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GILCREASE

MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN HISTORY AND ART



CHARLES BANKS WILSON

WOODY CRUMBO

150 YEARS OF PHOTOGRAPHY

OKLAHOMA IMAGES

CHARLES BANKS WILSON has occupied his studio in downtown Miami, Oklahoma for most of his professional life.

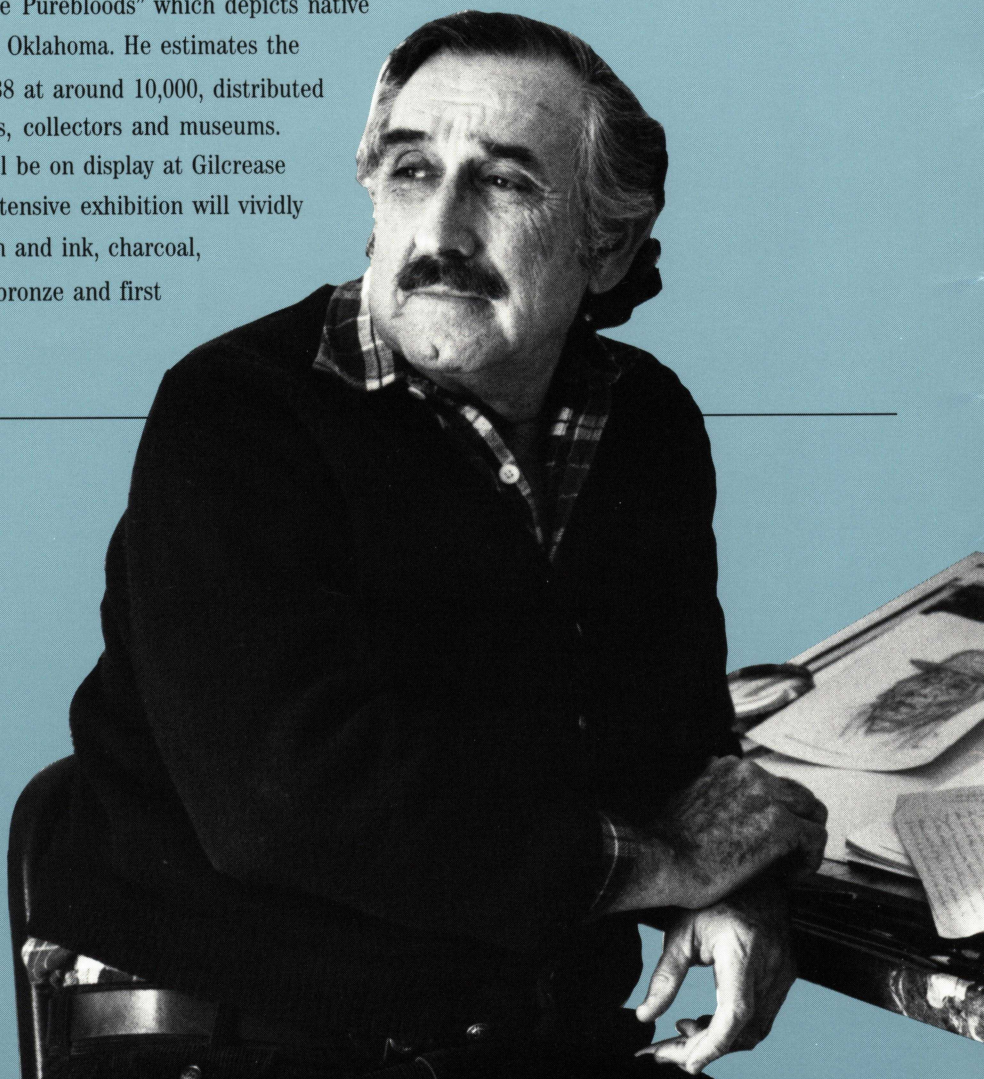
He has sketched and painted the people, places and scenes that surround him. Few artists have become so identified with their state as Oklahoma's Wilson. ■ "Without touching on the art influences of the time, it doesn't seem surprising to me that my subjects (or inspirations) have been regional," Wilson explains. "The roots in Oklahoma and nearby Arkansas have accommodated my interest in people and places." ■ Born in a small town in Arkansas and reared in a small town in Oklahoma, Wilson continues to demonstrate his love for this region. Nearly everything that has inspired him as an artist, he has discovered within a comfortable distance of his surroundings. His depictions of everyday life and the realism with which he paints, pull viewers to his paintings and lithographs as they personally relate to his subjects.

Not unnoticed in much of his work is humor, a trademark of Wilson's style. ■ With no formal training early in his life, Wilson depended on the inspiration of his teachers, friends and family to continue in the field of art. "My father painted houses — inside and out — as his father before him. My mother was a very artistic, beautiful woman. She refused to be the wife of a traveling musician, so Dad opened a paint store,"

Wilson says. "I presume my parents took note of my interest in drawing but believe the school teachers were the first to recognize I was more interested than most." ■ Wilson often did caricatures of his teachers and friends and "entertained them with comic chalk-talks. The chalk-talks made me kind of a school celebrity that was unappreciated by the faculty, however." ■ He attended the Art Institute of Chicago and in 1938 began entering his work in regional shows. But his inspiration was still in Oklahoma and he continually returned to his home in Miami. ■ Wilson is best known, within the state for his portraits and murals in the state capitol rotunda. Internationally he is recognized for many of his portraits and drawings including his series, "Search for the Purebloods" which depicts native

Americans from 60 of the 64 tribes in Oklahoma. He estimates the volume of prints he has produced since 1938 at around 10,000, distributed among approximately 3,000 purchasers, collectors and museums.

■ The Charles Banks Wilson exhibition will be on display at Gilcrease from July 22 to September 24. The extensive exhibition will vividly depict the region's history in watercolor, pen and ink, charcoal, egg tempera, acrylic, oil, lithography, bronze and first edition books illustrated by Wilson.



CHARLES BANKS WILSON

BY JAMES RALPH SCALES



Charles Banks Wilson,
The Quapaw, 1987,
15 by 18 inches, lithograph,
Charles Banks Wilson

The Woodrow Wilson Auditorium in Shawnee, Oklahoma was jammed that day in 1962 for a visiting celebrity. Every one of Roma Floyd's art classes was prepared for the distinguished visitor. I decided that public education was surely improving, when my fifth-grade child could speak on familiar terms of the great classical

painters of Europe. Mrs. Floyd had prepared her pupils to recognize American artists as well, and the excitement reached into all the grades when a real-life "Oklahoma artist" appeared and began his friendly, easy, unrehearsed comments.

Charles Banks Wilson and I had grown up together in

James Ralph Scales is president emeritus of Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and lifetime friend of Charles Banks Wilson. Educated in public schools in Oklahoma, Dr. Scales received a bachelor of arts from Oklahoma Baptist University and masters and doctoral degrees from the University of Oklahoma. He was a Walgreen Fellow at the University of Chicago and attended the University of London. He served as president of Wake Forest for 16 years.



Charles Banks Wilson, *Pow Wow Singers*,
1969, 13 by 20 inches, lithograph,
Charles Banks Wilson

Miami in the 1930s, and I had left Ottawa county in 1940, when he was a student in the Art Institute of Chicago. When I returned from the Navy in 1945, and he from a job doing illustrations for various war agencies, he had already claimed his lifetime studio above his father's paint store on Main Street. He has now been there 45 years!

The old rooms are pretty much unchanged. No effort has been made to turn them into a tourist attraction, but those lucky enough to find their way up the dusty stairs will find a number of rooms murkily differentiated to serve his multiple interests — painting, printmaking, framing, writing, and historical research. No glass walls. No

startling murals. No skylights. None of the embellishments of the 21st century, and few of the 20th century have been needed to maintain a busy artist whose daily regimen has not permitted time for an invasion of a team of interior decorators.

Here works an artist of integrity. While he has sometimes dismissed himself as an illustrator or the publisher of sketches and journals, he is instantly recognized by the curators of the nation's 10 finest museums as a perfectionist who has become one of the prolific artists of our time.

My memories of him have no beginning. We were



Charles Banks Wilson, *Wolves and Mustangs*, 1952, 10¼ by 14¼ inches, Carrie Wilson-Woodley

Charles Banks Wilson, *Morning on the Creek*, 1967, 13 by 18 inches, lithograph, Charles Banks Wilson

simply young boys growing up in the same town on adjoining streets, within a block of each other, during the 1920s and the Great Depression. Our houses were 400 feet apart, and I do not remember the time we were not acquainted. His was the last house on B Street Northwest, and mine was second from the end of C Street. Both dead-ended at the city limit, just beyond the NEO Railroad track. This suburban line ran trolleys all the way to Columbus, Kansas. Far more vital to the economy of the lead and zinc mines four miles north was the freight which was carried profitably enough through World War II.

