation area which will be located in the present gift shop area. The room will include gallery guide brochures and general information about the Museum, the collection and the historical themes presented.

Construction is tentatively scheduled to begin in mid summer with completion in November.



THE OKLAHOMA MUSEUM ASSOCIATION will meet at Gilcrease on April 27 and 28. This organization is comprised of more than 60 institutions and is dedicated to improving the management and operations of museums. The primary topics of discussion at the meeting will be security and understanding the legislative process.

DIARY OF A SIOUX WARRIOR

by Michael L. Starr

"I don't remember the year, but it was the same winter my mother was in the hospital for so long."

"You remember don't you? It was about the time the first steel radials came out."

"It was the same year O.U. wiped out Notre Dame 40 to 0 and won their third national championship."



We can measure the passage of time precisely yet we still use "mental pegs" on which to hang our personal conception of it. The Plains Indians, lacking both our technology and our pressurized life style, relied on such "pegs" almost exclusively to record their history. Their "pegs" were pictographic representations of the significant event experienced by the tribe during each year. Recorded on the hides of elk or buffalo, these "winter counts" jogged the memory of the tribal story teller and thus enabled him to recall nearly everything which had happened to his people at the time depicted.



Hide paintings were drawn so that storytellers could keep accurate records of the events of years long passed. "The Storyteller" by Olaf Seltzer gives a better mental picture of "Yellow Shirt".

A Sioux Warrior charted the activities of a year on this hide which is in the Gilcrease Collection. Research indicates that the hide was painted before 1885. The warrior depicted his activities in economically drawn figures which are interpreted in this article. The impact these pictographs had on an Indian is difficult for a modern viewer to imagine, but Gilcrease is rich in paintings and other material which parallel the experience of this Sioux. If the artwork in the Gilcrease shows remarkable experiences, then our Sioux Warrior was truly a remarkable man.



"Indian Warfare" by Frederic Remington



But winter counts were limited by their general nature. They simply could not concern themselves with the deeds of individuals. To fill the void all warriors felt, men took to depicting their exploits on tipi walls, shields, clothing, or, as will be illustrated here, a buffalo hide prepared especially for that purpose.

This hide painting is classified as Northern Plains Sioux for two reasons. First, the dog travois was unnecessary on the Southern Plains in the nineteenth century due to the abundance of horses. On the Northern Plains, however, there were never enough horses to totally displace the dog as a beast of burden. Second, the top line of pictographic drawings depict a ceremony which is peculiar to the Sioux Nation.

The people on the top line are deer dreamers; men who have had night visions of either the long tailed deer or the black tailed deer. These men would adorn themselves with antlers and body paint and carry hoops of willow branches. Once a year in early spring the deer dreamers, their medicine men, and their "holy women" would gather around the ceremonial lodges to make offerings of brightly colored cloth and to dance, and sing the society songs:

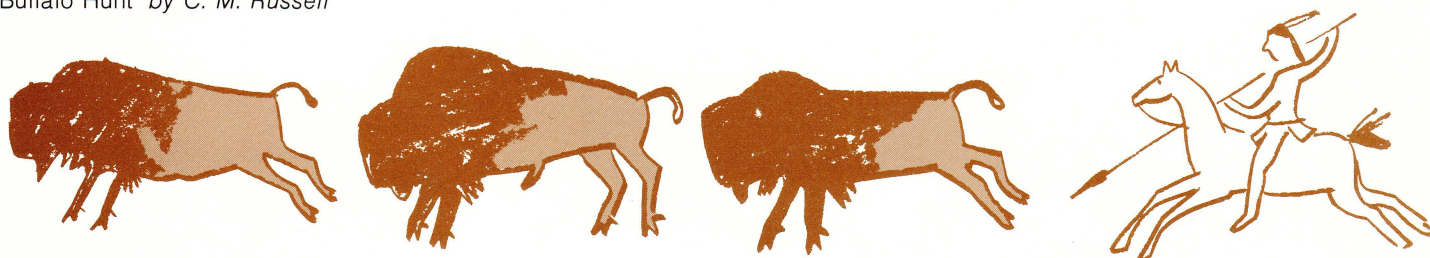
*"Whoever considers himself
beautiful —
after seeing me —
has no heart."*

The deer dreamers last met as a society in the spring of 1885. We can, therefore, place the actions which follow, if not the hide itself, in history somewhere before 1885.

