BOOTS, BRUSHES AND THE BIGHORN MOUNTAINS
Artwork from the 1860s to the 1930s
EXHIBITION DATES
JUNE 15 - SEPTEMBER 7, 2015

INAUGURAL EXHIBITION IN THE S.K. JOHNSTON, JR. FAMILY GALLERY AT THE Brinton MUSEUM
DIRECTOR’S STATEMENT

Boots, Brushes and The Bighorn Mountains is the culmination of a long-imagined exhibit of works dating from the 1860s into the late 1930s. Until recently the idea for it was confined to the back of my mind due to several mitigating factors, not the least of which was lack of a proper environment in which to house the impressive collection of artwork I envisioned for the show. Our new Forrest E. Mars, Jr. Building now provides The Brinton Museum with the perfect setting in which to display the art of and about this majestic, historic and enticing mountain range and the surrounding lands which it shades and waters. As the first large mountain range in northern Wyoming the Bighorn Mountains were a treasured hunting grounds for American Indian tribes and seen as a great natural resource by early American settlers. This exhibit suggests that the Bighorn Mountains have been no less treasured and exploited by artists visiting and living in the area between the 1860s and the late 1930s.

The works in the show are widely varied in style and subject matter, the earliest being two watercolors by Walter Sies. They fittingly depict scenes of Fort Reno and our country’s early military inroads into what was previously ceded to the Crow and Lakota people through the Laramie Treaty of 1851. The military theme boils into conflict as set forth in Frederic Remington’s Fight on the Little Bighorn which depicts the famous battle of 1876 as well as in Miles and his Escort, in which the artist places himself riding to the left of Major General Nelson A. Miles. As you view the show be careful to read labels because the chronology of the subject matter does not always correspond to the time of the canvases’ execution. For example, Fight on the Little Bighorn was painted by Remington in 1900, some 24 years after the battle. In contrast, he completed the self-portrait the same year (1890) he was on campaign with General Miles in Montana and Wyoming during the last of the Sioux Uprisings. Moran’s painting of Devils Tower was made nearly 27 years after the artist’s sketching trip of 1892 to northeastern Wyoming and across the Bighorn Mountains.

Many of our nation’s best known artists living in the latter half of the 19th and the first portion of the 20th
centuries painted the Bighorn Mountain Range. Several of them were traveling to the Bighorns in order to gather material for future artwork. Thomas Moran and George Gardner Symons are prime examples of what I would term expedition image collectors. Both artists were remarkably successful and highly acclaimed in their day, yet vastly dissimilar in their working styles. Moran did sketches and gathered notes of his trips in watercolor and pencil, then created the canvases back in his East Hampton, Long Island studio, while Symons was a noted American Impressionist known for often painting en plein air. In contrast to both we have Joseph Henry Sharp. He was drawn to the area by his good friend and former student Fra Dana who had first settled on Pass Creek, about 30 miles northeast of here, in 1893. Sharp was so captivated by the country and its American Indian inhabitants that he lived in the area for several years, building his Absarokee Cabin in Crow Agency, MT in 1905. Even after Sharp took up permanent residence in Taos, NM in 1912 he often returned to visit and paint with Fra. She introduced him to some of her artist friends, among them were Hans Kleiber and Elling William “Bill” Gollings. It was Gollings who profited most from association with Joseph Henry Sharp and his painting methods.

Another recurring theme which can be witnessed in these works is that of friendships created and cultivated between the artists and prominent Wyoming ranching families. We have already spoken of Joseph Henry Sharp’s long and lasting friendship with Edwin and Fra Dana. Edward Borein enjoyed the friendship of Bradford Brinton whom he had met through his neighbors Goelet and Edith Gallatin. Bradford Brinton would also befriend Hans Kleiber and Bill Gollings while W. H. D. Koerner would become a good friend of the Willis Spear family, perhaps our area’s most iconic ranching family of the early 20th century.

The Spear family would produce an artist of merit in their daughter Elsa Spear Byron.

Another important fact that I would like to stress is the rapport established between several of the artists whose work is contained in this exhibit. Thomas Moran traveled with his long-time associate and collaborator William Henry Jackson on his expedition from Gillette through the Bighorn Mountains. Hans Kleiber was a loyal friend to “Bill” Gollings and is credited with teaching the reticent Gollings the art of etching. As we discussed previously, they had met and painted with Sharp through their friendship with Fra Dana. Kleiber and Gollings both knew Edward Borein who was a fairly frequent visitor to the area although, according to Kleiber, Gollings felt that the California artist “High-Hatted them” when with Brinton and the Gallatins. We also know that Gollings knew, liked and corresponded with Charles Marion Russell. Russell’s tutelage of young Joe De Yong is well documented and Gollings also befriended De Yong during his days at Eaton’s Dude Ranch, so Wyoming’s Cowboy Artist certainly had a genial side, he even visited with Frederic Remington during Remington’s 1908 visit to Sheridan and the Bighorns.

The artists and their works exhibited in this show extracted a diverse body of images from the Bighorns for us to enjoy and ponder as we walk through this gallery nestled into this gentle hillside that is part of the mountains themselves. I want to thank my Assistant Curator, Jessie Landau, whose love for the area enabled her to endure the long hours of research and writing, for the diligent effort she exerted in order to make this exhibit a success. Equally deserving of credit is our Board of Directors’ unwavering faith in support of The Brinton Museum’s mission.