I remember that sometimes in the pasture across the railroad track, I saw the Wilsons and their friends in some activity with horses. I did not share this interest, but Charlie seemed to be a capable rider, and kept pace with George Provine Jr., the best of our generation. Feeding and sheltering and grooming animals cost very little in those days, but the equestrian circle among the whites was not nearly so large as in central and western Oklahoma. Among the Indian tribes, however, we saw horsemen splashed with the bright colors of native costumes on magnificent mounts that seemed to appear at every powwow. That great summer feast continued



Above, Charles Banks Wilson, *Non-Indian Settlement*, (1870 to 1906), 1972 mural panel, 13 by 26 feet, hangs in Oklahoma State Capitol

Top right, Charles Banks Wilson, *Indian Immigration* (1820 to 1885), mural panel, 13 by 26 feet, hangs in Oklahoma State Capitol

even during the depression among the Quapaws, Wyandottes, and Senecas, and other tiny tribes inhabiting the Spring River Valley east of Miami. It was a scene that caught Charlie Wilson's imagination. I do not recall seeing his father, Charles Burtrum, anywhere except the paint store, but his beautiful black-haired mother was the community chauffeur who encouraged the boys and girls of the neighborhood to go see the dances and the feasts of the tribesmen. This lovely lady, a University of Arkansas beauty queen, never pushed her talented son toward spectacular achievements. She did not need to kindle a curiosity that was present from his youngest days.



Charles Banks Wilson,
The Race, 1976,
13 by 20¼ inches,
lithograph,
Charles Banks Wilson

Charles was unselfconscious in growing up. None of us in the neighborhood knew enough about art to appreciate that we were in the presence of a genius, and he certainly never thought of himself as anything more than a fellow who liked to sketch on the underside of tables and chairs: the urge to commit graffiti never infected him!

We knew that he was good at games, better than most of us in amateur theatricals, a good enough musician to perform in ensembles heavy with horns and easy on the strings.

And he was the drum major — not modest or arrogant. From one of the local parades I remember he led the high

school band, then vanished to reappear in a different uniform a few blocks later as the leader of the understaffed junior college band. It was his first service to a school whose art department he organized and served for 15 years in the generation after World War II. He had an easy way with people, and he usually got what he wanted, not by confrontation or even persuasion. He was simply a well-organized fellow who knew what he wanted before any of the rest of us had thought about the problem at hand.

Miami was a homogenous town. We used to say that the owners and stockholders of the great mining

Charles Banks Wilson,
Race to the Barn, 1978,
 15½ by 20½ inches, lithograph.
 Charles Banks Wilson



Charles Banks Wilson, *Sorghum Mill at 10 A.M.*, 1960, 20 by 40 inches, oil, Frankie Van Johnson

companies lived in Miami, while the hard-rock miners chose to dwell among the chat piles of Commerce, Cardin, Picher, Quapaw, and Hockerville. At either end of the string of lead and zinc mines were the two comparatively wealthy towns of Baxter Springs, Kansas (3,000 residents), and Miami (8,000 in 1930.) Much of the early mining activity had been in Kansas and Missouri, but by the depression years, most of the installations were in Oklahoma, and there was very little activity of any kind after the crash of 1929. From the mid-1930s on, there was a gradual reopening of the great caverns that had produced the precious ores so heavily

for World War I. Charles Banks Wilson was one of the few people to see the importance of the miners, whom he depicted in some of his early lithographs.

I never saw any economic statistics about Miami in the depression. Most of us were very sensitive to the employment status of our families. We were well aware of the limitations of the poor. Those of us who had paper routes or jobs mowing lawns knew the anxiety of living from day to day. There was nothing quite like the economic security enjoyed by a small minority of families in the community: the lawyers, doctors, mining engineers, and Main Street storeowners made little



Charles Banks Wilson,
Plains Madonna, 1977,
17½ by 20¼ inches, lithograph,
Charles Banks Wilson

money but their visible base was the envy of their classmates. A few dozen families dominated the social scene. I recall hearing at some time in the mid-1930s that fewer than 50 had kept current with their local country club dues. The cost was low enough in all conscience, but this was a depression.

The Miami public schools were not segregated: they were the strongest in the area that two decades before had been Indian Territory. For some reason lost in the mists of history, Ottawa and adjoining Delaware County had not admitted blacks as permanent residents. My memory is that the school continued to pay the munificent

sum of \$1,000 a year to their most experienced teachers. Some made the mistake of being married, hence in response to schoolboard election pledges, were removed on the ground that "her husband's a-workin'." Art teachers came and went, but music escaped the label of frill. Music would have survived even without the partnership of athletics.

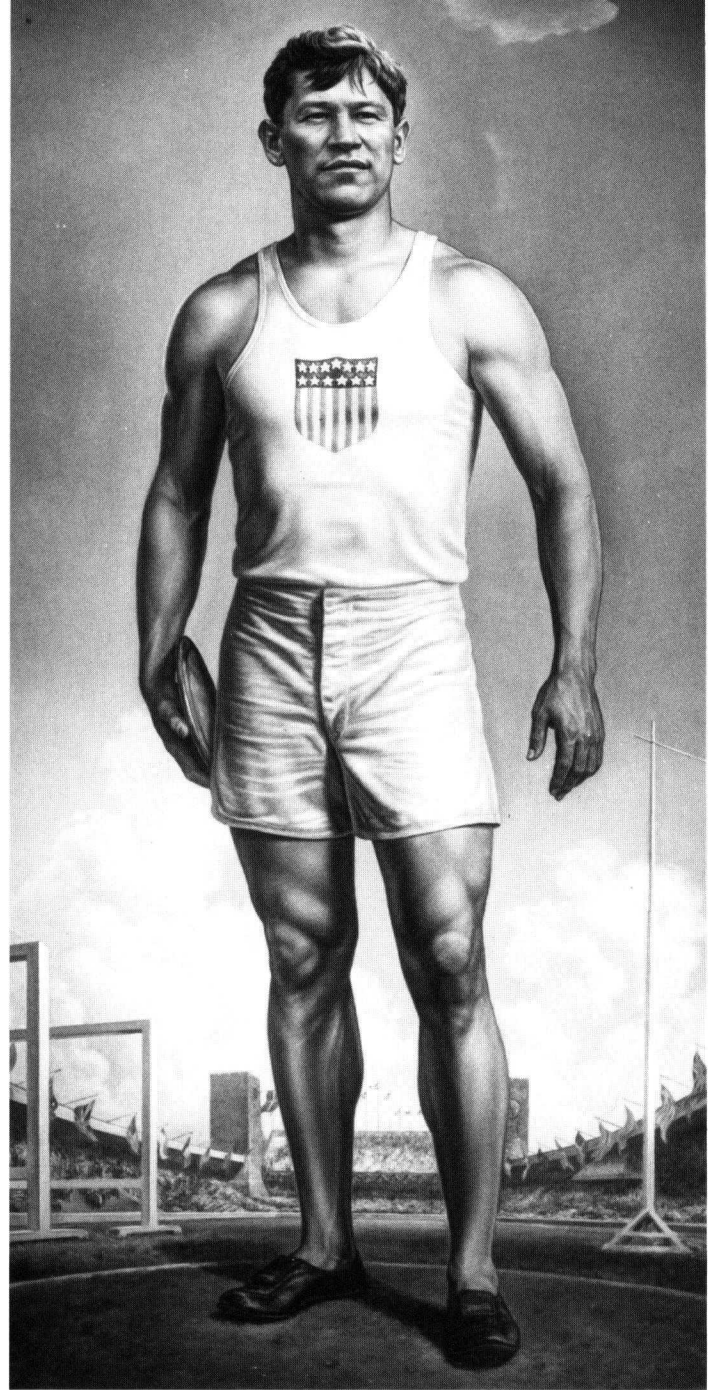
In any year, Charles Banks' gifts as an artist became essential to instruction. We recognized the multi-colored chalk boards on which the teachers had written, "Do not erase." Charlie could always be depended on to reproduce those splendid drawings, and replace them with next



Above, Charles Banks Wilson, *Sequoyah*, 1964 and 1965, 8 feet by 4 feet 6 inches, acrylic, State of Oklahoma

Center, Charles Banks Wilson, *Jim Thorpe*, 1967, 8 feet by 4 feet 6 inches, acrylic, State of Oklahoma

Right, Charles Banks Wilson, *Will Rogers*, 1964, 8 feet by 4 feet 6 inches, egg tempera, State of Oklahoma



week's assignment. In this, as in the labors of later years, his concentration discouraged comment and loose talk. He himself never had an art class in MHS, and gave up the correspondence course after three lessons!

There were no portraits in the public buildings of our town of 8,000, but there were some banks and churches whose architects had put their stamp on the community. Miami had long since ceased to have a Main Street of storefronts resembling a western movie lot. It happened that some of the finest places were completed just before the depression, so that the four or five streets in the heart of town had a certain style. What was surely the



Charles Banks Wilson, *Will Rogers*, 1979.
34 by 34 inches, oil, Will Rogers Memorial,
Claremore, Oklahoma

most splendid theatre in Northeast Oklahoma was the Indian-style Coleman directly across from Wilson's paint store. The Coleman could advertise "washed air" as early as 1929 as a sanctuary from the heat that sometimes made our part of the world an oven in deep summer. Hotel Miami was said to be the best between Tulsa and Kansas City. No banks collapsed, and while there was much deprivation, only Indians and poor whites knew the most savage effects of poverty until the late 1930s. These were proud people, treated with respect in the embarrassing distribution of commodities that came from the courthouse basement. Except for the Coleman, air

conditioning was unknown, and the decade of repeated droughts were endured only because people spent their evenings, and sometimes whole nights, in their yard.

