POINTS WEST

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Contents

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The Buffalo Bill Historical Center is a private, non-profit educational institution dedicated to preserving and interpreting the cultural history of the American West. Founded in 1917, the Historical Center is home to the Buffalo Bill Museum, Cody Firearms Museum, Plains Indian Museum, Whitney Gallery of Western Art, Draper Museum of Natural History and McCracken Research Library.

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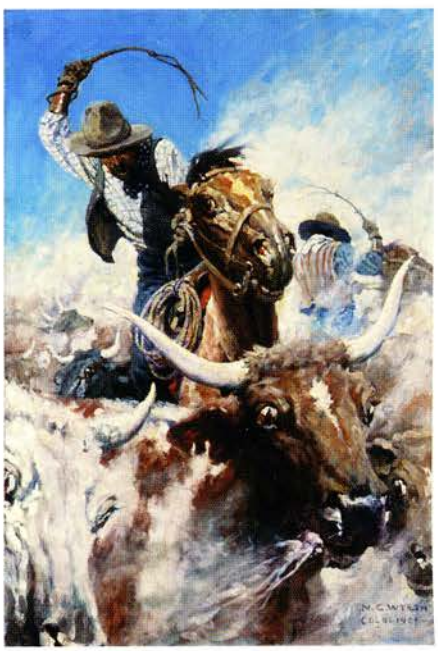


Cover: N. C. Wyeth (1882–1945), "*Cutting Out,*" 1904–1905. Oil on canvas, 38 x 25 7/8 in. Gift of John M. Schiff. 45.83

Calendar OF UPCOMING EVENTS

DATES AND EVENTS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

SEPTEMBER

10–21 RENDEZVOUS ROYALE BEGINS WITH OPENING OF THE BUFFALO BILL ART SHOW

10 NATURAL HISTORY LUNCHTIME EXPEDITIONS — 12:15 p.m. Free event.

10 Opening Reception BUFFALO BILL ART SHOW & SALE — 5 p.m.
18 WESTERN DESIGN CONFERENCE FASHION SHOW — Cody Auditorium — 6 p.m.
18–19 WESTERN DESIGN CONFERENCE SYMPOSIUM at BBHC, Coe Auditorium — 6 p.m.
18–21 WESTERN DESIGN CONFERENCE EXHIBIT — Riley Ice Arena
19–20 BUFFALO BILL ART SHOW & SALE Artist Demonstrations
20 LARRY L. PETERSEN LECTURE — 1:30 p.m Free event.
20 LARRY L. PETERSEN booksigning and NELSON BOREN print signing — 2:30 p.m.
20 BUFFALO BILL ART SHOW & SALE — 5 p.m.
21 QUICK DRAW AND BRUNCH — 9 a.m.
21 26TH ANNUAL PATRONS BALL — 6:30 p.m.

26–29 PLAINS INDIAN SEMINAR — ***Adversity and Renewal: Early Reservation Life on the Plains, 1880–1930.***

OCTOBER

18 NATURAL HISTORY LUNCHTIME EXPEDITIONS — 12:15 p.m. Free event.

NOVEMBER

9 AMERICAN INDIAN HERITAGE CELEBRATION PUBLIC EVENT — Visitors of all ages will have the opportunity to speak with Native artists, elders and storytellers and learn about Plains Indian traditions. Held in conjunction with the national observance of American Indian Heritage Month. 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.

12 NATURAL HISTORY LUNCHTIME EXPEDITIONS — 12:15 p.m. Free event.

28 THANKSGIVING DAY — Museum closed.

DECEMBER

7 ANNUAL HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE AND MUSEUM SELECTIONS SALE — 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. A free day of holiday music and traditions.

10 NATURAL HISTORY LUNCHTIME EXPEDITIONS — 12:15 p.m. Free event.

25 CHRISTMAS DAY — Museum closed.

31 ARTHUR AMIOTTE RETROSPECTIVE: CONTINUITY AND DIVERSITY — Exhibition closes.

Unknown photographer. N. C. Wyeth in his studio as he paints "*Rounding Up,*" with Allen Tupper True on the saddle posing for the painting. Photograph, ca. 1905. Allen Tupper True Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

N.C. WYETH

From the Hashknife to the Palette Knife

by Sarah E. Boehme, Ph.D.
The John S. Bugas Curator
Whitney Gallery of Western Art

The twenty-one year old easterner, in search of adventure and knowledge, headed out to the Gill Ranch, east of Denver, Colorado, to join the fall round-up in October 1904. He had outfitted himself with saddle, bridle, boots, spurs, breeches, chaps, slicker, and blankets. Unable to obtain his own horse, he hitched a ride with a sheepherder. Into the herder's rig, the neophyte cowboy piled his newly purchased gear, as well as tools more familiar to him, but more unusual in this setting, his camera and sketchbox. At the sheep ranch, he persuaded the rancher to let him try a "bronc." The rancher was saving his gentle horses, but with fairly low expectations of the easterner's potential horsemanship, he allowed the young man to try an unseasoned mount. The horse pitched a bit, but the easterner hung on, earned the confidence of the westerners, and rode off to work on the round-up.

"Here I am in the *great West*, and I'll tell you it is the *great* West."[1]

Thus the tenacious Newell Convers Wyeth demonstrated his mettle and the lengths to which he would go in his search for authentic western experiences. Like other young men who came west, Wyeth sought to prove his strength and resilience against the hardships of a rough and wild life. Yet he had another purpose; he sought to understand the life of the West so that he could portray it honestly in paintings intended as illustrations for books and magazines. N.C. Wyeth had recently completed his studies at Howard Pyle's illustrious school for illustrators. Even before traveling to the West, he had already gained some success as an illustrator of cowboy life, having sold a painting of a bucking horse and rider to the *Saturday Evening Post* for a cover. Following the advice of his mentor Pyle, Wyeth knew he needed to see the West himself, to gain the personal knowledge that would create the ideas for his art. Allen Tupper True, a fellow art student and a native of Denver, wrote to his mother in Colorado about Wyeth's impending visit and asked for her help in finding Wyeth a place where he could see the "puncher life." True concluded, "Wyeth . . . is the kind of fellow one wants to help—selfmade and reliant."[2]

For two weeks Wyeth rode for the Hashknife Ranch, participating in all the cowpunchers' labor and relishing in the outdoor life. He had originally intended only to observe and sketch the round-up from the vantage point of the grub-wagon, but instead he found himself rising from his outdoors' bed-blankets at day break and then roping, riding and cutting-out until sundown. The New England bred art student had companions called Dutch Lou, Scotty, and the Swede. The costs of maintaining the necessary string of horses consumed his monetary wages of eight dollars a week, but he earned priceless experience. He got thrown off his steed, suffered a broken foot from a horse misstep, accepted the cowboys' initiation rite of being thrashed with chaps, and faced death's nearness when the camp gathered around a young rider's lifeless body. He recorded in his diary, "A boys body brought in by two horsemen rolled up in a yellow slicker.

N.C. Wyeth (1882–1945), *Hashknife*. October 1904. Photograph. Courtesy, Colorado Historical Society. F26,269

The bad omens of the previous night proved only too true. The horse had thrown the boy and had kicked his head to pieces."[3] Wyeth had little time for color sketches and seems to have forgotten to bring a crucial paint, so instead he made some pencil sketches in the evening, took some photographs, but more importantly he literally soaked up experiences that would be kinesthetically remembered when he faced an easel with paints, brush and palette knife.

