REMINGTON

Frederic Remington

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Emerson Hough and Frederic Remington

FREDERIC REMINGTON and the American Old West

PARKSTONE INTERNATIONAL

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FREDERIC REMINGTON

Introduction

After the New World had been settled by European immigrants landing on America's eastern coastline, the only direction to go was west. This new country contained untold fortunes, and drew adventurers who wished to explore this vast frontier, and settlers who longed to make it their own.

The term "American Old West" generally coincides with the period between the American Civil War (1861-1865) and the end of the 19th century, but is more loosely used to define the culture that permeated a large part of the country for the entire 19th century. As the West was explored, fought over, settled, tilled, and developed, the culture that had once defined it began to pass away, becoming history and mythology, and leaving its mark on America.

Frederic Remington was one of the major figures to study this culture of the "Wild West" as it was quickly fading away, and thus contribute to its preservation in the American consciousness. Born in 1861 to a colonel for the Union, Remington was very much a child of the Civil War. He grew up in Ogdensburg, New York, and was sent to a church-run military academy, where his father hoped he would learn some discipline and focus. Straying from these wishes, Remington chose a life of journalism, setting aside his talents as an artist. He had a romantic fascination with the Old West, and submitted Western-themed articles, accompanied by his own illustrations, to publications such as *Collier's* and *Harper's Weekly*. His penchant for expressive phrasing and vivid depiction landed him his first cover of *Harper's Weekly* in 1886, jump-starting his career as a chronicler of the American West.

Remington's affability made him easy company for all sorts of men — from cowboys to Indians to cavalrymen — and he soon was sent out on assignments to accompany these men on their journeys. It is thus that Remington's oeuvre contains striking images of men from all walks of life; his experiences enriched his imagination, which inspired his works.

This book contains many of Remington's masterpieces, presented alongside text written by Remington himself, as well as by the great American writer Emerson Hough. These texts and images present a remarkable illustration of the American Old West, in all its glory. Onward!

Self Portrait on a Horse, c. 1890.
Oil on canvas, 73.7 x 48.3 cm.
Sid Richardson Museum,
Fort Worth, Texas.

The Frontier and the Range

by Emerson Hough

The frontier! There is no word in the English language more stirring, more intimate, or more beloved. It has in it all the élan of the old French phrase, *En avant!* Forward! It means all that America ever meant. It means the old hope of a real personal liberty, and yet a real human advance in character and achievement. To a genuine American it is the dearest word in all the world.

What is, or was, the frontier? Where was it? Under what stars did it lie? The tales of the American frontier have begun to assume a haziness, an unreality, which makes them seem less history than folklore. Now the truth is that the American frontier of history has many a local habitation and many a name. And this is why it lies somewhat indefinite under the blue haze of the years, all the more alluring for its lack of definition, like some old mountain range, the softer and more beautiful for its own shadows.

The fascination of the frontier is and has ever been an undying thing. Adventure is the meat of the strong men who have built the world for those more timid. Adventure and the frontier are inseparable terms. They suggest strength, courage, hardihood — qualities beloved in men since the world began — qualities which some might say are the very soul of the United States, itself an experiment, an adventure, a risk accepted. Take away all history of political regimes, the story of the rise and fall of this or that partisan aggregation in the government; take away the somewhat inglorious military past; but leave forever the tradition of the American frontier! There lies an American comfort and pride, for the frontier symbolises the melting-pot of character that defines the nation.

The frontier was the place and the time of the strong man, of the self-sufficient but restless individual. It was the home of the rebel, the protester, the unreconciled, the intolerant, the ardent, and the resolute. It was not the conservative and tender man who made history; it was the man sometimes illiterate, oftentimes uncultured, the man of coarse garb and rude weapons. The frontiersmen were the true dreamers of the nation. They really were the possessors of a national vision. Not statesmen but riflemen and riders made America. The noblest conclusions of American history still rest upon premises which they laid.

But, in its broadest significance, the frontier knows no country. It lies also in other lands and in other times. When and what was the Great Frontier? One need go back only to the time of Drake and the sea-dogs, the Elizabethan Age, when all North America was a frontier, almost wholly unknown, compellingly alluring to all bold men. That was the day of new stirrings in the human heart. Some strange impulse seemed to act upon the soul of the braver and bolder Europeans, and they moved westward. They lived largely and blithely, and died handsomely, those old Elizabethan adventurers, and they lie today in thousands of unrecorded graves upon two

The Lookout, 1887.
Oil on canvas, 66 x 55.9 cm.
The Hogg Brothers Collection,
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas.

continents, each having found out that any place is good enough for a man to die upon, provided that he be a man.

The frontier crawled west from the first seaport settlements, afoot, on horseback, in barges, or with slow wagon-trains. It crawled across the Alleghenies, down the great river valleys and up them yet again; and at last, in days of new transportation, it leaped across divides, from one river valley to another. Its history, at first so halting, came to be very swift — so swift that it worked great elisions in its own story.

