THE AMERICAN WEST

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF WISCONSIN

Cover: The American bison is a beast of almost mythological splendor in this oil painting by nineteenth century artist Alfred Jacob Miller. Miller's painting represents just one view of the buffalo in a collection of 125 works on the theme now at the Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, Fort Worth. A selection of pictures from the exhibition appears in this issue of The American West.

Above: A French-Canadian immigrant family, posed before its northern Wisconsin log farmhouse in 1895, proudly displays samples from what must have been a rich harvest. Tens of thousands of other families, looking for a similar plenty, headed even farther west during the last three decades of the nineteenth century and settled in new farming areas on America's prairie lands, Great Plains, and Pacific Coast. Some found their dream, but others encountered only hardship and despair. An illustrated essay on the frontier farm experience begins on page 22.

THE COVER ILLUSTRATION IS A DETAIL OF THE ORIGINAL PAINTING; THIS PICTURE APPEARS IN ITS ENTIRETY ON PAGE 16
COLLECTION OF THE AMON CARTER MUSEUM OF WESTERN ART, FORT WORTH, TEXAS

CULVER PICTURES

About the only thing missing from this jam-packed poster advertising Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show is a damsel in distress (though there's always the possibility that she's just out of sight, tied to the tracks in front of the train). Far more fun than the real thing, the show's reenactment of a western train robbery offered its audiences thrills and excitement, plus the comfort of knowing that Buffalo Bill and his riders (upper left) would never miss their cue to thunder through the pass and save the day. Meanwhile, out West, the plot was different. Train robbery was a thriving business, and for many years the bandits had all the advantages, as the article beginning on page 48 demonstrates.

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Naturalists Across the Rockies

The 1834 Journey of John Kirk Townsend and Thomas Nuttall

by John I. Merritt III

AT NOON on the twenty-ninth of March, 1834, three men set out from the bustling town of Saint Louis, walking west. They were an odd trio, even for that time and place.

Thomas Nuttall, a forty-eight-year-old naturalist, was known by a generation of Harvard students for his slovenly dress, Yorkshire accent, and preoccupation with birds and plants. An able teacher, he had recently resigned his university posts as lecturer in botany and ornithology and curator of the Harvard Botanical Garden to make the great journey of his life.

John Kirk Townsend, his young alter ego, was as outgoing as Nuttall was reserved. Scion of a prominent Quaker family of Philadelphia, Townsend had devoted much of his twenty-four years to the single-minded pursuit of birds. He had already gained an immortality of sorts by shooting, a year before in the woods near West Chester, Pennsylvania, a unique bunting that had been declared a new species and named after him.

Nathaniel Jarvis Wyeth, the third member of the group, was a Boston ice merchant turned fur-trade entrepreneur. Thirty-two years old, he had forsaken a comfortable life in the East for the rigors of the Rocky Mountains, where he had labored most of the previous two years, advancing his plan for breaking the monopoly on the Northwest fur trade held by the business descendants of John Jacob Astor and William H. Ashley.

Nuttall and Townsend, the two naturalists, had decided to walk the length of Missouri, and Wyeth had offered to accompany them a short way. The next morning he bade them well and turned back to Saint Louis to prepare for the expedition he would presently launch into the interior of what writers in the East were still calling the Great American Desert. Nuttall and Townsend intended to continue across the state at their leisure, observing the country and collecting specimens, before linking up again with Wyeth at Independence, where they would join his expedition.

They were in high spirits as they hiked the rough road. Townsend walked with a gun across his shoulder, Nuttall with a stick and a bundle. Both were wearing (so we may imagine) the wide wool hats, recently purchased in Saint Louis, that Townsend swore were hard enough to stop a rifle ball. Along the route, Nuttall found a number of curious plants but was disappointed because nothing was yet in flower. No matter—the spring migrations had begun, and the woods were filled with pileated woodpeckers, large black-and-white birds resplendent in their red cockades. The two men watched in awe as great flocks of sandhill cranes passed overhead, "some so high as to be entirely beyond the range of vision," Townsend wrote in his journal, "while their harsh, grating voices were very distinctly heard." Passenger pigeons filled the spring sky, and golden plovers en route from South America to their Arctic nesting grounds covered the prairie for acres. Townsend, who like his contemporary Audubon was easy with a gun, shot a good number of the plovers, and found that they were "very fat" and made an excellent meal that evening.

When rains came they dallied two days at the home of a widower, one of whose three daughters attracted young Townsend's interest. She and her sisters were "perfect children of nature," the sophisticated Easterner noted, and superior to most of the Missouri girls he had met, although still "touched with the awkward bashfulness and prudery which generally characterizes the prairie maidens."

Townsend and Nuttall may have appeared as the freshest of greenhorns to the frontier folk they met along the way, but in fact they were well enough suited to their journey. The Philadelphian's youth and exuberance more than made

"WIND RIVER MOUNTAINS"; NORTHERN NATURAL GAS COMPANY COLLECTION, JOSLYN ART MUSEUM, OMAHA

A painting of the Rocky Mountain Wind River Range made by Alfred Jacob Miller in 1837—just three years after Thomas Nuttall and John Kirk Townsend visited the same region—suggests the splendors the two naturalists found there.

up for his lack of experience, while the gray-haired Nuttall was actually a veteran Western traveler. Twenty-three years earlier, in 1811, he and the Scottish naturalist John Bradbury had ventured with Astor's men well up the Missouri, beyond the Mandan Indian villages in what is now North Dakota; and before taking his post at Harvard he had explored the Red River in the Indian Territory of the Southwest in the present states of Oklahoma and Texas. But Nuttall's earlier field trips would pale in comparison with the journey they had embarked on now. For at Wyeth's invitation they were headed—via the Great Plains, the Rocky Mountains, and the Columbia River—all the way to the Pacific. They would thus become the first naturalists to make an overland crossing of the continent. In so doing they would leave a legacy both to natural history and, in the form of Townsend's great journal, to the literature of the frontier.

By 1834, American ornithologists had done a remarkable job of collecting and cataloging species east of the upper plains which form the boundary between eastern and western faunas in the continental United States. Beyond this lay a vast territory that naturalists had been eager to penetrate for decades. Alexander Wilson, the Scottish poet-émigré who became the father of American ornithology, had failed a generation earlier in his effort to be appointed naturalist to Zebulon Pike's exploration of the Rockies. Wilson's eight-volume *American Ornithology* (1808–14), while thoroughly covering eastern birds north of Florida, contained little about western species other than the few plates based on specimens brought back by Lewis and Clark. Like Wilson, John James Audubon also dreamed of a field trip beyond the Mississippi to enhance his great work then in progress, *The Birds of America.* Audubon eventually made it west, but only as far as the mouth of the Yellowstone and not until after *The Birds of America* was published. In a sense, however, he traveled vicariously with Townsend and Nuttall, and it may be validly claimed that his monumental work lived up to its title only because of their expedition. Some 70 birds depicted in the final volume (1838)—out of a total from all the volumes of 505—were based on skins collected by the two naturalists, while much of the text in his accompanying *Ornithological Biography* relied on their detailed observations of birds in the field.

THOMAS NUTTALL was born in 1786 at Settle in Yorkshire. A self-educated man with a wide-ranging curiosity, he worked for a time in his uncle's Liverpool print shop before emigrating to Philadelphia in 1808, where he quickly fell under the influence of that city's thriving scientific community. Benjamin Smith Barton, of the famous family of early American naturalists, stimulated his nascent

CULVER PICTURES

Thomas Nuttall (1786–1859)

interest in natural history by introducing him to botany. In his quest for specimens, Nuttall was soon ranging through the lower Delaware Valley and as far afield as North Carolina, and eventually to Florida and Mississippi as well as to the Upper Missouri and Red River. Within ten years of his arrival in the United States he was an internationally recognized botanist and had catalogued all North American plants known to 1817. After appointment to Harvard as curator of the botanical garden, his interest expanded to include birds, leading in 1832 to the publication of *A Manual of the Ornithology of the United States and Canada*. (Periodically revised, "Nuttall" would remain a standard reference through the rest of the century.) Like Townsend and most other naturalists of his day, Nuttall was a generalist who also wrote on shells, minerals, fossils, and rock formations. In 1821 he had correlated certain limestone deposits in America and England by the fossils found in them, antedating by fifteen years the pioneering work of Samuel George Morton, a father of American paleontology. But his prevailing interest remained botany.

While in Cambridge, Nuttall became friends with Wyeth, who had collected specimens for him on his first western fur-trading expedition in 1833 and now invited him along for the second. Although nearing his fifties and with his place in science already secure, Nuttall could not refuse. His passion for the natural sciences knew no bounds. He had been in correspondence with Townsend and soon enlisted the young and equally enthusiastic Philadelphian under sponsorship of his city's prestigious research institutions, the Academy of Natural Sciences and the American Philosophical Society.

On the same day that Townsend and Nuttall stopped at the widower's house, Nat Wyeth wrote a letter from Saint Louis to his wife in Cambridge, telling her he had forgotten neither her request for "seeds and pretty stones" nor his promise to send for her if possible, although "a thousand circumstances may prevent it altho I desire it much. I feel as much as you can do the lonesomeness of my way of life but you know the success of what I have undertaken is life itself to me and if I do fail in it they shall never say that it was for want of perseverance."

Wyeth had first gone west in the spring of 1832, quitting a profitable ice business he had managed successfully on the shores of Fresh Pond in Cambridge. His head filled with what book knowledge he could acquire about the mountain fur trade, he planned to cross the continent overland from Saint Louis and meet up at Fort Vancouver on the Columbia with a shipload of supplies sent around Cape Horn. Wyeth expected to cut costs by sending his supplies by sea, then using the same ship to bring furs and salted salmon back to market. Although he schemed hard to make his plan work and learned all he could about the mountain trade, there were still huge gaps in his knowledge. "He was a learned innocent, as rank a greenhorn that ever tried the trade," historian Bernard DeVoto wrote of him. "He was like a novelist of passion about to encounter a passionate woman." Wyeth's first expedition lasted eighteen months and proved a disaster. His men quit, and the ship he sent around the Horn was lost at sea, but under the tutelage of one of the greatest of mountain men, Bill Sublette, he learned enough about the fur trade to return to Boston and get refinanced for another try.

Wyeth had planned to rejoin his naturalist friends at Independence. Traveling by steamboat, however, he met up with them by chance at Boonville twelve days after they had started their "pedestrian tour" across the state. Together they proceeded to Independence, a tiny village of fifty or so cabins, stores, and taverns perched on the Missouri near where it bends north. Townsend and Nuttall had enjoyed their fortnight on the road, and as an introduction to the natural and human denizens of the frontier it had been memorable. The sheer numbers of wildlife amazed them, particularly the brightly whirling flocks of Carolina paroquets admired by Townsend for "the splendid green and red of their plumage glancing in the sunshine," as he ruefully noted with what ease they were shot by hunters. (Like the passenger pigeons they saw darkening the sky and for much the same reasons—overshooting and habitat destruction—these lovely birds would be all but extinct by the end of the century.) In addition to their stay at the widower's house, Nuttall and Townsend had spent a sleepless night in a vermin-infested roadhouse redolent of rum and profanity. The frontier folk impressed them as a rough, hospitable, and always interesting lot. Apparently the curiosity proved mutual, for all along the route Missourians plied them with questions about their journey.

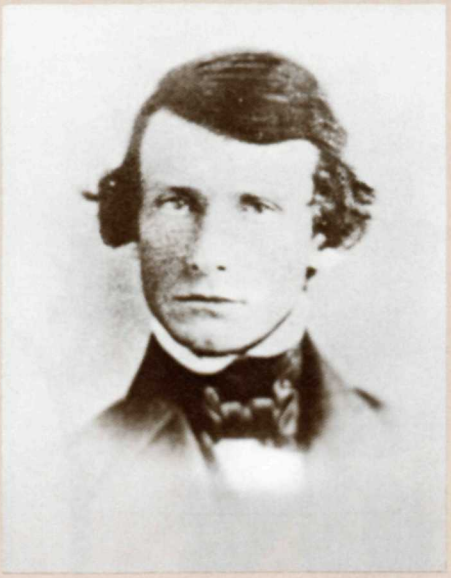
They spent two weeks at Independence outfitting for the expedition. Here was the staging area for the mountain fur trade that since 1806 had been penetrating the heart of the continent. Out of the complex maneuvering of various

fur companies there had evolved the system of the annual rendezvous: trappers who had spent the year in the mountains would gather at a predetermined spot to trade their furs for goods brought in from Missouri by pack train. Wyeth's ambitions to carve out a piece of the trade depended largely on getting his supplies to the rendezvous before Bill Sublette, his former mentor who now recognized Wyeth as a serious competitor, reached it with his. Wyeth hoped at least to cover the considerable expenses of his overland journey by what he could earn trading his supplies for furs at the rendezvous. From there he planned to go on to the Columbia system and establish several fixed posts for gathering and storing pelts, which he would send home aboard the ship he had again sent around Cape Horn. For his part, Sublette knew that freezing out Wyeth at the rendezvous would destroy the latter's enterprise and send him packing back to Cambridge for good.

On April 28, 1834, a caravan of seventy men and 250 horses rode out in double file with Wyeth in the lead. Joseph Thing, a Boston sea captain recruited to help navigate the prairie, brought up the rear. A party of Methodist missionaries, sent by their church to minister to the Flatheads on the upper Yellowstone and commanded by the indomitable Jason Lee, led their cattle along the flanks. It was an early spring, and the prairie grasses waved in the late-morning breeze. Overcome by excitement, Townsend sallied out ahead to admire the cavalcade, "our horses prancing, and neighing, and pawing the ground. Every man in the company seemed to feel a portion of the same kind of enthusiasm; uproarious bursts of merriment, and gay and lively songs, were constantly echoing along the line." The prairie was alive with yellow-headed blackbirds, which alighted on the backs of their horses. The next day they were bombarded by hailstones as big as musket balls, and on the third day out they saw their first Indians.

Riding northwest along the Little Blue River into what is now Nebraska, they reached the Platte by the eighteenth of May. By then several of the men had deserted, and—worse for Wyeth—Sublette had passed them in the race to the rendezvous, despite a later start. The Platte flowed through a wild country, absolutely flat and drier than the prairies they had just crossed. The river was several miles wide in parts, shallow enough for sandhill and whooping cranes to wade in, with sand flats and verdant islands rising from its shimmering waters. Wolves lingered in the campsites left by Sublette; pronghorn antelope raced across the plains and were easily shot for "sport," to Townsend's disgust, although his own sporting instincts would eventually get the better of him and he would shoot one himself—and feel remorseful for days afterward, as the image of the dying animal's soulful black eyes staring up at him weighed on his conscience. They would follow the Platte as far as the Sweetwater, in the present state of Wyoming, and finally go through South Pass to the rendezvous in the Green River valley. It was the same route that the next generation would call the Oregon Trail.

COLLECTION OF C. BROOKE WORTH



John Kirk Townsend (1809–1851)

The men had talked incessantly of buffalo, and here at last they encountered them—in herds stretching to the limits of the horizon, a sight "that would have excited the dullest minds to enthusiasm," Townsend wrote. Eventually he shot one and watched as the great bull trembled and swayed from side to side, "the clotted gore hanging like icicles from his nostrils," until it fell.

Later Townsend and the missionary Jason Lee took part in a memorable scene that both recorded in their journals. On a hunting foray, miles from the Platte and seized by thirst after a hard day's ride under the prairie sun, they watched, "gaping with astonishment and no little loathing," a standard trick of the mountain man far from water. Wyeth's chief hunter, Richardson, sliced open the stomach of a freshly killed buffalo and filled his cup with the "green and gelatinous juices" ("what they called cider," Lee noted). Richardson, "who always valued himself upon his politeness," first offered the cup to his greenhorn friends. For Lee the potion "was too thick with excrement to please my fancy though they affirmed with oaths that it was very good." Richardson, obviously relishing the situation, laughed heartily and drank it to the dregs. He then convinced Townsend to taste the buffalo's blood from the heart, "and immediately as it touched my lips, my burning thirst . . . got the better of my abhorrence; I plunged my head into the reeking ventricles, and drank until forced to stop for breath." Slightly ashamed and looking perhaps for dispensation, Townsend turned his blood-smeared face to Lee and grinned. As robust a spirit as ever plied the missionary trade, his friend burst out laughing until the tears ran down his cheeks. Back at camp that night, Townsend drank water and vomited up the blood, glad at last "to be rid of the disgusting encumbrance." Less than two months out of Saint Louis, they had come a long way.

During his cross-country trek, John Kirk Townsend collected hundreds of bird specimens; Townsend's warbler, shown here in a detail from an Audubon painting, immortalizes the discoverer's name.

THERE WERE OTHER ADVENTURES, and Townsend's telling of them makes his journal what it is—the most readable and exciting account ever written of the continental crossing. Returning from watch one night, he found staring from the dark corner of the tent "a pair of eyes, wild and bright as those of a tiger." As Townsend raised his gun to shoot, an Indian sprang before him and grabbed the muzzle, while another attacked from the side, his knife flashing in the firelight. The other whites broke up the tussle and explained: the Indians were Pawnee chiefs on a friendly visit. But following Wyeth's example, Townsend went to bed well-armed, watching the Pawnees' eyes glimmering in the dark until he drifted off to sleep at last, "dreaming of Indians, guns, daggers, and buffalo."

They rode on, through sandstorms and swarms of gnats whose bites left Wyeth's face so swollen he was blind for two days afterward; beneath hovering bald eagles, screaming alarm as the caravan passed their nest of young in a cedar tree; past prairie dog cities, rattlesnakes, and herds of wild horses; across the South Platte and along its north branch into the strange country of the upper river; past Chimney Rock and Scotts Bluff, famous later as landmarks on the Oregon Trail but familiar to mountain men for two decades already; through weird formations of man-high mounds, so close together they forced the riders to kneel on their saddles while Nuttall rode ahead, collecting "with a trembling and eager hand" the wildflowers growing in riotous profusion.

In this new habitat, wildlife was abundant. The naturalists cast away clothing, shaving boxes, and soap to make room for specimens. Townsend dreamed of a future expedition made up entirely of naturalists. By the tenth of June they had come in view of the Wind River Mountains, dazzling white in their cover of snow. Here in their first encounter with the grizzly bear—"Old Ephraim" to the mountain men—a huge bruin chased a terrified greenhorn and was shot dead in a volley of bullets.

On the fourteenth of June they crossed the Great Divide and five days later camped beside the Green River at the rendezvous site, in what is now west-central Wyoming. Townsend had suffered a misfortune along the way when the second volume of his journal slipped from his pocket along the trail and was lost forever. (He later filled in the missing parts by borrowing from a journal Nuttall had been keeping; historians have never accounted for the latter.) Townsend also came down with a violent fever, and his condition was rendered worse by the chaos of the rendezvous itself, which he described in a celebrated passage: "There is [in addition to the Indians who came to trade their furs] a great variety of personages amongst us; most of them calling themselves white men, French-Canadians, half-breeds, &c., their colour nearly as dark, and their manners wholly as wild, as the Indians with whom they constantly associate. These people, with their obstreperous mirth, their whooping, and howling, and quarrelling, added to the mounted Indians, who are constantly dashing into, and through our camp, yelling like fiends, the barking and baying of savage wolf-dogs, and the incessant cracking of rifles and carbines, render our camp a perfect bedlam. A more unpleasant situation for an invalid could scarcely be conceived. I am confined closely to the tent with illness, and am compelled all day to listen to the hiccoughing jargon of drunken traders, the *sacré* and *foutre* of Frenchmen run wild, and the swearing and screaming of our own men, who are scarcely less savage than the rest, being heated by the detestable liquor which circulates freely among them."

Townsend's troubles were nothing compared to Wyeth's, however. Sublette had arrived at the rendezvous first and had convinced Tom Fitzpatrick, the representative of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company with whom Wyeth had earlier signed an exclusive trading agreement, to repudiate the contract. Wyeth's plan, hinging as it did on a successful trade at the rendezvous, was wrecked, although he had no choice at this point but to carry out the rest of his scheme, which meant going on to the Columbia to build his supply post and meeting up with his ship at Fort Vancouver. Wyeth and his party left the rendezvous on July 2, riding northwest into the present state of Idaho, accompanied by some thirty Nez Percé and Flathead warriors with their wives, children, and dogs. The Indians rode with them for protection against the Blackfeet, whose intractable hatred of whites and most other tribes made them the scourge of the

northern Rockies, the "Iroquois of the West."

Twelve days later the group arrived at the Snake, a main tributary of the Columbia, where Wyeth picked the site for Fort Hall, the outpost he had planned for collecting and storing furs. (The present site of Fort Hall Indian Reservation is some forty miles upstream from Wyeth's camp. The fort was named for Henry Hall, Wyeth's senior sponsor.) The trip was uneventful, save for another grizzly attack and the accidental death of Zip Coon, a young antelope adopted a month earlier along the Platte and one of several animal foundlings acquired during the long march across the continent. These included grizzly cubs, which though no bigger than puppies proved "so cross and snappish" as to be dangerous to handle. Buffalo calves occasionally joined them, too. When Townsend captured a young bull it showed its gratitude by butting him in the chest and sending him sprawling, to loud guffaws from the men.

