Saddlebag Newsletter
August 2026
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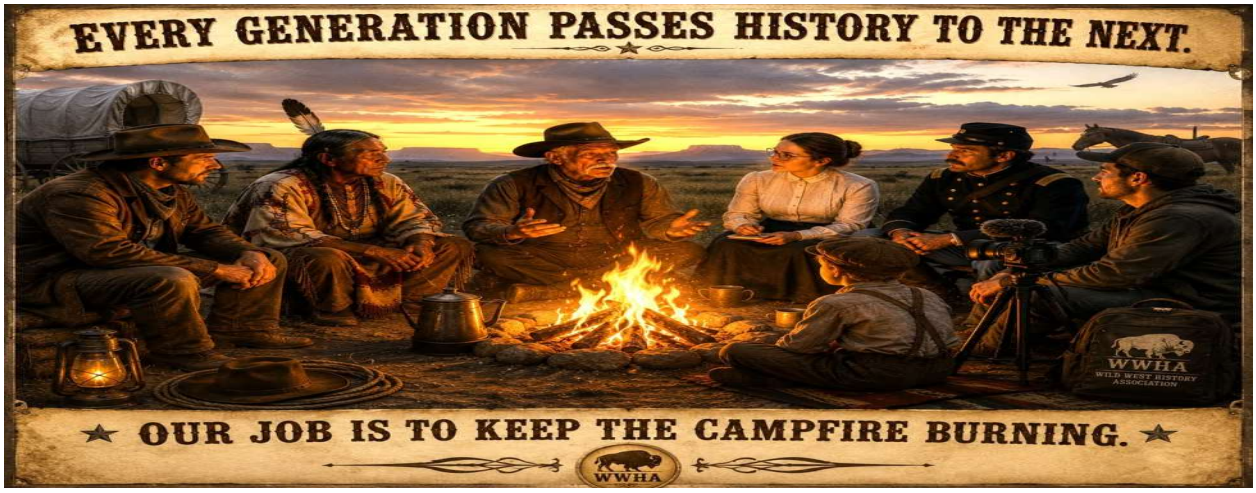
A supplement to the WWHA *Journal*
Available On-Line via www.wildwesthistory.org

Welcome to the Saddlebag Newsletter. Here is the latest information from WWHA. Previously posted Saddlebag newsletters will be found by date further down this section in the list of available newsletters. All earlier information will be retained for reference.

Welcome to our newest members!

Alan Fitch, Prescott Valley, AZ
Gregory Hasman, Albuquerque, NM
Frederick Holabird, Reno, NV
Amy Tellez/New Mexico Southwest Historical Society, Roswell, NM
Marianne Biskup, Stockton, CA
Kim Scott Tucson, AZ
Jim Olsen/Western Trading Post LLC, Wickenburg, AZ
Tim Hanson, Mill Creek, WA
Donald Slade - Euless, TX
Colleen Aycock - Albuquerque, NM
Donald Lincoln - Albuquerque, NM
Laura Love - Tucumcari, NM
Lee Rahlf - Topeka, KS
Kimberly Randleas - Canyon City, OR
Stacy Anderson - Gunfighter



To the fellow members, board members and friends of Wild West History Association,

As of the last night at our recent Albuquerque Roundup, my tenure for President ended by my own choice to not continue this position, but I will keep on the board as an active board member to ensure the success of WWHA. I believe the organization will keep growing, not only in memberships, which we've gained so many since January, but by programs and projects while working in this digital/multimedia age. During my time as President I met so many kind people who joined our group to be part of something larger than other groups, that is what makes us unique and gives me great hope for the future of wild West research and publication. Many of you may not know I am still employed full-time and the grueling demand to keep pace with a work-life balance became too time consuming from my family, so I hope you understand my decision.

Thank you everyone for allowing me to lead WWHA for those two years, and for your support.