Ken Schuster
Director & Chief Curator
My first impression of Wyoming was from above; flying into Sheridan over the Bighorn Mountains for my interview for the residential internship at the Brinton Museum, then The Bradford Brinton Memorial & Museum. As a New Yorker, the mountains of my childhood (the Appalachians, the Catskills, the Berkshires, the Adirondacks), beautiful in their own right, became hills in my memory when I first saw the Bighorns. I was wrong, I thought, I have not known mountains before. While the Brinton drew me out West, the Bighorns convinced me to move there. Despite living mostly in urban areas before, the only thing that I really miss now that I live in rural Illinois as I pursue my graduate studies, are the mountains.

I am, of course, not alone in my infatuation with the mountains, the Bighorns in particular. And for many, across time and history, the mountains stand in to signify the specific beauty and unique quality of the American West. Wild in spirit, remote, dangerous, yet unequivocally appealing, the mountains embody the place and feeling of the West.

In his famous 1890 essay “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” historian Frederic Jackson Turner wrote: “American history has been in a large degree the history of the colonization of the Great West.” While the frontier has shifted, across rivers and plains, as the country occupied territories and those territories became states, the West has maintained a place in the popular imaginary as the Wild West. It is the land of cattle ranches, cowboys, wilderness, and of course, mountains. Nothing embodies the spirit of the West today as well as the vast wilderness areas that make up the mountain ranges running North to South across the Western plains. The Bighorn National Forest is still a place to get lost, but also perhaps, to find yourself.

The plains surrounding the Bighorns were undoubtedly instrumental in the development of American history as we know it. Monuments to the Wagon Box Fight, the Fetterman Battle site and of course the Battle of the Little Big Horn, or Greasy Grass, among others remind us of the sacrifices and injustices made during the white settlement of these lands. But as they always have, the mountains endure, and stand as a monument to the wilderness itself, admirable in their beauty and permanence but unknowable in their entirety. The excitement that I feel when I begin to see the Bighorns rising in the distance when I make the long car trip from Illinois to Sheridan now is incomparable, just as it was the first time I landed in Sheridan.

Bradford Brinton also understood this special appeal, making his summer home in the foothills of the Bighorns, then leaving it in trust for the public to enjoy decades later. An art collector, Brinton understood the paintings he collected were rivaled only by the landscapes he could see through his windows. Many of the works exhibited here are from his own collection as he took pride in both the setting of the Quarter Circle A Ranch and in supporting local artists. Artists, especially in the mid-19th through the mid-20th centuries attempted to express that special beauty and enigmatic quality of the mountains in oil, pencil, pastel, and light on film. For many artists, Sheridan and the Bighorns, became quintessentially Western in
their minds, a site where the true West, and thus a truer American spirit (as Turner explained) remained. In 1908, Frederic Remington, on his last trip West the year before his death, stopped in Sheridan and made hunting trips into the Bighorns. On his return to Sheridan on July 1st, 1892, Thomas Moran wrote to his wife, “This is a delightfully situated small town at the foot of the Big Horn range, a fine stream of water running right through town.” Just four days later, “In a camp in the Big Horn Range,” he wrote her, “Our camp is in a beautiful little valley on top of the mountains.” An article from the 1928 Sheridan Journal told of artist and illustrator W.H.D. Koerner’s visit to the Spear’s Rimrock Ranch: “he believes this section is especially inviting to artists and authors, many of whom come here each year. They find the last great thrill of the old West in the foothills and main body of the Big Horn mountains.”

But maybe local artist Hans Kleiber put it best. Explaining why he choose the Bighorns specifically and deliberately to be his home, he expressed their beauty in this poem:

I’ve wandered here, I’ve wandered there Among the mountains of the West, And having seen my share of them, I love the Bighorns far the best.

I always loved the way they rise Above their far-flung sage domain, And how their peaks glisten in the sun In an unbroken, lofty chain.

Of course, nothing describes the mountains’ beauty better than these artists’ renderings of the range in oil, pastel, and pencil, apart from, perhaps, a drive up Red Grade or a hike to Lake Geneva, and experiencing the air, smells, sounds, and grandeur of the Bighorns firsthand.

For me personally, while I saw the mountains from a distance, from above, and below, living at the Quarter Circle A, I fell in love with the mountains described in these artworks. I imagined the placid lakes of Kleiber’s prints, the snowfalls and horses of Gollings drawings, the plains and ridges of Joseph Henry Sharp’s oils. This exhibition was one of the first projects I began working on at The Brinton Museum, and so in a way, I learned the mountains through the artist’s eye.

My very first trip into the mountains was up to Spear-O-Wigwam, accompanying The Brinton’s Director Ken Schuster for a lecture that inspired this exhibition. We even stopped on the way to look for the views of Blacktooth that Moran depicted in watercolor (now in a private collection and unavailable for exhibition). Later, I would search for Moran’s pencil sketches in actual rock formations my first time walking through Tongue River Canyon. Each time I hike past Coffeen Park, I see Kleiber’s twisted trees, and his serene lakes framed by towering pines. Perhaps I am fortunate, that the mountains I know have been formed for me in the artist’s imagination.

Considering representations of the region, we cannot ignore the freedom of artistic license, and the fact that many artists, including Remington, Koerner, Moran, and even Sharp, only made quick sketches on location and would return to their studios, frequently back East, to finish their paintings of the Bighorn region. Remington was famous for this, collecting materials on trips to the West, then fashioning them into finished products in New York, combining scenes, details, peoples and places into works that served to create a vision of the West for the Eastern American imagination. Sketches by artists like Moran and
Remington (included in the exhibition) show that the artistic inspiration provided by the Bighorns was not purely fantasy however.

