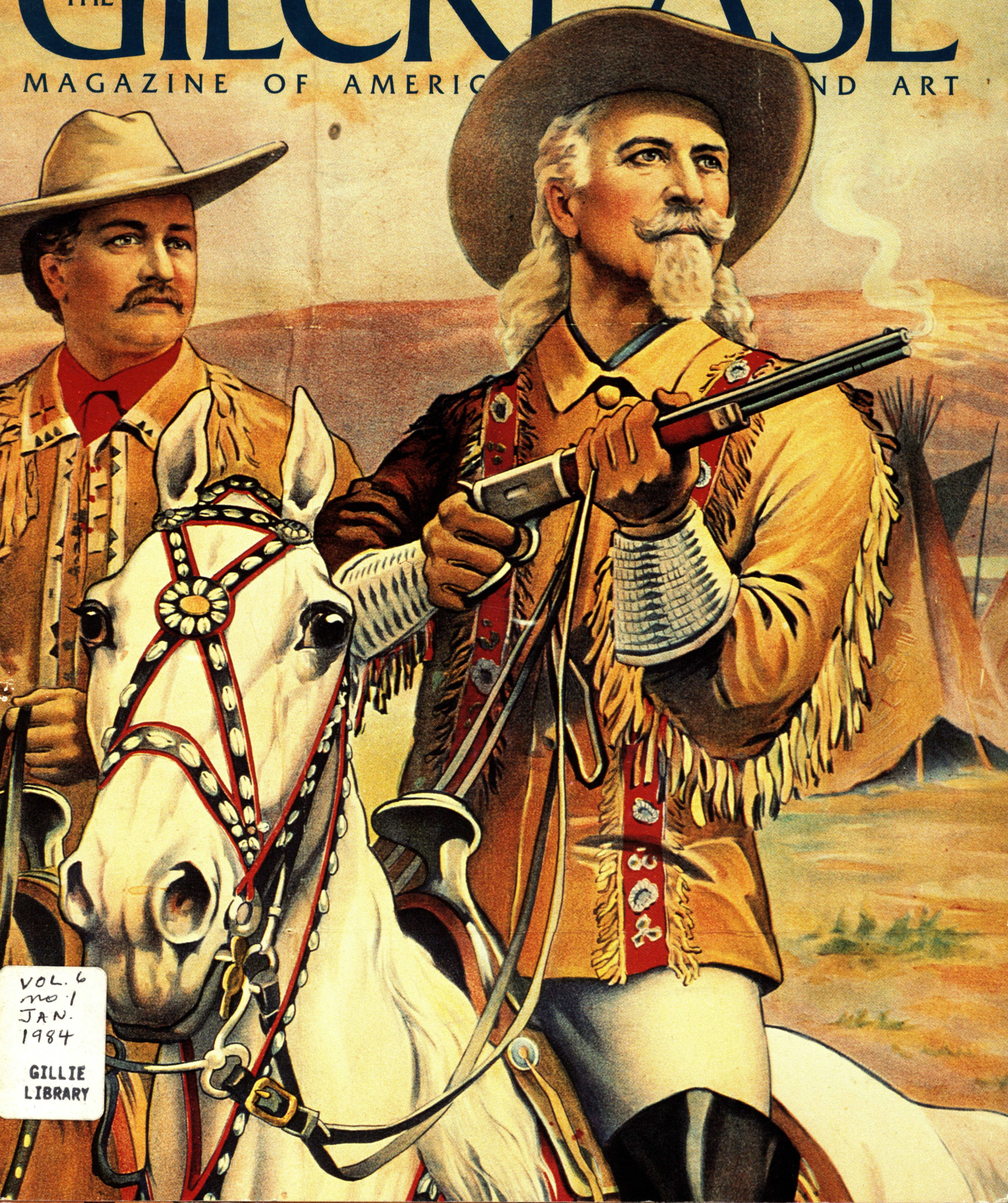


THE GILCREASE

MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN WESTERN ART



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The Flamboyant Fraternity

"Cody is not only a frontiersman, but a man of culture as well — indeed, something of a courtier. . . . But, above all, the still straight, lithe hero of a hundred border dramas is a reality, a breathing proof of the buckskin chivalry which once supplied practically all that was romantic and picturesque in American history."

NEW YORK PRESS, n.d. 1909

BY PAUL FEES

FOR OVER THIRTY YEARS other Wild West shows with other stars came and went while Buffalo Bill reigned and became synonymous with the Wild West. He was honored by kings and queens, presidents, publishers, and business tycoons. He was equally beloved by millions in Europe and America.

In the United States William F. Cody was the hero, the rugged individualist, the self-made man. In Europe, The Honourable W.F. Cody was heir to Benjamin Franklin — another of America's "nature's noblemen," reared in the wilderness yet endowed with the graces of civilization. A French historian has claimed that in 1790, a likeness of Franklin stood on nearly every mantle in France. By 1890, thousands of portraits and figurines of Cody decorated European homes.

His persona was immediately recognizable to Europeans and Americans alike — a dashing horseman with moustache and goatee, dark shoulder-length hair, seven-league boots, flowered buckskins, and soft broad-brimmed Stetson. Here was a cavalier! One British newspaper proclaimed him "the Bayard of the Plains," and his career seemed to "compare very favorably with the chivalric actions of romance."



If Buffalo Bill struck a familiar chord in the romantic imaginations of his audiences, it was not all coincidence. Cody had grown up with romance and had learned to capitalize on it. As a prairie scout in the post-Civil War days, he had been part of a flamboyant — chivalric — brotherhood that almost certainly adopted a knightly code.

Scouts were the eyes and ears of the frontier army. Their plainscraft and their knowledge of Indian culture made them indispensable. Almost all were civilians, and almost all were marginally employed, so they remained largely independent of military discipline. The good ones were highly paid. In 1868 Cody earned \$75 a month while the average enlistee was making less than \$15. They were specialists, and they asserted their status. They let their hair grow, and they adopted colorful nicknames — which they wore as titles of honor.

Many scouts were particularly noticed for their splendid or eccentric attire. The Cody who became familiar to millions had by 1871 firmly established his own style. He described dressing in his flashiest plainsman's frocks to impress the Grand Duke Alexis. But he was not alone. A correspondent for *Harper's Weekly* wrote of Wild Bill Hickok, "The man was by nature a dandy." He was

Paul Fees is curator of history at the Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody Wyoming. In this article, as in his lecture, "From Prairie to Palace" at Gilcrease Museum, Fees shares his sense of the role of the Honorable William F. Cody in bringing a knowledge of the life and history of the American West to the rest of the nation and to Europe as well.

"Hon. W. F. Cody, Chief of Scouts and Guide for U.S. Army" (ca 1875), lithograph poster

ABOVE, Detail, "Pawnee Bill and Buffalo Bill," black and white photograph





"From Prairie to Palace" (ca 1887), lithograph poster

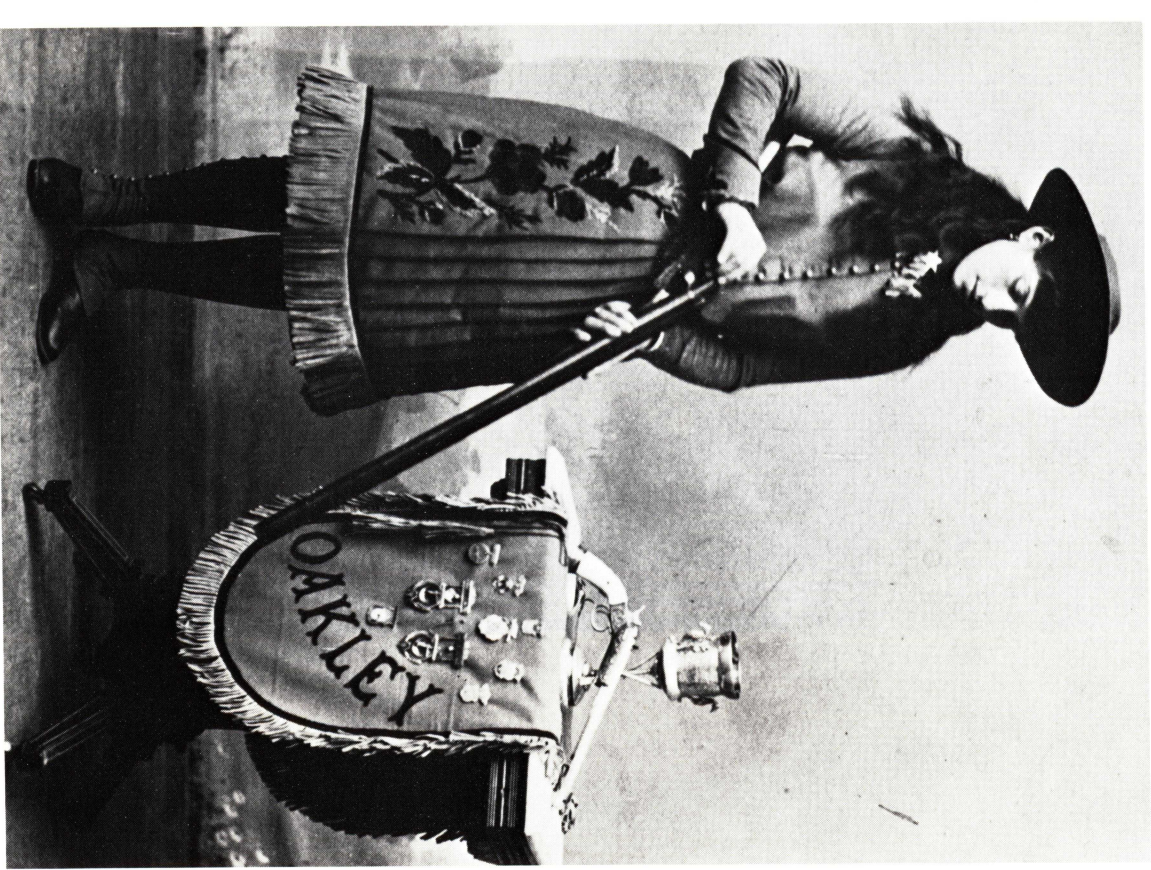
world mythology, including the cowboy and the Rough Riders.