In whatever year this particular celebration took place something happened to interrupt it. A combined force of Indians and what the Sioux referred to as "hat men" attacked the deer dreamers.



"Buffalo Hunt" by C. M. Russell



At this point the hero and author of this hide painting is introduced. Dressed in a yellow shirt, wearing a trailing warbonnet, and carrying a crooked lance he rallies his people and defeats the attackers.

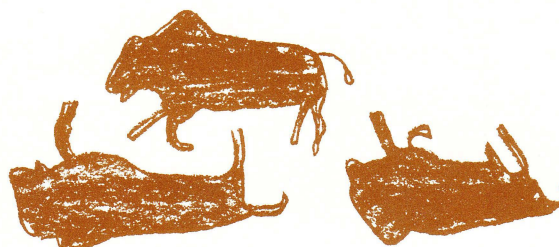
He must have achieved a considerable measure of success even before the year of this hide painting. Each feather in his warbonnet signifies a successful act of war, a "coup." Trailing warbonnets were worn only by war leaders (with the exception which will be discussed later). The crooked lance was frequently emblematic of high rank in one of the Sioux military societies.

The buffaloes running across the hide painting illustrate the early summer buffalo hunt. At this time the Sioux obtained not only food, but raw materials with which to replenish their material culture. Again, however, the Sioux encounter some "hat men." More than likely our hero in the yellow shirt and his party of hunters came upon a group of hide hunters. These were men who systematically reduced the population of the buffalo in North America from sixty million in 1800 to around six hundred in 1890.

Doubtless, "Yellow Shirt" did not see these "hat men" as simply hide skimmers, but as individuals who were literally destroying the tipis, the clothing, the furniture, tools, and food supply of the Sioux Nation. His reaction was only reasonable.