He hurried back to Denver, Colorado, rented a room to use as a studio, and wrote exuberantly to his mother, "I have spent the wildest, and most strenuous three weeks in my life. Everything happened that could happen, plenty to satisfy the most imaginative. The 'horse-pitching' and 'bucking' was bounteous."[4] He transformed his experiences into four paintings whose subjects were roping horses in a corral, a bucking horse in camp, driving cattle through a gulch, and a scene around the chuck wagon. After additional experiences visiting southwestern Indians, Wyeth headed back east to resume his career as an artist-illustrator, reaching Wilmington, Delaware, before the end of the year 1904.

Wyeth showed his cache of four round-up paintings to Pyle, who liked two of the works, but was concerned that the others resembled too much the art of Frederic Remington. Wyeth had received financial support from *Scribner's Magazine* to make his western journey and he now needed to prepare images for their publication. He had painted his four works in a horizontal format, probably influenced by the insistent horizontality of the western landscape he experienced. From a Colorado ranch, he had described the view, "Out of the west window, plains; out of the east, plains; out of the north window, plains; out of the south, plains."[5] *Scribner's*, however, featured a vertical format, so he produced another seven paintings, suitable for the magazine, and wrote a narrative around them, "A Day with the Round-up: An Impression."

The paintings and the text trace an imaginary day beginning with gathering for the early morning meal, and encompassing the dusty work of roping an unwilling horse, subduing an untamed mount, rounding up the stray cattle, racing with abandon for the noon meal, separating the cattle with different brands from the gathered herds, and concluding with the evening setting as the night wrangler takes over the duties of watching the herd. In their vertical format, Wyeth's paintings orient themselves around the human figure rather than the landscape. The natural environment is indicated in the dust enveloping the horse corral and the sharp angles of the canyon where the cattle had to be gathered, but it is the human action that concerns Wyeth. In *Above the Sea of Round, Shiny Backs the Thin Loops Swirled and Shot into Volumes of Dust*, the crouching roper balances his weight on one leg and reaches across his body with his roping arm, poised to throw his loop at just the right moment. The cowboys gallop directly toward the viewer, urging their horses with hats, quirts and ropes in *The Wild, Spectacular Race for Dinner*. Sharply foreshortened, the lead horse seems to burst through the imaginary picture plane into the viewer's space. Back in his studio Wyeth used the gear he had purchased as props. He posed fellow artist Allen True, whose parents had offered western hospitality to Wyeth, to capture the cowboy contrapposto of the herder in the painting *Rounding Up*. Although Wyeth completed these paintings in his eastern studio in 1905, he dated all the paintings from the series 1904, probably to emphasize the year of their genesis in experience.[6]

N.C. Wyeth (1882–1945), *Scotty Robinson*, October 1904. Photograph. Courtesy, Colorado Historical Society. F26,268

N.C. Wyeth (1882–1945), *Hashknife Ranch*, October 1904. Photograph. Courtesy, Colorado Historical Society. F26.282

"A Day with the Round-up" appeared in the March 1906 issue of *Scribner's Magazine*, published with four paintings reproduced in color and the other three in black and white. This attention to the young artist helped to further Wyeth's career as an illustrator, especially of western images. This first great success demonstrates the power of Wyeth as a narrative painter of action and emotion. Although the seven paintings (six of which are owned by the Buffalo Bill Historical Center) would be used and reused to illustrate various texts, they themselves were created as primary visual images. Wyeth wrote the text after having conceived the basic ideas for the images. The text elucidated, but did not overtake, the visual narrative. Throughout his career, Wyeth demonstrated his ability to convey dramatic meaning in his paintings, no matter what the source of the subject might be or whether he was illustrating a pre-existing text.

Wyeth, who was born in Needham, Massachusetts, in 1882, had studied in New England before being accepted in Howard Pyle's school in Delaware. While studying in Wilmington, he met Carolyn Bockius, whom he married in 1906 between western journeys. He made a second trip to Colorado early in 1906 and planned a third trip to the West later that year, but only went as far as Chicago and Kansas City. He bought land in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, where he painted and illustrated until his death in 1945. Although he never traveled to the West again, he did continue to illustrate Western subjects, including the life of William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody. His son Andrew, daughter Henriette and grandson Jamie continue the Wyeth artistic legacy. ■

N.C. Wyeth (1882–1945), *Mooney–Cook, Jim Peterson, Dale Middlemist (men around chuck-wagon)*, October 1904. Photograph. Courtesy, Colorado Historical Society. F26,272

[1]N.C. Wyeth to Henriette Zirngiebel Wyeth, Denver, Colorado, September 29, 1904, as quoted in, Betsy James, ed., *The Wyeths: The Letters of N.C. Wyeth*, 1901–1945, Boston, Gambit, 1971, p. 100.

[2]Allen Tupper True to Margaret Tupper True. September 5, 1904. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

[3]N.C. Wyeth, as quoted in, Brandywine River Museum, *N.C. Wyeth's Wild West*, Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, 1990. p. 66.

[4] N.C. Wyeth to Henriette Zirngiebel Wyeth, Denver, Colorado, October 19, 1904, *The Wyeths*, p. 106.

[5] N.C. Wyeth to Henriette Zirngiebel Wyeth, Limon, Colorado, *The Wyeths*, p. 99.

[6]Dating first explained by James H. Duff in memo to Buffalo Bill Historical Center, December 26, 1979. See *The Western World of N.C. Wyeth*, text by James H. Duff, Buffalo Bill Historical Center, 1979. For more information on Wyeth, see also Douglas Allen and Douglas Allen, Jr., *N.C. Wyeth: The Collected Paintings, Illustrations and Murals*, New York, Bonanza Books, 1972, and David Michaelis, *N.C. Wyeth: A Biography*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1998.

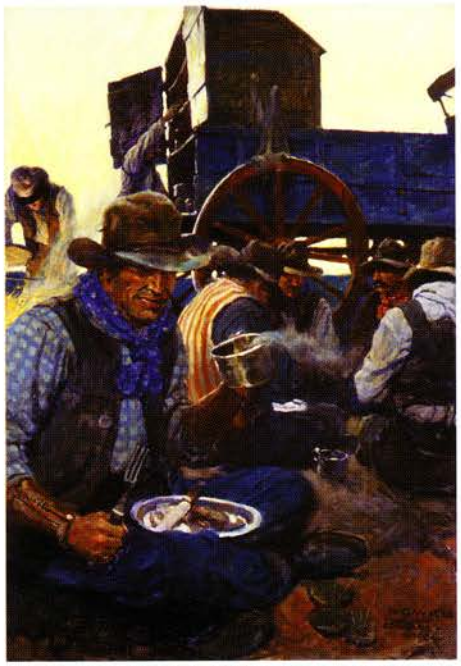
The following article is N. C. Wyeth's text for *A Day with the Round-up: An Impression*, as published in *Scribner's Magazine*, vol. XXXIX, no. 3, March 1906, pages 285-290. The paintings accompanying it and on the cover of *Points West* appeared as illustrations with the original article.

A Day with the Round-up
An Impression

by N. C. Wyeth

Groping and feeling my way out from beneath three or four thick blankets and turning back to the stiff dewy tarpaulin, I peered into the gloom of early morning. The sweeping breeze of the plains brushed cool and fresh against my face. Shapeless forms of still sleeping men loomed black against the low horizon. Near by I saw the silhouetted form of the cook's thick legs and a big kettle swing before the light of the breakfast fire. I stared in wonderment about me — then my confused mind cleared and I remembered that it was the cow-camp of the night before.