The Rough Riders comprised the horsemen of the world. Besides allowing peoples of all nations thereby to participate vicariously in the winning of the West, the Rough Riders showed American cowboys, Indians, and cavalry to be the equals of the finest cavalries of Europe and Asia.

The cowboy, who had been a figure of scorn — a hoodlum of the plains in the popular imagination — was rehabilitated in the Wild West as a chivalric hero. Buck Taylor was the first King of the Cowboys. Though show programs explained that the cowboy herded cattle, he

was more often represented righting wrongs, rescuing maidens, and showing off his magnificent horsemanship. It is no wonder that Frederic Remington portrayed him as "The Last Cavalier," or that Charles Russell proudly called himself a cowboy artist. Russell, in fact, showing a fascination with the chivalric past, even produced sculptures of armored knights on horseback that rival his noble cowpokes.

Cody and his men were lionized not so much for their exoticism but, as suggested, because of their codification of the familiar. Rosa Bonheur in 1889 painted Buffalo Bill almost as a centaur, a man so perfectly mounted that he was one with his horse. The Royal Family of Britain



"Full length portrait of Annie Oakley" (ca 1890), black and white photograph



"Buffalo Bill Seated with Children" (ca 1910), black and white photograph



"Buffalo Bill in Stage Costume" (ca 1875), black and white photograph

gave Cody several valuable gifts emblazoned with "Honi soit qui mal y pense," the motto of the Order of the Garter.

In Europe and America, Cody embodied the chivalric values and rode a crest of romanticism to considerable fame and fortune. For all of his showmanship, he held the respect of the most influential of his contemporaries. America's harshest critic of the heroic tradition, for instance, was Mark Twain. In *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* he reduced Arthurian romance to the ridiculous. In *Huckleberry Finn* he exposed the cult of honor and its resultant feuds and duels as murderous folly. But in 1906, in a sentimental story called "A Horse's Tale," he began:

I am Buffalo Bill's horse . . . He is over six feet, is young, hasn't an ounce of waste flesh, is straight, graceful, springy in his motions, quick as a cat, and has a handsome face, and black hair dangling down

on his shoulders, and is beautiful to look at; and nobody is braver than he is, and nobody is stronger, except myself. Yes, a person that doubts that he is fine to see should see him in his beaded buckskins, on my back and his rifle peeping above his shoulder, chasing a hostile trail, with me going like the wind and his hair streaming out behind from the shelter of his broad slouch.

Twain portrayed him as loving to children, respected by officers and men alike, gallant toward women, and a gentleman in all company.

Sir Gawain, Bayard, Aramis, Ivanhoe, Buffalo Bill — the lineage was clear. Cody had been one of a number of frontier knights who lived the romance of the plains. Cody will be remembered as the scout who carried that romance to the cities of the East, to Europe, and back to the West, and helped give Americans a mythology to match their landscape. ◡

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FEATURING THE WESTERN WILDERNESS

Towering Mountain Ranges and Endless Vistas; Indigenous
Peoples of The Plains and Mountainmen living in Natural Balance
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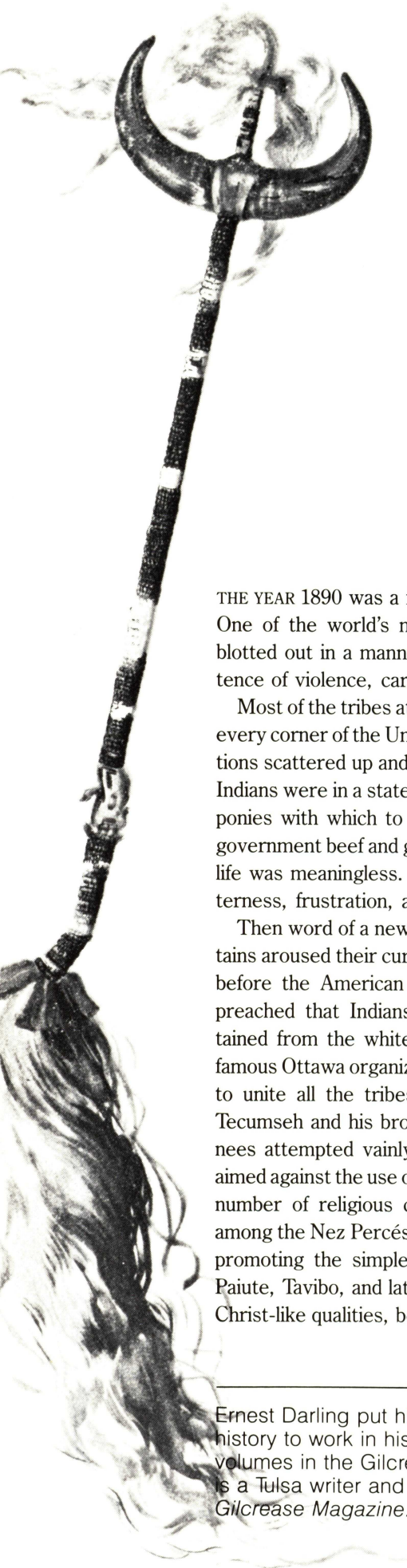
THE COWBOY ERA

Images from the Second Half of the Century
Capturing the Drama and Pathos of the Closing of the Frontier;
the Robust Spirit of Individualism, Heroism, and Adventure.

And the Last of the Great Scouts, Himself

William F. Cody, Buffalo Bill

The American Hero whose Wild West exhibition brought
the Thrill and Excitement of the Frontier to Millions Around the World
and whose **Life**, **Legend**, and **Legacy** Reflect the Complex Story
of the Great American West.



THE YEAR 1890 was a fateful one for the Plains Indians. One of the world's most colorful social cultures was blotted out in a manner consistent with its short existence of violence, carnage, pageantry, and dancing.

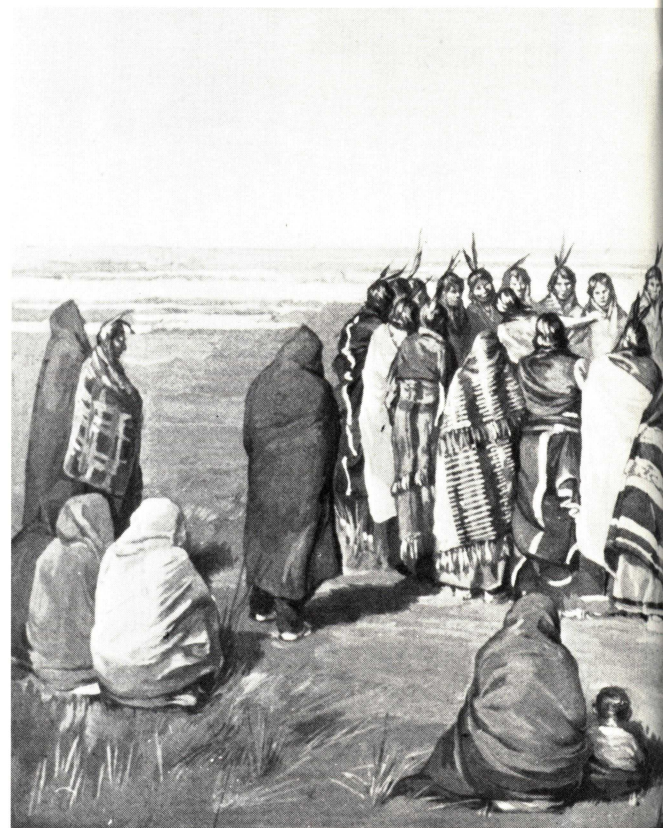
Most of the tribes at this time had been gathered from every corner of the United States and placed on reservations scattered up and down the Great Plains. Here the Indians were in a state of shock — no buffalo to hunt, no ponies with which to go warring, or raiding, and only government beef and government clothing. Reservation life was meaningless. War had failed them. Anger, bitterness, frustration, and a sense of futility pervaded.

Then word of a new religion from the western mountains aroused their curiosity. It was not really new. Long before the American Revolution a Delaware prophet preached that Indians should give up everything obtained from the white man and live the old way. The famous Ottawa organizer, Pontiac, using this thesis tried to unite all the tribes in the East. After his failure, Tecumseh and his brother, The Prophet, of the Shawnees attempted vainly to form an Indian Confederacy aimed against the use of liquor and other vices. By 1850 a number of religious cults had risen in the Far West among the Nez Percés, Paiutes, and smaller groups still promoting the simple and old way of life. In 1870 a Paiute, Tavibo, and later his son, Wovoka, who claimed Christ-like qualities, became very influential with a doc-

Ernest Darling put his professional expertise in history to work in his research for this article in the volumes in the Gilcrease Museum library. Darling is a Tulsa writer and a frequent contributor to the *Gilcrease Magazine*.

The Ghost Dance Comes to

BY ERNEST F. DARLING



ABOVE: Mary Irvin Wright, "The Ghost Dance — Larger Circle." Plate Drawings for the *Fourteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology*.

trine that taught racial equality, a return to the old life, and resurrection of the dead. Their rituals included prayers, chanting, singing, and dancing, all pleading for mercy and divine help in eradicating their enemy.

The Northern Sioux who had been most relentless in their warfare with the whites heard of the movement second-handedly, but it sounded so promising that in the spring of 1890 they sent a delegation beyond the Rocky Mountains to check on the rumors of this Indian "Christ." Upon returning the members reported to their celebrated Chief Sitting Bull, saying, "We have taken the cars of the iron horse toward the setting sun, then by horseback for five more suns." Arriving in the country of the Paiutes, now Nevada, they were directed to Walter Lake where they found an assemblage from many tribes also waiting.

