

THE GILCREASE

MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN HISTORY AND ART



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Front Cover — Beans, 20½" by 21½", gouache, by Gordon Snidow.

Back Cover — Cutting Out A Tough Customer, 28½" by 23⅝", gouache, by Gordon Snidow.

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JEAN DEVLIN

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

The more we visit the state of New Mexico, the easier it becomes for us to understand why the area has attracted countless artists down through the years.

It's beautiful, scenic country ranging from barren, yet enchanting, gleaming, stark white desert to red rock and clay mesas, to green forests and valleys with towering purple mountains pointing into the sky.

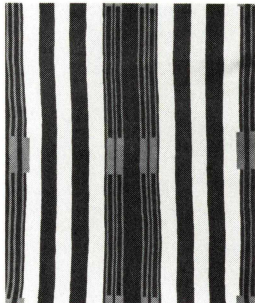
One of those mountains is the Sierra Blanca, a peak over 12,000 feet high which is located on the Mescalero Apache Indian Reservation. We had the rare opportunity recently to spend a few minutes early in the morning on the bank of a clear blue body of water called Lake Mescalero. Looming in the background behind a timberline of evergreen trees is the snow-covered Sierra Blanca. It was a beautiful moment, in a magnificent setting. Then, the perfect touch was added as suddenly a flock of Canadian geese took flight up and over the lake toward the mountain peak.

Western artist Gordon Snidow lives just a few miles from this site, at nearby Ruidoso. He moved to New Mexico in 1960 and dedicated himself to telling the story of the contemporary cowboy through his art work. Today, he is one of the most successful painters of the current Western art scene. His realistic, masterful paintings have brought him numerous awards, high regard by his peers, an evergrowing group of avid collectors, and perhaps most important to him, the respect of his cowboy friends.

Gordon Snidow is a superb craftsman who has definite ideas about the state of affairs in the field of Western art. We hope our story gives the reader a better insight into the field of Western art and one of its finest practitioners.



Snidow



Weaving



Rendezvous

Woven images of the American past are preserved in the unique tapestries produced by the Indians of the Southwest. It has been said that this art form for the Indian weavers was not separate from life, and that their work is an extension of this philosophy.

The blankets, rugs and dresses reveal the sensitivity of the Indian artist who wove them with much care and concentration, thus creating objects of superb colors and fascinating designs. The result is a unique Native American art form.

Presley Ford, Jr. is also unique. Last year he decided to fill some of his retirement hours as a Gillie (volunteer worker) at Gilcrease Museum. One of our curators asked him to begin cataloging the collection's Indian blankets and rugs, which number over 200. It took Presley over a year to finish the job, working at the project two days a week. He became quite involved in the chore, and as a result is now considered our resident expert on Indian weaving. But, best of all, he has written a story about Southwestern Indian weaving for this issue.



Rendezvous! It was a magic word for a marvelous event that took place every summer during the 1820s and 1830s in the Rocky Mountain region of our nation.

It was a wild and wooly happening that brought together members of various Indian tribes, fur traders and trappers, merchants, and anybody else who happened to be in the general area. The mountain men had been trapping beaver since the preceding fall, the winter had been long and hard, and it was time to celebrate. And, they did celebrate. The revelry went on day and night as the mountain men and Indians tried to outdo each other in wrestling, horse racing, target shooting, fur trading, card games, storytelling, drinking whiskey, and brawling.

The 1832 Rendezvous was held at Pierre's Hole, now the town of Victor, Idaho. It was a humdinger. But, so were

all the rendezvous. It was a colorful period in the history of the westward development of our nation.

Spinning the story of those historical rendezvous for us in this issue is a former high school history teacher, Ernest E. Darling, who in 1970 toured the Yellowstone country and the site of the 1832 Rendezvous held at Pierre's Hole.



Speaking of a rendezvous, the Third Annual Gilcrease Rendezvous has been scheduled for May 1, 2, and 3, 1981 at Gilcrease Museum.

It won't be as wild as the ones described by Ernest Darling in his story, but we'll bet it will be just as much fun. Activities will include everything from an Indian powwow and muzzle loading rifle matches, to foot-stomping music and a skit from the play "Oklahoma."

Featured artist this year will be Gordon Snidow who will have a special exhibit of his work on display.



Things are changing in the museum world and Gilcrease Director Fred Myers tells us about the significant change in the way museums view themselves in today's modern society.

How about Gilcrease? Well, things are stirring at Gilcrease so more people can learn and enjoy this great national treasure. The Message from the Director is good reading.

William J. Butler
Senior Editor



Gordon Snidow

Gordon Snidow Finds Success With Realistic, Masterful Paintings Of Modern Cowboy

By William J. Butler



PHOTO BY WILLIAM BUTLER

It didn't take a lot of imagination to design and build Highway 54 which stretches from El Paso, Texas, northwest across the arid desert to Alamogordo, in south central New Mexico. The two-lane blacktop highway is a surveyor's dream. It runs as straight as an Apache arrow for 85 miles. The only bend in the roadway is a very slight turn to the west of about three feet a few miles north

of the tiny hamlet of Orogrande. This marvel of man's engineering ability is the classic example of the wise words of some immortal scholar who declared: "The shortest distance between two points is a straight line." But, the scenery doesn't exactly lend itself to priming the pump of creative endeavors. It's desert, the great American Southwest desert. A lot of sand, a lot

10 A.M. And Done A Day's Work, watercolor, 23 by 28 inches.

Snidow
R



of cactus, and a lot of sky. On the horizon a range of mountains promises better things to come, and a long white, gleaming, jagged line seems to lay for miles at the bottom of one of the mountain ranges.

Western artist Gordon Snidow had picked us up at the El Paso airport and after we made stops for a pair of new cowboy boots and a “fix” of Tex-Mex food and cold Mexican beer for lunch, he pointed his station wagon across the desert toward his home in Ruidoso, New Mexico.

Despite what seemed to us to be a vast, barren expanse of wasteland, the artistic eye of Snidow became apparent.

“That long line of white over there? That’s the White Sands area. It’s white desert sand,” Snidow explained. “We’re on the White Sands missile testing grounds now, Bill. It’s real pretty when the sun hits the sands at sunset.”

An Army helicopter swished past overhead and a roadrunner ran across the highway in front of us while we continued to drive straight ahead, not even the slightest bend in the road.

There had not been a tree in sight, and as far as I could see not a chance of one being in existence for miles in any direction.

“We’re getting close to the Orogrande National Park,” Snidow said.

“What do you mean a national park?”

“A national park,” he repeated. “You know, trees and things like that.”

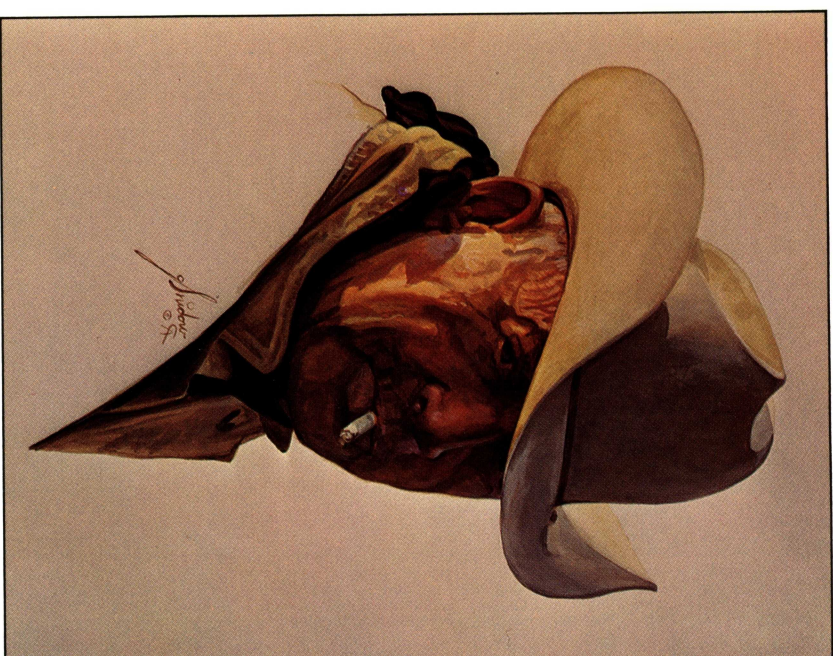
“You’ve got to be kidding.”