Kleiber’s trees do exist. The vistas captured on film by William Henry Jackson can still be found. Joseph Henry Sharp’s and Frederic Remington’s rolling foothills surround the range. I have seen storms just like the one depicted by Fra Dana. And this is exactly the allure of the mountains and the appeal they have provided artists for decades, if not centuries. The mountains are beautiful, perhaps even magical, and those of us fortunate enough to live in their foothills feel exactly that, lucky.

While we all know that history is constantly changing, the land of the West evidencing this through its stories of native occupation, Indian wars, cattle drives, railroads and more, the mountains remind of us of the few things that do endure. While Sheridan is obviously a more modern town today than the one which William Henry Jackson photographed in the late 19th century, the mountain passes he depicted still remain. While Wyoming, and the West generally, is involved in changing political and environmental debates, the Bighorns remind us that nature exists as a monumental force. Visitors and locals alike understand that the mountains are a wild space, existing alongside, but often separate from humanity.

The artists represented in this show tell viewers about the importance of this shared history with the landscape. And they remind us of the very important ways that the past exists within our daily lives. The mountains, an imposing presence, will remain well beyond our own lifetimes, to tell of their own beauty; and these artists aid them in the telling. Highlighting how we are but small actors in the grand landscape of the West, but also demonstrating the important cultural impacts we can have on this landscape, as Sharp evidences the interaction of the Crow people on their traditional lands, or Koerner describes how the lands of the West and the cowboys who ranched it came to shape each other.

Personally, I will be forever grateful to the mountains. Even while I live 1,000 miles from the Bighorns, they continually inspire me, motivating my scholarship, encouraging me to get outside and enjoy the natural world, reminding me to connect with non-human animals in a meaningful way, and to revel in the beauty that diverse landscapes have to offer. This is also, I think, the impact the Bighorns had on many artists in this exhibition, and continues to have on viewers of these artworks. I hope you enjoy this show and feel as moved. Help yourself get lost in the mountains, both those outside and the ones rendered in two dimensions within the gallery, and hopefully find something new.

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iii Moran, Home Thoughts, 113.
Wild Horse Round Up, pen & ink, 14" x 15"
Bradford Brinton Memorial Collection
EDWARD BOREIN (1872-1945)

Edward Borein was born in the San Francisco Bay area. When he was just 21 years old, he rode south to work as a cowpuncher in southern California and across Mexico. While on the range, he sketched from the saddle, documenting his life as a cowboy. By 1900, after about 7 years on the range, he moved back to Oakland to set up a studio, and in 1907 he moved to New York to pursue his art career full time. His portrayals of Western life gained great popularity in the East and he found consistent work as an illustrator. In 1921 he returned to California and established a studio in Santa Barbara. A tireless worker, Borein produced over 300 different etchings, documenting the West from the Wyoming mountains to the pueblos of the Southwest.

A good friend of Bradford Brinton’s, the two likely connected in Big Horn through the Gallatins who became acquainted with Borein in New York. Around 1927-28 he painted the frieze in the living room of the Quarter Circle A Ranch House with scenes from local area history. He also frequently made custom Christmas cards for Brinton. Borein’s sensitive and detailed etchings show not only the unique geography of the West and Southwest, but also extreme care in depicting accurately the life of the people in these regions, from the intensity of bronc busters at local rodeos to the contemplative faces of Indian women.
Storm Coming Down, oil, 5¼" x 9"
On Loan: Courtesy of Montana Museum of Art & Culture, Permanent Collection, University of Montana, Donated by the Artist
Fra Dana (1875-1948)

By Brandon Reintjes, Curator of Art Montana Museum of Art & Culture, University of Montana

Fra Broadwell Dinwiddie Dana (pronounced ‘Fray, after her grandfather Samuel “Franklin” Maxwell) was one of the leading artists of the Rocky Mountain Northwest at the turn of the 20th century. Her characteristic style of Impressionism developed through friendships with notable American artists such as Joseph Henry Sharp, William Merritt Chase and Alfred Henry Maurer.

Born in Terre Haute, Indiana Dana’s family lived just across the Ohio River from the riverboat town of Cincinnati, OH. In 1890, at age fifteen, she began studies at the Cincinnati Art Academy where she first met Sharp, who began teaching there in 1879. A lifelong friendship resulted.

In 1893, Dana moved with her family to Parkman, Wyoming. There, she was introduced to her future husband, Edwin L. Dana, and they married in 1896. Together they developed the largest purebred Hereford cattle operation in America—the 400,000 acre 2A Ranch on Pass Creek at the foot of the Bighorn Mountains, with additional properties on the Crow Reservation in southeastern Montana. Sharp, commissioned to paint the Battle of Little Bighorn by President Roosevelt in 1902 and who later built his ‘Absarokee hut’ in nearby Crow Agency, was a frequent visitor to the Dana household.

The year after she was married, Dana began a series of annual trips to pursue her love of painting. She was introduced to Chase by Frank Duveneck, one of her instructors at the Cincinnati Art Academy. She studied with Chase at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (1897), then Chase’s New York School of Art (1898) and at his plein air summer school in the Shinnecock Hills (1899). Chase famously painted Fra’s portrait as a class demonstration and presented her with the finished painting which she treasured throughout her life. By the turn of the century, the Danas kept an apartment in New York City. It was there in 1901 that Fra met Maurer. Over the next decade, she made regular trips to Europe, frequently with Edwin, and even remained in Paris one winter to paint with Maurer.