I hurriedly pulled on my boots and rolled the great pile of still warm blankets into a huge bundle and tied them so with two shiny black straps. Dark figures were moving about the camp — some crawling from beneath heaps of tangled beds, others trundling their big ungainly rolls, lifted high on their backs, to the bed-wagon. And so I carried mine, joining the silent processions that moved, a vague, broken line in the growing light of the early morning.



N. C. Wyeth (1882–1945), *The Lee of the Grub Wagon*, 1904–1905. Oil on canvas, 38 x 26 in. Gift of John M. Schiff. 46.83

Suddenly into this strangely quiet fragment of wild life, the cook's metallic voice pierced the silence like a thing of steel.

"Grub's ready. Hike, yer bow-legged snipes er the valley; I cain't wait all day; what ter hell d'ye think — I come frum Missoura?"

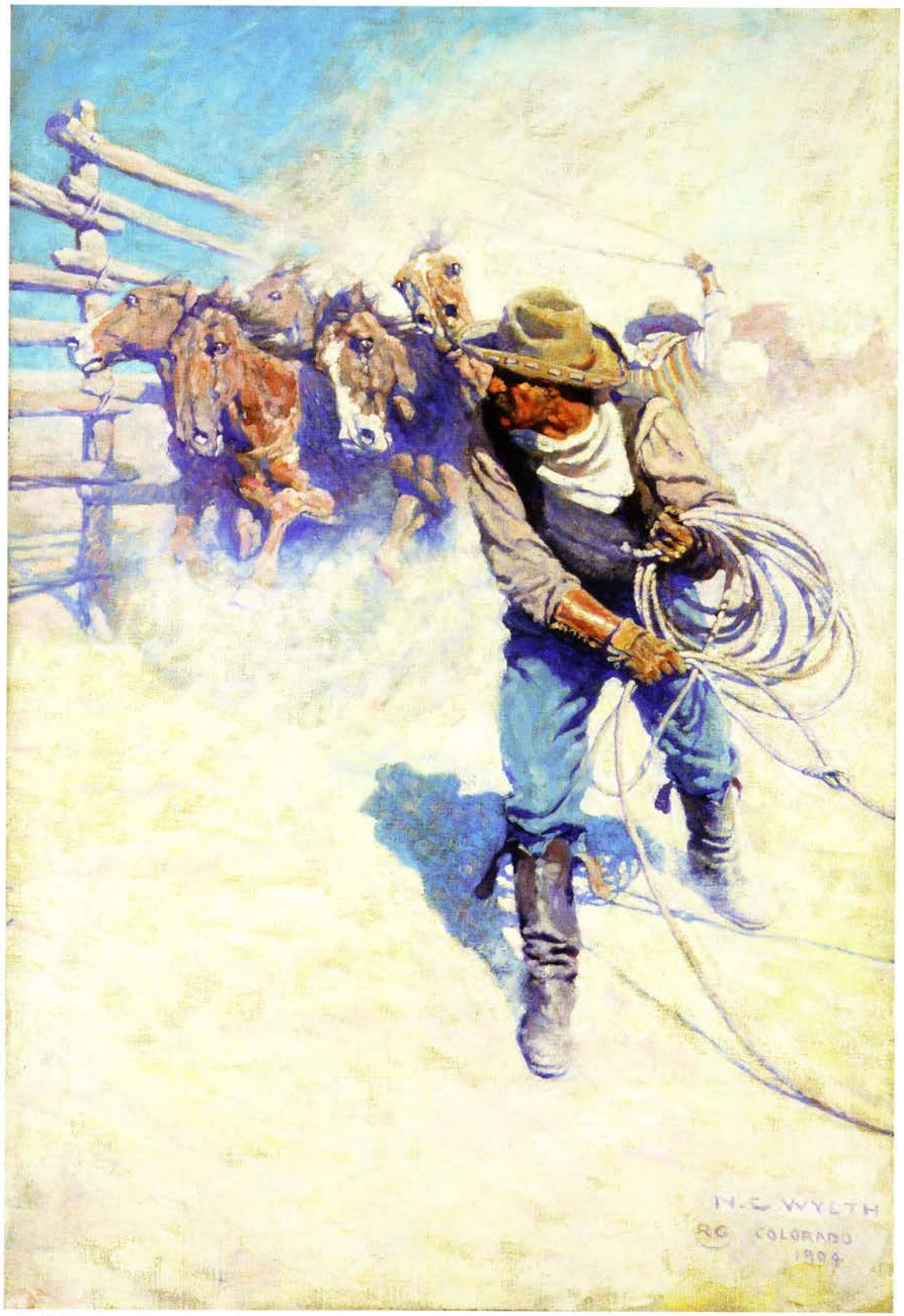
Then I joined the dark mass of men around a tin pail of water. The cow-punchers do not wash very much on the round-up. A slap of water to freshen the face, a vigorous wipe with a rough, wearisome towel, and the men were ready for their breakfast.

I joined them — a crowd seated in the lee of the grub-wagon. Everything was very quiet, save now and then the click of the spoons on the tin cups. They ate in silence, all unconscious of the rich yellow glow that was flooding the camp.

Then the quiet of the morning was broken by a soft rumbling that suddenly grew into a roar, and from a great floating cloud of golden dust the horse herd swung into the rope corral.

The men tossed the tin cups and plates in a heap near the big dish-pan. There was a scuffle for ropes and the work started with a rush. In the corral the horses surged from one side to the other, crowding and crushing within the small rope circle. Above the sea of round, shiny backs, the thin loops swirled and shot into volumes of dust; the men wound in and out of the restless mass, their keen eyes always following the chosen mounts. Then one by one they emerged from the dust, trailing very dejected horses. The whistling of ropes ceased, and with a swoop the horse herd burst from the corral to feed and rest under the watchful eye of the "wrangler."

By now we had all "saddled up" and mounted save "The Swede." He was very short, with a long body and bowed legs; his hair and eyebrows light against the burned red of the face. His belt hung very low on the hips, and his blue jeans were turned up nearly to the knee. The ribbon of his high-crowned felt hat was bordered by the red ends of many matches and he wore a new white silk handkerchief that hung like a bib over his checkered shirt.



N. C. Wyeth (1882–1945), *Above the Sea of Round, Shiny Backs the Thin Loops Swirled and Shot into Volumes of Dust*, 1904–1905. Oil on canvas, 38 1/4 x 26 in. Gift of John M. Schiff. 3.77

We watched him as he led his mount into "open country," for the horse was known to be "bad." His name was "Billy Hell," and he looked every bit of that. He was white, of poor breed, and probably from the North.

"The Swede" walked to the nigh side of his horse and hung the stirrup for a quick mount. Then he ran his hands over all the parts of the saddle, giving the cloth a tug to see if it were well set. He pulled up the latigo one or two more holes for luck and spit into his rough hands. The horse stood perfectly still, his hind legs drawn well under him; his head hung lower and lower, the ears were flattened back on his neck, and his tail was drawn down between his legs. "The Swede" tightened his belt, pulled his hat well down on his head, seized the cheek-strap of the bridle with one hand, and then carefully fitted his right over the shiny metal horn. For an instant he hesitated, and then, with a glance at the horse's head, he thrust his boot into the iron stirrup and swung himself with a mighty effort into the saddle.

N. C. Wyeth (1882–1945), "*Bucking*," 1904–1905. Oil on canvas, 38 x 26 1/8 in. Gift of John M. Schiff. 2.77

The horse quivered and his eyes became glaring white spots. His huge muscles gathered and knotted themselves in angry response to the insult. Then with his great brutish strength he shot from the ground, bawling and squealing in a frantic struggle to free himself of the human burden. It was like unto death. Eight times he pounded the hard ground, twisting and weaving and bucking in circles. The man was a part of the ponderous creaking saddle; his body responded to every movement of the horse, and as he swayed back and forth he cursed the horse again and again in his own native tongue.