“Nope, keep your eye peeled, it’s coming up ahead,” he warned. “There it is, see that tree and sign?”

On the side of the highway we passed a single, small, sorry, weak-looking tree with a sign beside it which read: Orogrande National Park.

A short distance beyond the “national park,” we cruised around that one, single little bend in the highway and headed into Alamogordo, and then Tularosa. A large mountain peak loomed up directly ahead on the horizon. It was the 12,003 foot high Sierra Blanca mountain of the 460,000-acre Lincoln National Forest,

Colorado Coolade, gouache, 14½ by 25 inches.



The Cattleman, gouache, 14 by 17 inches.

in the Sacramento Mountains near Ruidoso.

We were now entering the Mescalero Apache Indian Reservation which was established in 1873. The reservation contains 179 square miles and covers both the east and western slopes of the Sacramento range.

“Now we’re in the kind of country you like, Bill,” Snidow commented.

It is beautiful, scenic country of mountains and valleys covered with pine, fir, spruce, aspen, white oak, pinon and juniper trees. Sierra Blanca is majestic with its covering of snow which beckons to both nature lovers and skiers.

As we pass through the village of Mescalero, Snidow’s artist eye is revealed once again.

“See that church building ahead,” he said. “It’s really beautiful when the morning or late evening sun hits it.”

He is referring to a large, cut-stone building with belfry that sits below the crest of a hill in a small valley on the outskirts of Mescalero.

Gordon Snidow maintains his home and studio on a plot of land nestled beneath a wooded hill in a small valley just outside Ruidoso, New Mexico. Over the past 20 years he has become recog-

“My instructor called my Dad and told him not to send me back because I was better than she was.”

nized as one of the major recorders and painters of the Western scene through his paintings of the contemporary American cowboy. He has won 19 major awards given by the Cowboy Artists of America, his art work has been featured in major shows and galleries in the United States, and Europe, he is known as a superb craftsman, and he has become financially successful with a two-year waiting list of people who want to purchase his work.

And, all of this is quite a piece down the road from his first one-man show as a second grader at Pleasant Porter elementary school in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

“I remember my first art show at Pleasant Porter, I was in the second grade and my art teacher put up a bunch of my things for a PTA meeting,” Snidow recalled. “They were some little animals and cartoon figures. That was my first recollection of having instruction in art. Then I had instruction in junior high school and in the eighth and ninth grades in Sherman, Texas. I painted a young boy selling popcorn at a football game. My teacher sent it to the Texas State Fair where it won a blue ribbon for student art work. That encouraged me and I started taking some painting lessons from a lady in Sherman.”

The family moved to Enid, Oklahoma, and Snidow became serious about art. His Dad found a teacher to give him private lessons.

“I took one lesson from her and she called my Dad and told him not to send me back because I was painting better than she was,” he said. “I didn’t know about that until my Dad told me a couple of years ago. I was looking for more advanced information and Dad enrolled me in the Famous Artist School, a correspondence course, and it was really great. Then I came back to Tulsa to Daniel Webster High School where I had a good teacher who taught me an awful lot before I graduated.”

But Snidow had decided at the age of 12, after a visit to Gilcrease Museum, that he wanted to be an artist.

“I discovered Gilcrease when I was 12. I remember it was just like one big room with an entry way,” he said. “I remember going in there and seeing the Rus-

S. Snidow
R

sells and Remington's, and Homer and Whistler. I loved the subject matter of the Russell's and Remington's, I liked all the paintings. It was the first original art work I had viewed, and I said that's what I want to do, that's what I want to be, and I decided I wanted to be a cowboy artist."

Although he had not been raised on a ranch or in a cowboy atmosphere, Snidow had enjoyed summer holidays in a rural setting at his grandparents farm in Missouri.

"I had a kind of Tom Sawyer type of summers, it was great," he remembered. "In those days most things were horse drawn in the rural community. And, we'd go into town on Saturday, go to the movies and see Zorro, Gene Autry, Roy Rogers in cowboy movies with serials and cartoons, we'd go to the ice cream parlor, and the grownups would stand on the street and visit. Then we'd go back to the farm and me and my cousins would get on the horses and we'd reenact what had happened that week at the cowboy movie. Those kinds of summers, that was my heritage."

After finishing high school in Tulsa he entered the Art Center School in California in 1956 and graduated in 1959. One of his classmates was Joe Beeler, also one of today's top Western artists.

He made a major decision upon graduation from the Art Center School and that was that he would paint the contemporary West, the modern American cowboy. He decided that he wanted to make a statement about the people in his own time. Returning to Tulsa he quickly found out that he was not in the setting of Arizona and New Mexico where he had wanted to live since he was a youngster, and that there was not much of a market for his work. He had heard about the art community of Taos, New Mexico and its galleries that sold art, so he headed West with his work.

"I walked into the Lewis art gallery in Taos, that was in 1960 and in those days everything was modern art," Snidow explained. "So I walked in, and there was a customer in the gallery at the time, and I asked



Sunup, gouache, 19 by 25 inches.

Gordon Snidow has paid his dues in the cow camps of the West, on the dusty trail, around the campfires, in the studio, and in the galleries.

Lewis if he would be interested in handling my work. Well, I walked out with \$250, the customer that was standing in there walked out with my painting, and Tommy Lewis took his commission, and I thought, Boy, that's really neat. So I got busy and painted another painting. I was still in Tulsa at that time, and I brought it out to Lewis, and damned if the same thing didn't happen again."