If the exterior aspect of the community was pleasant, there was no great market for paintings and watercolors. Some of the larger bungalows boasted a copy of classical sculpture or a tapestry or two. The houses of the well-to-do were notable for their gilt frames, seldom for the prints contained therein.

I do not recall ever talking with Charlie about community art or architecture. He was always "Charlie" when we were boys, but our mothers called him



Charles Banks Wilson, *Angie Debo*, 1985, 22 by 26 inches, oil, State of Oklahoma

“Charles.” “Banks” was an affectation of our mature years, which seemed somehow to fit. Like me, he was forever contending with a double name, which was commonly visited on girls and boys alike in southern families. I do not recall seeing him often in Miami during the summer, when he was likely to be visiting his grandparents in Springdale, Arkansas, or later in Orlando, Florida. Judge Banks always was consulted in any assessment of the “political situation” in his part of Arkansas, but he had worked briefly as a paint contractor in Miami, where Charlie’s adored maternal grandmother was a Christian Science practitioner. Only a handful of the

town intellectuals worshiped at the tiny church in the next block from our house. This stalwart woman remained faithful to her beliefs, even as she was going blind from an ailment her science could not cure.

Unlike most of us, Charlie was spared the agonies of adolescence. He was never the lanky, pimply-faced adolescent. He was always well-dressed, but never conscious of it. He was always coordinated, even kinetic in his movements, and blessed with the grace of natural good manners.

While we were deferential toward our teachers, we were certainly not reverential, and I never heard of any



Charles Banks Wilson, *The Prairie Chief*, 1983, 17¼ by 22½ inches, lithograph, artist's proof

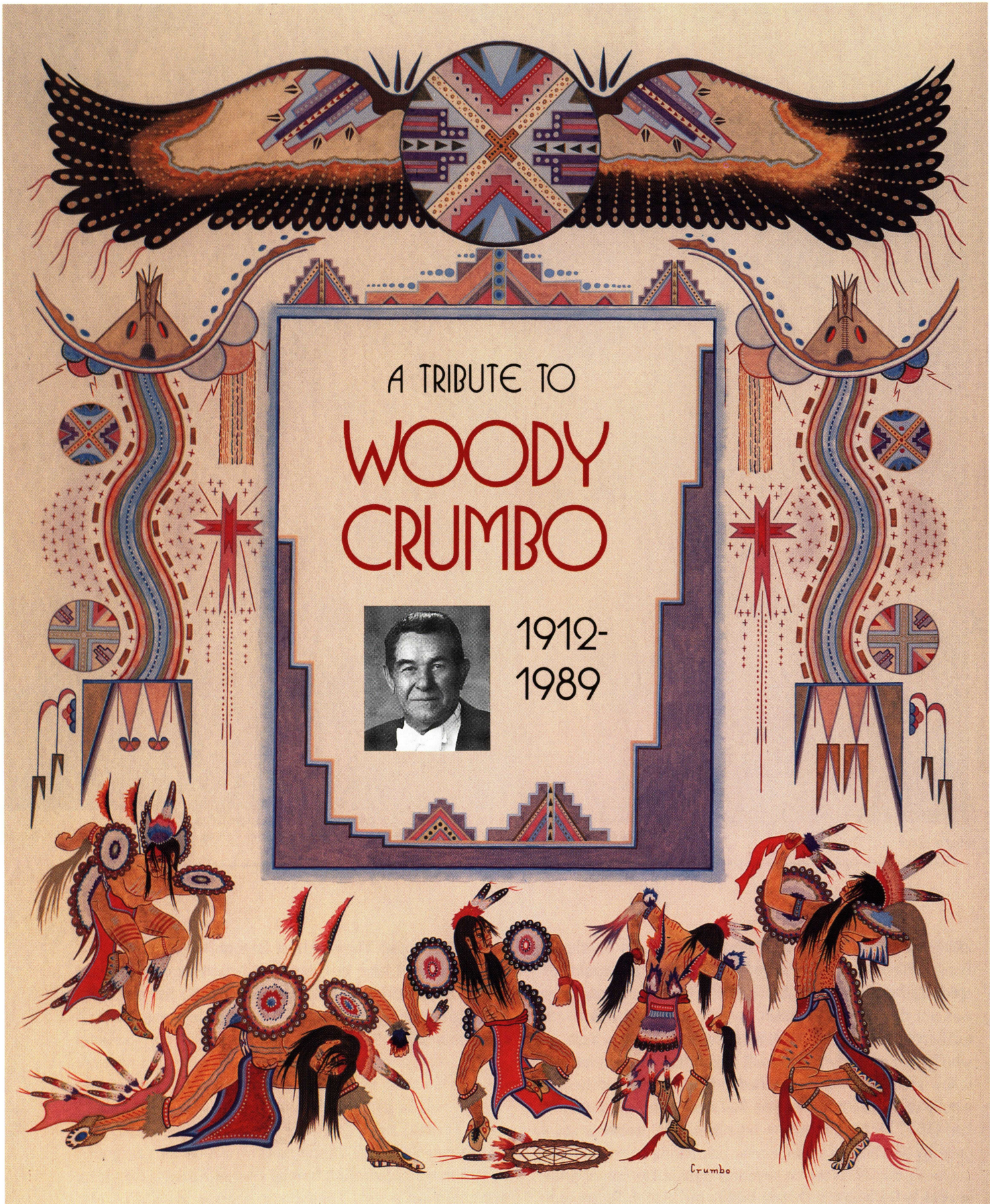


Charles Banks Wilson, *Osage Orator*, 1960, 34 by 25 inches, egg tempera, National Cowboy Hall of Fame, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

incident involving rough treatment by or toward Charles Banks Wilson. Once we were banished from the common study hall of 95 to an exile for two. This enforced union was not disciplinary so much as a precaution against further disruption. Charlie's caricatures of the teachers who kept the study hall were a delightful diversion for his fellow students, who demanded an endless flow of these wholly-recognized figures. We had a wise principal, the late Dr. C. F. McCormick, who solved two problems at once by sending us to supervise one another.

Out of this enforced association came a lifetime of pride in each other's work. On my wall is the sketch Banks did

of his old mentor, Thomas Hart Benton, on Benton's 75th birthday. I have distributed at least fifty copies of the sketch Banks did of Will Rogers as the basis for the painting that hangs in the position of honor in the Oklahoma State Capitol. ▽



Woodrow Wilson Crumbo, *Illustration For a Book Page*, 19½ by 24 inches, tempera

BY MARGARET W. TEAGUE

“Say goodbye to my father, and then let go.”

Thus are we counseled, and comforted, with words spoken by the son at the graveside of his father, Woody Crumbo. Woody died of an apparent heart attack at his studio home in Cimarron, New Mexico, on April 4, 1989. He was 77 years old.

It would be easy to slip into sentimental appraisal, and praise, of this man of many talents, but Woody would not want this. He would want us to remember the laughter, the humor, the joy in life, the skill of his hands, his plans and visions, both practical and euphoric, the generosity of his spirit and how good it was to know him.

Woody's life spanned the decades from the birth of what at first was Contemporary American Indian Art to today, when it sometimes is called Traditional Native American Art. He was a leader in this movement, but he also was a musician, singer, dancer, sculptor, writer, educator, prospector, originator and innovator of marketing and promotion of American Indian art. He taught many other Indian artists and helped them earn a living from their efforts by making their art accessible to wide markets. He taught many others to enjoy and appreciate this art.

Woody Crumbo was one of three Indian artists closest to Thomas Gilcrease. The other two were Acee Blue Eagle, a comfortable friend because of shared heritage and interests, and Willard Stone, for whom Thomas Gilcrease was sponsor and patron at the beginning of the woodcarver's career. Woody was artist-in-residence at Gilcrease Museum for three years, living with his family

in a house on the museum grounds. He not only continued his own painting during this time, but interested Thomas Gilcrease in the works of other Indian artists. Today, there are some 500 paintings by 100 Indian artists in the Gilcrease collections, with more than 140 of these Woody's own work.

More important for the whole of the Gilcrease collection, perhaps, was the impetus and assistance Woody gave the collector in assembling the incomparable treasures of southwestern art now in the museum collections.

“Tom was restless,” Woody said. “Sometimes he'd call me at four o'clock in the morning, wanting to take out for New Mexico or Arizona, sometimes with him driving, sometimes with me. Sometimes we'd go just to visit, sometimes just to look. Sometimes we'd go to buy, and Tom always knew what he wanted. He had a good eye for the best.”

These forays into the Southwest resulted in the acquisition of priceless paintings, textiles, baskets, pottery, jewelry and artifacts, and of friendships with artists and dealers which continued after the trips ceased.

Although it seems unlikely that anyone today will be unfamiliar with what only a few years ago was “contemporary” and today is “traditional,” few people recognized this distinctive art 50 years ago. It was to dispel this unfamiliarity that Woody gave much of his life, his energies and talents.

Woody spoke casually of his painting as “line and color,” but there was a longer story he told when speaking at



Margaret W. Teague is a former journalist, now retired living in Bartlesville, Oklahoma.