Then it was over. The cow-punchers nodded in approval and one of them dropped from his saddle and picked up "The Swede's" hat.

"Rounding-up" means to hunt and to bring together thousands of cattle scattered over a large part of the country known as the free range. For convenience in hunting them, the free range is divided into a number of imaginary sections. Into these sections the "boss" of an outfit sends the score or more of punchers, divided into squads of twos and threes, each squad covering a given section. This is called "riding the circle."

The boss of our outfit was a man by name "Date" Middlemist — the cow-punchers called him "Date." He was of a silent nature, of keen perception, and without an equal in his ability to locate the wandering herds of cattle.

After a day's round-up he would talk to his men of the work and tell them what section they were to cover on the morrow, and once I remember he came to me and asked how I had fared for the day — and if I were saddle sore. I told him "No!"

"Then," he said, "you can work with Scotty Robinson and Crannon to-morrow. You'll ride the 'Little Cottonwood Crik' country."

And as he was leaving he turned and added, "It's a _____ long ride."

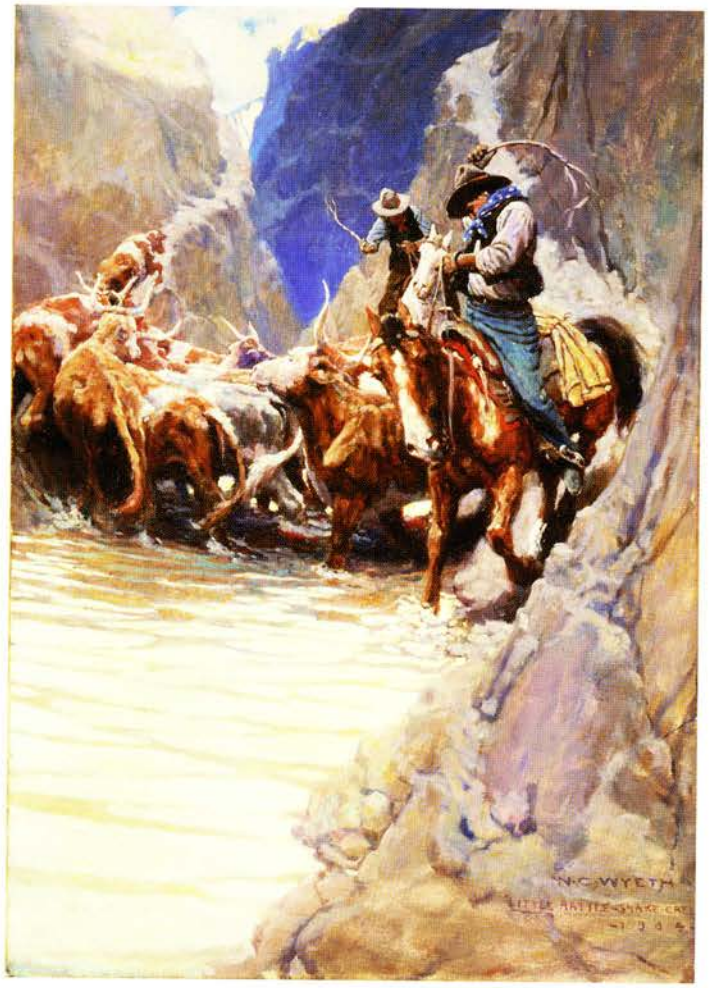
And so in the morning I started out with the others on the trail of some four or five hundred cattle.

We rode many miles, finding every little while a few of the cattle, some three or four, perhaps, standing quietly together in a gully. And as we pushed our way toward the distant camp of the outfit that had moved to the farther end of the section since we left, our herd gradually increased. With the added numbers the driving became difficult and we had to crowd our horses into the rear of the sullen and obstinate herd. We crossed, recrossed, and crossed again, yelling and cursing and cutting them with our quirts. The herd slowly surged ahead, above them floating a huge dense cloud of silvery dust that seemed to burn under the scorching sun of the plains.

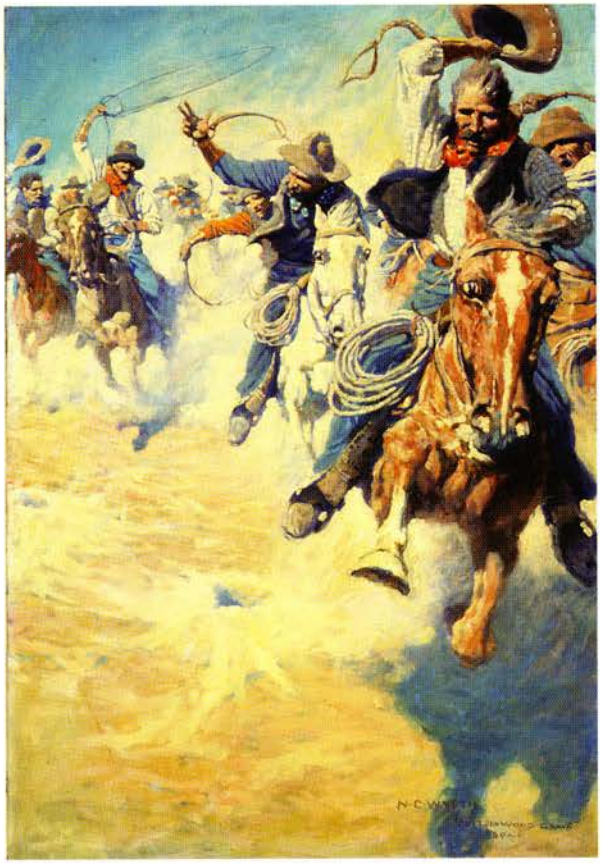
It was well-nigh to noon before we saw a sharp dark line on the horizon that appeared and disappeared as we rose and fell along the undulating creek bottom. We knew the dark line to be the cattle already rounded up, and that we were late. But we had ridden the big circle that morning.

Our cattle soon saw the larger herd, and their heads went up, their tails stiffened, and they hurried to join the long dark line that began slowly to separate itself; as we drew nearer, into thousands of cattle. And as we approached the main herd our cattle became more quiet. From the distant waiting multitude, as if in greeting, came a low, rumbling moan. The sound was faint; it became audible as the hot wind of the plains blew against my face, then it died away again — even as the wind spent itself on the long stretch of level plain.

Soon our cattle were on the run, and from a distance we stopped and watched the two herds merge one into the other. We were late, and the cow-punchers greeted us with jibes of all sorts, but we did not mind them, for the day's drive was over. To the right of the herd, some six hundred yards, stood the grub-wagon. Near by it I saw the smoke slowly rising from the cook's fire, and my appetite was made ravenous. Someone called, "Who says dinner?" and with that came the stinging crack of many quirts, the waving of hats, the whirling of ropes, and with the cow-boys' yells — that I believe have no equal, — there followed a wild, spectacular race for dinner. My horse was tired and streaked with sweat and white dust, his ears drooped, his tail hung limp, and he breathed hard, but I found myself in the first "bunch" at the finish. I jumped to the ground and hurriedly loosened the saddle and the soaking wet blanket from the horse's back and threw them on the hot ground to dry. Then I made for the soap-box of tin dishes and heaped my tin plate with meat and potatoes, and afterwards, by way of dessert, I had a small can of tomatoes. We sat in the shade of the grub-wagon, and along with the eating the men told of a large herd of antelope they had seen and of an unbranded cow they had brought in.