Today, however, the Old West generally means the old cow country of the West — the high plains and the lower foothills running from the Rio Grande to the northern boundary. The still more ancient cattle-range of the lower Pacific Slope will never come into acceptance as the Old West. Always, the words "Old West" evoke images of buffalo plains and cattle-drives, of cowboys and Indians.

The American cow country may with very good logic give itself the title of the only real and typical frontier of all the world. Many call the spirit of the frontier Elizabethan, and so it was; but even as the Elizabethan Age was marked by its contact with the Spanish civilisation in Europe, on the high seas, and in both the Americas, so the last frontier of the American West also was largely and deeply affected by Spanish influence and Spanish customs. The very phraseology of range work bears proof of this. Scores of Spanish words are written indelibly in the language of the plains. The frontier of the cow-range never was Saxon alone.

It is a curious fact also that this Old West of the plains was very largely Southern and not Northern on its Saxon side. No States so much as Kentucky and Tennessee and, later, Missouri — daughters of Old Virginia in her glory — contributed to the forces of the frontiersmen. Texas, farther to the south, put her stamp indelibly upon the entire cattle industry of the West. Visionary, impractical, restless, adventurous, these later heroes — bowing to no yoke, insisting on their own rights and scorning often the laws of others, yet careful to retain the best and most advantageous customs of any conquered country — naturally came from those nearest Elizabethan countries which lay abandoned behind them.

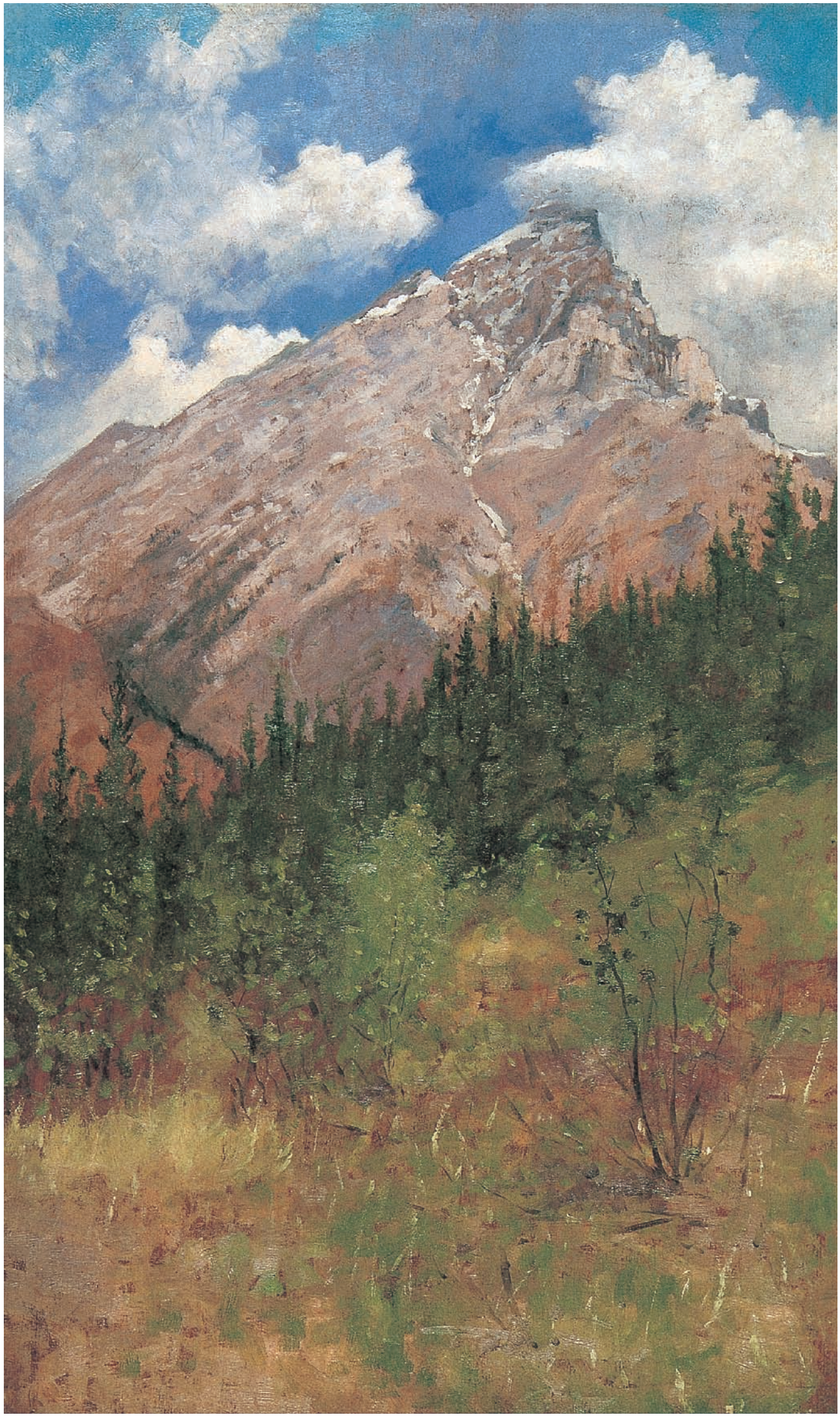
If the atmosphere of the Elizabethan Age still may be found, let us look to the roistering heroes of a gallant day; for this was ever the atmosphere of the American frontier. To feel again the following breezes of the adventuring ships, or see again, floating high in the cloudless skies, the sails of the Great Armada, was the privilege of Americans for a double decade, in that country, so unfailingly beloved, which is called the Old West of America.