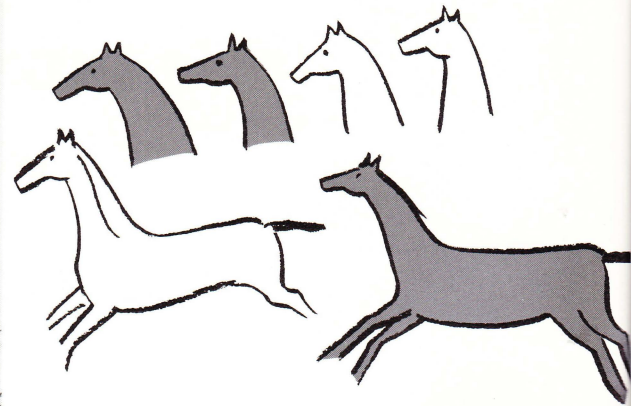


"Hide Hunters" by Olaf Seltzer





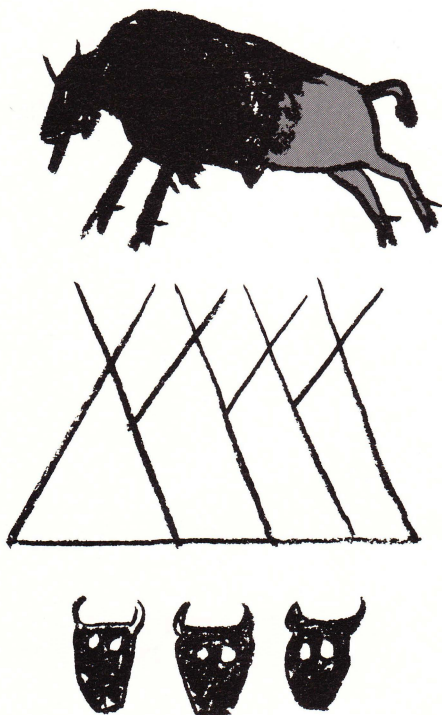
"Okeepa" by George Catlin

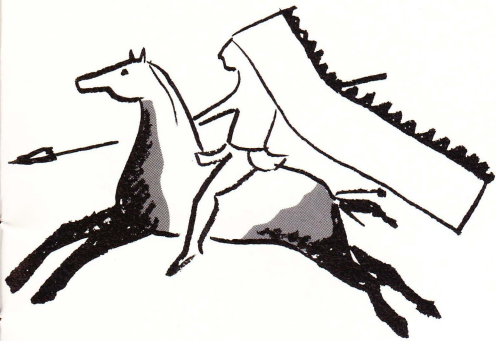


One buffalo stands alone, its tongue sticking out illustrating the fact that in mid-summer, after the big hunts, preparations were made in the year of this hide painting for a Sun Dance. The buffalo is depicted over four tipis. Each tipi overlaps another. In this manner the author is able to symbolize the gathering of all the clans into one great circle. To the right of the "circle" are three buffalo skulls representing three men who have pledged to offer their bodies to *Wakan Tanka* — The Great Mystery.

The nature of this offering is profound. A special pole — a *wagasham* — is raised in the center of the "circle." Cherry branch bundles are attached to the *wagasham* in thanksgiving for the life of the people's mother, the earth. A rawhide image of a buffalo dangles from the center pole, again in thanksgiving, this time for the people's brother, the buffalo. A rawhide male figure hangs from the pole as a petition to *Wakan Tanka* for the well-being of all the members of the tribe. The red sheet waving from the pole is one of four cloth banners representing the four powers subordinate to *Wakan Tanka* (red — north; white — south; yellow — east; black — west). Last of all, a human being is suspended from the center pole.

Two rawhide ropes are attached to the skin over the man's pectoral muscles by means of splinter-sharp skewers or the talons of an eagle. From the man's back are suspended two to eight buffalo skulls weighing twenty-five pounds each. In addition to this, skin offerings could be made. From ten to two hundred pieces of flesh could be cut from the bodies of the





"Black Foot Horse Thieves" by C. M. Russell

pledgers. The pledgers did not hang from the center pole for long. The object was to break free from the *wagasham* and to free themselves of the skulls as quickly as possible.

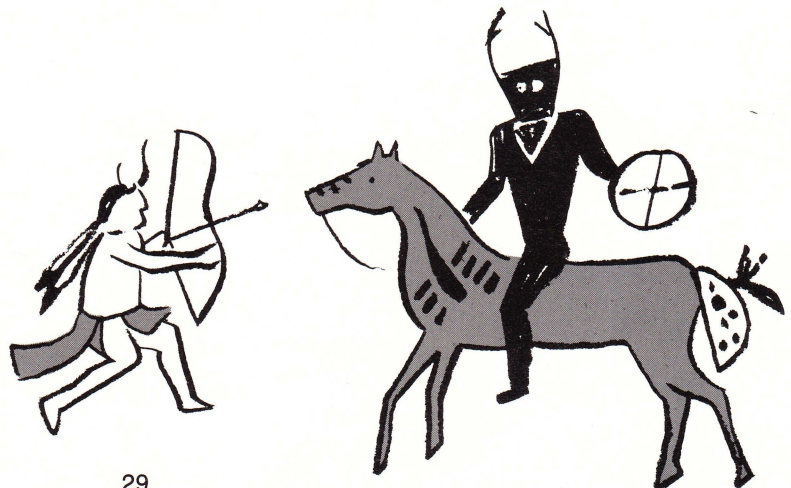
Why then did they do it? In the Epistle to the Romans, 12:1, Paul admonished the Christians in Rome "to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, wholly acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service . . ." He bases his admonition on "the mercies of God." In other words, since God has already done so much for these people, they ought to give their lives over to Him. This same reasoning underlies the philosophy of the Sun Dance. In thanksgiving to all that *Wakan Tanka* has done for him, more especially for deliverance from some great danger, the pledger literally offers his body as "a living sacrifice." Thus obvious pain and mutilation suffered by the pledger, while dramatic, are not the purpose of the ceremony, rather unavoidable by-products of the most acceptable offering possible to the one who provided them with all things.

But again something happens to disrupt the mid-summer activities. Two horses and several horse heads are represented on the hide. The complete horses signify animals in close proximity to our hero. The heads illustrate the fact that those horses are now at a distance. Evidently, "Yellow Shirt's" people were the victims of a horse raid.

