

Walter Haskell Hinton
Illustrator of the Popular
American West

Walter Haskell Hinton

**Walter Haskell Hinton:
Illustrator of the Popular American West**

Catalogue of 2010 Exhibition titled *Walter Haskell Hinton: The Golden Age of Illustration* organized by the Ewing Gallery of Art, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville ©2010 Ewing Gallery of Art, exclusive of the essay "Walter Haskell Hinton: Illustrator of the Popular American West." © Jaleen Grove all rights reserved.

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Front and Back Cover: *Pioneers traveling by covered wagon
pulled by an ox team.*
Oil on canvas, date unknown.

Hinton's appreciation of the artist Frederic Remington is expressed in the impressionistic dust and the naturalistic rendering of the straining animals and teamster. This is one of only a few paintings Hinton kept for himself; it is unknown whether it was made for reproduction. Collection of the Hinton family.

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by Jaleen Grove

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*Portrait of
Walter Haskell Hinton at Easel*



Introductions and Acknowledgements

Eighteen years ago a retired Knoxville, Tennessee engineer introduced me to the art of Walter Haskell Hinton. Ervin Newman had developed a passion for the artist's work following a visit to his son's office at Fairmont Railway Motors in Minnesota. Robert Newman, the company's new president, had discovered paintings by Hinton in storage and wished to share them with his father. Commissioned in the 1940s by Fairmont Railway Motors, predecessor of Harsco Rail and a division of Harsco Corporation, the paintings were from a series titled *The History of Transportation*. Ervin Newman's enthusiasm for this work led him to research the artist's life and to locating Hinton's only child Walter Raymond Hinton, who was living in Florida. With assistance by Ray, as he was known, and Ray's wife Susanne, Newman continued to identify and contact some of the artist's other major clients such as Deere & Company and Washington National Insurance Company. Much of the preliminary planning necessary to undertake an extensive exhibition project had already been done by Newman before he contacted me. At that first meeting I was shown examples of WH Hinton's art and Newman shared his vision of an exhibition that would bring much of the artist's work, which spanned over six decades, together for the first time. He believed that Hinton's art would be of great interest and value to students and faculty as well as to visitors from the greater Knoxville community. If I concurred with his assessment of this artist's work and agreed that a retrospective exhibition would be of educational significance for our program, then he would consult and assist in any way necessary to ensure its success.

Once I had agreed that the Ewing Gallery would pursue this exhibition project, the first step was to contact Hinton's former clients and his son Ray. When told that he and Susanne had kept countless drawings, paintings, and other materials of his late father for many years - even as they had moved from one home to another and from Massachusetts to Florida - I knew immediately that there would be enough material to mount an important and thorough exhibition. With the support and endorsement of Ray and Susanne Hinton, Harsco Corporation and others, The Ewing Gallery organized the first retrospective exhibition of Walter Haskell Hinton. After its 1993 display in Knoxville, the exhibition travelled to Camp Hill, Pennsylvania where it was on view at Harsco Corporate Headquarters.

Since then, the Ewing Gallery has acquired Hinton pieces for its permanent collection including gifts from Washington National Insurance Company and Ray and Susanne Hinton.

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Ray Hinton died in 2006. His son Walter and daughter Elliott contacted the Ewing Gallery regarding the family's collection. From these discussions, a second exhibition celebrating the artistic genius of their grandfather was born. A member of Elliott's family, Jaleen Grove, an artist and art historian specializing in illustration history, was invited to write an essay for the proposed exhibition catalogue. After a meeting at Walter's home to review materials for the project, Jaleen began her extensive research on the life and work of Walter Haskell Hinton. Her essay on the artist forms the bulk of this catalogue.

A project of this depth could not have been accomplished without the contributions of many individuals. Walter Hinton and Elliott Willis endorsed this exhibition project from the very beginning and Jaleen Grove has guided its development. I recognize Lucas Charles, member of the Department of Art faculty at the University of Memphis, for the design of this catalogue and Mike Berry, Manager of the UT Downtown Gallery, for exhibition preparation and installation. Finally, I thank everyone who has lent works to the exhibition and everyone who has provided financial support. These benefactors are listed on the preceding page.

Sam Yates

Director and Curator

The Ewing Gallery of Art and The UT Downtown Gallery



Figure 1 *The Water Hole*, 1959

Notebook belonging to Mark Largy.

Image: Mark Largy. This picture was also issued in reverse.

Finding Walter Haskell Hinton

1. W. Raymond Hinton, video commentary, Ewing Gallery, 1993.

2. Mr. B and his family requested anonymity.

3. Jim Steranko, "The Lure of the Pulp: An Artist's Perspective," *Pulp Art*, ed. Robert Lesser (NY: Gramercy Books, 1997), 56. Steranko estimates less than two percent of original pulp cover art still exists.

4. Hinton, interviewed by Ferrell E. White and Roland Wade, "Interview Of Walter Haskell Hinton," Public Relations Department of the Washington National Insurance Company (March 12, 1976, Glen Ellyn, Illinois); hereafter, "Washington interview." WNI published a booklet and a pamphlet based on the interview, but they made some errors in it. Also, a transcript made by WNI staff fails to record some of the tape due to the limitations of the technology then. All information appearing here has been derived by Jaleen Grove directly from audio copies of the original tape in the collections of Ewing Gallery and Mr. B. In these tapes Hinton mentions having given away many works to friends, and offers some to White and Wade, who accept.

When Walter Haskell Hinton was asked by his son Ray why he had never had any art shows, Hinton replied with a wink, "I like to know my painting is sold before I do the work."¹ Accordingly, the first exhibition of Walter Haskell Hinton's paintings did not come until 1993, over a dozen years after his death. It covered everything from his advertising art, to pulp Westerns, to calendar art, to landscapes and portraits. The story of how Hinton came to light in the late 1980s after being mostly forgotten is typical of many rediscovered illustrators: someone happened upon about 25 paintings from the 1940s lying neglected in a dusty storeroom. This was a CEO at Fairmont Railway Motors named Robert Newman, and his interest led to that first show. With assistance from Newman's father Ervin, the Director of the University of Tennessee's Ewing Gallery Sam Yates curated the exhibition. The current presentation of Hinton's work is a more intimate follow-up to that retrospective, and offers a more focused study of Hinton's western and outdoor-themed work. It includes some significant original paintings of Native Americans made in 1947-48 for *Mammoth Western* magazine, from the private collection of Mr. B, who befriended Hinton in the 1970s.² They have never been publicly shown before now.

Exhibitions of commercial illustration in academic galleries normally devoted to fine art were exceedingly rare in 1993 and remain unusual in 2010, although that is rapidly changing as the field of art history widens to accept all the facets of popular and visual culture. Because illustration was not valued as "art," comparatively few original illustrations have survived. Even publishers and illustrators themselves routinely disposed of them.³ By his death, Hinton had few originals in his house, having given away almost all the preliminary and finished works he had retained (these were few, as most finished pieces remained with his clients). He felt that since they had served their purpose – they had been sold and published – they had little value.⁴ That the retrospective and current exhibitions have been mounted is a testament to the independent spirit of the Ewing Gallery and friends of Walter Haskell Hinton who have lovingly preserved the items they collected. Probably less than 15 percent of Hinton's original works exist now, and the collections of the Hinton family and Ewing Gallery are somewhat lacking in both personal papers and finished original works. But they are still important collections to study, since they at least include a wide range of printed samples, portfolios and photo albums, quite a few comprehensive sketches, and miscellaneous drawings. From these and from interviews made with the artist in the 1970s, and from some short but useful accounts published many years ago, we have a cross-section of Hinton's 94 years of life that reveals major

themes composing American visual culture after 1900. Hinton, who achieved respect in his field but not the stardom of his contemporaries Norman Rockwell, JC Leyendecker, or (to pick Hinton's own favorite) his predecessor Frederic Remington, is worth studying because his career in many respects is typical of the careers and impact of the hundreds of other illustrators whose legacies are less available.

Writing on Walter Haskell Hinton

As will be seen in this catalog, there are two contradictory positions taken regarding Western and outdoors artwork of Hinton's genre: some find that it performs valuable social services by uplifting individuals, uniting people, celebrating widely held American ideals and being inherently enjoyable. Others would argue that it performs a social disservice by omitting historical truth, abetting commercial exploitation, and propagandizing excessive patriotism. Which point of view an individual takes is influenced by life experience, training, and political orientation, and some may therefore dismiss the question of which viewpoint is correct as a matter of mere personal preference. However, in reality, the two views are both correct and co-exist: an image may contain both positive and negative potential, because how images make meaning is contingent upon the specific time and context in which they are seen. The prominent scholar of the West, Patricia Limerick, wrote that after attending a lavishly illustrated lecture by a fellow scholar in which he described the personal beliefs of Frederic Remington, she "wasn't sure if [she] should feel guilty over having developed a deepened appreciation of Remington's artistic gifts while also developing a deepened discomfort with his racism and elitism." She concluded that she could have both at the same time, that the paradoxes of Western art are what make it vital as both an object of study and a cultural phenomenon.⁵ Accordingly, this critical biography will place Hinton's work in multiple contexts in order to see not one but many ways it can signify for skeptics as well as fans.

To be taken seriously, Hinton's work must be treated seriously.⁶ To praise Hinton only for his meticulous and beautiful achievements could be mistaken for an insincere sales pitch, and would neglect the art historian's responsibility to enlighten and opportunity to explore issues that apply to the entire field of visual culture studies. The theories advanced by dislikers of illustration and Western imagery about how pictures may manipulate do merit attention. Although the owner of calendar art may think only of the peaceful, happy scene it displays, the advertiser who commissioned it is trying to turn these good feelings into sales. We are faced with the task of discriminating between our ideals versus behaviors we are encouraged to adopt every time those ideals are invoked in a commercially produced picture (an ad, a calendar issued by a corporation, a magazine, a gallery). Translating an intuitive emotional response into rational understanding can empower us to say *why* we like a particular piece or product, not simply that we do, and enable us to exercise control over how that image or product enters our lives. By improving our consciousness of how pictures work upon us we become more discriminating lovers of art, which strengthens our values. Whereas Walter Haskell Hinton's goal was to evoke national common values, this essay's goal is to understand exactly what those values were, how they were communicated, how they were adopted by commercial interests that at times work for and at other times against what Hinton personally stood for, and to what effect.

Professor of American Studies Charles F. McGovern finds that there have been two warring factions in America, each vying to define consumerism: advertisers and consumer advocates. Advertisers, where McGovern would pigeonhole Hinton, have been proponents of an unregulated "boundless market" while the consumer advocates, protesters against the rapacity of business, have countered with centrally controlled "collective civic responsibility."⁷ Although McGovern sees the two camps as diametrically opposed, the position of this critical biography is that Walter Haskell Hinton's commercial art partook of both,

5. Patricia Limerick, "Western American Art: Celebrating the Burden of Popularity," in *Redrawing Boundaries*, 12-13.

6. William H. Truettner makes a similar argument for applying contemporary art historical methods to Western art in "Old West Meets New Art History," *Redrawing Boundaries*, 28.

7. Charles F. McGovern, *Sold American: Consumption and Citizenship, 1890-1945*. (University of North Carolina, 2006), 20.

and in fact is an expression of attempts to reconcile the two sides – sides that may also be interpreted as the rights of the individual versus the health of the social whole, or, the Republican versus the Democrat.

Accordingly, this essay will downplay the critical readings that emerge readily from theoretical literature and could easily be applied template-like to Hinton's work. Without neglecting them, we will also explore the experience and lived practices of Hinton's consumers and of the artist himself in terms of *sensibilities*, using their own words where possible, in order to expose the complexities of living within the period of late capitalism and the contradictions of the checks, balances, compromises and counter-readings that reside in printed illustrations. It is hoped this catalog will open up other approaches to Hinton's work, including those in post-colonialism, gender, kitsch, and media ecology.

Finally, this catalog aims to bring Hinton to diverse audiences, both popular and academic, and will attempt to bridge the gap between the two. For this reason, it will adopt an intermediate vocabulary. The format of a critical biography where the life story is interspersed with formal analyses was chosen in order to provide an element of entertaining variety and narrative cohesion to what might otherwise be a boring slog to non-art historians. This effort is intended to allow art and culture experts and non-specialists to meet on equal terms, and to open up new avenues of thought about the importance of popular illustration not just for society in general but for how individuals use it and what it means to them.

The Popular Reception of Walter Haskell Hinton

The most striking discovery throughout the preparation of this catalog has been the expression of love for Hinton himself and for his archetypal images by those who knew him and those who came upon his pictures through happenstance. Mark Largy, a retired police officer, feels a deep bond with an image of a whitetail buck poised next to a pond with wood ducks (Figure 1). It adorned the cover of a Hilroy notebook given to him by his grandmother in 1959, and so it became a symbol of their close relationship. It also seems to have provided a much needed stabilizing force for a man whose career would have exposed him to the most difficult aspects of society daily. Mr. Largy writes:

I love it dearly for so many reasons. . . . I was always an admirer of Rockwell, Disney (yes Disney) and Mr. Hinton. Not so much for any similarity of style, but more so for their ability to stage their subject matter into a portrait that made life a bit more palatable to take.

I am not saying Mr. Hinton's work was "cutesy," "cartoonish" or "unrealistic." Quite the contrary.

I still find the eyes of the buck and the duck to be almost mesmerizing and intense, in contrast to the quiet beauty of the soft sunlight filtering down through the trees and little pond.

But this is the attraction and the appeal of this work. Not edgy or overly dramatic. Just a sense of the acute alertness of all the animals against the backdrop of a forest subtly softened and made less threatening, for the moment, by the shaft of sunlight.

When people ask why I like it so much my reply is, "It's a break from the slap the in face of real life. Don't over analyze it. Just look and enjoy!"⁸

8. Mark Largy, to Grove, email, July 19 and July 21, 2010.

9. Daniel Wickberg, "What Is the History of Sensibilities? On Cultural Histories, Old and New," *American Historical Review*, (June 2007), 661.

10. Rebecca Bedell, "The Revolutionary Art and Politics of Sentiment," paper delivered to the Association of Historians of American Art, St. Francis College, Brooklyn NY, Oct. 10, 2010.

Mr. Largy's non-analytical appreciation of the picture is in the manner of regarding art called *sensibility* that extends back at least 250 years.⁹ In this tradition, which originated as a gentlemanly virtue, the viewer's cultivated emotional response – such as love, horror, pity, joy, awe, and admiration of beauty – was an index to his or her refinement as moral person according to the values of his or her era. Art historian Rebecca Bedell argues that sentimental, patriotic art was key to the formation of nationalism among eighteenth-century publics during and following the War of Independence.¹⁰ At least one scholar has connected sensibility to the support of human rights in America, for sensibility is the

prerequisite of empathy.¹¹ Art, including the mass-produced chromolithographic prints that flooded the nineteenth century, was thought to be uplifting and democratic because it allowed people of all walks of life to develop sensibility.¹² Mr. Largy, is an inheritor of this sort of connoisseurship, a cultural folk practice that has been handed down to him, and one that perhaps allows him to self-express and to balance his life, and that acts as a foundation for his ethical response to the world.

Much of Hinton's work celebrates core traditional values of the United States of America:¹³ respect for nature, for family, for enterprise, for self-determination, and for nation-wide agreement on ideals and sense of purpose. In his calendar pictures, occasionally Hinton mantles the shoulders of a national hero such as Paul Revere with these values, but usually he bestows everyday folk with the responsibility of carrying values forward in the course of their regular lives: tired pioneers persevere through magnificent landscapes, hunters admire vigorous game getting away, a farm boy raises puppies and then must sell them, an Indian couple confronts a menacing bear. Average people doing normal or remarkable things, things that *stand* for (rather than the stiltedness of directly symbolizing) commonly held ambitions and ideals: this is what makes Hinton's work appealing. When one looks at a painting by Hinton, there is a sense of looking along with millions of other people at the same time, for the themes of nature's beauty, family ties, fortitude, self-expression, bravery, and so on that have been made familiar to all through generations of similar printed images. Hinton's work continued a traditional iconography of America's concept of its ideal self that originated long before his birth, a visual tradition that dozens of other illustrators also contributed to. His work was part of this greater "conversation" between images and people over time, a conversation held in a language readily understood by diverse communities across the country.

Was there actually a national agreement on America's self-conception? That is debatable, but it is possible to say that at least the images are legible in most communities throughout the nation; we know how we're supposed to take them. To achieve any complex objective, such as national cooperation, continuous desire and effort to do so are necessary. Made appealing and intelligible for the purpose of encouraging such desire, Hinton's images evoke generally accepted nationalist themes by imaginatively reiterating symbolically resonant scenes of laudatory humble and noble actions by typical people and animals. In looking at them, conscious of those millions of other eyes looking too, we are reminded of the responsibility to work toward the ideals expressed in them, in order for the nation to act as one community.

