

Frederic S. Remington



The mature Remington, c. 1909,
Frederic Remington Art Museum, Ogdensburg, New York

ranch cook while sketching everything he saw, from shrinking buffalo herds to military conflicts with American Indian tribes. His view was raw; his illustrations reflected the more authentic feeling of the West. He sent a sketch to *Harper's Weekly* and it is considered his first published illustration, though it was redrawn by W.A. Rogers before it appeared in the February 15, 1882, issue.

Remington's next significant venture came in 1883 when he decided purchase a Kansas sheep ranch. During this time he continued to sketch, but ranch work proved to be rough and wool trade returned to Remington so this career was short-lived. After heading home to retrieve funding from his mother, he returned to Kansas City to start a hardware business which eventually succumbed to an alleged swindle. Finally, with his remaining money, he invested in a saloon as a silent partner then went back east to marry Eva in 1884. Remington's new bride detested the saloon life and was not impressed with his sketches of saloon patrons so she quickly retreated east to live with family. Remington bartered his sketches and paintings for necessities

Frederic Sackrider Remington was born on October 4, 1861, in Canton, New York, to parents Seth Pierre Remington and Clarissa Bascom Sackrider. His father, a journalist and newspaper publisher by trade as well as a civil war colonel, perhaps provided his son with an interest in journalism as well as heroic glorious interpretation of military conquests. Remington began sketching cowboys and soldiers at an early age and attended various military schools though it was clear he was not meant to be a soldier. To try some formal art training, he enrolled in Yale University, but he was drawn to the action of non-academic pursuits including football and boxing.

A turning point came when his father passed away, Remington left Yale and the dull studio assignments (still life and plaster cast drawing) he disliked. A variety of brief jobs kept him busy until 1881 when he departed on his first adventure West to seek out his fortune. This was also after his father-in-law denied his sweetheart Eva Canten's hand because he was not impressed with Remington's lack of financial responsibility. He worked as a cowboy, scout, sheep herder, and ranch cook while sketching everything he saw, from shrinking buffalo herds to military conflicts with American Indian tribes. His view was raw; his illustrations reflected the more authentic feeling of the West. He sent a sketch to *Harper's Weekly* and it is considered his first published illustration, though it was redrawn by W.A. Rogers before it appeared in the February 15, 1882, issue.

Remington's next significant venture came in 1883 when he decided purchase a Kansas sheep ranch. During this time he continued to sketch, but ranch work proved to be rough and wool trade returned to Remington so this career was short-lived. After heading home to retrieve funding from his mother, he returned to Kansas City to start a hardware business which eventually succumbed to an alleged swindle. Finally, with his remaining money, he invested in a saloon as a silent partner then went back east to marry Eva in 1884. Remington's new bride detested the saloon life and was not impressed with his sketches of saloon patrons so she quickly retreated east to live with family. Remington bartered his sketches and paintings for necessities

and then found success selling his paintings. Transitioning the hobby into a real profession, he returned east in triumph to reunite with his wife.

Publishers interested in his illustrations of the west, sent Remington as an artist- correspondent to cover events such as the United States war against Geronimo in Arizona in the mid 1880s, the South Carolina earthquake of 1886, and the Spanish-American war in 1898. While on these and other assignments, he retrieved artifacts, took photos, and created many sketches, all which he would use later in his studio to produce artworks. His vision of his experience in the West was slightly embellished, but that only added to his "cowboyish" persona.

In 1890, Remington had his first solo show. By then he was established in society, and his "Wild West" adventures made him a celebrity of sorts. His illustrations could be found in many businesses and homes whether in numerous publications, illustrated books, or artworks hung on the walls. His commission in this decade took him to Dakota Territory, Mexico, Cuba, Europe, Russia, and North Africa.



He decided to try sculpture in 1895 by creating his first bronze, *Bronco Buster*. Following the dismal success of his novel and the stage play based on his character "John Ermine" he decided to devote his time entirely to sculpture and painting, including creating a successful series of nocturnal paintings. To make a statement that he was done with illustration, in the late 1890s he burned dozens of his artworks that had been used in publications. Also, as civilization was encroaching on his "Old West," he shared his thoughts in a letter to his wife dated November 1900, "Shall never come west again. ...It spoils my early illusions – and they are *my* capital."

The final two years of his short life were spent in studio due to his declining health. Remington wished to be outside with his fellow artists painting "plein air" (associated with the Impressionism style though this quality may only be seen in the backgrounds of his later artworks. On December 26, 1909, America lost their cowboy at the height of his career, when he died from peritonitis after an emergency appendectomy.