Yours most graciously,

Paul M. Marquez

WWHA has a new Merchandising Manager, Tonya Erdman from Spokane, WA.
She will be taking over the duties from Jean Smith, whose Treasurer's job is requiring her full attention. Tonya, her husband, Eric, & their family will be helping in this new adventure. New ideas & new merchandise will be appearing soon in the Journal, Saddlebag, & on the website. Let us thank Tonya & support her, as the merchandise is one of WWHA's fund raising projects. Thank you also to Paula Jean Hunley for her yearly donations of shirts & other types of merchandise.

As the new President of the Wild West History Association, I want to express my sincere appreciation to our Board, members, and volunteers who continue to make this organization the place to go for Wild West history. It is an honor to step into this role, and I look forward to working alongside all of you as we continue to grow and improve the organization.

I want to extend my deepest thanks to outgoing President Paul Marquez for his two years of dedicated service. We are fortunate that Paul will continue serving on the Board and the Executive Committee where his experience and perspective will remain invaluable.

Looking ahead, I am pleased to announce that our 2027 WWHA Roundup will be held July 14–17th in Kansas City, Missouri at the Hilton Kansas City Airport. Planning is underway and more details will follow in the Saddlebag, on the Website and our other Social Media channels.

There are many ways for members to contribute to the Wild West History Association. Our Journal editor is always looking for new scholarly articles. The Saddlebag is the place for advertising upcoming author signings or Wild West events where we can support our shared interests. One of the best ways you can help the organization is by subscribing to our Facebook, Instagram and YouTube channels then “Like”, “Hype”, comment and share the content.

Thank you for your continued support of WWHA.

Donna Harrell
President

We are saddened to announce the passing of the mother of our Past President, Paul Marquez. Throughout the years, Paul's mother has been a significant presence in his life.

Mary Angela Marquez, 89, beloved mother of Paul Marquez, passed away peacefully on July 27th, surrounded by all seven of her children. She led an extraordinary life filled with hard work, faith, and devotion to her family.

The services are scheduled as follows:
Tuesday, August 11th at All Saints Church on Federal, Denver, Colorado. Viewing will begin at 8:30 a.m., followed by the Rosary at 10:30 a.m. and Mass at 11:00 a.m. Burial will take place at Mt. Olivet and will include Mariachi music. A reception will be held at 2:00 p.m., with further details to be announced.

We offer our condolences and peace to the Marquez family.

The 2026 Roundup was a tremendous success, drawing approximately 166 attendees for a memorable gathering filled with history, fellowship, and lively conversation. Attendees enjoyed outstanding speakers, discovered new insights about Billy the Kid, and were entertained by talented members and guests. The bus trip to Acoma Pueblo was especially impressive—those who went came away inspired, and those who missed it were left wishing they had joined. Another highlight was the Billy the Kid panel, which brought together several respected experts on Billy the Kid and Lincoln County history. Award recipients will be published in the September Journal and on the website. As always, one of the most meaningful parts of the Roundup was the chance to reconnect with old friends, welcome many new attendees, and catch up on life and history. The live and silent auctions were also a great success, thanks to the many outstanding items generously donated by our members.

Random Crowd photo

Random photos from the 2026 Roundup in Albuquerque

Chris Daring

Jean and
Chuck Smith

at the Merchandise table

Kyrie Brown, Mary Carey, Cecilia Ogasawara, Eddie Lanham

David de Haas

Heidi Osselaer and Susan Garrett

Matt Bernstein, John Boessenecker, Tim Hagaman, Casey Tefertiller, Chuck Smith

Roy Young interviewing Kurt House for “Evening With”