In addition to her newspaper reporting experience, Teague served on the staff of Philbrook Museum of Art in Tulsa, the El Paso Museum of Art and the Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art.

During her time at Gilcrease, she worked with Thomas Gilcrease and befriended many artists of the time, including Woodrow Wilson Crumbo.

seminars as late as 1978:

For hundreds of years, there was little or no true art among American Indians. Some creative work has come down to us which can be called artistic — in the decoration of pots, in paintings on softly-tanned hides and in pictographs. Certainly such efforts represent the Indian's innate, inherent love of beauty and need to preserve his history and identity, but it would be hard to argue that this was art for art's sake.

Today's American Indian art is a natural extension and evolution of these ancient paintings, drawings and carvings. Its most easily recognized characteristics are that it is two-dimensional and that it retains the silhouette treatment of figures. Frequently, there is little or no indication of foreground, horizon or perspective, hence no indication or feeling of distance or depth. Painted surfaces are flat, with what shaping and shading is desired by the artist achieved through fine lines following the outline of a figure or shape, deepening in value as the form is defined, without blending or shading of colors.

In the beginning, the medium usually was tempera water color — show card paint — which was available, comparatively inexpensive and quick-drying, and which gave a matt finish. This was an unforgiving medium, difficult to handle or control, allowing little or no possibility for correcting mistakes. This makes even more remarkable the details of extreme delicacy which require the finest of brushes and sureness of touch. The colors are vivid and strong, or subtle and soft, but always harmonious.

Before our own American Indian art got started in the very late 1920s and '30s, the Indian was painted as the white man saw him. Afterwards, the Indian began to paint as he saw himself. Today he paints his myths, mysteries, legends and dreams, his spiritual beliefs and aspirations, his humor, costumes and dances, his ceremonies and daily life. We paint everything from dramatic dancers to gentle woodland scenes to squaws quietly grinding corn. We paint our life.

The first time I met Woody Crumbo was atop a ladder. I last visited with him sitting in the sunshine on a bench outside a rock shop and trading post south of Bartlesville. In between these meetings were almost 40 years of friendship. This was not the kind of friendship which had to be nurtured with daily care. It could be picked up where we had left off months, or even years, before.

The “episode of the ladder” was in early 1950. I was a frequent visitor to the Gilcrease Museum grounds during the two years Thomas Gilcrease supervised construction of his greatly-expanded museum, and was familiar with Woody's Indian paintings from the first exhibits mounted when the museum reopened in May, 1949. From an earlier period on the staff of Philbrook Museum I knew the first painting acquired for the Philbrook permanent collection, when it opened in 1939, was Woody's “Deer and Birds,” and that he had been instrumental in organizing the first Contemporary American Indian Art Annual competition at Philbrook in the mid-1940s. Woody and Charles Banks Wilson had been judges of this first-of-the-kind show. I had read where Woody had completed a series of 84 paintings of religious ceremonials of American Indians, “faithfully interpreting the spirit and mysticism of



Woodrow Wilson Crumbo, *Family Scene*, 9 by 12½ inches, tempera



Woodrow Wilson Crumbo, *Blue Horse*, 19¾ by 24¼ inches, tempera

his people.” I also had heard much of Woody from the Indians who worked on the Gilcrease Museum grounds and they said I really ought to meet Woody, but I never had.

One day on a visit to Gilcrease, I found scaffolding in front of the vaulted entrance, and was told that was Woody Crumbo up there working on his stylized bird which for so long was the symbol of Gilcrease Museum. The Indians on the ground began urging me to climb up the ladder to meet Woody. He joined in from the top to cheer me on. Never good at climbing, I did eventually make it to the top. And so we met! At the top of the ladder! Then I had to get down, with no help from anyone. I had been told that Woody was half-Potawatomie and half-French. I figured the French half helped me up but the Potawatomie half would not help me down. Woody told me that the bird symbol on which he was working was the Messenger Bird Ascending to Heaven, or the Peyote Bird, depending on to whom he was telling the story, and for what purpose.

“It is a sacred symbol of deep spiritual meaning to Indians, but white people do not always understand and accept this,” Woody said.

The path this versatile Indian artist took to reach the top of his own ladder had a rocky beginning. Woodrow Wilson Crumbo was born January 31, 1912, on Indian land near Lexington, Oklahoma. His mother, Mary, was of Potawatomie descent and his father, Alex, a horse trader, was English and French. Alex died when his son was only four years old and Mary took her family to live on Potawatomie lands in Kansas. She died there only three years later, leaving her son orphaned at age 7 and his education halted in the third grade.

Woody was taken into the home of a Creek family on Shell Creek west of Sand Springs. For the next 10 years he lived with various Creek families in the area, tending herds of cattle and horses. As little boys will, Woody carried a pocket knife to fashion flutes from reeds growing in the creek bottom, and as few little boys do, he also carried a pencil and scratch pad for sketching.

When Woody was 17, he enrolled in the eighth grade at Chilocco Indian Agricultural School, where he quickly caught up with his academics. He made friends with several Kiowa youth attending the school and spent summers and school breaks with them on the Kiowa reservation at Anadarko. Here he came to the attention of

“Aunt Susie” Peters, field matron for the Kiowa, Comanche and Arapaho Mission.

“Aunt Susie was the mother of Indian art in Oklahoma,” Woody said. “She was the major figure in encouraging the traditional art style among Oklahoma Indians. She was no artist, had not studied art, but was just interested.”

In 1922, Aunt Susie sold 22 of Woody’s paintings to the San Francisco Museum of Art for its permanent collection. This was the first significant sale of Woody’s work.

On the Kiowa reservation, Woody’s mind and imagination were filled with stories of the Kiowa Five, a group of young Kiowa artists who had been taken under the wing of Dr. Oscar B. Jacobson, director of the Art Department at the University of Oklahoma. They were not allowed to enroll officially at OU because they did not have the academic background to comply with the standard entrance requirements, but they were tutored by Dr. Jacobson. They were James Auchiah, Jack Hokeah, Stephen Mopope, Spencer Asah and Monroe Tsatoke, and sometimes Lois Smokey. All went on to success as American Indian artists.

Because of his musical ability and intense interest in Indian culture and heritage, Woody touched the spirit of one of the Kiowa Old Ones, Belo Cozad, venerable flute carver and player. After a night of prayer and meditation, Woody was permitted to follow the tradition of carving and playing the ceremonial cedarwood flute of the Kiowas.

While at Chilocco, Woody received a scholarship to the American Indian Institute at Wichita, Kansas. This was a Presbyterian school founded by Dr. Henry Roe Cloud, a fullblood Winnebago, for a limited enrollment of boys of exceptional ability. He instructed them in art, education, religion and leadership. Woody graduated three years later as valedictorian of his class.

Woody enrolled in Wichita State University in 1933, to study with Clayton Henri Staples, noted water-colorist, and Thurlow Lieurance, musician and composer of Indian music. Woody assisted Lieurance in interpreting and converting Indian drumbeats, songs and chants to forms which could be recorded and preserved.

During his student years at Wichita State, Woody earned his way as an Indian dancer. Through a government-sponsored program, he led a group of a dozen dancers on a tour of many Indian reservations,

where he not only learned other tribes’ dances, but their traditions, customs, art and details of tribal dress. Many songs and dances were added to his repertoire in this way. He continued to dance at the Gallup Ceremonials until 1941. He also taught Indian arts and crafts in youth programs and summer camps, especially to Boy Scout groups. He continued his work with the Boy Scouts for many more years.

In 1936, Woody followed his Kiowa friends to the University of Oklahoma, to study under Dr. Jacobson and other fine teachers who took special interest in the young Indian artists. He taught the first classes in jewelry-making offered at OU, specializing in silversmithing, a craft for which he invented and patented special tools.

After two years at OU, Woody became the second Director of the Art Department at Bacone Indian College, at the suggestion of Acee Blue Eagle, who had founded the department in 1935. One of Woody’s students was Willard Stone, cementing the lifetime friendship of these three — Woody, Acee and Willard.

During summer months from 1939 to 1941, Woody and other Indian artists were commissioned by the U.S. Department of the Interior to study mural painting and etching techniques with Olaf Nordmark, a Swedish technician, in Washington, D.C. and to paint murals in the Interior Department building there. Nordmark, with the Indian Service, also taught at various reservations in Oklahoma, and Woody continued his studies under this master.

The year 1941 was pivotal for Woody as it was for the world at large. He and Lillian Faye Hogue, of Creek descent, were married, and he went to work for Cessna Aircraft in Wichita. He also fulfilled two commissions for murals that year, one, “The Rainbow,” in the post office of Nowata and the second, “The Indian Teachers,” in the Sequoyah memorial near Sallisaw.

In 1942, Woody returned to Tulsa to work for Douglas Aircraft for the duration of World War II. A daughter, Minisa, and a son, Woody Max, were born to Woody and Lillian during this period.

By the time the war was over, Woody could list more than a dozen first prize awards at various Indian painting competitions on his application for a Julius Rosenwald Foundation Fellowship. He submitted 19 paintings along with his application, in which he stated what were



Woodrow Wilson Crumbo, *Scaffold Burial*, 25 by 20¼ inches, tempera



Woodrow Wilson Crumbo, *Singers For the Dance*, 36 by 32 inches, oil

becoming his compelling goals: To assist other Indian artists, to create a market for their work so they could realize some reward from their efforts, and to make their art more accessible to the general public. Woody won the fellowship and became the only American Indian to be so honored.