Today, Hinton's best known works are his calendar images made for both decorative and advertising purposes and also issued as art prints and jigsaw puzzles, especially those made for John Deere tractors. His most common imagery is of wild animals and fishermen in lush landscapes. Less well known today are his cowboy and Indian images, which he had enjoyed immensely since childhood and made for pulp magazines in the 1930s and 40s. In the 1950s, magazine illustration began fading from prominence as a communication medium, and Hinton naturally concentrated on the stronger print and calendar market, where his other love, wildlife, was the main subject. In retrospect, it is regrettable that Hinton did not turn to a gallery career of Western subjects as other contemporary illustrators did at that time, including John Clymer, Robert Loughheed, and Fred Harman. Hinton, who was especially masterful at rendering horses in complex action poses and at conveying the glory of the American landscape, had as much potential as any of them to achieve the renown that they each did. Although he did not become a gallery artist, Hinton nonetheless expressed his enthusiasm for Western themes in print.

The heroism of the Old West was the best genre available to Hinton for spinning nationally recognizable yarns. It was very popular and people were familiar with a range of stock characters – cowboys, Indians, sheriffs, pioneers, mountain men, outlaws – which made storytelling easy and fast. Hinton's genuine interests had led him to spend time on Mexican ranches and to read history

11. Elizabeth B. Clark, "'The Sacred Rights of the Weak': Pain, Sympathy, and the Culture of Individual Rights in Antebellum America," *Journal of American History*, Vol. 82, # 2 (1995), 463–493.

12. Peter C. Marzio, *Pictures for a Democratic America* (London: Scolar Press, 1980), 117.

13. And Canada: Mark Largy is Canadian, and his taste is common among Canadians, as the popularity of the more scientific wildlife artist Robert Bateman indicates. However, Hinton had in mind an American audience.

books voraciously, and so he was an authority on period details. Most importantly, the West had been a symbol of indigenous American national identity since Independence. As cowboys and pioneers were thought to have achieved economic and spiritual self-realization in a harsh land through hard work and godly order, so America as a whole was thought to embody the work ethic and moral integrity to become a model nation for the world, one that could demonstrate hitherto unheard of levels of equality, justice and prosperity.

It is a fine-sounding goal, and a flattering view of the people who settled the West. But in the first half of the twentieth century, wars, depression, continuing social disparity, urbanization, and especially, a populace increasingly dependent on purchasing food, shelter and goods rather than self-producing them led many to question how close the relationship actually was between the self-sufficient pioneer and the national identity. Some charged that, for all that such national symbols brought people together, they also obscured significant disparities and problems rather than addressing them. Were images like Hinton's actually dangerous?

The Critique of the West as National Symbol

Historian Frederick Jackson's Turner's famous 1893 "frontier thesis" (following the democratic political ideals laid out by founding fathers such as Thomas Jefferson) posited that America's moral and economic greatness was the result of settlement on an ever expanding frontier by yeoman farmers in a God-given land of plenty, of liberty, and of opportunity.¹⁴ This heroic vision had been promulgated by generations of romanticized print media already, and became the textbook version of American history for much of the following century as well. In a scrupulously researched book on the visual records of the Old West, Martha Sandweiss writes,

*Time and time again during the second half of the nineteenth century, popular publishers and government printers, travel writers and scientific chroniclers alike were faced with options that would allow them to select between photographically based sources and more imaginative drawings, between photomechanical reproductions and more free-form engraved and lithographic prints. More often than not, they chose the more inventive forms of illustrations. In doing so they betrayed their own values and their perception of what it was their readers really wanted; they chose to print the legend, not the fact.*¹⁵

14. FJ Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," delivered to the American Historical Association, Chicago World's Fair, 1893.

15. Martha A. Sandweiss, *Print the Legend: Photography and the American West* (Yale, 2002), 324.

16. Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Harvard University Press, 1950). Smith was a Berkeley literature professor and Mark Twain scholar who established the academic discipline known as American Studies.

17. Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, 1899.

18. Earl Pomeroy, "Toward a Reorientation of Western History: Continuity and Environment," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* (March 1955): 579-600.

The Turner-esque legend is the print media tradition that much of Hinton's work follows. But in 1950, on the heels of Hinton's peak as a Western artist, Henry Nash Smith's landmark critique titled *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* effectively debunked Turner's thesis.¹⁶ Under the impetus of Depression era realism followed by postwar self-examination, intellectuals like Smith had intensified a questioning of Americans' acceptance of commercial values and assumptions of cultural superiority that had already been exposed in Thorstein Veblen's critique of "conspicuous consumption" in 1899.¹⁷ Smith suggested that runaway consumption and profiteering were the direct result of the values and beliefs promoted by Turner, and that perpetuation of Turner's thesis in popular media (which turned it into a mythology) served to obscure unpalatable historical fact and lead present citizens toward a docile patriotism, laying them open to economic and political exploitation. Smith's work was followed in 1955 by Earl Pomeroy's even more influential essay "Toward A Reorientation of Western History," which argued that democracy had not sprung from American soil as Turner argued but rather was derived from European sources.¹⁸ Smith and Pomeroy inaugurated what since about 1970 has been termed the "New West" body of scholarship. This body is huge, and has done much to highlight the Western presence and deeds of Spanish-, Chinese-, and African-Americans; the decidedly unheroic activities on the part of the political and commercial interests who did the most to conquer the West; the actual humble lives of the so-called heroes such as Daniel Boone; the privations and suffering of the Native as well

as the supposedly blissful yeoman farmer; the contributions of women; and it also argues the absence of any actual “frontier.”¹⁹ The consequence of linking the myth of the West to nationalism and commercialism has been, argues American Studies professor Charles F. McGovern, to move the democratic public sphere from one of social process to one of consumer process, dulling the public’s wits along the way.²⁰ Other bodies of work have emerged that take similar issue with romanticization of farm and wilderness environments, Hinton’s other main subject areas.²¹

Meanwhile, art criticism has mostly concurred that the public were innocents (or ignoramuses, some implied) being duped by the proliferation of advertising, magazine, and calendar art. In the 1930s, commercial art was called “a degradation far more frightful than the prostitution or enslavement of the mere body” by one,²² and “kitsch . . . the epitome of all that is spurious in the life of our times” by another.²³ Some feared that art copied by machines was making art less special,²⁴ that handmade folk culture was being lost and citizens “mystified” (brainwashed),²⁵ that looking at pictures of life was usurping actual participation in life,²⁶ and that because of it all, Americans were out of touch with true ideals.²⁷ These theories of art continue to stigmatize the illustrator’s work even today.²⁸

Hinton’s Western and outdoor work would indeed be regarded, in the eyes of most academic scholars today, as dangerous.²⁹ Most of these authorities have not respected the tradition of sensibility, because they felt that individuals should not be left to “know what they liked.” Rather, art was to be judged by what experts thought to be objective criteria (like formalism), or deconstructed to reveal how such work embodies relations of power. But not entrusting the average person to decide for him or herself what to like compromises democracy. Hinton’s paintings continue to be fervently loved by their present owners, and known to avid collectors, while the art of the West has not only persisted in popular culture but has been gathered into specialized museums. This suggests that the cultivation of sensibility and social cohesion that his pictures were made for are still relevant. In fact, both Hinton’s defining of national symbols and scholars’ attempts to interpret and reinterpret such definitions are harbingers of and catalysts of social upheavals. Hinton’s illustrations deserve to be studied in all their complexity because a country that does not take stock of the full scope of its populace’s tastes (which relate to such struggles over symbolic definitions) cannot be said to know itself.

The Illustrator’s Job

Paying attention to what people liked in the mid-twentieth century as opposed to what they were told to appreciate by elites who championed modern art can give us insight into American culture in ways that modern art of the period, with its mandate to be aloof from the everyday, cannot. *What people like* is a deceptively straightforward sounding notion. Determining it ought to be as easy as asking, as easy as observing behavior. But if it were, advertisers, manufacturers, and politicians wouldn’t spend millions trying to find out and then frequently getting it wrong anyway.³⁰ Part of the difficulty is that “people” are so diverse. Another is that “liking” in this context is identified with “buying.” For the illustrator, what people like is not actually a stable, rocklike, golden entity, lying there to be discovered and mined. It is instead a fluctuating stream, responsive to the slightest disturbances and additives, even liable to change course without warning.

The job of the twentieth century illustrator was to be an expert in what people liked; his or her special task was to dip into that stream of tastes, taking measure of its flow and subtly altering it to bring the buyer’s and seller’s goals together. Marshall McLuhan famously noted that, “When faced with a totally new situation, we tend always to attach ourselves to the objects, to the flavor of the most recent past. We look at the present through a rear-view mirror. We march backwards into the future.”³¹ In the often unpredictable stream of tastes, the gold was the rocklike, stable symbols that remained largely unaffected by the shape-

19. See for instance PN Limerick, CA Milner II, CE Rankin (editors), *Trails: Toward a New Western History* (University Press of Kansas, 1991); Tracey Patton, “Let’s Go, Let’s Show, Let’s Rodeo: African American Involvement in Rodeo,” paper presented June 17, 2010 at VisCom 24, Portland Oregon, excerpted from forthcoming book.

20. Charles F. McGovern, *Sold American: Consumption and Citizenship, 1890-1945* (University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

21. For an overview, see Julia B. Corbett, *Communicating Nature: How We Create and Understand Environmental Messages* (Island Press, 2006).

22. RG Collingwood, *The Principles of Art* (Oxford, 1958 [1938]), 34.

23. Clement Greenberg, “Avant Garde and Kitsch,” *Partisan Review*, 1939 [accessible online].

24. Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” 1936 [accessible online].

25. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 1944, revised in 1947.

26. Lewis Mumford, “Standardization and Choice,” in *Art and Technics*, (Columbia, 1952), 96-110.

27. Daniel Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (Harper Colophon, 1961).

28. Similar proclamations are made by Robert Hughes in his 2008 television series *The Mona Lisa Curse*.

29. The academic reception of Western art has been taken up by Peter H. Hassrick, “Where’s the Art in Western Art?” in *Redrawing Boundaries: Perspectives on Western American Art* (Denver Art Museum, 2007), 9.

30. Matt Haig, *Brand Failures: The Truth about the 100 Biggest Branding Mistakes of All Time* (Kogan Page, 2005); Robert M. McMath, *What Were They Thinking? Marketing Lessons I’ve Learned from over 80,000 New-Product Innovations and Idiociers* (Crown Business, 1999).

31. Marshall McLuhan and Q. Fiore, with J. Agel, *The Medium is the Message: An Inventory of Effects* (New York: Random House, 1967), 74.

shifting course of fads and fashions. These included the enduringly popular motifs of the past familiar to all, even new immigrants: the rugged outdoorsman, the (sub)urban salary man, the heroic cowboy, the pretty girl, the tough pioneer, the noble Indian. Yet they were only raw material. The illustrator still had to take this ore and mold it into forms that the current audience could relate to, for repeating purely traditional forms would only result in products that looked boring, old fashioned, and irrelevant. This required a delicate balance between respecting familiar patterns and laying on the novel and modern. The skilled illustrator could perpetuate old ideas by carefully renewing and revitalizing them with modern trappings, and in the process harness what was most ideologically useful in both traditional and new values. This formula was one of the surest sales techniques for new products, akin to what another man of Hinton's generation, Raymond Loewy (1893-1986), dubbed the "MAYA" principle: Most Advanced Yet Acceptable [to consumers]. (Loewy was designer of the modern telephone and Concorde jet, among other things).

What people liked was a twist on old favorites, and thinking up twists was Hinton's strength. Because the definitions of *people* and *liking* were contained by the need to market, Hinton's output was necessarily circumscribed to nurture and meet the dominant culture of the mainstream marketplace, that of middle class Anglo-America. But within these limits, he was innovative and effective, even subversive at times. Culture and art critics assumed that the commissioned illustrator was a soulless agent, powerless to do aught but express the views of his patrons.³² Hinton's grandson challenges this view:

32. E.g., Adorno, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

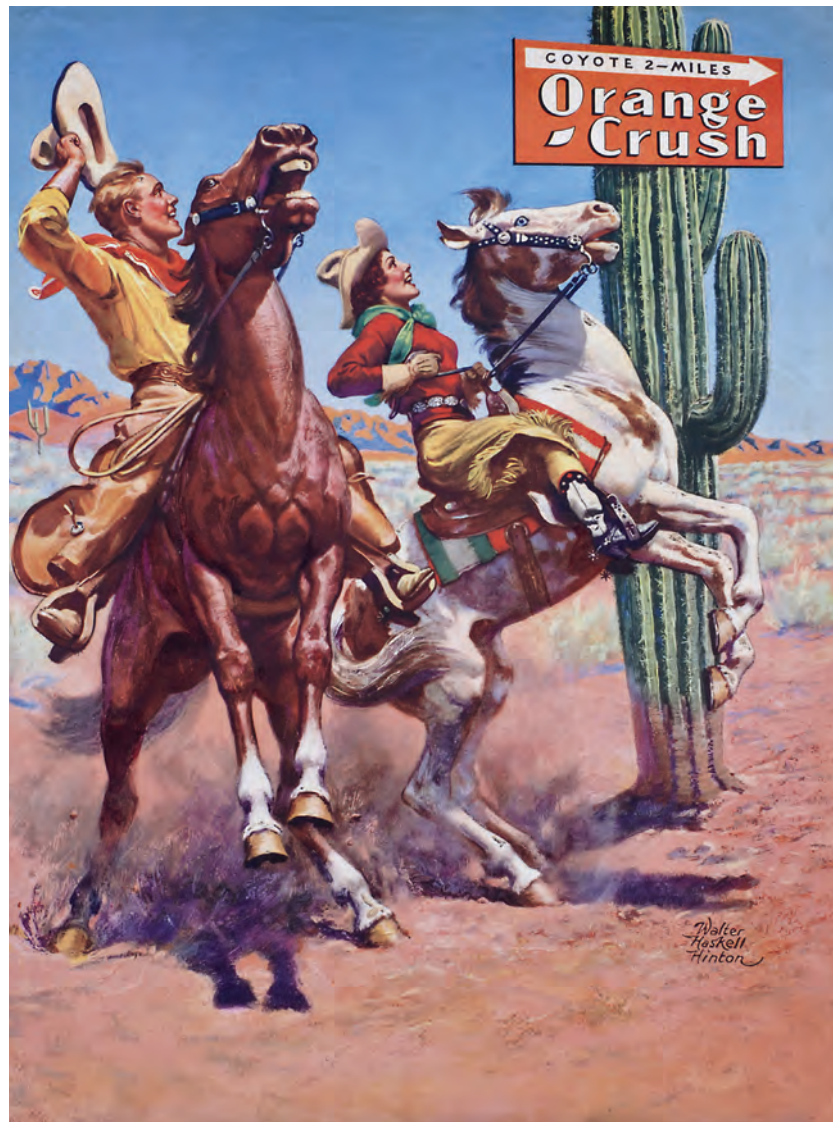


Figure 2 Advertising illustration for *Orange Crush*. Circa 1935. Collection of the Hinton family.

although WHH delivered the goods in terms of images that would help to sell the client's product, he often slipped in elements that served to debunk myths. . . . This is Walter "Rascal" Hinton at work – a man who can slip an alternate, even subversive, theme into the work without detracting from his commissioned task. Just as when he served inexpensive wine from bottles labeled for legendary vintages, he must have enjoyed being able to collect a fee while yet exercising freedom of expression reflecting his own views.³³

33. Walter H. Hinton II to Grove, email, Aug. 9, 2010.

In looking beneath the surface of Hinton's work with its avowed commercial intent, we find respect for the environment, for animals, for loving relationships, for respectful treatment of cultural "others," for solidarity. Most importantly, Walter Haskell Hinton expressed a joy in life that acts as carrot (rather than stick, as more overtly "political" art has done) to encourage, not force, viewers to become better people and to form better communities.