In the early 1910s, it became increasingly difficult for Dana to paint due to health problems and her obligations as a ranch wife. Her artmaking became sporadic. She stated, “I couldn’t be a ranch woman and paint. You can’t live two lives.” The Danas began purchasing property in Montana on Freeman and Trout Creek in Cascade and Meagher counties in 1918. In 1937, they moved their ranch operation from Wyoming to Montana. That same year, Fra moved into the Blackstone Apartments in Great Falls with her mother and sister and resumed painting. Edwin visited the apartment frequently until he retired in 1942. Both of them were beset by ill-health and Edwin died in 1946 just after the two celebrated their golden wedding anniversary. Fra passed away December 1, 1948, leaving her significant collection to the Montana Museum of Art & Culture at the University of Montana.
Eaton Ranch Brand, charcoal, 24” x 18”
On Loan: Courtesy of the Seligman Family Foundation
Joe De Yong is perhaps most famous for being the only student ever taken on by C.M. Russell. He was born in Webster Grove, MO and first saw Russell's paintings at the St. Louis World's Fair. As a boy, De Yong learned fancy roping and by age fourteen he was wrangling cattle. At the age of 17, De Yong worked with cattle on his first film in Arizona. After an illness derailed his short career as a bit actor, De Yong wrote to Russell and Russell's illustrated reply saw De Yong traveling to Montana to meet his idol. De Yong worked in Russell's studio from 1916 until Russell's death in 1926. This decade of lessons proved invaluable and De Yong became well-known as a Western artist. He used his first-hand knowledge of the West to work as a consultant and designer on movie sets, working with famed directors such as Cecil B. DeMille and Frank Lloyd. Due to his work with the movie industry, De Yong settled in California, living in Pasadena and Santa Barbara until his death in 1975.

De Yong met Howard Eaton through the Russells and spent time in the Wyoming Bighorns visiting Eaton's Ranch with the Russells. Many of his drawings of horses from his time spent at Eaton's Ranch sport the Eaton brand, placing the images in this setting, even if the icons of the region, like Blacktooth and Cloud Peak, are absent from his scenes.
Wrangling Horses on the Quarter Circle A, oil, 27½" x 32½"
Bradford Brinton Memorial Collection
ELLING WILLIAM (BILL) GOLLINGS (1878-1932)

Bill Gollings is often referred to as Sheridan’s own Charlie Russell, famous as a painter and working cowboy. Gollings was born in Idaho territory in 1878 but after his mother’s death, Gollings and his siblings moved to Michigan to live with their grandmother. Gollings would then move with his grandparents to Chicago and upstate New York, until he moved back with his father after he remarried. Gollings’ father was a miner in Lewiston, Idaho, so this move meant he and his brothers would be back in the Western landscapes of their birth. After some time, Gollings’ father left the mine and they moved back to Chicago, where Gollings would finish school. As a young man, however, Gollings dreamed of returning to the West, and eventually took the train to South Dakota with a friend in 1896.

By the early 1900s, Gollings found himself working as a ranch hand in Southern Montana. Always having had an interest in painting, he ordered his first paint set in 1903 and began painting and drawing in the winters, working roundup in the spring and summers. His first recorded visit to Sheridan was in 1904, when he began selling pictures through the local furniture store of W.E. Freeman. Despite his local success, Gollings always felt torn between his two loves – painting and cattle wrangling, often finding it difficult to fully commit his time to either. In 1909, however, Gollings “built a shack and called it a studio,” in Sheridan. Around this time, Gollings had the opportunity to meet Frederick Remington, on his last trip West, whom he listed as one of his major influences alongside Joseph Henry Sharp and C.M. Russell. Gollings became very well known locally and was commissioned by important collectors including Bradford Brinton and the State of Wyoming for the Capitol Building. Despite this success, Gollings was incredibly reserved, preferring to remain unknown, often not completing paintings. Despite his best efforts to avoid fame and recognition Gollings is one of Wyoming’s most famous artists today, and his work is in many major museums including The Brinton Museum, The Buffalo Bill Center of the West, the University of Wyoming, the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum, and the Gilcrease Museum.
Bridge at Brecktons, Fishing (Thomas Moran with rod in foreground), photograph, 11¾" x 19½"
Courtesy of William Henry Jackson Collection (#20101160), History Colorado, Denver, CO
WILLIAM HENRY JACKSON (1843-1942)

William Henry Jackson grew up in Keesville, NY. His mother painted watercolors and he first started taking photographs at the young age of 12. In 1858 he found his first job retouching photographs in a studio in Troy, NY. In 1862, just 19 years old, he enlisted as a member of the Light Guard from Rutland, VT. After a tour of duty in the Civil War, Jackson settled in Omaha, NE and opened a portrait photography studio with his brother. In 1870 he accompanied the geologist Ferdinand Hayden on his famous expedition across Wyoming, along the Green River, and into Yellowstone. Jackson’s were among the first photographs ever published of Yellowstone. Jackson would work with Hayden documenting the West for the next seven years. Eventually, Jackson settled in Denver and is today best known for his landscape photography including images of Yellowstone and Colorado’s famed Mountain of the Holy Cross.