Self-Portrait on Horse, c. 1890, oil on canvas,
ex-collection: Newhouse Galleries, New York City; E.L. Dempsey, New York City

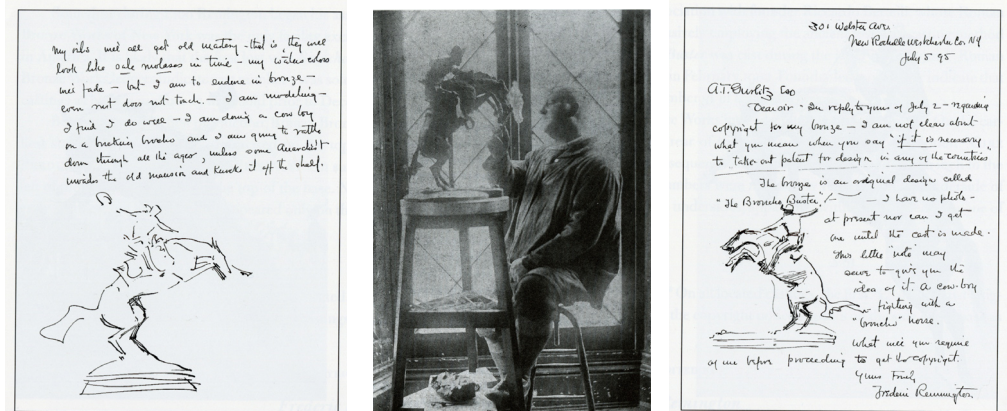


Collier's Weekly, September 14, 1901

Throughout Remington's career as an illustrator and painter, he developed a sculptor's sense of vision, and playwright Augustus Thomas encouraged him to pursue this artform. However, at first Remington lacked the confidence to try this medium until his friend and sculptor Frederick Ruckstuhl, inspired and provided him with the necessary supplies to create his first sculpture, *Bronco Buster* (originally titled *The Broncho Buster*), and copyrighted October 1, 1895. Henry-Bonnard Company sand-cast the first bronzes and later Roman Works would produce more copies utilizing the lost-wax method.

This "illustrated sculpture" did garner some criticism, but most felt this, as well as his other bronzes, seemed alive and were about to jump off their base. His style was revolutionary: the first Western action bronze demonstrating his technical mastery of a difficult medium. Much like a camera, Remington's sculptures captured a moment or incident – part of a story, and *Bronco Buster* exhibits the artist's celebrated flair for depicting this dramatic activity.

Remington went on to create 21 more bronze statues after the success of his inaugural sculpture. Joslyn's *Bronco Buster* was a sand-cast version which was cast number 54 from Henry Bonnard's foundry.



IMAGES (LEFT TO RIGHT): 1895 letter with pen and ink sketch from Remington to Owen Wister, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Remington modeling his first subject, *The Broncho Buster*, 1895, Frederic Remington Art Museum, Ogdensburg, New York; 1895 letter from Remington to A.T. Gurlitz, with pen and ink sketch, P.Beitler, Winnetka, Illinois

Discussion Questions

Is *Bronco Buster* a sculpture or a statue? Why? What is the difference?

○

It is thought that Remington's artworks are a moment in a story. What is *Bronco Buster's* story, and how does it begin and end?

○

Remington traveled to "the West" many times. What do you consider to be the West? How does it compare with Remington's West?

○

Imagine you journeyed westward with Remington. How would you travel there? What would you sketch?

Timeline

1860

1861 Frederic Sackrider Remington is born on October 4 in Canton, NY

1865

Frederic Remington in the early 1890s, Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka

1870

1875 Receives first formal art instruction at Vermont Episcopal Institute, Rock Port, VT

1875

1878 Enrolls at Yale College of Art, New Haven, CT

1880

1881 Travels west to Montana Territory - first trip to the 'Old West'

1882

1882 *Harper's Weekly* publishes an illustration based on a sketch Remington submitted

1884

1884 Moves to Kansas City, invests in a hardware store then saloon

1885

1885 Pursues an illustration career & moves to Brooklyn, NY

1886

1886 Travels to the Southwest & submits illustrations regularly to *Harper's Weekly*

1887

1887 Exhibits in his first show at the National Academy of Design & travels to Dakota, Wyoming & Montana Territories & western Canada for *Harper's* commission

1888

1888 Travels to New Mexico, Texas & Arizona for *Century Magazine's* commission & two paintings are used for US Postage Stamps

1890

1890 Holds his first solo exhibition at the American Art Association; travels to Dakota territory & visits the site of Sioux Nation's defeat at Wounded Knee