When Wovoka appeared that evening before a huge fire he showed scars on his wrists and face and said they

the Plains Indians



LEFT: "Sacred Object from the Sioux Ghost Dance." Plate CX. 1893, Part 2.

were the results of bad treatment on earth during an earlier life. He told of becoming quite ill only three years before and of dying. He asserted that God then spoke to him about a judgment day with a return of the old order. The vanished buffalo would reappear along with the Indian's dead friends and relatives, and all whites would be pushed away or killed. But now the Indians were to live a loving and peaceful life, and above all, he emphasized a dance which they must practice reverently if they wished to help bring the change. No guns would be needed as praying and dancing determined the outcome. Even a date was set for this miracle, the spring of 1891.

It is known that Wovoka, when a young man, had lived with a white settler and learned something of Christianity at a mission school. He also had worked in Oregon and Washington where he witnessed the Shakers and other sects in their religious exercises of trembling and falling into trances.

There were as many versions of this prophecy as Indian tribes, and the messianic cult with all its rituals was adopted in varying degrees by most tribes on the plains. Since the government had suppressed their most popular dances as barbaric and backward, the dance of the new program quickly became the greatest attraction, and as the participants usually wore shirts or gowns of white flour-sack material, it was called the Ghost Dance by the whites. Other features, especially the belief in resurrection, no doubt helped inspire the name.

These fetish Ghost Shirts were a peculiar facet of the dance, particularly with the Sioux who claimed them bulletproof if decorated with proper emblems and in sacred paint. Medicine men started the belief probably to allay fears of so many armed guards, but it was lamentable since the faith placed in the protective shirts only made them easy targets for the troopers. Not all tribes were as indigent as the Sioux, and when the craze reached the Southern Plains, the Cheyenne and Arapaho managed to use the finest buckskin and the most beautiful motifs.

The dance was planned to bring about exhaustion, prostration, and hypnosis. Wovoka's directions called for long prayers, much chanting, and partaking of sacred food. Following this solemnity the dancers would begin circling as they wailed and cried in a fearful and heart-rending fashion. After a few hours, one by one they began staggering and falling. The victims who seemed to be in a trance were allowed to lie with no effort to revive them because they were on a visit to the Spirit World.

When the Sioux decided to accept the Ghost Dance and its accompanying philosophy, they immediately sent recruiters to the reservations in Indian Territory where they gave instructions for performing the prayers and



ABOVE: Mary Berrl Chapman, "The Ghost Dance — Praying." Plate CXV. LEFT: "Sacred Object from the Sioux Ghost Dance." Plate CX. Drawings for the *Fourteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology*, 1892-93, Part 2.

dancing. A few of the southern tribes were leery about the benefits, but others, like their northern neighbors, were in despair and humiliation and eagerly embraced the new prospect. The Cheyenne, Arapaho, Wichita, and Caddoans became so overwhelmed in their pursuit that the commander at Fort Sill issued orders to crush the activity. Luckily, the Indian's ardor collapsed in disappointment first.

The Kiowa chief, Aphehtone, had already heard of the creed and thinking it might be the chance for regaining his recently deceased daughter, decided to go west and see about it himself. When he found Wovoka, Aphehtone was baffled. The Indian Christ looked like any other man, and was living a quite unsaintly life by Walter Lake. The chief returned to the reservation where he told the Kiowas they might accept the dance

only, and as a social one, not a religious one.

On their way home the Sioux messengers stopped at the Osage Reservation and tried for more enlistments, but the elders said it sounded like another trick of the whites, or that Wovoka dreamed it, or more likely, he was drunk. A few of the least pacified Osages fancied the idea and built secret camps and lodges where they met and danced. However, they soon deserted the camps due to the sanity of the old leaders and they themselves not being in too great a despondency.

Probably the major tribe to be the least affected was the Comanche. This is not surprising as they are known in Indian history for their skepticism.

What started in a peaceful, non-violent spirit was to end in bloodshed, because the dance developed into one of revenge and victory over the enemy. At the very end of the ominous year, on December 28, when the whites had become so skittish in their fear of a combined Indian warpath that the military elected to arrest Sitting Bull, thinking it might calm both sides. But the arresting police bungled the charge and the old chief was killed. Sporadic shooting broke out. Old men, women, children, and warriors went berserk. The white soldiers were taut and in a frenzy. To name the more frightened side would be difficult, but what history calls the Battle of Wounded Knee was in fact a massacre. The few struggling survivors were driven back to the reservation where the Ghost Dance was performed no more. It had been well named by the whites. ▽

RIGHT: Man's Ghost Dance Shirt, Arapaho (ca 1890). This shirt is of buckskin dyed blue with red figures and stars, blue bird design. Feather bundle on front and back tabs with fringe extending from all edges. From the Chandler-Pohrt collection, on loan from Richard A. Pohrt to the Buffalo Bill Historical Center.



BY MILDRED D. LADNER

Buffalo Bill, Sitting Bull and Cary

In 1884 when William de la Montagne Cary was at his peak as an illustrator for the popular magazines of the era, he spent some time visiting the Buffalo Bill Wild West enactments whenever he could commute to the location of the performances, from Philadelphia to Albany. Cary had known Colonel Cody from previous sketching expeditions up the Missouri River and painted *Buffalo Bill on Charlie* during the early '80s. He enjoyed sketching amidst the large cast of the most flamboyant show extant, using its animals and props in lieu of returning to the scene of his erstwhile adventures in the disappearing wilderness.

During such a visit to the troupe on Staten Island, Cary encountered one of the men who was on the Northern Boundary Survey in 1874. This particular "river rat" was on the crew of the Mackinaw boat on which the noted ornithologist, Dr. Elliott Coues, came down the river in a fleet of such boats that autumn. Cary was a passenger on Coues's boat for a major part of the journey.

Now the former crew member represented the United States in a position that seems strange in the twentieth century. He was guarding Chief Sitting Bull, a ward (prisoner) of the government permitted to travel with the Wild West

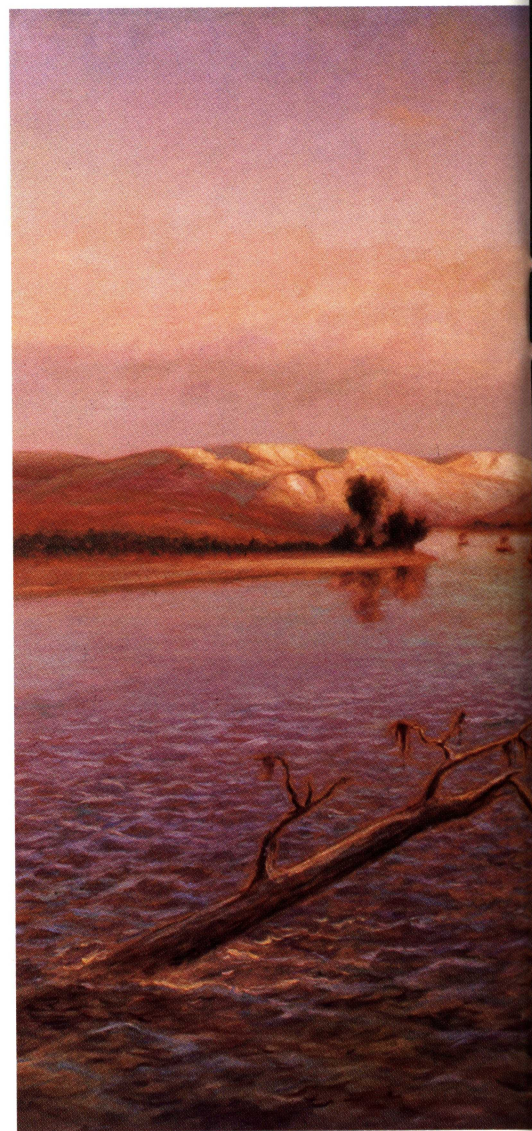
throughout the states and abroad.

"Sitting Bull was a great drawing card for the show, it being several years after the Custer fight," Cary wrote in his account of the incident. "I was introduced to him and several other chiefs by this man, Mr. Cody being present at the time. As soon as Sitting Bull saw me, he said 'How' . . . as 'How, friend,' and shook my hand warmly and made a circle with his arms three or four times. He evidently saw I didn't understand the motion. Then he said 'Jack!' Jack Culbertson."

The reference was to a youthful companion of Cary's first trip up the Missouri River in 1861, when the artist was traveling in the company of two other New York youths on an expedition to see for themselves the wonders of the West, to hunt wild animals and — in Cary's case — record the ways of the Indians and frontiersmen in his sketchbook.

In a lengthy account, Cary related what had happened to him and Jack Culbertson, son of the influential chief factor for the American Fur Company and his wife, the greatly admired full-blood Blackfoot princess Natawista Iksana (Medicine Snake-Woman).

While laid up for repairs (to the steamboat) for a couple of days, Jack Culbertson and I went ashore to



hunt . . . on the hostile side of the Missouri. We wandered up over the bluffs as we found no game in the bottoms of the river. We came to a little inlet from the Missouri and met two young Indian bucks.

Jack spoke to them in the Sioux language and told them who he was. He knew of them. His mother was the daughter of a Sioux chief. They asked us to go with them to camp.

I felt a little unsafe and told Jack. He said they belong to the same tribe that my mother came from, and it's all right. Seeing he felt assured of our safety, I at last yielded to his persua-



William de la Montagne Cary, "Return of the Northwest Boundary Survey," 44 inches by 84 inches, oil on canvas

sion. We were at least two miles or more from the boat, and we knew it would take at least two or more days to make the repairs to the boiler. The boat was on a sandbar, the Captain feeling it was much safer than laying up on shore, on account of the Indians.

We accompanied the young fellows to the village, over the (hills) in a secluded spot, which consisted of about twenty-five villages.

I had been accustomed to taking my exercises on the boat every morning, on the upper deck on one of the braces, an iron bar or stanchion crossing the upper deck of the Spread Eagle eight

feet above the deck. Being something of an athlete, I used to do the turns and the Grants swing . . . turning somersaults and handsprings.