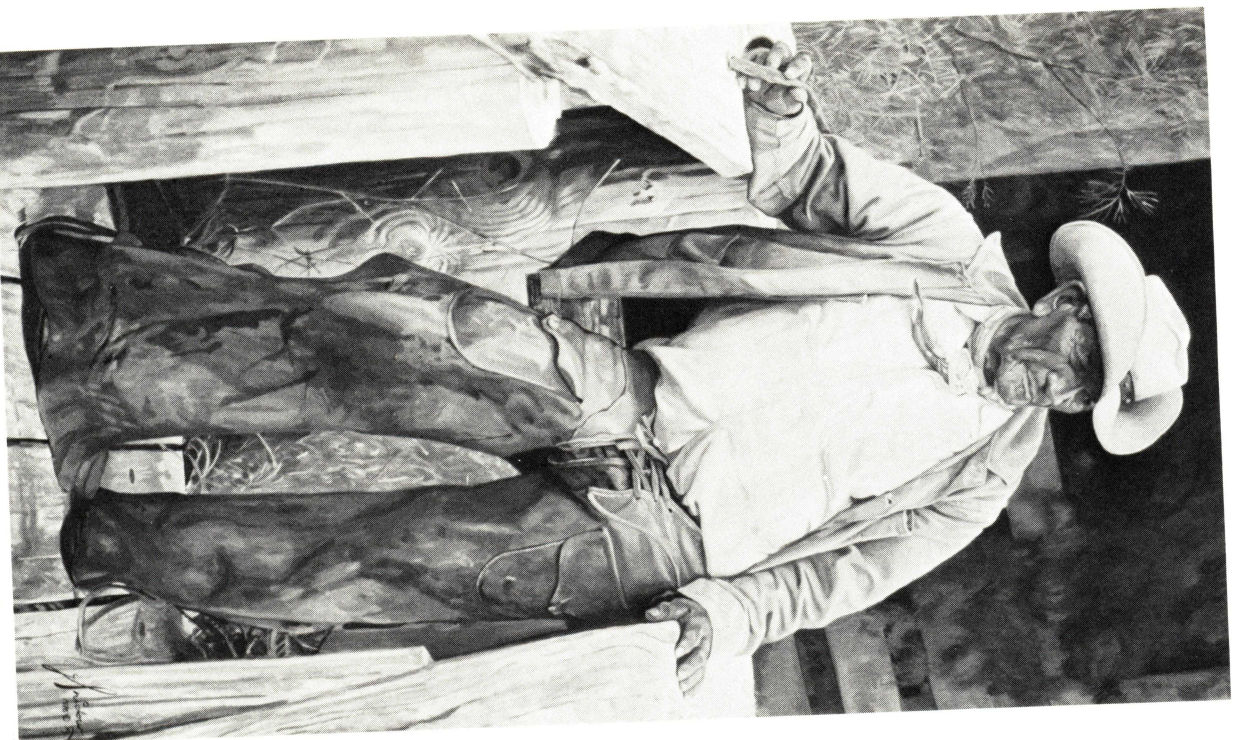
Still feeling the urge to move West, Snidow had a family started and found out he couldn't make a living as a painter. So, he obtained a job as a commercial artist at the Sandia laboratories in New Mexico in 1960 which enabled him to have a regular paycheck and be in the country where he could be close to his subject matter, the American cowboy.

He continued to paint on weekends and at night, while working during the daytime as a commercial artist. He traveled around to various ranches observing the cowboys at work and play and increased his knowledge of the contemporary cowboy's life. He stayed in touch with Joe Beeler, became acquainted with other artists and in 1965 when they founded the Cowboy Artists he was one of the first accepted into the group.

"In those days there wasn't anyplace to show Western art, and it wasn't accepted," Snidow remarked. "So we banded together and decided we would have art shows. And, we also decided we should set a standard for Western art in quality of work, authentic portrayal, and in honest business dealings. We now have about 24 members."

In 1971 the cowboy artist from Tulsa quit his commercial art job and became a full-time artist painting the life of the contemporary cowboy.

During the past 20 years Gordon Snidow has paid his dues in the cow camps of the West, on the dusty trail with the cowboys, around the campfires, in art galleries and shows, and in the long hours spent in the art studio forever working, forever perfecting his craft of painting. And, he has been waiting for Western art to become the popular art form which it has become in today's world.



A Sure Enough Good Hand, gouache, 20 1/2 by 34 inches.



Saturday Night Whiskey, A Bunch Of Sunday Morning Hurt, gouache, 15 1/4 by 20 1/4 inches.

What's the reason for the recent great surge of popularity of Western art? This is a subject which is dear to the heart of Gordon Snidow and he'll quickly tell you his thoughts on the matter.

"Well, there are a lot of reasons, and they are not always apparent and there is not one simple answer," he begins. "First, you had modern art to the point that it excluded all other art forms. After World War II an awful lot of people in this country felt that it was an art form that had to be explained to them and it was shoved down their throats without understanding. At the same time we were moving from a rural to an urban country, more and more people going to college

and they were being educated in the appreciation of art and the value of original art work. Up until Western art, most art appreciated in this country came from Europe such as French Impressionists and the Old Masters and that was what was collected and valued. Then the modern art movement came along and that was the only thing worth collecting as far as the critics were concerned, and realism went into decline. But, a new middle class educated to collect original art, and artists that produced American subjects in realism, all just came together. And, I think the Cowboy Artists popularized Western art. I believe that the best reason Western art has become popular is

"The Rosebud" East Of The Little Big Horn, gouache, 30 by 40 inches.

"I believe
the reason
why Western
art has become
popular is
that it
communicates
and it is
uniquely
American."



“We’ve got a lot to be proud of in this country and that’s what Western art is to me.”

that it communicates, you don’t have to interpret it, or have some critic interpret it for you, and it is uniquely American.”

And, one of the most unique of the Western artists on the current scene is Gordon Snidow. He is making a definite statement about the contemporary cowboy with his art. It’s hard work but it has paid off.

Today he is at the top of the Western art mountain. He produces about 20 paintings a year which sell in a range from \$5,00 to \$40,000 and has a two-year waiting list of commissions ordered by clients.

“I feel very fortunate, and my life couldn’t be better,” he said. “I can remember that I sold my first painting in Tulsa for \$125, of course, that was in 1960 dollars and pretty good money then.”

The 44-year-old, burly, balding, bearded artist leads a disciplined work life. He usually arises and starts working in his studio around five or six o’clock in the morning. But, sometimes he starts earlier.

“I’m an artist 100 per cent of the time, all of the time,” Snidow explains. “Sometimes I get up at maybe two in the morning, in the middle of the night and come to the studio and paint. It’s kind of frustrating for my wife when I do that, but it happens. However, you can’t stay in the studio all of the time. At the end of a long productive time, I get sort of burned out and I have to go back to the ranches and sort of get my batteries recharged, get new ideas, meet the people.”

After 20 years of painting the cowboys, what does he plan for the future?

“Well, I’m always thinking about the next painting. I don’t look back. What if I could only do one more



Just A Pinch Between Your Cheek And Gum, bronze, 26½ inches high.

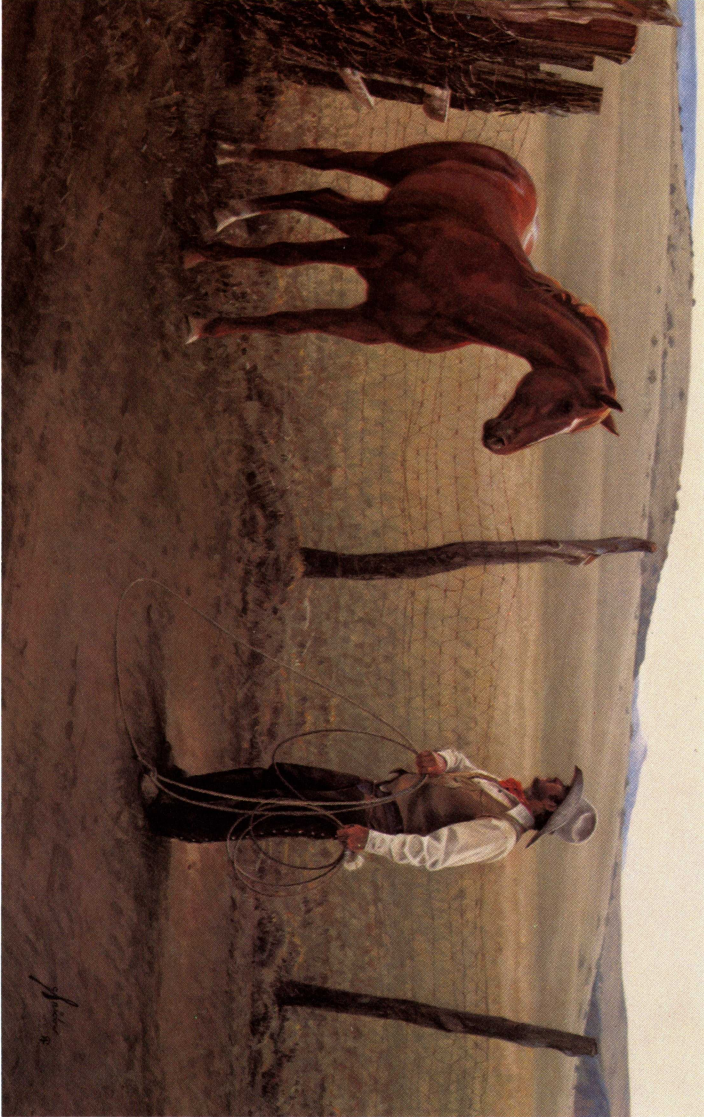
painting, what would it be?” Snidow paused and then said, “Well, it would be a cowboy. Yeah, it would be my cowboy. I would do nothing different than what I’m doing. We’ve got a lot to be proud of in this country and that’s what Western art is to me. I love the people in the West, I like the cowboys, the ranchers, the people that are just plain old people, and I like to tell their story. And, I like to do it as elegantly as I possi-