N. C. Wyeth (1882–1945), "*Rounding Up*," 1904–1905. Oil on canvas, 38 x 26 in. Gift of John M. Schiff. 1.77



N. C. Wyeth (1882–1945), *The Wild, Spectacular Race for Dinner*, 1904–1905. Oil on canvas, 38 1/8 x 26 in. Gift of John M. Schiff. 44.83

The "wrangler" ended the dinner. Into the camp he drove the horse herd, and from it fresh mounts were roped for the afternoon's work of "cutting out."

Cutting out is a hard, wearisome task. There were some six thousand cattle in the herd that had been rounded up that morning, and it was the work of the men to weave through that mass and to drive out certain brands known as the "Hash Knife," the "Pot Hook," the "Lazy L," and the like.

The herd that had been quiet was again in a turmoil, bellowing and milling, but it was kept within limited bounds and well "bunched" by the score or more of punchers outside.

My roan was well trained. He seemed to know by my guiding which cow I was after, and kicks and bites, we would separate our cow from the writhing mass. I could faintly see my fellow-workers, flat silhouettes in the thickening dust, dodging and turning through the angry mass of heads and horns. My throat grew parched and dry, and the skin on my face became tight and stiffened by the settling dust. Once I stopped to tie my silk handkerchief over my mouth; I found it a great help.

And so the afternoon passed quickly. I rode for the last time into the sullen herd, carefully watching for any remaining cows with the brand of the "Hash Knife." But I did not find any; my work was finished and I rested in the saddle, watching the remaining men complete their "cutting out," (see cover image) helping them now and then with a stray cow.

The sun was low and very red, the shadows were long and thin. The afternoon's work was completed, and I was glad. From across the plain I saw the red dust of a small herd that had already left camp on their long night journey to the home pasture, and I heard the faint yelps of the cow-boys who were driving them. I dismounted and with the knotted reins thrown over my arm, slowly walked back to the grub-wagon.

Some of the beds had already been unrolled, and I spread mine in a good level place. The ground was still hot and dry, but the air was rapidly becoming cooler, and the dew would soon fall.

In twos and threes the men came into camp, tired and dusty. We grouped about the wagons, sitting on the tongues, on unrolled beds, anywhere, perfectly contented, watching the cook prepare the evening meal. The odor of coffee scented the air, and I was hungry and tired as I never was before.

After the supper, a circle of men gathered about the camp-fire. The pulsing glow of many cigarettes spotted the darkness; the conversation slowly died with the fire, and one by one the dark, somber faces disappeared from the light.

I was the last to leave. I crawled into my blankets and lay for a moment looking into the heavens and at the myriads of stars. I pulled the blankets up to my chin and then I felt the warmth of the ground creep through them. As I lay there I heard the faint singing of a night herder floating across the plains, and — for an instant — I thought of the morrow. ■

N. C. Wyeth (1882–1945), *Night Herder*, Collection of Andrew and Betsy Wyeth. Photograph courtesy of Brandywine River Museum.

W.H.D. KOERNER


The
Prairie Child
ARTHUR STRINGER
Author of The Prairie Mother
Rolls
LARGE SIZE

"IN MY MIND'S EYE," AN ARTIST'S APPROACH

by Julie Coleman
Curatorial Assistant, Whitney Gallery of Western Art

"I try to draw the man the author describes . . . I concentrate on the character until it comes alive and I can see him in my mind's eye."

– W.H.D. Koerner[1]

W.H.D. Koerner found his niche as an illustrator in the overwhelming popularity of the western adventure story. This type of art, however, was often criticized as *merely* illustration, implying a lack of creativity on the part of the artist because he/she did not necessarily originate the subject matter. For Koerner, the pictures he created to tell the story were conceived and given life in his "mind's eye."

In the June 25, 1932 issue of *The Saturday Evening Post*, Wesley Stout's article, "Yes, We Read the Story," directly addressed the ever-so-popular, yet often innocent question continually posed to illustrators at the time: "do you read the story?" Stout's matter-of-fact essay, based on interviews with illustrators for the *Post*, including Koerner, discussed their methods of production and revealed to readers that illustrators not only read the story, they literally dissected and ingested it. Stout explained that illustrators took extensive notes on the characters and the picture possibilities, noting the period and scene. He pointed out that like the authors, illustrators read the narrative with great care and pride. But Stout reasoned the similarities ended there. How illustrators approached the final product — their artistic process — varied as differently as the authors' styles of writing. The process itself was indeed one of creativity.

At the time of Stout's interview, Koerner was working on Hal G. Evarts' newest serial, "Short Grass," a story about the final glory days of the open range.[2] As an illustrator, Koerner was commissioned to produce suitable illustrations for popular fiction. To meet this objective, he executed a precise, methodical working process, which began by reading the text. After he had read the story, he took notes on its setting, time and characters. Although the general period of "Short Grass" was evident, Evarts had attached no obvious date to the story, only a clue. The author spoke of a character having later played a part in the Johnson County cattle war, which led Koerner to conclude the period was prior to 1892. From this information, Koerner could depict the appropriate style of clothing worn by the cowboys during this time of western settlement.

Next, he selected specific passages in the story to illustrate. For "Short Grass," Koerner produced eighteen illustrations. He chose to base his painting, *Hard Winter*, on the passage: "The snow eddied and whirled about the men. They were muffled to the eyes by their neck scarfs. Night had descended by the time they returned to the ranch house."

Left: W.H.D. Koerner's paints, brushes and artist's materials. Cowboy Boots and Wooly Chaps. *The Prairie Child, North of 36, Ruskin's Modern Art* and *What Is Art*. All items from the W.H.D. Koerner Studio Collection, Gift of the artist's heirs, W.H.D. Koerner, III and Ruth Koerner Oliver. (Photograph by Sean Campbell)

W. H. D. Koerner (1878–1938), *Hard Winter*, 1932. Oil on canvas, 29 x 41 1/8 in. 23.77

Koerner preferred to make illustrations that would bring the text alive. When the article and illustration were printed, the passage would appear under the illustration, making an exact correlation between the text and image.

For inspiration in creating his imagery, Koerner studied the visual images of Frederic Remington, who ushered in and dominated The Golden Age of Illustrating until his death in 1909. Koerner also consulted his massive collection of clippings, large brown folders stuffed with photographic reproductions of western subject matter from magazines and newspapers. Then he did research, often in the New York Public Library and Museum of Natural History, as well as his own personal library. To create the main figure in the painting, Koerner relied upon his imagination and the author's physical description of the character. Although he felt a model would hamper his creativity, he found it advantageous in fine-tuning subtle effects. As he recalled, "I may want to know exactly how the light falls upon an ear, or the precise twist of a head, but the model is only a lay figure to me."[3] Koerner often dressed his children, Billy. and Ruth, in costume and posed them to help capture the play of light on clothing and the shape of the human figure. In *Hard Winter*, Billy posed for the figure on horseback so his father could get the right modeling on the clothing worn by the cowboy.