We were taken to the chief lodge. They recognized Jack, who talked to them, and they gave us a hearty welcome. We sat outside the lodge and the old chief brought his large wooden bowl and placed it before us, and we were asked to partake of the contents. It was a sort of stew with some pounded berries mixed with it. We always had a good appetite so we asked no questions and set to work with the horn spoon.

Mildred D. Ladner — her name and her work — have long been important to Gilcrease Museum and to the *Gilcrease Magazine*. In this article Ladner shares an anecdote about the subject of the current major exhibition at Gilcrease — Buffalo Bill — and a painter she has studied intensively, William de la Montagne Cary. The results of this research will appear in her book, *William de la Montagne Cary: Adventurous Painter on the Missouri*, to be published in the spring by the University of Oklahoma Press.

Jack was talking to the several chiefs and answering questions in his mother's tongue. . . . I could see by some of his motions that he was speaking about my performance on the brace or iron bar on the steamboat, and my drawings and paintings.

All of a sudden Jack turned to me and said, 'The chiefs want to see you turn some handsprings and somersaults.' I was taken aback . . . and tried to excuse myself by saying I was too tired after my long walk and I felt it a rather undignified thing to do under the circumstances. But Jack used all his persuasion and said, 'It will please them, I know, and it will do you no harm.' So at last I yielded.

By this time there was a crowd of about two or three hundred Indians collected around the lodge. Evidently some of the young bucks had heard the conversation and had given the news out to the village — squaws, bucks on horseback and children and dogs. At last I stepped out into a clear space in front of the lodge and turned three or four handsprings, which evidently met with their approval, they making demonstrations of surprise and applause. I then turned several somersaults or air springs without touching the ground with my hands, which brought more surprise and applause.

Jack was telling them evidently of the performances on the parallel bar, and at last he said, 'I have told them of the other things you do and they have sent for a good strong pole which they will fix between two small trees . . . and I want you to show your other

stunts.' I felt I had done enough, but at last I yielded knowing it would please them, and as it was very warm and I was in a glow from my former exertions, I went into the lodge and stripped to my underwear.

I walked up to the trees and saw that the pole had only been laid across two limbs. I told Jack it was not secured. Jack told them to bring a couple of lariats to secure the pole firmly in place. I supervised the tying of the pole and when I felt it would

stand my weight I jumped up and grasped it with my hands, it being about eight feet from the ground, and commenced my performance. This seemed to be more of a surprise to the Indians than what I had done before. They made many demonstrations of pleasure and applause. When I had finished and gone through all the tricks I was capable of, we found it was getting late and we must get back to the boat . . . as Mr (Andrew) Dawson (who was one of the factors of





the American Fur Co.) . . . and our friends would be worried about our absence. They wanted us to stay overnight, but they saw the sense of Jack's argument. They did not wish it to be known their camp was there, they were going to move the next morning. We then left the camp.

On the way back, Jack told me they were Sioux and hostile. He said they were on their way to meet a big camp. You can imagine my surprise when he told me it was well that I was with (him) . . . I can't tell what might have happened had I been alone.

In 1884, at the Wild West, it became obvious to Cary that Sitting Bull remembered him from that command performance, or perhaps from some practice sessions when the boat tied up at one of the Yankton Sioux villages.

"At that time," Cary records, "Bull could not have been more than 24 years old. I was a smooth-faced boy of about 20. And at this time, I had a full beard."

Sitting Bull and White Eagle, "another Sioux chief and Medicine Man," presented Cary with their photographs "taken in Canada when they crossed there alone, after that terrible Easter massacre." They took the precaution of tearing a little piece off the corner of each picture and I was told by John Nelson, an old squaw man who had an Ogellala (sic) squaw who piloted Brigham Young and the Rocky Mountain saints to Salt Lake in 1840 . . . (that) the scraps they tore out (were placed) in the corner of their handkerchiefs which they wore around their necks. This was done to save their souls from going with their picture." ◡

"Sitting Bull," black and white photograph

Gilcrease Book Reviews

BY MILDRED D. LADNER

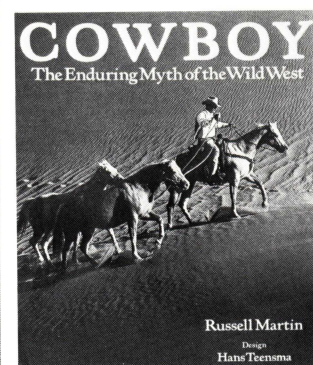
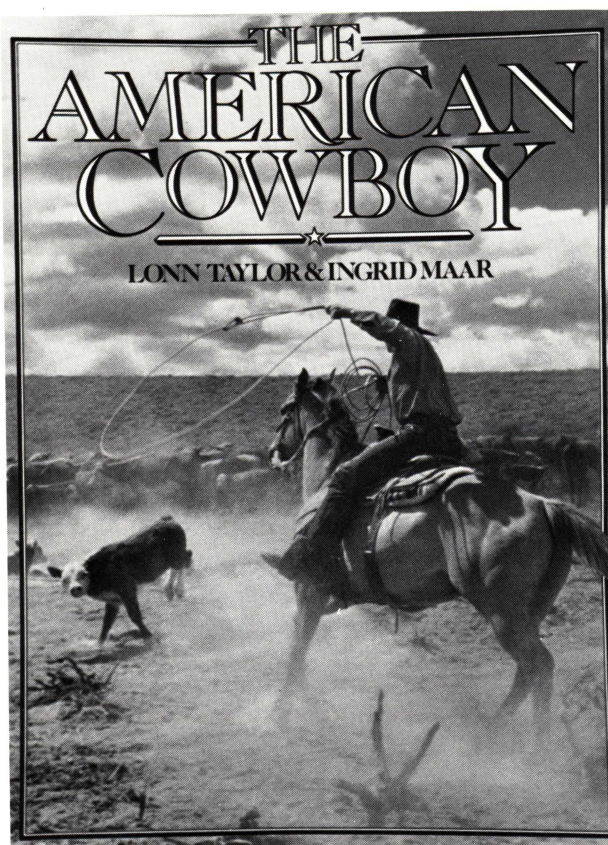
IT'S HIGH NOON on Madison Avenue and two respectable publishers stand ready to draw the Christmas trade, armed with oversized, glossy books celebrating the cowboy as an American hero.

First off the press was *The American Cowboy* by Lonn Taylor and Ingrid Maar, (Bessie/Harper & Row), containing essays by B. Byron Price, Dave Hickey and Royal B. Hassrick. From Stewart, Tabori & Chang, a relatively new art book publisher, comes *Cowboy, The Enduring Myth of the Wild West*, written by Russell Martin and designed by Hans Teensma. Each is priced at \$50.

The first-named was designed as a catalog for the Library of Congress exhibition honoring the cowboy. Half of its three hundred illustrations are in full color, with entire pictorial sections separating the essays. From the library's treasures and from lending institutions such as the University of Oklahoma Library's western collection, the Cowboy Hall of Fame and the Will Rogers Memorial, Ms. Maar selected paintings, sculptures, books, manuscripts, songs and advertising symbols that contributed to the building of a folk hero. (She is the Library's curator for exhibitions; Taylor is historian and deputy director for the Museum of New Mexico in Santa Fe.)

This is a beautiful and informative book, but somehow its text lacks the spontaneity and cohesiveness of Martin's. Both lean heavily on materials from the Buffalo Bill Historical Center, focusing on the role of Colonel Cody in attracting young men to the western frontier.

Either of these books would make a welcome gift for those whose roots are on the ranges of the western United States, or who yearn to know more about the area and the cowboys who make up its sturdy citizenry. There are four hundred illustrations in the Martin book, including two from the Gilcrease collection — E.C.



Ward's *Enter the Law* and O.C. Seltzer's ornamental piece, *Cow Skull and Meadowlark*.

The Rise and Fall of the Sundance Kid by Edward M. Kirby (Western Publications, Iola, Wisconsin, \$4.95) considers the other half of the partnership that put Kirby's first book into the popular movie, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*.

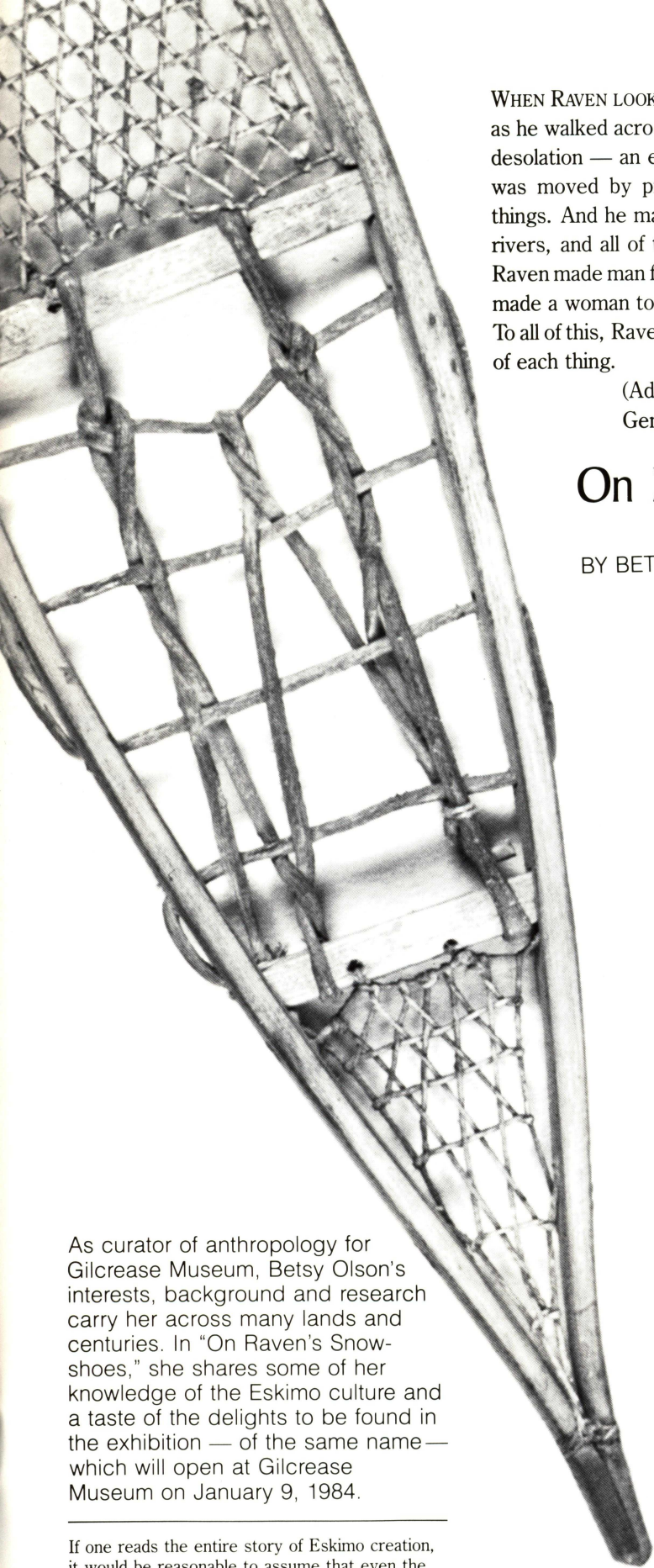
Harry Longabaugh, descendant of a pre-Revolutionary Pennsylvania family, came west at age fourteen to become a cowboy but led the life of an outlaw instead. According to Kirby's research, the famous Sundance Kid assumed the name of Hiram BeBee and died in 1955 in the Utah state prison.