1892

1892 Travels to Europe, Russia, & North Africa on *Harper's* commission

1895

1895 Casts his first bronze sculpture, *Bronco Buster*, with Henry-Bonnard Company using sand-cast method

1898

1898 Travels to Cuba, Florida & Puerto Rico to document the Spanish-American War

1899

1899 Experiments with color pastels; first color illustration is published by *Harper's Monthly*

1900

1900 Casts first bronze, *The Norther*, with Roman Bronze Works using lost-wax method

1901

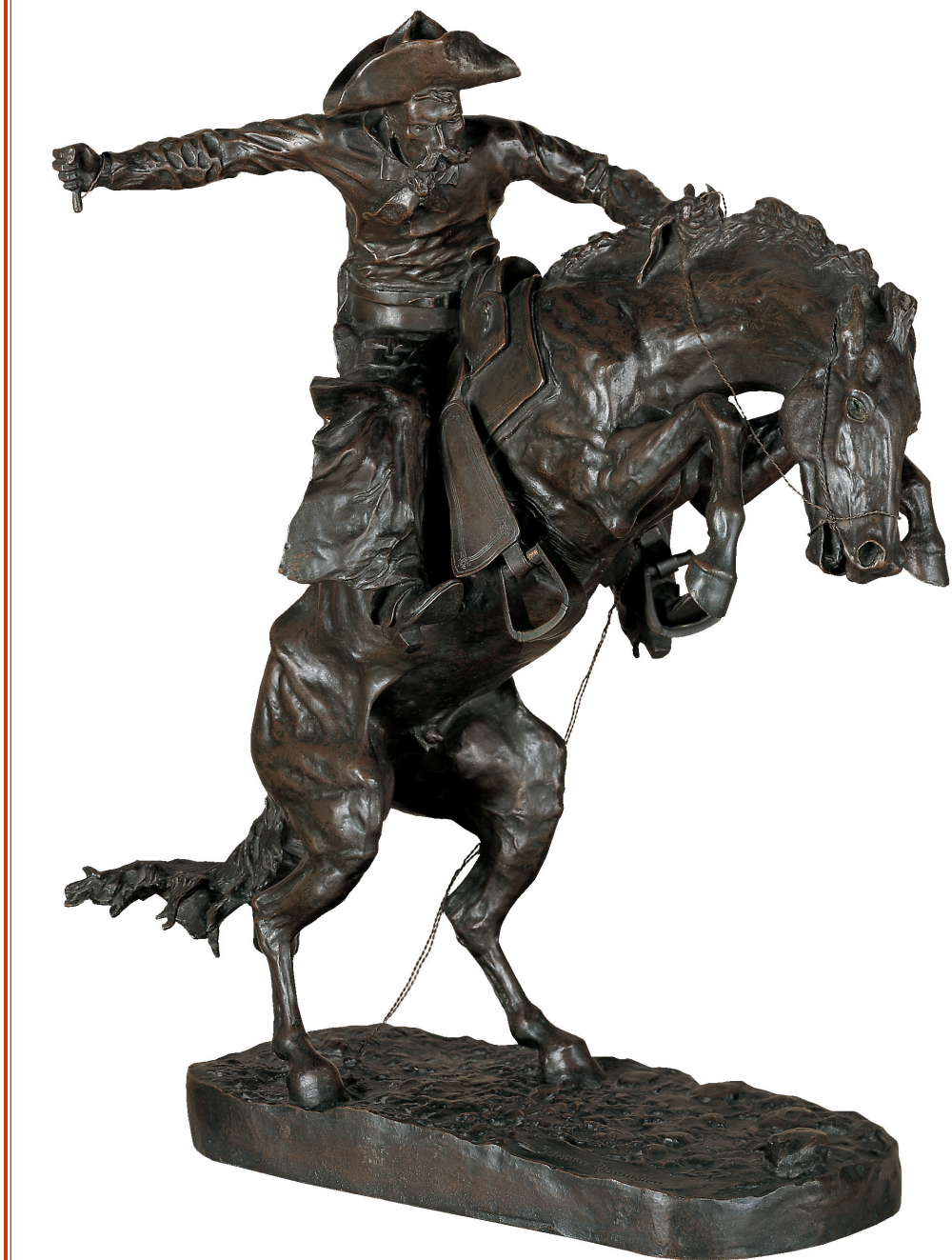
1901 Publishes his first novel *John Ermine of the Yellowstone*

1905

1909 Dies in Ridgefield, CT on December 26

BACKGROUND IMAGE: Frederic S. Remington, *Canadian Northwest Mounted Police*, 1890, oil on board, Gift of Mrs. C.N. Dietz, 1934.63. *Originally reproduced as an illustration in an issue of *Harper's Monthly*, June 7, 1891, it was one of eighteen illustrations by Remington appearing in Colonel Theodore Ayrault Dodge's four-part serial entitled "Some American Riders."