It was a sweltering July day, and "Little Billy Koerner" was swaddled in coats and scarves from head to toe. In order to help his son endure this very uncomfortable situation, Koerner told him the story surrounding the scene. Years later, his son vividly recalled the experience and remembered how much cooler he felt imagining the blizzard in the story.[4]

Armed with multiple bits of information and ideas, Koerner could now transfer to paper the image taking form in his mind. He usually made four or more 4 x 5 inches or slightly larger thumbnail and preparatory sketches both in pencil and in color until he felt the composition was correct for the painting he envisioned. Once he had the desired composition, he transferred it freehand in charcoal to his canvas. Using the paint generously, he painted freely and spontaneously with bold, strong strokes, sometimes using a palette knife or wide brush, well worn down, to obtain a "rich impasto" approach, which lent excitement to his strokes.[5] In order to get the effect he wanted, it was not uncommon for Koerner to combine a variety of media, ranging from charcoal, wax crayons, colored pencils, oils, watercolors and the hard "Mon Ami" pastels. He usually completed the entire painting within one week. Koerner did not need to paint in color, as many images would be reproduced in black and white. He painted with a full palette of color primarily because he saw the works as having a life beyond illustration. He felt they were complete works on their own. Even without the accompanying text, Koerner's sweeping brush strokes, use of texture and muted color scheme in *Hard Winter* effectively capture and relay a story about the harsh, bitter winter conditions cowboys contend with on the western open range.

W. H. D. Koerner (1878–1938).
Pencil sketch for *Hard Winter*, 1932.
Pencil on paper, 7 1/2 x 9 in. Gift of Ruth Koerner Oliver and W. H. D. Koerner, III.

Born in Lunden, Germany, in 1878, William Henry David Koerner (anglicized form) came with his family to Iowa in 1880. At the age of eighteen, he started his illustrative career as a professional illustrator for the *Chicago Tribune.* In 1907 Koerner went to Wilmington, Delaware, to become a pupil of Howard Pyle, who had also mentored N.C. Wyeth and Harvey Dunn. Regarded as the greatest teacher of illustration in America, Pyle instilled a unique philosophy in his students. He emphasized imagination over copying from life, encouraging his students to go as far as possible without models, using them only to correct the drawing. He also stressed immersion in the subject and above all, a strong narrative thread to the picture. How paint was applied to the canvas was of little concern. Trained to create images that accompanied, amplified and effectively visualized written fiction, his pupils became masters at narrative art. The best illustrations were those that stood on their own as works of art. Pyle's curriculum not only honed the skills and talents of his students, but also shaped the entire direction of Western art and illustration.

By the 1920s, the West had become an important setting for popular fiction, and the conflict and romance of the open frontier provided ample material for writers and publishers. Books and magazines, such as *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Scribner's Magazine*, featured western fiction by popular authors. Illustrations were used to enhance the drama, excitement, and appeal of the narratives. Under Pyle's tutelage, Koerner quickly developed a solid reputation of his own, specializing in western and outdoor themes, portrayed from his studio in Interlaken, New Jersey.

Harvey T. Dunn (1884–1952), *W. H. D. Koerner at His Easel.* Oil on canvas. Gift of Ruth Koerner Oliver and W. H. D. Koerner, III. 4.78

Right: "Short Grass" in *Saturday Evening Post*. Clipping file kept by Koerner. Photographs by Koerner of son Bill. W.H.D. Koerner Studio Collection, Gift of the artist's heirs, W.H.D. Koerner, III and Ruth Koerner Oliver. (Photograph by Chris Gimmeson)

Authenticity was extremely important to Koerner, and he went to great lengths to investigate and accurately portray the American West. He traveled with his family to see the western states first hand. While on these trips, he sketched the surroundings, snapped photographs, and collected artifacts. He also acquired a substantial and rich collection of costumes and accessories to use as props for his works. His close attention to detail and intense desire for accuracy brought him many commissions for illustrations, particularly of western subject matter for *The Saturday Evening Post*.

Until his death in 1938, Koerner had illustrated more than nine hundred articles, short stories and serial installments during his career. To achieve such status required respect and collaboration between author and illustrator, and Koerner worked hard not to compromise this relationship. He was careful to interpret what the author meant without giving the plot away, or distracting from it. His aim was to enhance, not jeopardize the reader's interpretation. To spark excitement, he emphasized human drama in his works, and constructed compositions that focused on large central figures to bring forward important elements in the story. Today, more than ever, Koerner's paintings are not *merely* illustrations, but strong visual statements that stand on their own as significant works of art. ■

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[1] W. H. D. Koerner, as quoted in, Wesley Stout, "Yes, We Read the Story," *The Saturday Evening Post*, June 25, 1932, p. 38.

[2] Hal G. Evarts, "Short Grass," *The Saturday Evening Post*, May 21–July 2, 1932.

[3] W. H. D. Koerner as quoted in, "Yes, We Read," p. 38.

[4] William H. D. Koerner III, as told to Frances B. Clymer on August 19, 1993, Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, WY.

[5] W. H. Hutchinson, *The World, The Work and the West of W. H. D. Koerner*, Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1978, p. 134.

Charles. M. Russell (1864–1926), *Self Portrait*, 1900, watercolor on paper, 13 1/2 x 7 3/4 in. Watercolor on Paper. Gift of Charles Ulrick and Josephine Bay Foundation, Inc. 98.60

A Mysterious Pair of Outlaws

by Edith Jacobsen
Whitney Gallery of Western Art Intern,
Summer 2001

The painting hung on the wall accompanied by a label bearing only the title, artist, and donor. Its file in the vault remained practically empty. Why was this painting created and why was it never listed among the rows of books by and about the famous cowboy artist? The case would eventually lead from books and scholars to archives and galleries, and finally come down to a pair of outlaws.

At the Buffalo Bill Historical Center, the files on Charles M. Russell's *Escape* reveal only a sliver of information. They show that the painting was in the estate of Nancy C. Russell at the time of her death (which helps to verify its authenticity). Later William E. Weiss bought *Escape* from the Knoedler Gallery in New York and donated it to the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in 1973. The remaining information about the painting comes from the painting itself. Below his signature, Russell scripted 1908. Also, the medium of the painting is black and white oil. This choice of colors implies that *Escape* was probably created as an illustration. Since most publications at that time did not use color, it made sense to paint the original illustration in black and white thus helping to better maintain the painting's original color and shading.

With this base of information about *Escape*, research turned to books written about Russell and his art. One book in particular (Renner and Yost's *A Bibliography of the Published Works of Charles M. Russell*) seemed promising because it has attempted to catalogue the titles of all published Russell works, but *Escape* was not listed.[1] In fact, despite the massive amount of research and scholarship on Russell, a listing of Russell's painting, *Escape*, was not found in any of these books.

With little help from books about Russell's art, the research turned to books about Russell's life. When this painting was created in 1908, Charlie Russell was on his way to becoming the famed "cowboy artist," but he was not yet widely accepted. From the time of his arrival in Montana in 1880 at the age of 16, Russell had gradually gained fame throughout Montana for his art, but it was not until he married Nancy Cooper in 1896 that his career really began to develop. She helped Charlie to progress from just another talented artist in Montana to a nationally known and respected artist. She began to demand higher prices for his art, put his work in art galleries outside of Montana, and correspond with publishers about her husband's illustrating abilities.

These efforts eventually led the Russells to New York in 1903 where Charlie was able to learn from other artists, develop his style, and most importantly, introduce his name among the big city art circles. Immediately following their return to Montana in the spring of 1904, Nancy began to correspond with publishers in New York to actively seek out illustrating commissions for Charlie. The Russells were well aware that one way for an artist to become better known was by illustrating in the widely circulated magazines such as *Collier's* and *Harper's*. It was during this illustrating period that Russell created *Escape*.

However, knowing that *Escape* was most likely an illustration does not explain why it was never listed among Russell's illustrations. Perhaps *Escape* was prepared but never actually published. Another possibility is that it was published, but under a different title. Sometimes a publisher would supply his own title if the illustration had no title, or he would change the artist's title to suit his purposes. One of Russell's paintings has been published under 22 different titles.[2] Maybe the image of *Escape* could be found in one of the over 50 books and 100 stories and articles that Russell illustrated.[3]

An image strikingly similar to *Escape* appeared in Russell's own collection of short stories, *Trails Plowed Under*, compiled just before his death. *I'm Scareder of Him Than I am of the Injuns* illustrates the story, "A Pair of Outlaws." Like *Escape*, this illustration shows the same cowboy on a bucking horse, gripping the saddle horn, clenching a rope, about to lose his hat. Both cowboys are below an embankment. Both are pursued by Indians on horses.