Always a man of action, "Yellow Shirt" organized a counterraid to retrieve the captured animals. The enemies, whichever tribe they were, evidently came a

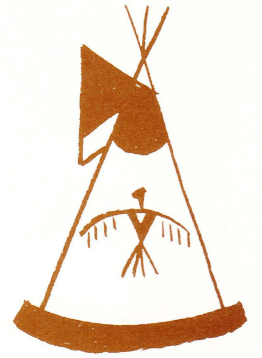


"When Sioux and Blackfoot Meet" by C. M. Russell

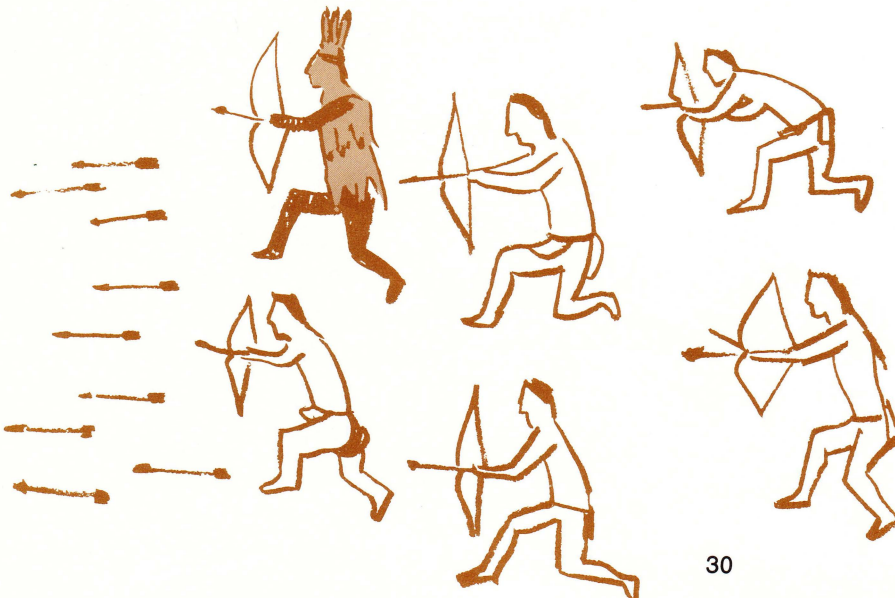




"Secret Meeting" by A. J. Miller



"Attack on the Wagon Train," (Detail), C. M. Russell



great distance and were able to elude pursuit for some length of time. The three dead animals mean that "Yellow Shirt's" war party traveled so far that they could not carry enough food to sustain them on their journey. Eventually our hero did overtake the enemy and defeat them in hand to hand combat. What appears to be a sabre in his hand, together with the trailing warbonnet and crooked lance mentioned earlier, lends credence to the theory that "Yellow Shirt" was a leader of the Sioux Strong Heart Military Society which used all of those items as society regalia.

In retrieving captured horses the general rule was that if the horses were recaptured before they reached the enemy camp they were returned to their original owners minus one apiece to the warriors for "expenses," but if the captured horses were retrieved from the enemy camp, title to those horses was transferred to the raiders who recaptured them. Whatever the situation here, our hero brought back a number of horses to his village.

The winter following "Yellow Shirt's" successful raid finds him financially able to marry a woman. Even though one horse was given to the woman's father, our hero did not simply buy her. The "bride price" was more a form of "marriage insurance" than a dowry. If it turned out that she was not a good wife, our hero could reclaim the horse. If he fell short as a husband, she could leave him and her father could keep the horse.

Aside from his marriage, the winter was uneventful. The next scene depicted is that of camp movement, an event associated with spring. The women walk-



"Inside the Teepee" by C. M. Russell

ing behind our mounted hero do not necessarily mean that he had more than one wife. He could have, but it is more likely that in order to show all that she did, "Yellow Shirt's" wife had to be represented more than once. This would be consistent with the thinking then underlying the sexual division of labor on the Plains. If the task to be performed could result only in a state of sobbing exhaustion, the woman did it. Women were busier than men.