They spent three weeks at Fort Hall. Game proved scarce, so a hunting party was assembled that included Townsend. On its return six days later with a healthy supply of buffalo meat, he noted that Nuttall had become "so exceedingly thin that I should scarcely have known him." During the hunters' absence the camp had lived on nothing but grizzly meat—"and short rations of that," Nuttall complained to his young friend. With "a complacent glance at my own rotund and *cow-fed* person," Townsend wrote, I "wished my *poor* friend better luck for the future." They were joined in camp by a motley band of trappers led by Thomas McKay of the Hudson's Bay Company, and by Captain William Drummond Stewart, a Scottish nobleman hunting big game. (Stewart eventually wrote a novel based on his adventures and lived out his years in his ancestral castle, surrounded by huge western landscapes.) The following Sunday most of them assembled under the rustling cottonwoods to listen to Jason Lee preach what history records as the first sermon in the Oregon country. (Lee had planned to leave Wyeth and minister to the Flatheads, but following the rendezvous he abruptly decided to abandon his mission and proceed instead to Oregon. He stayed on there to play a prominent role in the territory's history.) The next day Lee read from the Bible again, this time over the body of one of McKay's men, killed when thrown from his mount during a horse race.

Lee and the other missionaries left with Stewart and McKay on July 30, followed six days later by Wyeth's party, now down to thirty men, a few squaws, and 116 horses. Leaving the Snake, they crossed overland and after a week's hard going camped on a broad plain by the Big Wood, or Boise, River. The dry, lava-strewn country of chasms and naked peaks east of the Boise was among the most desolate they had encountered. The "air feels like the breath of a sirocco, the tongue becomes parched and horny, and the mouth, nose, and eyes are incessantly assailed by . . . dust," Townsend wrote. Here, where wagon trains would later founder, the men chewed bullets and

Though a man of broad interests, Thomas Nuttall was primarily a botanist whose greatest joy on wilderness treks was to collect plant specimens, such as this lovely river crab apple which appeared in his volume on American trees.

pebbles in a futile effort to cut their thirst, and a mulatto identified only as Jim threw himself on the ground and announced he would die rather than go further. (They soon found water, and one of the men went back to rescue him.) The caravan had lost its way in a maze of mountains in the area now known, appropriately, as the Lost River Range. On reaching the Boise they found it "literally *crowded* with salmon" on their spawning run. They had gone a week or more without fresh game, and when a sleek little colt wandered, prancing and whinnying, into camp, Townsend admired "the little stranger" only fleetingly before sending a bullet through him. That night the colt was stewed with beaver, grouse, and salmon. A Snake chief invited to dinner stalked out in disgust when, after a few mouthfuls, he detected horsemeat. "It struck me as a singular instance of accuracy and discrimination in the organs of taste," noted Townsend, ever the dispassionate observer. If "the chief knew how the horse meat he so detested was procured, and where, he might probably have expressed even more indignation, for it is not at all unlikely that the colt had strayed from his own band."

On the twenty-third of August they crossed the Snake into the present state of Oregon. By now their diet had changed from meat to salmon, and in the changeover many were suffering diarrhea (as they had earlier from the alkali water of the upper plains). The next day Richardson left,

Continued on page 62

THE BISON in ART and HISTORY

A new exhibition at the Amon Carter Museum explores one of the West's noblest and most enduring images. Here, a selection from the show, with an accompanying essay on the buffalo's long and often tragic history.

by Larry Barsness

OIL ON CANVAS, 1888
BUFFALO BILL HISTORICAL CENTER, CODY

LAST OF THE BUFFALO
Albert Bierstadt

A FUR TRAPPER once described a friend as "a big feller with hair frizzed out like an old buffler's just afore sheddin' time"; he used the natural buffalo analogy that would allow his hearers to see the "big feller" in a meaningful image. Buffalo images popped out of the mouths of fur trappers because the beast had imprinted so many images in their brains. They spoke of bravery as "brave as a buffalo in the spring"; it was the opposite of "I run as ef a wounded buffler was raisin' my shirt with his horns."

Indians, too, used buffalo metaphors. Crows described the circumference of a tree as one robe, two robe, or three robe—a visual estimate of the buffalo robes necessary to reach around it. The expression "Drop his robe" meant that a man died where he stood—with his boots on, if you will. Sioux Indians named each winter after an outstanding happening. "Winter when the buffalo stood among the tipis" meant a good winter; on a hide calendar a stylized sketch of buffalo among tipis would depict its goodness. Likewise, Indians used the buffalo image to symbolize and name various months of the year: thin buffalo moon or moon of much buffalo hair. . . .

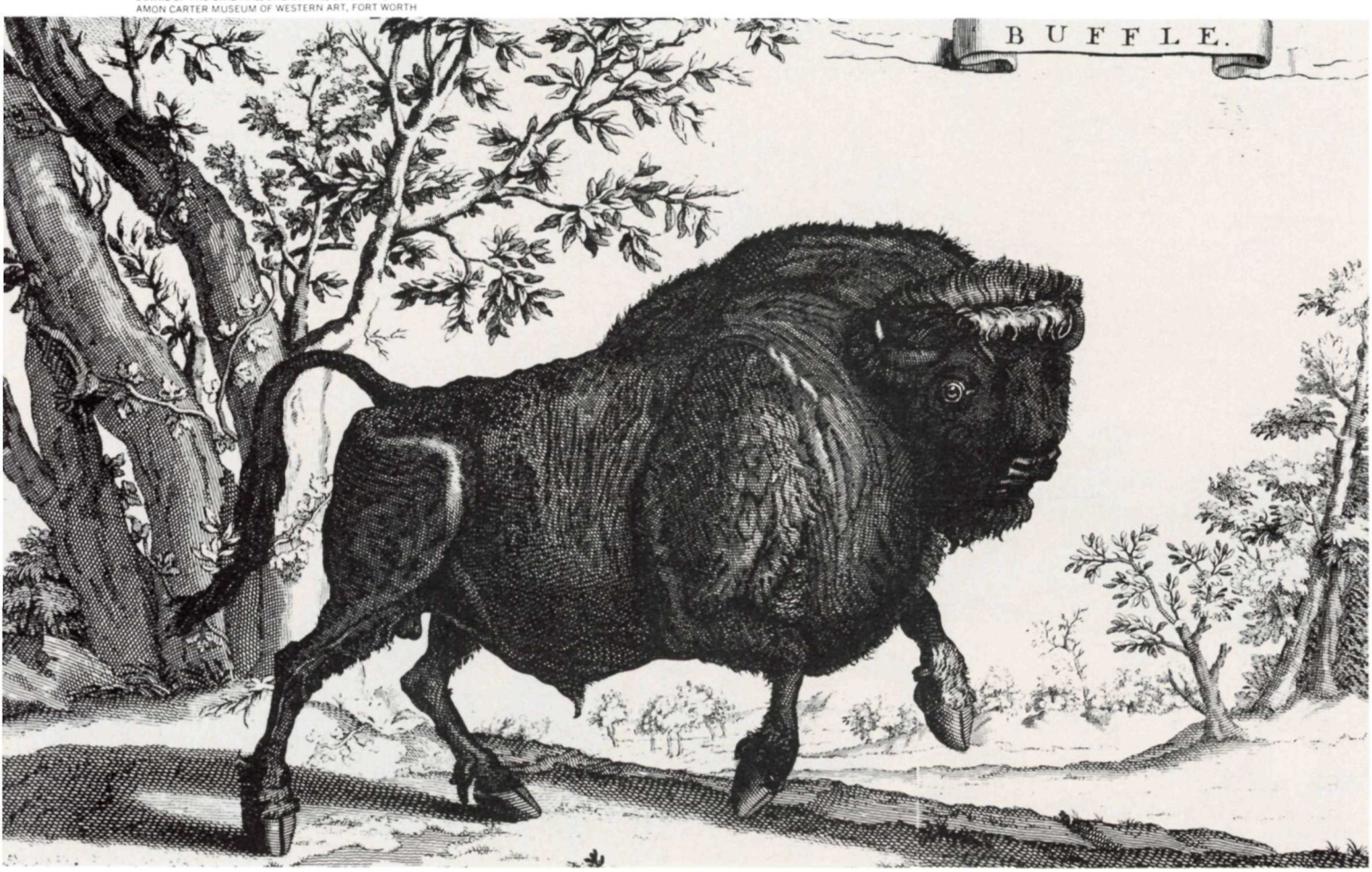
In the West we've named a low, gray orange-berried bush "the buffalo berry"; in the East we have the buffalo nut, black and two-horned. Today we understand the term buffaloed, although, since we see no more encompassing herds, we no longer see the image that brought it into our language, but we might still see the image in "Dead as a buffalo chip."

Buffalo images help us to see an image of what the West was—an Eden filled with these pastoral wild animals, an adventureland filled with buffalo to chase, a wonderland filled with more big bodies than any other place on earth, a playground where one could plink at the biggest targets

The exhibition The Bison in Art *is showing at the Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, Fort Worth, through April 3, after which it goes on tour. For other museums and dates for this show,* *turn to page 54.*

The text on these pages is adapted from material in The Bison in Art, *catalog for the Amon Carter exhibition. Containing illustrations of all 125 works in the show (40 of them in color), the 152-page book costs $14.50 and is available from the Northland Press, Flagstaff, or the Amon Carter Museum.*

DETAIL OF THE ORIGINAL; ENGRAVING, CIRCA 1770
AMON CARTER MUSEUM OF WESTERN ART, FORT WORTH



BUFFEL
Jakob Van Der Schley

of our continent's outdoor shooting gallery, a mine of hides and tongues to be worked and forgotten . . . a symbol of America's diversity of experience.

Artists saw all of this and captured it on sketch pad, on canvas, on wet plate and film. Their pictures of buffalo reveal much of what attracts us to the West of yesterday.

No European arriving on the North American continent during the centuries before our own could remain free from involvement with the fact of this beast. In the East the New Yorker in his sleigh bundled under a buffalo robe, the butcher speared smoked buffalo tongue from brine, the traveler along the Mississippi followed buffalo trails through the canebrake, the housewife sewed on buffalo-bone buttons. In the West the homesteader raised no cattle because he could kill buffalo for his table, the fur factor fed buffalo meat to his employees, the Forty-niner played with buffalo calves and then butchered them, and travelers set fierce dogs on wandering buffalo to keep them out of camp at night.

North America was buffalo land. Never on any continent had an animal of this size expanded into such a population—thirty to sixty million.

Nor did the buffalo population expand just because the plains climate suited them. Prehistoric species had lived in the Arctic tundra. Probably the buffalo emigrated to our Arctic from northern Asia fifty to eighty thousand years ago, trying to escape pressure from hunters. They crossed the then-existent land Beringea, a grass-covered link between Asia and North America, revealed only when the Ice Ages impounded much of the world's water in ice, thus lowering the ocean level. When the buffalo and his pursuers reached Mackenzie Bay, they found themselves beyond mountain barriers and for some reason turned south. Both followed the great Mackenzie River valley to the open grasslands. Here extended thousands of miles of forage, water and brush, the perfect home for grass eaters.

Eventually buffalo ancestors overflowed the home. Some swam the Mississippi to live among eastern forests; others moved south into the desert, as least as far as Culiacán, Mexico, perhaps even to Nicaragua; still others walked over the easy, pasturelike Continental Divide between the head of the Missouri and the head of the Columbia, and made their way to Oregon and upper California. But all of these disappeared to be replaced

ETCHING, 1790
AMON CARTER MUSEUM OF WESTERN ART, FORT WORTH

AMERICANISCHER AUR OCHS / BOS BISON
Johann Rudolph Holzhalb

by our two modern subspecies *Bison bison bison* (plains buffalo) and *Bison bison athabascae* (wood buffalo). They, too, had almost filled the continent above the Rio Grande when European man arrived.

If a drought stunted grass, these modern buffalo foraged on brush; when water holes dried up they went for days without water while they moved to wetter land—perhaps to high mountain elevations. When deep snow covered the grass, buffalo rooted it aside to feed; when the blizzard howled, they stayed snug in their woolly winter coat—but they shed it before the hot summer came. They, unlike other large animals on the continent, could live anywhere on it, from tropic to arctic, swamp to desert, mountain peak to ocean beach.

Probably buffalo lived longer than most North American animals; animals thirty years old live in today's herds. And cows continued fertile at twenty-five, even thirty years old. Baby calves six months old could outrun wolves; if caught, though hornless, they stomped and kicked some attackers to death, and perhaps escaped. A buffalo herd could outrun the usual horse, especially one burdened with rider. In spite of bulk, a buffalo could scale bluffs with the agility of a mountain goat; he could jump six-foot obstacles.

Small wonder this animal lived in such numbers on our continent.

ASIAN MAN eventually filled this continent as well as the South American continent. Though he'd arrived here pretty much as a buffalo hunter (at least a hunter of big grass eaters), now he lived more variously. He raised corn in most arable places. He gorged on salmon in the Pacific Northwest and shellfish in the Atlantic Northeast. But he lived most leisurely from the western banks of the Mississippi to the Rockies, gorging on the big, red-meated, warm-blooded buffalo, using the rest of his carcass for all manner of useful things.

These foot-hunters knew all of the buffalo's instincts and played upon them; furthermore, they, lucky hunters, lived amongst unwary herds that, unlike deer or elk, sometimes of a night came grazing amongst the tipis or about the camp's outskirts.

AFTER 1850
DENVER ART MUSEUM

BUFFALO SHIELD
(Cheyenne)

CIRCA 1870-1890
BUFFALO BILL HISTORICAL CENTER, CODY

BEADED PIPE BAG
(Brulé Sioux)

French explorers found such hunters along eastern rivers and along the Mississippi. Early Spanish explorers found them killing buffalo along the Pecos, the Canadian, and the Cimarron, gathering hides to trade for corn in nearby pueblos and assure good winter living.

Buffalo hunting peoples, adventuresome, uninterested in farming, loving the wandering life more than the sedentary, followed the herds. And since the buffalo provided most necessities to these wanderers, each group came to revere the beast, the giver of all; they came to place him and the sun at the center of life, as the givers of all life. They prayed to the sun each morning; they prayed to a buffalo skull after cleansing themselves in the sweatbath. Many of their ceremonies, even among groups who differed in language and dress, revered the buffalo skull and used both it and the buffalo tongue in religious ceremonies. All groups danced a sun dance; all danced various fertility dances and hunting dances using buffalo paraphernalia. They saw magic in buffalo things.

Over the ages such people learned to use all of the animal: the hooves for hammers and glue, the horns to carry hot coals to the next campground, the tail as an

PEN AND PENCIL ON PAPER, 1876
AMON CARTER MUSEUM OF WESTERN ART, FORT WORTH

CHEYENNES AFTER BUFFALO
Buffalo Meat

expunger for the sweatbath, the ribs as sleds, the stomach and pericardium as water jug when suspended from three crossed sticks (like stool legs). And the luxuriant cowhide, taken in the full fall pelage, made the warmest bedding or winter capes; taken in the summer's shed condition it made tipi skins. Bull hides, especially the tough neck skin, made durable shields or, when covering a durable bowllike frame made from willow sticks, a useful boat. Teeth, bones, sinews made hundreds of other things.

During summer, life amongst the herds meant pleasant gatherings of many tribal groups together, for now the herds gathered in enormous careless swarms, their energies and attention swallowed by the urgency of the rut; a man with a bow or spear could move almost unnoticed out of coulee or willow brush to down the animal he chose.

And what feasting one downed animal provided. Immediately following the hunt, meat still body warm; thin-sliced liver laced with drops of gall, mouthfuls of warm large intestine yet full of chyme. A hundred pounds of innards and four hundred pounds of meat from a fat cow carcass. This was not a carcass with barely enough meat to feed a family group for one day, such as a deer carcass; here was meat for a hundred people for one day. Amongst the buffalo herds, a man needn't hunt, hunt, hunt most of the days of his life for fear of starving. A few animals down meant days free for game-playing, storytelling, or idling. At night, after a big hunt, warm orange light gleamed late through tipi skin. The lucky hunter feasted his friends; serving tongue, dripping ribs, and yards of toasted gut turned inside out, stuffed with meat, spitted and roasted over the coals. He saved the delectable marrow for the old people, the only meat their gums could chew.

In winter, people lived in somewhat smaller groups than in summer, although living on buffalo allowed larger groups to stay together than did living on deer or rabbit as in the North and East. They camped in sheltered places near the woods and river bottoms where buffalo might winter. In nice weather, men hunted; in cold they sat at home and ate pemmican soup and dried meat. They complained of starving, meaning they wanted fresh meat. Few buffalo peoples starved. They went into winter camp with tons of dried buffalo meat, enough to carry them through most any winter. Winter, then, was a time of peaceful re-

OIL ON CANVAS
AMON CARTER MUSEUM OF WESTERN ART, FORT WORTH

BUFFALO HUNT
Alfred Jacob Miller

laxation, of storytelling, of game-playing, of gambling.

This carefree life became even more so when it gained the European's horse, not only because the pack horse could carry more than the pack dog (the tiny skin tent women could carry or dogs drag on tiny travois grew into the large tipi). The horse also meant transportation for the sick, the old, the wounded, and small children.

And the horse brought pleasure to the foot-hunters. Horses let them ride to the far horizon just to take a peek over it and then, unable to resist, a ride to the next far horizon, and the next. Possession of the horse made buffalo hunters an even more cosmopolitan people.

The horse allowed hunters to travel quickly to a herd and quickly return with the meat. Equally important, it meant the lone hunter could move quickly to a buffalo he spied in the distance, even though he, when he came near, would probably dismount to sneak up on it. The man with a buffalo horse or two became a powerful influence in the village; he fed extra people, and those he fed became his followers. But the horse did not, as commonly thought, increase the ability of the buffalo hunter to kill buffalo.

Although the buffalo hunters had the horse for just a little more than one hundred years—tribes in the Southwest first obtained horses about 1700 and tribes in the North about 1775—these people became some of the finest horsemen in the world. When people picture a North American Indian, they picture him horsed—and, usually, chasing a buffalo.

AS THE EUROPEAN moved west from the Atlantic Coast, he forced eastern tribes to move west also. And as these tribes moved onto the open plains, they, too, became buffalo hunters. The Cheyennes, the Blackfeet, the Assiniboins—all peoples of the East, learned buffalo hunting from the Plains tribes and adopted their buffalo mysticism. The numbers of people subsisting on the buffalo increased, but the herds seemed still innumerable. But, according to William T. Hornaday of the Smithsonian Institution, by 1832 no buffalo could be found east of the Mississippi, and by 1825 the herds had disappeared from Iowa, across the river. The shrinking of the eastern

AQUATINT AND ETCHING, 1840
AMON CARTER MUSEUM OF WESTERN ART, FORT WORTH

BISON DANCE OF THE MANDANS
Karl Bodmer

herds mostly came about because of the numbers of European settlers using the beasts as targets, shooting them but often as not leaving the meat to rot.

The buffalo made possible much of the exploration of the West. The Lewis and Clark expedition ate well once it reached buffalo country but almost starved when it left it in the Rockies. Major Stephen Long's expedition through the Missouri country in 1819–1820 and the Zebulon Pike expedition along the Red River in 1806 subsisted on buffalo. And Pike's men not only subsisted, but also wasted, shooting extra buffalo each day, just for the excitement. Covered-wagon caravans heading for Oregon and California tried to live on the buffalo, although those in the late 1850s found few along the Platte; either the herds avoided the great overland highway or earlier travelers had killed them off.

Buffalo meat supported the first great business ventures in the West: Canada's Hudson's Bay Company and North-West Company, the United States's American Fur Company and Rocky Mountain Company. The Canadian companies, dependent upon transporting furs across the continent by canoe and York boat, relied upon depots filled with buffalo pemmican to feed the hundreds of voyageurs who paddled the canoes.

The big companies of the United States, with the swift Missouri to ride, needed no pemmican depots, but each fur post employed hunters or traded for Indian-killed meat in order to feed their men. After the collapse of the beaver-pelt trade, the companies switched to trading for Indian-tanned buffalo robes, thus encouraging the native buffalo hunters to kill for hides alone. Hundreds of thousands of robes went downriver in the late 1830s and the 1840s.

By the late 1830s Isaiah Gregg noted that the buffalo "are rarely seen within two hundred miles of the frontier." In the 1840s other observers noted the herds had "shrunk" to within the confines of the high plains. They seemed to think the herds had withdrawn from contact with encroaching settlers. Actually settlers had killed off local buffalo; the high plains observers saw buffalo that had traditionally occupied that region.