Portrait printed with Remington's obituary in the January 8, 1910, *Harper's Weekly*, Frederic Remington Art Museum, Ogdensburg, New York



Frederic S. Remington
American, 1861–1909
Bronco Buster
1825
bronze, 24 1/2 in. high
Bequest of N.P. Dodge, 1954.303

Remington: The Illustrator



The Ambushed Picket, 1886, pencil, pen and ink, and watercolor on paper, ex-collection: Newhouse Galleries, New York City; Samuel H. Rosenthal, Jr., Los Angeles



The Ambushed Picket, Harper's Weekly, June 8, 1889, Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth

Remington wanted to preserve the Old West, and he shared how it happened in *Collier's* May 19, 1905, issue: Evening overtook me one night in Montana, and I by good luck I made the camp-fire of an old wagon freighter who shared his bacon and coffee with me. I was nineteen years of age and he was a very old man. Over the pipes it developed that he was born in Western New York and had gone West at an early age. His West was Iowa. Thence during his long life he had followed the receding frontiers, always further and further West. 'And now,' he said, 'there is no more West. In a few years the railroad will come along the Yellowstone and a poor man can not make a living at all....'

He had his point of view and he made a new one for me.... I knew the wild riders and the vacant land were about to vanish forever... and the more I considered the subject, the bigger the forever loomed. Without knowing exactly how to do it, I began to try to record some facts around me, and the more I looked the more the panorama unfolded.... His career began with his first drawing published in 1882, and by 1890 more than two hundred of his illustrations depicting his Old West had appeared in *Harper's*, *Century*, and *Outing* magazines. He was the highest paid illustrator of his time and considered the best illustrator to depict the American Indian and Western lifestyle. In total, 41 periodicals and 142 books (including some he authored) featured his illustrations.

A substantial commission for Remington was to create 400 illustrations for the special edition of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *Hiawatha*. Another significant project included 80 illustrations for his friend Theodore Roosevelt's book, *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail*. Later in a letter to the editor of *Pearson's Magazine*, dated July 17, 1907, President Roosevelt stated that "he [Remington] has portrayed a most characteristic and yet vanishing type of American life. The soldier, the cowboy and rancher, the Indian, the horses and the cattle of the Plains, will live in his pictures and his bronzes, I verily believe, for all time."

The Remingtons were excellent horsemen so it is no surprise the young Frederic received riding lessons from a prominent civil war cavalry colonel - his father. In addition to riding horses everywhere, Remington included them in thousands of his illustrations. In 1889, he wrote the article "The Horses of the Plains" where he described practically every type of horse found in his "Old West." He knew their temperaments, every muscle, and could draw them from any angle which was advantageous when he transitioned to sculpture. Remington made it no secret that he hoped his tombstone included the epitaph:



"He Knew the Horse"



IMAGES (TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT): Frederic S. Remington, *Cutting Out Pony Herds*, 1908, oil on canvas, Lent by William C. Foxley, L-2005.30; *An Old Time Northern Plains Indian: The Coup*, 1908, oil on canvas, Lent by William C. Foxley, L-2005.46 (BOTTOM): *A Half Hour's Halt*, ink wash on paper, Gift of Barbara Birmingham, 2009.55

Bronze Fabrication: SAND CAST



Frederic S. Remington, *Bronco Buster*, 1895, bronze, Bequest of N.P. Dodge, 1954.303 (photograph from c. 1950s, lasso still attached to statue)

LOST WAX



Frederic S. Remington, *Bronco Buster*, 1895, bronze, Lent by William C. Foxley, L-2005.36

Frederic Remington's bronzes were created using sand cast and lost wax or cire perdue methods. With his first statues, he collaborated with Henry Bonnard using the sand cast process. After a plaster cast is made of the final clay sculpture, and it is pressed into a sand bed in a foundry mold. The second half of the foundry mold is clamped on the first with more sand packed into it. A second set of molds are used to make the sand core, a place filler, which will have a steel armature support to make this hollow bronze casting. The molds are sent to the oven to dry and harden the sand mixture, and then molten bronze is poured into that negative space. Molds and the armature are taken apart while the bronze is still soft, and when it is cooled, it is finished and patinated.

Later in his career, Remington worked with foundryman Riccardo Bertelli's Roman Bronze Works and the lost wax method. For this process, a wax copy is made from the plaster cast of the original, and melted wax is brushed inside it. Once cooled, it is opened so there is an exact wax copy where the sculptor may make changes or add more details. At this point, a series of vents and gates are rigged on the wax model to aid with the pour. An "investment mold" is formed with plaster and sand inside and outside of the mold. It is all baked in a kiln and with the wax melting or "lost" leaving a hollow space the foundrymen now fill with liquid bronze. When it is cooled, the mold is removed and the bronze cast is finished and patinated.



FREDERIC S. REMINGTON (AMERICAN, 1861–1909)

BRONCO BUSTER

1895, BRONZE

JOSLYN ART MUSEUM© OMAHA, NEBRASKA
Bequest of N.P. Dodge, 1954.303

Frederic Remington