The last line of the hide painting indicates another horse raid. Sometime before the great buffalo hunts our hero, doubtless accompanied by others, entered an enemy village containing numerous horses (indicated by the swarm of hoof print marks by the village). He was discovered in the midst of stampeding the herd and was attacked. He fled with the herd, was pursued, and, after killing some of the pursuers, escaped back to his village. Just as hoof print marks on a hide painting frequently signify the presence of horses, hoof print marks painted on a horse can signify the number of horses captured by the horse's owner. To show everyone else that an enemy was slain, the warrior might make a hand-print on his clothing, or horse, or face.

The year concluded, our hero might have relaxed in his tipi, looked over his record of accomplishments, and considered one of the "strong heart songs" then popular on the Plains.

"Today is a good day to die."

He would have agreed with that, but he could not have helped thinking that the past year had also been a good year to live. ♦

***Grandfather, have mercy upon me that
my people will not starve.***

***Grandfather have mercy upon me, I'm
offering my body to you,
This is all I have to offer.***

***Grandfather, have mercy upon me,
I have made an offering,
I have offered my flesh, blood, & tears.***

Grant me my prayers.

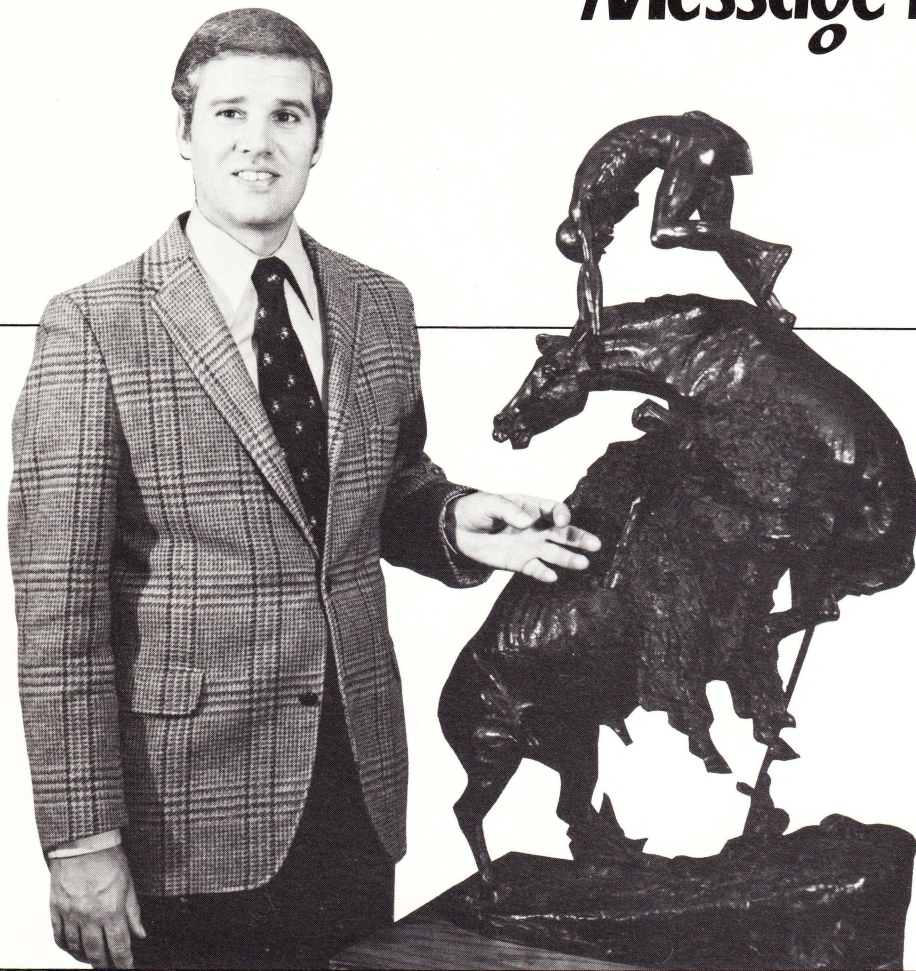
From here on it is up to you.