The Indian hunter regarded the hunt as part religious undertaking, part excitement. He approached the hunt seriously, partaking of four prayerful rituals. A medicine

PEN AND INK WASH ON PAPER, CIRCA 1837
AMON CARTER MUSEUM OF WESTERN ART, FORT WORTH

TAKING THE HUMP RIB
Alfred Jacob Miller

man accompanied the hunting group and offered prayers and performed ceremonies as the hunt progressed. Following the hunt, offerings of bits of food and prayers thanked the buffalo for giving of his meat to people. The Cheyennes refrained from shouting in the excitement of the chase; to them it would have been sacrilegious.

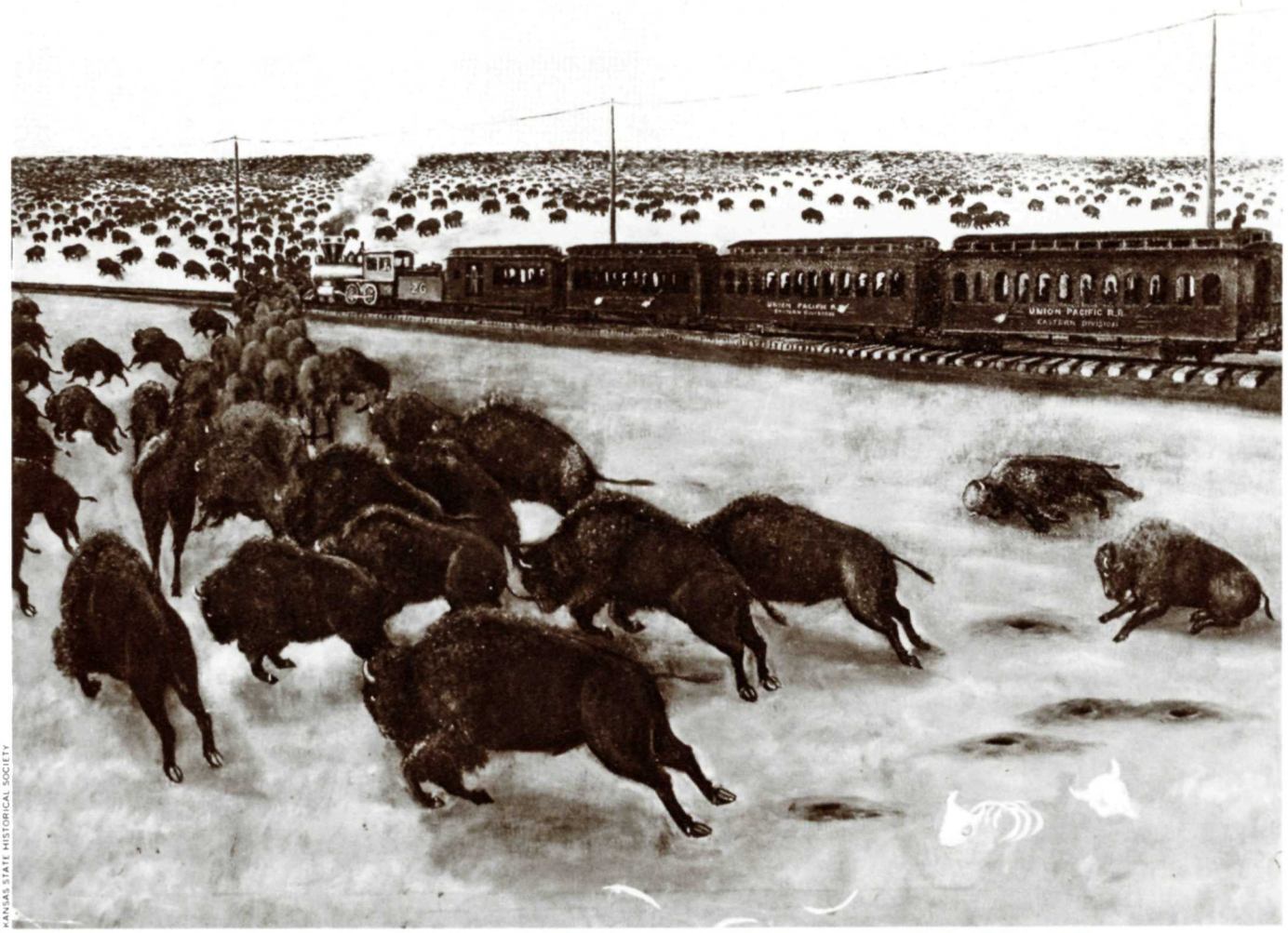
The white hunter went out and shot meat and had done with it.

Both Indian and white often wasted meat. Either one might take only the tongue; often, from the six-hundred pound carcass they removed only the hump ribs, liver, and upper gut. Both white and Indian sometimes downed several animals, just to choose the best.

The European immigrant found in America animals plentiful enough for the sport of shooting—no gamekeepers to keep out poachers, and game so abundant every man became a provider. He used any trick he could devise to ease his game-getting; he shot more than he could use and let it rot. The plethora of game, the freedom from restraint in the New World, led to wanton slaughter.

Colonial government had attempted to restrain this as early as 1639 by passing game laws. Most all states had some game protection by the early nineteenth century—but not the federal government in its territories. Congress passed the first game law protecting the buffalo in 1855 in the wake of many complaints about the slaughtering by Sir George Gore, who, in a splendiferous safari along the Platte and Missouri, killed 2,000 buffalo, 1,600 deer and elk, and 105 bears, strewing the prairies with carrion. But in spite of a law on the books, all game kept right on disappearing; few people could see reason for restraint when any walk in the woods gave glimpses of game, when ducks blackened the sky each fall, when a man found himself driving through buffalo for days.

When the country east of the Mississippi no longer provided the bloody slaughter of the frontier experience, the American plinker took his guns to the West. Any trip onto the grasslands, to be complete, meant shooting a buffalo. The tenderfoot fretted until he entered buffalo country like a sailor who "cannot long more for land than the traveler in that region for buffalo." Eminent scientists and anthropologists succumbed to the itch. Lewis Henry Morgan could say in his anthropological journal, "I have now seen and shot at buffalo until . . . I am quite satisfied." The



OIL ON CANVAS, 1931
KANSAS STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SHOOTING BUFFALO FROM A UNION PACIFIC TRAIN
Walter Lockhart

Audubon party, on the Upper Missouri, one day shot animals only because one of their party had not yet downed his bull. Along the Platte, a mighty hooraw arose whenever a wagon train sighted buffalo: "the drivers . . . would leave the teams and keep up a running fire after them."

The American millionaire and the titled European had a go at buffalo-plinking. They traveled in sumptuous style: champagne and wine at dinner, after-dinner brandy, tasty lunches served in the field on linen. The Army provided escorts and wagons (it gave the troops practice in the bivouac said the officers—actually it gave them the chance to hobnob with bigwigs). Grand Duke Alexis of Russia celebrated his twenty-second birthday plinking at buffalo.

Buffalo outings became the rage. Even as the Atcheson, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad was building into buffalo country it began running excursion trains of a weekend to allow the derbied a chance to do as the top-hatted. As soon as the engine chuffed past a nearby herd, guns poked through raised windows and the plinking began—the shooting gallery of the country fair on wheels. If the barrage should chance to down animals, the engineer obligingly stopped to allow the "hunters" to gather round the fallen: "then came the ladies; a ring was formed; the cornet band gathered around."

Others added to the slaughter. The Union Pacific and Santa Fe railroad builders fed the track layers on buffalo (until they almost revolted), the American Fur Company gathered thousands of buffalo robes, and, as the railroads pierced buffalo country, meat hunters shot buffalo for tongues to pickle and "hams" to smoke for the eastern market.

Between 1830 and 1870 the buffalo population dropped from an estimated thirty million to an estimated eight million. If the government had wanted to protect the herds from the most wanton of this slaughter, it could have stopped excursion trains, limited meat and robe shipments, placed inspectors at important travel and trade centers. Congress had passed a law in 1855, but failed to implement it. Fur companies had opposed regulations; farmers could scarcely see themselves as neighbors to trampling herds; railroads, speculating in land sales to settlers, hardly wanted the herds nearby; almost no one lobbied for the buffalo in Washington, D.C.

OIL ON CANVAS, 1894
BUFFALO BILL HISTORICAL CENTER, CODY

THE GREAT ROYAL BUFFALO HUNT
Louis Maurer

AND SO MATTERS STOOD when German tanners discovered a way to tan the buffalo hide into useful leather; heretofore manufacturers had found it too stretchable and soft to use in most of the usual leather creations. American tanners now began to use the German methods and, through advertisements appearing in the new railroad towns, offered to buy raw hides. Within a year the hide trade shipped far more hides east than did the robe trade (limited in output by its dependence upon tanning by Indian women).

Hide hunters could make as much as two dollars each for a good cow hide. Men laid off by stoppage in railroad construction, as well as men who had been butchering buffalo to ship the meat east, formed groups to go among the herds and put the slaughter of buffalo on an organized basis. A small group used a hunter, a couple of skinners, and a camp rustler: the hunter owned the good gun and shot each day's quota; the skinners removed the hides and loaded them in the wagon; the camp rustler cooked, pegged down and turned the hides as they dried, smoked hams, pickled tongues, piled and folded the cured hides.

Somewhat wrongly these hide hunters have been blamed for the "extermination" of the buffalo. More accurate to say that they slaughtered the eight million remaining of the thirty to sixty million buffalo alive in the 1500s; the other millions—hundreds of millions when one counts reproduction over three hundred years—disappeared because they made a nice target for thousands of bloodthirsty frontier plinkers. They disappeared at a rate of some one million per year from 1830 to 1870; they disappeared at about the same rate once the hide hunters went to work. By 1883, a thousand, perhaps two thousand, plains buffalo hid out in the remoteness of the Rocky Mountain states.

Now travelers throughout the grasslands, those who'd traveled amongst the buffalo millions, found the open spaces, once made somewhat friendly by buffalo presence, lonesome and dreary—empty as we see it today (where no cattle graze). Newcomers could yet tell that some big animal had lived here: his wallows dimpled the land and skeletons lay everywhere, many of them grouped where the hide hunter had slaughtered them.

Bone-picking became the last nineteenth-century money-making enterprise from buffalo. Homesteaders who found

PEN AND INK DRAWING, 1913
WILLIAM REESE, FRED WHITE JR., AND FRONTIER AMERICA CORPORATION

THE END, 1883
Martin S. Garretson

their acres littered with bones hauled them to the nearest railroad and received money from the first cash "crop." Others went into the "business" and did nothing else for several years but pick bones. Red River carts of the Métis creaked and groaned along the Missouri and Red River, making bone trips where before they'd made yearly and even twice-yearly trips to gather meat for the Hudson's Bay Company. The bones went east in hundreds of trainloads, headed for sugar factories that used them in refining, to fertilizer factories and to china potteries. The easy pickings were through by 1890, but occasional boxcars of buffalo bones went east as late as the early 1900s.

In the 370 years since Cabeza de Vaca had walked amongst the herds from the Texas coast to the Culiacán (and praised the taste of buffalo meat), men had wasted buffalo continually. Coronado's men slaughtered 500 animals as they prepared to march west from the false paradise of Quivara. A hundred years later sixteen Spaniards, traveling amongst the nomad buffalo hunters, joined in the slaughter with their arquebuses, killing 4,430 "beeves." About the same time, Father Hennepin, with La Salle, saw the Miamis kill 50 buffalo and take only the tongues. A hundred years later, in the Appalachians, an old man and his friends camped at a salt lick, killed 600 buffalo, then had to leave because the stench drove them away. Another hundred years and the carcasses lay along the railroad tracks so thick one man believed he could have walked one hundred miles along the right-of-way and never have stepped from a carcass to the ground.

Today some twenty-five thousand buffalo graze in pastures scattered from coast to coast and in Hawaii, only a *pfft* away from extinction—but scattered enough to provide breeding stock against catastrophe. About half of these thousand plod about the pastures of private owners, some of whom raise them because they feel an obligation to the beast, but most because nowadays you can sell buffalo meat at a profit. If business stays good, the herds may increase; if the price drops the herds will decrease. Only the government herds here and in Canada stand between them and obliteration.

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The FARMERS' FRONTIER

by Maisie Conrat
and
Richard Conrat

FARM FAMILY, NEBRASKA, 1887
SOLOMON BUTCHER
NEBRASKA STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

During the last three decades of the nineteenth century, a vast migration of settlers streamed into the new states and territories of the West, lured by the promise of free homesteads, by advertisements for cheap railroad land, and by their own keen ambitions.

THROUGHOUT THE NATION'S EARLY HISTORY, American farmers had been on the move, their hopes and ambitions turned toward the West. In the three decades following 1870, this westward stream of migration swelled into a flood, spilling over the remainder of the prairies, over the Plains and the Pacific Coast, and sweeping away the farmer's last frontier. During this brief span of time more land was taken up than in all the previous history of the country.

The rapid settlement of the last frontier was stimulated, in part, by the availability of free land under the Homestead Act. It was further stimulated by the construction of transcontinental railroad lines and a multitude of branch lines. Railroads not only expedited passage to the frontier and opened up new areas for settlement but also launched a vigorous colonization campaign, inundating the East and Europe with extravagant promotional literature portraying the unknown territories as a virtual garden of Eden.

Many families who came west in the last decades of the century would succeed in building comfortable and fruitful lives in the new country. But many others—particularly those who came after 1880—would find that the West failed to live up to their expectations. Some families with little capital who came in search of free land would discover that most of the good land was already in the hands of railroads or speculators and that only inferior tracts were left open to the homesteader. Some, who moved out optimistically onto the semiarid Plains, would see their crops, together with their dreams, wither and die under the unrelenting sun as they waited helplessly for the rains that never came.

Western expansion in the United States had always been accompanied by an intense and, at times, frenzied spirit of speculation. Millions of acres of fertile virgin soil waiting to be claimed—"oceans of land . . . good as the best in America, and yet lying without occupants." The great frontier was a temptation to men, both rich and poor, to try their luck at turning a quick profit. The eastern capitalist could purchase a township of raw prairie land, hoping that a boom in the area would soon double or treble the value of his investment. The farmer of moderate means was tempted to buy an extra quarter-section in the expectation of selling it in a few years to some newcomer at a handsome profit.

The lure of the frontier tugged at farmers in the older states and awakened a mood of restlessness. When neighbors here and there sold out to take up land farther west, many farmers found the urge to follow irresistible. Large numbers of those who struck out for the frontier were landless men with little opportunity at home—the younger sons of small farmers, renters, and farmhands unable to afford eastern farms, or European immigrants. But there were also settlers on the frontier who had left behind comparatively productive farms in order to seek their fortunes in the new country. For many families, mobility became an accepted part of life, some moving westward three or four times within a generation. Although the process of uprooting was always painful, the chance of improving the family's economic position took precedence over old friendships and family and community ties. In the 1850s, one observer of the American scene remarked:

"It has appeared to me that there is less attachment among our countrymen to their birth place, or the family homestead, than almost any civilized people on earth . . . the roving propensity of the Yankee is proverbial. Our actions but too clearly indicate us as mere 'pilgrims and sojourners on earth,' ready to settle down in one place, and then break up and re-settle in another, just as interest shall seem most likely, in our estimation, to be promoted."

THE WIDESPREAD SPECULATION in public land which characterized the nation's frontier period had never been either restricted or restrained by government land policy.

This article is excerpted from The American Farm: A Photographic History *by Maisie Conrat and Richard Conrat, published this month by the California Historical Society, San Francisco, and the Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.*

OREGON TRAIL, WYOMING, CIRCA 1875
WILLIAM H. JACKSON

WESTERN HISTORY DEPARTMENT, DENVER PUBLIC LIBRARY

Here is a place for a man to rebuild his fortune again. Here there need be no destitute, for all that will work there is abundance; here is a land yielding bountifully, open to all nations, where all may enjoy the blessings of a home. DAKOTA TERRITORIAL LEGISLATURE

RUSSIAN IMMIGRANTS, SOUTH DAKOTA, 1894
PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN

SOUTH DAKOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Ho! For the West! Nebraska ahead!
The best farming and and stock raising country
in the world! The great central region,
not too hot nor too cold.... The opportunities
now offered to buy B.&M. R.R. lands on long credit,
low interest... will never again be found. RAILROAD BROADSIDE

FARM FAMILY, NEBRASKA, 1887
SOLOMON BUTCHER

NEBRASKA STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Never before in the history of the country have there been so many of our people looking with longing eyes toward the few sections that yet remain to invite them to possess and occupy. KANSAS RESIDENT, 1880

On the contrary, the government had generally accepted the idea that a substantial part of the public lands would be purchased by men of wealth purely for investment purposes. As a result, a large portion of the public domain was acquired by capitalists, real-estate companies, banks, and other large purchasers.

This engrossment of public lands by wealthy speculators was deeply resented by most settlers on the frontier. During the 1840s and 1850s, these Westerners and their political allies brought ever-increasing pressure to bear on Congress to call a halt to the rampant monopolization of the public domain and to make government land policy more favorable to settlers of little means. Westerners demanded that "the public lands . . . be held as a sacred reserve for the cultivator of the soil," and it was further demanded that small tracts of government land be granted free to actual settlers.

In 1862, western settlers won a historic victory when, after years of political wrangling, the Homestead Act was finally passed. Under this act, Congress granted 160 acres free to any settler who would undertake to improve his claim and live on it for five years. The Homestead Act did not guarantee that the remainder of the public domain would be reserved for actual settlers only, as reformers had wished. Nevertheless, it was widely hoped that the passage of this liberal legislation signaled a decisive change in the direction of government land policy and that in the future the activity of large-scale speculators would be sharply curtailed.

The optimism surrounding the passage of the Homestead Act would soon prove to be ill-founded. In the years that followed, Congress continued to permit enormous tracts of public land to be engrossed by wealthy investors and speculators. Much of the best agricultural land in the country was not reserved for homesteading, but instead left open to sale, and investors continued to purchase vast holdings directly from the government. At the same time, other speculators were being allowed to amass hundreds of thousands of acres through the lax and often corrupt administration of various land laws such as the Desert Land Act, the Preemption Act, and even the Homestead Act. Although Congress had adopted a policy of granting free homesteads to frontier settlers, the westward movement remained, as it had been in the past, a wild scramble for land in which the most powerful interests won the largest prize.

In the race for land, the nation's railroads were by far the largest single winners. During the years immediately following the passage of the Homestead Act, railroads succeeded in wresting from Congress increasingly larger grants of public land. In 1862, the two lines that built the first transcontinental railroad received, along the length of their right of way, ten square miles of land for each mile of track constructed. Two years later, another transcontinental line was granted up to forty square miles for each mile of track. It has been estimated that the total amount of public land bestowed on railroad corporations during the second part of the nineteenth century by both federal and state governments amounted to approximately 180 million acres—an area almost one-tenth the size of the United States.

The government's lavish grants to railroads, together with the prodigious activity of real-estate investors, substantially reduced the amount of public land that was open to homesteading. Many settlers who came west to find free land discovered that fertile, well-located land open to homesteading was more difficult to come by than they had expected. Railroad lines, which usually preceded settlers into new territories, had picked out, as part of their grants, much of the best agricultural land throughout large regions of the West and were advertising it for sale. Speculators and land companies, which had also moved in early, had swallowed up other large sections of desirable land. Many settlers and

"The American Farm," a companion photographic exhibition to the book of the same name, opened earlier this year in simultaneous showings at museums in Oakland, California, and Chicago, Illinois. Presented by the California Historical Society, the exhibit will tour the country over the next three years. Its next appearance will be at the San Antonio, Texas, Museum of Transportation during March 5–April 17.

U.S. LAND OFFICE, GARDEN CITY, KANSAS, 1885
PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN

KANSAS STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Rained a little last night.
Enough to lay the dust.
Corn nearly all dried up.
For the life of me I don't see how farmers will winter. No oats,
No corn, No fruit, No grass, No nothing. KANSAS FARMER, LATE 1880S

their families found that in order to locate free land it was necessary to move into unsettled and isolated areas, miles away from transportation lines, schools, churches, and other community institutions. Moreover, in many cases, the government land available was agriculturally inferior to the lands held by railroads and speculators.

In view of this situation, it is not surprising that many settlers decided to buy their farms rather than to homestead. Of the 2.5 million farms that were established in the public-land states between 1860 and 1900, it has been estimated that only one in five were legally acquired homesteads.

As FREE LAND GREW SCARCER in the more humid areas of the Plains during the late 1870s, frontier farmers began to push farther westward—moving out beyond the 100th meridian into western Kansas, Nebraska, and eastern Colorado. During this period, the agricultural potential of this semiarid region had been the subject of much heated debate between government scientists and western interests. Scientists for the U.S. Geological Survey, together with army officers who had explored the Plains, in general maintained that most of the region was incapable of sustaining crop farming. It was argued that the semiarid lands should be reserved for grazing purposes or for irrigated farming. And it was deemed imperative that prospective settlers be warned of the dangers inherent in moving out into the dry country.