Look for more photos in the September Journal

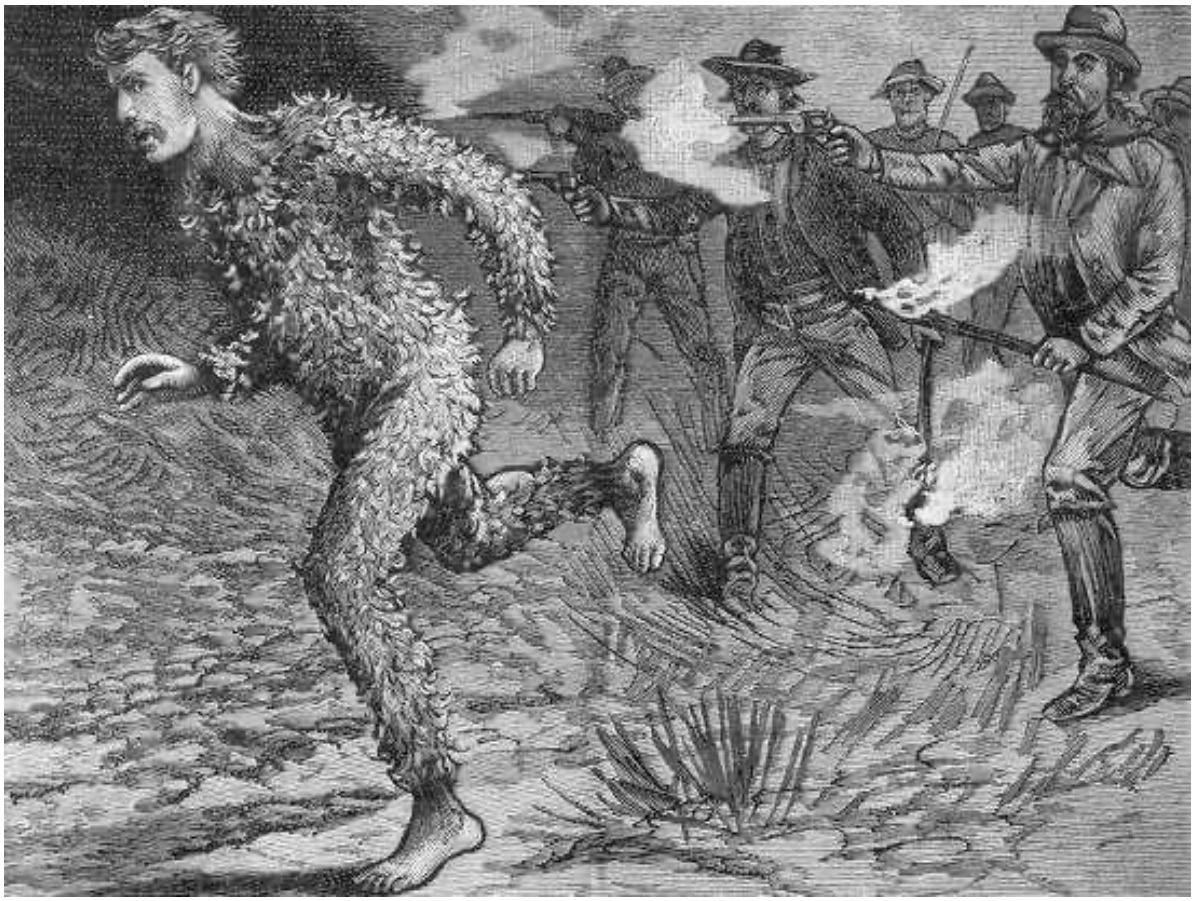
Tar and Feathering in the American West:

Frontier Justice or Public Humiliation?
Women Were Not Immune

Eddie Lanham

Few images from the American frontier are as deeply rooted in popular culture as that of an unfortunate victim covered in hot tar, coated with feathers, and ridden out of town on a rail. It has become a staple of Western novels, Hollywood films, political cartoons, and television comedies. Yet, like many legends of the Wild West, the reality was both more complex and more disturbing than the myth.

Tar and feathering was rarely intended as a death sentence. Instead, it was one of the harshest forms of public humiliation ever devised. It served as a warning to others, a punishment without a courtroom, and a dramatic display of community power. While most commonly associated with the American frontier, the practice actually has much older origins.



Artist Illustration of Tar and Feathering. Not AI.

An Old Punishment in a New Land

The first well-documented case of tar and feathering dates to England in the twelfth century. King Richard I, better known as Richard the Lionheart, ordered that thieves caught stealing aboard his ships should have their heads shaved, be covered with boiling pitch, feathers thrown over them, and then be left ashore to serve as an example to others.

Centuries later, English colonists brought the practice to North America.

During the years leading up to the American Revolution, colonial patriots occasionally tarred and feathered British tax collectors, customs officials, and others viewed as loyal to the Crown. Ironically, a punishment once associated with royal authority became a weapon against that very authority.