bly can and that means doing it in a fine art form.” On our way back to El Paso we passed the stone church building at Mescalero.

“Boy, you ought to see the light on the windows in that church early in the morning or at sundown,” Snidow said.

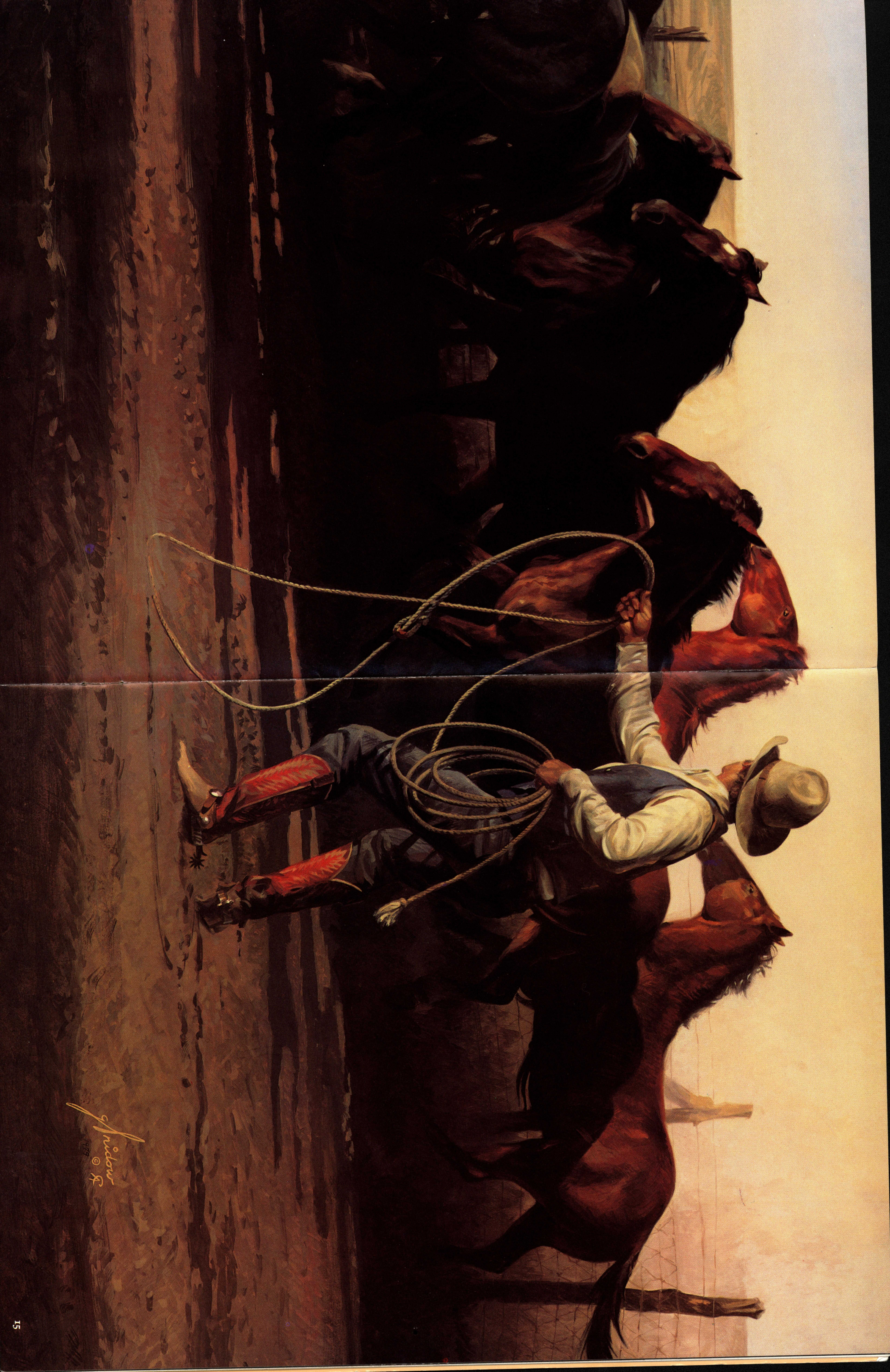
I am convinced that some day Gordon Snidow will produce a painting of the church at Mescalero with

the light hitting the windows. And, I am also convinced that somewhere in the painting will be a cowboy. Highway 54 had not changed. It was still as straight as an Apache arrow. The desert was still barren. But, the trip back to El Paso was a bit smoother than before. This time we were being driven by successful Western artist Gordon Snidow in his \$40,000 Mercedes sedan. ¹



Sweet Talkin' Man, gouache, 37½ by 23½ inches.

Shown on the following page, Eyeing The Catch Hand, 24 by 36 inches, gouache.



Shadows
© R
1979



SOUTHWESTERN

WEAVING

Southwestern Indian Weavers Turned Necessity Into Unique, Superb Native American Art Form

By Presley Ford, Jr.

Connoisseurs of weaving have long realized the value and importance of Native American Indian weaving and today, as never before, such weaving is being appreciated and sought after by collectors and museums throughout the world.

The Indians of the Southwest have been weavers for several centuries, producing magnificent woven creations with superb colors and fascinating designs resulting in unique tapestries.

Hundreds of these finely wrought tapestries in the forms of blankets, rugs, and dresses are to be found in the Gilcrease Collection. Included are treasures of weaving artistry of a wide variety which highlight the beauty of texture, design and color created in textiles by weavers in the Southwest. And, in the history of such weaving it becomes clear how the Spanish, and later American civilization impacted on the lives of the Indians who were native to the arid land where the desert floor stretches to red mesas and dark mountains shouldering into turquoise skies.

When in 1540 Coronado spearheaded the first Spanish thrust into the Southwest, members of his party reported that the Pueblo Indians in the villages along the upper Rio Grande and on the western

mesas were weaving cotton textiles. Their predecessors, the Anasazi, had in fact perfected weaving on the vertical loom as early as 1100, the time of the cliff dwellings at Mesa Verde.

When in 1598 Oñate led the colonization of New Mexico, sheep and goats were introduced to the area. The Pueblo Indians got sheep and wove wool. There also were weavers among the Spanish settlers.

The Navajos, it is believed, migrated to the region between 1100 and 1500. A Catholic priest, Father Benavides, described their life style in 1630. Because

WEAVING

he did not mention sheep or wool, it is believed that they were not yet weavers.