However, both in Congress and in the West, the voices of these government scientists were drowned out by the far louder and more numerous voices of western promoters. Railroad companies pictured the Plains as an agricultural paradise where settlers would "all become prosperous, and many will acquire fortunes in a short period." One railroad selling lands in western Kansas and eastern Colorado declared that "crops of all kinds . . . can be raised in abundance without much labor, and our fruits are unsurpassed in size and delicacy of flavor." Western boosters claimed that rainfall on the Plains was steadily increasing from year to year, and much publicity was given to the theory that "rain follows the plow." Proponents of this popular theory asserted that as farmers moved westward planting crops and trees, the climate of the region would inevitably grow more humid.

Plentiful rainfall on the Plains during the mid-1880s seemed to justify this widespread optimism. And eager land-seekers rushed westward to stake their claims. Land offices in Kansas, Nebraska, and Colorado were deluged with applications for government land. In 1886, land entries for Kansas amounted to over five million acres—about one tenth of the entire area of the state—and virtually all of this acreage lay beyond the 100th meridian. At the land office in Garden City, Kansas, on the 101st meridian, 50,000 acres were taken daily during the year 1885. The registrar of this land office wrote:

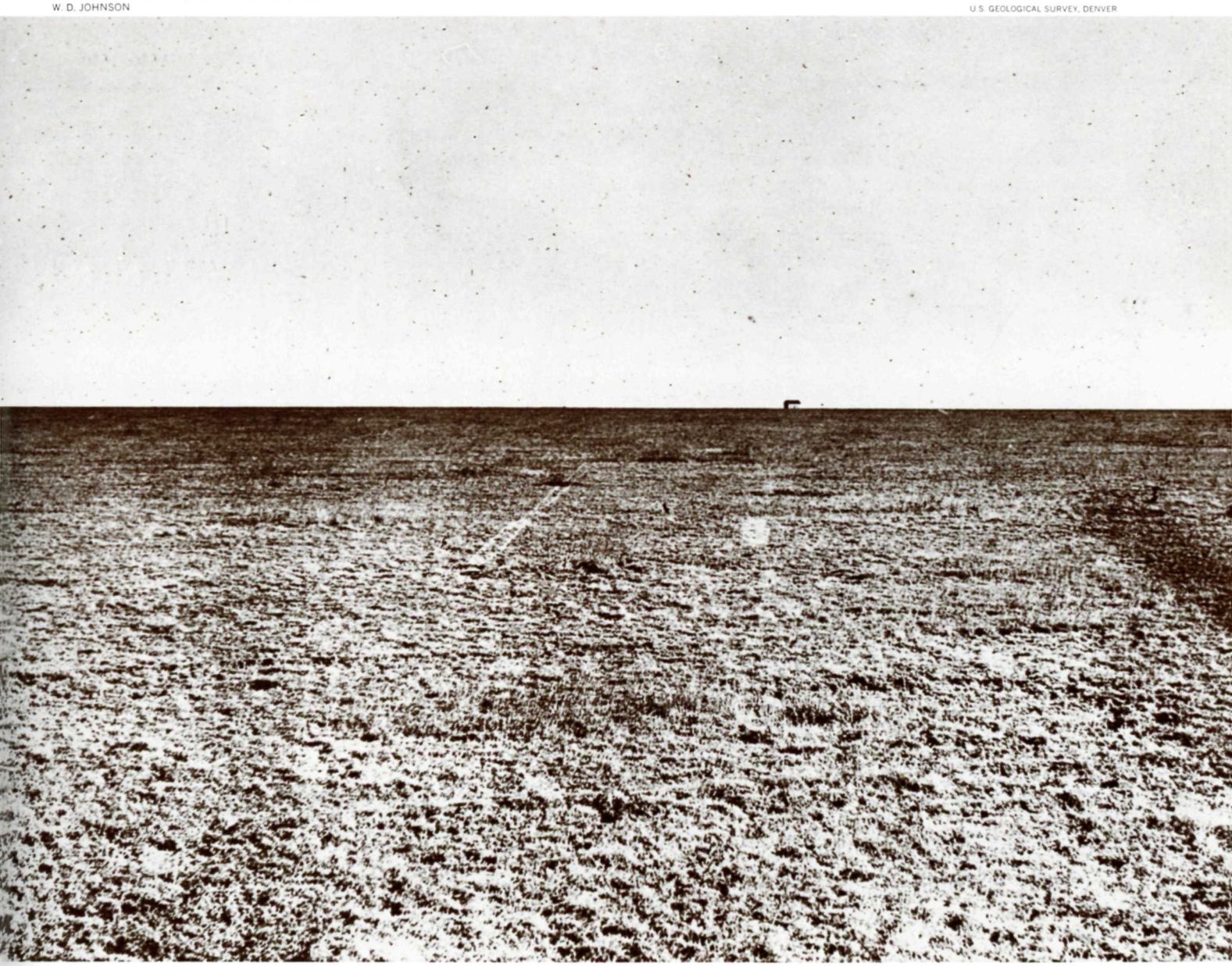
"The rush for land in this section of Kansas is unprecedented. Every train brings in a crowd of landseekers. For more than an hour before the office opens, a mass of humanity throngs the doorway, and it is a remarkable sight to see the press and excitement."

The great land boom on the Central Plains frontier proved to be short-lived. In the late 1880s a series of dry years began which would continue through the middle of the next decade. Years of partial or total crop failure inflicted terrible suffering on new settlers on this frontier and caused many to abandon their claims. Between 1888 and 1892, half of the population of western Kansas moved out, and large areas in Nebraska and Colorado were almost entirely depopulated. From the drought-stricken regions came reports of "hundreds of families . . . on the verge of starvation" and urgent pleas for food, fuel, and seed for the next year's crop. One Kansas settler wrote:

"Most all the people here that could leave have done so and what is here are too poor they cannot get away and are in need for they been here for four years and raised no crops."

ABANDONED HOMESTEAD, WESTERN KANSAS, 1897
W. D. JOHNSON

U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER



HOMESTEAD CLAIM, OKLAHOMA TERRITORY, 1889
A. P. SWEARINGEN

WESTERN HISTORY COLLECTION, UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA LIBRARY, NORMAN

"We were going to God's Country.
We were going to a new land and get rich.
Then we could have a real home
of our own. OKLAHOMA SETTLER'S WIFE

BY THE YEAR 1890, nearly all of the most desirable agricultural land in the country had passed into private hands. On the Pacific Coast only forested uplands and land requiring costly irrigation remained to be settled. In the Dakotas and Texas, settlement was pushing up against the 100th meridian, and in the Central Plains, farmers had already far exceeded the line of safety.

Yet there was one large region of well-watered and highly desirable land in the nation that had only just begun to be settled—the region that would soon become known as Oklahoma Territory. During the 1820s this territory had been set aside as a perpetual Indian reserve—"a permanent home," according to one treaty, "which shall, under the most solemn guarantee of the United States, be and remain theirs forever." This solemn pledge would not endure long. Throughout the 1880s, land-hungry white settlers had clamored for the federal government to open up the territory for homesteading. On several occasions, groups of "boomers," as they were called, moved illegally into Indian lands and had to be forcefully ejected from them by federal troops.

In the end, however, the government gave in to the insistent demands of the land-seekers, and the Indians, as usual, were pushed aside. In the spring of 1889, it was announced that two million acres in the central region of the territory would be opened to homesteading. Days prior to the official opening, thousands of prospective settlers converged on the borders of the former Indian lands, where they set up camps and waited restlessly, held in check by federal troops.

At precisely twelve noon on the appointed day soldiers fired their pistols, signaling the opening, and the furious race for land began. One reporter at the scene wrote:

"Along the line as far as the eye could reach, with a shout and a yell the swift riders shot out, then followed the light buggies or wagons and last the lumbering prairie schooners and freighters' wagons . . . above all a great cloud of dust hovering like smoke over a battlefield. It was a wild scramble, a rough and tumble contest filled with excitement and real peril."

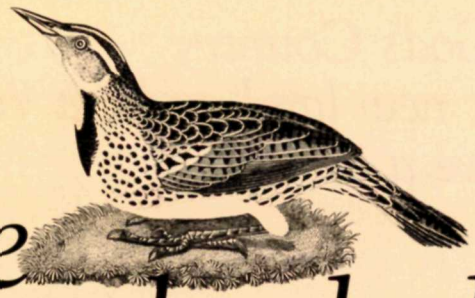
By the end of the day, hundreds of settlers had staked out farms, and two tent cities with 10,000 residents each had sprung up on the prairie.

The "land run" of 1889 was only the beginning of white incursions into former Oklahoma Indian lands. In succeeding years, other portions of Indian Territory would be opened for settlement, and more runs would be held. By far the largest, most famous, and most violent of these stampedes took place in the Cherokee Outlet, which was opened in 1893. In this spectacular run some 100,000 land-seekers competed against each other to obtain 40,000 claims. In the melee, several people lost their lives.

Like pioneers on other frontiers, the land-seekers who swarmed into Oklahoma came with a variety of motives and intentions. Some were petty speculators who came merely to stake a claim and sell out at the first opportunity. But most were poor men—former renters and small farmers—who yearned for the chance to begin life anew on the rich prairie soil of which they had heard such glowing accounts. The wife of one Oklahoma settler who moved to the territory in 1890 wrote:

"We were going to God's Country. . . . It was pretty hard to part with some of our things. We didn't have much but we had worked hard for everything we had. You had to work hard in that rocky country in Missouri. I was glad to be leaving it. . . . We were going to God's Country. We were going to a new land and get rich. Then we could have a real home of our own."

Richard Conrat *is a professional photographer. His wife,* **Maisie Conrat,** *is a writer and exhibition and book designer. The Conrats' earlier book,* Executive Order 9066, *was a photographic essay documenting the evacuation and internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II. Like* The American Farm, Executive Order 9066 *was presented by the California Historical Society as a major touring photographic exhibition.*



The Meadowlark Sang

THE MEADOWLARK has always been a friend of mine, ever since I was a child on our homestead in Oklahoma. The sun would come out after a downpour, and on a high post somewhere the meadowlark would begin to sing, and the frogs would croak in the trees, and we would know the rain was over. My brother Bob and I would put on old clothes and go out and run barefoot in the puddles of water—leftover rain everywhere—and we would tie strings on tumbleweeds and run with them up and down the lane. We would laugh and scream and squeal, and our dog Shef would run and play, too, and bark; and the meadowlark would sing, his little throat bursting, telling us the storm was over.

When my family first came down from Kansas to homestead, they built a sod house. The floor was just dirt at first. To sleep, we would take mattresses, ticks full of corn husks and straw, and lay them across the rafters for our beds. A ladder went up the wall on the inside, and we kids would climb it to get to our beds.

Back of the house, the boys built an outhouse from limbs of trees. It had a curtain for a door. I used it for my playhouse. My doll was an ear of corn wrapped in a piece of blanket, and I had a shoe box with some pictures on it, an empty tin can with a big red tomato on the outside, a little chair, and a coffee sack. When my brothers would go in the outhouse, they would throw my stuff as far as they could and laugh at me running and crying, gathering it all up again.

Summer was building time. A wall would go up. The roof went to a peak. Summers would come and go, and one day we had a big frame house: four rooms downstairs and four rooms up for sleeping in, and a lean-to on the outside.

Our house had a front room, all shut off because it was too fine—so grand we kids weren't allowed in it. It had a couch and a chair of red velvet plush and a comforter sent by Dad's sister, Aunt Phoebe. In one corner was a big book cupboard that held all of our books and all of the magazines that Aunt Phoebe sent to us: *The Youths' Companion* and everything on history and encyclopedias. I would slip in there lots of times and get books for the boys to read. They were so hungry to read.

There was a big kitchen in the lean-to. It was the busiest room in the house. We had a long cookstove with wood burning in it and a big black kettle on the back that had beans or pork and different good things cooking in it. Mother always had big pans of bread or biscuits or cornbread coming out of the oven. Sometimes we got to make doughnuts, two big dishpans full. We all got to cut out the holes. That was our best treat of all. There was a long table in the middle of the room with benches around it where the children sat on rainy days especially, reading, drawing, whittling out toys, or playing dominoes. At the far end of the kitchen my father had supplies—boots and shoes and pants—he would trade to other settlers for potatoes or pork or chicken or fruit. He would take these things for pay because they didn't have money. The men liked to talk about

Memories of an Oklahoma Childhood

by Letha Wolfe Bartley
with Stephen J. Wolfe

what their rights were under the laws of the Indian Territory and how they could change the laws. They were always at our house after they found out that my father knew a lot about the law.

My mother was a good nurse. When we had colds, she would make onion syrup for coughs. She would fry onions and put them in a little bag on our chests with mustard plasters besides, and then she would put us in a tub of hot water with a quilt over us to hold the steam, and she would use tar soap on us. She knew how to break up a cold.

The neighbors all helped each other, and in sickness they would always come to get my mother. Many and many a night they would come after her with a team and wagon and get her to go sit up with sick people. In time of death, she would help lay the corpse out. People would go in their wagons to the burial. They didn't have a minister in the beginning, and many a time my father was asked to read from the Bible and give a prayer.

Life went right on for those people.

In those days it rained so much that we could cut a limb off a peach tree or apple tree and just stick it in the ground, and it would start to grow. It wasn't too long til we had a young orchard of all these trees and long rows of grape vines that were wired up onto frames and current bushes and rhubarb. The boys would tend it with a cultivator hitched to a horse. Soon we had an orchard with fruits that we could use and give to other people.

My folks had a big iron kettle that you could put over the open fire, and we would use it to make our own fruit butters. It had a big wooden ladle. We kids would get so tired of stirring—we wanted to quit all of the time. We would put peaches and apples and plums out on screens to dry for winter. Those hungry boys sure did love the fruits. I was small. They would put me through the pantry window, so long and low, and I would hand them dried fruit and pickles out of the keg and kraut from the barrel. It's a wonder we didn't get caught.

We did our own butchering on our farm. My brothers would put a big iron pot of water to boil on the fire outside, and they would scald the hogs to get the hair off them in that hot water. Then they would string the hogs up on poles and scrape them and then cool them, and the next day they would take them down and start cutting them up so they would have the hams and shoulders to put up in salt brine. Then they were hung in a smokehouse and cured. The rest we ground up into sausage that was made into cakes and put in open stone jars. We poured cured lard over the sausage to keep it. We also made headcheese and cornmeal bread and fried mush with meat in it. Butchering day was a delight—we had such good food from it.

In the early mornings as we worked in the yard and garden there seemed to be every kind of bird. I would listen to each one far and near and try to remember them all. Even the black crows and the magpies seemed to love our flowers and garden. There were quail by the river. On rainy days my brothers would take the shotgun and go up to the river and get big batches of quail and bring them home, and my mother would make wild bird pies.

Some days we went with the neighbors in wagons up to the Salt Fork River to fish for the catfish. We kids played and waded in the low places and ate all day. The men would bring in a nice bunch of fish and clean them, and the women would roll them in cornmeal and fry them in big iron skillets. We made corn bread over the fire and cooked coffee in tin buckets. Everyone was singing and happy and hollering, just having a good time, and as we drove along home in the wagons, we all sang in the quiet night. It took so little in those days to make folks happy.

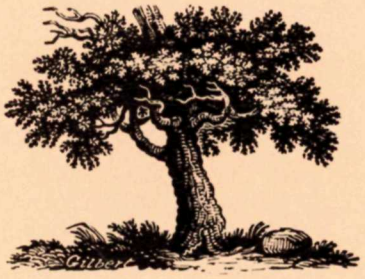
At night at home my father read first a chapter in the Bible and then read special verses and had us memorize them. Then he read every article he could find. And he mended: he would always be mending a harness or the boys' shoes or sewing on something of leather with his awl and thread. He had makeshift saddles and blankets, and they all had to be repaired.

Mother had a treadle machine in one corner of the room where she sat patching and making the boys' shirts and underwear and pants. She seemed so wonderful to me because she could make these clothes without a pattern or anything. She would just sit there at the table and cut out big pieces of material and then go to the machine and sew, and the first thing you knew the clothes would be done. Sometimes I would go and sit beside her and try to sew on buttons, and lots of times I would sew the button right on top and I would always have to take it off, but I thought I was helping. I used to save the scraps of material and would go out to my favorite spot on the steps and try to sew where I could hear the meadowlark sing.

MORNINGS, when Bob and I walked to school, I always listened for the meadowlark. I had my little tin lunch bucket, and I would gather flowers for my teacher: the dandelions had long stems and they were so yellow and the bluebells and daisies. Bob would take his slingshot or bow and arrow or even an old tin can and stick and play shinney all the way.

The schoolhouse was cold those mornings. The logs hadn't gotten going. Then they would get too hot, and we would have to open the schoolhouse doors. The teacher would open our day of school with one of the older pupils reading a chapter in the Bible; then we all repeated the Lord's Prayer. Then she would go to the old organ and pump it, and we would all sing *America* and *Star Spangled Banner* or *Joy to the World*. That was always the best part of school to me. And through the windows we could hear the meadowlark singing.

Later we built a frame schoolhouse, painted it red. The teacher was my Uncle John, who had come down from South Dakota where he worked on freight trains. They



coupled the cars together by hand, and he got his arm cut off doing that, so he came to Oklahoma. He stayed at our house, and I rode with him to school. My brothers had their own ponies. A neighbor boy my age, Benny, started to school too. We played and kicked our feet together in the aisle. Uncle John told us time and again to turn around. I thought I was teacher's pet, but one day he came back there, put his foot up on the bench, turned me over his knee, and put that stubbed arm down on my head. With the other, he really beat me. Benny got it too. If any of the larger pupils ever acted disrespectful, he would sure whip. Then we got a pretty young teacher. My older brothers broke their necks to please her. We even got her to go home with us for suppers. The boys all quarreled to see which would walk home with her.

On Sundays, people came in wagons and on horseback to church. There was an organ there, and one neighbor lady, Molly Dean, played it. Her hair was fastened in a bun on top of her head, and as she played and pumped that organ I would watch that bun of hair bobbing and would think it would fall apart anytime.

Dad and the boys would fix fence on our property Sundays instead of going to church. We had 360 acres of land that we leased, besides the 360 acres of our homestead. And by trading horses and harnesses and wagons, we bought some other land from early settlers who wanted to leave.

There was a lone tree on my folks' land. It was a landmark in the early days of Oklahoma. It could be seen for miles around. It was a real large cottonwood. Part of it was dead and scarred. Oldtimers said the tree was a lookout for the Indians. It was on my father's land, but no one farmed close to it. The boys of the neighborhood had it for a gathering place. They found arrowheads, leather string, and moccasins there; and in the fall, we loved to eat the berries that grew there, and in winter we would gather wild plums around the tree. And one time a little spotted pony, an Indian pony, strayed along with our horses out near the lone tree. She had a bridle and blanket on her so we figured some Indian must have been shot. She had been ruled and was gentle. She came right up to my brother Harry. He claimed her, and no one came for her so he kept her for his own. He called her Brownie, and he let the children ride her a lot.

There was open range in those days. The boys had to take care of the stock. My folks had brought down from Kansas white-faced Herefords, a hundred sixty head of them, and they didn't want to get them mixed in with other people's stock. We had sixty head of horses, too. But the water holes in the grasslands where the stock would drink were awful salty lots of the time. A well could be dug four-feet deep, but it wouldn't be long until the salt water would seep in and they would have to dig another. The lovely bunch of horses began to die off. The stock kept eating that salt grass and lots of them eventually died.

The cattle had to be herded around. The boys had a team and wagon right with the cattle. On the wagon were their supplies and food. They would take the horses and hitch them on the wagon when they needed to move, or they would ride and round in the cattle and keep them together. All the boys had to take turns standing out at camp with the cattle, and then some of them would ride home to get more food to eat and clean clothes, and they would get books to read, too, and then they would go back.

Of the boys, John, the oldest, was the sick one. He was a weakling and couldn't be depended on; he was thin and water ran out of his nose—asthma. He would take the wash basin with warm salt water in it and go out in the yard and snuff it up his head. Frank, the next one, was quite strong and dependable, and he took on the responsibility of the herd. Frank was a daredevil. He had a big old shotgun, and he would hunt down the wolves and coyotes and hoot owls and even rattlesnakes, and he got lots of game to cook.

The settlers next to us had boys who were rough like their dad, and they liked to chase our boys and scare them away from the waterholes at night. They would make screeching noises and shoot arrows at the wagon, and Frank would be out trying to keep the horses and cattle together. So one night he was in just the right place and let go with that old shotgun. He heard a loud wail. In days to come our neighbors bragged that their boy was shot at by Indians. Frank would laugh to himself. The nights were quieter after that.