After the Revolution, tar and feathering never completely disappeared. Instead, it evolved into a form of vigilante justice that appeared whenever communities believed the legal system was either too slow or unwilling to deal with an offender.

Why It Flourished on the Frontier

Life on the western frontier often moved faster than the law.

In many mining camps, cattle towns, and newly established settlements, there were few judges, limited law enforcement, and little patience for lengthy legal proceedings. Citizens frequently formed vigilance committees to handle matters themselves.

Not everyone who was tarred and feathered was a hardened criminal.

In many cases, guilt was never proven. Being unpopular was sometimes enough.

Tar and feathering became less about justice than about sending a message: *You are no longer welcome here.*

Was the Tar Really Boiling?

Hollywood has often portrayed victims being drenched in boiling tar, implying that few could survive such an ordeal. The historical record paints a different picture.

Most vigilantes used pine tar rather than the asphalt-based tar used on roads today. Pine tar had long been used for waterproofing ships, preserving rope, treating wooden fences, and even for certain medical purposes. Although it needed to be heated until it became sticky, it usually was **not** brought to a full boil before being applied. If boiling tar had been poured directly onto a victim, the burns would likely have been fatal. That does not mean the punishment was harmless.

Even warm pine tar could cause painful burns, blistering, infection, and lasting scars. Removing hardened tar from skin and hair often required scraping, cutting away hair, or using oils and solvents that created even more pain.

Victims sometimes suffered permanent skin damage. Others never recovered emotionally from the public disgrace.

Pine tar refinery

The Feathers Were the Least of Their Problems

Once the sticky tar had been applied, feathers—usually from chickens, geese, or ducks—were thrown onto the victim. The feathers served no physical purpose. They transformed the victim into a living spectacle. Covered from head to toe in white feathers, the individual became an object of ridicule. Crowds laughed, shouted insults, and often forced the victim to parade through town before being expelled. Many accounts describe the victim being ridden out of town on a fence rail.

Contrary to popular belief, this did not mean riding comfortably atop a rail like a horse. Instead, several men lifted a wooden fence rail on their shoulders while forcing the victim to straddle it. The rough wood pressing between the legs, combined with constant bouncing as the men walked, created another painful layer of humiliation.

"Tar and feathering was not intended merely to punish—it was intended to humiliate, ostracize, and warn everyone else what could happen to those who defied the community."

A Punishment Without Due Process

Tar and feathering occupied a gray area between law enforcement and outright mob violence.

Communities often defended it by claiming that the offender deserved punishment but that imprisonment was impractical. Jails might not exist, judges could be hundreds of miles away, and witnesses often disappeared. Yet vigilante justice carried obvious dangers. false accusations, personal grudges, business rivalries, political disagreements, and prejudice sometimes determined who became the next victim. Immigrants, minorities, labor organizers, and political outsiders frequently found themselves targeted.

Modern historians caution against viewing every vigilance committee as heroic. While some undoubtedly protected frontier communities from dangerous criminals, others abused their authority and punished people for reasons that had little to do with justice.

Women Were Not Immune

Although men made up the majority of documented victims, women were occasionally subjected to tar and feathering as well. Women accused of adultery, prostitution, operating brothels, or violating local moral standards sometimes found themselves

attacked by mobs. In several frontier communities, women associated with unpopular political or religious movements also became targets. These incidents remind us that frontier justice often reflected the social values—and prejudices—of the communities enforcing it.

Famous Incidents

Perhaps one of the best-known Western examples occurred during labor disputes in mining regions, where company officials or strike organizers were occasionally tarred and feathered by opposing factions.

Newspaper editors also became favorite targets. Throughout the nineteenth century, editors wielded tremendous political influence. A strongly worded editorial could inflame an entire town. More than one editor discovered that freedom of the press carried real physical risks on the frontier. Some victims survived and continued their careers elsewhere. Others quietly disappeared from public life.

Hollywood Gets It Wrong

Western films often portray tar and feathering as humorous. The victim stumbles through town covered with feathers while everyone laughs before the story quickly moves on.