The Range

In 1803, when those two immortal youths, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, were about to go forth on their great journey across the continent, they were admonished by Thomas Jefferson that they would likely encounter in their travels, living and stalking about, the mammoth or the mastodon, whose bones had been

An Old-Time Plains Fight, c. 1904.
Oil on canvas, 68.6 x 101.6 cm.
The Frederic Remington Art Museum, Ogdensburg, New York.

Ghosts of the Past, c. 1909.
Oil on canvas, 30.5 x 40.6 cm.
Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, Wyoming.



found in the great salt-licks of Kentucky. We smile now at such a supposition; yet it was not unreasonable then. No man knew what inhabited that tremendous country that lay beyond the mouth of the Missouri.

The value of this land was little understood by the explorers; and, for more than half a century afterwards, it commonly was supposed to be useless for the occupation of white men and suitable only as a hunting-ground for savage tribes. The school maps of the age showed only a vast region marked, vaguely, "The Great American Desert," which was considered hopeless for any human industry, but much of which has since proved as rich as any land anywhere on the globe.

Perhaps it was the treeless nature of the vast plains which carried the first idea of their infertility. When the first settlers of Illinois and Indiana came up from south of the Ohio River they had their choice of timber and prairie lands. Thinking the prairies worthless — since land which could not raise a tree certainly could not raise crops — these first occupants of the Middle West spent a generation or more, axe in hand, along the heavily timbered river-bottoms. The prairies were long in settling. No one then could have predicted that farm lands in that region would be worth $150,000 an acre or better, and that these prairies of the Mississippi Valley would, in a few generations, be studded with great towns and would form a part of the granary of the world.

The early explorers, passing beyond the valley of the Missouri, found valueless the region of the plains and the foothills, but the native animals and indigenous peoples who lived there found great value in its resources. The buffalo then ranged from the Rio Grande to the Athabasca, from the Missouri to the Rockies, and beyond. No one seems to have concluded in those days that there was after all slight difference between the buffalo and the domestic ox. The native cattle, however, in untold thousands and millions, had even then proved the sustaining and strengthening nature of the grasses of the plains.

Now, each creature, even of human species, must adjust itself to its environment. Having done so, it is more disposed to love that environment. Every individual thinks that he has the best land in the world: so it was with the American Indian who, supported by the vast herds of buffalo, ranged all over that tremendous country which was later to be taken over by the white man with his domestic cattle. No freer life ever was lived by any indigenous peoples than by the Horse Indians of the plains in the buffalo days; and never has the world known a physically higher group of men.

On the buffalo-range — that is to say, on the cattle-range which was to be, Lewis and Clark met several bands of the Sioux — the Mandans and the Assiniboines, the Blackfeet, and the Shoshones. Farther south were the Pawnees, the Kaws, the Otoes, and the Osages, most of whom depended in part upon the buffalo for their living, though the Otoes, the Pawnees, the Mandans, and certain others now and then raised a little corn or a few squashes to supplement their bill of fare. Still farther south dwelt the Kiowas, the Comanches, and others. The Arapahoes, the Cheyennes, the Crows, and the Utes, all hunters, were soon to come into the

Banff, Cascade Mountain, c. 1890.
Oil on academy board, 76.2 x 45.7 cm.
The Frederic Remington Art Museum, Ogdensburg, New York.

awareness of the white man. The youthful captains took account of such of these tribes as they met, gravely and with extraordinary accuracy, but without discovering in this region much future for Americans. After all, they were explorers and not industrial investigators.

It was nearly half a century after the journey of Lewis and Clark that the Forty-Niners were crossing the plains. Still the wealth of the plains remained untouched. California was in the eyes of the world. The great cow-range was overleaped. But when the placer fields of California began to be less numerous and less rich, the half-savage population of the mines roared on northward, even across the northern border. Soon it was to roll back. Next it worked east and southeast and northeast over the great dry plains of Washington and Oregon, so that, as readily may be seen, the cow-range proper was not settled as most of the West was, by a directly westbound thrust of an eastern population; but, on the contrary, it was approached from several different angles — from the north, from the east, from the west and northwest, and finally from the south.