We lost one brother in herding the cattle. One Saturday afternoon my dad was mowing hay in the field, and my brother Ed's horse and dog came from Salt Fork River, running right to him. Well, my dad knew something was wrong so he went right to—he followed the dog who led him to where the bank had caved in and smothered my brother. Dad tried to revive him but couldn't. He was dead, with that little Sunday School paper tucked in his hand.

THAT OLD SALT FORK RIVER, it was so peaceful, and the cattle lay in the river bank and in under the banks in the cool in the summertime. It was so nice in the summertime, but all early spring it would rain, and it was always a nightmare to people on account of their stock. The river kept changing course and cutting down through their land, and they couldn't do a thing about it. It would take out all the fences. Many and many a time, people who lived on the other side of the river had a corpse they would have to bring across that raging water to be buried, or someone would have to go in time of sickness. My brother Frank, because he wasn't afraid of the water, was always called on to go and bring a boat across, push a boat across in that raging water, to help some of the neighbors that had sickness.

One spring some Germans came to join the German settlers who had come to this country twenty years earlier and settled across the Salt River. But the river was swollen a quarter mile wide, and they couldn't get to the other side, so the townspeople had to take them in. The German men all helped on the river to keep it in its banks, but they couldn't speak English. There was one German lady with her hair in a knot on the top of her head, so tall and severe. I took her children out to play, but she caught me by the pigtails and marched me into the house and plumped me down hard. She put me to patching and darning. Every kid was busy. She let us know it was a sin not to keep busy. When the river lowered, I was glad to see her go, but many times I have been thankful I could do a good job patching and darning. Sometimes we would get invited to the German colony for dinner, where we had fried chicken, homemade bread, buttermilk, and cheese.

Those German people became my father's best customers at his grocery store. My dad's store was near a blacksmith shop. Further down the road was the schoolhouse. A potbellied stove stood in the middle of the store. Benches and stools were around. In the winter when the snow was high outside and the wind was howling, the stove put out a comforting feeling. The kerosene lamps cast blows and shadows up on the bright walls of calico and on the shiny red coffee grinder, and the chimney made sounds just for me. Customers gathered around, spit in the stove, and kicked the peanut shells underneath. The men bought chewing tobacco and Bull Durham for their pipes. When the ladies came in with their crocks of butter and buckets of eggs to trade, their eyes were looking at the boxes of shoes and material. When a customer would pay a bill, my dad would give him a large sack of candy. The atmosphere was friendly, and nobody seemed to be in a hurry. Everybody sat around eating out of the pickle barrel or the peanut sack. All the time a conversation was going on about Jane's new baby or Grampa Nap's rheumatism or the bad roads. Some good news, some bad. Anyway, it was like a magic fairytale that you could only find in those days.

Then one day my father, bringing the cattle across that muddy Salt Fork River, got caught in some old barbwire and couldn't get out. He got chilled and died of pneumonia. Then a cyclone took everything we had. We didn't have any home. A German man and his family were our neighbors. He had lost his farm up in the German settlement on Salt Fork River. He had lost his wife. He had seven girls. Before we knew it, my mother had married him. He moved her and our furniture over to his house. He put all the boys out to farmers to work for their keep. He put me in that German settlement with an older couple. The lady was bedfast and didn't speak English. I wore her old dresses, cut off. I sure had to work. One Sunday afternoon, the doctor came. When he saw me, he said that if my dad knew what his little girl had come to, he would turn over in his grave. He took me to a farm west of Turkey, to an older couple. They got me clothes and started me to school at the red schoolhouse, and we went to church all the time. I was there until I was grown and married.

My husband Gilbert and I farmed the prairie land. On rainy days when Gilbert couldn't work in the fields, we would walk and go hunting. He had a rifle, and we got ducks, quail, rabbit—all good meat. I thought it was miles we went because I had to carry the sack. We saw lots of birds and flowers that we didn't know about. When we got home and got our hunt all cleaned and put away for later cooking, we would read up on different birds and flowers and trees, even skunks and coyotes.

Gilbert soon learned that ever since I was little, I had always listened for the meadowlark, assuring me that everything was all right. Always, when he heard its song, he would say it was our bird, singing just for us.

Letha Wolfe Bartley, *now in her eighties, lives in good health in Longmont, Colorado.*

Stephen J. Wolfe, *who assisted in the writing of this article, is a grandson of Mrs. Bartley.*

Illustrator-Artist of the Canadian and American West

PRIVATE COLLECTION

FRANK SCHOONOVER'S FRONTIER

by Cortlandt Schoonover

THE PERIOD from 1880 to 1920 is often called The Golden Age of American Illustration. At a time when illustrators had an enormous and enthusiastic public, there were many candidates for the title of "America's most popular illustrator." Although it is not my intention to enter my father's name in this popularity contest, Frank Schoonover was certainly one of the leading contenders.

Frank Schoonover was, above all, an artist of action. From his first commercial drawing in 1899 to his last painting in 1968, more than four thousand pictures later, his work was infused with vitality and drama. Particularly dramatic were his compositions of Indians, cowboys, and other forceful characters of the American and Canadian West, which provided illustrations for many successful books. For models he chose persons of strong physique and character. "I never painted a weakling," proclaimed Schoonover.

Most of his paintings are still in collections in the Brandywine region of Pennsylvania and Delaware where he studied, lived, and worked among the prodigious concentration of talented artists created by Howard Pyle.

The students of Howard Pyle may be referred to as the second generation of American illustrator-painters. Among them were Stanley Arthurs, Clifford Ashley, Harvey Dunn, Gayle Hoskins, N. C. Wyeth, and of course Frank Schoonover. Of Pyle's students, Schoonover was to enjoy the longest painting career: he lived ninety-five years, from 1877 to 1972.

Howard Pyle exemplified the illustrator-painter. He thought of the book as a total enterprise. Binding, type, and layout were as important as the text and illustrations. His technical skill, creative imagination, and dramatic power elevated the status of illustration to great heights. His 100 students at the Drexel Institute in Philadelphia, in his summer classes at Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, and in his school in Wilmington, Delaware, were inspired by Pyle as a writer, artist, and teacher.

In 1895, Howard Pyle and the Drexel Institute trustees devised a plan to stimulate interest in the art department by offering prizes and scholarships. The following year, Schoonover won a Drexel scholarship: "To hear on the day before Christmas that I had been admitted into Howard Pyle's class on Composition was my greatest Christmas present, as I felt I was on my way to some kind of living. . . . I felt very honored because his class was a pretty strong one—made up of big shots! Clyde O. Deland, Jessie Wilcox Smith, Maxfield Parrish, Thornton and Violet Oakley, and others.

"So I started to work on making compositions. Of course, I was bewildered as to what to do, so I thought the only thing was to make pictures of things I knew. I was living in the country, and I remember clearly three pictures I made: one was a farm scene in the fall—a field of corn. Huskers were hand-husking the ears and throwing them into the bottom of a wagon, which was drawn through the rows. Another was of some boys in a little

INDIAN IN CANOE

OIL ON CANVAS | COVER ILLUSTRATION FOR *LADIES HOME JOURNAL*, DECEMBER 1922 | PRIVATE COLLECTION

THE DEER STALKER

OIL ON CANVAS

FROM "THE WARRING TRIBES" BY JAMES W. SCHULTZ, *AMERICAN BOY MAGAZINE*, JANUARY 1920

COLLECTION OF MARIAN STEIN, NEW YORK

DEATH RAPIDS

OIL ON CANVAS

FROM *THE WHELPS OF THE WOLF* BY GEORGE MARSH, PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY, 1922

COLLECTION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE

THE FREEZING MAN WAS DRAGGED TO SAFETY

OIL ON CANVAS FROM "WHEN THE PRINCE CAME HOME" BY GEORGE T. MARSH, *SCRIBNER'S MAGAZINE*, MAY 1914 PRIVATE COLLECTION

PRIVATE COLLECTION

Schoonover in the Canadian wilderness.

stream with poles and some mosquito netting fastened to the poles catching minnows for bait. The third showed a boy carrying a Christmas tree toward a covered bridge. Mr. Pyle was strangely impressed, no doubt noticing signs of his type of work. 'You have learned the secret of creativity. Work hard, don't be discouraged ever, and make this year a flying start. We'll see how you make out soon enough.' "

"Today is August nineteenth, my twenty-fifth birthday," Schoonover told Pyle in 1903. "I just don't feel right about the work I am doing for I am having to project to the public too much that is really not out of my experience. You have given me the skill. Now I feel that I must pick a field in which I can develop a relationship with the public that will say, 'This rings true; he knows because he has been there.' "

"Where have you in mind?"

"The Canadian North country, the Indians, the Eskimos, the great unknown country up there."

"Go," said Mr. Pyle.

After spending the long winter of 1903 in northern Quebec and Ontario, crossing Hudson Bay by dogsled with two Indian guides, living with the Indians, and experiencing first hand just as much as he possibly could, Schoonover returned armed with a treasure of sketches; crayon, pencil, and charcoal drawings (it was too cold to use oil paints); photographs and notebooks; and above all a knowledge of the people and the vast country.

The first story and drawings to come out of his Canadian experience appeared in the April 1905 issue of *Scribner's* magazine. It bore the intriguing title "The Edge of the Wilderness" and was the artist's account of his daring travel in the bitter Canadian winter far from civilization. Illustrated with nine color drawings in pastel, the story was followed by a second article, "Breaking Trail," in *Scribner's* May 1905 issue. These two issues not only established Schoonover's reputation as a man who had "been there" but as an artist who was exhibiting his potentialities as a writer and illustrator combined. But much more than that, they demonstrated his passion for accuracy, his fascination with and awareness of significant detail, his ingenuity, persistent concern with dramatic action, and above all his imagination—what Pyle called "mental projection."

In 1905, Clarence Edward Mulford, well-known writer of Western stories, conceived of a character whose combination of charisma and quirks was to canonize him in the annals of cowboys and Indians. The character was a Tom Mix shoot-'em-up wrangler, except for the fact that one of his legs was shorter than the other. His name was Hopalong Cassidy (see color plate on the following page).

Mulford's idea was good enough, but he wasn't sure that his character would come across creditably in print. It so happened that his friend Schoonover was about to embark on an assignment in the West. Mulford conned Schoonover into keeping a watchful eye out for stump-legged cowboys.

While in Montana, Schoonover saw a short-legged cowboy sitting awkwardly on a corral fence. Remembering Mulford's commission, he drew several sketches of this as-yet-hypothetical character. The model's name is unknown; Schoonover did, however, purchase his boots (which still exist). Whoever this nameless and shoeless person was, the character he portrays went on through novels, pulps, comic books, films, and television serials to become a household word.

Zane Grey as late as 1970 was still known as "the world's most successful author." Frank Schoonover illustrated a number of Zane Grey's serials including "Open Range,"

HOPALONG TAKES COMMAND

OIL ON CANVAS

FROM "THE FIGHT AT BUCKSKIN" BY CLARENCE E. MULFORD, *OUTING MAGAZINE*, JULY 1905

DELAWARE ART MUSEUM

SHORTY HAS THE BEST POSITION.

OIL ON CANVAS FROM "THE FIGHT AT BUCKSKIN" BY CLARENCE E. MULFORD, *OUTING MAGAZINE*, JULY 1905 COLLECTION OF MR. AND MRS. JAMES C. ENGMAN

THREE COWPUNCHERS

OIL ON CANVAS FROM *THE BAR-20 THREE* BY CLARENCE E. MULFORD, A. C. MC CLURG COMPANY, 1921 DELAWARE ART MUSEUM

PRIVATE COLLECTION

A photograph made by Schoonover.

"Avalanche," and "Rustlers of Silver River," and books including *Rogue River Feud* and *Valley of Wild Horses*. Grey liked the illustrations that Schoonover took great pride in producing for his colorful stories. Both enjoyed fantastic exposure during the '20s when they were at their productive peaks. It is impossible to establish any realistic figures on the amount of Grey's monthly output, but we do know that Schoonover's reproductions of his works reached upwards of five million readers a month. Cumulative reader involvement would probably have put this figure conservatively at around ten million a month. Considering then the circulation of the magazine- and book-reading public, this was big league.

A disciplined artist, Schoonover started his working day no later than eight in the morning, carried lunch to his studio, and worked steadily until five in the afternoon. Schoonover's studio was not aesthetic. It was crowded with artifacts, and the enormous production of his works often seemed to create a clutter. But he could easily zero in on a particular painting in a stack of canvases or retrieve a needed object instantly.

It was his habit to walk to and from work even long after he owned an automobile. He ate supper almost invariably at six, and there were not many evenings when he did not rise from the dining-room table and go to his drawing board, where he thought nothing of turning out at least three or four pen-and-inks finished for publication.

Legend has it that Schoonover was fascinated by the color red. He used a special mixture of cadmium red to which he added a touch of varnish for brilliance. A spot of what came to be known as "Schoonover Red" seemed to appear in some form in all of his pictures—a sash, a shirt, buttons, a knife blade, a sail, a blanket. In fact, one way of spotting "a Schoonover" is to look for this characteristic touch of red.

For many years, Frank Schoonover had based his own work on the tenet that imagination is the key to reality. In 1942 he felt that it was time to pass on a few of his secrets of success, as Mr. Pyle had done for him. In short, he started teaching.

He was especially happy with children and catered to a group of them on Saturday mornings. Next dearest to his heart after the children was a special class composed of ready-to-retire, retired, or just people seeking further fulfillment of their lives. Of course, Schoonover also had a class of "hard-core" art students. But he maintained the humanistic approach and avoided as best he could the "art school" concept.

Although oils, pen-and-inks, photography, and teaching were his forte and pleasure, he was also an accomplished watercolorist, restorer, portraitist, and muralist, and he took particular pride in his skill as a cartographer. Along the way, he created bookplates, etchings, collector's plates, and even a statue of an Indian.

But how would the artist himself, looking over his ninety-five years, have felt about his achievements? I believe he got the greatest joy out of his proficiency in portraying the beauty of action. "A picture has got to tell a story," he would tell his students over and over again. Into the cloth of his story-pictures he wove the vibrant threads of action. The vitality of his interpretation of the outdoors gave his art a very special individuality.

Shortly before he died, he turned to me one day with his mischievous smile beaming, and said, "You can spot a Schoonover every time; even I can."

Cortlandt Schoonover *(1914–1976), a native Delawarean, personally knew many of his father's associates and over the years took an active interest in documenting the artist's works and remembrances. He edited* Edge of the Wilderness, *a compilation of his father's diaries, articles, and illustrations of early twentieth-century Canada.*

TRAIN ROBBERY

The birth, flowering, & decline of a notorious western enterprise

by Richard Patterson

THE FIRST TRAIN HOLDUP was ridiculously easy. It occurred not in the West but the Midwest, in 1866. As an Ohio and Mississippi passenger train pulled out of the sleepy little southern Indiana town of Seymour, two armed bandits sauntered into the baggage car from the coach behind. Getting inside a baggage car in those days was no problem; it had not yet occurred to express company messengers to lock their doors. One intruder deftly relieved the messenger of his keys and unlocked one of the two express company safes. He scooped out the contents, $13,000 in cash. The other safe wouldn't open, so the bandits dragged it over to the door. One of the robbers pulled the bell cord, signaling the engineer to stop. As the train slowed, the two men pushed the safe out the door and leaped after it into the darkness. It was all over in minutes; the startled train crew could only proceed to the next town and notify the authorities.

The bandits, the Reno brothers, would hit several more trains in the area during the following months and on a local level would soon become famous. But news from Indiana spread slowly in those days, and it would be four years before the idea of robbing trains caught on west of the Rockies. But when it did, it caught on big.

The first western train robbery was a doubleheader. It occurred on November 5, 1870, and the target was Central Pacific's Transcontinental No. 1. As the train pulled out of the mining town of Verdi, Nevada, some masked men jumped aboard between the express car and the locomotive tender, in the area trainmen called the "blind baggage." This spot got its name because none of the crew could keep an eye on it while the train was in motion; the express cars of that period had no door in front, and the locomotive crew's vision was obstructed by the tender.

At a deserted stretch in Truckee Canyon, the masked men crawled forward and put guns in the ribs of the engineer and fireman. The train was stopped, and the coaches behind the express car were cut loose. The engineer was ordered to pull ahead and stop again. Then the men forced their way into the express car, and as the helpless messenger watched, they took more than $40,000. The messenger's only consolation was that in their hurry the bandits had overlooked almost $5,000. But this just wasn't his day. A few hours later, at Independence, Nevada, the train was stopped again, this time by six army deserters, who quickly found the money the first robbers had missed.

Almost immediately the word got around that express cars were easy targets, and for the next decade robbers ran roughshod over the railroads. The James gang, the Youngers, Sam Bass—from 1870 to 1880 their hauls averaged nearly $30,000, with Sam Bass taking the prize, $60,000, at Big Springs, Nebraska, in 1877.

The methods used by these bandits of the seventies were crude but effective. The trains were usually halted by loosening a rail, laying ties on the track, or signaling the engineer with a fake emergency. Sometimes a gang would get the drop on the crew at a water tank or at a lonely desert depot. The more agile robbers would swing aboard the blind baggage as the train was gathering speed. Once a train had been stopped on a deserted stretch of track, the lone express company messenger, huddled in his rickety wooden car, was an easy victim.

Crime in general was, of course, no stranger to the West in the 1870s. Law enforcement was crude, and the business slump of 1873 was said to have led many otherwise honest citizens to try their hand at dishonest work. But it seemed the railroads were burdened with more than their share of thievery. Some blamed it partly on ill feelings stemming from land condemnations and high freight rates. But lawyer-turned-train-robber Al Jennings of Oklahoma probably explained it best: "Train robbery was simple because the element of surprise always favored the bandit."

The express companies seemed to move slowly against the problem. As late as 1875 some were still requiring their messengers to supply their own guns and ammunition, and the simple expedient of locking express-car doors was not always enforced. But even when locked, the wooden cars

NAPA, CALIFORNIA, 1892. WELLS FARGO BANK HISTORY ROOM, SAN FRANCISCO

A scene guaranteed to make a bandit's mouth water: an express wagon overflowing with valuables; and a train ready to carry the treasure across desolate stretches of the West where robbery would not only be possible, but easy.

seldom kept out a determined bandit. A favorite device to gain entry was to drill out the door locks with a brace and bit.

The safes themselves didn't present much of a problem either. In an 1876 holdup of the Missouri Pacific, the Jameses and Youngers, after being denied the keys by a stubborn messenger, simply chopped a hole in an Adams Express Company safe with a coal pick.

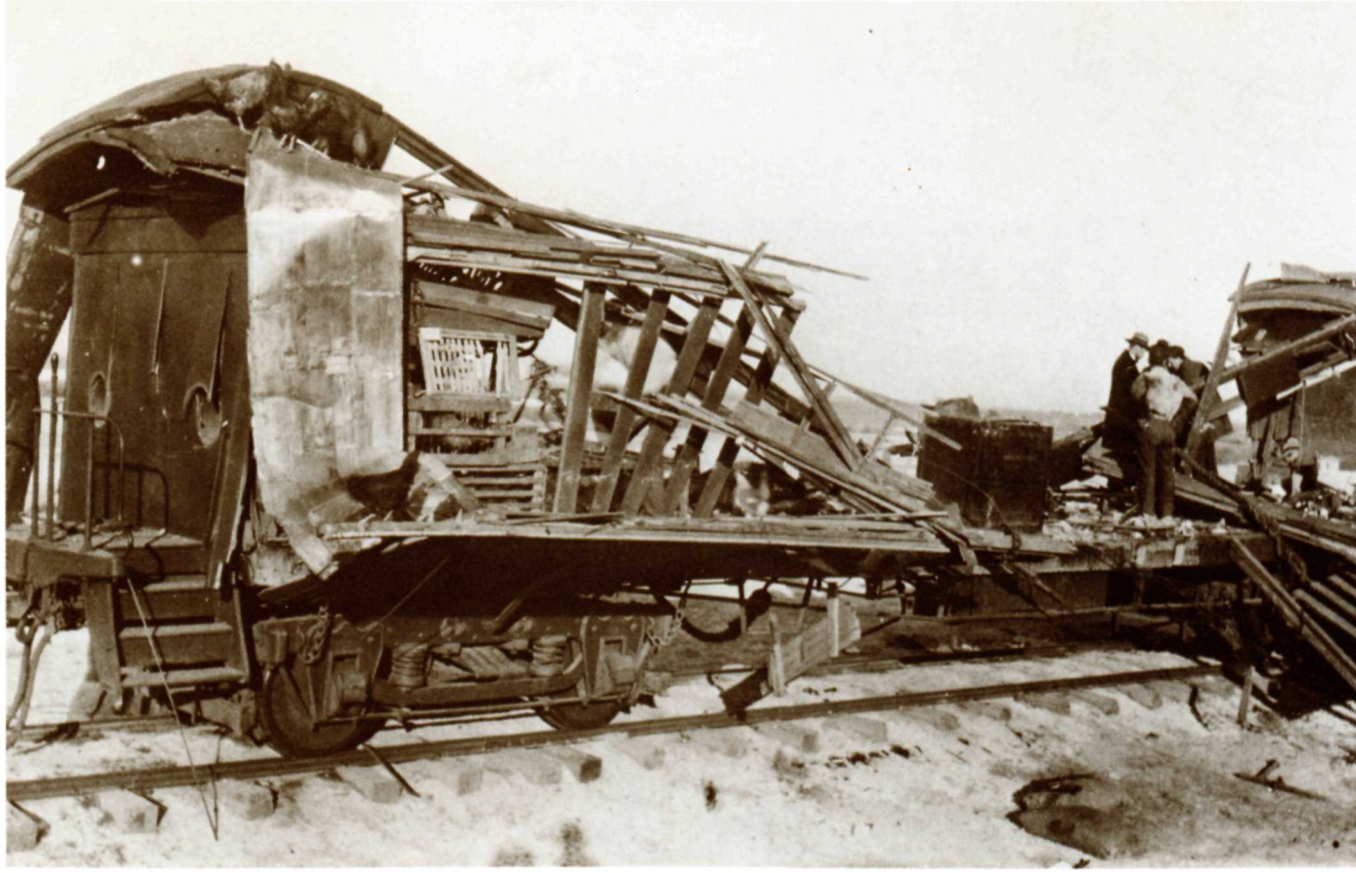
It was the early eighties before the express companies began to put up much of a defense. Express-car doors were finally strengthened, many with boiler iron, and bigger and meaner messengers were placed on the train runs. The messengers were given better arms and strongly encouraged, sometimes with promises of rewards, to resist robbery attempts. Occasionally they were successful. On January 21, 1883, near Montello, Nevada, fifty-year-old Wells Fargo messenger Aaron Y. Ross slammed the door in a surprised robber's face, barricaded himself behind his safe, and fought a three-hour gun battle with the intruders, wounding one who tried to enter through the roof. Later that year, when twelve bandits stopped the Santa Fe Thunderbolt at Coolidge, Kansas, the messenger and train crew put up such a fight the robbers fled for their lives.