Reality was much darker. The physical injuries could take weeks to heal.

The emotional damage often lasted far longer.

Communities intended the punishment to permanently destroy a person's reputation. Friends abandoned the victim. Businesses failed. Families sometimes left town entirely to escape the shame. Unlike a jail sentence, which eventually ended, public humiliation could follow someone for the rest of his or her life.

Decline of the Practice

As western communities matured, formal legal systems gradually replaced vigilante justice.

County sheriffs became more professional. Judges were appointed. Courthouses were built. Juries replaced angry crowds.

Although isolated cases of tar and feathering continued into the twentieth century—including during labor disputes and even civil rights conflicts—it became increasingly

rare. By then, Americans had begun viewing the punishment less as justice and more as assault.

Separating Myth from History

Tar and feathering occupies an unusual place in American memory. It symbolizes frontier justice while simultaneously exposing its greatest weakness. Many early western communities genuinely struggled to maintain order under difficult circumstances. Crime could spread rapidly where formal government was weak or nonexistent.

Yet history also reminds us that mobs rarely produce impartial justice. Without evidence, due process, or the opportunity to defend oneself, innocent people can become victims as easily as the guilty.

The American West was filled with courageous lawmen, dangerous outlaws, hardworking settlers, and honest citizens trying to build communities from the ground up. But it was also a place where fear, rumor, and public anger could sometimes overpower fairness. Tar and feathering stands as one of the clearest examples of that tension.

Conclusion

Today, tar and feathering survive mostly as a colorful image in popular culture, often stripped of its true meaning. Beneath the feathers, however, was a very real person enduring pain, humiliation, and exile.

For frontier communities, the punishment represented swift action when legal institutions were absent or ineffective. For the victims, it represented the terrifying power of public opinion unchecked by law.

The story of tar and feathering reminds us that the American West was never simply a battle between good and evil. It was a region where ordinary people wrestled daily with difficult questions about justice, authority, and community responsibility.

In the end, perhaps the greatest lesson is not how often tar and feathering occurred, but why it eventually disappeared. As civilization spread across the frontier, Americans increasingly recognized that even those accused of wrong-doing deserved something better than judgment delivered by an angry crowd. That may be one of the most important—and least celebrated—victories in the history of the American West.

Prescott's Doc HolliDaze Weekend, August 14-16, 2026

Join the gathering in downtown Prescott, Arizona, for Prescott's Doc HolliDaze weekend, August 14-16, 2026! The celebration is designed to promote the history of Prescott with entertaining and engaging education and to provide a fun weekend of events for both locals and out of town attendees. A discounted All Weekend Pass includes entrance to all events for $165, and tickets for individual events are available as well at www.PrescottTombstoneConnection.org.
Begin the weekend with a Victorian Garden Party at Sharlot Hall Museum on Friday, August 14th, beginning at 5:00 PM, followed by a downtown Saloon Crawl. Our "Welcome to the Weekend Reception"! Meet your fellow history enthusiasts and enjoy some light bites and music by Chip Hanna while you stroll the 4 acres of gardens and historic buildings of this iconic museum. The Prescott Regulators and their Shady Ladies will entertain with a "Doc" skit! Then take a tour of several local watering holes. Each guest will receive a drink ticket in the form of a wooden nickel good for one special "Doc Drink" offered by one of the participating bars. Western or 1880's period attire is encouraged but certainly not required!

On Saturday, August 15th, from 9:00 AM to 3:30 PM, learn some fascinating history at the Wild West History Forum at the fabulous Elks Theatre! Scheduled speakers for the History Forum include Roy Young, Mark Boardman, Peter Brand, Michael Paul Mihaljeich and Anastasia Sitnina. Seating for the History Forum is General Admission, and the concession stand will be open.

There will be a lunch break from 12:00 to 1:30. A catered lunch will be available at the Hassayampa Inn's Marina Room, with sandwiches and salads of your choice. Meet the History Forum speakers and relax before returning to the Elks Theatre for the afternoon sessions.