Hauling the Gill Net, 1905-1906.
Oil on canvas, 51.4 x 66 cm.
The Frederic Remington Art Museum, Ogdensburg, New York.

The early, turbulent population of miners and adventurers was crude, lawless, and aggressive. It cared nothing whatsoever for the native tribes. War, instant and merciless, where it meant murder for the most part, was set on foot as soon as white touched red in that far western region.

All these men who had crowded into the unknown country of the plains, the Rockies, the Sierras, and the Cascades, had to be fed. They were not content with the means by which the natives there had always fed themselves. Hence a new industry sprang up in the United States, which made certain history in that land. The business of freighting supplies to the West, whether by bull-train or by pack-train, was an industry *sui generis*, very highly specialised, and pursued by men of great business ability as well as by men of great hardihood and daring. Each of these freight trains which went West carried more and more of the white men. As the trains returned, more was learned in the States of the new country which lay between the Missouri and the Rockies, which ran no man knew how far north, and no man could guess how far south. Later came the pony express and the stage

River Drivers in the Spring Break Up, 1905-1906.
Oil on canvas, 68.6 x 101.6 cm.
The Frederic Remington Art Museum, Ogdensburg, New York.

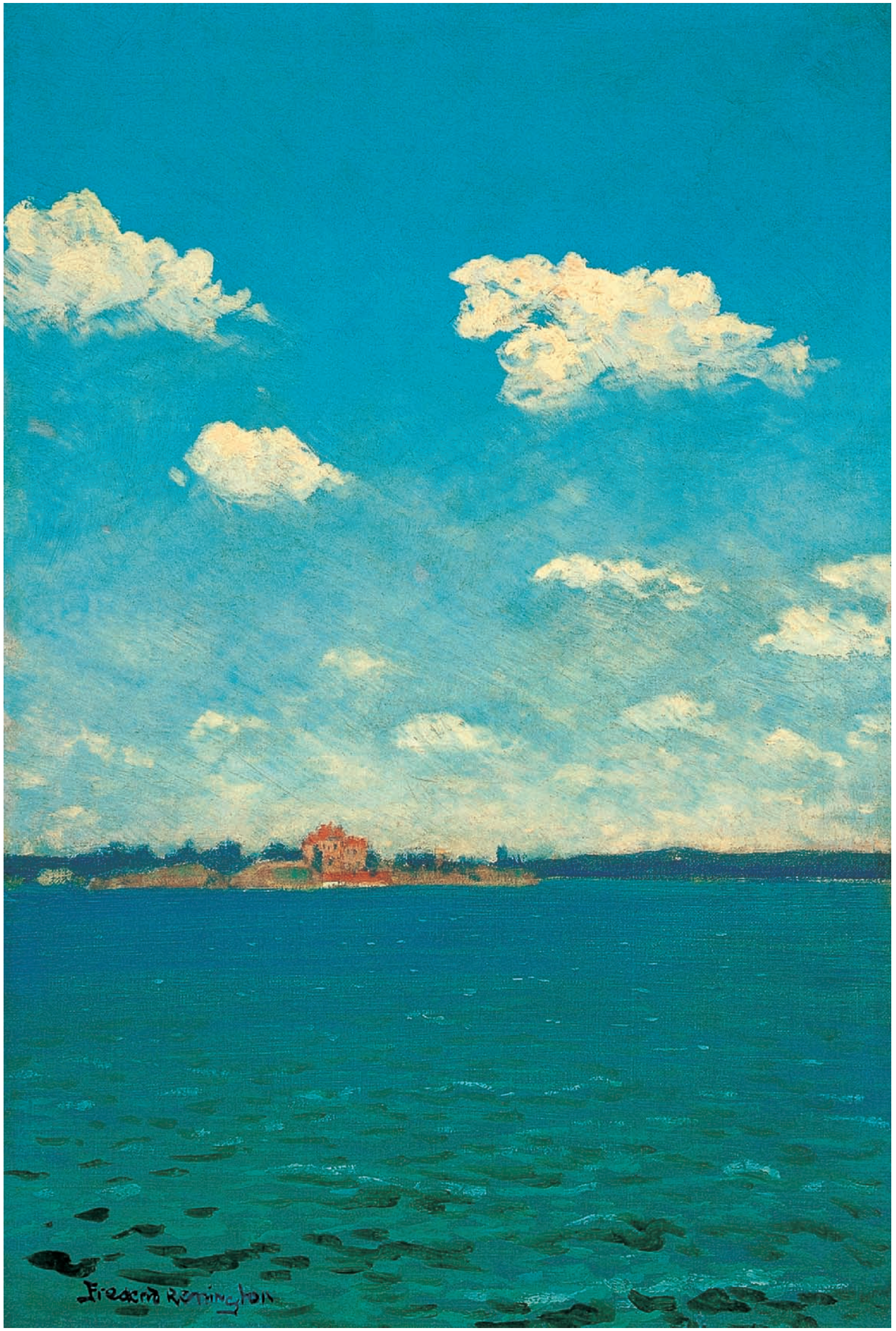
coach which made their marks on history and romance for a generation. Feverishly, boisterously, a strong, rugged, womanless population crowded westward and formed the wavering, now advancing, now receding line of the great frontier of American story.