The updating of tradition to the delight of both audience and client is evident in an Orange Crush advertisement dating to the 1930s, that resembles the pulp fiction covers he had recently become known for (Figure 2). Hinton depicts a cowboy and cowgirl on lively horses, with a sign pinned to a cactus indicating the beverage is available nearby. The pairing of the good-looking young man and woman all alone in the desert suggests freedom and some romance between the two. Hinton is drawing upon a deep-seated popular familiarity with figures of the Old West that date back to nineteenth century "story paper" characters based on real people such as Deadwood Dick and Calamity Jane, the ancestors of the 1930s pulps' themes. In this tradition, romantic outlaw Westerners such as Dick and Jane live independent lives of drama and intrigue, although not always happily or respectably. Updated for the Depression era, the couple are clean-cut and joyous, and in modern clothes. The girl's hair and face look as though she has just stepped from a beauty salon, while the man is square-jawed and blond, in keeping with the eugenically informed conventions of glamour then dominating magazines and movies. The intense coloring of the picture also signals that this is not a Victorian image. Hinton's crowning twist is the sign nailed to the giant cactus, a humorous reference to the commercial signs crowding the sides of buildings and hoardings in city spaces, here transposed to a natural setting. The image allowed the viewer to apply the traditional symbol of the romantic, free-spirited Old West to the contemporary experience of purchasing a soft drink in a modern, urban setting, thus making the drinking of Orange Crush seem like an act of self-expression and independence, not to mention patriotism.

For an art form that has been dismissed as simplistic by art critics for much of the past century or more, illustration turns out to be resoundingly complex. Illustrations not only put words into pictures or decorate the page, as is often supposed. They also embellish texts, or even contradict them, the interplay between image and text reflecting the complexity of making meaning in the human brain.³⁴ Our soda pop ad, for instance, does not even picture the product, leaving us to problem-solve, to recall previous ads, and to create connections among hot desert and thirst and Orange Crush. In the rapid process of puzzling it out, we inevitably insert ourselves into the narrative, identifying with it: "If I were out on a sunny day in a desert, how would I feel? Oh, of course -!" Illustrations are not only pleasing to look at in terms of subject, composition and color, they use aesthetic delight to persuade us to feel an emotion, to make a purchase, to adopt a belief: the use of intense blue in the sky, for instance, provokes a craving for the color orange, its complementary on the color wheel, as well as suggesting water. And illustrations document events and ways of life passing or gone – horses here, not cars – yet they also present ideals that rarely actually existed – the beauty of the healthy, happy couple in fashionable gear. Thus, the Orange Crush ad does not just sell a drink, it also speaks to nostalgia for the disappearing "good old days" and to optimism for a future of readily available goods, even in the desert. It also documents emerging new relations between the sexes, in which a woman accompanies a man as his equal in his sphere. Walter Haskell Hinton's work, then, may be read for what it tells us about the everyday hopes, fears, and experiences of

34. Most of the research on how illustration works on cognition has been done in the area of children's literacy.

average Americans in his day, whatever made them identify with commercial art in order to cope with the immense social and technological shifts that occurred over the artist's lifetime.

It is unknown where this ad ran. Hinton proposed related advertisements to the soft drink company, but they did not award him any work. They swiped his ideas instead, he alleged.³⁵ He knew firsthand that commercialism was not fair – and so did everyone else who lived through two world wars, a Depression and the most rapid technological and social changes ever. All the more reason to want a world in commercial art that *was* fair.

35. Hinton, Washington interview.



Figure 3 *Oil portrait of Mary Haskell Hinton, by Walter Haskell Hinton.*
Collection of the Hinton family.

Family and Childhood

Walter Haskell Hinton was born on August 24th, 1886, in San Francisco, to Walter Otho Hinton and Mary Washburn Haskell Hinton. Unfortunately, little information survives about the Hinton and Haskell families, and there is only sparse documentation of even the artist's own life. We can only piece together a history from a few spotty government records;³⁶ family oral history; a long interview conducted in 1976 by longtime client Washington National Insurance; articles written by Ralph C. Hughes concerning Hinton's work for John Deere; the

36. David Saunders supplied census and military records.

memories of Bill Rathje, who as a boy was mentored by Hinton from 1952 to 1966; Bill and Kitty Slater, who lived next door; John Higgins-Biddle, who also grew up next door, and Mr B, a friend and collector who wishes to remain anonymous.

At the time of Hinton's birth, only about three municipalities in the world had electric lights. Cinema was not yet perfected, vaccinations were still in the experimental phase, and agriculture was steam powered at best. Racial and social segregation was entrenched, but Americans were still settling the West, feeling optimistic about the wealth and prosperity that awaited those who worked hard regardless of origin. As a nation, the United States promoted this philosophy



Figure 4 *Young Walter Haskell Hinton camping, circa 1905. Collection of the Hinton family.*

through official, learned and popular channels, taking it for granted that reason, strong morals, just laws, and science would ensure prosperity for all. But by the time the personal computer was on the verge of becoming a household appliance in 1980, the year of Hinton's passing, each of these principles had been challenged and transformed, or in the eyes of some, forsaken as hopelessly utopic. While technological progress did indeed improve the standard of living (but not economic parity) for the majority, it also spawned environmental and social problems. The World Wars, the Depression, the Cold War, and the struggles of subjugated communities for recognition and equal opportunities exposed hypocrisies, prejudices, and even errors in traditional social structures, moral teachings, and science. In the face of these setbacks, a culture of commercialism insinuated that business venture – whether in the form of manufacturer investment in innovation or reciprocal consumer investment in standard of living – was the way to fix past blunders and ensure a happier future. But such “progress” meant rapid change, and that entailed loss as well as hope. Hinton's art, with its

37. Walter Haskell Hinton also stated his father was born in Yreka. Undated draft of letter to Col. J. Frank Drake; collection of the Hinton family.

38. Elliott (Hinton) Willis to Grove.

39. Hinton, Washington interview.

40. Hinton, Washington interview.

combination of the nostalgic past and the optimistic future, both expressed and mitigated the mixed feelings of the modern American.

Hinton himself was a product of westward expansion. His father, Walter Otho Hinton, emerges as a mysterious and exciting figure. Census records indicate he was born in England in 1855, but Raymond Hinton wrote that Walter Otho was born in Yreka, California, in 1856.³⁷ In family recollection, Walter Otho joined the Navy at 14 when his widowed mother remarried, but didn't stay long. Navy records found by Raymond Hinton noted that Sailor Hinton went ashore in Mexico with a swimming party and "declined to return."³⁸ He then moved constantly throughout the West and abroad keeping a low profile; perhaps he later fibbed on his census about his birthplace to avoid trouble. Walter Haskell Hinton – who apparently inherited some of his father's gift for creative statements – claimed that his father could speak seven languages fluently, and that he was a well traveled man with a brilliant memory.³⁹ Walter Otho spoke Spanish fluently and also some French, both of which he taught his son.⁴⁰ In San Francisco he courted Mary Haskell, but presumably due to his unsettled background, her father did not accept him, and so they eloped. He worked for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, possibly

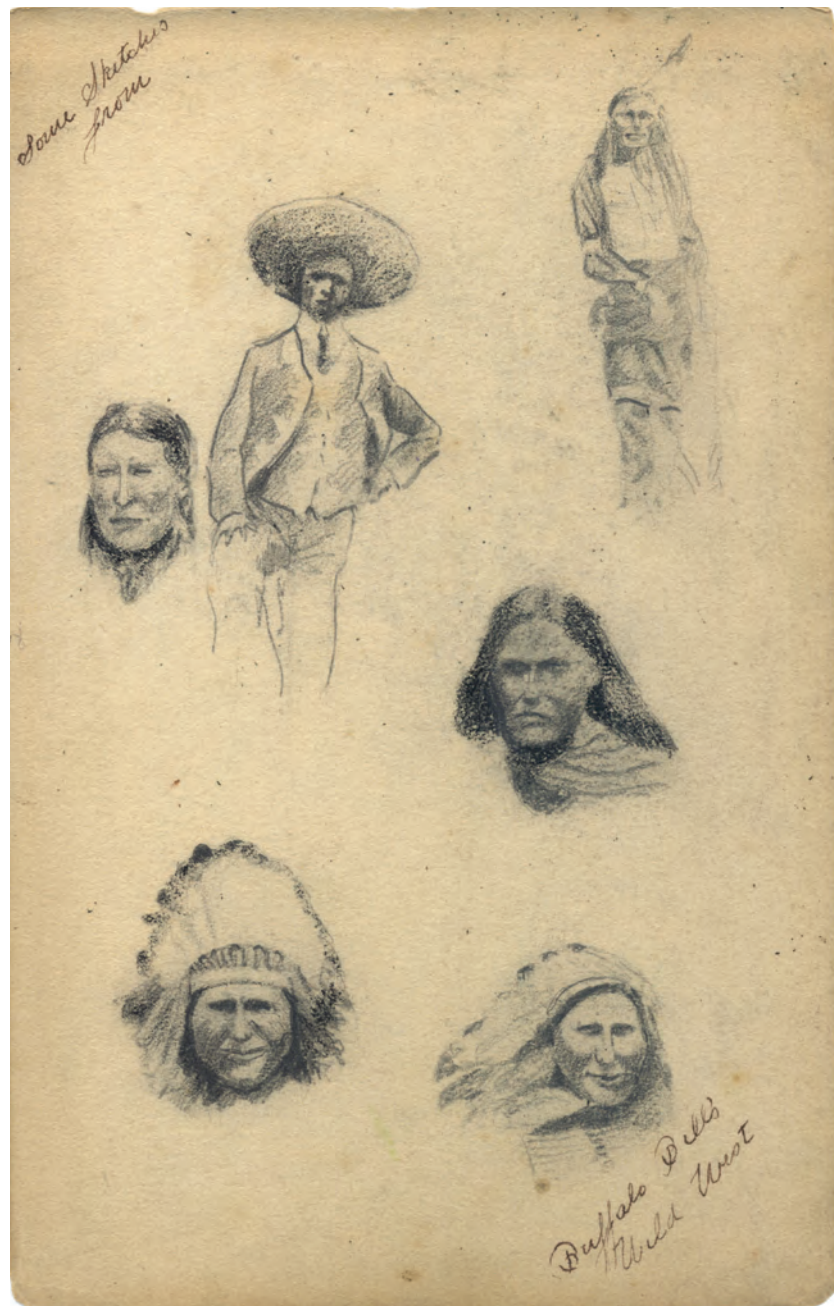


Figure 5 *Some Sketches From Buffalo Bill's Wild West, probably done by Hinton between the ages of 10 and 14. Pencil. Collection of the Hinton family.*



as a “printer’s devil” or “tramp printer” (compositor), a position associated with eccentric, itinerant workers as well as being a mere entry-level position into the printing industry.⁴¹ It is recalled by Dr. Rathje that at some point in Hinton’s early childhood, Walter Otho took the family to Baja California, Mexico to prospect for oil. Around 1890, they moved on to Denver, where Walter Otho worked for the *Rocky Mountain News*. In 1893, they were drawn to Chicago by the sensational World’s Columbian Exposition (where Turner was delivering his Frontier Thesis). There, Walter Otho worked as a printer, translator, manager, and proofreader, likely for the *Chicago Tribune*.⁴² By the time young Hinton reached his teens, his father was friends with the well-known French-born painter Albert Francis Fleury and owned some paintings by him. He aspired that his son should become a fine artist like Fleury.⁴³

Walter Haskell Hinton described his mother, Mary, as having had “a great deal of character” (Figure 3). She had artistic sensibility, he said, which she expressed in part in embroidery.⁴⁴ According to a genealogy prepared by her grandson Ray, she was born in San Jose, August 16th, 1864, and was a direct descendent of a Captain William Haskell, who had emigrated to Massachusetts from England in the 1600s. Her father went West from Maine on a wagon train in 1849, in the gold rush, and became a shipwright. Mary had a propensity as a spiritualist, an activity that enjoyed particular favor during the Victorian period. She consulted mediums and the Ouija board in times of need, and young Walter inherited a certain respect for this alternative way of understanding life.⁴⁵ Walter Haskell Hinton attributed his own talented visual memory to a combination of his father’s memory and his mother’s aesthetic sensibility.⁴⁶ She was to live with her son for the remainder of

Figure 6 *Lake Calumet*, a place where Hinton’s parents liked to picnic. Oil on canvas painted by Hinton, date unknown. Collection of the Hinton family.

41. John Howells and Marion Dearman, *Tramp Printers* (Discovery Press, 1996).

42. These are Walter Otho Hinton’s professions as listed in city directories 1894-1905.

43. Hinton, Washington interview.

44. Hinton, Washington interview; Susanne Hinton.

45. Bill Slater to Jaleen Grove.

46. Hinton, Washington interview.

47. Julia Parody took over Mary's work when Mary died, as a professional housekeeper.

48. Washington National Insurance Company, "Death Takes Artist who Created Paintings of Washington's Life." Unidentified publication, collection of the Hinton family.

49. Elliott (Hinton) Willis to Grove.

her life, raising her grandson. With the occasional help of Julia Parody, daughter of a family friend, Mary seems to have provided a quiet home that may have given a necessary stable background that made possible her son's strongwilled striving for success, as she had done previously for her husband.⁴⁷

From an upbringing that emphasized do-it-yourself gumption, Walter Haskell Hinton seems to have absorbed the art of educating himself and leading a highly self-directed life. At the end of it, he remarked that he had been able to live it exactly as he chose.⁴⁸ One family story relates that Hinton was nearly expelled from high school for drawing all over his textbooks, and the teacher recommended that, rather than wasting more time in regular school, Walter Otho Hinton ought to send his son to art school.⁴⁹ Dr. Rathje adds that young Hinton was tutored at home by his parents (French and Spanish lessons, for instance), since his father was such a capable man, while the census of 1900 notes he was schooled by a "private teacher" – probably Albert Fleury, with whom he first learned painting. Hinton maintained that learning was a life-long process, and he spent an immense amount of time reading. Dr. Rathje, who has held positions at leading universities, maintains that Hinton was the "best-educated" person he has ever encountered. This independent nature runs throughout Hinton's life and art, and it affected both his subject matter preferences and his technical methods.

The Strenuous Life and Young Men

Before television, illustrators like Walter Haskell Hinton occupied a powerful position, because, in searching for what people liked, it was they who selected and recorded scenes of everyday life in magazines, newspapers, advertisements, and books. They defined how things were understood to be, or ought to be. In doing so, for all that they were documenters, they were also *interpreters* of that life. How they selected subjects determined what counted and what didn't, and how they chose to interpret what they documented affected how viewers understood ideas, events and people; and it affected what they liked. It is through interpretation of the rocks of tradition that illustrators shifted the stream of taste and knowledge – and in doing so, reinforced the durability of those rocks. Naturally, the artist's own social and cultural background that stressed independence influenced his interpretations.

An undated photograph shows young Hinton tending a campfire, gun in the tree above him and a bird dog at his side (Figure 4). Nurturing boys to an ideal of self-reliant yet dutiful masculinity was typical of late Victorian America. As the economy shifted away from its tough, pioneering, agricultural base to a white-collar, urban lifestyle, fears abounded that this gentrification would result in sickly, sissified men who would be physically and morally unable to answer a call to duty should the country require it – as it did during the First World War. The spiritual and physical rejuvenating power of the Great Outdoors was the remedy,⁵⁰ celebrated by luminaries such as Henry David Thoreau and Walt Whitman. The latter located nationalism in the Western landscape, which he envisioned as a kind of return to origins of mankind that would foster a healthy, strong race of moral people. Theodore Roosevelt, who was deeply interested in eugenics, was a leading proponent of the "strenuous life," in which he extolled the virtues of the rough Western experience. In accordance with this philosophy, boys were encouraged to spend time in nature and at sports, developing inner and outer discipline, and grounding their identity in traditionally male pursuits such as camping, hunting and fishing. Framed in a rhetoric of a unique, blessed, indigenous Americanness, Native American Indian traditions were frequently appropriated motifs: summer camps borrowed native names and rituals, and youths were encouraged to live off the land, in harmony with nature, romantically, as native peoples (once) did.⁵¹ The valorous character built up by the strenuous life made the ideal citizen one who nobly took his place in society, not as a mere cog but as a team player or "brave" of an Indian tribe, the independent pursuit of his personal goals enmeshing with a mutual national destiny as envisioned by political and cultural leaders.

50. Michael S. Kimmel, *The History of Manhood* (SUNY Press, Albany, 2005), 42, 53; Jeffrey P. Hantover, "The Boy Scouts and the Validation of Masculinity," *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 34, # 1 (1978): 184.

51. DAT Clark and J. Nagel, "White Men, Red Masks: Appropriations of 'Indian' Manhood in Imagined Wests," in *Across the Great Divide: Cultures of Manhood in the American West*, edited by M. Basso, L. McCall, and D. Garceau (Routledge, 2001), 119.