Jackson first documented the Bighorns when the Wyoming World’s Fair Commission subsidized a trip for him through the range and into Yellowstone in order to document the newly formed state for the Chicago World’s Fair. While the expedition was completed, the Wyoming Commission was not able to present their state pavilion at the fair due to lack of funding. In the summer of 1892, Jackson traveled with the painter Thomas Moran from Gillette and Devil’s Tower to Sheridan. Together, they fished, photographed and sketched along Goose Creek, then ventured into Tongue River Canyon and into the mountains, where Jackson photographed the spectacular peaks of the Bighorns.
Bradford Brinton's Ranch, oil, 11" x 15¾"
Bradford Brinton Memorial Collection
HANS KLEIBER (1887-1967)

Hans Kleiber was born in Vogelmuehle, Germany but spent most of his youth in Jaegerndorf, Silesia, then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In 1900 he immigrated with his family to the United States, where they settled in Massachusetts. In 1905 he left his family to become an artist’s apprentice in New York City. Kleiber only remained in this position for a short time, however, and learned most of his artistic skill from his friend, the artist-naturalist Clarence Blodgett. Missing the mountains of his youth, Kleiber took a position with the US Forest Service in 1906 and moved to Wyoming. In 1912 he earned his US Citizenship and was then hired as an Assistant Ranger, to be promoted to Forest Ranger the following year. Kleiber established his home and studio in Dayton, WY, which can still be visited today. What is perhaps most remarkable about his Wyoming production is that there was no printing press in the area, and he made his own press with rollers he obtained from the Sheridan Iron Works, eventually purchasing a medium sized press in 1928. While he made his home in Wyoming, his work was exhibited as far away as London and New York.

Kleiber’s work is truly a testament to how well he knew the Bighorn National Forest and the time he spent in the mountains. Few artists have captured the specific vistas and traits of the region in such an inexhaustible manner as he did. He was deeply invested in expressing what he understood as the importance of nature to human culture, as well as involved with efforts to preserve wilderness areas. Kleiber was fully a Bighorns artist, representing the mountains in pencil, ink, etchings, paint and even in poem. He met Bill Gollings in 1908 and was a close friend of Bradford Brinton’s from 1921 until his death. His background as a Forest Ranger perhaps sets Kleiber apart in terms of the ways that he understood and depicted the mountains, but, as James Forrest wrote: “Hans felt that nature taught an entire catalog of invaluable lessons – lessons anyone could learn by paying attention.”
The Mercy Stroke, oil, 28" x 40¼"
Museum purchase funded by The Brinton Museum's National Advisory Council
W.H.D. KOERNER (1878-1938)

Born in Germany in 1878, Wilhelm Heinrich Detlev Koerner immigrated to the United States with his family when he was just two years old. The family settled in a small town in Iowa where Koerner earned his first job as a boy painting cows on milk wagons. As a young man, Koerner earned money selling watercolors and eventually moved to Chicago, and at the very young age of just 20, began working for the Chicago Tribune. He soon began studying illustration formally, first at the Art Institute, then the Art Students League in New York, and eventually under Howard Pyle in Delaware. Koerner became very successful as an illustrator in the first decades of the 20th century, working for magazines such as McCall’s, Redbook, Harper’s, Good Housekeeping, Collier’s, Pictorial Review and the Ladies Home Journal. His most recognized work however are his Western themed covers and illustrations for the Saturday Evening Post. Koerner was infatuated with the West, and made many trips to Yellowstone, the Bighorns and California to gather material for his work. Koerner interestingly often depicted women in the West, both as pioneers and cowgirls, refusing to represent it as solely a masculine space, as many other artists of the time often did.

He befriended the Spear family on his many visits to the Bighorns, often staying at their ranch. Koerner even designed the stationery for the Spears’ Rafter Cross Bar Ranch in Lodge Grass, MT. His painting The Mercy Stroke depicts a riding trip he took with members of the Spear family into the Bighorns. The painting was so beloved by the family it can be seen in a photograph of Philip Spear’s living room featured on one of his Christmas cards. The Mercy Stroke, done in Koerner’s illustrative style with broad strokes and bold color, shows himself, on foot, Jessamine and Philip Spear and Loren Stanley looking down into a canyon (identifications according to a letter from Betty Goodin Pilkington to Ruth Ann Spear in the Buffalo Bill Center of the West Archives).
Devil's Tower, oil on canvas, 20½" x 16½"
On Loan: Private Collection, Courtesy Gerald Peters Gallery, Santa Fe, NM
THOMAS MORAN (1837-1926)

Thomas Moran was born in Bolton, England but moved to Philadelphia with his family when he was just seven years old. While he apprenticed for a time with a wood engraver in Philadelphia, Moran found his fame as a painter. As a member of the Hudson River School, Moran gained acclaim for his landscapes, particularly of the American West. His 1872 oil of the *Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone*, painted after his expedition with geologist Ferdinand Hayden, is credited with inspiring Congress to make Yellowstone the first National Park. Besides Hayden, Moran also worked closely with expedition photographer William Henry Jackson, developing iconic images of the West, including his famous *Mountain of the Holy Cross*. These iconic paintings demonstrate Moran’s philosophy of landscape, evidenced by his 1879 statement that he placed “no value upon literal transcriptions from nature,” but that he instead wanted to present, “the spectacular [with] the impressions produced by nature on himself.”

In 1890, the Wyoming commission for the World’s Columbian Exposition which would take place in Chicago in 1893, planned a Wyoming pavilion to celebrate the territory’s newly minted statehood. The state commission created an expedition to travel through and document the state which included Moran as painter and Jackson as photographer. In June of 1892 Moran and Jackson met in Flagstaff, Arizona to begin their journey to Wyoming. The rest of the expedition group went out across Wyoming, east to west, but Moran and Jackson took a train from Cheyenne to Gillette to make a special trip to visit Devil’s Tower. They set out on horseback and by June 26 they reached Devil’s Tower, despite getting caught in a hail storm, getting lost and being without food for almost 30 hours. At Devil’s Tower, Moran made several sketches, turning them into the oil painting featured in the exhibition.