But for long there was no sign of permanent settlement on the plains, and no one thought of this region as the frontier. The men there who were prospecting and exploiting were classified as no more than adventurers. The day of the cowboy had not yet dawned. There is a somewhat feeble story which runs to the effect that in 1866 one of the great wagon-trains, caught by the early snows of winter, was obliged to abandon its oxen on the range. It was supposed that, of course, the oxen would perish during the winter. But next spring the owners were surprised to find that the oxen, far from perishing, had flourished very much — indeed, were fat and in good condition. So runs the story which is often repeated. It may be true, but to accredit to this incident the beginnings of the cattle industry in the Indian country would surely be going too far. The truth is that the cow industry was not a European discovery. It was a Latin enterprise, flourishing in Mexico long before the first of these miners and adventurers came on the range.

What was known of the Spanish lands to the south was mostly due to the commerce of the prairies — the old wagon trade from the Missouri River to the Spanish cities of Sante Fe and Chihuahua. Now the cow business, south of the Rio Grande, was already well differentiated and developed at the time the first adventurers from the United States went into Texas and began to crowd their Latin neighbours for more room. There it was that the frontiersmen first discovered the cattle industry. But these southern and northern riflemen — ruthless and savage, yet strangely statesmanlike — troubled little about the herds themselves. There was a certain fascination to these strangers in the slow and easeful civilisation of Old Spain which they encountered in the land below them. Little by little, and then largely and yet more largely, the warriors of San Jacinto reached out and began to claim lands for themselves — leagues and leagues of land which had no market value. Well within the memory of the present generation large tracts of good land were bought in Texas for six cents an acre; some was bought for half that price in a time not much earlier. Today much of that land is producing wealth; but land then was worthless — as were cows.

This civilisation of the Southwest, of the new Republic of Texas, may be regarded as the first enduring American result of contact with the Spanish industry. The men who won Texas came mostly from Kentucky and Tennessee or southern Ohio, and the first colonizer of Texas was a Virginian, Stephen Fuller Austin. They came along the old Natchez Trace from Nashville to the Mississippi River — that highway which has so much history of its own. Down this old winding trail into the greatest valley of all the world, and beyond that valley out into the Spanish country, moved steadily the adventurers whose fathers had but recently crossed the Appalachians. One of the strongest thrusts of the American civilisation thus entered the cattle-range at its lower end, between the Rio Grande and the Red River.

Untitled (Dark Island Castle, St. Lawrence River), c. 1907.
Oil on board, 45.7 x 30.5 cm.
Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, Wyoming.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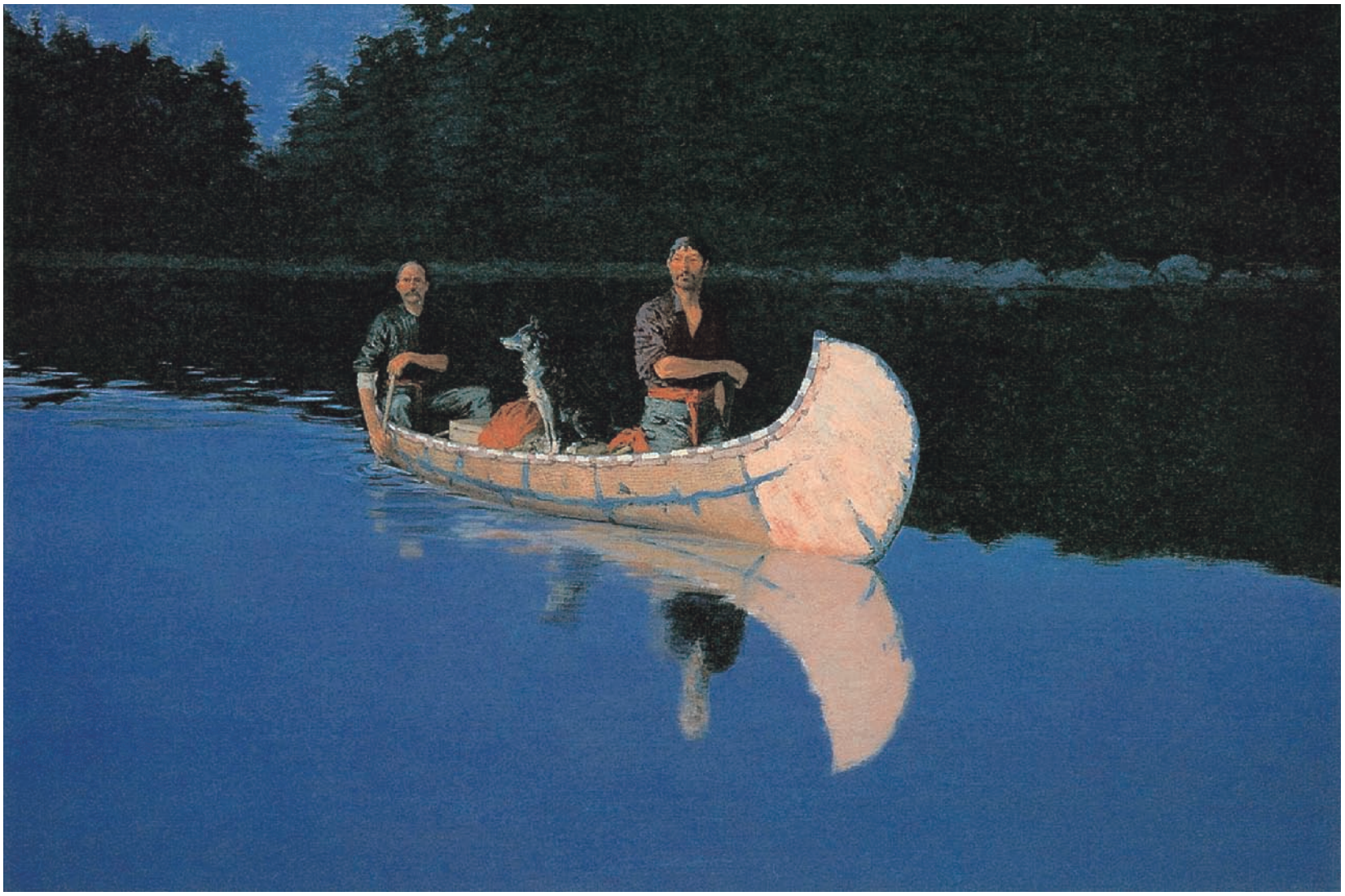