In an era when living in Eastern cities meant breathing constant coal fire smoke, lead paint fumes, and the reek of horse urine; wearing restrictive corsets and collars, sleeping in pest-infested firetraps if one were poor, and observing soul-stifling class and race prejudices, there is some truth to the healing properties of the outdoors. The Chicago area, where Hinton was raised and where he spent almost his entire life, established “natural” parks and encouraged fitness. The physical culture lifestyle of Oak Park, where Hinton came to live later in the 1920s, is credited by at least one biographer with producing that quintessential figure of modern manhood and outdoor life, Ernest Hemingway (1899–1961).⁵² It is not surprising, then, that young Hinton fished, hunted and camped, and eventually emerged as an expert in outdoor sporting life illustration, with a lifelong interest in pre-colonial Native American cultures.

Formal Training and Early Influences

Hinton recalled that as a boy he had an uncontrollable desire to draw from the moment he was old enough to hold a pencil. An artist Hinton admired very much was the illustrator-reporter Frederic Remington, who illustrated Roosevelt’s writings.⁵³ Remington had been one of the most popular of illustrators between 1890 and 1910, and Hinton would have absorbed Roosevelt’s romantic view of the West through Remington’s work in magazines. Hinton regularly attended Buffalo Bill’s Congress of Rough Riders of the World, sketching the cowboys and Native performers (Figure 5).⁵⁴ On one occasion, as a result of the Spanish he had presumably learned in Baja, he befriended some vaqueros and brought them home for supper.⁵⁵

It was when he was approximately 12 years old that his father arranged for Hinton to accompany Fleury on *plein air* sketching expeditions.⁵⁶ Fleury was academically trained in oils and watercolors, and had executed several important commissions in Chicago, such as the murals of Spring and Autumn in the Chicago Auditorium, and the pastoral genre scenes of Roosevelt University’s Ganz Hall, designed by the progressive architect Louis Sullivan. Fleury particularly excelled at landscapes and urban scenes. One contemporary writer said his work was “Chicago idealized,”⁵⁷ while another noted it was “characterized by strict fidelity to fact”;⁵⁸ Victorian taste did not see a contradiction between the two because, in the vein of the Arts and Crafts movement then in vogue (which Sullivan and his student Frank Lloyd Wright embraced), factual “truth to nature” entailed selecting only the very best that nature had to offer, then distilling it down to its essence.⁵⁹ Fleury’s impressionistic handling of atmospheric effects is likely the ancestor of Hinton’s own light-filled, hazy renderings of the 1920s that adorned the covers of *Successful Farming* and *The Dairy Farmer* (Figure 6). Fleury’s murals such as the one in Ganz Hall of men harvesting ice are also not dissimilar in subject to Hinton’s later idealized but factual paintings of railway workers for Fairmont Railway Motors.

After about two years of shadowing Fleury, Hinton enrolled at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1900 with Fleury’s recommendation (Figure 7). For the first two years he took Juvenile classes on weekends and evenings, and then in 1903 he enrolled as a regular Daytime student, taking Antique class – drawing from classical Greek and Roman statuary casts – followed by Costume and Nude.

52. David M. Earle, *All Man!: Hemingway, 1950s Men’s Magazines, and the Masculine Persona* (Kent State University Press, 2009).

53. Bill Rathje to Jaleen Grove. Rathje remembers Hinton had a book of Remington’s work that he referred to.

54. Bill Rathje suggests Hinton may even have worked with the show as a roadie, but this has not been verified.

55. Raymond Hinton to Phil Kavinick, March 25th, 1982. Collection of the Hinton family.

56. Hinton, recorded conversation with Mr. B, 1980.

57. Maude I. G. Oliver, “A Painter: The Work of Albert F. Fleury,” publication unknown, collection of Chicago Public Library.

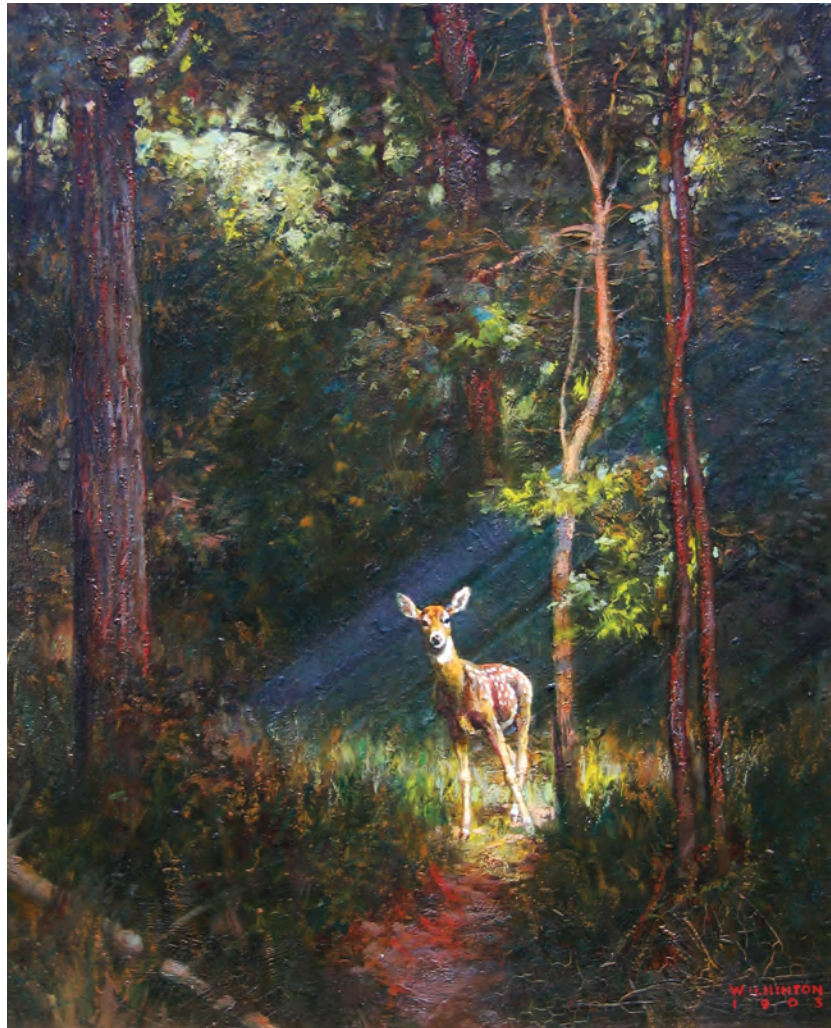
58. Francis E. Towne, “Albert Fleury, Painter,” *Brush and Pencil* (June 1903), 208.

59. This theory began with Ruskin and was developed by Owen Jones and William Morris; see Jones’ *Grammar of Ornament*, 1856.



Figure 7 *Beaux-arts Ball of the students of the Art Institute of Chicago, circa 1905. The location is Blackstone Hall, which was built in 1903. Collection of the Hinton family.*

Figure 8 *Oil on canvas*, 1903.
Collection of William Slater.



Yet he pursued other subjects too. A 1903 painting (at age 17) of shafts of light illuminating a fawn pausing in a woodland glade prefigures the sporting and wildlife paintings he was to pursue from approximately 1930–1960 (Figure 8). Following his father’s wishes, Hinton first prepared for a life as a fine artist, intending to go study in France as most artists and illustrators who could afford it did. But in 1904 he took Illustration, and enjoyed it. He received an Honorable Mention from instructor Thomas W. Stevens in all three of his Illustration classes, whereas before he had received this distinction in only a third of his prior courses.⁶⁰

At the turn of the century, making pictures for literary fiction and children’s gift books was highly respected as art (though not as much as landscape painting), with men like Edwin Austin Abbey and Arthur Rackham setting high standards. Hinton soon set his heart on studying at Chadds Ford with the great master of fiction illustration, Howard Pyle (1853–1911), who was renowned for encouraging his students to intuitively develop independent and personalized styles, bringing illustration closer to the lauded individualism of the Romantic painterly tradition. Pyle had visited the Art Institute in 1902 and 1903,⁶¹ and perhaps this is what led Hinton to switch majors. But Hinton was heavily disappointed when his application was rejected, later saying his Dad “wrote a lot about his son and not enough about Pyle’s talent.”⁶² He probably did not know that Pyle was forced to choose as few as one out of every one hundred applicants, that Pyle put weight on recommendations from instructors he trusted, and that 1903 was the last year Pyle’s summer school operated, with students after that increasingly being made up of established professionals.⁶³ Pyle also chose recruits intuitively, drawing on his personal tastes as much as his eye for a student’s talent. Hinton’s classmate, the celebrated Harvey Dunn who was already teaching first year students at the

60. Records obtained from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

61. Art Institute of Chicago, *Circular of Instruction* (1904), 37.

62. Susanne Hinton, email to Elliott Willis and Walter Hinton, Nov. 1, 2010.

63. Henry Pitz, *The Brandywine Tradition* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1968), 114, 126, 148; Ian Schoenherr, email to Grove, Oct. 29, 2010.

Art Institute, went to Pyle in 1904.⁶⁴ Pyle praised Dunn's submission, a brooding dark landscape made when Dunn was angry, for "feeling and originality."⁶⁵ Hinton's wealth of Honorable Mentions prove he had excellent talent, and judging by his delicate fawn painting of 1903, he had strengths in technical mastery and tradition. These strengths, however, may have put him at a disadvantage as Pyle said outright they were not his top criteria.⁶⁶ Being declined by Pyle was most regrettable, as young Walter's drive, talent, independence, and familiarity with spiritualism via his mother would have made him an excellent candidate for Pyle's rigorous, creatively demanding, soul-seeking approach. Hinton at this time did not yet match the supple talents of Pyle's slightly older protégé Philip R. Goodwin (1881-1935), but certainly Hinton was more accomplished than Frank Stick (1884-1966), whom Pyle advised in 1905. All three men completed similar sporting and wildlife subjects for the calendar market in the 1930s and 40s, but Hinton has fallen through the cracks of history where they did not, in part because of their Pyle pedigree.

The Advertising Business Before 1920

Then life changed abruptly, with Walter Otho Hinton's sudden death on January 23rd, 1905, from cancer. Eighteen-year-old Hinton was forced to quit school and take work as a commercial artist, to support himself and his mother. He managed a few occasional classes until 1907, but could not return as a full time pupil. His inclination for independent development had to take a backseat to commercial pressures.

Illustration art expert Roger Reed says, "The Brandywine people [Pyle and his students] tended to be disdainful of advertising as the thing that was killing the Golden Age and its gentility, emphasis on factual accuracy, and appreciation for an individual 'look' and point of view. In Chicago, advertising was the lifeblood, and illustration-making focused ever more on creating a mood with saturated colors and technique that produced maximum impact, with satisfaction of the client as the primary goal."⁶⁷ It was perhaps the first test of whether Hinton could adjust to developing what people liked, as opposed to what *he* liked.

Over the following five years, like the stalwart individualist operating in tandem with society that the strenuous life promoted, he quickly worked his way up from an entry level position at a Chicago engraving house to being a valued creative force in Milwaukee advertising agencies such as Hall Taylor and then Cramer Krasselt. As a free-thinker, Hinton's edge over other aspiring illustrators was his ability to develop ideas. It was his usual practice to sketch out visual strategies right there in the meetings with art directors and executives, demonstrating how concepts flowed through his fingertips as easily as the figures he drew. More than once, this exhibition of talent won him the job. When he resigned his position in 1909 to take advantage of an offer to go to Mexico for some painting and ranching (his friend Breckenridge had free passes, as secretary to the president of the Mexican National Railroad), Cramer Krasselt so missed his creativity that he was given his job back immediately six months later, when the Mexican Revolution cut the adventure short.⁶⁸ While in Milwaukee, Hinton also tried out teaching art, as he is listed as an instructor in the Wisconsin School of Arts in a history of art in Milwaukee.⁶⁹ But apparently teaching did not appeal to him; in 1952 when a neighbor asked Hinton if he would instruct his grandson,



64. Dunn is listed as an Advanced Student teaching undergraduates in the Circular of 1904. Schoenherr establishes Dunn's presence at Pyle's classes by November, 1904.

65. Robert F. Karolevitz, *Where Your Heart Is: the Story of Harvey Dunn, Artist* (North Plains Press, 1970), 31.

66. Pyle in Pitz, *The Brandywine Tradition*, 118. Further critical analysis of Pyle's values and their impact on what was devalued in illustration would be a useful addition to illustration history.

67. Roger Reed to Jaleen Grove, Jan. 5, 2010.

68. Hinton, Washington interview.

69. William George Bruce, "Progress of Art in Milwaukee," *History of Milwaukee, City and County* (Volume 1), 689. (ebook)

Figure 9 "Nearest is Dearest," cover, *Life*, May 30, 1912. Collection of the Hinton family.

70. Bill Rathje to Jaleen Grove.

Hinton initially declined, saying that teachers cease to be painters.⁷⁰

1912 found Hinton in New York. Not much is known about these months, except that he did a number of clothing and hosiery ads, and that he considered New York "miserable." One highlight is that he did a cover for *Life* (May 30, 1912), which was at that time a humor magazine (Figure 9). Titled "Nearest is Dearest," it depicts an American sailor charming an East Indian maiden, showing Hinton's lifelong interest in subjects exotic to him. The girl's sari and the setttee are quite accurate, although the improbability of the cross-cultural courtship scene supplies the joke. He soon moved on to Philadelphia in 1913, where he established a studio at 721 Walnut St and lived at (among other addresses) 1411 South 54th St. Freelancing, he began doing work for famed advertising agency NW Ayers and the prestigious magazine *Saturday Evening Post*, who had offices nearby.



Figure 10 Interior of Hinton's studio in Milwaukee, circa 1910. Collection of the Hinton family.

Hinton promoted himself much in the manner of established fine artists of the generation before. This is evident from photographs of his studio, which reveal Persian carpets on the floor, Native American art and Asian antiquities, musical instruments, and Jacobean furniture (Figure 10). This style of decoration with its emphasis on the exotic, the hand crafted, and the Jacobean was referred to as "art atmosphere," and it can be seen in photographs and paintings of leading Victorian artists' studios such as that of William Merritt Chase.⁷¹ Such fine art studios were used to receive guests, and to coyly display works that were for sale, though of course no tasteless price tags would have been in evidence. The luxurious surroundings and curiosities amused visitors, and the art atmosphere itself quietly did the selling. Hinton was not engaged in this type of art market, but by borrowing its trappings he indicated to prospective clients that his values were "above" the usual trade of illustration and it implied he had something extra to offer.

In fact, he did. His collections were born out of genuine interest in the objects and their craftsmanship, history, and culture. His clients were not just benefiting from his taste but from his growing body of knowledge. "If you have the knowledge and you can spring it at the psychological moment [in a job interview], the job is yours," he explained. As an example of this, he liked to relate a story about when a prospect in the 1920s sought him out because he knew Hinton was doing historical paintings. As a kind of test, he asked Hinton if he knew what a *quipu* was. "A quipu? Why, of course I know!" The prospective client gaped. "A quipu is an ancient Inca recording device made of strings." It turned out the company, a paper manufacturer, had an idea to use the quipu as a metaphor in an ad campaign for the different kinds of paper they were making, and wanted an artist who was genuinely informed.⁷²

71. Sarah Burns, *Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in Gilded Age America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

72. Hinton, Washington interview. In the interview, 90 year old Hinton faltered in his recollection and accidentally said Aztec rather than Inca. Bill Rathje recalls an embroidered version of this story, where Hinton's knowledge of the quipu won him the contract over a lineup of hungry illustrators during the Depression.

Interpretation: Aesthetics, Ideology, and Iconography

Accounts Hinton worked on while in Philadelphia include Baldwin Locomotive, Cheney Silk Co., and Atlas Powder, but the project he was to remember best years later was his development of tobacco mascot Velvet Joe:

When I was down east, I originated a "type" down there that was very famous. It ran for five years, and people were writing in all over the country: "Is there such a person as Velvet Joe?" It was done for the Liggett & Myers company, and we were boosting Velvet Tobacco. And the advertising was so good – I didn't smoke – the advertising was so doggone good on pipe smoking that I became a pipe smoker!⁷³

73. Hinton, Washington interview.

Advertising illustration may be understood as the application of an artist's interpretation in order to enhance the symbolic properties of the object or service for sale to the point where that object or service stands for more than just what it is used for. The interpretation-enhanced item carries an emotional charge in which the consumer has some kind of psychological investment, because the illustrator has taken emotional appeal into consideration in his or her interpretation. An act of rhetoric, illustrators' creative interpretation uses three interrelated forms designed to tap into what a defined group of people will like: aesthetics (shape, color, rhythm, etc); ideology (ideas of what is proper); and iconography (readily understood symbols and stories).