"A Family Odyssey Among the Indians" is the descriptive subtitle for Adolf

and Beverly Hungry Wolf's *Shadow of the Buffalo*, (Morrow, \$12.95), the story of a German-born immigrant to California who was drawn to the Blackfoot tribe and married a Blood Indian. With their children, they live in a mountainous area of British Columbia, going back to the old ways.

Adolf and Atsitsina, a tribe elder, demonstrated the making of pipes and rattles at the Smithsonian's Folklife Festival.

May Ann Hafen's 100-page-account of her early years, *Recollections of a Handcart Pioneer of 1860 — A Woman's Life on the Mormon Frontier*, (University of Nebraska, \$4.50) is a simply written account of crossing the plains with the last handcart band and the subsequent hardships of pioneering in raw communities to establish the promised land. ◊



WHEN RAVEN LOOKED DOWN on the earth, as he walked across the sky, he saw only desolation — an earth so barren that he was moved by pity to create all living things. And he made the mountains, the rivers, and all of the great frozen lands. Raven made man from a pea pod and soon made a woman to ease man's loneliness. To all of this, Raven gave *inua*, the spirits of each thing.

(Adaptation of the Eskimo Genesis Story).

The northernmost part of our continent is divided into two major divisions: the Arctic area which extends from the northern Pacific Ocean eastward to include Greenland, and the Subarctic which lies to the south or inland from the Arctic area. Environment, culture, and ethnography separate the two. The Arctic area, home of the Eskimo and Eskimo-Aleut, is a land of mostly frozen barren tundras. A tree line begins the coniferous forests of the Subarctic which is the land

On Raven's Snowshoes

BY BETSY OLSON

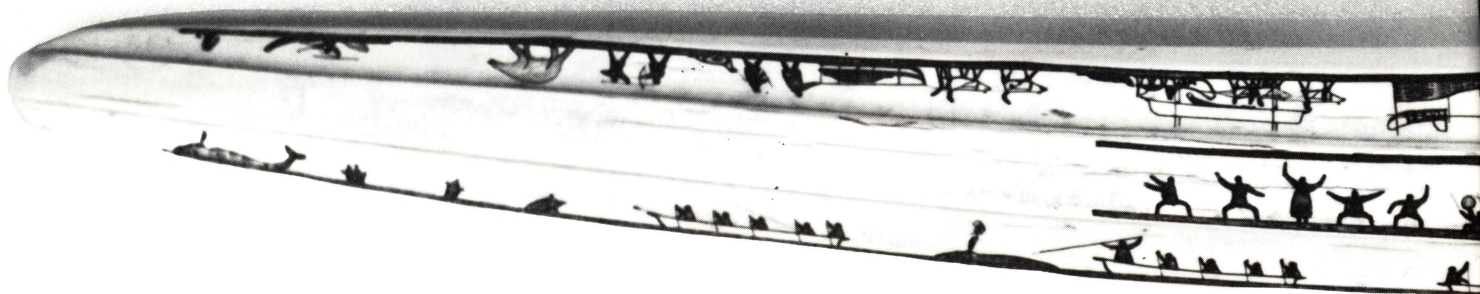
As curator of anthropology for Gilcrease Museum, Betsy Olson's interests, background and research carry her across many lands and centuries. In "On Raven's Snowshoes," she shares some of her knowledge of the Eskimo culture and a taste of the delights to be found in the exhibition — of the same name — which will open at Gilcrease Museum on January 9, 1984.

If one reads the entire story of Eskimo creation, it would be reasonable to assume that even the sky was frozen when Raven walked across it and saw the wasteland called earth. Surely Raven needed the support of snowshoes in his travels.





A composite photograph of Eskimo clothing shows a waterproof, hooded jacket fashioned from seal gut. A wooden hunting hat — indispensable to arctic hunters — has engraved ivory decorations and hunting charms. Dance mittens such as these would be worn at one of the major feasts, and are decorated with puffin beaks. Fishskin boots are waterproof and probably are worn with woven grass socks.



of the Indians.

Oft-repeated migration studies confirm that the Eskimos were comparatively late migrants to the New World from Asia. No archaeological confirmation for an earlier date than about 2,000 B.C. can be found. In physical structure and in blood grouping, racially the Eskimo-Aleut are the most Mongoloid of the earliest Americans and are close to the Asiatic Chukchi.

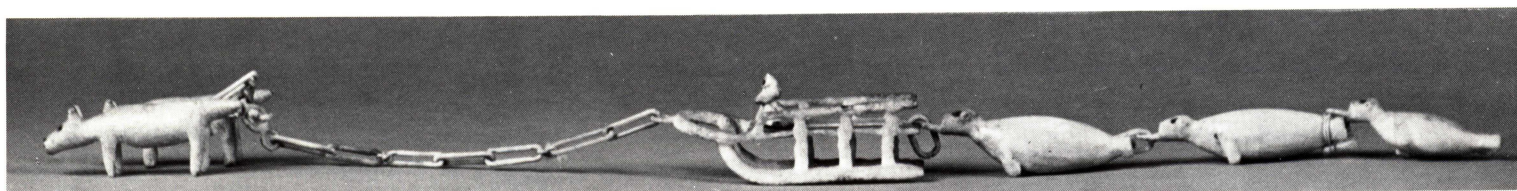
Technologies and skills of the Western Eskimos were adopted primarily to the coastal tundras. Sea mammals were the most valuable animals to this hunting and fishing society. Caribou hunting, fishing, bird hunting and a relatively small amount of plant gathering furnish additional subsistence.

Several features distinguish the Alaskan Eskimo from those of Canada and Greenland. Widespread trading and exchange networks existed among coastal

and inland peoples and Siberia. Periodic gatherings were routinely held to trade or as recreational festivities.

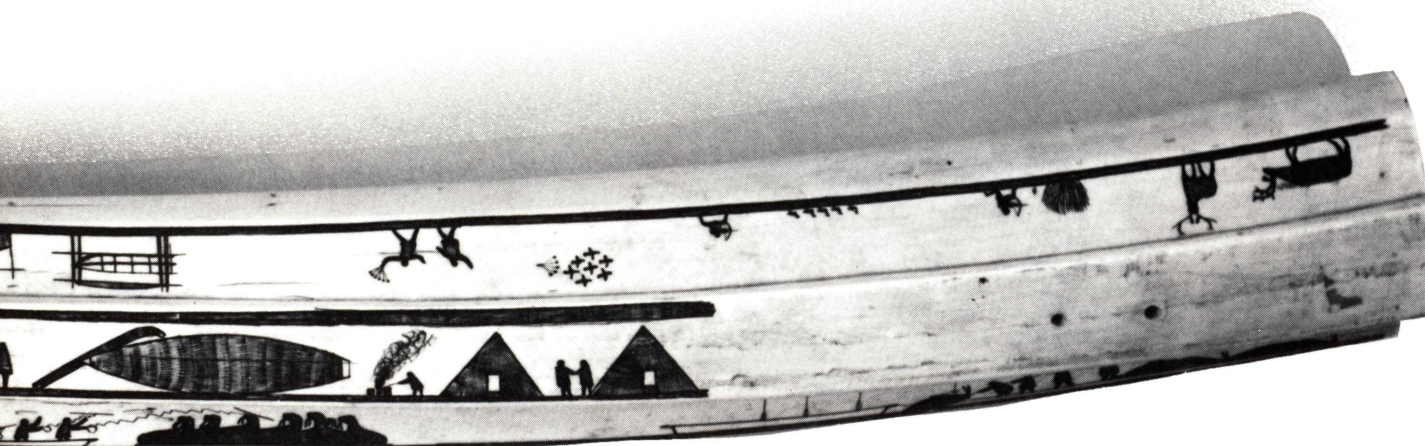
A specific house or building, the qasigiq, (also spelled kaskgee or karigi) was the ceremonial, work, recreation, and living structure primarily for men, found only in Alaska. Specific feasts or festivals, such as the Bladder Festival or the great Feast of the Dead, are parts of the elaborate public ceremonial cycle of the Alaskan Eskimos. There was a lasting and united extended patrilineal family unit. And finally, Alaskan culture had a greater complexity, proliferation, and elegance of art styles.

Quite unlike a lot of primitive societies, Eskimo people do not have a political or societal locus of authority. Informal sanctions operate instead. For instance, a singing contest serves as an alternative to murder and the inception of a blood feud.



When ivory was not suitable for engraving or when an artist was simply inspired to carve, enchanting objects were made such as this carving of dogs pulling a umiak with seals being dragged behind. Knowledge of chains predated European contact and ivory carved chains were used on a wide assortment of artifacts.