When word of these aborted attempts got around, would-be holdup artists apparently reconsidered the risks involved. For the next three years the number of train robberies decreased, leading the express companies and railroads to believe the crisis was over. Then along came Fred Whitrock, alias Jim Cummings, and successful train robbery was back in the headlines.

On October 25, 1886, Whitrock boarded a passenger train heading west out of Saint Louis. He knocked on the express car door and introduced himself as a new employee who was supposed to learn the run. On displaying an authentic-looking letter on Adams Express Company stationery, he was admitted by the messenger. A short time later the train crew found the messenger tied to his chair and $59,000 missing from the safe. Whitrock, giddy with success, kept his name in the newspapers for months with taunting letters to editors, daring the authorities to capture him.

Three large robberies followed Whitrock's haul: $67,000 from the Saint Louis and San Francisco in 1886, $50,000 from the International and Great Northern in 1887, and $40,000 (plus $200,000 in bonds) from the Southern Pacific in 1887. About the same time the famous Rube Burrows gang began operations, engaging in more than a half dozen robberies during 1887–1888 that ranged all the way from west Texas to Alabama. Though the Burrows outfit usually didn't get much—probably their best haul was little over $10,000—they ran the Pinkertons ragged.

In 1889 a new dimension was added to train robbing—dynamite—a decided advantage over unpredictable black powder that had been used on occasion. On February 22, bandits Chris Evans and John Sontag crept aboard the blind baggage of Southern Pacific's No. 17 near Pixley, California. When the Wells Fargo messenger refused to open up, they quickly and cleanly blew off the express car door. These two would become a scourge to the Southern Pacific in the following months.



BOTH PAGES: WELLS FARGO BANK HISTORY ROOM, SAN FRANCISCO

In 1889, dynamiting was added to the train robbers' repertoire. Clearly the robbers in this 1892 holdup near Cross Creek, California, were after something more than chicken dinner (note blast survivors perched atop the car, upper left).

BEGINNING IN 1890, robberies on the major lines, especially the Southern Pacific, became almost commonplace. Outdoing their counterparts of the seventies, these bandits became expert at their craft. A large operation would likely involve months of preparation. Often a leader would work alone, gathering minute details on train schedules, crew personnel, and shipments. Then he would put a gang together and perhaps strike several trains, sometimes even the same train at the same place on successive days.

Some of the bandits sought out dishonest railroad employees who would provide information for a share of the loot; others were ex-railroaders themselves, who found that their knowledge of trains could bring them a handsome profit.

Although there were some variations, train robberies in the nineties generally followed a pattern. The gangs numbered from two to five members, down from previous years when outfits riding in Texas often reached twenty. Usually two men would sneak aboard while a train was gathering speed. At a deserted stretch they would work their way forward and get the drop on the engineer and fireman. The engineer would be ordered to stop with the express car just off a trestle or bridge, making it difficult for passengers or crew members in the back of the train to come forward to help. An alternative was to cut the train loose behind the express car and order the engineer to pull a mile or so ahead.

The engineer and fireman would then be marched to the express car. Frequently other gang members would be hiding along the right-of-way and join the group at this point. The express messenger would be ordered to open the door. If he refused, the bandits would threaten to blow up the car with him in it. Sometimes they would threaten to kill the trainmen instead, but generally they avoided killing when possible, knowing full well that railroad detectives and Pinkertons gave these cases priority.

If a messenger stubbornly refused to open up, the bandits, in the classic Evans and Sontag style, would blow the door off. A few skittery robbers were uneasy handling dynamite and carried kerosene instead. By starting a fire under the car, they usually convinced the messenger it was better to give in than be roasted alive.

Occasionally a curious passenger would wander forward to see why the train had stopped, but usually he was easily frightened off. In most cases, the bandits had all the time they needed to complete their work.

When the haul from the express car was good, train robbers generally bypassed the passenger coaches, feeling that there was more risk involved there. A few bandits, however, specialized in robbing coaches and, in the traditional manner, would go down the aisles stuffing loot in a sack.

By the mid-nineties the express companies and railroads had realized they were losing the battle against the bandits. And to their dismay, studies revealed that of the many railroad systems throughout the world, only trains in the United States were seriously plagued by robberies. Consulting on the problem, the British Transport Commission advised its American counterpart that the rails in the West could never be protected; there were just too many miles of track. The system had simply outdistanced authority. William A. Pink-

By the mid-1890s the railroads and express companies were actually losing the battle against train robbery, and extreme protective measures—like this heavily-armed guard detail for a Wells Fargo shipment from Reno—became necessary.

erton, on the other hand, felt the Pinkerton agency's clients were victims of the times. Pinkerton believed the "yellow-covered novels" of the day were a major source of trouble: they "glorified the outlaw element too much" and "inflamed the minds of country lads" to turn to crime.

Even though the Pinkerton agency was doing a fairly good job of catching train robbers, Pinkerton also complained of lack of support from local law enforcement authorities, claiming they tended to stop pursuing bandits when they crossed county lines. And according to Pinkerton, many law-abiding citizens, having no particular fondness for the railroads, sympathized with the robbers and on occasion even helped them escape.

The reason given by the British experts was probably closer to the truth. Distance was a real problem. From 1880 to 1893, over 40,000 miles of rails were laid in the West. In Missouri alone, a fertile ground for holdups, trackage grew from 2,000 miles in the 1870s to over 6,000 by 1893. By January 1893, when the last spike of the transcontinental Great Northern was driven home, five desolate ribbons of track spanned the western states. The Union Pacific ran from Washington to Texas with legs running east into Nebraska and Missouri. The Southern Pacific, after taking over the old Central Pacific in 1885, dominated California and the plains to the south and east, along the Rio Grande to New Orleans. The Santa Fe ruled the endless miles in the middle, from Chicago to Los Angeles, and the Northern Pacific and Great Northern ran the long stretch from the Great Lakes to the West Coast.

Along these miles of wilderness, fortunes were carried daily: silver, gold, and payroll money in the mining areas; bullion to be used as reserve by small town banks; and hundreds of thousands of dollars in coins from the federal mints. It was all very tempting—and very accessible.

In 1892 the desperate express companies and railroads met to draft a resolution asking Congress to place the crime of train robbery under federal jurisdiction. The Pinkerton Detective Agency actively supported the measure, although fully aware that should the government step in, it could lose its best clients. But Congress moved slowly, and the proposal was sidetracked.

Getting little support from Washington, the express companies seriously considered dumping part of the problem onto the government's lap by raising the rates for banks to the point where they would be forced to ship money by United States mail.

The frequency with which trains were robbed was almost a joke by this time. The subject became the plot for stage plays; William Cody in his *Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Pioneer Exhibition* used "The Great Train Hold-up and Bandit Hunters of the Union Pacific" as his show-stopping climax. And soon Thomas Edison would choose a train robbery as the story line for America's first motion picture with a plot.

In the mid-nineties a Chicago reporter visiting Kansas City wrote that train robberies were so commonplace in that area that a local newspaper no longer reported them unless "they came in early and other news was dull." One railroad alone, the Southern Pacific, would be robbed fifty-nine times before it was all over.

THE BETTMANN ARCHIVE

This tough-looking posse, hired by the desperate Union Pacific to catch the notorious Wild Bunch, grimly pursued Butch Cassidy's gang in a special train provided by the railroad.

IDEAS WERE SOUGHT on how to solve the problem. It was suggested that all express cars be made of steel. But the manager of the San Francisco Railroad felt it wouldn't help: "Why should we do that when anyone may buy a quarter's worth of dynamite, and blow to pieces the strongest metal ever put together?" He suggested instead making it more difficult to obtain dynamite. Another proponent of steel cars recommended going a step further: he advocated using a globular steel express car with "revolving gun turrets." Another suggested a "steel stronghold" at one end of the car, from which the messenger could put up a good fight. Wade Hampton, United States Commissioner of Railroads, came up with the idea of installing an inner door on express cars made of "strong iron grating." It would be difficult to destroy by dynamite, he felt, and messengers, using new "repeating shotguns," could fire through the grating.

Hampton also offered advice on catching train robbers. A dog fancier, he suggested using foxhounds to track them down. The animals could be placed strategically at selected stations and sidings and be summoned by telegraph when needed.

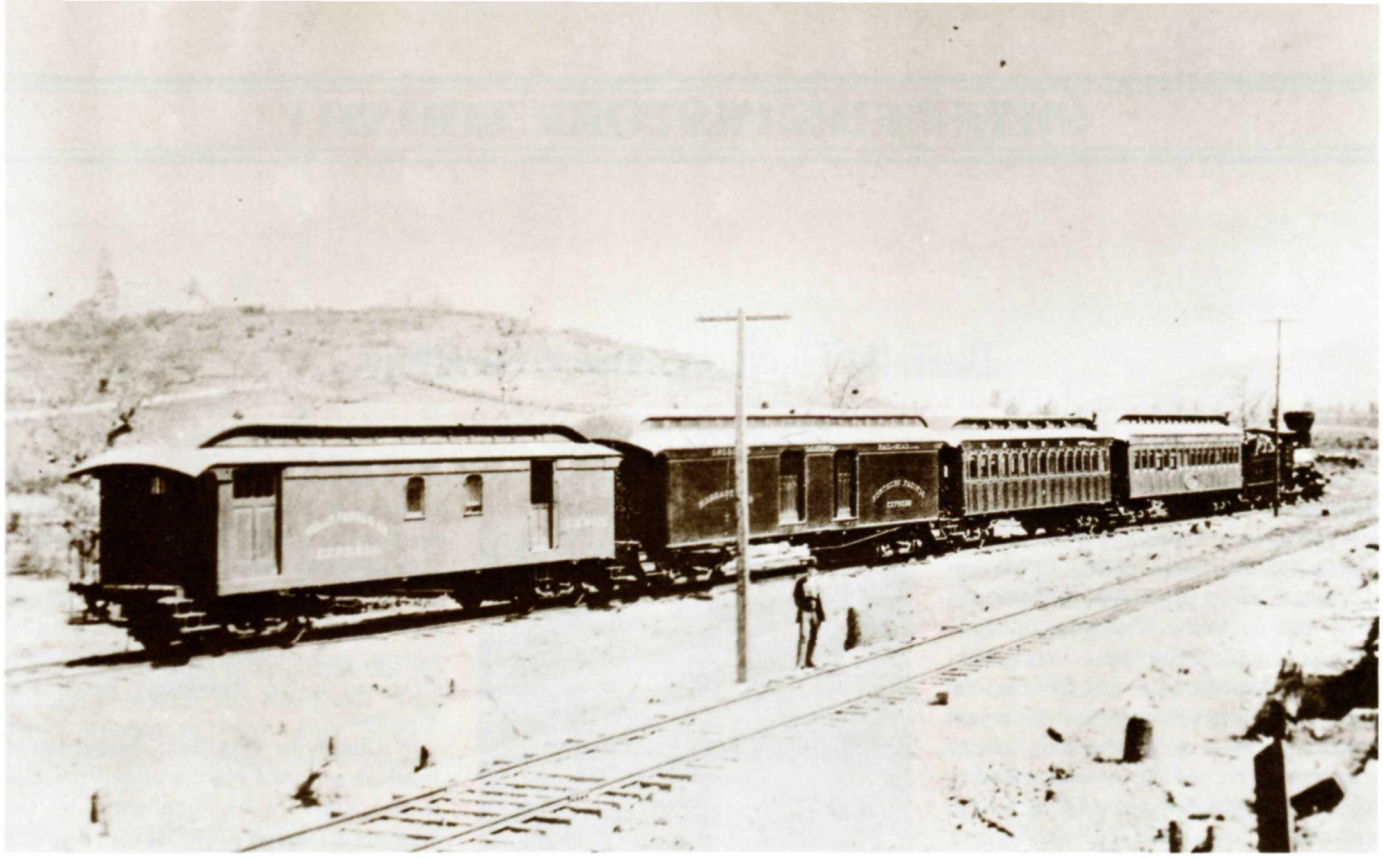
A carefully devised plan was submitted by a young army lieutenant, John T. Knight, who had gained experience guarding payroll shipments between military posts. Knight suggested changing the positions of train cars. Trains of the day were nearly all lined up in the same order: first came the locomotive, then the tender, express (or baggage) and mail car, second-class coaches, first-class coaches, sleeping cars (if any), and caboose. Knight recommended putting the express car at the end of the train, just in front of the caboose. The bandits, he said, after stopping the locomotive, would have to march the engineer and fireman past all the passenger coaches and sleeping cars to get to the safe in the express car. He further suggested installing alarm bells on all coaches and sleepers which could be rung by an express messenger in trouble. Shotguns, kept in glass cases at the ends of the coaches and sleepers, could then be passed out to trainmen and passengers willing to help. Finally another alarm system could be installed to alert the coaches and sleepers if robbers cut the express car loose from the rest of the train.

The railroads instead opted for all-steel cars, and the express companies added guards to protect the messengers, most of whom were selected "for their determination and nerve." The American Express Company assigned four men to a car and armed them with "riot guns." Other companies followed suit, equipping their men with the "latest improved style of revolvers and Winchesters."

Armed guards were also placed among the passengers; and on runs where holdups were expected, Pinkertons and railroad "posses" were placed in cattle cars or special baggage cars with ramps that could be dropped quickly for immediate pursuit by horseback. Some railroads put on special trains with just a locomotive, tender, and "posse car," to wait at a siding for word of a robbery.

The Pinkertons recruited hundreds of informers, or "operatives" as they were called, culled from among railroad employees, local business men, and others who were interested in seeing train robbery stopped.

Some of the steps taken by the railroads were imagina-



SOUTHERN PACIFIC RAILROAD

To quell robberies, railroads tried putting the express car at the rear, as shown above, so would-be robbers, after halting the train, would have to march the engineer and fireman past hopefully alert passengers to reach the treasure.

tive. The Missouri, Kansas and Texas line displayed savage-looking Indians as train guards, hoping to discourage even the bravest bandits. The Denver and Rio Grande experimented with a large pipe attached to the locomotive boiler which ran back over the roof of the cab and tender. Using this device the engineer could spray the robbers' hiding place with live steam at a temperature of 750 degrees.

Finally, all this effort began to pay off. Train robberies reached a peak in the year 1900. The number was down in 1901, rose slightly in 1902, and then began a gradual and permanent decline.

The changeover to all steel cars probably helped the most, while the reduction in the number of gold and silver mines in the West, which resulted in fewer shipments of ore and payroll money, made the hauls less attractive. And in 1902 Congress passed the Train Robbery Act, which increased federal jurisdiction over these crimes.

The decline in robberies was also aided by another string of thwarted attempts. The first, which occurred in April 1910, was a daring holdup of the Southern Pacific's China-Japan Mail. The robbers concealed themselves aboard during makeup of the train. Everything went smoothly: they commandeered the locomotive, gained entry to the express-mail car with the threat of dynamite, and wrapped it all up with a well-planned escape by rowboat. The only problem was that they had been outsmarted. When they finally reached a hiding place and counted their loot, they found only $17.

The following year in Cow Creek Canyon, Oregon, robbers successfully stole the front half of the Southern Pacific's No. 16 but had to leave empty-handed when they couldn't force a stubborn and well-armed messenger to open up the steel express-car door. In March 1912 near Sanderson, Texas, an express messenger beat one bandit to death with an ice mallet and killed a second with the first bandit's gun. A similar fate befell a would-be robber on the Shasta Limited near Delta, California, the following year. And in May 1914, a bandit attempting to rob the Southern Pacific's No. 21 lost a gun battle with two railroad detectives hiding among the passengers.

Passenger coaches were still an occasional target during the 1920s, but the amount of the take was seldom large, and much of it was in traveler's checks.

In March 1932, after passing the hat through the coaches of the Southern Pacific's Lark, two bandits were forced to jump while the train was still moving because the engineer thought their stop signal was a leak in the air system. Battered and bruised and missing their revolver (which eventually led to their capture), the luckless bandits counted their total earnings at a mere $216.

The wrap-up came the following year, on February 15, aboard the Sunset Limited near Ontario, California. While a robber was emptying the pockets of the passengers, the conductor borrowed a pistol from a traveler and shot the bandit dead. On that night, train robberies, as the American West knew them, came to an end.

Richard Patterson *is an editor at the Allen Smith Company, an Indianapolis, Indiana, lawbook publisher, and writes historical articles in his spare time. He is preparing a book on the western expansion of the railroads.*

Buffalo, Pioneers, and Cow Chips

A rare collection of works by artist **Thomas Moran** (1837–1926), including more than twenty sketches on loan from Yellowstone National Park, can be seen through April at the **Buffalo Bill Historical Center in Cody, Wyoming.** In 1871, Moran accompanied the F. V. Hayden surveying expedition to the Yellowstone region. The expedition's report created much interest in preserving the area as a national park, and the landscape studies of Yellowstone done by Moran (along with photographs by W. H. Jackson) gave convincing evidence of the region's beauty and uniqueness. The following year Yellowstone became the nation's first national park.

Also on display at the Buffalo Bill Historical Center during April will be a group of 102 **Navaho weavings,** including *rugs, blankets, and tapestries.*

"Instantly Fashionable," an exhibit of **women's fashions in Los Angeles from the 1820s through the late 1940s** is on display until April 3 in the Textiles and Costumes Gallery of the Ahmanson Gallery, **Los Angeles County Museum of Art.** Featured are more than forty dresses from the museum's permanent collection, ranging from the Mexican-influenced *china poblada* costume of early Los Angeles to dresses by noted designer Gilbert Adrian. An accompanying display of contemporary photographs further illustrates the dress of Los Angeles women.

An exhibition of **early lithographs of western cities** has been assembled in conjunction with *Cities on Stone: Nineteenth Century Lithograph Images of the Urban West,* a book written by John W. Reps and issued in 1976 by the Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, Fort Worth.

The lithographs will be on display at the **Joslyn Art Museum,** Omaha, Nebraska, from March 3–April 17; at the **Oakland Museum,** Oakland, California from July 7–August 21; and at the **Utah Museum of Fine Arts,** University of Utah, Salt Lake City, September 18–October 30.

MORAN EXHIBITION AT THE BUFFALO BILL HISTORICAL CENTER (LEFT)

The Bison in Art, an exhibition depicting the influence of the buffalo in the nineteenth-century West through paintings, sculpture, engravings, and artifacts, currently showing at the **Amon Carter Museum of Western Art** in Fort Worth, Texas (see pages 10-21), will be seen at three other museums during coming months. **The Buffalo Bill Historical Center** in Cody, Wyoming, will host the show from May 1–September 30; the **Glenbow-Alberta Institute** in Calgary, Alberta, from October 15–November 27; and the **Joslyn Art Museum** in Omaha, Nebraska, during December 20, 1977–January 29, 1978.