After visiting Devil’s Tower, Moran and his expedition troupe caught the stage coach for the 26 hour journey to Sheridan. Moran was charmed by Sheridan and especially Goose Creek, spending some time in the next few days sketching along the banks. By July 3 of 1892, Moran and Jackson met with the main part of their expedition that had originally forged on ahead, and the artists joined them with Moran sketching Cloud Peak, which he would later depict in watercolor and oil, and by July 7, the group was in Tongue River Canyon, evidenced by Moran’s detailed sketches of the rock formations there. The group would then move north, with Moran sketching the Little Bighorn River and eventually on to Yellowstone.

While none of Moran’s Bighorn paintings gained the fame of some of his other works, the range and Wyoming especially had a profound impact on the artist and his career, as well as how the West is pictured in the American imagery. Moran continued to travel out West and visit these vivid landscapes well into his later years. He died at the age of 85 in is Santa Barbara, CA home in 1926.
Powder River ca. 1914, pastel, 3½" x 7½"
On Loan: Courtesy of Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum, Canyon, Texas. Frank Reaugh Estate.
Charles Franklin “Frank” Reaugh (1860-1945)

By Michael R. Grauer. Associate Director for Curatorial Affairs/Curator of Art and Western Heritage Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum, Canyon, Texas

Born near Jacksonville, Illinois, Reaugh moved with his parents to a farm near Terrell, in northeastern Texas, via wagon in 1876. The Reaugh family moved to Oak Cliff near Dallas in 1890. In the early 1880s, Reaugh met cattlemen Frank and Jerome Houston, who had ranching interests throughout North Texas, and accompanied them on cattle drives and roundups near present-day Wichita Falls and in Indian Territory (now Oklahoma). Reaugh made numerous sketches during these trips, often from the saddle, and later enlarged and composed them in the studio.

Reaugh studied art formally at the Saint Louis Museum and School of Fine Arts during the winter of 1884 and 1885. Following his studies in Saint Louis, Reaugh returned to Terrell and began teaching art to young ladies in the area. Saving enough money teaching, Reaugh was able to arrange a trip to Paris, and enrolled at the Académie Julian. After traveling through Belgium and Holland in 1889, Reaugh returned to Paris to attend the Exposition Universelle, which included paintings by Cézanne, Manet, Monet, and Pissarro, and was possibly Reaugh’s first exposure to Impressionism. He returned to Texas in May 1889. Between 1890 and 1915 Frank Reaugh enjoyed his greatest success as an artist. He exhibited works at the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893 and at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in 1904, the prestigious National Academy of Design in New York, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia, and the Art Institute of Chicago. He also became a member of the Society of Western Artists and exhibited with that group all over the United States.

Reaugh took a sketching trip to Wyoming and Montana in 1914. Reaugh described his trip north in some detail to artist and protégé L. O. Griffith in an October 1914 letter: “My trip to Wyoming and Montana was a success, and they sure made it as pleasant as such a trip could be. They kept quite a lot of the sketches, so that I could afford to go through Yellowstone Park. The park was good, the ranches were better ....”

Evidently, Reaugh stayed at the OW and LX Bar ranches of then-Wyoming-governor John B. Kendrick, part of the Kendrick Cattle Company. The headquarters for these ranches were on Old Woman Creek north of Lusk, Wyoming, and on Hanging Woman Creek in Big Horn County in southeastern Montana. Reaugh considered the resultant Wyoming painting, Powder River, his finest work of pure landscape.

While he met great success as a painter, the innumerable small pastels scattered all over the United States are the gems of Frank Reaugh’s career. In each of these small masterpieces, Reaugh’s special relationship with the West is mingled with each stroke of the pastel. And this mixing of a part of himself with his medium gives each work a sparkle and a life rarely found in paintings of any size. The integration of his artistic spirit with the pictorial image was a result of the spiritual communion between Frank Reaugh and the landscape of West Texas and the American West.
Top of the Big Horns, oil, 14 1/2" x 21"
On Loan: Courtesy of the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art, Indianapolis
FREDERIC REMINGTON (1861-1909)

One of the best known painters of the American West, Frederic Remington's biography is perhaps as much myth as it is fact. He was born in upstate New York, near the Canadian border in Canton. He enrolled in Yale's School of Fine Arts and played football for the Bulldogs, but dropped out after a year and a half when his father died. Using his inheritance, he went to Kansas to try his luck at sheep farming and married Eva Caten in 1884, but soon found success instead as an illustrator. Despite his brief stint at Yale, Remington would portray himself as primarily self-taught.

Remington gained national recognition through his illustrations for Harper's Weekly and Teddy Roosevelt's Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail. While he became famous for these Western scenes, Remington remained always an Easterner. He purchased a home in New Rochelle, in the suburbs of New York City, in 1889 and established his studio there. As he transitioned from illustration to a career as a painter, inspired by impressionists and expanding his work in color, he would travel West, often by train, to collect sketches and materials to turn into finished works in his New York studio. Remington was also a well-known author, writing many of the articles he illustrated himself. In 1909 he moved with his wife to a new suburban home in Ridgefield, CT where he would die that December of complications from appendicitis.