Pueblo men (and the women at Zuni) were skilled weavers. As early as 1630 the Spaniards imposed an annual tribute of one vara of cotton cloth on each household.

The Pueblos did not only tapestry but twill weaves. The diamond twill, brown and white checked blanket woven for Hopi babies is noteworthy.

The Pueblos specialized in back stitch embroidery. The white cotton dress woven for the Hopi bride and later converted into a ceremonial manta by the wool embroidery of sacred designs as well as the dark brown diagonal twill manta woven at Acoma with borders embroidered in red and green are typical.

Under Spanish domination Pueblo weaving declined, and in the last century the village Indians turned to trade garments. It survives mainly in the weaving of ceremonial garments, principally at Zuni and on the Hopi mesas.



By 1638 there was a treadle loom in use in Santa Fe. By 1790 there were about a hundred Spanish weavers along the upper Rio Grande. They

wove on horizontal looms with continuous warps which ordinarily appeared as fringe on the ends of the serape. Warps were doubled at the edges to give strength. The early looms were less than 30 inches wide, and the two halves of a poncho or serape were sewn together unless an over-and-under weave was used to produce double width. Wefts were usually continuous, and designs featured solid stripes and bands varied by beading, ticking, or diagonal blocking — all through the alternation of wet colors.

Rio Grande weavers never attained the superb skills of their Mexican counterparts. In 1807 the brothers Bazán, master weavers, were brought from Mexico to Santa Fe. It is believed that through their teaching design elements from the famous Saltillo serape (among them the serrate diamond, the chevron, the hourglass figure, the leaf, and the zigzag column) were introduced in simplified versions along the Rio Grande.

Weaving by Rio Grande craftsmen peaked during the period of Mexican independence (1821-1846).

Twenty thousand Rio Grande blankets were exported to Mexico in 1840.

An unusual item is the servant, or slave, blanket woven by Navajo women taken captive in counter raids on the hostiles by the Spaniards. The designs show Rio Grande influence, but the construction is clearly Navajo providing clues to its unique origin.

Rio Grande weaving declined in the late 1800s in the face of commercial competition. It survives mainly as weaving for tourists, notably at Chinayó in the mountains between Taos and Santa Fe.

Navajo weaving is first mentioned in reports to the Viceroy of Mexico in 1706 to 1743. Precisely how Navajo women began weaving is not known. However, it is reasonably certain that they learned from the Pueblo Indians, for Navajo and Pueblo looms and weaving techniques are essentially the same.

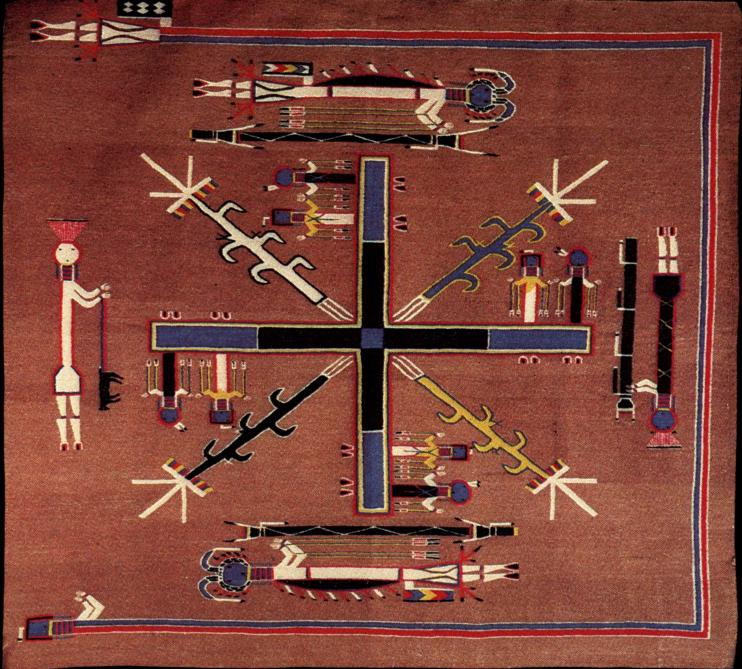


In classic times producing a blanket began with the preparation of the wool. The sheep were sheared.

The wool was cleaned and carded to align the fibers. With a spindle the yarn was hand spun; and, if colors other than natural browns, whites, and grays were desired, the yarn was dyed with indigo obtained from the Spaniards or native vegetal or mineral dyes.

A loom was built by stretching the warps between two bars and twining selvage cords across the ends to hold the warps in place. After the warps were suspended between crossbars, the wefts were threaded through them from the bottom upward. Wefts were not necessarily continuous; new wefts were inserted where the blanket changed colors or at the lazy lines marking the limits of the weaver's reach. As each weft was laid, it was pounded down with comb and batten concealing the warps. Also, it was looped through twisted selvage cords suspended along the edges. The completed blanket was removed from the loom, the selvage cords knotted at the four corners, and the work was done.

In classic times the Navajo women wove dresses, shoulder blankets, and serapes of such quality that by 1811 one writer called them "the most valuable" in New Mexico, Sonora, and Chihuahua. The dress consisted of two blankets sewn together like skins; it hung from the shoulders and was gathered at the waist with a sash. It featured a dark center panel with a red area (often edged with terraced cloud figures and featuring a horizontal row of design) at each end. A famous



Shown on this page are prime examples of Southwestern Indian weaving. At upper left is a Sandpainting Rug, while a Navajo Pictorial Rug is shown upper right. At lower left is a Third Phase Chief Blanket.



WEAVING

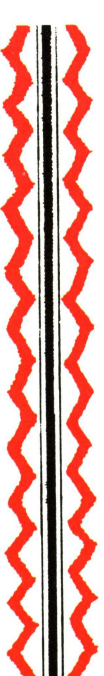
item was the chief blanket, a shoulder blanket woven for trade with the Plains tribes. Originally it featured alternate brown and white stripes. Blue and/or red lines were inserted in the top and bottom and middle stripes when indigo dye and red yarn (obtained by unraveling bayeta, Saxony, or American flannel) became available. In the next stage red rectangles were added in 12 areas; ultimately these became a full diamond, four half-diamonds, and four quarter diamonds thrown against the striped background.

Trade in such blankets was extensive. A visitor to Bent's Fort in Eastern Colorado in 1845 saw several hundred Cheyenne maidens wearing striped Navajo blankets. In these pieces and in the superb bayeta serape the design elements featured stepped (right angled) figures, often in diamonds or edge-to-edge zig-zags.

In 1864 disaster hit the Navajos. A force under Kit Carson made total war, destroyed their fields and flocks, and marched 8,000 men, women, and children 300 miles east to 40 square miles of dry farmland called Bosque Redondo (Round Grove).

After four disastrous years, the remnant was returned to its homeland and assigned to a reservation. Here with some help from the government, including 30,000 sheep and 4,000 Rio Grande blankets, they started over. Hard years followed. The classic dresses and blankets wore out; the people turned to government issue or trade goods.

With the reservation came the trading post, and Navajo women wove primarily to barter for trade goods. Three classes of blankets were established: the fancy blanket sold by the piece, the common blanket sold by the pound (including dirt), and the saddle blanket (fine pieces were often woven for home use).



Civilization was closing in on the Navajos. In 1881 the railroad reached the reservation; and in the 1870s and 1880s aniline dyes, Germantown yarns, and cotton twine reached the trading posts.

Navajo women experimented with the new materials. The result was the riot of design and color called the eye dazzler. In its finest form it was made of Germantown yarns with cotton warps and featured serrate diamonds radiating in vivid colors to the edges of the blanket. However, the term is also applied to

handspun blankets with colorful but less elaborate patterns.