The **University of Nebraska** has established a **Center for Great Plains Studies** at its Lincoln campus. On April 13–15, the Center will sponsor a **series of symposia** with the theme, "The Cultural Heritage of the Plains." Gilbert Fite (University of Georgia) will be the keynote speaker, and papers will be presented by a variety of scholars. Further information about the symposia can be obtained from Frederick Luebke, Department of History, or Brian Blouet, Department of Geography, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE 68588.

An **Eighty-Niner Day** celebration at **Guthrie,** Oklahoma, will commemorate the April 22, 1889 land run that began the settlement of Oklahoma's "unassigned lands." The celebration, which extends from April 19–23, will include a parade, rodeos, and carnival; and craft demonstrations at the **Oklahoma Territorial Museum.**

A **Cimarron Territory Homesteader Festival** will take place at **Beaver,** Oklahoma, April 20–23, highlighted by the World Champion Cow Chip Throwing Contest, "a highly specialized athletic event open to all pasture discus pitchers."

Pioneer Day will be celebrated in **Okemah, Oklahoma,** April 21–23, with rodeos, a parade, and other entertainment; and May 5–8 in **Guymon** with a mule-train encampment as well.

Drawings, renderings, sketches, and blueprints by **Oregon architects** are on exhibit at the **Oregon Historical Center** in Portland through May 1. Planned in cooperation with the Historical Resources Committee of the American Institute of Architects, the display includes first concepts of such well-known landmarks as Temple Beth Israel, the Pittock Mansion, and the Lloyd Frank residence. Featured architects include Jamieson Parker, Herman Brookman, Wade Pipes, and Pietro Belluschi.

Correction

Our caption for the cover illustration in the November issue stated that by 1900 only thirty-nine bison remained in the American West, all of them at Yellowstone National Park. It has since been brought to our attention that while the Yellowstone group was the only surviving wild herd in the United States at that time, private herds were maintained by individuals such as Michel Pablo (with Charles Allard until 1895) in western Montana; Charles Goodnight in Texas; and James "Scotty" Philip in South Dakota.

Three New Books on Montana

REVIEWED BY PAUL R. TREECE

Montana: A History of Two Centuries by Michael P. Malone and Richard B. Roeder *(University of Washington, Seattle, 1976; 366 pp., illus., maps, biblio., index, $14.95).*

Not in Precious Metals Alone by the Staff of the Montana Historical Society *(Montana Historical Society Press, Helena, 1976; 308 pp., intro., illus., notes, index, $18.50).*

Territorial Politics and Government in Montana, 1864–89 by Clark C. Spence *(University of Illinois, Urbana, 1975; 339 pp., intro., charts, biblio., index, $11.50).*

MALONE AND ROEDER, history professors at Montana State University, probably intended for their new general history of Montana to be adopted as a textbook in Treasure State colleges and universities. They probably also hoped that the book would appeal to western history buffs. They should realize both aspirations. Previous general histories of Montana have typically suffered from poor organization, uncritical use of sources, long quotations, overemphasis on the spectacular, and a slighting of recent history. The Malone and Roeder *Montana* is well-organized, and the reader is led smoothly from one era to the next. While the book is based on secondary sources, the authors leave no doubt that they have carefully weighed the evidence before arriving at their insightful interpretations. They have taken pains to keep local events in a national perspective. The twentieth century is reached at about midpoint in the book. The second half of the book contributes much to the reader's understanding of modern Montana as the authors deftly handle such interesting topics as the local economy and politics (for several decades dominated by the manipulations of the copper barons); the downfall of thousands of misinformed farmers after World War I; the problems of public education in a big, poor state; and the paradox of sending liberals to Washington while electing conservatives to serve at home. The authors have also provided an excellent bibliography.

The Montana Historical Society has commemorated the nation's Bicentennial by publishing a big, beautiful book of manuscript selections from the treasure trove housed in the society's library in Helena. One of the purposes of this collection is to allow those who cannot personally visit Helena to sample the richness of the society's manuscript holdings and enjoy the excitement of reading the letters, diaries, and journals of the men and women who had a role in shaping Montana's destiny. The collection covers the same period as the Malone and Roeder book and is complementary to it. The choice of selections provides a well-balanced treatment of two centuries of history, and the explanatory headings which precede each selection are extremely useful. Lovers of quality book craftsmanship will be especially pleased with the large format, heavy antique ivory paper, hand-executed calligraphy, and interesting photographs. The staff of the Montana Historical Society should be commended for this interesting and beautiful publication.

Clark Spence, a professional historian, has authored several serious books and articles on western subjects. The main thesis of *Territorial Politics and Government in Montana* is that the creation of the territory, the appointment and removal of federal officials, the awarding of government contracts, and the settlement of many, if not most, issues were not decided on the merits of the particular case. Instead, politics was first and foremost in determining the decision. Clark concentrates his attention on the executive branch. Indeed, more than one-half of the book is devoted to a discussion of the territorial governors and their administrations, while the legislative and judicial branches each rate only one separate chapter. Politics in the early territorial period was characterized by conflict between the federal appointees, typically out-of-office Republicans who were poorly informed about frontier conditions, and the local citizenry, usually Democrats and frequently perceived by the appointees as disloyal refugees from the defeated Confederacy. Politics in the later territorial period was marked by mutually beneficial accommodations between the federally appointed governors and many of the economic leaders of Montana, regardless of party. The book is carefully researched. Clark makes extensive use of newspapers, manuscript collections, and government reports but nevertheless makes an occasional error: e.g., the mouth of the Judith River is not downstream from the mouth of the Yellowstone (p. 50n), James Stuart never had placer holdings in Central America (p. 160), and Richard Hickman was not a Democrat (p. 296). Most readers will not be frightened away by this scholarly, heavily footnoted work because the author writes lucidly. Clark's interest in his native state is demonstrated by the fact that he is currently writing *Montana: A Bicentennial History*. Readers of his book about Montana Territory will be looking forward to the publication of his next work about the Treasure State.

Paul R. Treece, *assistant dean of Central Ohio Technical College, Newark, is writing* Mr. Montana: The Life of Granville Stuart, 1834–1918.

RECENT WESTERN BOOKS

Ten Years with the Cowboy Artists of America: A Complete History and Exhibition Record by James K. Howard with a foreword by Frederic G. Renner *(Northland Press, Flagstaff, Arizona, 1976; 213 pp., illus., biblio., $40.00).*

Since 1966 when the Cowboy Artists of America held its first show, the realistic western art of its members has attracted increasing attention. Thirty-three members of the CAA are represented in this fine large-format volume, which reproduces 125 examples of their art (89 in color), including all the award-winners from CAA shows.

Drama & Conflict: The Texas Saga of 1776 by Robert S. Weddle and Robert H. Thonhoff *(Madrona Press, Austin, 1976; 210 pp., illus., maps, biblio., index, $12.95).*

This bicentennial book describes Texas in 1776, when it consisted of five growing colonies on New Spain's frontier.

Early Architecture in New Mexico by Bainbridge Bunting *(The University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, 1976; 122 pp., illus., intro., biblio., index, $12.95 cloth, $6.95 paper).*

This first comprehensive survey of early New Mexican architecture begins with the pithouses of the Basket Makers (350 A.D.), and covers Pueblo Indian, Spanish colonial, Mexican, and territorial New Mexican buildings. The author, a professor of art at the University of New Mexico, has spent twenty-five years studying his subject.

Los Angeles: Biography of a City by John and LaRee Caughey *(University of California, Berkeley, 1976; 509 pp., illus., biblio., index, $14.95).*

This interesting, often provocative selection of writings tells the story of Los Angeles from its beginning to the freeway-gashed present.

Alcatraz by Ted Needham and Howard Needham *(Celestial Arts, Millbrae, California, 1976; 71 pp., illus., $3.95 paper).*

This book consists of a series of eerie photographs, with accompanying text, of the famous maximum security prison as it appeared in late 1973, empty of prisoners but not yet a public park.

Old Ranches of the Texas Plains by Mondel Rogers *(Texas A&M University, College Station, 1976; 124 pp., illus., intro., notes, $27.50).*

In a series of sensitive paintings, artist-architect Mondel Rogers has captured the spirit of the past surviving in the old ranches of the Texas plains. He has also included a fine essay on ranching architecture and notes about each of the eighty paintings.

Beverly Hills: Portrait of a Fabled City by Fred E. Basten *(Douglas-West, Los Angeles, 1975; 383 pp., illus., index, $23.50).*

This potpourri of more than 450 period photographs with text tells the story of glamorous Beverly Hills.

Men, Mules and Mountains: Lieutenant O'Neil's Olympic Expeditions by Robert L. Wood *(The Mountaineers, Seattle, 1976; 505 pp., illus., maps, intro., notes, biblio., index, $17.50).*

This is the story of the two military expeditions that explored the Pacific Northwest's Olympic Mountains in 1885 and 1890. The book is enlivened by extracts from the handwritten, previously unpublished journal of Pvt. Harry Fisher, a humorous and perceptive member of the 1890 expedition.

The Asian American: The Historical Experience edited by Norris Hundley, Jr., with an introduction by Akira Iriye *(Clio Press, Santa Barbara, 1976; 186 pp., intro., notes, biblio., index, $15.75 casebound, $5.75 paper).*

These eight essays, which first appeared in the *Pacific Historical Review,* treat the Asian-American experience from this group's own often-neglected point of view.

Ansel Adams: Photographs of the Southwest with an essay by Lawrence Clark Powell *(New York Graphic Society, Boston, 1976; 128 pp., illus., $32.50).*

Most of the beautiful and luminous photographs in this book, taken by Ansel Adams between 1927 and 1968, have never, or rarely, been reproduced before. Accompanying them is a graceful personal essay on the land by Lawrence Clark Powell.

Cities on Stone: Nineteenth Century Lithograph Images of the Urban West by John W. Reps *(Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, 1976; 99 pp., illus., maps, biblio., $14.95 cloth, $9.95 paper).*

The development of lithography and of western cities occurred at roughly the same time. The results of this happenstance can be seen in this interesting small book, designed to accompany an exhibition originating at the Amon Carter Museum of Western Art. The book contains reprints of fifty extremely decorative color lithographs of western cities, including numerous bird's-eye views, and a well-documented essay on the theme.

"Bo'jou, Neejee!": Profiles of Canadian Indian Art by Ted J. Brasser *(The National Museum of Man, The National Museums of Canada, Ottawa, 1976; 204 pp., illus., maps, biblio., $14.25 paper).*

Based on a major exhibition of rare Canadian Indian artifacts, many just recently acquired by the National Museum of Man, this fine book includes both color and black and white plates, and an informative text.

Indian Rock Art of Southern California by Gerald A. Smith and Wilson G. Turner *(San Bernardino County Museum Association, Redlands, California; 150 pp., illus., maps, biblio., $17.50).*

Both interest in and vandalism of Indian rock painting is increasing. This book attempts to preserve some of that art through an introductory essay and a catalog of more than three thousand drawings of designs from Southern California rock paintings.

Gilpin County Gold: Peter McFarlane, 1848–1929, Mining Entrepreneur in Central City, Colorado by H. William Axford *(Sage Books, The Swallow Press, Chicago, 1976; 210 pp., illus., maps, appen., notes, biblio., index, $10.00).*

Businessman Peter McFarlane's career coincided with much of the great era of Gilpin County mining, and so this biography is also the story of an area that included what was once called "the richest square mile on earth." Based on unpublished McFarlane family papers, this book should interest all those concerned with Colorado mining history.

Walter Prescott Webb

REVIEWED BY ROBERT A. TRENNERT

IN THE THIRTEEN YEARS since his death much has been written about Walter Webb's contribution to the writing of American history. Often described as one of the nation's most original thinkers, Webb has been analyzed as a frontier historian, environmentalist, and prophet of the future. This past year has produced an exceptional outpouring of significant material on the man and his work.

Essays on Walter Prescott Webb: The Walter Prescott Webb Memorial Lectures edited by Kenneth R. Philp and Elliott West *(University of Texas, Austin, 1976; 147 pp., intro., notes, $7.95).*

The Making of a History: Walter Prescott Webb and The Great Plains by Gregory M. Tobin *(University of Texas, Austin, 1976; 194 pp., intro., biblio., notes, index, $10.95).*

Walter Prescott Webb: His Life and Impact by Necah Stewart Furman *(University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, 1976; 236 pp., intro., illus., biblio., notes, index, $12.00).*

Webb, the last of the frontier triumvirate of Turner, Bolton, and Webb to be the subject of a full-scale biography, has been fortunate enough to have two excellent works on his life and writing produced simultaneously. Despite the seeming similarity, however, the two biographies complement each other, being different in scope and outlook. Additionally, the *Essays on Walter Prescott Webb* contribute to a further understanding of this complicated man.

Necah Furman's *Walter Prescott Webb* is the more complete biography. It is personal in nature and discusses all aspects of Webb's life from Texas farm boy to renowned historian. Webb emerges from this treatment as an immensely likable human being, one who encountered both the frustrations and rewards of an academic career. His contributions to historical writing are analyzed in the context of his times and the intellectual climate of the nation. It is the story of a man unable to escape his frontier roots, who finally stopped apologizing for his background and eventually wrote four works of permanent significance. Fortunately, through the large collection of available manuscript materials, the factors that motivated Webb to his greatness can be determined with some accuracy, and Furman has convincingly re-created the atmosphere within which Webb operated.

The Making of a History views the subject from a different perspective. Gregory Tobin concentrates on those factors in Webb's life that led him to write *The Great Plains*. The presentation is not a personal biography but rather a study in professional development. Within this context, Tobin concentrates on several formative influences, particularly the frontier background and association with Lindley Miller Keasbey, whose teaching stressed the effects of environment on social institutions. Yet the end product, *The Great Plains*, published in 1931, was uniquely original and represents, Tobin states, "one of the most successful attempts by a first generation westerner to produce an integrated view of his immediate historical context." The wealth of material and valuable insights contained in this book well illustrate the unusual aspect of Webb's approach to history that permitted him to flaunt traditionalism successfully.

The final selection, *Essays on Walter Prescott Webb,* contains the five papers presented at the tenth annual Walter Prescott Webb Memorial Lecture at the University of Texas at Arlington. The five contributors, Joe B. Frantz, W. Eugene Hollon, W. Turrentine Jackson, George Wolfskill, and Walter Rundell, Jr., are all former Webb students. The essays themselves are varied, and space prohibits a detailed discussion. Two of the papers are concerned with aspects of Webb's early career, and the others use his ideas on comparative frontiers, environment, and the "great" frontier as points of departure. All are exceedingly well done and present examples of the great scholarship the man and his history continue to generate.

In retrospect, Webb's own sense of humility might cause him to blush at some of the praise he is currently receiving, but he would be delighted to know that the quest for historical knowledge is still being stimulated by his example.

Robert A. Trennert *wrote* Alternative to Extinction: Federal Indian Policy and the Beginnings of the Reservation System.

The Court-Martial of George Armstrong Custer by Douglas C. Jones *(Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1976; 291 pp., illus., $8.95).*

REVIEWED BY ROBERT M. UTLEY

THIS IS A NOVEL, but here we judge it as history, both because this is a magazine of history and because the author is a serious historian who strives to place his fiction in a truthful historical context.

The premise is that a badly wounded George Armstrong Custer survived the Battle of the Little Bighorn and wound up before a court-martial on charges of mismanaging the action and getting his command wiped out by the Indians. It is a fascinating plot, one fairly certain to sell many books and find its way to the motion-picture screen.

On the whole, Jones succeeds in working his way through this plot without serious violence to history. Nevertheless, specialists in minutiae will find much to criticize, such as incorrect uniforms (cavalry stripes were not black; old photographs rendered yellow as black) and a persistent confusion of brevet and regular rank (Custer would *not* have worn the uniform of his brevet rank of major general in 1876; still less, in a military court in New York City, the fringed buckskins of the frontier). Irritating, too, is a tendency to modern military usages not prevalent in 1876—e.g. 18 October 1876, TJA for Trial Judge Advocate, and Executive Officer for the second-ranking officer of the regiment. In the accounts of the Battle of the Little Bighorn there are numerous errors that obviously proceed from carelessness or ignorance rather than the requirements of plot.

This reviewer does not think it in character for General William T. Sherman to have deliberately contrived a court-martial designed to rid the army of Custer, and I am quite certain that a court organized to try a lieutenant colonel for even the most heinous offense would not have included two major generals and four brigadiers. Nor would I characterize either George or Elizabeth Custer so harshly, but of course this is a mere difference of opinion in a matter that has prompted monumental differences of opinion.

These are minor quibbles with a work that in its essentials combines fast-paced fiction with generally sound history.

Robert M. Utley, *a former WHA president, has written extensively on Custer and the Indian-fighting army.*

Song From the Earth: American Indian Painting by Jamake Highwater *(Little Brown, New York, 1976; 222 pp., illus., biblio., appen., notes, index, $19.95).*

REVIEWED BY JOHN C. EWERS

JAMAKE HIGHWATER, a skilled writer of Indian descent, presents this book as "the first popular work" on American Indian painting. He leans heavily upon several books by non-Indian scholars published during the past decade. His book to a considerable degree reflects the strengths and weaknesses in the published record on American Indian painting.

Like Dorothy Dunn's *American Indian Painting of the Southwest and Plains* (1971), this book deals almost exclusively with paintings by Indians of the Southwestern and Great Plains tribes. Relatively little attention is given to paintings created before 1900.

The author's primary concern is with the development of secular painting among the Pueblo and Navaho during the present century; the works of Kiowa artists who were special students at the University of Oklahoma during the 1920s; and the larger numbers of Indians schooled in Santa Fe since the 1930s. He shows concern for the conflict between the traditional flat, two-dimensional style and the contemporary painting influenced by international abstract expressionism since World War II.

The book's greatest weakness lies in its provincial assumption that no Indian painting was important unless it was created by an Indian who was a resident of, or was schooled or taught in the Southwest. No mention is made of Angel De Cora, the most influential Indian artist, teacher, and spokesman for Indian art at the beginning of the century. She was a Winnebago Indian from Nebraska. Forgotten also are the Indian artists who actively contributed to WPA art programs during the depression years. One of them, Victor Pepion, later executed the murals in the Museum of the Plains Indian on the Blackfeet Reservation, Montana. Another, William Standing, a full-blood Assiniboin, dared to picture Indians as human beings less dignified and statuesque than the red men in Edward Curtis's photographs. His humorous works were criticized by other Indians much as are Fritz Scholder's well-known "ugly Indians" today.

John C. Ewers, *senior ethnologist, Smithsonian Institution, is currently revising his 1939 book* Plains Indian Painting.

The Peoples of Utah edited by Helen Z. Papanikolas *(Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, 1976; 499 pp., intro., illus., index, $7.50).*

REVIEWED BY GUSTIVE O. LARSON

THIS BOOK is an important centennial addition to the historical literature of Utah and the West. It not only reviews the much publicized British and Scandinavian contribution to the founding of the state, but provides a long delayed recognition of the minority groups which have simmered, largely unnoticed by historians, on the edges of Utah's melting pot.

Appropriately the book opens with a sketch of the natives encountered by the white invaders of the Great Basin region. It also gives proper recognition to the small black minority from their first appearance in Salt Lake Valley. The balance of the chapters, excepting those treating the Mexicans and Canadians, deal with immigrants from overseas—Jews, Continental Europeans, Chinese, Italians, Japanese, Yugoslavs, Middle Easterners, and Greeks. Each chapter is authored by a scholar who is either identified with the nationality he represents or has already researched it for other scholarly purposes. The result is a more or less sympathetic approach by each one to his subject.

The work is well-edited to avoid the serious disunity which could result from varying writing skills and different approaches in the fourteen chapters. A selection of illustrations accompanying each chapter adds interest to the book.

Each minority group is considered with regard to numbers, vocational preference based on native experience, and field of employment. As in other states the foreign element often faced hostility and prejudice and, as elsewhere, the separate ethnic groups found a sense of solidarity and security in preserving their native customs, entertainment, and social organizations.

Of importance to the territory was the immigrant's attitude toward becoming "Americanized"—whether he considered himself a candidate for citizenship or merely a transient. In the American tradition, many rose from humble beginnings to prominence in industry or in political or intellectual circles.

Gustive O. Larson, *associate professor emeritus in history and religion at Brigham Young University, is the author of the award-winning book* The "Americanization" of Utah for Statehood *(1971).*

The Vanishing White Man by Stan Steiner *(Harper & Row, New York, 1976; 319 pp., index, $10.95).*

REVIEWED BY DAVID LAVENDER

THIS IS A RATATOUILLE of a book, appetizing but slippery. The thrust is roughly this. The white man's lust for power—read energy (all comes to energy these days)—is destroying humanity.

First the Indians were conquered and betrayed by force and lies; now their leaders are being seduced by corporate money to yield their last sacred places.