Possibly more than any other artist's, Remington's vision of the West is the one that has so firmly stuck in the American imagination. He wholeheartedly believed he was recording a vanishing culture. Remington loved the romantic vision of cowboys and Indians he portrayed, and saw the West as a space formed by hardship and conflict. He despised change and the narrative of settlement so common on the Western landscape, going so far as refusing to ever own an automobile. According to David McCullough, "he went West to chase a disappearing past, not to find the future. To him the West was more a place in time than any part of a map or something to own." While Remington was unquestionably difficult, his writing verges on being xenophobic if not downright anti-Semitic and racist, his influence on American culture, in particular the visualization of the West, is unprecedented.

Remington's first visit to the Bighorns was in 1890, when he was traveling with General Miles in Montana to make illustrations for Harper's articles on the Indian wars. At the end of his life, Remington "gravitated" to the Big Horn basin, visiting his friend Buffalo Bill Cody. It is said he loved Sheridan because it was the last place that still kept the true spirit of the West, and it is Sheridan, and the Bighorn Mountains, that was the site of Remington's last visit to the West in the year before his death. His paintings of the Bighorns display the shift Remington made at the end of his life towards an impressionistic style, using color and loose brushstrokes to capture the true beauty of the mountains.
Illustrated Letter & Envelopes, ink & watercolor, 16½" x 10¼"  
On Loan: Courtesy of Frank and Kathy Eaton
CHARLES MARION RUSSELL (1864-1926)

Born in St. Louis, MO Russell always dreamed of becoming a cowboy. In 1880, just after he turned 16, Russell made that dream a reality, and moved to Montana. After attempting his hand unsuccessfully at sheep ranching, he met the trapper Jake Hoover, who took pity on Russell, and he became Hoover’s apprentice. After two years of living and working with Hoover, Russell earned a job as a night herder with several cattle outfits in the Judith River Basin. He took full advantage of his extra time during the day to sketch and document life as a wrangler. While still a working cowboy, he published a few illustrations in Harper’s Weekly and Leslie’s in the late 1880s. After wrangling cattle for 11 years, Russell finally retired in 1893 to pursue his artistic career full time. In 1896 he married Nancy Cooper and she took on the role of business manager, helping greatly to promote his career, making deals with printers for illustrations and always demanding the highest prices. In 1900, they built a home in Great Falls, MT and even though he would achieve national recognition within the next decade, he and Nancy stayed in Montana, preferring the Western lifestyle to larger, Eastern cities that most artists called home at the time. In 1926 the couple started building a home in Pasadena, CA, but Russell sadly died of a heart attack before it was finished.

Russell is perhaps most famous for being a real cowboy artist, having worked as a cowboy and choosing Montana as his permanent home. Unlike other famous Western artists of his time, such as Remington, Russell lived the life he depicted, counting cowboys, wranglers, and Plains Indians among his closest friends, including men like Will Rogers. Famous not only for his work in pencil and paint, Russell also began sculpting at the turn of the 20th century and produced many dynamic bronzes of Western and wildlife themes.

Russell never painted the Bighorns directly, although he visited often. The letter in this exhibition is an illustrated note from Russell to his friend Howard Eaton, one of the founding brothers of the nation’s first dude ranch. Eaton’s Ranch started in North Dakota and was moved to Wolf, WY in 1904. The letter, recounting an amusing mishap with spilt milk, is illustrated with scenes of a pack trip, and written on Russell’s stationery with his iconic buffalo skull mark.
Crow Camp, oil, 18” x 24½”
On Loan: Courtesy of Mr. & Mrs. Summerfield K. Johnston, Jr.
JOSEPH HENRY SHARP (1859-1953)

Joseph Henry Sharp was born in Bridgeport, Ohio in 1859. While he dropped out of public school at age 14 because he was losing his hearing, he was able to enroll at the School of Design in Cincinnati and then traveled to Europe in 1881 to study in Madrid, Antwerp, Munich and Paris. He returned to Cincinnati in 1890 to teach at the Art Academy. In 1893 he took his first sketching trip West and fell in love, taking up permanent residence at the Taos artist colony as one of its founders in 1902.

Sharp’s first visit to the Bighorn region was in 1899 when he went to Crow Agency to discuss a land sale at a Crow Council. The following year, Sharp came to Sheridan to sell paintings through Herbert Coffeen. After this, Sharp began spending his summers at Crow Agency, focusing on painting portraits of Crow Indians. His early work during this period was critiqued as being too ethnographical, so the artist began shifting his focus to the landscape, yet often including figures moving within it.

Sharp’s commitment to his work at Crow Agency was clear however, as he built a studio there sometime between 1902 and 1904, and eventually built a home there with his wife in 1905. The design of his home and studio, named Absarokee Hut, was influenced by the culture, landscape, and people of the region. While Sharp always remained fascinated by the Indian as subject, by 1906 landscapes and scenes of Indian life within the landscape made up about two-fifths of his work. His sensitive portrayal of native subjects was noted by viewers of the time, however, as one critic of an exhibition in Kansas wrote: “Thanks to him the Indian becomes less of a tradition and more of a human being.” This would have been no small feat in 1908.

While Sharp clearly loved the land and people of the northern plains, after several years at Crow Agency, the weather, in particular the harsh winters, got the better of him. Upon returning to his home at Crow Agency after a sketching excursion near Sheridan in the winter of 1916 he wrote to a friend, “Snow scenes will cost more next exhibition.” By the 1920s, Sharp was no longer traveling to Montana regularly and he sold his home there in the 1930s. While he would continue painting for nearly two and a half more decades, Sharp’s time in Montana and Wyoming remained extremely influential on his career and his depiction of Indians in particular.
Fort Reno, watercolor, 8½” x 12¼”
Bradford Brinton Memorial & Museum Collection
WALTER SIES (n.d.)