Iconographically, in the case of Velvet Joe, Hinton modeled the fictional character on that most recognizably quintessential American writer, Mark Twain, (whose likeness was well known from published engravings and photographs) for the "type":



Figure 11 Bust of Velvet Joe, mascot for tobacco company Liggett & Myers. Modeled by Hinton circa 1918. Photo, collection of the Hinton family.

74. Hinton, Washington interview.

One fellow came up with an idea they wanted to have a character; to boost this tobacco, so they called him Burly Bill. I was to make this big fat fella. But I objected to that. I said, "I don't think that makes as interesting a type." I said, "I'll tell you what I'd like to see on Velvet Joe. I'd like to see a blend of Mark Twain and a friend of mine who looks very much like him, a blend of those two to create this type." So I made a sketch and they were all for it so our whole series went that way.⁷⁴

Hinton also created a three-dimensional bust for displays, which also would have served to keep any artist working on the brand copying from the same model (Figure 11). After some twenty years of slick, clean-shaven, young urban gentlemen popularized by illustrator Charles Dana Gibson, Twain's distinctive bushy white hair and moustache were easy to make into a "type" that by 1915 denoted a distinguished older man with a slight air of eccentricity. It spoke immediately to a generation of mature white men who liked Twain's style of witty pragmatism – the tobacco company's target market. The campaign ran in *Literary Digest* throughout 1918, where fans of Twain were likely to be; companies selling reprints of Twain's classics also advertised there.

Ideologically, the Twain-like Velvet Joe tapped into inherited, subconscious associations with the targeted group's collective childhood nostalgia for the good old days by pairing Joe with grandchildren, who build a snowman portrait of Joe, or enjoy a fire on a down-home open hearth with him. Others showed Velvet Joe acting as a father figure to soldiers, while another featured men around a campfire. The virtues of folk life, tradition, patriotism, male camaraderie, and Huck Finn independence were communicated. Hinton, aged 25, helped write copy in the voice of this older man type, celebrating the old and the cherished:

Our preliminary was all in verse. There was one [where] I had Joe with his fiddle; let's see if I can remember it:

*When I take down my old fiddle,
And I rosin up the bow,
I find the sweetest music
In the tunes of long ago.*

*There's a kind of mellow sweetness
In the good thing growing old;
Each year that rolls around it
Leaves an added touch of gold.*

*We love the old friends better
Than we'll ever love the new,
And I get my greatest comfort
When I'm wearing the oldest shoe.*

*And I get my greatest pleasure
When I'm smoking fragrant, ripe,
Aged, mellowed Old Velvet,
In my oldest, sweetest pipe.*

*And boy did that stuff go over! Every one of 'em, we had a verse;
started out with that first.⁷⁵*

75. Hinton, Washington interview.

Aesthetically, the advertising campaign reiterated the old-timey nostalgia and rural informality with loose, textured black and white pencil sketches by Leone Bracker (Figure 12). Hinton was probably disappointed he was overlooked for doing the final artwork, but, since Bracker got to sign the piece, the agency must have wanted a "name" artist. It was not normal for advertising artists to be allowed to sign their work unless the illustrator was famous and considered to be lending their renown to the product. Liggett & Myers probably decided Hinton was still

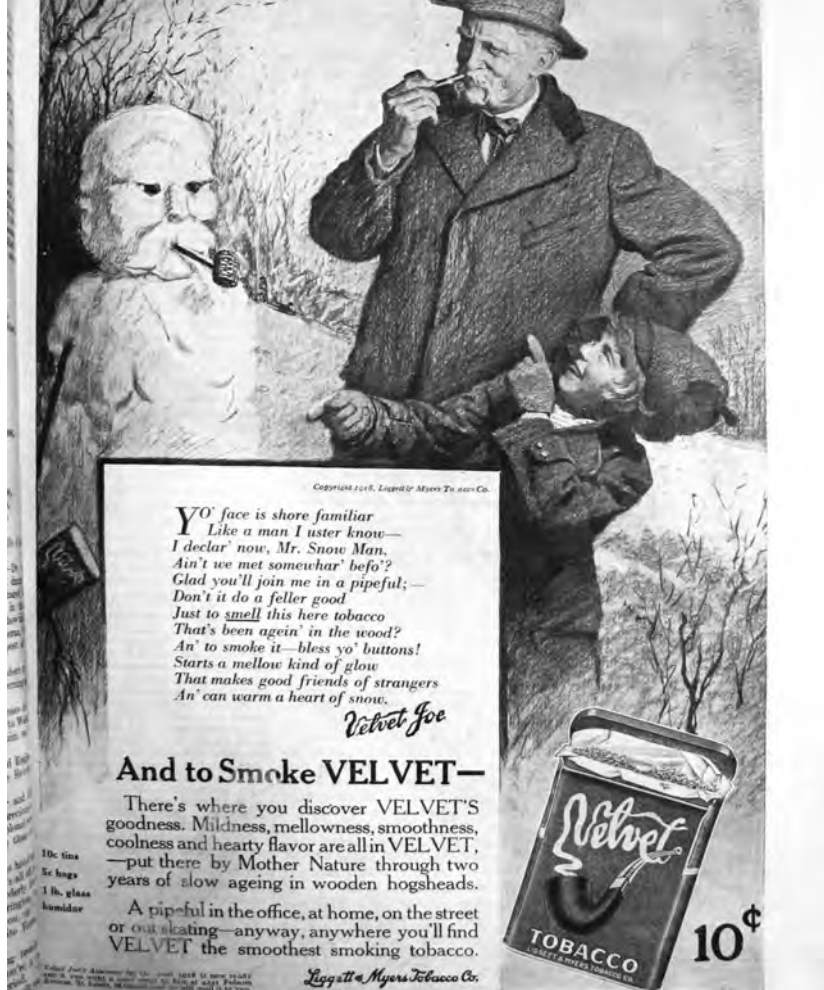


Figure 12 *Velvet Joe* advertisement concept by Hinton, with illustration by Leone Bracker, in *Literary Digest*, January, 1918.

an unknown, while Bracker although only a year older than young Hinton, was a stronger draughtsman and had already established himself as a book illustrator. (Hinton was awarded some color illustration work on Velvet Joe at a later date). But not getting to illustrate the first round of the campaign is not what Hinton regretted in the long term. Instead, being deprived of credit for even the work he *did* do on Joe was the hurt he felt until his death:

Well I had to make a bust of Joe, and it went up to San Francisco Exposition. I never got any credit myself. They didn't let me sign it, and oh the thing was famous, but oh boy was I cheated on that one!

Later, when Hinton was working for the Richard A. Foley ad agency, a feature ran in the *Saturday Evening Post* on “originators” of famous ad campaigns. Hinton related,

*Here, sitting alongside my bust, it said [of the agency] “This is the father of Velvet Joe,” and they didn't have a darned thing to do with it!*⁷⁶

76. Hinton, Washington interview; recorded conversation with Mr. B, 1980.

Regardless, as an idea man, Hinton was now edging towards the high end of the advertising field. His innovations were allowing him a greater sense of self-expression in his work, for which he would eventually receive much credit.

Tragedy and Success

Hinton's position now allowed him to take lengthy camping trips to the region of Morgan Center, Lake Seymour, and Lake Willoughby in Vermont. It was there in 1914 that he married Marie Stanbridge, of Morgan Center. On June 7, 1915, their son Walter Raymond Hinton was born in the Randolph Sanatorium, a Vermont “cottage hospital.”⁷⁷ Sadly, Marie is said to have died in childbirth. No records have

77. Constance E. Putnam, “Grave-robber, Good Doctor,” *Dartmouth Medicine*, 2004. http://dartmed.dartmouth.edu/winter03/html/grave_robber_good_doc.shtml Accessed May, 2010.



What has been said of the INDIAN side cars can be said with equal force of the INDIAN Powerplus twin. Unheard of manufacturing conditions and almost daily changes in Government requirements present a multitude of perplexing problems, but the INDIAN executives keep the watchword constantly in mind—"The Government first—a square deal to civilians"—the latter of course including dealer and consumer. And then comes the matter of price? Increased costs prevail on every hand. Every detail entering into motorcycle production entails a higher first cost, including raw material and labor and even freight and expressage. And so, with an ever rising raw material market and our high-grade labor receiving largely increased wages, the setting of a price upon the finished INDIAN can be of a temporary nature only.

Indian
with the



Basic conditions must be normal to set a fixed price. The conditions we face at the present time are not normal. Under the circumstances our prices being subject to change without notice are not guaranteed and are subject to price prevailing at time of delivery.

The outstanding features of our big INDIAN Powerplus Model N 19 are:

World famous Powerplus motor that has no equal in power, smoothness of operation, accessibility and flexibility.

Reinforced and exclusive shock-absorbing Cradle, Spring Frame and Fork.

Simple controls perfectly balanced and easily handled.

Simple construction throughout so as to afford the most exacting usage.

Highly rigid construction, a sure safe solid and even detail of construction and maintenance of first quality.

INDIAN Powerplus Model N 19
List price \$300

Motorcycle
colors

Figure 13 *Indian Motorcycle advertisement by Hinton, circa 1919. Collection of the Hinton family.*

78. Hinton, interview with Mr. B, 1980.

79. Edward Bernays, interview in documentary directed by Adam Curtis, *Century of the Self* (BBC, 2002).

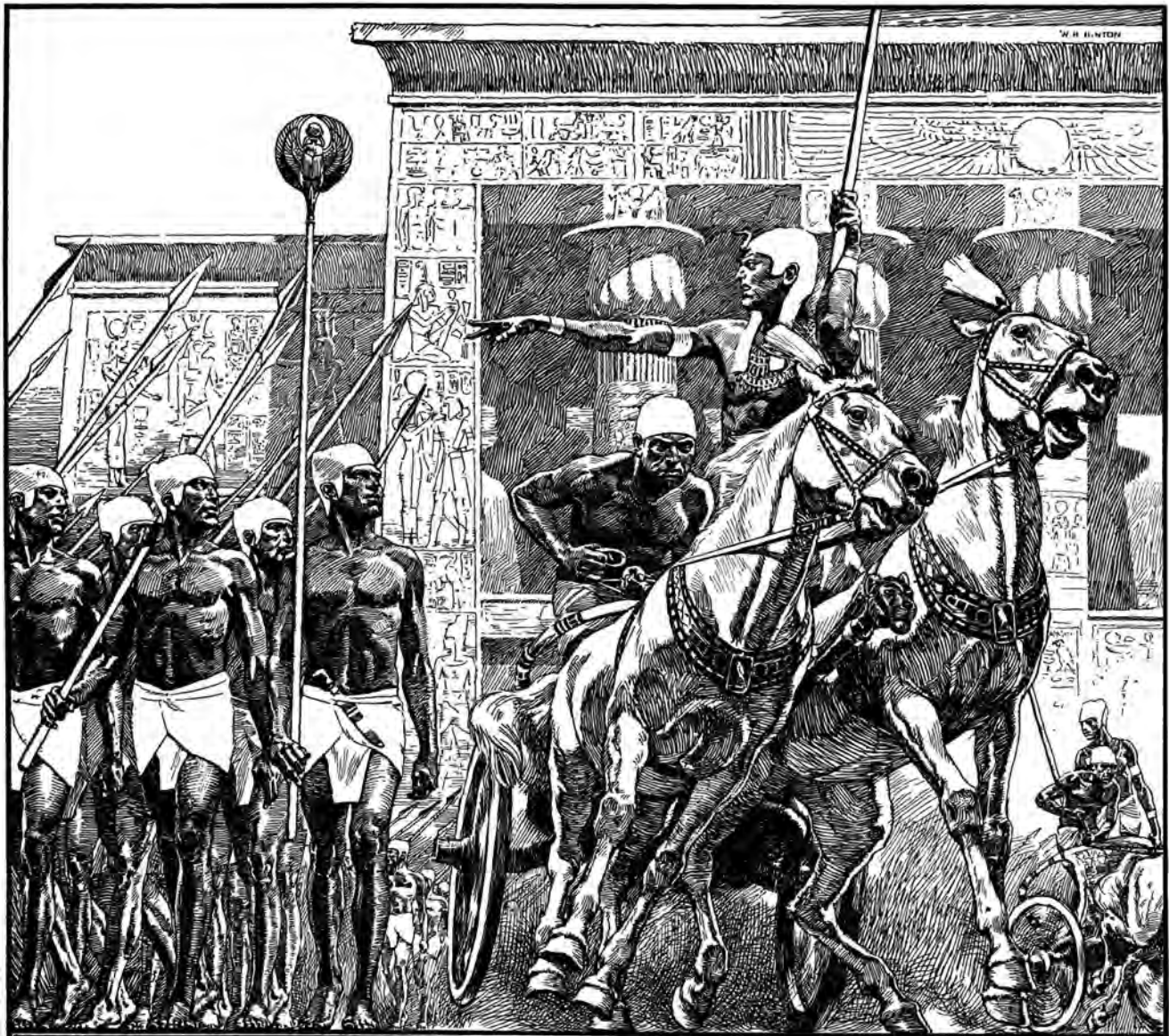
80. Hinton, Washington interview.

81. Hinton, Washington interview.

been located to confirm her circumstances or her genealogy, no image of her is known, and Walter Haskell Hinton refused to speak of her for the rest of his long life, not even to his son. Once when he was innocently asked when he had been married, Hinton only answered cryptically and mournfully, "Oh Gosh – that's one of the things I lost – I forget those dates."⁷⁸ We can only surmise that he wished to put behind him this awful trauma. He took the baby back to Philadelphia to his mother's care, and he did not ever pursue marriage again.

Hinton reported for the draft in 1917, but as the sole supporter of his mother and son, he did not enlist. Possibly, he was of more use as an ad man: his Indian Motorcycle spreads obviously date from wartime, featuring the usefulness of the motorcycle in saving lives in the trenches (Figure 13). The poster campaigns of the First World War demonstrated to the government and the public that pictorial advertising could be pleasing to look at and could perform a valuable service to society by mustering the war effort. They also proved that advertising was more powerfully persuasive than anybody had previously realized, and so the term "public relations" was coined when "propaganda" came to have negative connotations.⁷⁹ Rapidly spreading interest in the field of psychology and in statistical analysis was transforming the advertising business from trial-and-error attention-getting and information-imparting to a closely calculated science of influencing behavior.

In 1919, a Chicago man named Charles Daniel Frey heard about Hinton and offered him a job in a bullpen (a studio of salaried illustrators) back in Chicago. Hinton decided to take it; the 1920 census places him in Chicago Ward 14.⁸⁰ Frey was a leader of the American Protective League, a right-wing volunteer organization of vigilante civilians who worked with Federal agents to sniff out spies and radicals. In 1919 the government was beginning to distance itself from the APL, and so Frey, originally a newspaper man, started up a commercial art studio. Frey must have valued Hinton's talents as an idea generator because he offered to pay all his moving expenses. (Hinton thought this was funny, because he had by then amassed many pieces of heavy antique furniture).⁸¹ It is doubtful whether Hinton had anything to do with the APL, since his own politics were not radical, but Frey would likely have taught him all the latest propaganda tactics recently developed during the War by the likes of PR genius, Edward Bernays,



30

Through the dim vistas of history, the glory
the customs, the every day life of ancient Egypt
are brought down to us through their pictorial
art with the vividness of reality.
Send forth your advertising message as vividly,

As well as ancient Egypt's
"Your Story in Picture Leaves Nothing Untold"

BARNES-CROSBY COMPANY

E. W. HOUSER, PRES.

**ADVERTISING ART STUDIOS
PHOTO-ENGRAVING SHOPS**

9-NORTH FRANKLIN ST. COR. MADISON ST.
CHICAGO, ILL.

Member American Photo-Engravers Association



Figure 14 *Barnes-Crosby advertisement by Hinton*, 1928. Collection of the Hinton family.

82. Finding Aid, for Charles Daniel Frey, Special Collections, Young (Charles E.) Research Library, UCLA <<http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/kt1c6003fx/>>

83. Hinton, Washington interview.

nephew of Sigmund Freud.⁸² Hinton's own approach was to use an attractive narrative, just like the tale of Velvet Joe reaching for his fiddle:

*If you can bring in an interesting story you sort of hypnotize the reader to the fact he's being led into an advertising proposition, painlessly. So you get this interesting side, and then you can associate the product that you're trying to push with this. So that's the way advertising works.*⁸³

In all Hinton's work, with the exception of some of his landscapes, there is some kind of "interesting story" being told: a motorcyclist rescues soldiers; a fly fisherman teases a fellow digging worms; a country boy frolics with his puppies and horses, and is visited by a passing city girl; John Deere invents the steel plow. Whether intended for advertising or to embellish a magazine or a jigsaw puzzle, his pictures capture some moment in time for which the viewer can readily imagine what happened just prior and what will happen next. This sort of participation is what makes illustration appealing. When the subject matter was something some individual – perhaps a fisherman – found personally resonant, his participation in the narrative did indeed break down his or her resistance to purchasing the item the image embellished. But it also increased the likelihood he would donate to a fish hatchery.