Meanwhile the white ranchers of the West, also true lovers of the earth, are being similarly steamrollered for the coal under their lands. Doom nears—unless we return to the wisdom of the Old People, an unlikely event since Western man does not understand the fundamental "Circle of Life."

All of this is spiced with anger, sarcasm, irony, bits of mysticism, and more than a little self-flagellation.

There are blizzards of quotations, ranging from disembodied phrases to long "testaments." Generally eloquent, these testaments come from Indians, ranchers, government officials, and whatnot; and consist of their views about their work, their despairs, and the hopelessness of white civilization—not American civilization—that adjective is reserved for the continent's original inhabitants.

One can be sardonic. I recall a wheezy writer's formula: since sure sellers were about Lincoln, doctors, or dogs, why not a super mix, "Lincoln's Doctor's Dog?" Nowadays why not "Up with Indians, down with GNP, incense for the earth?" Plus woman's lib, for it seems that along with certain vegetables, the Indians gave us both emancipated women and democracy.

As I say, this is hard to handle. Certainly the Indians and the land have been brutalized. Realizing that, you either stand on the side of the angels or in darkness, and to hell with complexity or even with a middle view of red folk-wisdom such as is presented in, say, T. R. Fehrenbach's fine and compassionate *Comanches* (1974). As for concrete proposals, Steiner offers none.

But, then, neither did Jeremiah, crying in the wilderness.

David Lavender *has written many books on the West, including* David Lavender's Colorado; California: A Bicentennial History; *and* Nothing Seemed Impossible, *a biography of William Ralston.*

Cherokee Sunset, A Nation Betrayed: A Narrative of Travail and Triumph, Persecution and Exile by Samuel Carter III *(Doubleday & Company, Garden City, New York, 1976; 318 pp., illus., biblio., notes, index, $9.95).*

REVIEWED BY THAYLE K. ANDERSON

ALTHOUGH *Cherokee Sunset* is but one of numerous recent attempts to reassess the travail of the Cherokee nation, Samuel Carter III has, nevertheless, made a praiseworthy contribution to Cherokee scholarship.

Relying heavily upon contemporary accounts published in the *Cherokee Phoenix* and upon letters and speeches of tribal leaders, missionaries, and Indian agents, Carter shows in compelling detail why this disturbing chapter in our history still invokes a sense of guilt and outrage in us a century and a half later.

The Cherokees, according to Carter, took full advantage of Article XIX of the 1791 Holston Treaty, which provided federal assistance for "a greater degree of civilization" for the tribe, and transformed rapidly from a hunting to an agricultural society. The tribe, Carter asserts, also possessed "a respect for knowledge, a hunger to know, and an unusual capacity for learning." The author documents this claim convincingly as he studies the Cherokees' conversion to Christianity, their positive response to the school systems established within the tribe by various religious organizations, their enthusiastic reception and implementation of Sequoyah's remarkable Cherokee alphabet, and their methodical formulation of a parliamentary democracy.

Carter treats the Cherokee leaders, John Ross and the Ridges, in detail as he chronicles their resourceful but futile efforts to avoid dispossession at the hands of the very civilization that they had tried to emulate. He also studies the tribe's split into crippling factions in the face of a fire storm of intimidation and persecution which finally resulted in their expulsion from Georgia.

Finally, the author traces in exhaustive detail the Cherokees' tragic exodus westward, during which over 4,000 of the 16,500-member nation perished, and he recounts their efforts to resolve their internal conflicts and to reassert their economic and cultural integrity. Carter writes well and documents carefully; his account is as enlightening as it is harrowing.

Thayle K. Anderson *edits the* Kentucky Philological Association Bulletin.

A Pioneer Gentlewoman in British Columbia; The Recollections of Susan Allison edited by Margaret A. Ormsby *(University of British Columbia, Vancouver, 1976; 262 pp., illus., appen., notes, index, $18.95).*

REVIEWED BY TED C. HINCKLEY

ONE PHENOMENON which the on-coming generation must be the poorer for not knowing is the Victorian matriarch. Yet as the editor of Mrs. Susan Allison's recollections (1860–1894), Professor Margaret Ormsby assures that one gentle woman and strong-willed pioneer has won at least hard-cover immortality.

Born in Ceylon, raised in England and Scotland, with upper-class inculcation, fifteen-year-old Susan Moir arrived with her parents in British Columbia in 1860. Her future pointed up the Fraser River to the frontier world expanding about Fort Hope. In 1868, Susan married John Fall Allison, English born and American educated, one-time California miner turned British Columbia cattle rancher. Driven by the call of the wilderness, the newlyweds pushed into the virgin Similkameen Valley. Eventually assisted by fourteen children and days whose working hours frequently exceeded fourteen, the Allisons gradually mastered the frontier environment.

Readers who envision the Victorian life-style as all sweat and no sweetness are certain to be disappointed by these engagingly written reminiscences. Despite ceaseless domestic chores and the destruction of her domicile at three different times by snow and fire and finally by flood —the river carried away fourteen structures—Susan Allison appears to have been a contented woman.

For the historian, Mrs. Allison's sanguine pen recorded valuable vignettes of the interior's commerce, settler life, and the Similkameen and Okanagan Indians. Although she reveals the predictable revulsion at aboriginal wife-trading, gambling, and considerably else, her tone is always one of sympathy and never expresses contempt.

Professor Ormsby's fine introduction and scholarly notes form over half of the book. Clearly this expensive volume is a mandatory acquisition for anyone seriously interested in the history of British Columbia.

Ted C. Hinckley *is a professor of history at San Jose State University in California. His field of interest is the American frontier in Alaska.*

Mirror of the Dream: An Illustrated History of San Francisco by T. H. Watkins and R. R. Olmsted *(Scrimshaw Press, San Francisco, 1976; 300 pp., illus., index, $27.50).*

REVIEWED BY BRIAN MCGINTY

THE BRIDGING of time is a shadowy business at best," say historians Watkins and Olmsted, "an uncertain mixture of fact, aspiration, and memory." The mixture that is *Mirror of the Dream* is not impeccable (there are minor though annoying errors of fact), but it is probably as good as anything two thoughtful, informed, and intensely literate interpreters of Western America could compress into 300 pages of prose and pictures.

For most of its two centuries of history, San Francisco has been geographically separate, if not isolated, from the mainstream of American life. Its physical remoteness, perched as it is on a windswept spit of sand at the western edge of the continent, has contributed in no small part to the fascination with which Americans have regarded it. "The City" has been and is insular, narcissistic, and eccentric.

But for much of the last century—from the gold-fevered turbulence of the 1850s through the psychedelic Flower Generation of the 1960s—it has been the focus of much of America's westward vision, a usually reliable barometer of its widely fluctuating success and failure. Reflecting the vision, San Francisco has become what Watkins and Olmsted describe so well in their illustrated history, *Mirror of the Dream.*

The authors' text is marred by occasional lapses into obscureness and verbosity; more often it is distinguished by insight and grace. The words are enhanced by a wealth of revealing photographs (450 of them, many previously unpublished) and a handsome design by John Beyer.

A hundred writers would like to have written this book. Tens of thousands of readers will want to savor it, for what it is (intelligent, vital, succinct) and for what it is not (another rehashing of old and familiar themes).

Building their bridge across time, Watkins and Olmsted have proved that, in expert hands, the business need not be nearly as shadowy as they suggest.

Brian McGinty *is an attorney and writer who lives in San Francisco. His articles on western history have appeared in this and other magazines.*

Jefferson's Nephews: A Frontier Tragedy by Boynton Merrill, Jr. *(Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey, 1976; 478 pp., maps, charts, biblio., appen., notes, index, $16.50).*

REVIEWED BY JERRY A. HERNDON

BOYNTON MERRILL'S intensively researched study is the definitive story of the heinous crime committed in 1811 in Livingston County, Kentucky, by Thomas Jefferson's nephews, Lilburne and Isham Lewis.

Lilburne and Isham chopped a slave boy to pieces in the presence of the rest of Lilburne's slaves in order to teach them to obey orders. Merrill's study traces the causes, circumstances, and effects of the crime, which lent the finishing blow to the fortunes of the prominent Lewis family in West Kentucky.

Merrill discusses in considerable detail the governmental, economic, social, and religious institutions of both Virginia and Kentucky, demonstrating their role in setting the stage for the tragedy. His discussion of economic factors which encouraged the emigration westward of such aristocratic Virginia families as the Lewises is especially enlightening. Equally informative is his discussion of slavery in Livingston County, and his comparisons of the institution in West Kentucky and Virginia.

This study also traces the intermarriages and interconnections of the Lewises and Jeffersons, and notes Jefferson's silence about the terrible crime committed by the sons of his sister Lucy.

But Merrill also points out Jefferson's discussion of the "hypochondriacal affections" which Jefferson saw as "a constitutional disposition" in the entire Lewis family, and which he blamed for the possible suicide of Meriwether Lewis. The explorer had either committed suicide or been murdered in 1809; but Jefferson's remarks about the Lewis family, written several years later, in 1813, may well have been prompted in part by a more recent Lewis suicide, that of Lilburne Lewis in 1812.

Boynton Merrill's well-written, carefully documented account is an intriguing study of the frontier experience as well as of the character, misfortunes, and aberrations of a once prominent Virginia family.

Jerry A. Herndon *is a professor of English and the director of graduate studies in English at Murray State University in Murray, Kentucky.*

NATURALISTS

(Continued from page 9)

leading a party to trap in the mountains. Down to seventeen men now, they struck the Powder River on the twenty-eighth and three days later camped at the Grande Ronde, a verdant valley that would become a noted resting place on the Oregon Trail. Here they met "the Bald Chief," the legendary Captain Benjamin Bonneville, a sometime army officer, now a fur-trade maverick whose presence in this no-man's-land between British and American territories may have been secretly underwritten by the United States government.

Only the Blue Mountains—the last chain they would have to cross—remained between them and the valley of the Columbia, and on the second of September they camped on the western ridge beside the Utalla River. Close to civilization now, they resolved "to remove, at least, one of the heathenish badges which we had worn throughout the journey." Nuttall's razor was "fished from its hiding-place in the bottom of his trunk, and in a few minutes our encumbered chins lost their long-cherished ornaments; we performed our ablutions in the river, arrayed ourselves in clean linen, trimmed our long hair, and then arranged our toilet before a mirror, with great self-complacence and satisfaction." Later Townsend strolled along the stream, making a meal of rosebuds, and returned to find Nuttall and Captain Thing over the campfire, picking the bones of an owl Townsend had intended for his specimen collection.

Late on the following day they crossed a sandy ridge. Below them stretched the Columbia—"the noblest looking river I have seen since leaving our Delaware." Townsend could scarcely suppress a shout of joy to see a stream whose waters emptied directly into the Pacific. After resting two days at Fort Walla Walla, they descended the river—first on foot, then by canoe. Nuttall's plant specimens, nearly a thousand of them, received a thorough soaking, and he spent several days putting them back in order. "In this task, he exhibits a degree of patience and perseverance which is truly astonishing," wrote Townsend of his companion. "Sitting on the ground, and steaming over the enormous fire, for hours together, drying the papers, and rearranging the whole collection, specimen by specimen, while the great drops of perspiration roll unheeded from his brow." By the middle of the month they had reached Fort Vancouver, the center of the Hudson's Bay Company operations in Oregon.

ALTHOUGH STILL 114 MILES from the Pacific, Townsend considered his trans-continental journey ended. Six months and three days had passed since he had set out from Philadelphia. He would linger more than two years longer in the West, however—ranging into the Oregon interior and along the coast to collect more specimens, making a side trip to the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii), even becoming for a time the Fort Vancouver surgeon, although he appears to have had no formal medical training. In addition to the 231 species of birds collected, he also gathered 14 new species of small mammals, and some 60 new crustacea. Scientists at the time recognized 39 new species of birds among the treasure lode brought back by Townsend and Nuttall. Reclassification over the next 140 years reduced that number, so that today 25 are still considered valid species.*

Townsend became fascinated by the Coastal Indians during his two-year stay in Oregon, and his attitude toward them reflects the qualities in his own character that make his journal so fresh. As the Fort Vancouver surgeon he treated their ailments, and as a field naturalist he employed them as guides. (The Indians, for their part, dubbed him "the Bird Chief.") He made friends with them, and it is typical that while often lamenting their disease-ravaged state, he seldom lapses into condescension in describing them. Townsend's view of Indians throughout his journal, like his view of the frontier whites encountered in Missouri, is often supercilious, but it is never overbearing or without humor, and his journalist's instincts always triumph over any moral standards his nineteenth-century mind may occasionally impose. His account of a Sauk and Fox band visiting Saint Louis is typical, treating in elaborate detail their dress, manners, methods of body painting and ear piercing, and most curious of all, "the custom so universal amongst Indians, of seeking for vermin in each other's heads, and then *eating* them . . . only suspending their delectable occupation to take their bites of bread as it is passed them in rotation. The effect upon my person was what an Irishman would call the attraction of repulsion, as I found myself almost unconsciously edging away until I halted at a most respectable distance from the scene of slaughter."

In discussing a visit by a Kansas chief to their camp in the early part of the crossing, he acknowledges that his initial view of Indians came largely from eastern writers. But his description quickly rebuts Cooper: "He [the chief] is a young man about twenty-five years of age, straight as a poplar, and with a noble countenance and bearing, but he appeared to me to be marvellously deficient in most of the requisites which go to make the character of a *real* Indian chief, at least of such Indian chiefs as we read of in our popular books. I begin to suspect, in truth, that these lofty and dignified attributes are more apt to exist in the fertile brain of the novelist, than in reality. Be this as it may, *our* chief is a very lively, laughing, and rather playful personage; perhaps he may put on his dignity, like a glove, when it suits his convenience."

*Tricolored blackbird, chestnut-backed chickadee, common bushtit, Townsend's solitaire, sage thrasher, four warblers (MacGillivray's, Townsend's, blackthroated gray, and hermit), western bluebird, rufous-collared sparrow (now found only in Latin America), lark bunting, chestnut-collared longspur, Vaux's swift, poor-will, black oystercatcher, mountain plover, surfbird, wedge-tailed and slender-billed shearwaters, sooty albatross (now found only in the Southern Hemisphere), yellow-nosed albatross, pelagic and Brandt's cormorants, and marbled murrelet. Townsend also discovered the Oregon junco and Audubon's warbler, although today they are considered subspecies of the dark-eyed junco and yellow-rumped warbler respectively.

References to James Fenimore Cooper pop up elsewhere. Townsend adulates Richardson, the caravan's chief hunter, as "an experienced man in this country, of a tall and iron frame, and almost child-like simplicity of character, in fact an exact counterpart of *Hawk-eye* in his younger days." Cooper's nostalgic vision of the frontier—at a time when the frontier had the better part of a century to go—must have been a heavy burden for succeeding chroniclers like Townsend to bear. Yet in a sentimental age, Townsend seldom sentimentalizes. His vision is occasionally clinical (in Oregon, he cooly describes raiding Indian burial grounds looking for good specimens of skulls, and at one point he even removed an entire corpse), but it is mainly journalistic in the best sense. Perhaps above all it is a vision of wonder. Townsend views the West of the 1830s as an Easterner, and implicit in that fact is the knowledge that all this wild freedom must pass. It is therefore a vision much like our own.

Thomas Nuttall left Oregon in October 1835 for the Sandwich Islands, then returned to the mainland and worked his way down the coast aboard a brig. He had filled a dozen boxes and barrels with specimens by his arrival in April 1836 at San Diego. Here he found a ship, the *Alert,* bound for Boston, with one of his former Harvard students among the vessel's crew. For Richard Henry Dana, it was a startling sight. "I had left him quietly seated in the chair of Botany and Ornithology in Harvard University," he wrote in *Two Years Before the Mast,* "and the next I saw of him, he was strolling about San Diego beach, in a sailor's pea-jacket, with a wide straw hat, and bare-footed, with his trousers rolled up to his knees, picking up stones and shells. . . . I knew him at once, though I should hardly have been more surprised to have seen the Old South steeple shoot up from the hide-house." Nuttall boarded the *Alert* and was soon on his way home. Dana's shipmates dubbed his treasure of plants, shells, rocks, and skins "curiosities," and the man who had collected them, "Old Curious."

Not long after his arrival in Boston, Nuttall was approached by John James Audubon, who himself had recently returned to the United States from England, where he had been tending to the ten-year production of *The Birds of America.* Audubon planned 400 plates for his great work, and all but 85 had been completed. Nuttall gave Audubon all his skins of new bird species and told him of the vast collection of Townsend, who had been sending his specimens back to Philadelphia by the bale. Audubon had always had problems with elements of the Philadelphia scientific community, some of whose members remained fiercely loyal to the memory of Alexander Wilson and resented this interloper. Nevertheless he was able to gain access to Townsend's collection and—after protracted negotiations—purchase some ninety duplicate skins and sketch the others he wanted. (Among the prints in Audubon's *Birds of America* is one of Townsend's bunting, based on the specimen shot by Townsend near West Chester in 1833. An object of curiosity among ornithologists for the rest of the century, it was finally declared an invalid species after no further specimens were taken. It may have been a hybrid or an abnormal dickcissel. But Townsend's name lives on in two valid species, Townsend's solitaire and Townsend's warbler, as well as in two species of mammals, Townsend's chipmunk and Townsend's ground squirrel.)

Despite his eventual success in obtaining the skins, Audubon remained embittered over the high-handed treatment he had received. Seldom in his life, he wrote, "have I felt more disgusted with the conduct of any opponents of mine, than I was with the unfriendly boasters of their zeal for the advancement of ornithological science, who at the time existed in the fair city of Philadelphia."

Townsend arrived home in November 1837. The rest of his short life was anticlimactic. He planned to write a major ornithology, but lacking financial backing and discouraged by the success of Audubon's work, gave up after a single volume of *Ornithology of the United States of North America* was published in 1840. He married Charlotte Holmes of Cape May Court House, New Jersey, and they had one son. Townsend worked in Washington for a time, mounting birds for the National Institute, and studied dentistry but probably never practiced. He made plans to sail as the naturalist aboard a naval ship around the Cape of Good Hope, but failing health prevented him from making the journey. He died in Washington in February 1851, age forty-one.

Nuttall continued his botanical work in Philadelphia at the Academy of Natural Sciences. He returned to England in 1842 after inheriting his uncle's estate near Liverpool, where he cultivated rhododendrons and exotic plants. In 1859 he died there, at age seventy-three, having outlived his young friend Townsend by nearly a decade.

Wyeth lingered in Oregon two more years. He returned overland to Boston in the fall of 1836 and, his ventures in the fur trade having failed utterly, took up the ice business again. The rest of his years were spent in the comfort of Cambridge, by Fresh Pond, where he died in 1856.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTE

A great deal has been published about the Rocky Mountain fur trade that flourished in the first half of the nineteenth century. Perhaps the liveliest and most engaging history of the trade is Bernard DeVoto's *Across the Wide Missouri* (Houghton Mifflin, 1947). For a readable account of America's early naturalists and the development of natural history in this country, *Wildlife in America,* by Peter Matthiessen (Viking, 1959) is recommended. Nuttall's career is explored in *Thomas Nuttall, Naturalist: Explorations in America, 1808–1841* by Jeannette E. Graustein (Harvard University, 1967).

Audubon's enormous debt to Townsend and Nuttall is apparent throughout his *Ornithological Biography,* the separately published text that accompanied his famous print series, *The Birds of America;* both works were combined in the seven-volume octavo edition of *The Birds of America* brought out in 1840–44 and most recently reprinted, in paperback, by Dover Press in 1966.

Townsend's account of his continental crossing, *A Narrative of a Journey Across the Rocky Mountains, to the Columbia River,* was published in Philadelphia in 1839 and again in London the next year in two volumes entitled *Sporting Excursions in the Rocky Mountains, including a Journey to the Columbia River.* A revised version, which omitted some of the original chapters, appeared as part of volume XXI in a series on *Early Western Travels, 1748–1846,* edited by Reuben G. Thwaites (Arthur H. Clark, 1905). The Thwaites's version was reprinted in a 1970 limited edition by Ye Galleon Press of Fairfield, Washington.

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W. TURRENTINE JACKSON, president of the Western History Association for the current year, received his graduate training at the University of Texas, where he earned the first Ph.D. degree supervised by Walter Prescott Webb. His books include *Wagon Roads West, Treasure Hill,* and *The Enterprising Scot.* In addition, he has coauthored four cooperative studies; edited four volumes; and published some forty-five articles in historical journals. In 1973, "Turpie" was chosen for the Distinguished Teaching Award at the University of California, Davis, where he is a professor.

Rodman Paul, vice president of the WHA this year, received his doctorate at Harvard in 1943. He has taught at both Harvard and Yale, and since 1947 at the California Institute of Technology. His publications include *Abrogation of the Gentlemen's Agreement, California Gold: The Beginning of Mining in the Far West, Mining Frontiers of the Far West,* and *The California Gold Discovery.* His main field of interest is western economic and social history.