After the History Forum on Saturday, there will be a grave marker dedication for JD Kinnear's grave at the Pioneer's Home Cemetery at 4:00 PM. There is no charge to attend the dedication. The grave marker has been arranged and funded by the Wild West History Association.

Doc's Birthday Party and Whiskey/Cigar Tasting will take place on Saturday, August 15th, from 6:00-9:00 PM at the Marina Room at the Hassayampa Inn, with a buffet dinner and some delicious birthday cake! Enjoy dancing under the stars to the music of Sky Daddy Conwell. Meet Doc Holliday (impersonator Cory Allen from Tombstone) and wish him a happy birthday! Yes, he shares a birthday with the original. A selection of whiskeys will be provided for sampling, and if you find one you like, full size drinks will be available at the no-host bar. Visit with our History Forum speakers and enjoy a talk by Bradley G. Courtney on Doc's paramour, "Big Nose" Kate. Learn to play faro and try one of the selection of cigars presented for sale by Ol' Havana Cigar Bar. 1880's period or Western attire is encouraged but certainly not required!
On Sunday, August 16th, beginning at 1:00 PM, Walking History Tours will be provided by local historians Christopher Gillis, Drew Desmond, Brenda Cusick and Brad Courtney.

The weekend is a celebration of John Henry "Doc" Holliday's time in Prescott prior to his fateful move to Tombstone. In 2024, Whiskey Row Historian Bradley G. Courtney and researcher D. Sue Kissell learned the exact location of the house where John Henry "Doc" Holliday lived during his time in Prescott. It was located off Montezuma Street in what is now the parking lot between Bashford Courts and Yavapai Title. A fundraising effort was launched to create a bronze plaque commemorating the location, and the plaque was placed by the City of Prescott in their easement. A wildly successful unveiling event followed, and the committee elected to continue to celebrate Doc Holliday's Prescott tenure with an annual event on the weekend closest to Doc's birthday of August 14th.

A commemorative booklet, "Doc Holliday in Prescott", written by Bradley Courtney, will be available at the event, as will books and artwork by the History Forum presenters. Stuart Rosebrook, executive director of Sharlot Hall Museum, will emcee the History Forum as well as Doc's Birthday Party and Whiskey/Cigar Tasting.
The Hassayampa Inn, 928-778-9434, and Hotel St. Michael, 928-776-1999, are the host hotels for the event. Ask for their Prescott's Doc HolliDaze rates when making your reservations.

Tickets are limited and are available online only at www.PrescottTombstoneConnection.org.

Proceeds benefit Sharlot Hall Museum and the Wild West History Association. For more information call 928-713-5136 or email prescott.tombstone@gmail.com

WILD WEST HISTORY ASSOCIATION

YOUTUBE

Learn More About Wild West History

August 2026

Released Every Friday After 3:00PM EST

PLEASE! LIKE, COMMENT AND SUBSCRIBE
(This Channel Helps to Fund the WWHA)

August 7th

Tonkawa Indians Eat Comanche Flesh. The Battle of Plum Creek and The Great Comanche Raid.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XpdaePtRKf0

August **14th**

We Found the Site of Wyatt Earp's Tonopah Saloon

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t7yYoAw1K_4

August **21st**

She Pulled the Arrows From Her Own Body: The Forgotten Wagon Train Attack of 1865

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S6kWDw6nDLk

August **28th**

From Gunfighter to Freight Wagon: Wyatt Earp's Lost Chapter. See the Ghost Town: Candelaria, Nevada.

WILD WEST HISTORY ASSOCIATION

YouTube SHORTS

(Less Than 3 Minutes) (Cell Phone View)

Learn More About Wild West History

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(This Channel Helps to Fund the WWHA)

August 4th

The First Wounded Texan You've Never Heard Of

https://www.youtube.com/shorts/jsMED9OsDLU

August 11th

Longest Graveyard in America. Exploring the Oregon - California Trail's Majestic Landmarks. Drone.

https://www.youtube.com/shorts/LYTQZ4-8IUE

August 18th

Notorious Cherokee Outlaw Ned Christie Killed, One Companion Burned. Did they kill the wrong man?