Commercial Art Versus Fine Art

84. Hinton, Washington interview.

85. The argument is explored by Loren Stone, "Who Says it isn't 'Fine Art?'" *American Artist*, Vol. 6 (May, 1942), 24.

86. Hinton, Washington interview.

Hinton once explained that there were "two phases of art": commercial art and "easel paintings for hanging in homes."⁸⁴ Art historians of Hinton's era, and up until recently, traditionally emphasized the intuitive side of creativity, honoring the mysteries of what since the eighteenth century had been called "genius" in the production of easel paintings. The artist called upon his inner-directed and presumed superior powers of insight to interpret his subject (it was assumed women were incapable of true genius) in ways that revealed its essence, and in doing so, he developed a unique, autographic style, instantly recognizable. While Hinton would have learned these values from Fleury, as an illustrator he *also* had to contend with art direction from others and the need to make his pictures perform for a preconceived and approved-by-committee purpose. Illustrators then and now often point out that their task is more difficult than that of easel painters, who could follow their hearts and not worry about pleasing others as much.⁸⁵ Recently, art criticism has begun to re-evaluate the supposed freedom of the fine artist, showing how subtle, subliminal, and covert market pressures from peers, clients, press, and the public have actually helped mold even the freest artistic spirit. Hinton recognized this hidden determining market force long ago, when he once explained how Corot was forced to turn his first success into a gimmick and replicate it, so that when the purchaser's friends saw the work they could recognize it. The easel painter, Hinton claimed, was "locked in" to one kind of expression.⁸⁶

The prospect of endlessly repeating himself while keeping up a pretence of originality and inner inspiration for the purpose of boosting bourgeois artificial art-collector prestige struck Hinton as distasteful. He preferred the challenge of having to reinvent himself constantly:

*Now with commercial art I didn't know what we had in the next minute. Somebody would come in with something entirely different and, well, you had to produce. You had to know something; you would have to have done a certain amount of study to develop yourself to be versatile to take care of all these different situations that may arise. So I preferred that – there was much more variety and it was much more interesting.*⁸⁷

87. Hinton, Washington interview.

The relish in Hinton's voice as he related memories of commercial work suggests that identifying the formal, ideological and iconographic interpretation that would best charm the targeted audiences (including the client himself, as well

as his client's customer) was a pleasurable game of wit and strategy, where selling his vision and then living up to the client's challenge were creatively fulfilling.

Rather than placing proof of expertise in a signature style as we do with easel painters, with the bullpen illustrator, we must judge quality by the creator's versatility and mastery of many styles. Where fine artists are often measured by their exhaustive study of one subject – Degas' ballet dancers, for instance – bullpen illustrators are best evaluated for how they facilitate a variety of concepts. Chicago had been the birthplace of modern advertising methods in the nineteenth century (in step with the evolution of the department store), and it was still the primary center of advertising in the 1920s. Through this booming decade, Hinton worked on accounts that ranged from household products to industrial goods to services, from products aimed at "classes" to those marketed to the "masses," and he became expert at it under his next employer's roof.

Barnes-Crosby and the Roaring Twenties

Being back in Chicago brought the Hinton family back to familiar surroundings. Hinton didn't stay long with Frey. In 1921 when Frey closed the art studio and began an advertising agency, he moved on to become the chief artist on the staff of the Barnes-Crosby agency, where he was to remain until the Depression.

As senior artist at Barnes-Crosby, Hinton had to develop promotions for the agency itself. This demanded his best work, and so it is from such a campaign that ran in *Printers' Ink Monthly* that we see Hinton's best pen and ink work. An example later impressed Fridolf Johnson (1905-1988), editor of *American Artist* magazine and respected graphic artist, who reproduced it in his 1982 survey of American pen and ink illustration (Figure 14).⁸⁸ Showing a pharaoh commanding troops, it is a very masterful composition that combines the ancient Egyptian use of a ground line and lack of linear perspective (the troops all stand on the same plane with no foreground) with a European depth of field (the foreshortened chariot and the temple in misty atmospheric perspective in the background), which makes an optical illusion of the horses jumping off the page. The upright verticality of the soldiers and pilasters is interrupted by the radical diagonal of the wheeling horse's legs, carrying the eye up to the focal point: the horizontal commander's arm, with the temple framing him, which allies the pharaoh with divine purpose. The campaign, which matched Hinton's interests in the exotic, presents scenes of ancient civilizations' use of graphic communication, suggesting advertising illustration was comparable to the artistic achievements of Egyptians, Persians, medieval Gothic painters, and Aztecs (it was rather singular of Hinton to include Aztecs in what was otherwise a customary narrative of European cultural progress; this willingness to honor New World peoples on equal footing was a precedent for Hinton's later work depicting indigenous peoples). The copy on one explained, "Persia's beautifully illuminated and illustrated manuscripts graphically bring to us her poetic and artistic past. In no less a measure our modern advertising can be made to live on the printed page by the use of convincing and realistic illustrations." The slogan read, "Your Story in Pictures Leaves Nothing Untold."

With Hinton's mounting success at telling stories, the family frequently upgraded their living quarters, renting at Rogers Park, at 124 Hamlin Avenue just east of Garfield Park, in Oak Park, and at 324 Marion Street in Prospect Heights.

During the 1920s, production and consumption soared and were seen as the mainstay of the economy. President Coolidge linked capitalism with civic benevolence, advertising with spiritual redemption.⁸⁹ Business, building, and education reached unprecedented heights. The new economy also brought a corresponding shift in the concept of masculinity. Where in Hinton's childhood men prided themselves on their outdoorsy capabilities, in the 1920s aptitude at business and participation in gentlemen's clubs, nightlife, and consumerism began to gain in importance, all of which was encouraged by magazines.⁹⁰ A large amount of Hinton's advertising work was devoted to men's ready-to-wear clothing

88. Fridolf Johnson, *Treasury of American Pen-And-Ink Illustration, 1881-1938*: 236
Drawings by 103 Artists (Dover, 1982), 120.

89. Calvin Coolidge, Address to the American Society of Newspaper Editors, Washington, D.C., January 17, 1925; Address Before the American Association of Advertising Agencies, October 27, 1926.

90. Tom Pendergast, *Creating the Modern Man: American Magazines and Consumer Culture, 1900-1950* (University of Missouri Press, 2000), 145.

(a relatively new commodity), which reflected the shift in the economy from agricultural to white collar work. Hinton worked for companies such as Allen A., Sears and Roebuck, and David Adler. In an expensive ad for Tokio Hosiery using gold ink (Figure 15), Hinton drew upon his knowledge of and appreciation for Japanese art, using flat shapes and a minimalist design (at home he had a stunning Japanese cabinet with inlaid mother of pearl, and a small collection of *netsuke*). Hosiery was a rapidly expanding market as hemlines went up; associating the brand with the geisha figure suggested sexy exoticism to Americans.

A 1942 commentator unabashedly wrote:

91. Loren Stone, "Who Says it isn't 'Fine Art?'" *American Artist*, Vol. 6 (May, 1942), 24.

*Fine art, it has often been said, is a record of the times. I say advertising art is ahead of the times. Advertising brings the future to the public . . . [it] creates public acceptance for ideas which themselves determine the times. It is "propaganda" for a better way of life.*⁹¹

Although hindsight can easily identify the downsides of the pursuit of ever increasing standards of living, in the 1920s, when class differences and diseases we now cure easily still haunted everyone but especially the poor who lived in rickety, barely plumbed tenements, the "better way of life" was gratefully embraced as an

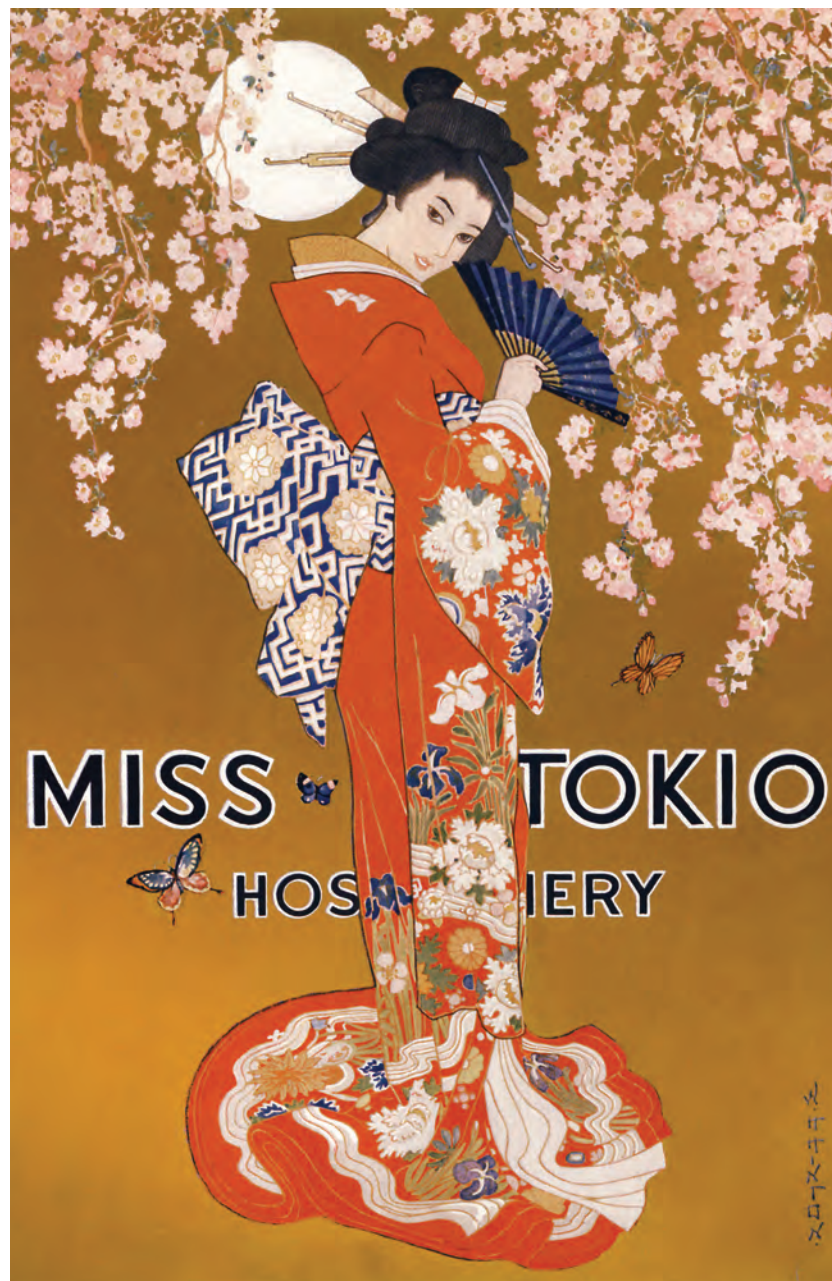


Figure 15 *Miss Tokio Hosiery* advertisement by Hinton, circa 1925, using gold ink for the background. Collection of the Hinton family.

urgent national priority. To have a “modern” house meant having a bathroom and appliances. Women were encouraged to express themselves through “scientific” housekeeping.⁹² Unsurprisingly, one of the biggest early clients Hinton had was Old Dutch Cleanser, for whom he painted women cheerfully scrubbing away for “Healthful Cleanliness.”⁹³ As an advertising artist, Walter Haskell Hinton would have felt his work was helping the nation achieve better living circumstances and self-respect, and that his work was helping improve the economy and industry.

92. McGovern, *Sold American*, 36-48.

93. Hinton, Washington interview.

Agricultural Magazines

Hinton also executed numerous covers for *Successful Farming*, *Dairy Farming*, and *Fruit, Garden and Home* magazines. He recalled,

*In fine art they look down upon commercial art of course, but even the illustrators that illustrate new covers for magazines, they look down on the fellow that's advertising somebody's toothpaste.*⁹⁴

94. Hinton, Washington interview.

Although Hinton didn't personally feel his ad work was less creative or artistic than other kinds of illustration, it was important for any ambitious illustrator to excel at covers, in order to build more of a name and to develop that signature style that would allow him to win the more esteemed assignments as Leone Bracker had done. Hinton placed many samples of these covers in his portfolio, which he used to win magazine assignments from publishers in the next decade.



Figure 16 Cover, *Dairy Farmer*, 1928.
Image: Jaleen Grove, from magazine in
New York Public Library.



The Goal of Every Family Is An Attractive Home With Everything In It To Make Living Enjoyable

THIS picture above is an indication of what can be done in beautifying the farm home. There are thousands of such homes among the families of our readers; they must be sources of great satisfaction and happiness to the owners and members of their families. We believe that farming can be made profitable enough so that every farm family can have a good home, good buildings, good furniture, we're doing everything in our power to help you make your farm profitable enough to provide all of these things.

And it isn't always necessary to spend a lot of money to improve the appearance of your home and its surroundings. A great deal can be done by the proper arrangement of buildings and by planting the right kind of trees, shrubs and flowers in the right places. All these add so much to the beauty of the home. Such decorative landscape features are not particularly expensive, but they do require careful planning; and trees should be planted now to add to the future beauty of your farm landscape.

Successful Farming's Better Homes Department

From the very first, Successful Farming has given special attention to many of the details of home management—new recipes, care of the children, household conveniences, interior decorating, etc. But, starting with the October number, we began to enlarge the section and to cover fully, every department of home planning, landscaping, flowers, furnishing, decorating and management. We want this department to be an inspiration to you and to fully meet every requirement of yours in the further improvement and beautification of your home. It shall be our purpose to give you pictures and articles on

beautiful homes so that out of the many, you may select the ideas that best suit your requirements.

Our Better Farm Home Department will not stop with simply helping to plan the home and its surroundings, but will give special attention to interior decorating, furnishing of the home, and household conveniences that lessen labor and give you more time for other things.

Thus, the November number is even more interesting than was the October number and some very fine articles along the same line are planned for the December number.

Be Sure To Read The December Number Carefully

Of course, the regular departments will be fully up to their usual high standard. Among many other articles there will be one of the best on feeding dairy cattle that we have yet seen.

The November number contains a discussion of the McNary-Hansen Bill written by the man selected by the McNary-Hansen leaders. This will be followed in December by an article by L. J. Tabor, National President of the Grange, on the Export Debiture Plan, which the Grange has advocated for years. It is our hope that we can publish in future issues, every

promising plan for the relief of agriculture in order that you may have the opportunity to study them all carefully and decide which one you favor.

Each issue of Successful Farming is being planned in advance more carefully than ever. It is our honest belief that you'll find it ever more helpful, more practical, and more interesting than it has been in the past. By all means, see that your subscription is renewed or extended, and make sure that you receive every one of these future issues. (Special Rates in effect, said December 17th are—)

3 YEARS FOR 50c; - - - 6 YEARS FOR \$1

Use the special order blank enclosed with this copy of the paper.

SUCCESSFUL FARMING

E. T. Meredith, Publisher,

Des Moines, Iowa

Like other periodicals, the farming magazines also promoted improved standards of living. Hinton's covers are usually scenes of especially pretty farms with people going about their work with an air of summery leisure, or of children at play (Figure 16). This interpretation of the idyllic farm reiterated a century-old symbol of American identity, what Henry Nash Smith in *Virgin Land* termed "the agrarian utopia of hardy and virtuous yeomen," which had originated with Thomas Jefferson.⁹⁵ In the nineteenth century political rhetoric and beliefs that eventually culminated in the 1862 Homestead Act, the yeoman was supposed to be content to work hard and to prefer a life free of "corrupting" luxuries in a very Puritanical way. But magazines of the 1920s promised him – or rather, his tired-out descendants – that the fruits of nineteenth century improvements invested in modern technology would lead to affluence, leisure, and consumer goods. Why should farmers not have these things as urban professionals did? Not only did the agricultural magazines promote modernization of farming equipment in their articles, editorials, and ads, they also contained much content aimed at turning farmhouses into oases of genteel living complete with gifts under the Christmas tree (Figure 17). Hinton's farming families use modern equipment alongside the old, and the farm family is always well dressed and has fine barns and homes.

The Depression and Glen Ellyn

With the unprecedented boom in advertising in the 1920s, Hinton did quite well financially. He purchased a Cadillac and took his

Figure 17 *Successful Farming* promotional, 1926. Image: Jaleen Grove, from magazine in New York Public Library.