Little is known about the artist Walter Sies. He was from Indiana and lived for a time in Terre Haute and on a houseboat on the Wabash River. Sies is best known for his Midwestern landscapes. He was also known to paint miniature versions of larger landscapes and sell them for $1.00 each. The dollar also gave the purchaser a chance to win the larger painting in a drawing once he had sold 150 of the smaller works. Sies also spent time out West and was said to have painted Western scenes from memory when back in Indiana.
Horses on the Quarter Circle A Ranch, photograph, 9½" x 16"
Bradford Brinton Memorial Collection
ELSA SPEAR BYRON (1896-1992)

Elsa Spear was born in Big Horn, Wyoming on her family’s ranch. Being a Spear, and therefore a member of one of Wyoming’s earliest ranching families, it seems only fitting that Elsa would be known for documenting ranch life in the early 20th century. When she was just twelve years old, Spear Byron received her first camera, a Brownie, and was using it to photograph Crow Indians by the time she was fifteen. In her teens, Elsa also worked as a guide, taking dudes on pack trips into the Bighorns, intimately learning the mountains she would later capture so beautifully in photographs. These vacationing Easterners would also be some of Spear Byron’s first customers, requesting enlargements of the images she made on their trips. Well ahead of her time, Spear Byron founded Fotokraft of the Big Horns, making her kitchen into a dark room, advertising in magazines and newspapers, and handing out business cards at a time when it was unusual for a woman to be working. Her business not only sold photographs, but also custom made place cards, lamp shades, and other items made with her images. A true Wyoming woman, Elsa continued riding horses well into her 80s and lived to be 95, providing a link for all those lucky enough to know her to the state’s early history. She won many awards including being named an outstanding artist/photographer by the University of Wyoming in 1978, being crowned “Grand Lady of the Bozeman Trail,” in 1979 by National Geographic, and being inducted into the Cowgirl Hall of Fame in 1990.
Beaver Lake on Moncrieffe Ranch, Sheridan Co., Wyo., photograph, 7½” x 9½”

Courtesy of the J.E. Stimson Collection, Wyoming State Archives, Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources
JOSEPH E. STIMSON (1870-1952)

Joseph E. Stimson was born in Virginia and spent the majority of his childhood in the mountains of South Carolina. After his family moved to Nebraska, Stimson, just 18 years old, moved to Wisconsin to work as an apprentice to his photographer cousin, James Stimson. From his cousin, Stimson learned portrait photography and the collodion and wet-plate processes.

Two of Stimson’s brothers worked for the Union Pacific Railroad, so it was likely at their urging that Stimson moved to Cheyenne and purchased a studio and photography equipment in 1889. By 1901 he was hired by Union Pacific as a publicity photographer. Tasked with improving the public image of the railroad overall, Stimson did not image just the railroad then, but also cities, ranches, and natural wonders along the way. Due to this work for the railroad, Stimson had gained a reputation as a landscape photographer in Wyoming and was commissioned by the state in 1903 to create 500 photographs to be displayed at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition. At the fair he won three silver medals, including for his work picturing mining and machinery. In the following years, Stimson photographed not only Wyoming, but expanded his practice to represent Colorado, Nebraska, Kansas, Utah, Idaho, Nevada and California. In the year after his death, the Wyoming State Archives acquired Stimson’s collection, consisting of over 7,500 images, many of them 8 x 10 glass plate negatives and several hand colored prints.

In his effort to represent the natural and industrial beauty of the West, Stimson of course included many representations of the Bighorns. While only a sample of them are on display, Stimson’s images represent some of the most iconic and stunning features of the range, including Cloud Peak and the twisting trails through tall pines.
Ten Sleep Canyon, oil, 29½" x 35½"
On Loan: Courtesy of The Family of Stevan B. & Margaret C. Smith
GEORGE G. SYMONS (1861-1930)

George Symons was born in Chicago in 1861 as George Gardner Simon. He later changed his name to Symons in an attempt to avoid anti-Semitic sentiments of the time. Symons trained at the Art Institute in Chicago, as well as in Paris, Munich and London. After working as a commercial artist in Chicago for a time, Symons made his first trip to California in 1884 and fell in love. After studying in Europe, Symons established a studio in California, while also maintaining studios back East in New York City and in the Berkshires in Massachusetts. Symons came to fame as a plein air painter, doing most of his work on location. He is most famous for impressionistic scenes of snowy New England but also gained attention for his Western landscapes, most often set in his beloved California, as well as desert settings, including the Grand Canyon for a commission from the Santa Fe Railroad. Symons' work is included in such esteemed collections as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the St. Louis Art Museum.


Reaugh to Griffith, 11 October 1914, Reaugh Collection, PPHMRC.


McCullough, 23.


Quoted in Boehme, “The North and Snow,” 46.

Quoted in Boehme, “The North and Snow,” 46.


Bill Gollings. Pamphlet from Sheridan County Fulmer Public Library (November 2011)


Charles Belden: Cowboy Photographer, episode 1202, Main Street Wyoming, PBS, aired August 19, 2013.


“Well Known Artist Visiting at Spear’s Rimrock’s Ranch,” *Sheridan Journal* (June 8, 1928)