This is all I can do.

*The Prayer of a sun Dance
Pledger, couched in simple and
direct phrases calls to mind the
one to one relationship
established in the Lord's Prayer.
The profound religious
undercurrent of the Indian culture
does not wander too far from
Christianity when it is considered
in parallel.*

Message from the director

FRED MYERS



Gillie Library

As the new Director of Gilcrease Institute I am having a marvelous time becoming familiar with the Gilcrease collections. I would like to share some of my first adventures in the collection with you here.

Along with the rest of the world, I had some idea before coming to Tulsa of the vastness of the collection, by reputation the largest assemblage of North American art, artifacts, and documents. Six months experience of the collection confirms in my own mind the basis of this reputation and establishes to a certainty the absolute preeminence of the materials dealing with the frontier of European settlement and the movement westward.

What I had no way of understanding until recently was that despite its vast size and variety the Gilcrease collection exhibits an amazing unity.

Everything in the collection serves in some way to document the historic experience of man and nature in America, of the vast wilderness of North America and the sequence of the cultures men have imposed on the wilderness and on each other.

Nearly anything in the collection can be seen as forming part of the context for lots of other things. Documents illuminate paintings of historical events, paintings document how pots were made and so on. The deeper you go into the collection, the more apparent becomes its unity.

Let me describe for you two voyages of exploration into the vast continent of the Gilcrease collections that I recently made and what I found. Word went out that as part of a series of lectures at Gilcrease Institute I would be talking on one

occasion on Stephens and Catherwood in Yucatan and on another occasion on the Thomas Eakins painting of Frank Hamilton Cushing.

The latter is one of the most distinguished pieces of art in the whole collection. My main point was to be that Eakins painted a likeness that had, in the modern sense, "soul". In order to flesh out this rather unprovable notion, however, I wanted to describe who Frank Hamilton Cushing was — the first director of the Smithsonian's Bureau of American Ethnology, appointed 1879 — and describe some of the Indian artifacts depicted by Eakins as proper accoutrements for this pioneer American anthropologist.

With the help of the staff, who knew about these things all along, I discovered in the Gilcrease collections: original editions of books written by



Frank Hamilton Cushing, the first Director of the Smithsonian's Bureau of American Ethnology, by Thomas Eakins.



Mayan Icon, a lithograph by Frederick Catherwood.

Cushing, letters from him to his father describing among other things Cushing family genealogy and the son's poetic response to the Southwestern desert, two Zuni pots (not particularly distinguished ones) actually owned by Cushing, a sash identical to the one he is wearing around his leggings in the painting, a shield very much like the Zuni shield depicted in the painting, a photograph of Cushing dressed as he is in the painting, and — most important to me at that moment — a photograph of Frank with similarly dressed Indians. The records had indicated to me that Eakins represented Cushing as a member of the secret Zuni Bow Priest society, but I was a little skeptical of the accuracy of the regalia in the painting until the photograph undeniably demonstrated to me that Eakins

(and Cushing) were precisely accurate in their presentation of Zuni ceremonial dress circa 1890.

Ah, the joys of scholarship! But isn't it fantastic to have all this contextual material right within the collection?

Second example: my topic this time was the exploration in the years 1839 to 1843 of ancient ruins in Central America by the American lawyer and author John Lloyd Stephens and the English artist Frederick Catherwood. I knew we had two of Catherwood's watercolor drawings because they were on display, but a little digging in the collection turned up in addition: original editions of the two two-volume books published in 1841 and 1843, other contemporary poorly illustrated and much less lucid books, a portfolio of gorgeous hand-colored lithographs brought out by Cather-

wood in limited edition, "only a few" hand colored.

At one point I was able to talk about the Mayan ruins at Tulum using a slide courtesy my Kodak 1977, Stephen's written description of Tulum, Catherwood's hand-colored litho and his study drawing of the same ruin as it was in 1840.

I got goose bumps as I was marshalling all this material for the lecture audience, as I get goose bumps now just describing the layered richness of it again.

The Gilcrease is that kind of collection. Its vast entirety is made up of many, many interrelated stories — endless stories and discoveries that are there for us all.

Frederick

The
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