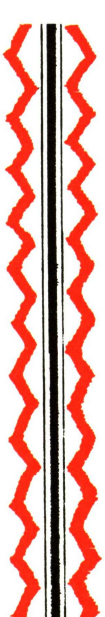
By 1890 the proprietor at the trading post became dominant. Men like Lorenzo Hubbell had great influence on the weaving. He furnished materials and suggested designs. The Moki pattern rug with its background of alternate brown and blue stripes is attributed to him.

What the trader provided was a market. J. B. Moore, for example, published the first mail order catalogues. C. N. Cotton went to Gallup and became a wholesaler. The Fred Harvey Company became an important outlet. From an output of \$25,000 in 1890 the industry grew to over one million in 1931.

What the market wanted was rugs not blankets. New design developments came on rapidly. Among them were borders, bands, pictorials, and outlining. Colors other than red became less common. Such innovations as yei rugs depicting spirits, yelichai rugs picturing masked dancers impersonating yei characters, and sand painting rugs reproducing the dry paintings from sacred chants, made their appearance.

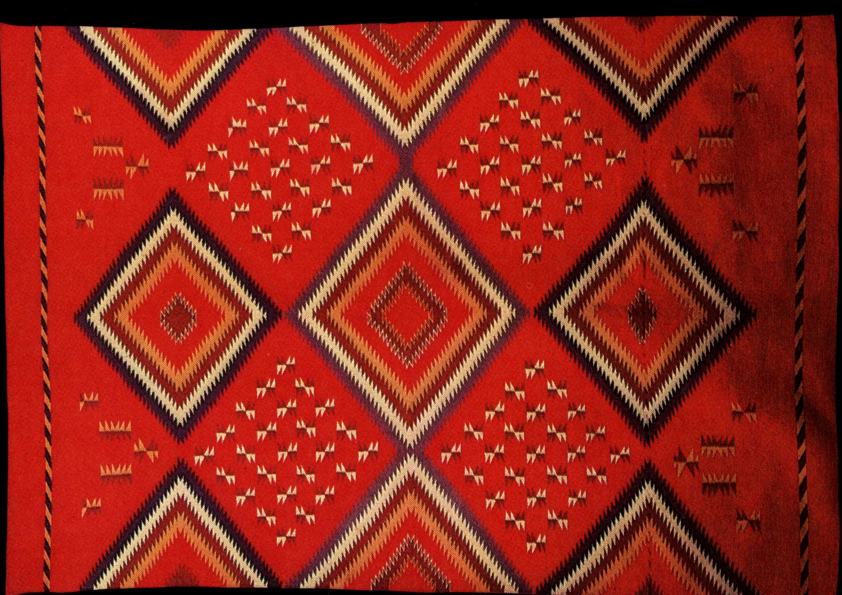
Regional styles associated with specific trading posts came to represent about one-fourth of the weavers' output. Ganado, Klagetoh, Tuba City, Teec Nos Pos, Reo Mesa, and Two Gray Hills: such posts became trade names.

In the 1920s and 1930s the Navajos were encouraged to experiment with native vegetal and mineral dyes, and the result was the modern vegetal dyed rug typical of Chinle, Crystal, Pine Springs, Wide Ruins, and Burnt Water.



In recent decades weaving has declined in relative importance as a source of Navajo income. Annual output was estimated in 1974 at only 10,000 rugs. Inflation, of course, has caused prices to skyrocket. Contemporary weaving is generally of good quality by name weavers. What began as household necessity and proceeded to industry has become an art form.

Today there is a renaissance of weaving on the Navajo reservation with modern craftsmen achieving a new pinnacle of weaving artistry. There is also a new awareness of the great beauty and significance of this ancient art among the general public. 



A great variety of patterns was used in the weaving of Southwestern Indians. Shown at upper left is the Eye Dazzler Blanket while the Slave Style Blanket is shown at upper right. At lower left is a Terraced Style Blanket.

Rendezvous At Pierre's Hole Was One Wingding Of A Fling

By Ernest F. Darling

There wasn't a recognizable bank, bar, or brothel within 1,000 miles, yet the place was crowded with eager worshippers of Mammon, Baachus, and Venus. This was not the landing of the fleet, nor the Olympic Games. This was Pierre's Hole, located in Idaho at the west foot of the Teton Mountains, and had been designated as the 1832 rendezvous of fur-traders and trappers.

Pierre was a half-breed Iroquois hunter who had been killed by Blackfeet five years previous, thus not able to attend his namesake assemblage. On the other side of the Tetons was even a lovelier park — Jackson's Hole. No wonder the magnetism of the area still draws multitudes of hunters, skiers, climbers, and sightseers.

The beaver-trapping mountain men, the representatives of the fur-trading companies, and Indians by the hundreds had been planning to make the meeting since the last one a year ago at Cache Valley, some 150 miles to the south. And now carnival time was here again.

All history does not record anything quite like these rendezvous. They were not totally unique — there existed characteristics found at many other events, and at many other times — the Medieval fairs, a Turkish bazaar, the Kentucky Derby, an alumni re-



Gilcrease's Third Annual Rendezvous Set May 1-3

The Third Annual Gilcrease Rendezvous will be held May 1, 2 and 3, 1981 at Gilcrease Museum and will feature an expanded program with a variety of activities planned for both Thomas Gilcrease Museum Association members and the general public.

Gilcrease's Rendezvous is patterned after the old Western frontier trappers' rendezvous originated by French-Canadian and other fur trappers in the Rocky Mountain region in the mid 1800s.