Evening on a Canadian Lake, 1905.
Oil on canvas, 69.2 x 101.6 cm.
Private collection.

In all the several activities, mining, freighting, scouting, soldiering, riding pony express, or even sheer adventuring for what might come, there was ever a trading back and forth between home-staying men and adventuring men. Thus there was an exchange of knowledge and customs between East and West, between the old country and the new.

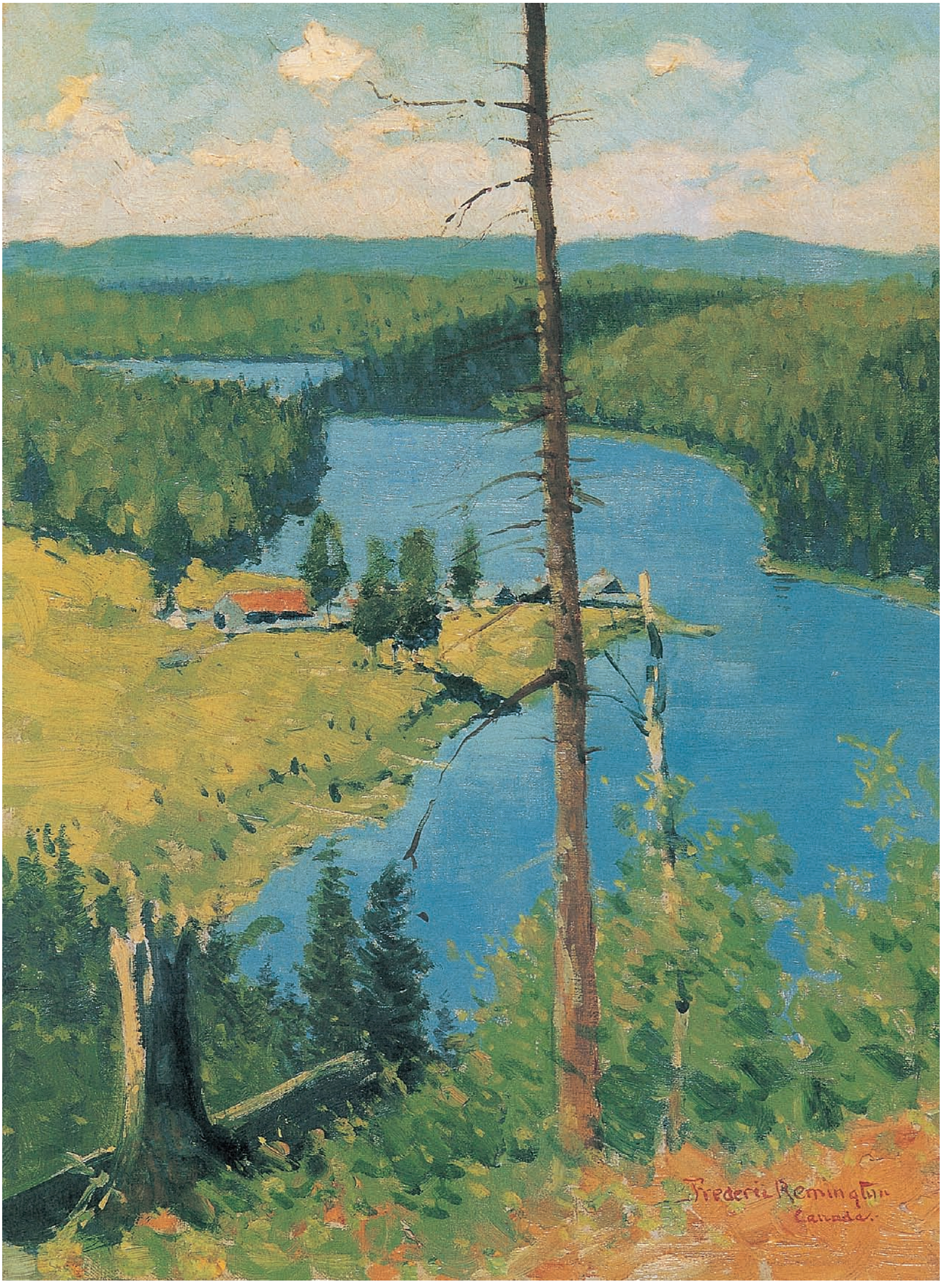
In the original cow country, in Mexico and Texas, countless herds of cattle were held in a loose sort of ownership over wide and unknown plains. Like all wild animals in that warm country, they bred in extraordinary numbers. The southern range, indeed, has always been called the breeding range. At this time, the cattle had little value. He who wanted beef killed beef; he who wanted leather killed cattle for their hides. But beyond these scant and infrequent uses cattle had no definite value.