An unusually large engraved walrus tusk has three baselines or sections of engravings. These pictographs (communication through pictures) can be "read" and depict men and women dancing along with other household and hunting activities.



Strong beliefs in shamanism, the supernatural, and in spirits are also adaptive measures.

Of these measures, mankind's first specialist — the shaman — is perhaps the strongest. The shaman functions as an intermediary between members of his society and the supernatural world either by talking to the spirits and hearing their replies or through possession. Among hunting and gathering societies, a widespread, and probably ancient, technique is the sucking cure. It is believed that shamans have the ability to extract diseases from ill persons. Among the Eskimo, either men or women can become shamans. In east Greenland, candidates desiring to become shamans begin training for this role when they are seven or eight years old. Novitiate lasts from five to ten years.

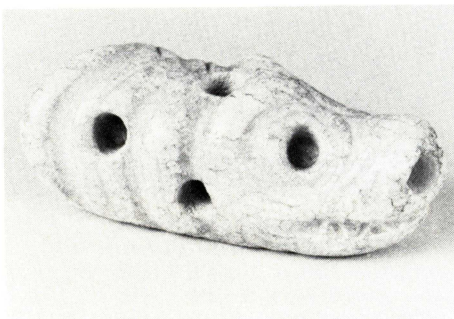
An awareness of the complexities of determinants in Eskimo history, like geography or weather, can only be suggested in a brief article such as this. Great ice storms, long winter nights, or unending sunless days were times for Eskimo workers to make hunting and fishing equipment, and to replenish tool boxes.

Many theories have been proposed in an effort to explain the uncertainties of

the origins of Eskimo pictographic art. An archaeological site at Cape Prince of Wales yielded a number of engraved ivory artifacts in which etched geometric designs evolved into realistic representations of men, their activities, and animals. As early as 1778, artifacts with pictographic art were collected by members of Capt. James Cook's Expedition.

An ivory carving industry developed when Eskimo engravers realized that Europeans were eager to possess such carvings. Scenes which in the past were found on bow drills or bag handles were now transferred to pipes. The shapes of pipes proved to be an excellent place to engrave hunting scenes and animals.

Utilitarian objects are transformed into astonishingly beautiful art forms with engravings on ivory, like a hunting tally, a fishing lure, or smoking pipe. Without any self-consciousness, a worker would carve incredible likenesses of seals or whales to lash to a kayak thereby appeasing the *inua* of those animals. Mythology and belief are given visual form by the shaping of ivory, wood, and stone. These forms in Eskimo art are continuations of a remote past which reveal the splendor and determination of a unique race of people. ▽



Mythical creatures, each with its own *inua* (spirit) are referred to almost constantly by the Eskimo. This sculpture is possibly a *palraiuyuk* or mythical creature that is a malevolent monster.



The subject of many tales told by Eskimos, a creature named *Ti-Sikh-puk*, the worm man, is a particularly strong character in Eskimo mythology. Part worm, part man, this creature of transformation serves as an amulet, as the subject of sculptures or engravings, or could function as pendants or belt buckles.

As long as 1,500 years ago, hunting magic and art have decorated equipment of the Eskimo people. An assemblage of ivory carvings shows some of the traditional art forms and some of the more contemporary styles of this art. Ivory birds have existed for thousands of years and serve as powerful hunting amulets or else as gaming pieces. There is one bird with a human head, making it a mythical being. Seals and walruses, whales and bears, and beautifully designed fish are included in this photo.



A New Look at Alvan Fisher

BY FRED BARRY ADELSON

WHEN ALVAN FISHER (1792-1863) began to paint full-time in 1814, he embarked on a career which was to last nearly fifty years, during which he executed hundreds of paintings. From the outset, he energetically dealt with landscape and genre, scenes from everyday life. Both subjects were initially thought to be unworthy of serious artistic consideration.

By the 1830s, Fisher's art was no longer avant-garde. His pictures represented what the public had come to expect; they had become part of the mainstream. The painter enjoyed considerable popularity, and his work was well received critically. However, like many of his contemporaries, Fisher was becoming a forgotten personality within a year after his death. The full extent of his contribution to the development of nineteenth-century American art is only now being recognized.

Although Fisher was extremely versatile, landscapes were his real enthusiasm. He was a leading early participant in the Hudson River school, the first group of American artists who earnestly painted native scenery. Despite the name, not all the Hudson River school painters were New Yorkers or residents of the state. Moreover, their landscape subjects reveal a motivation for travel beyond the Hudson River valley in search of a variety of sites. The most characteristic Hudson River school compositions perfectly combine the real and the ideal and are based on landscapes by Claude Lorrain, the seventeenth-century French painter. In addition to Fisher, such artists as Thomas Doughty, Thomas Cole, and Asher Brown Durand comprise the first

generation of this unofficial yet coherent group; all are included on the basis of style and attitude toward nature.

Fisher's early interest in nature paralleled America's emergent discovery of its scenic beauty. As a result of the many Claudian-inspired landscapes completed by the late twenties, he became a model for the generation of American artists born after 1800. His position is even more significant because relatively few painters were then dealing with landscape subjects as a regular undertaking rather than a whimsical *divertissement*. Fisher's exhibition record and account book entries reveal a continuous commitment to landscape.

As late as 1835 Thomas Cole could write: "The painter of American scenery has, indeed, privileges superior to any other. All nature here is new to art." Once the public accepted such images, they were eagerly purchased when offered for sale.

Throughout his prolific career, Fisher expanded the subject matter of American art. As a romantic who worked in the Boston area, he was fascinated by the exoticism of the frontier. Along with the numerous canvases of Eastern scenery based on direct observation, Western themes began to appear with great frequency in his work during the 1840s. These paintings oftentimes display a masterful blend of landscape and genre.

From the second quarter of the nineteenth century, the American frontier became both a reality of the country's expansion and a mythic symbol of a promised land in the wilderness. A key issue in the progress of American civilization was

how to deal with the country's Indian population. During the 1830s the federal government pursued a program of "removal" that pushed the native inhabitants further west to lands deemed more suitable for their use. The Indian was no longer the eighteenth-century innocent but the nineteenth-century obstacle to progress. Apart from assimilation, there was no place for him in American society.

As a result of the country's expansion, the West offered new subjects for both writers and painters. Fisher's involvement with frontier images demonstrates a link to attitudes that Americans developed during this period of "manifest destiny." With the exception of a curiously late trip to Milwaukee in 1861, there is no indication that Fisher ever traveled far from the East Coast. His pictures of trappers, Indians, and frontier life were undoubtedly inspired by reading.

The artist first dealt with a western theme as early as 1828 in "The Prairie on Fire" (presently unlocated), only known through the gift book engraving published in *The Token* for 1829. The image accurately illustrates a passage from James Fenimore Cooper's *The Prairie* and effectively recreates the sense of terror described by the author. Cooper was quoted as having said that the Fisher image "twas the best — the only good illustration he had seen from his books." Titles cited in the artist's notebooks, volumes found in his extant library, and subjects in later paintings accompanied by appropriately selected passages quoted in exhibition catalogs reveal the continued use of romantic literature.

In addition to stories based on contem-

Fred Barry Adelson, the author of "A New Look at Alvan Fisher," did extensive research on this nineteenth-century American painter for a thesis. Adelson is now professor of art history at Glassboro State College, Glassboro, New Jersey.



Alvan Fisher, "Pursuit," 36 inches by 42 inches, oil on canvas

porary accounts of the westward movement, Fisher also dealt with the early frontier of Ohio, West Virginia, and Kentucky. These pictures indicate his fondness for history. In 1843 and 1857, he auctioned two paintings both titled "The Escape of Major McCulloch." It was not uncommon for Fisher to copy his own work, suggesting the appeal of particular images. A description of the subject in an extant catalog of the 1857 sale reads:

"According to the history of the times, McCulloch was hunting in West Virginia, in the vicinity of what is now Wheeling, when he found himself surrounded by the Indians; on examining his position, he saw that the ridge on which he stood terminated in a rocky bluff, and by leaping his horse from it, he might save his own life, at the expense of that of his noble horse; at worst, instant death was better than the sure one of torture from the Indians. He headed his steed to the precipice, held his rifle in front of his body, and at full speed, took the leap, landed safely at the foot of the bluff, and as he fled down the slope, turned and tauntingly waved his adieus to his pursuers who stood looking their astonishment at his daring feat, forgetting at the moment to fire at his retreating figure."

The canvas, called by such diverse titles as "The Pursuit," "Mountain Man Pursued by Indians," "Daniel Boone Escaping from Indians," and "Indians Shooting Daniel Boone," in the Gilcrease Museum collection can now be identified as "The Escape of Major McCulloch." Fisher represents the dramatic moment when McCulloch, pursued by Indians, leapt from the rocky cliff to safety.

Though the Gilcrease painting is undated, the lighting and the detailed vegetation clearly indicate that the composition was completed by the early 1840s. The diagonal design also supports this date.

Two earlier images, "The Rescue" and "Mr. Dustan Saving His Children from the Indians" (present whereabouts unknown), both deal with a similar theme of an Indian attack. "The Rescue" was published in *The Token* for 1833. A poem by an unidentified writer accompanied the engraving:

*The father has clasped his child,
And sprung with her on his steed,
And away through the depths of the
forest wild,
From their savage foes they
speed . . .
But look! Upon their rear,
Gliding with rapid pace,
The Indian hunters fast appear,
And press upon the chance.
A pistol-shot in the air!
And the courser springs like a
startled hare,
Away at the sudden sound.*

The subject of the print seems related to "Mr. Dustan Saving His Children from the Indians," a painting sent to the Boston Athenaeum in 1833. The exhibition catalog quoted from Timothy Dwight's *Travels in New England and New York*:

"Upon the first alarm, Mr. Dustan flew to his house, ordered his children to flee in a direction opposite the approaching danger; then endeavored to save his wife, who was ill; but unable to accomplish this, he mounted his horse, intending to save one of his children. He overtook them a

few hundred yards from the house; the trial came — he could not take one and leave the rest to perish; he determined to save all or die with them. He turned and faced the pursuing savages, (this is the moment illustrated by the painting) forming a rear guard for his little flock. Thus, alternately firing upon the enemy and retracting for a mile, he saved all his children."