95. Smith, *Virgin Land*, 170-171.

Figure 18 Frontispiece of photo album by Hinton, showing his lettering skills. The kachina doll pictured here was purchased on the trip. Gouache, circa 1927. Collection of the Hinton family.

96. Receipt. Collection of the Hinton family.

97. Susanne Hinton, email to Elliott Willis and Walter Hinton, Oct. 27, 2010.

family on long vacations by train to Alaska via Banff and Vancouver, and to Utah and Arizona, and he went on a sailing trip to Niagara. He documented these travels with a German-made 4x5" view camera and made beautiful albums (Figure 18). He also collected aesthetic objects made by native peoples and visited sites such as Hopi House in the Grand Canyon, a museum and shop employing the Hopi themselves. This research aided him when he later painted Native Americans.

The 1929 stock market crash caused only a small hiccup in his career. In 1930, he traded in his Cadillac for a flashier Pierce Arrow, costing \$4510.⁹⁶ Then, in 1933, the worst year of the Depression, Barnes-Crosby closed and Hinton moved his family to suburban Westchester where they could grow some of their own food.⁹⁷ Hinton returned to freelancing, and it suited him well. In 1937 he was able to buy a unique handcrafted Swiss chalet style house at 709 Crescent Boulevard in the more rural community of Glen Ellyn, where he remained for the rest of his life (Figure 19). The magnificent ancient

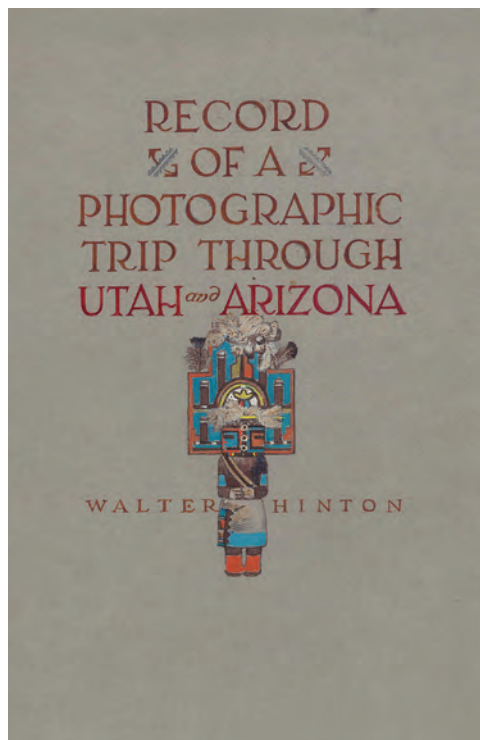




Figure 19 Hinton's Glen Ellyn house, with son Ray in car, circa 1945. Collection of Bill and Bobbi Laing.

trees in the area, one of which still stands in his old back yard, attracted people who valued nature and the arts. Frank Lloyd Wright had designed Bill Rathje's grandfather's house nearby, which seems to have led to other unusual houses like Hinton's being built in the vicinity, and to a populace deeply interested in the arts.⁹⁸ Hinton loved his house for its fine craftsmanship, drawing guests' attention to the skilful plasterwork inside.⁹⁹ He improved the "art atmosphere" by installing whimsical architectural carvings inside and out of dramatic faces, monks' heads, wooden squirrels, and Chinese-looking bird houses. William Slater recalls,

I lived next to Walter as a boy and spent many days watching him paint and being fascinated with his house. . . . [It] looked like a Swiss Chalet with lots of big heavy dark beams and stone. It rambled all over and was fascinating for a kid. He had a great collection of antique militaria from Mongol war shields and helmets, very ornate wheel lock muskets, and other various flintlock, snaphense etc. over his fireplace¹⁰⁰

His home became something of a legend in the neighborhood, with strangers sometimes asking to see (and even buy!) his collections.¹⁰¹ Outside, Hinton believed in preserving a natural habitat for birds and animals, and so he encouraged native trees and plants to grow, and as the street became busier, he let the evergreens between the road and the front door fill in.¹⁰² Because of the wilderness setting and carved faces, Slater recalls that some children regarded the house and Hinton as spooky. But those who knew him found him friendly and engaging. John Higgins-Biddle, another boy who grew up next door, recalls that:

He worked hard and regularly in his yard, his pipe in his teeth or pocket. He was one of the first environmentalists long before the term existed. He was a forceful opponent of the town's spraying to kill mosquitoes, which he claimed also killed the birds. He composted everything and was a valued source of information to our family and others about how to care properly for trees, shrubs, grass, etc. Indeed, in the winter of 1948-49 rabbits ate the bark off a small magnolia tree we had planted to celebrate the birth of our sister. Mr. Hinton advised we wrap the stems carefully with cloth and cover that with foil. If you visit today, you'll see that tree not only survived but is one of the largest, most beautiful magnolias in Glen Ellyn.¹⁰³

Hinton's appreciation for the environment is especially expressed in his popular calendar paintings, which celebrate native animals and plants so much.

The studio was established in a small space on the upper floor, where

98. Richard G. Johnson is researching Wright's influence in the neighborhood.

99. Hinton, Washington interview.

100. William J. Slater, "Biography for Walter Hinton," *Askart* <http://www.askart.com/AskART/artists/biography.aspx?artist=100488> (accessed April 16, 2010).

101. Bill Rathje to Jaleen Grove. In the Washington interview, Hinton also recounts instances of strangers attempting to buy his antiques.

102. Hinton, Washington interview.

103. John Higgins-Biddle, email, June 14, 2010.

Hinton painted on an easel next to a large north-facing window that he had specially enlarged (Figure 20). Next to him was his paint stand with jars and brushes and palette, and nearby stood filing cabinets of reference material and drawers of sketches and proofs. It is here that he produced the John Deere and other corporate paintings, and the Western, sporting, and calendar images he is remembered for today.

Sporting Magazines

Thanks to his independent nature and ability to sell ideas, Hinton was extremely prolific during the 1930s, when many other illustrators were going hungry. Not one to wait by the phone, Hinton routinely prepared detailed comprehensive sketches and cold-called all sorts of agencies and publishers to sell his ideas. He used the same sales techniques he had mastered back when he freelanced in Philadelphia:

*This one fella wanted to represent me. I could beat him all to hell when it came to selling because I could talk to a man, find out what he wanted, and all the time the old think-tank is working and evolved an idea. Then I could take a piece of paper and draw it in front of him.*¹⁰⁴

104. Hinton, Washington interview.

105. Hinton, recorded conversation with Mr. B, 1980.

106. Hinton, recorded conversation with Mr. B, 1980.

He thought the covers of *Outdoor Life* and *Sports Afield* were “lousy,” so he sent in some ideas and they accepted them right away.¹⁰⁵ He also contributed interior illustrations and “fisherman’s calendar” art. Hinton completed numerous covers for both between about 1934 and 1950. *Outdoor Life* eventually got upset with Hinton because he refused to work exclusively for them, even though they offered to pay him not just his usual fee but also that which *Sports Afield* would have paid.¹⁰⁶ It was unusual for competing magazines to use the same illustrator, once that illustrator had done enough work to become associated with a particular title. Unfortunately, we don’t know when *Outdoor Life* complained and what came of it, but Hinton appears to have done more covers for *Sports Afield* (around 24) and for longer. Hinton would have appreciated the editorial direction espoused by *Sports Afield*’s founder, Claude King:

*Sports Afield . . . wants to help propagate the true spirit of gentle sportsmanship, to encourage indulgence in outdoor recreations and to assist in the dissemination of knowledge regarding natural history, photography, firearms, and kindred subjects.*¹⁰⁷

107. Claude King quoted in Jay Cassell and Diana Rupp, “The Story of Sports Afield” http://www.sportsafield.com/site/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=53&Itemid=32 (Accessed July 9, 2010).

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Figure 20 *Hinton's studio*, circa 1941.
Collection of the Hinton family.

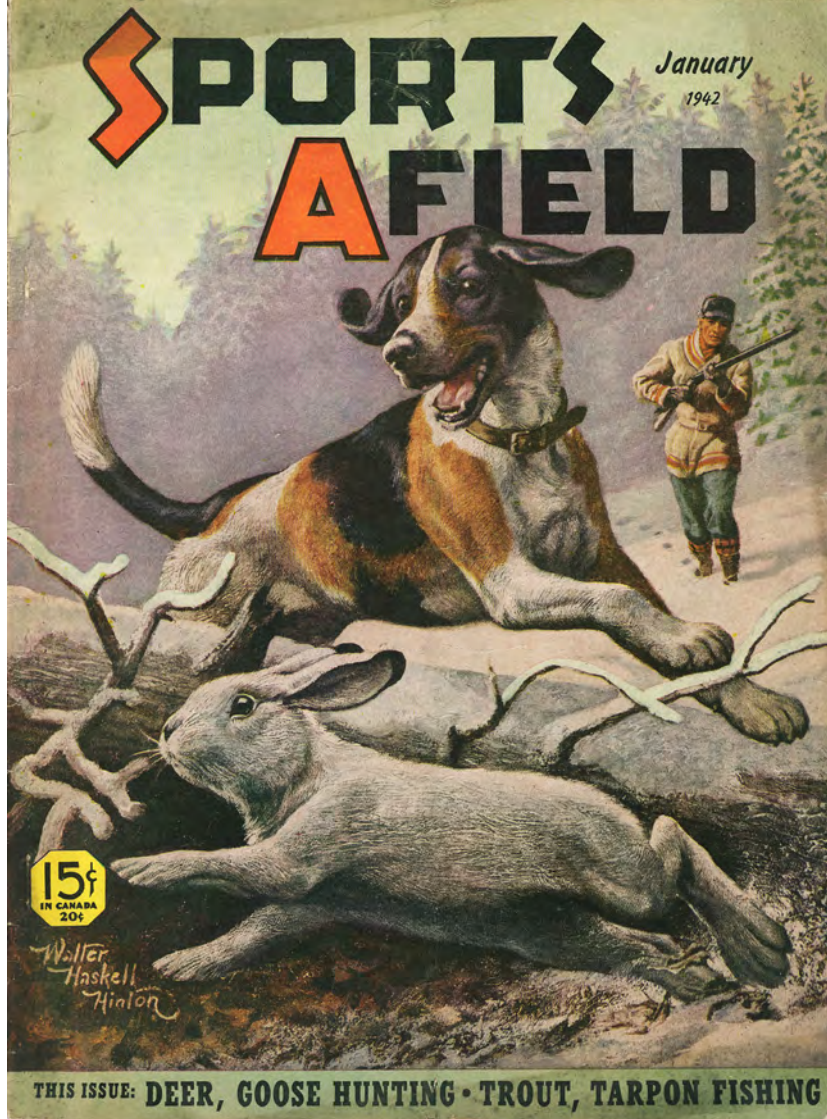


Figure 21 Cover, *Sports Afield*, January 1942. Image: Jaleen Grove.

In keeping with its educational objectives, the magazine sold books for youths on environment and conservation; several of Hinton's covers show youngsters being mentored by outdoorsmen. In 1942 *Sports Afield* also ran little write-ups about each cover on the Contents page, which Hinton praised:

*You have certainly struck on a dandy idea, this story of the cover . . . You can also inject into the readers a little painless natural history. As usual, I believe you are leading the field in this feature.*¹⁰⁸

108. Hinton, rough draft manuscript. Collection of the Hinton family.

Employing his knack for storytelling, Hinton penned these easily, with his rough draft matching the published text exactly. Beginning with "When winter mantles the earth with a blanket of white . . ." it continued in this semi-poetic vein to describe the changing coat of the snowshoe rabbit and the keenness of the beagle (Figure 21).

Hinton's prose, which appeared in 1942, and King's vision were typical of the Thoreau-esque philosophy of nature that had developed at the turn of the century. Understanding of the West as pristine wilderness and a veritable cornucopia was perpetuated with images of bountiful forests and lakes teeming with trophy fish and game, calling out to be caught. It was still the spiritual land of opportunity for those amenable to a strenuous life – but development was encroaching. Game hunting and conservation programs began around the turn of the century, often led by farmers, who had a vested interest in controlling deer and bird populations.¹⁰⁹ Stewardship of the outdoors was therefore closely related to other aspects of settlement, a close relative to the farming and Western scenes Hinton also painted; hunting and fishing comprised another aspect of folk life in the Midwest. One *Sports Afield* article documented the outdoors

109. Karen R. Merrill, "Domesticated Bliss: Ranchers and Their Animals," in *Across the Great Divide: Cultures of Manhood in the American West*, edited by M. Basso, L. McCall, and D. Garceau (Routledge, 2001), 175–6.

110. Don Mills, "Small Town Stuff," *Sports Afield* (June, 1945), 26.

pursuits of the magazine's printers in the town of Mount Morris, Illinois, where Kable Brothers Company employed 800 people in printing. Members of this staff organized a game conservation plan in order to preserve a balance between farming and wild habitat.¹¹⁰ Hinton's work, then, expressed not just lofty literary ideals, but the actual interests of people residing a scant 100 miles away from him, whose livelihoods depended on the magazine's success, to which Hinton's covers contributed no small part.

111. Earle, *All Man!*, 2009.

112. Mr. B to Jaleen Grove.

Subjects Hinton chose for these two outdoors magazines ranged from the humorous to the sublime, and included all manner of fish, game, and dogs. By the 1930s, the culture of camping, hunting and fishing had turned into a lucrative industry. Not in fact so much a practice of the "strenuous life" any more, nor limited to rural people such as those of Mount Morris, middle class men took weekend and day trips rigged out in the most fashionable equipment and with the latest lures and guns accompanied by purebred dogs, to relax, bond with friends, and get a taste of the testosterone-filled life described by Ernest Hemingway, who was then a celebrity of the pulps and men's magazines.¹¹¹ The cover of *Outdoor Life* of November, 1941 shows just such a gentleman, the model for whom was Hinton himself (Figure 22). He was an avid skeet shooter and fisherman.¹¹² He was not however, a hunter:

*I felt like a dirty criminal. You just pull a trigger and you take something that you couldn't replace if you lived to be a thousand years. That's their home and they enjoy their lives and have just as much a right to live as I have. But I was brought up to hunt and fish. Of course, fish I don't feel so bad about because they are a bunch of cannibals anyway. But as far as killing animals, I even feed them out here at night.*¹¹³

113. Hinton, Washington interview.



Figure 22 Self portrait. Cover, *Outdoor Life*, November 1941. Collection of the Hinton family.

He was even squeamish about boiling live lobsters.¹¹⁴ Hinton's conflicted feelings about enjoying target practice versus actually killing reflected a shift in public attitudes in general. In 1948, *Outdoor Life* printed an essay by southerner and Presbyterian minister Renwick C. Kennedy sharply criticizing trophy and sport hunting.¹¹⁵ It opened up a raging debate in which Kennedy was characterized as a "sentimentalist," which spilled over into *Time* magazine, where GIs who slaughtered wildlife on farms for fun were exposed.¹¹⁶ While *Outdoor Life* maintained support for sport hunting, more articles began to appear that condemned illegal and greedy hunting practices while touting conservation. Hinton's covers depict far more anglers than shooters, and when the occasional hunter is shown actually raising his firearm, he is generally far away in the distance and the focal point is the sensitively rendered and ennobled game fleeing in the foreground.

During the war, Hinton reported for draft but did not serve since he was approaching the age of 60 and supporting his mother at home. He did, however, design war effort posters (thumbnail sketches exist but it is unknown whether any were turned into finished posters), and he completed patriotic covers for *Sports Afield*. One shows soldiers in a trench gesturing at flying ducks, and in another, an old man waves at passing recruits from a trout stream. The July 1942 issue of *Sports Afield* is the most patriotic of them all and utilizes the tactic of updating tradition very effectively: a V for Victory floats between a modern hunter with a rifle under a flag of the United States, and a Daniel Boone-like Minute-Man in the background with a flintlock and "Betsy Ross" flag (Figure 23). Rhetorically, the image suggests that the fighters for Independence from English domination in 1776 (given a more Western than New England flavor here) be the role models for men of age to fight Nazi domination. The hunter here is equated with a militiaman; an advertisement for Western Cartridge Company running in *Sports Afield* during the war juxtaposes a vignette of a boy at target practice with a picture of a shooting soldier; boy and soldier are in identical poses. "America Can't Miss!" says the title; "Yesterday he shot for fun . . . today he shoots for freedom!" says the copy. What the soldier is shooting at is omitted (as it is in Hinton's Victory composition), allowing the viewer to concentrate on his prowess rather than his impact. Hinton's cover and the advertising reinforced one another, both using the entrenched popular iconography of American history and the ideology of American exceptionalism to bolster the war effort.