The short story accompanying the illustration reveals more about both images. In "A Pair of Outlaws," a man called Bowlegs finds trouble in a saloon, shoots a man, and leaves town on the run. After two days of hard riding, his horse is practically lame, and Bowlegs is anxious to find a new mount. He is in luck when he spots a herd of horses. "One big, high-headed roan" catches Bowlegs' eye. He corners the roan in a wash and then notices the horse has brand marks all over his hide signaling to Bowlegs that this horse "changed hands a lot of times an' none of his owners loved him." Back then, a bad horse was known as an outlaw, so that made for a pair of outlaws. In spite of the horse's bad marks, Bowlegs recognizes that the horse will be strong and fast, so after a lot of trouble, he succeeds in saddling the bronc. Just then, he notices a group of war-painted Cheyenne Indians heading his way, and reasons, "It's a sure case of hurry up." But "The minnit he [the horse] feels my weight, the ball opens." And Bowlegs begins to describe in great detail the kicking and bucking of "Mister Outlaw." When the bucking finally stops, the roan takes off "bustin' a hole in the breeze" and the pair safely escapes.[4]

It is during this description of bucking that a few key clues are dropped. One observer of *Escape* speculated that the man in the painting was not a real cowboy because a real cowboy would not be hanging on to the saddle horn. Surely Russell would have been aware of this obvious fact after all his cowboy years in Montana. This line from "A Pair of Outlaws" explains: "I've made my brags before this that nothin' that wore hair could make me go to leather [hang on to the saddle horn], but this time I damn near pull the horn out by the roots, an' it's a Visalia steel fork at that" [5] (Visalia is a type of saddle and the steel fork is the front part of the saddle that connects the horn to the rest of the saddle).[6] Another line is directly reflected in both illustrations: "Finally he kicks my hat off—either that or he makes me kick it off." The saddle horn and hat elements find their way into both illustrations and come directly from the narration in the story leading to the conclusion that both *Escape* and *I'm Scareder of Him Than I am of the Injuns* were created to illustrate "A Pair of Outlaws."

Despite the striking similarities of the two paintings and their undeniable connection to "A Pair of Outlaws," they cannot be the same illustration. The image in the book is a watercolor gouache. Its composition is horizontal, not vertical, and it includes the herd of horses in the background. Also, the horse in the book has his head bowed the opposite direction of the horse in *Escape*.

Charles. M. Russell (1864–1926), *Escape*, 1908. Black and white oil on canvas, 17 5/8 x 12 in. Gift of William E. Weiss. 21.73

Looking further into the origins of *Trails Plowed Under* and "A Pair of Outlaws" provides clues about the reasons Russell apparently created another very similar illustration for the same story. In the new Bison Books Edition of *Trails Plowed Under*, Russell authority, Brian Dippie, explains that the book is a 1926 compilation of short stories Russell wrote throughout his life. Included are four stories that Russell originally wrote and illustrated for the *Outing Magazine* from 1907 to 1908. Dippie discovered that Russell prepared "A Pair of Outlaws" with an illustration for the magazine, but *Outing* hit financial problems, so "A Pair of Outlaws" and its accompanying illustration were not bought and published as Russell had planned. Later *Collier's* bought the story with the potential of publishing the story without the illustration. But Nancy did not forget the painting. In a letter to one of *Collier's* editors, she writes, "He [Charles] has a dandy drawing that goes with it [the story] and it would be to[o] bad to think it could never be used with the story it was made for."[7] Finally in 1926, the story was resurrected and used for *Trails Plowed Under*, but *Escape* did not accompany it.[8]

The new illustration that Russell created for *Trails Plowed Under* may have been done at the request of the publisher. The watercolor gouache is similar to the other illustrations, mainly watercolor or pen and ink, and the style and medium of the oil painting may have been out of place in the book. Perhaps a horizontal composition was more appropriate for what the publisher wanted for the book. And maybe after 18 years, Russell decided he wanted a different style. Regardless of the reasons, *Escape* would never be published with "A Pair of Outlaws."

Just who gave the painting the title, *Escape*, is still a mystery. In the correspondence between Nancy Russell and the editor of *Outing Magazine*, the illustration's title is never mentioned. However, an art dealer with no idea of its origin would probably give it some sort of title about a cowboy on a bronc being chased by Indians, so it is likely that whoever titled the painting knew its connection to "A Pair of Outlaws." And considering its complete lack of publicity, it seems likely that as time went on, only the Russells would know the connection, which implies that *Escape* is the authentic title.

Although it was never published, *Escape* reminds viewers not only of Charles M. Russell's great career as an artist, but also of his career as an illustrator and author. Whether it was a grand gallery painting, an illustration for a magazine, or a short story, Russell used his talents to preserve the old West with its cowboys, Indians, and sometimes even a pair of outlaws. ■

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[1]Yost, Karl and Frederic G. Renner, *A Bibliography of the Published Works of Charles M. Russell*, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1971.

[2]*Lewis and Clark Meeting Indians at Ross' Hole.* Yost, Karl and Frederic G. Renner, *A Bibliography of the Published Works of Charles M. Russell*, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1971, v.

[3]Renner, Frederic G., *Charles M. Russell Paintings, Drawings, and Sculpture in the Amon G. Carter Collection*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1966, 73.

[4]Russell, Charles M. *Trails Plowed Under*, Garden City, Doubleday, Page & Company, 1927, 85–90.

[5]Ibid, 89.

[6]Ward, Fay E., *The Working Cowboy's Manual*, (New York, Bonanza Books, 1983, 206, 208, 213.

[7]Britzman collection, Accession Number C. 6.222, Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center. Nancy C. Russell to Caspar Whitney, 1 March, 1909.

[8]Russell, Charles M. *Trails Plowed Under*, Bison Books Edition, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1996, introduction by Brian W. Dippie, viii.

Charles. M. Russell (1864–1926), *I'm Scareder of Him Than I am of the Injuns*. Courtesy of Montana Historical Society. Gift of C. R. Smith. 52.04.12

Thom Ross (b. 1952), *The Virginian*, 2001. Acrylic on canvas, 36 x 30 in. Used with permission of Thom Ross.

THOM ROSS

by Frances B. Clymer
Librarian, McCracken Research Library

Artist and author Thom Ross, whose art has focused on the American West and baseball — his two great passions, loves to tell a story. The Buffalo Bill Historical Center's Whitney Gallery of Western Art is home to several Ross paintings including, *Scene from the Battle of the Alamo* (acrylic on paper, 2000), *Burial at Sea* (acrylic on canvas, 1999), and *Hickok and Cody*, (acrylic on canvas, 1998). While primarily a studio artist, Ross has achieved considerable success as an illustrator. He has provided illustrations for "twenty two or twenty three books" including histories and books about baseball. In 2001 his book *Gunfight at the OK Corral in Words and Pictures*, was published by the Fulcrum Publishing Company of Golden, Colorado. That same year, Ross was selected to illustrate the centennial edition of Owen Wister's novel *The Virginian*, being published by the Buffalo Bill Historical Center and Roberts Reinhart Publishers. In the past his illustrations have been drawn from already finished paintings, portraying scenes of actual events or people. The illustrations for *The Virginian* represent a departure for him, in that they are commissioned works created for a fictional story.