Woody had little time to take advantage of the Rosenwald Fellowship before joining Thomas Gilcrease as artist-in-residence at Gilcrease Museum. His three years there bracketed the time when the museum was open in only one large gallery in a converted carriage house, until this was closed in 1947, and Thomas Gilcrease became absorbed in supervising construction of a new museum of many galleries. Before this new museum was opened in May, 1949, Woody's urge to turn his dreams into reality impelled him to take his family to Taos, New Mexico.

He not only wanted to make Indian art available to more than a few collectors, he wanted to perfect new techniques for silk screen printing which he had been

developing for some time. He set up a studio in Taos where he employed a group of Indian artisans to work on a veritable artistic assembly line, producing silk screen prints and etchings, mostly of his own work at first since this was available. He also launched an educational campaign, planning to put 30 to 50 art shows of 30 days each on the road, to run simultaneously in many cities.

Shows were held in colleges, universities and museums whenever possible, so students could see, learn and purchase original art work for moderate prices. Woody sometimes pointed out that both silk screen prints and etchings are considered "original." Prices were \$2.50 for matted etchings and \$5.50 to \$7.50 for matted silk screen prints. Years later these were resold for \$125 to \$175 for the etchings and \$500 to \$750 for the silk screen prints. More important to Woody, however, was when an earlier purchaser came to him and told him that he, the buyer, still treasured a print or etching he'd bought at one of these shows.



Out of this period came what surely must be called Woody's "signature" painting, "The Spirit Horse," even more than the Peyote Bird, which sometimes he used so subtly. There is no mistaking this prancing horse with body in vibrant blue and riotously swirling forelock, mane, tail and feathers at the ankles in purest white. Limited-edition prints of "The Spirit Horse" were given by then-Governor George Nigh as Governor's Arts Awards in September, 1982, for the State Arts Council, of which Woody was a member.

"Horses have never been animals to me when they get on canvas," Woody said. "They are spirits, and if I paint them in unreal colors, it is meant to prove that they are phantoms."

Woody continued to freelance as a painter during his Taos years, sometimes turning to oils for his original work. One of his more widely-known paintings was done in oils in the early 1950s, as a memorial to honor American Indians who served in the United States Armed Forces. He remembered the story of a Sioux soldier who had been killed in World War II just after asking his family to give him a traditional Indian burial if he should fall in battle. He painted this story in "Sioux Indian Burial," or "Spotted Wolf's Last Request," a dramatic canvas which shows the traditional scaffold burial of a Sioux Warrior along with full battle regalia of an American soldier, and many patriotic symbols of the United States. This painting is owned by the Boy Scouts of America and hangs in their Koshare Indian Museum in La Junta, Colorado. Woody was honored by the Sioux for this memorial painting.

Over the years, Woody wrote and spoke many times in many words of his goals — as an artist, a teacher, a visionary and sometimes as a businessman. During his time in Taos, others began to speak and write for him, waxing even more enthusiastic than Woody himself.

"He has striven to make American Indian art better known, more affordable, even more profitable for himself and other Indian artists, through development of skills in etching and silk screening — non-traditional media he has taught other Indian artists," one columnist wrote. "His goal has been rehabilitation of his people, through education, reproduction and marketing — to take Indian art to a national audience and to draw visitors to the Indians."

In 1960, Woody joined the staff of the El Paso Museum

of Art, newly-acquired by the city after decades of private, volunteer operation. As curator, Woody was responsible for creating a professional museum from scratch, for taking care of what already was there and setting the pattern for the future. During two separate periods, Woody was acting director.

El Paso is a surprisingly un-Indian city, but Woody discovered a lost tribe of Indians, down the Valley of the Rio Grande River. This was an identifiable ethnic group of Tigua Pueblo Indians, who had fled northern Spanish New Mexico in 1680 during one of the uprisings of native Pueblo Indians against their Spanish conquerors. Woody secured legal assistance and persuaded the Federal Government to declare the Tiguas a legitimate Indian Tribe, one of only two in Texas.

The urgent need to get back to his own creative work overcame Woody again in August, 1968, and he moved his family to La Junta, where his work was known and appreciated from earlier years. In 1972, they returned to Taos, and in 1974 came home to Oklahoma, settling in Okmulgee.

Woody again set up a studio for production of his silk screens and etchings. He also took to the road himself, establishing retail outlets for his work and that of other Indian artists. Woody Max sometimes accompanied his father on his marketing trips, to show and sell his own superb silver and turquoise creations.

Woody was inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame by the Oklahoma Heritage Association on November 16, 1978. Will Rogers Jr. read the citation: "Woody has become internationally renowned for his etchings, silk screens, murals and paintings. He has labored effectively on a volunteer basis to aid Indian artists and entire tribes. He also has been an important force in preservation of Indian music and dance, and holds patents on jewelry-making equipment."

Woody and Lillian Crumbo probably were more proud of an honor which came to their daughter, Minisa, only a few weeks later. Minisa, now Mrs. Jim Halsey of Nashville, Tennessee, became the first American Indian artist and the only woman ever to have an art exhibit in the Soviet Union.

Soon the call of the country drew Woody to rural Checotah, near Lake Eufaula, where he converted part of a big, red barn to a studio. During these years, Woody



Woodrow Wilson Crumbo, *Peyote Ceremony*, 29 by 47½ inches, tempera

had been doing little if any original painting. In fact, he said he had given it up altogether. He was just too busy with all the other irons he had in his fire. On our last visit in the sunshine south of Bartlesville, I asked him if he thought he'd ever get back to painting.

"I don't think so," he said. "If I painted a large piece the way I would want to, up to my standards and as others would want it to be done, it would take maybe six months, and if I sold it, which I might not want to do after all that time and work, I'd have to charge too much for it, and I wouldn't want to do that, so — no — I don't think so."

This was quite logical.

A note saved from a seminar given in Bartlesville is not so logical. It is more like a walk through the mysteries of the man's mind, even though Woody said, "This is not voodoo talk, but real and straight."

"The great thought of the Indian today," he said, "is to try to give America a few of the things we can get together out of our culture, to enrich the culture of America. The Indian has much to offer in spiritual ideas. It is the Indian concept that everything is kin to God and to himself. We are co-workers with God. The Indian pays tribute to these things which God has made and which are kin to him, because God also made him, the Indian.

"A person who makes an object is a creator — whether it be art, growing flowers, making a fine piece of

machinery, fixing a car, building a hogan or a tepee — or anything. This is an expression of art.

"Everything has a spiritual quality, a reason for being and doing. The creator projects himself into the object he creates, the object, whatever it may be, then has a spirit. Anything you do, you project yourself into it. I have projected my spirit into each work. You look at it, my spirit looks back at you and speaks to you and to other people. You feel and respond."

Woody was not the outspoken political activist some of his contemporaries were. He let his art speak for him. But he knew the reasons for Indian bitterness and wove this history into his history of Indian art. He reached back into tribal memory and into his own memories and experiences of his boyhood when all things Indian were suppressed by the government.

"The government wanted to make us all farmers, tin smiths, shoe cobblers or stone masons — tradesmen. This went on for some time. Then some white people encouraged a few of us," Woody said. "Composers began writing music with Indian themes. Government officials became interested and general public interest began to build up. Programs were put together to put the Indian on a pedestal to show how smart Indians were.

"Then came the collectors, such as Thomas Gilcrease and Frank Phillips, and others, and these men began to put money into Indian arts and crafts. Then these



collectors wanted other people to see and appreciate what they had been collecting and putting their money into, so they established such museums as Gilcrease Museum and Woolaroc.

"It was not until the early 1960s that the government allowed Indian arts to be taught as such at the Institute of Indian Arts in Santa Fe. Indians were taught how to paint, dance, weave baskets, make jewelry, rugs and pottery, and how to sell their products. Each of our arts stimulated the others and people could be selective in what they purchased. And some Indian artists began to make a good living.

"In the early 1970s, Indian art really took hold! Wham! Overnight — until everyone wanted something Indian.

"But then came the Indian traders, home hobbists making Indian-type products, and the hippies, all got into the act, imitating Indian arts and crafts. Then came the assembly line producers, and the importers of poor imitations of Indian art, and then the discount stores began selling these crafts at 50 percent discount.

"It was overkill. We were over-sold. These people will never know how much damage they did to the American Indian," Woody said, adding, "This is just plain history, not an opinion."

Although Woody did not say so at the time, this obvious disenchantment coincided with his return to Oklahoma. But Woody did pick up his brushes and paints again in the quiet studio beside the lake, to create three major works. His last three paintings were done in 1985 and '86. Two are in water color and the third is in "prism" color, a pencil-like water color. Two are purely traditional. The third is something of a departure, experimenting as Woody so often did. The titles also are traditional, as Woody remained true to his style, standard and spirit. They are "The Chief Speaks," "Spirit Talk" and "Returning War Party." Woody reproduced all three in silk screen prints.