This was loose-footed property. It might stray away after all, or it might be driven away. Hence, in some forgotten time, the Spaniard invented a system of proof of ownership which has always lain at the very bottom of the organised cow industry; he invented the method of branding. This meant his sign, his name, his trade-mark, his proof of ownership. The animal could not shake it off. It would not burn off in the sun or wash off in the rain. It went with the animal and could not be eradicated from the animal's hide. Wherever the bearer was seen, the brand upon its hide provided certain identification of the owner.

Now, all these basic ideas of the cow industry were old on the lower range in Texas when the white men first drifted there. The cattle industry, although in its infancy, and although supposed to have no great future, was developed long before Texas became a republic. It never, indeed, changed very much from that time until the end of its own career.

One great principle was accepted religiously even in those early and crude days. A man's cow was *his* cow. A man's brand was *his* brand. There must be no interference with his ownership. Hence certain other phases of the industry followed inevitably. These cattle, each branded by the iron of the owner, in spite of all precautions, began to mingle as settlers became more numerous; hence came the idea of the round-up. The country was warm and lazy; if a hundred or a thousand cows were not collected, very well. If a calf were separated from its mother, very well. The old ranchers never quarrelled among themselves. They never would have made in the South anything like a cattle association; it was left for the Yankees to do that at a time when cows had come to have far greater value. There were few arguments in the first rodeos of the lower range. Haggling would have been held contemptible. On the lower range in the old times no one cared much about a cow. Why should one do so? There was no market for cows, and no one who wished to buy them. If one tendered a Mexican five pesos for a yearling or a two-year-old, the owner might

The Great Explorers IV — Radisson, 1905.
Oil on canvas, 43.2 x 75.6 cm.
Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, Wyoming.


Frederic Remington
Canada.

perhaps offer the animal as a gift, or he might smile and say "Con mucho gusto" as he was handed a few pieces of silver. There were plenty of cows everywhere in the world!

Let us, therefore, give the old Spaniard full credit in picturesque romance and in the organised industry of the cow. The westbound thrust which came upon the upper part of the range in the days of more shrewd and exacting business methods was simply the best-known and most published phase of frontier life in the cow country, so it has been accepted as typical. In practicality, all of the great phenomena the frontier of the old cow-range was southern by birth and growth.

There lay, then, so long unused, that vast and splendid land so soon to write a romantic history of its own, so soon to come into the admiration or the wonder of a great portion of the earth — a land of fascinating interest to the youth of every country, and a region whose story holds a charm for young and old alike even today. It was a region royal in its dimensions. Far on the west it was hedged by the gray-sided and white-topped mountains, the Rockies. Where the buffalo once lived, the cattle were to live, high up in the foothills of this great mountain range which ran from the Rio Grande to Canada. On the east, where lay the Prairies rather than the plains, it was a country waving with high native grasses, with many brilliant flowers hiding among them, the sweet-William, the wild rose, and often great masses of the yellow sunflower.

From the Rio Grande to the Athabasca, for the greater part, the frontier sky was blue and cloudless during most of the year. The rainfall was not great. The atmosphere was dry. It was a cheerful country, one of optimism and not of gloom. In the extreme south, along the Rio Grande, the climate was moister, warmer, more enervating; but on the high steppes of the middle range in Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, western Nebraska, there lay the finest out-of-doors country — man's country.