By deconstructing the icons of the west, Ross strives to look at them in new ways.

During a recent telephone conversation from his home in Seattle, Ross provided insights into his work and evolution as an artist. "When I was growing up all the TV shows were westerns," he remarked. Shows like *Bonanza, Rawhide, Have Gun Will Travel* and *The Virginian* were among those that stimulated Ross's interest in the frontier west. Born in California in 1952, his childhood in Sausalito was fairly typical for the period. In addition to enjoying TV westerns, he remembers being impressed with John Wayne in the movie *The Alamo*. Hunting, fishing and baseball were also important elements in his life. As a teenager, when many of his peers began to pursue other interests, Ross continued to be fascinated by the great stories of the West — stories told from the perspective of the daring and fearless warriors engaged in the winning of this vast region. Ross completed a fine arts degree at California State University, Chico in 1974, and spent the next two years living and working in California.

A great turning point in his life took place at the 100th anniversary of the Battle of the Little Big Horn, where Ross experienced what he describes as an "existential epiphany." When he and some friends arrived in Montana several days before the June 25, 1976 commemoration, they witnessed protests staged by representatives of the American Indian Movement. These were followed by a visit from a pro-Custer contingent that included George Armstrong Custer's great-nephew. The tension between the two views of Custer was palpable.

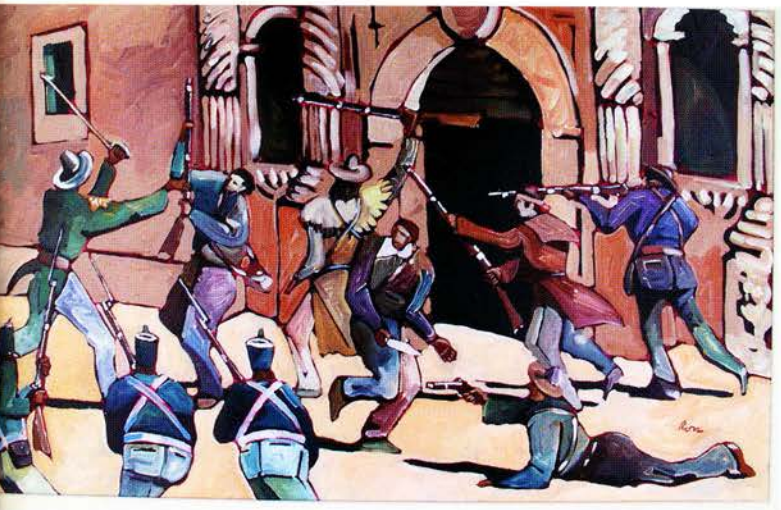
Thom Ross (b. 1952), *Hickok and Cody*, 1998. Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 60 in. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. W. D. Weiss. 12.98.2

After all the participants had departed, Ross found himself sitting at the memorial site, when a wild wind arose out of nowhere and began howling across the land. In the twenty minutes the windstorm lasted (the same amount of time the last stand of the battle took, according to Ross's reading of battle accounts), he reached an important realization. It was time for him to start learning again, to let go of the preconceived, iconic notions of the American West and its heroes, and gain an awareness of the multiple ways in which the battle and its aftermath can be viewed. This relearning extended to other historic events such as the Shootout at the OK Corral and the Battle of the Alamo, which continue to evoke the "Myth of the West."

It had already become apparent to Ross during his student years, as he experimented with depictions of classic American heroes, that his was a minority perspective in the California of the 60s and 70s. Seeking a place where he could paint his heroes and tell their stories, he migrated to the Jackson Hole area in Wyoming, where he waited on tables and worked on his art. During this time he married and became a father. June 2, 1984 marked another turning point in his life. His daughter Rachel was born, and his resolve to be an artist was solidified. In the ensuing years Ross lived in Vermont and Palm Springs, California, working as a waiter by night and a painter by day. He credits friend and fellow artist Delos Van Earl with providing the friendship and artistic camaraderie that sustained him through what were sometimes difficult times.

By deconstructing the icons of the west, Ross strives to look at them in new ways. His depictions do not shy away from the violent aspects of the rough and tumble culture of the frontier west. For him, violence is a defining characteristic of the cowboy myth, where the hero is often portrayed as the judge, jury and executioner in an unforgiving, savage land. Unlike other western artists who "do not want to deal with the darker side, the battle between life and death" that is part of our common experience, Ross strives to show our shared humanity in his works. "Why?" he asks, "does something like the OK Corral resonate?" "Do we somehow unconsciously relate to the isolation and loneliness?" "How do you paint the events?" His efforts to answer these questions and create a fresh, new means of expression for himself are hallmarks of his works whether on canvas or in three-dimensional sculpture.

Ross's writings on baseball have been published in anthologies alongside Stephen King, Jack Kerouac, Doris Kearns Goodwin, Phillip Roth, Richard Hugo, John Sayles and Garrison Keillor. His paintings and sculptures can be seen in galleries and museums in Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Texas, Washington, and Wyoming. Ross shares his passion for the West with his two daughters, visiting sites where history was made and telling their tales. ■



Thom Ross (b. 1952), *The Alamo*, 2000. Acrylic on canvas, 16 5/8 x 27 3/4 in. Mary Jester Allen Fund Purchase. 15.00

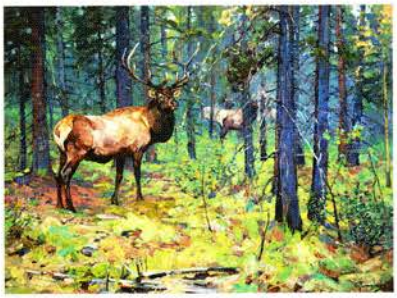
The 100th Anniversary Edition of *The Virginian*

by Nathan Bender
Housel Curator, McCracken Research Library

The McCracken Research Library is proud to announce the publication of the 100th Anniversary Edition of Owen Wister's classic novel *The Virginian: A Horseman of the Plains.* This centennial edition features specially commissioned artwork by Thom Ross and a new foreword by B. Byron Price, former director of the Buffalo Bill Historical Center. The original illustrations by Ross are based on nine acrylic paintings on canvas and five black and white block prints that capture the dramatic spirit, humor, and romance of Wister's novel. This artwork, incorporated into a new book design by the SangFroid Press featuring Janson and Caslon type fonts, gives Owen Wister's novel a fresh contemporary look while retaining the essence of traditional western values. Roberts Rinehart Publishers partnered with the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in the creation of this exciting new publication.

Originally published in 1902 by The MacMillan Company of New York, the text of the 100th Anniversary Edition was digitally scanned from the copy of *The Virginian* from Buffalo Bill Cody's TE Ranch library, now held within the Garlow Family Collection of the McCracken Research Library. Price's foreword provides a brief historical look at the first and centennial editions, and comments on how the novel helped establish a romantic, chivalrous image of the cowboy in American culture. ■

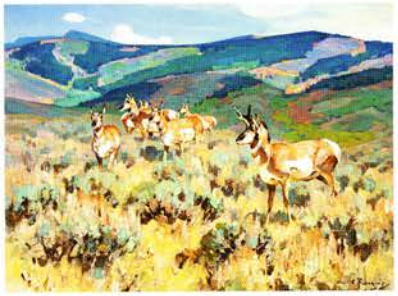
Silver Tip Grizzly Bear—Rocky Mountains, Alberta



The Herd Bull

The Mountaineers—Big Horn Sheep on Wilcox Pass

Mule Deer in the Badlands, Dawson County, Montana



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Moose

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