The passage describes the specific incident represented in the unlocated picture.

Both "The Rescue" and "The Escape of Major McCulloch" have wild-eyed white horses that gallop with their legs widely spread off the ground. The glances of the riders are directed toward the attack on the right and create a diagonal that connects the foreground and the middle distance. The painting, however, demonstrates a far greater emphasis on the landscape. Though its setting remains unidentified, it is surely not West Virginia but undoubtedly a composite of carefully observed bits of nature which may be based on the artist's recent travels to the White Mountain region of New Hampshire. The foreground vegetation is detailed and well lit. Unlike the crisp linearity of the engraving, "The Escape of Major McCulloch" represents a believable atmospheric background.

The canvas by Fisher in the Gilcrease collection is an excellent example of his mature style. Though the artist studied nature directly, the landscape setting with its conventional device of the framing tree at the left, scooped-out center, and distant mountains is derived from Claude. The idealized composition is typically ar-

ranged to distinguish foreground, middle ground, and background by different tonal gradations whose source of light is hidden. Fisher uses a rather conservative palette based on local color. The foreground is composed of green and brown with touches of yellow, orange, and red for bright accent. As the landscape, seen under a pale blue clouded sky, extends into the distance, the entire color scheme lightens to present a convincing perspective of deep space.

Fisher was practically peerless as a businessman-artist. Throughout most of his career, he received the support of private collectors. His most lucrative way to sell work was at auction. As a sales alternative, it was a highly successful means to dispose of large collections of pictures. During the forties and fifties, Fisher personally organized at least four one-man auctions in Boston. The sales of both paintings called "The Escape of Major McCulloch" are recorded in the artist's account book. Their respective entries indicate that one was sold at his first auction to Mr. Livermore for only twenty-eight dollars in 1843. Fourteen years later, a second version was bought at another one-man auction by Mr. H. Hall for one hundred and ten dollars. The higher price realized in the 1857 sale suggests the greater appreciation of a frontier subject. By then, the continental limits of the nation had recently been fixed.

Since only one image of "The Escape of Major McCulloch" has surfaced, it is difficult to determine whether the two works were exact duplicates. Fisher often made slight changes to revitalize an



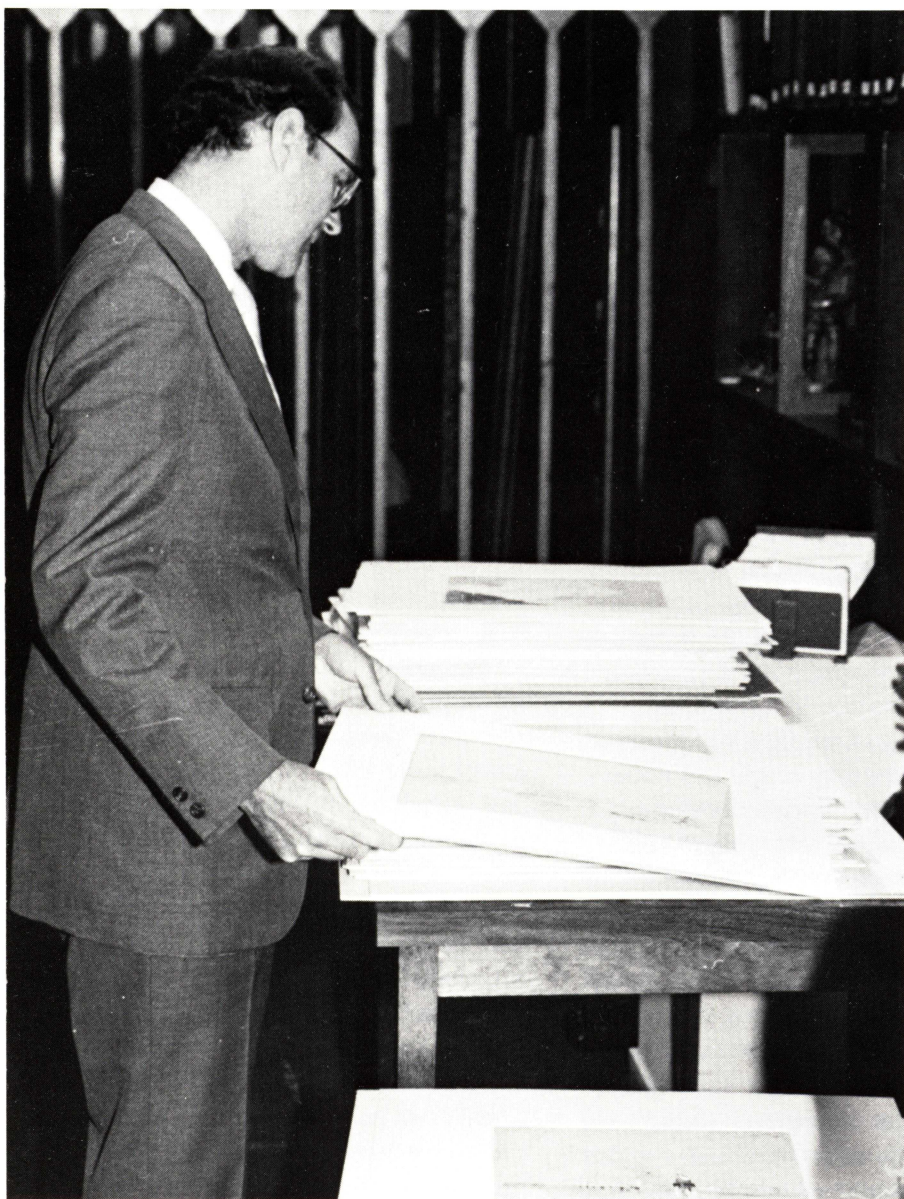
Detail, Alvan Fisher, "Pursuit," 36 by 42 inches, oil on canvas.

earlier composition. The controlled application of paint and the lighting effects in the Gilcrease picture compare with other known canvases that can be positively dated in the early forties. Given this, it seems most likely that the museum's painting was the one originally purchased at the 1843 auction by Livermore.

Knowledge of pre-Civil War American art is benefited from insight into Fisher's role in its history. The frontier images are a significant aspect of the painter's career and affirm major philosophical issues for the American imagination in the 1800s. Gilcrease Museum is fortunate to have acquired "The Escape of Major McCulloch." It is one of only a few works by Fisher included in a public museum not located on the East Coast. Ownership of this important example of Fisher's art enhances the collection's well-rounded holdings of nineteenth-century American painting. ◊

JOHN WILMERDING, the deputy director of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., was recently in Tulsa to lecture at Gilcrease Museum. His subject was "The Significance of Landscape at Mid-Century," a period which is at the focus of his interest in nineteenth-century American art. Wilmerding is a noted lecturer and author of some 15 books, 19 catalogues, 48 magazine articles and a dozen book reviews. His first book was "Fitz Hugh Lane, American Marine Painter," and his latest is "Important Information Inside: The Art of John F. Peto and the Idea of Still Life Painting in Nineteenth Century America." A Guggenheim Fellow, Wilmerding was awarded his Ph.D. in fine arts by Harvard University and was Leon E. Williams Professor of Art at Dartmouth College before joining the staff of the National Gallery in 1977. While he was at Gilcrease, he talked with Louisa Collett.

Talking about Art with John Wilmerding



COLLETT: Dr. Wilmerding, do you have any advice for the beginning art collector?

WILMERDING: To begin to collect art is, I suppose, like starting anything from scratch. You have to jump in the water and then you learn to swim. The classic cliché is that people like what they like and they respond to pictures that way. In that sense it's no different deciding what you might like to buy for yourself from what your reactions might be when you walk into a museum. You say to your neighbor, "Well, I like that and I don't like that!" Your reaction is purely on a gut or emotional basis.

COLLETT: Can you start collecting art on that kind of casual basis?

WILMERDING: It's probably the simplest way to start collecting. You acquire what you like. Then, gradually, if you're serious, you begin to set patterns and to learn about artists and about pictures. As you proceed, you should be aware that most real collectors think collecting is a kind of disease. Once you're hooked you can't stop.

COLLETT: How does personal collecting relate to collecting art for a museum?

WILMERDING: Both from a curatorial point of view and from a personal point of view, museum collecting is not unlike personal collecting. If one is interested in an artist, or in landscapes or still lifes, whether it is western art or any other kind of art, American or European, you have to begin to accumulate. As one buys the second example and the third, there come those decisions as to

John Wilmerding examines a drawing from Gilcrease's collection



what makes a better picture or a better sculpture from the last. Then you come to realize that the decisions can't be made entirely on just your emotional response, but that to make a decision about quality or condition, you have to start to learn. For example in western sculpture, you must learn what the difference is between an original bronze and a copy. This forces you to face up to some technical questions and you have to start learning about art and how to look at it. This is what curators and directors and historians do for collector friends — to show them how to look and what a work means.

COLLETT: Surely one must quickly get beyond the purely technical and historical aspects?

WILMERDING: I think the surprise for all of us is when we first start looking at pieces of art, whether in museums or in other people's collections, is that what starts as a kind of passive response — we take it or leave it, like it or don't — at some point turns into something more mysterious and exciting. That is to say, it becomes something where you have to enter the dialogue and that's the learning process.

COLLETT: What if this work of art is something you don't like?

WILMERDING: But the point is especially true of areas we don't like. For example, people who are uninformed about art traditionally dislike Abstract Expressionism because they can't understand it right away and so they have a fear of somehow being put on. I think the lesson is that for any kind of art, be it Abstract Expressionism or Old Master art, the simple surface reaction isn't going to be the end. All great art is going to sustain our coming back and looking at it over and over again. If you get everything the first time you look at it and your judgment is going to be only on the basis that you like its color,

you're potentially missing a lot. A great work of art will give you something new every time you come back to it. You're not going to get everything the first time around.