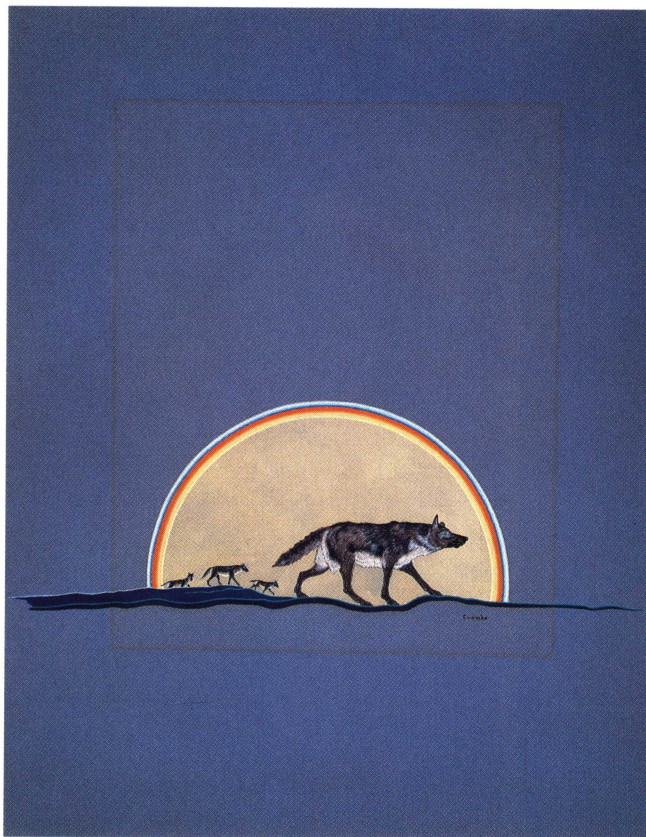
Then again, New Mexico beckoned and Woody and Lillian moved last year to Cimarron. Woody continued to cast about for ways to add to his own artistic experience and production, to assist other Indian artists and to make it all worthwhile for everyone.

Woody could count more than 1,200 one-man shows for a career total. His work is in museums, private collections and homes from coast to coast. Presidents of this country, political leaders of other nations and private citizens have purchased his art. Even Queen Elizabeth of

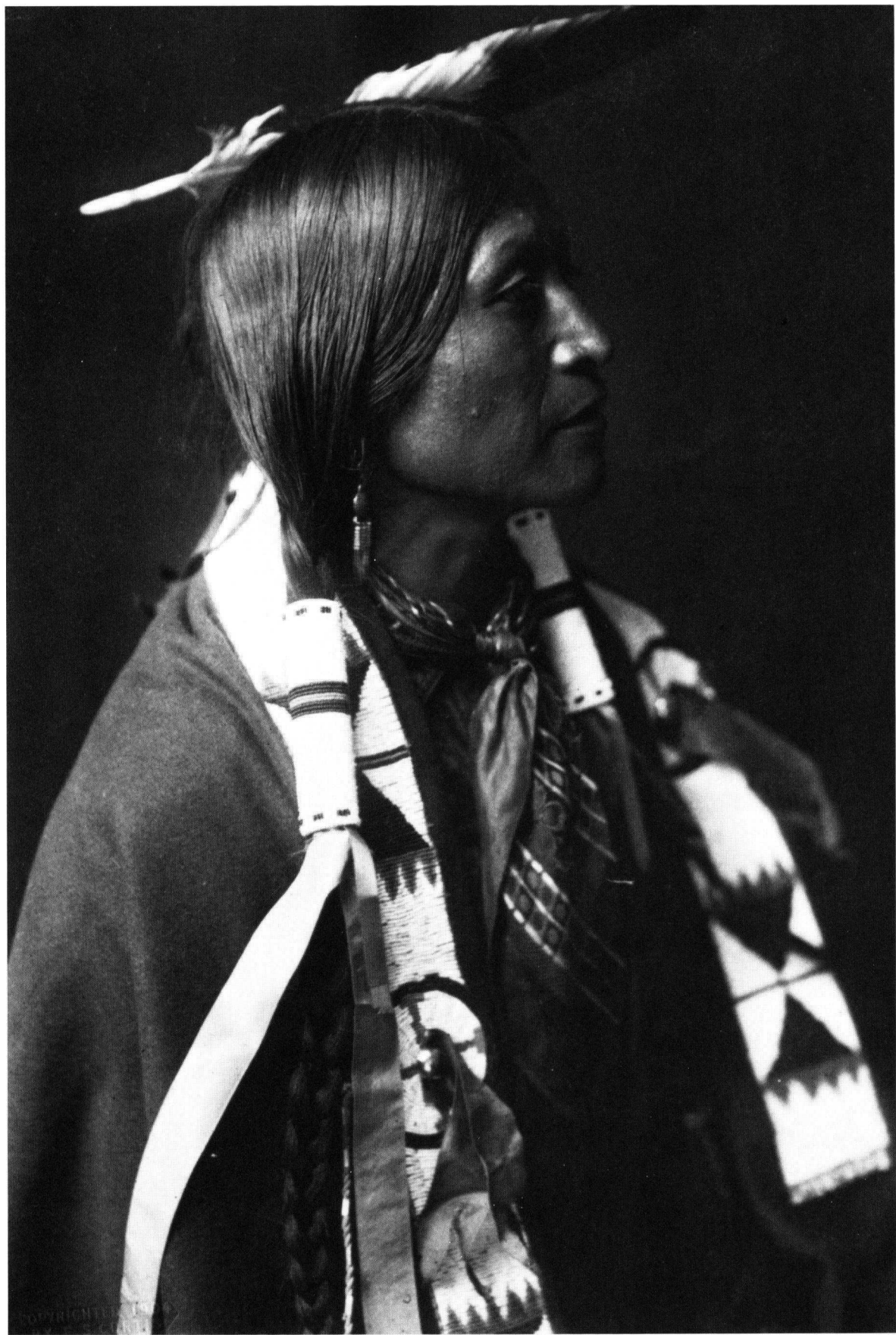
England has numbered sets of Woody's etchings and silkscreen prints in her collections.

The pride and appreciation Thomas Gilcrease held for Woody's work endured through the years with the collector filling one or two galleries with these exciting Indian paintings whenever he wished to show one of his favorite collections or to capture the public's particular attention.

Woody taught many other Indian artists to paint, or to paint better. He taught them to have confidence in themselves and their work, and to reap rewards for their efforts. He taught uncounted others how to recognize, enjoy and appreciate Indian art, and he made this affordable to the general public. He left a rich legacy of his own incomparable work. He did what he said he was going to do almost 45 years earlier — and he had a good time doing it! ☺



Woodrow Wilson Crumbo, *They Would See Him Silhouetted Against the Moon's Brightness*, 15½ by 12½ inches, tempera

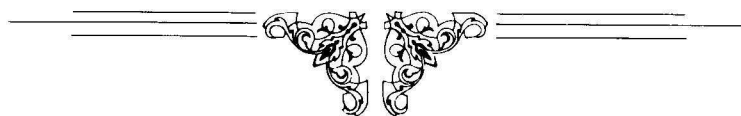


Edward S. Curtis, *Apache Brave*, photograph

On August 13, 1839, Frenchman Louis Daguerre presented the world with the photographic image and its process — his “Daguerreotype.” The medium which became the major instrument of visual communication and documentation celebrates its 150th anniversary this year. In honor of the accomplishments achieved in this visual arts field, Gilcrease Museum will feature an exhibition of early photography this fall from the Gilcrease collection, including daguerreotypes, tintypes and photographs from such notable photographers as William Henry Jackson and Edward S. Curtis.

MIRRORS OF HISTORY

BY PAULA HALL



The Indians called them the “shadow catchers.” Many early settlers feared the impact their truth brought to the public about subjects and places, never before seen. Most Americans were in awe of the “fixed image” that could capture the moment with amazing accuracy.

The discovery of photography was an exciting moment in history. For the first time, man could make a picture of the world without the use of pencil or brush to translate what his eyes could see. Instead, with a device called a camera, along with metal or paper treated with special chemicals, the photographer could make a picture — a fixed image of truth.

Although the technical procedures were developed in 1839, the use of light reflected images dates many centuries before. As early as the 16th century, scientists had constructed a primitive form of a “darkroom” which contained a small hole in one wall. When light was projected through the hole, an inverted image of the view outside appeared upon the opposite wall. This room was the first version of what came to be known over the next several centuries as the “camera obscura.”

Artists utilized the process to render lifelike scenes and objects in two dimensions. It is unlikely that the scientists who perfected the camera obscura or the artists that used it ever imagined a fixed image was possible. The application and experimentation of light-sensitive

chemicals to the camera obscura process brought the beginnings of photography closer. However, permanent pictures failed until Daguerre succeeded in discovering the ideal “developing” process of exposure to mercury vapor and a “fixing” agent of common salt.

There were few attempts to experiment with the more primitive form of photography in America until after 1839. It has been noted that early photography in America followed a pattern similar to the American experience in art. Early photographers, like early American painters, excelled in portraiture. Landscape photography developed more slowly.