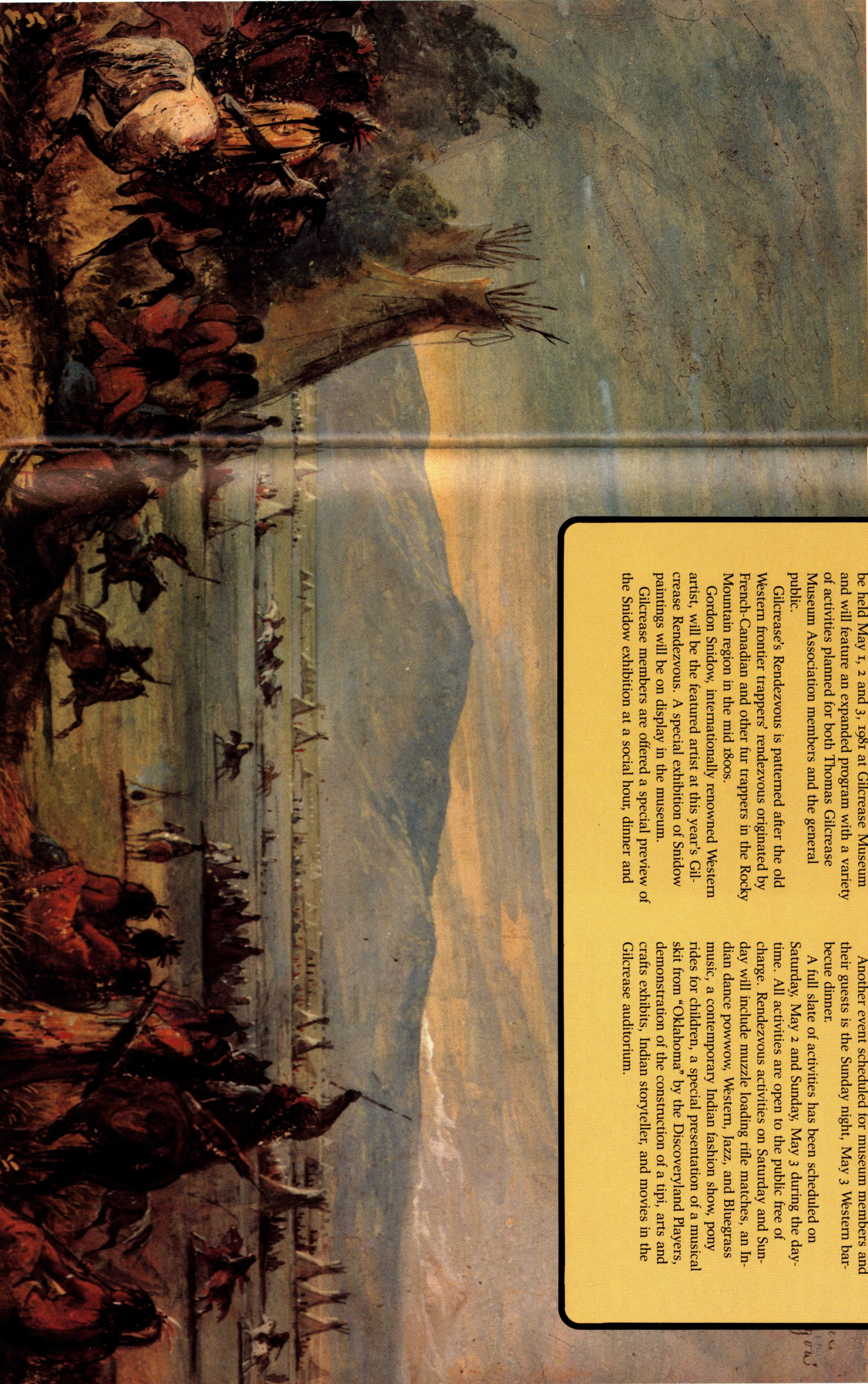
Gordon Snidow, internationally renowned Western artist, will be the featured artist at this year's Gilcrease Rendezvous. A special exhibition of Snidow paintings will be on display in the museum.

Gilcrease members are offered a special preview of the Snidow exhibition at a social hour, dinner and

auction/sale of Snidow works on Friday night, May 1. Another event scheduled for museum members and their guests is the Sunday night, May 3 Western barbecue dinner.

A full slate of activities has been scheduled on Saturday, May 2 and Sunday, May 3 during the day-time. All activities are open to the public free of charge. Rendezvous activities on Saturday and Sunday will include muzzle loading rifle matches, an Indian dance powwow, Western, jazz, and Bluegrass music, a contemporary Indian fashion show, pony rides for children, a special presentation of a musical skit from "Oklahoma" by the Discoveryland Players, demonstration of the construction of a tipi, arts and crafts exhibits, Indian storyteller, and movies in the Gilcrease auditorium.

Horse Racing Through Wind River, Oregon, oil, by Alfred J. Miller.





Trappers and Crow Indians, oil, by Alfred J. Miller.

the temperature of the water seldom rose a few degrees above freezing. Every day the trapper waded out thigh-deep to set his traps in the beaver run. He fell back on an age-old ploy in devising bait — a musky secretion obtained from both male and female beavers. Each animal that was caught had to be hauled ashore and skinned; and before the skin dried, it must be carefully scraped and washed; then dried again, folded, and baled. Arthritic, over-weight, or faint-hearted need not apply.

Some adaptive measures could be taken in dealing with the weather, sickness, and loneliness, but the unpredictable Indian kept everyone on a constant alert. If he was not taking horses or supplies, it was scalps, or all three. Not only for rightful revenge, but also a chance for personal challenge, and if successful, it made great camp fire conversation.

The recluse hunters seemed content with their lot. The annual cycle was to start trapping in late fall, when the cold restored the quality of the pelts, until the animals went into winter hibernation, and their pursuers did likewise. Perhaps a rudely built log cabin, or more often an Indian style tipi made of hides provided some protection while sleeping, eating, and

repairing equipment. In various ways many trappers acquired an Indian squaw as a helper and companion for these times. You could usually buy, barter, or steal one.

There were instances when true love came along, like the story of two young trapper friends who were captured and dragged off to the Indian village. Here their fate was debated for a number of days, the warriors giving every reason for killing them, but the chief had taken a mysterious liking to the unfortunates. With his winsome daughter, Mountain Lamb, the chief connived an arrangement for their escape.

Now during their captivity neither man had missed the sidelong glances of the doe-eyed beauty, and each had fallen for her. At the next rendezvous only one of the partners was able to attend, and while there he found, properly courted, and married Mountain Lamb. She returned to the men's camp and proved a helpful and loving wife, but after a couple of years her husband met with tragedy and lost a leg. The primitive

operation didn't heal fitly and he finally decided to return to the states for medical care. Knowing that his chances of living were slim, and that his wife couldn't adapt to 'back East' ways, he willed his lamb into the arms of his grateful friend and hobbled away.

With the first thaw in late winter, the hunter was out after pelts until May or June, then it was planning and preparing for rendezvous which took place in July or early August.

One remained alive in this environment to the degree you learned to adjust — plus a little bit of luck. So the mountain men adjusted down the ladder of civilization until his skills matched those of the wilderness. In appearance they could pass for Indians, even their speech was influenced with many one syllable words, and the gesturing sign language seemed to come natural. Their philosophy of living revealed

their uncertainty of survival, and they developed a callous respect for human and animal life. Once lured beyond the frontier, they quickly lost the thin veneer of civilization.

This side-pool of barbarism seemed predestined for short existence — gentility and conformity were waiting. The mountain conclave of 1835 had the services of a bonafide physician, and of all things — a preacher. A year later the mantle was further softened by the appearance of white women missionaries.

Then with the suddenness that fickle fashion or uncurbed economics so often bring, the fur trade and its mongrel offspring — rendezvous, passed from the scene. The business panic of 1837, and the displacement of beaver fur with silk brought the picturesque flings to an end. **T**



Pierre, Rocky Mountain Trapper, watercolor, by Alfred J. Miller.

BOOK REVIEWS

By Mildred D. Ladner

One of the saddest aspects of American publishing is the lack of concern among commercial publishers about reprinting books of significance but limited commercial value.

Thus, its with jubilation that we received the University of Oklahoma Press' second printing of Frank Bird Linderman's *Recollections of Charley Russell*, (\$9.95) originally printed in 1963.

This is not a picture book although there are some Russell sketches and illustrated letters, plus a handful of color plates. It's a first hand (and first rate) account of Linderman's friendship with the lovable — although not always reliable — cowboy artist who left his mark on the West.

Linderman, described as "at one time or another a trapper, an assayer, a businessman, a newspaper editor, a legislator, and an insurance agent as well as the author of seven books about Indians," was probably Russell's closest friend. His recollections are amplified by reports from his three daughters on Charlie and Nancy Russell's life style.



The Life and Art of Jerome Tiger – War to Peace, Death to Life by Peggy Tiger and Molly Babcock (OU Press, \$39.95) may well be the bestselling art book of the year. A limited edition of 650 copies was depleted before it was released.

Profusely illustrated in color throughout, the Tiger book is divided into two parts: a biographical account related by Jerome Tiger's widow and a cousin, and tributes by

such Indian art authorities as Tiger's mentor, Nettie Wheeler; Gilcrease Registrar Jeanne Snodgrass King, and Indian artist Woody Crumbo. Paul A. Rossi, a former Gilcrease director, wrote the foreword.