https://www.youtube.com/shorts/uozczqehBF8

August 25th

Tombstone. Who Named the Famous Old West Town Where the Earps and Holliday Out-gunned the Cowboys?

https://www.youtube.com/shorts/agKDXxiYgug

Art of the West
Chris Homel: A Los Angeles Artist with Wyoming Roots
By Rebecca Joleen Sparks

LA artist, Chris Homel, loves the Wild West: its vast landscapes and colorful people. When asked why he is attracted to Western art, Homel aptly replied that the Wild West "was a very short time in our nation's history, yet no other time has been more romanticized." Despite its brevity, the generations that followed continue to gravitate to the romantic notions of open skies and lawless pursuit, and Homel is no exception. His art captures the very essence of what draws us to this short yet spellbinding time. In Homel's own words, "It's the mystique of the old west and it's textures which draw me to it."

In his childhood, Homel's artistic talents were fostered by the loving attention of his grandmother, Dorothy, who was involved in the Los Angeles art scene through her friendship with Myrle Medeiros, a prominent figure in the "big-eyed child" movement. Those who are old enough may remember seeing some of Medeiros's lithograph prints for sale at Woolworth's. Homel remembers posing for Medeiros as a young boy. Two of those portraits hang in his studio today. Despite Medeiros's fame, the artist that most influenced Homel was his grandmother. He likens her home to that of a museum in which he studied each and every one of her works. Homel credits his grandmother for cultivating his artistic ability, saying, "It was my grandmother who insisted and paid for my first painting classes when I was fourteen."

Other family members nudging Homel ever closer to his love of Wild West imagery are his grandfather and uncle. Homel's grandfather, originally from Wyoming, hung onto his Wild West roots and his love of horses. Perhaps to honor his grandfather, Howel's very first painting was of a horse poking its head out from inside a stable. According to Grandpa's instructions, this painting was framed and prominently displayed in the living room. When Uncle Jack, an eccentric man from Spain, saw the painting, he declared that young Homel would be the next Sorolla. Homel ended this memory with a confession, stating, "I never knew what that meant, as I was only a boy, but now I do. Oh how I wish that were true!"

Homel spent those early childhood years in Sherman Oaks, a part of Los Angeles that is very near the Santa Monica mountains. There, he would have spent countless hours pondering the permanence of the scenery that lay before him, admiring its juniper hues. "That particular mountain range holds a special place in my heart," Homel related.

That idyllic place was not destined to be a constant in Homel's life. Rather circumstance would propel him to New York City. A Flame Artist by profession, Homel got his start in post-production during those five years spent in New York. Practical reasons prompted not only his return to Los Angeles but also his fortuitous return to the Santa Monica Mountains. Atop the arid ridges and inside in the rocky valleys, Homel's artistic eye detected the timeless scenes that early pioneers would have likewise beheld.

Homel's paintings are created through a variety of approaches. Sometimes, he sketches Wild West people and scenery from his mind's eye, while at other times he finds his subjects in photographs. Homel also uses digital media to envision or revise his work. When time permits, Homel is able to indulge and paint from Plein Air, taking his canvas, brushes, and paint out into the world to capture the enduring beauty outstretched before him. Homel states, "The wild areas which surround the urban expanse of LA is surprising to many. It is truly vast and diverse."

When talking about his influences, Homel credits first and foremost his grandmother, Dorothy, but he also credits well-known artists, including Joaquín Sorolla, Anders Zorn, Jeremy Lipking, and Edgar Payne, who according to Homel, "is one of the most inspirational Western artists who ever lived." Homel also cites two contemporary artists: Mark Maggiori and Morgan Weistling. Perhaps Homel's most admired artist, however, is Norman Rockwell, whom Homel credits as having an unparalleled ability to convey character through portraiture.

It is the Saddlebag's hope that our readers take a look at Homel's depictions of the Wild West, for the images he has created speak to the enduring fascination of this short yet resonant era: its people, its lore, and its landscapes.

See You Next Year

September issue will have photos and articles about the Texas Ranger Symposium in Blanco, Texas and Doc Hollidaze in Prescott, Arizona.