Following the Civil War, American photographers focused their cameras on the scenic wonders of the western states, an ironic contrast to the war-torn eastern states. The photographers of this time felt themselves to be “the eyes” of a new country. Government- and industry-sponsored expeditions were sent to explore the new West and photographers accompanied many of these expeditions.

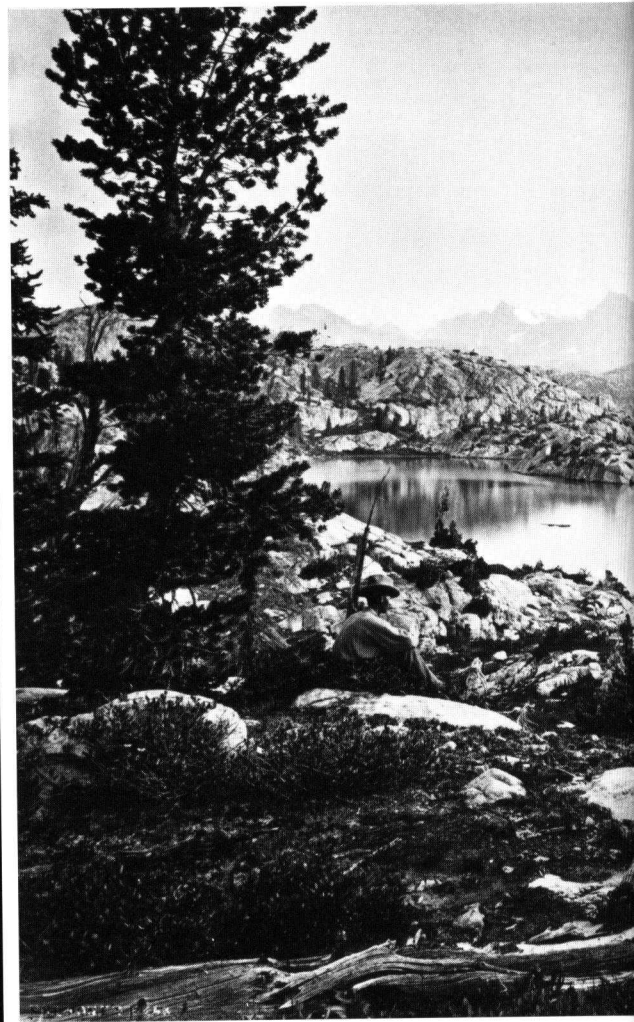
The growth of western landscape photography was in full swing by 1870. Expeditionary photographers were using a new process first developed during the Civil War — the collodion wet plate. The new process made possible the printing of many photographs from a single glass plate, unlike Daguerre’s one-of-a-kind image.

Among those photographers who left their portrait studios behind to document the activities of the West was William Henry Jackson (1843-1942). Jackson left the studio that he and his brother had opened in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1868 to wander and capture the scenes along the transcontinental railroad line. He then followed Ferdinand V. Hayden, head of the U.S. Geological Survey, on a series of topographical surveys of the Rocky Mountains from 1870 until 1879.

Some of the Jackson's most important photographs were those taken in Yellowstone. They succeeded in conveying the majestic beauty of the region so well, they were notably influential in passing legislation through Congress in 1872 establishing Yellowstone as the nation's first national park.

One of Jackson's most memorable images is that of the Mount of the Holy Cross in the Rocky Mountains. Landscape artist Thomas Moran, who accompanied Hayden's survey expedition for a year (1870-71), painted many scenes Jackson captured in photographs and was said to be a great influence on Jackson's evolving style of landscape photography, as they traveled through the Rockies together.

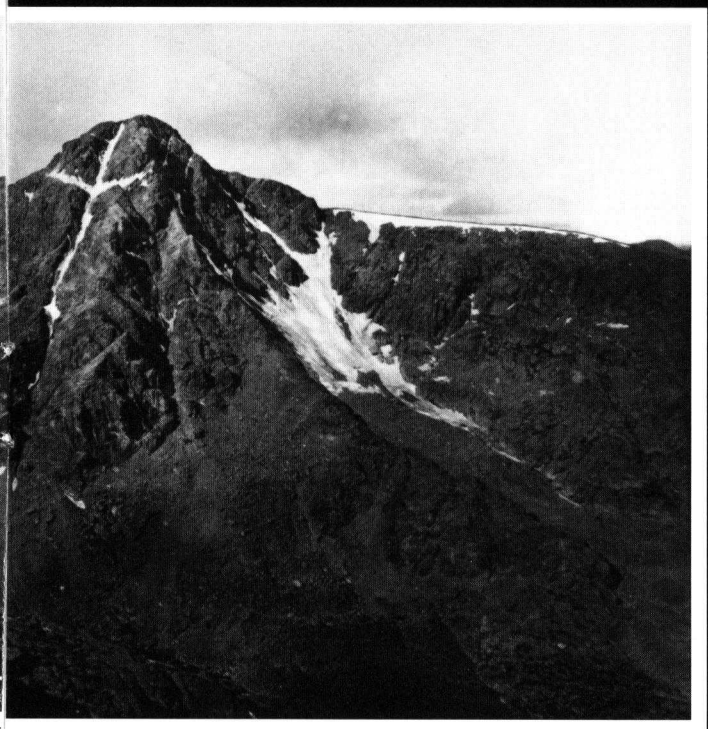
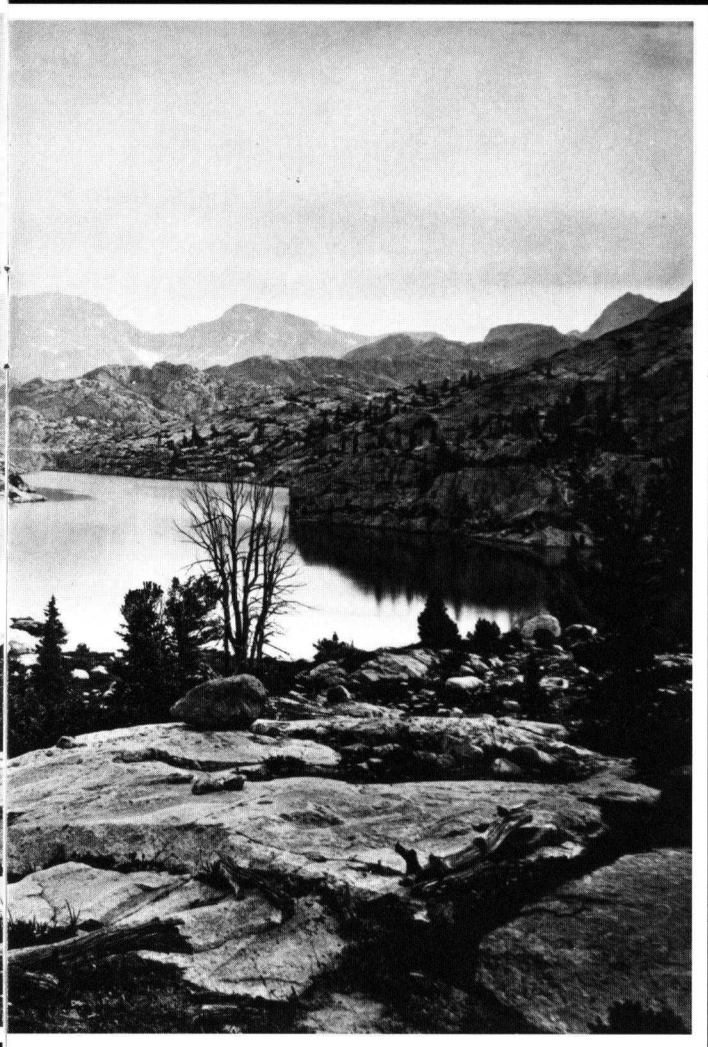
A man of enormous energy and stamina, Jackson produced tens of thousands of negatives during his lifetime. Jackson's photographs are known to be preserved in greater numbers than most of his contemporaries, since he was a commercial photographer for all but the eight years he was a part of the Hayden survey team. Jackson opened his own photographic establishment in Denver, Colorado in 1879 and continued to photograph throughout the country and around the world. He died in 1942 at the age of 99 leaving behind the most important evidence of a camera artist's career — thousands of negatives.