COLLETT: What's the next step for the collector?

WILMERDING: Somewhere early on, as a collector buys from a dealer the second time or goes to the artist a second time, or decides to upgrade, you will find what you think is a better example. You have to make the decision as to whether to acquire it on some basis. This for some people means paying attention to the condition of the work.

For example, if one is interested in prints, in graphic arts, you have to begin to recognize the difference between an early state and a late state, a good impression and a bad impression. This is what print collecting is all about. There are terrific joys in it. Pleasure has always got to be the bottom line — the fact that art delights and gives pleasure.

COLLETT: What else do we look for in a work of art?

WILMERDING: Isn't art, in part, a record of culture, of man's achievement? One of the reasons we have museums organized according to different fields is our sense of seeing a historical chronology. We have an Egyptian room, a Greek collection, medieval art. Generally, museums devoted to the history of painting will be organized according to national schools and often by century. So to some extent one way of seeing art is simply as examples of material culture. Paintings tell us the way people lived and worked. They are historical documents.



COLLETT: And more?

WILMERDING: Art is also something more mysterious in that like music and other art forms, it is purely abstract. Music doesn't illustrate history. Certain kinds of art, the best art, are something more than mere illustrations of a particular period and a particular country. They carry values that the human spirit responds to. Any of us, whenever we go in museums, will respond to art and say, "Well, my favorite picture is 'such and such'!" For me, it is almost a spiritual experience. And that is a clue to that quality of art which is the reason we want to preserve it and pay attention to it, namely, that the artist has the power to say things that the rest of us mortals don't.

COLLETT: Can we talk about that?

WILMERDING: Art has an ability to uplift and instruct and give pleasure in ways we may not be able to fully articulate — even our historians. To that extent art has the power of the very nature of the humanities, whatever human creativity can produce. One of the reasons we want to look at art is that its contemplation provides spiritual enrichment. And if that is the power of art, we can respond to it in a whole variety of ways. This can be influenced by how things are hung and arranged and that's the museum side of collecting. But even an individual collector will hang or display things in a certain way. The decisions about how art is presented or organized or hung help one understand why it is valued, for color or for shapes or accumulated forms or images. This is a classic example of the whole being more than the sum of the parts.

COLLETT: Then individuals and museums must both make the same kinds of decisions about collecting and about displaying art?

WILMERDING: There are different types of collecting, both for individuals and for museums. Certain kinds of collectors are the acquirers. They want to gather everything. They want tremendous richness and depth and are almost compulsive in their acquiring. Others will be very austere and very focused.

It's not that one kind of collecting is better than another, but it's interesting to see how individual collectors feel comfortable with certain kinds of patterns. The reason for collecting for some is to get as many examples of that particular type of pot or that kind of horse sculpture or that particular landscape by that artist. Others will feel that they are covering a whole period, the nineteenth century or the eighteenth century what-have-you. This could lead one across borders from one nation to another.

Museums are the same way. Some will buy depth and have storerooms filled and walls hung top to bottom. Another point of view would be to show only the high points of a key example. And that is a different kind of experience. Viewers — or potential collectors — can learn different things from different museums. That is one of the pleasures of this museum as opposed to another museum.

COLLETT: I have always been a museum person and now I realize why.

WILMERDING: One of the reasons for going to museums is that they are not all the same. Their purposes are different. I think that is one of the most fascinating things about the development of museums in America. Every city loves to have museums. Some are much older than others; each has its special *raison d'être*.

Some are devoted to historical surveys, some to universal surveys. Others to particular personal interests. Gilcrease Museum, like its type in America, is in a way the most fascinating because it is built around the personal taste of one individual, with its failings and its high points. And one doesn't want to be like everybody

else. A museum like this tells you both about the art of a given area and also about personal taste — and that's another obligation of museums, too, it seems to me . . . not letting go of what an individual's vision was, whatever its strengths and weakness.

COLLETT: How does the National Gallery of Art fit into that picture?

WILMERDING: That National Gallery in America is, interestingly, a museum that has evolved both out of a person's individual taste, namely Andrew W. Mellon, but also with the clear aim of being a universal, or at least a comprehensive museum as far as the history of modern western painting goes. We were founded as we are called, the "National Gallery," after the model of European paintings galleries. We have since acquired and been given sculpture and some decorative arts. We were not founded as a "museum," a term which is Germanic in derivation and applies to the idea of an institution holding artifacts and objects in different media from different cultures.

The National Gallery was founded as a paintings gallery after the National Gallery in London and this was partly the intention of Andrew Mellon. By intentionally not giving his name to it, he indicated that he intended it to be a national museum of Old Masters which would in turn attract other gifts. Like this much smaller municipal museum — Gilcrease — the National Gallery was founded as the vision of a particular individual . . . and it had at the heart an individual's collections, his great masterpieces. Since its founding the National Gallery has grown to fill the much larger idea of being a museum devoted to modern art from the Renaissance to the Twentieth Century in the Western European and American schools.

COLLETT: In your lecture on American landscape at Gilcrease in September you gave us such an interesting perspective on American art. Is it your feeling that American art has elements that set it aside from other national art?

WILMERDING: Well, I was trying to hint at that in a way. One of my approaches to American art has been to deal with it both as art and also to see it in larger cultural terms. For that reason I find it interesting and useful to bring to bear American literature and what we now know about American history.

And so the question "Is there a national identity?" is something we hope to find answered in all of our art forms, not just painting. What has fascinated me about the middle of the nineteenth century and the so-called

Luminist School is that there is a clue here to something in American art that is quite distinct from European painting.

The fact that Americans have always wanted to somehow deal with the question of national identity is typical of us. It is both a measure of our insecurity as well as our sense of chauvinism and pride. So I'm cutting down the middle: on one hand there is no question that American art and American culture, as the nation itself, have always been conscious of internationalism and isolationism. On the other, we can't separate ourselves or our art totally from the mainstream of western art. In that sense, no matter what one says about American landscape painting, for example, it is intimately bound up with the development of the larger mainstream of romantic western painting in France and Germany and England. In that sense, it is not very different, although it may have different subject matter.

COLLETT: What is the distinguishing difference?

WILMERDING: One can find — and I think this has to do with the geography itself — that our sense of space is different. One sees here in Oklahoma, at the center of the country physically, the meaning of the horizon. It's breathtaking for anyone who first experiences it. When artists of the early nineteenth century saw it for the first time, the emphasis on the horizon in landscape became a particular compositional feature.

Light clearly is another element. Now light exists in all northern countries — that cool dramatic clear lighting. One finds parallels in northern German and Scandinavian art for the same reason. We are at a relatively northern latitude on the North American continent.

But having said that, clearly there is something about American light that does seem to be clearer, sharper, drier. The combination of the light and the expansive geography have determined both the actuality and the mythology of our feelings about an American identity. And this shows up not just in nineteenth century American art, but in painting today. Even though the subject matter is different, the American wish for precision, bigness, even the ideal of the big canvas invented in the New York school, is demonstrated in many developments in contemporary painting.

COLLETT: Dr. Wilmerding, your visit to Gilcrease has brought us so much. Please come back soon.

WILMERDING: I will. ☹



Message from the Director

A COUPLE OF THE BIGGEST events of the Gilcrease winter season are not going to take place in Tulsa. They are going to occur in Denver and New York — in Denver the opening of an exhibition drawn from the Gilcrease collection, and in New York the publication of a book related to the exhibition.

The exhibition is entitled (and the book is likewise) "Treasures of the Old West: Masterworks from the Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art." The exhibition will open to the public at the Denver Art Museum on January 7 and

will travel to the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in Cody during the summer. The book will be available at these museums, in our own museum shop and, as they say, anywhere good books are sold.

Curator and author for the exhibition and book is Peter Hassrick, director of the Buffalo Bill Historical Center. Hassrick is a widely published author and a ranking expert on the paintings of Frederic Remington. In making selections for the exhibition Hassrick looked at the artists' points of view towards western material.

Spanning approximately 100 years the works are indicative of differing and changing views of the West. Early works tend to treat the West as new information that needs to be conveyed by means of images to an unknowing audience. Later works tend to create and reinforce some of the symbols of the West, such as the majesty of the scenery and the heroic stature of the cowboy.

Basic affinities Hassrick points out are artists who see the West primarily as landscape and those who see it as a record of the way men live their lives, how they work, how they hunt, how they travel. All in all, the exhibition and book suggest to old Gilcrease hands a new way of experiencing the rich Gilcrease collection.

It is intriguing to speculate that even old Gilcrease hands might not know by touring our galleries that an exchange exhibition was happening. Of the 87 works in the exhibition, it is my guess that only several will be missed from the galleries — the West painting, the Jarvis portrait, a Bierstadt, a Moran, possibly a Remington or two. A great number of the works in the exhibition are ones that have not found room in the galleries in the last several years, and others such as the Russells are among those things that are regularly rotated in our galleries.

It is an indication of the strength of the Gilcrease collection when it becomes clear, as it does with this exchange of western material, that significant numbers of things can be shared with new friends in sister cities without depriving the home galleries of their importance and pizzazz. And there will be new friends. Attendance in Denver is anticipated to be 60,000 persons and in Cody, with its flood of Yellowstone Park tourists, as many as 250,000.

Exchanges with the Denver Art Museum for display in our galleries are being worked out. The massive "Buffalo Bill and the Wild West," currently on view in Tulsa, is the Cody side of the exchange. The whole enterprise is an extension of the successful 1982 exchange with the Amon Carter Museum and a significant step in having more people discover the glories of Gilcrease.

Fred A. Meyer

THE GILCREASE

MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN HISTORY AND ART

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FRONT COVER: Detail, "The Two Bills" (ca 1912). Lithograph poster from Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Pawnee Bill's Far East Show. From the collection of the Buffalo Bill Historical Center.

BACK COVER: An Eskimo hunter is captured in the strong Gilcrease

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This book is a gift from
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