But for the time, busy with more accustomed things — mining, freighting, fighting, hunting, trading and trapping — Americans who had arrived upon the range cared little for cows. The upper thrust of the great herds from the south into the north had not begun. It was after the Civil War that the first great drives of cattle from the south toward the north began, and that men in Texas learned that cattle moved from the Rio Grande to the upper portions of the State and fed on the mesquite grass would attain greater stature than in the hot coast country. Then swiftly, somewhat luridly, there leapt into our comprehension and our interest that strange country long loosely held under our flag, the region of the plains, the region which we now call the Old West.

In great bands, in long lines, slowly, towheaded, sore-footed, the vast gatherings of the prolific lower range moved north, each cow with its title indelibly marked upon its hide. These cattle were now going to take the place of those on which the Indians had depended for their living these many years. A new day in American history had dawned.

The Moose Country, 1909.
Oil on board, 47.9 x 38.1 cm.
The Frederic Remington Art Museum, Ogdensburg, New York.

Cattle and Cowboys

by Emerson Hough and Frederic Remington

Cattle Country by Emerson Hough

The customary method of studying history by means of a series of events and dates is not the method which we have chosen to employ in this study of the Old West. Dates are at best no more than milestones on the pathway of time, and in the present instance it is not the milestones but the road itself with which we are concerned. Where does the road begin? Why does it come this way? Where does it lead? These are the real questions.

Under all the exuberance of the life of the range there lay a steady business of tremendous size and enormous values. The "uproarious iniquity" of the West, its picturesqueness, its vividness — these were but froth on the stream. The stream itself was a steady and sombre flood. Beyond this picturesque environment very few have cared to go, and therefore sometimes have had little realisation of the vastness of the cowboy's kingdom, the scale of his interests, or the strength, resolve, and skill needed to carry out his daily life. The American cowboy is the most modern representative of a human industry that is second to very few in antiquity.

If we are to seek the actual truth, we ought most to value contemporary records, representations made by men who were themselves a part of the scenes which they describe. We must go beyond the stereotypes of the "Wild West" in order to gain a just and lasting estimate of the times. We ought to look on the old range neither as a playground of idle men nor as a scene of hysterical and contorted human activities. We ought to look upon it from the point of view of its uses to mankind. The explorers found it a wilderness, the home of the Native American and the buffalo. What were the underlying causes of its settlement and development?

There is in history no agency so wondrous in events, no working instrumentality so great as transportation. The great seeking of all human life is to find its level. Perhaps the first men travelled by hollowed logs down stream; then possibly the idea of a sail was conceived. Early in the story of the United States men made commercial journeys from the head of the Ohio to the mouth of the Mississippi by flatboats, and came back by keelboats. The pole, the cordelle, the paddle, and the sail helped them to navigate the great streams which led out into the West. And presently there was to come that tremendous upheaval wrought by the advent of the iron trails which, scorning waterways and mountain ranges alike, flung themselves almost directly westward across the continent.

The iron trails, crossing the northern range soon after the Civil War, brought a market to the cattle country. Inevitably the men of the lower range would seek to reach the railroads with what they had to sell — their greatest natural product, cattle on the hoof. This was the primary cause of the great northbound drives already mentioned, the greatest pastoral phenomena in the story of the world.

Texas Cowboy, c. 1890.
Oil on canvas, 50.8 x 61 cm.
Private collection.

Trailing Texas Cattle, c. 1904.
Oil on canvas, 77.5 x 130.8 cm.
Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, Wyoming.

Untitled — Early Autumn, c. 1907-1908.
Oil on canvas, 66 x 45.7 cm.
Gilcrease Museum, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

The southern herds at that time had no market at their doors. They had to go to the market, and they had to go on foot. That meant that they must be driven northward by cattle handlers who had passed their days in the wild life of the lower range. These cowmen of course took their character and their customs northward with them, and so they were discovered by those enthusiastic observers, newly arrived by rail, whom the cowmen were wont to call "pilgrims."

Now the trail of the great cattle drives — the Long Trail — was a thing of tremendous importance of itself and it is still full of interest. The braiding of a hundred minor pathways, the Long Trail lay like a vast rope connecting the cattle country of the South with that of the North. Lying loose or coiling, it ran for more than two thousand miles along the eastern edge of the Rocky Mountains, sometimes close in at their feet, again hundreds of miles away across the hard tablelands or the well-flowered prairies. It traversed in a fair line the vast land of Texas, curled over the Indian Nations, over Kansas, Colorado, Nebraska, Wyoming, and Montana, and bent in wide overlapping circles as far west as Utah and Nevada; as far east as Missouri, Iowa, even Illinois; and as far north as the British possessions. History has no other like it.

The Long Trail began to deepen and extend. Soon, the flocks of strong men, carelessly interlapping, increased and multiplied amazingly. They were hardly looked upon as wealth, because the people could not eat a tithe of the beef; they could not