The co-authors worked to years on the tragic story of the 26-year-old Creek-Seminole artist who died of a gunshot wound only five years after his distinctive style had been discovered and nurtured by Miss Wheeler.

This art/biography is in a sense a portrait of an Indian community in mid-century. Told in a simple, narrative style, it has much to say about the direction given native talent. It is definitive both as biography and art book, for the writers exerted every effort to include all the Tiger work extant.



For the ethnology-minded, Vennese anthropologist Christian E. Feest has written an excellent book on *The World of Art – Native Arts in North America* (Oxford University Press, \$9.95 in paper.) Thoroughly documented and executed in a scholarly although far from dull manner, Feest's book contains 30 color plates and 193 in black and white.



A *Brush with the West* by Dale Burk (Mountain Press, Missoula, \$19.95) attempts to interpret contemporary art in the American West in its historic perspective. This ambitious undertaking bears an introduction by Vivian Paladin, former editor of Montana, the Magazine of Western History. It is valuable for the light it casts on some of the fine Western artists painting and sculpting today, including such Gilcrease visitors as sculptor/painter Verle Goodnight, sculptor Harry Jackson and painter W. Steve Seltzer.

One wishes the author had cov-

ered the scene in greater depth and on a broader canvas, for his "West" is fairly well confined to Montana and Wyoming, although he acknowledges Montana's debt to the Amnon Carter Museum for purchasing the Mint Collection of Russells (and some O. C. Seltzers), thereby alerting the state to its lost heritage. He also comments the value of the Cowboy Hall of Fame awards.



Sagas of Old Western Travel and Transport by H. Wilbur Hoffman (Howell-North, San Diego, \$25) fills a need by detailing the types of transportation and conditions endured in traveling West during the 19th Century, whether overland, up the rivers, around the Horn, or across the primitive and dangerous Isthmus of Panama.

This is a fascinating, anecdote-filled book, hard to put down once one becomes involved with the stranger-than-truth experiences of those determined to push westward the boundaries of a fledgling nation.



Planning a trip through the colorful West? Consider taking along Erwin and Peggy Bauer's *Photographing the West*, (Northland Press, \$14.95 in paper), a book filled with beautiful landscape and nature photography along with tips on the equipment to use and the places to go to capture the best photographs. It's a pleasure for the arm-chair traveler to peruse and a must for the camera-armed vacationer in the West.

Gilcrease Magazine, Editor Receive Five Major Awards

Several awards have been presented recently to Gilcrease Museum in recognition of the new vigor and originality of *The Gilcrease Magazine of American History and Art*.

In fact, a total of five major awards has been given to the magazine and to William J. Butler, our senior editor. The magazine itself and two feature stories written by Butler were recognized as tops in their categories and awarded the Bronze Quill Award by the International Association of Business Communicators.

Senior Editor Butler accepted on behalf of the museum a prestigious Addy Award for best magazine in this year's competition.

The Addy Awards are presented by the American Advertising Federation in recognition of excellence in advertising, public relations, and publication work. Nearly 700 entries were submitted in this year's competition, from local, area and regional advertising and public relations agencies, corporate firms, newspapers, radio and television stations, associations, and individuals. The Addy is particularly meaningful for not only recognizing unusual achievement in solving communication problems, but it carries in its wake the valued critical acclaim of peers — in this instance, three of New York's top advertising agencies served as judges.

Additionally, two Silver Link Awards were presented by the Public Relations Society of America. The Gilcrease Rendezvous was recognized as the Best Public Relations Event of the Year with a Silver Link Award of Merit, and our senior editor was awarded the top Silver Link Award for Outstanding Writing in Public Relations in recognition of his creative work in writing the story on Joe Beeler featured in the Spring '80 issue of *The Gilcrease Magazine*. This was the first time ever presentation of a Silver Link Award for best writing. Entries for the Silver Link awards came from local and area associations, corporate companies, public relations agencies, individuals and media.

— Fred A. Myers



PEOPLE AND PERSONALITIES



Director Fred Myers is surrounded with a bevy of beauties, all contestants for the Miss Rodeo America title of the International Finals Rodeo, who toured Gilcrease.



Mrs. Fred Beaver, left, and Mrs. Solomon McCombs, widows of the two renowned Indian artists, visit during the Beaver/McCombs Memorial Exhibition at Gilcrease.



Joe Chukwurah, left, editor, Anambra State Legislature, Enusa, Nigeria, and Eneke Chukwujindu, legislative assistant to the National Secretariat of the Nigerian Legislature, listen while Gilcrease Director Fred Myers explains objects in the Federal Gallery.



Robert J. Riggs, Jr., chairman of the Board of Trustees of Gilcrease, and his daughter, Debora, enjoyed the Beaver/McCombs Memorial Exhibition at the museum.



The Rev. Theodore Hesburgh, president of The University of Notre Dame, right, pauses on a recent visit to the museum with Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Biolchini.



Duane Cummins, autographs his recent book on W. R. Leigh during a lecture and autograph party at the museum.

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

By Fred A. Myers



Museums are going — some would say, in a prim voice, have gone — show biz. In the new museum world how many people go through the turnstile is the most important measure of success. Museums have worked out new ways to bring in the requisite crowds. It has been proved to everyone's satisfaction that large numbers of people can be enticed into museums to see bronzes recently dug up from ancient Chinese tombs and to ooh and ahh over the material remains of an obscure teenaged Egyptian pharaoh — not only to see but to buy expensive modern trinkets that reproduce the vials and jewelry of the pharaoh's long dead but still fashionable wife.

The ballyhooing of such exhibitions to a wide public is symptomatic of a significant change in the way museums view themselves. Museums began in Europe three centuries ago when rich and powerful men, who were also collectors, began to show their treasures to the occasional connoisseur or artist. When museums began in America about 100 years ago they usually started out as institutions established for the public. They often, however, evinced their aristocratic prototypes in Europe, a sort of public-be-damned attitude that was expressed in such basic things as inadequate labels and no place to sit down. The assumption was that the visitor needed to be at least a minor league connoisseur of very strong constitution to experience the museum.

The problem with this assumption is that very few people then or now are connoisseurs. Many, many people, however, have enough curiosity and energy to learn a great deal from museums if they are presented

well organized exhibitions with good labels in comfortable surroundings. Although not many museums have engaged in market research, many of the people who run museums these days are trying to assess what potential visitors need to make their visits educational and enjoyable and to entice folks to visit in the first place. This is where show biz comes in. A successful show always meets its audience where the audience is, and then jogs it a bit.

So how is vast, quiet Gilcrease going show biz? Well, the labels are longer (whether or not they are better is for you to decide). There are new padded benches in the galleries. Ten films on the collection were recently shown on Oklahoma education television and will be shown to a wider audience in the future. A lecture was recently presented as if Nancy Russell were telling her life story herself, the lecturer dressed as Nancy dressed. The Third Annual Gilcrease Rendezvous is scheduled for the first weekend in May. The basis of the Gilcrease Rendezvous is the reenactment of activities that took place in the historic rendezvous in Wyoming in the 1820s and 30s. Music performances, Indian dancing, black powder shooting — lots of people come to the Gilcrease Rendezvous to enjoy these activities and while they are on the premises also encounter the exhibitions in the galleries.

Any danger, a prim voice queries, that this kind of thing will lead Gilcrease away from its basic purpose? Not a chance, comes the reply, because learning and enjoying Western activities such as those in Rendezvous are what the collection is all about. The basic mission of the Museum in this time and place is to help more people learn and enjoy. ■

Second Phase Chief Blanket, a Southwestern Indian weaving pattern.



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