William H. Jackson, *Fremont's Peak*, photograph



Detail, William H. Jackson, *Mountain of the Holy Cross*, photograph



William H. Jackson, *Falls on Left Fork of Gardiner's River*, photograph



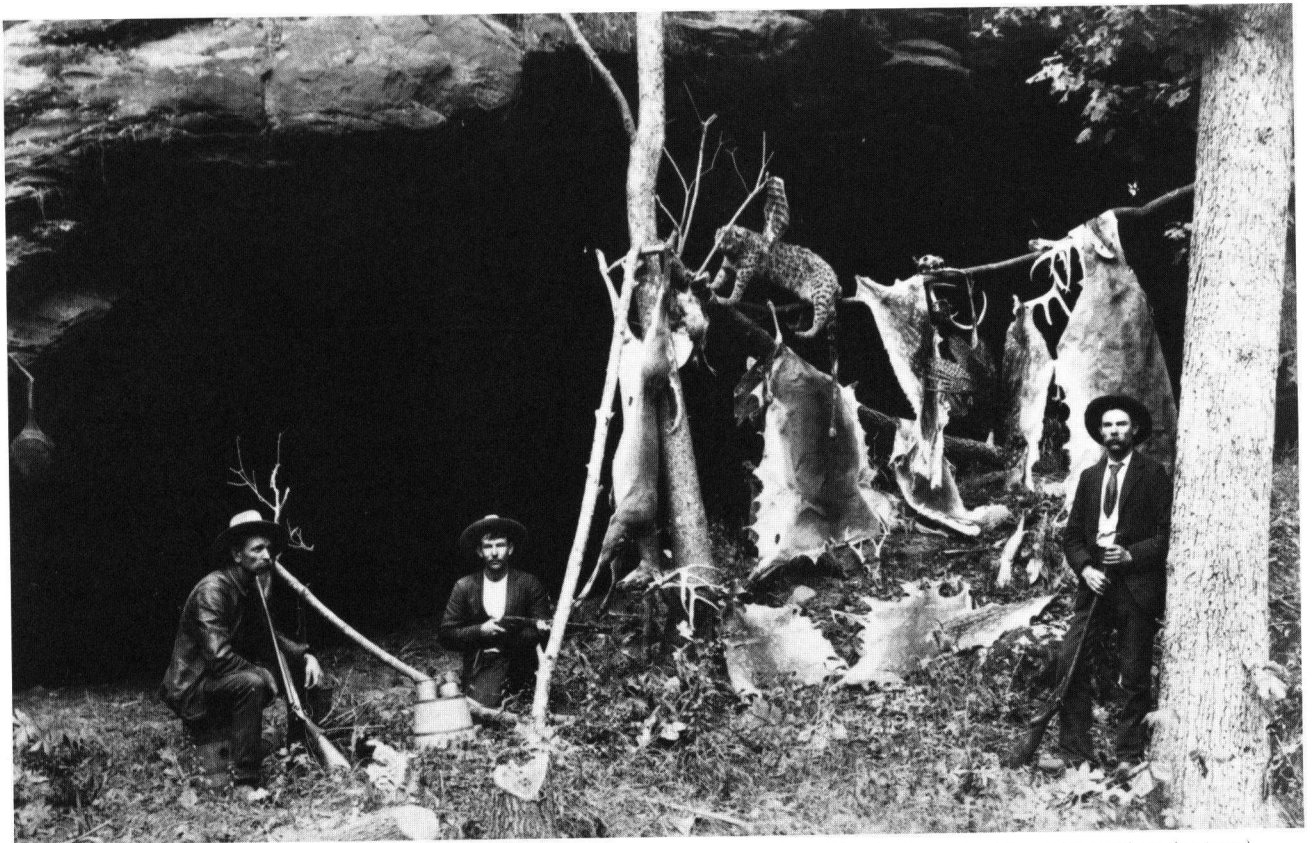
While Jackson was documenting the majestic beauty of the Rockies, there were several photographers capturing the realism of other parts of the West and events that were shaping western history. William S. Prettyman (1858-1932), a 21-year-old immigrant, moved from his home in Maryland to Kansas the same year Jackson opened his studio in Colorado.

Prettyman, training as an apprentice photographer during the Civil War, had learned the rudiments of portrait photography and opened his business in Arkansas City, Kansas. Over the years he photographed many notables of the West including outlaws, Indian leaders and pioneer settlers. He became known not only for his studio portraits, but also his ability to realistically capture the events of a changing country.

Taking prolonged tours into Indian country, south of Kansas, he photographed an era soon to disappear. As a restless population, uprooted by the Civil War, moved to the West in search of new opportunities, Prettyman was there also to document these historic events.

As the year 1889 approached, it became clear to Prettyman that the greatest land rushes in history would be taking place. Eager settlers were converging on Indian Territory awaiting the opening of unassigned land. There were five land rushes in the areas of Indian Territory from 1889 to 1895. Prettyman, sensing the epoch proportions of these events, followed the land rushes from the beginning with his camera. Through his efforts, the history as it occurred was documented, a landmark in news photography.

The 1870s produced more Indian photographs of serious historic and ethnological interest than any other 10-year period. The photographers who attempted to capture the Indian life of this time experienced often hostile relations. Indians losing their land to the encroaching white man often viewed photographers with embittered resentment. It took a special character to overcome so much suspicion and mistrust to capture this vanishing age. The practice of photography on the Indian frontier was not taken lightly or accomplished easily.



William S. Prettyman, *Robbers' Cave in Cherokee Strip*, photograph (Prettyman himself is photographed far right, against the tree.)



William S. Prettyman, *Group Portrait*, photograph



William S. Prettyman, *Cow Camp*, photograph



William S. Soule, *Bird Chief Arrapahoe*, photograph

William Stinson Soule, a young Civil War veteran determined to go West to improve his shattered health was not unfamiliar with the world of photography when he arrived in Fort Dodge, Kansas, in 1867. His elder brother had founded the Soule Photographic Company in Boston before the Civil War and William had worked in a photographic gallery in Pennsylvania.

He was employed as chief clerk in the post store at Fort Dodge and supplemented this with odd jobs as an amateur photographer. In 1870, it is believed he was employed by the United States Army to photograph the building of the newly-founded Army post, Fort Sill, Oklahoma, deep in Indian Territory. Soule was provided with the unique opportunity to take pictures of a wide variety of different tribes of the Plains Indians during this time. He photographed these fierce proud people at the height of their relentless struggles against the white settlers.

Although much of his work has vanished over the years, over 75 glass plate negatives were recently discovered with the Los Angeles County Board of Education and have been transferred to the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History. Soule's remaining work may represent the single largest body now known of the Southern Plains tribes of his time.



William S. Soule, *A-to-Quoip Yamperico Chief (Comanche)*, photograph



William S. Soule, *Kiowas*, photograph



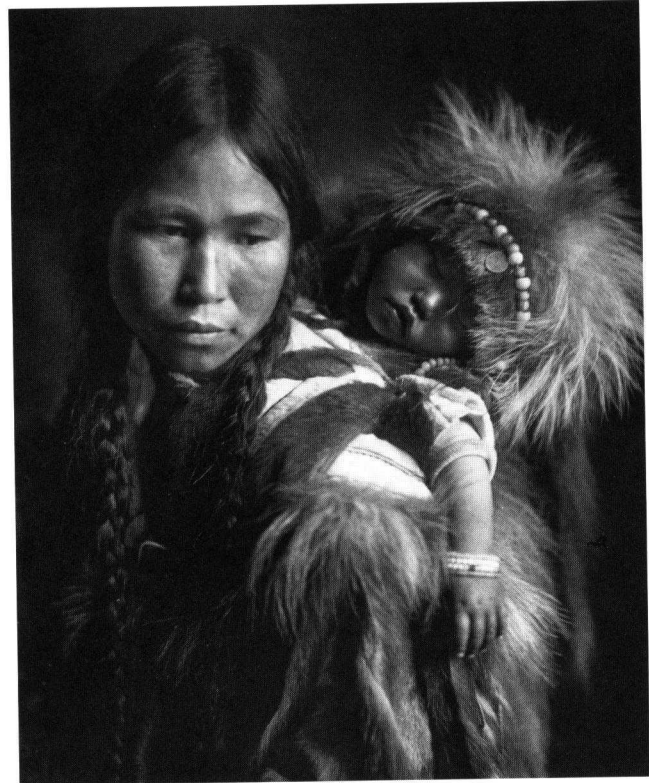
Probably one of the most dedicated Indian photographers, Edward S. Curtis (1868-1952) concentrated on preserving North American Indian life on film from the trans-Mississippi West to Alaska before it vanished. The genial historian was able to gain the confidence of the Indians, establish relations with the chiefs and priests, and make the most thorough study of tribal life customs, characteristics and ceremonials.

Curtis first photographed an American Indian in 1896 and began his self-assigned lifetime project to create a visual record of every tribe in North America. He had moved to Seattle, Washington, in 1887 and owned a part interest in a studio. Leaving all this behind, Curtis traveled broadly throughout the United States from 1906 to 1927 recording North American Indian lifestyles. The first stage of fulfilling his dream was reached when two volumes of his *North American Indians* were published in 1907.

His work required 30 years of his life, but when complete, included a twenty-volume text with over two thousand photographs. Curtis had strong feelings about the image of the Indian and wanted to set on record the lifestyle of the more than eighty tribes he visited.

Curtis' dreams of picturing and describing the Indians of the United States and Alaska were not accomplished without personal strife. Like many of the early American photographers, the price he paid was reflected in his ailing health, broken marriage and continual lack of funds.

The marvelous representations these early American photographers provided are unmatched in the archives of history. A celebration of photography and its future can only be enhanced through the reflections of the past. ▽



Edward S. Curtis, *Madonna of the North*, photograph



Edward S. Curtis, *Crazy Thunder — Ogalala*, photograph



Edward S. Curtis, *Wisham Bride*, photograph

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FRONT COVER:
Charles Banks Wilson, *Shawnee Ribbon Bets*,
1948, 20 by 28 inches, oil

BACK COVER:
Woodrow Wilson Crumbo, *Peyote Bird*,
18½ by 35½ inches, tempera

Illustrations in this issue are from the Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art unless otherwise indicated.

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