After the war there are few covers by Hinton. Illustrated magazine covers seemed increasingly old-fashioned; women's magazines had already begun to switch to photography in the late 1930s. By 1957, technological advances in fast speed film for color photography – and the cost savings this entailed – had ousted illustration almost entirely.¹¹⁷



Figure 23 Cover, *Sports Afield*, July, 1942. Collection of the Hinton family.

115. Renwick C. Kennedy, "Why I Gave Up Hunting," *Outdoor Life* (February 1948).

116. Tennant McWilliams, "Remembering Ol' Bullet," *Troy University Magazine* (Summer 2009) <http://www.troy.edu/magazine/archives/Summer2009/bullet.html>.

117. *Outdoor Life*, "1948-1957: Optimism Unbound: Decade of Development" (May 1998), 75.

Pulps and Westerns

In the illustration world, working for pulp magazines – so-called because they were cheaply printed on the worst pulpy paper – carried less prestige than working for “slicks,” the industry jargon for large-circulation subscription magazines (like the sporting ones) that could afford glossy paper, well-known writers, and nice rotogravure printing. Hinton, however, does not appear to have cared about prestige and he didn’t need the money either. At the same time as he pursued pulp he had regular better paying work from the 1930s to the 1950s doing large corporations’ advertising and the sporting magazines, and he usually signed his work boldly (some pulp illustrators did not sign, to protect their reputations). Primarily he illustrated *Western Story* and *Wild West Weekly* for publisher Street & Smith, and *Mammoth Western* for Ziff Davis, but he also did work on *Adventure*, *Love Story*, *Amazing Stories*, *Imagination*, and *Fantastic Adventures*, inexpensive titles that most people could afford. He avoided the more lurid and pornographic titles that gave pulps a bad name. Pulps paid modestly compared to the more respectable magazines, but they could be done more quickly with less art direction.¹¹⁸ Plus, Hinton personally liked Western material and enjoyed doing the historical research the assignments required.

Hinton completed at least two dozen pulp covers with Western themes, and many interior illustrations besides. Usually he depicted a cowboy with a gun drawn riding a lively horse, pursuing or being pursued by another gun-slinging cowboy. The cowboys were dressed in iconic garb established originally by nineteenth century studio dress-up portraits of commoners posing as cowboys,¹¹⁹ with chaps, kerchiefs, guns and hats, and they often are heroically portrayed from a low perspective so that we gaze up at their squinting, chiseled features (Figure 24). Hinton excelled at drama, especially at painting muscular horses in all manner of contorted action poses, with clouds of dust and distant cliffs purpled by a setting sun. No women appear, and no sappy emotions are betrayed, although sometimes Man’s Best Friend runs alongside his master’s horse. This is a man’s world of dirt, conflict and bravery, and even the camp cook’s pink shirt and makeshift apron (perhaps donned to amuse his slightly smirking buddy) heighten his masculinity by contrast, rather than compromise it (Figure 25). His West is that fantastical playground of American boyhood where virtue was measured by character and virility, bound by an internal code of honor.

Perhaps Walter Haskell Hinton’s affinity for Western subjects originated in a familiarity with the dime novels and story-papers of the nineteenth century. This was where the white hat/black hat dramas of frontiersmen Kit Carson, Deadwood Dick, and Wild Bill Hickock originated, which were modeled on real people but told mostly imagined adventures of them as pioneers, scouts and antiheroes. Dime stories circulated nationally and so they established a common idea of the West. In the 1880s, cowboys – previously uninteresting low-status workers of a variety of races – started to become Caucasian hero figures too. Although these cheap stories largely ceased being published when little Walter was seven years of age, they would have circulated widely for many years after, and their customary forms lived on in popular entertainment such as Vaudeville, the Buffalo Bill extravaganzas that he frequented, photographs, and the new silent movies. They were quick to resurface in print when the pulps began publication around 1913, and they remain a familiar genre today. Hinton’s eagerness to go to Mexico in 1909 may have started with the romance of the West and Southwest in popular culture, as well as his father’s colorful stories about his own years there.¹²⁰ He spent much of that trip sketching at ranches, which provided source material.¹²¹ Meanwhile, government reports and history books backed up the cowboy archetype with the rhetoric of the humble farmer and rancher bringing civilization to a savage land.¹²²

“New West” scholarship has revealed that the common pioneer was enticed west by advertising literature issued by government and big businesses who profited from the removal of the Indians, the building of railroads, and the ensuing real estate booms. The boosting of the free landholder built upon the concept of Manifest Destiny (the idea that America was the gift of Providence

118. According to his account books on file at the Society of Illustrators, in the 1940s, Arthur William Brown received \$700 for interior illustrations in *Redbook*; while in the 1960s the highly esteemed Norm Eastman received only \$200-\$250 for pulp covers (interview published in *Men’s Adventure Magazines: In Postwar America*, ed. Rich Oberg, Steven Heller, Max Allan Collins, George Hagenauer (Taschen, 2008), 471.

119. Sandweiss, *Print the Legend*, 331.

120. Elliott (Hinton) Willis to Grove.

121. Hinton, Washington interview; Roland M. Wade, *A Brush With History: Walter Haskell Hinton* (Washington National Insurance Company, circa 1976), 5.

122. Sandweiss, *Print the Legend*.

VOLUME 4
NUMBER 4

MAMMOTH

WESTERN

APRIL
1948

MAMMOTH

APRIL 25¢

WESTERN ANC

LAST OF THE
TINHORNS
by WM HOPSON



put at the disposal of blessed white settlers), and also stemmed from interest in preventing economic competition from the South's slave system from spreading west.¹²³ Popular entertainment reinforced the notion of an empty West going to waste, waiting for development, and ignored the contributions of African Americans, Chinese, and Mexicans, and the violent displacement and genocide of Native Americans. Professor of Western history Brian Dippie points out that such scholarship has caused museums to wonder whether the Western is in fact expressive of not just bad taste but "bad values."¹²⁴

But why should popular Western imagery reflect historical fact? Dippie goes on to make a case for allowing Western art to be judged by its own standards of

Figure 24 Cover, *Mammoth Western*, April, 1948. Collection of the Hinton family.

123. Smith, *Virgin Land*, 165–173.

124. Brian Dippie, "In the Enemy's Country: Western Art's Uneasy Status," in *Redrawing Boundaries*, 19, 25.

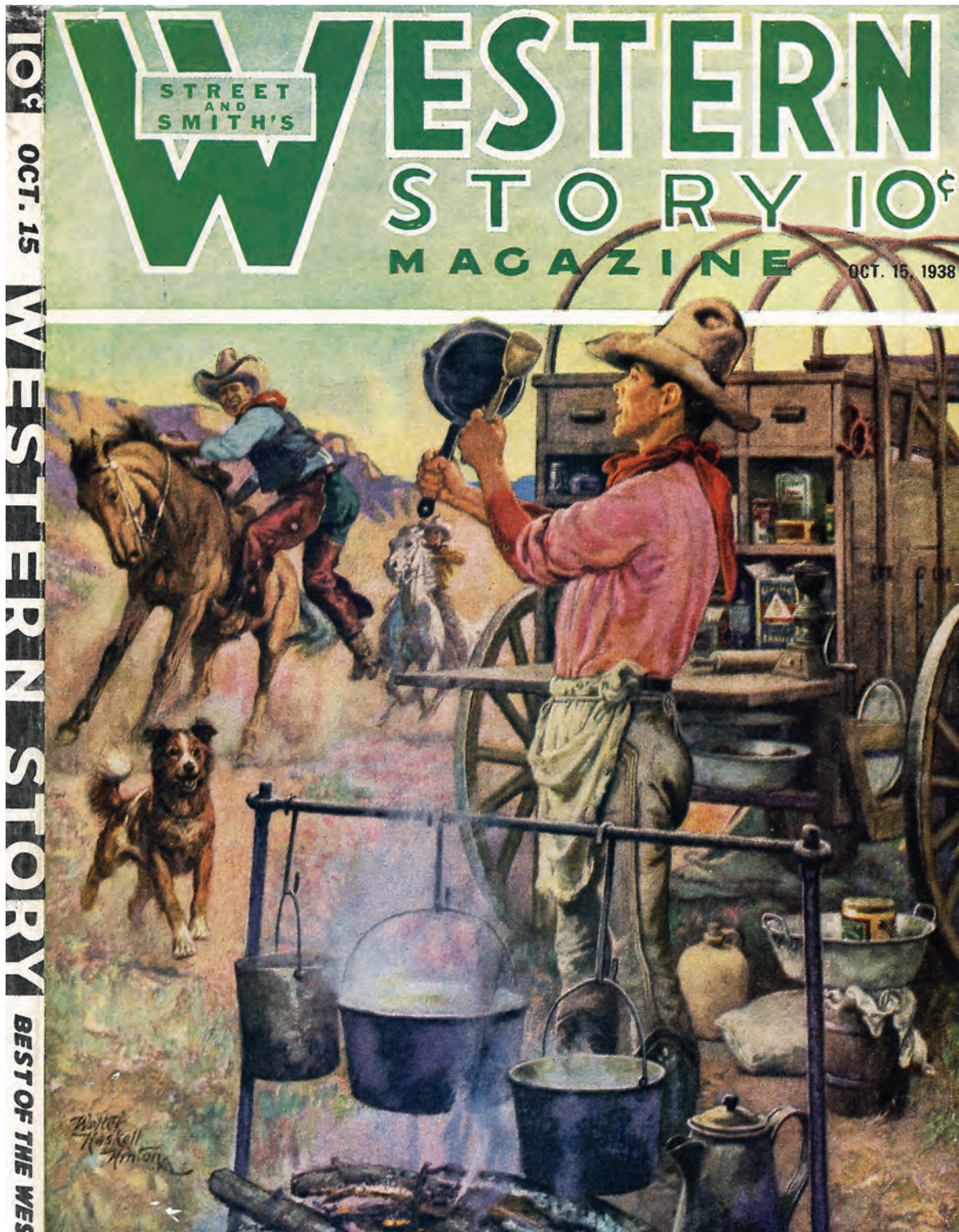


Figure 25 Cover, Western Story, Oct. 15, 1938. Collection of the Hinton family.

telling heroic stories of emotional and aesthetic appeal, rather than imposing aesthetic criteria from outside, because such stories constitutes a genre that holds meaning for many. For pulp writer and historian Robert Weinberg, also a professor of English, expecting true realism out of pulp fiction (or Hollywood film) is ridiculous. "The Wild West is not supposed to be history, so why mix them up?" he asks.

125. Robert Weinberg to Grove,
April 23, 2010.

*The academy is like a disturbed child running about with a pin popping balloons, enjoying making others unhappy. They want everyone to admit there's no magic. Who made academia the world's moral conscience? What a terrible world if all our dreams were realistic!*¹²⁵

Dippie and Weinberg raise two important points: artistic expression needs a certain freedom, and listening to stories is an important cultural activity. The problem that bothers critics is that Western art often passes itself off as “real,” which they fear fools people into thinking that it is.

Before returning to the importance of fiction, we should explore whether critics might have a valid point. What was interpretive and what was factual *were* entirely mixed up together in Hinton’s work, in part because, ironically, of a general interest in realism in Hinton’s time. On one hand, with the weight of nostalgia, business interests, politics and national identity all relying upon the perpetuity of the West as land of moral and economic hope and glory, naturally people liked to see this idealistic story told and retold; and so as a genre, the Turner-esque Western was about as stable a rock in the stream of tastes as possible, meaningful, fun and gorgeous to look at. The 1930s inaugurated a new golden age of the Western in movies and novels, which drew from roots in pulps. However, on the other hand, since the Turner philosophy was showing some strain during the Depression, the Western required revision for a new generation. Popular culture and elite culture both were turning to social realism and regionalism with an emphasis on the dignity of the working man, as seen in the work of Hinton’s contemporaries Denys Wortman (1887-1958) and Thomas Hart Benton (1889-1975). So in the pulps and calendars Hinton illustrated, there are two contradictory impulses. One is an impulse for romantic interpretation in the tradition of the nineteenth century dime novel, gunfights and all; and the other is for a new corrective realism that attempted to provide accurate historical information on frontier life, reflected also in a stylistic turn to finer detail and finish in the 1930s. Therefore, Hinton depicted handsomely grim, pistol-toting cowboys for *Wild West Weekly* with exacting factual accuracy in the firearms and gear, and authentic prairie schooners venturing into glamorous picturesque landscapes for the calendar companies.

Hinton’s realism – in style and in subject – heightened romanticism rather than challenged it, and this was a winning advertising tool as well as pleasing to buyers of pulps and art prints. Fairmont Railway Motors, after they told him no artist could paint a railway track and he had proved them wrong,¹²⁶ soon had him illustrating scenes of the history of transportation and character studies of workers (discussed below). For the latter, in making *Scaling the Sierra Nevadas* as real as possible, Hinton interviewed a station master who showed him an antique

126. Hinton, Washington interview.

Figure 26 *Scaling the Sierra Nevadas*, made for Fairmont Railway Motors. Circa 1940. Collection of Harsco Rail.



Figure 27 Watercolor by Hinton, unfinished, date unknown. Collection of the Hinton family.



Figure 28 Print. Collection of the Hinton family.



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127. Hinton, Washington interview.

handcar.¹²⁷ Hinton made precise sketches and then placed the handcar with a heroic crew into vividly colored, postcard-like flowering landscape (Figure 26). The company's image thus imparted concern for their workers and appreciation of beauty. Naturally, actual events such as the exploitation of Chinese labor were not included in the history of transportation. Neither clients nor the public really wanted their comforting visions of a glorious American history, their leisure reading, and the decoration of their homes disrupted with too much realism. To them, exclusion of exploited workers was not a case of bad values, it was a case of promoting better values.

Hinton's West omitted the complexity of social relations, because, as Dippie points out, social realism is not part of the Western genre any more than it is of advertising. His work instead had the happy effect of giving hope to Depression and wartime readers. Weinberg remarks,

The Western is about hero worship. Fantasies like these set a standard of ideal behavior: good triumphs over evil no matter what, unlike life. It's about doing the right thing, no matter the cost. Americans like to do the right thing, like fighting Nazis.

Uniformly, the cowboys and other men of the outdoors Hinton painted are righteous heroes enforcing morality. Critics felt that distraction was equivalent to



Figure 29 *Thumbnail sketches, pencil.* Circa 1940. Collection of the Ewing Gallery. A center one is the thumbnail for images seen in Figures 35 and 36.

128. William Gilpin, quoted in Smith, *Virgin Land*, 37-40.

129. Colorado State Archives, "Spanish - Mexican Land Grants: A Brief Introduction" <http://www.colorado.gov/dpa/doit/archives/mlg/mlg.html> (Accessed Sept. 24, 2010).

doping, but more charitably, fantasy is *imagination*, the source of creative change.

The romantic connection of the West to American economic progress and political dominance is plainly stated in a precisely rendered calendar image by Hinton, of which two versions exist (Figures 27, 28). The scene (possibly unwittingly) illustrates ideas in a petition made by William Gilpin in 1846 to elected representatives, in a plea for building a trans-continental railroad:

Upon the western edge of our Union, at the confluence of the Kansas and Missouri rivers, there assembled during May, 1843, American citizens with their families to the number of one thousand, each one on himself alone dependant [sic], and animated by impulses driving him irresistibly to the west. Surrounded by his wife and children, equipped with wagon, ox-team, and provisions, such as the chase does not furnish, accompanied by his rifle and slender outfit of worldly goods, did these hardy men embark upon the unmeasured waste before them. ¹²⁸

For Gilpin, who became first governor of the Colorado Territory, progress of the pioneer would lead to the building of a blessed new American empire, greater than any empire before: "to teach old nations a new civilization – to confirm the destiny of the human race" In his rhetoric, it was not a self-centered vision. Rather, it was meant "to unite the world in one social family . . . to absolve the curse that weighs down humanity, and to shed blessings around the world." Unfortunately, Gilpin's integrity is to be questioned, for he was a notorious land speculator who deprived Hispanic Americans of their property.¹²⁹

Consequently, the success of Gilpin's imagined utopia is open to debate, but for Hinton's audience American progress was a virtuous journey. Goals are necessarily fictions, for they haven't happened yet. The old stories Hinton retold are easily rebuked now for inaccuracy, but they were not meant to be an objective record of the past. They were told in order to keep Americans' eyes upon the best outcome for the future, a laudable enough purpose for fiction. For the buying public, that Gilpin and others used the fiction to defraud others didn't discredit the ambitions it represented.

This pair of images tells the familiar tale. In the first, unfinished rendition, an accurately detailed mountain man gazing out beyond the picture's edge leads a wagon train bearing a bonneted mother and baby (a Biblical reference) into a dry but colorful southwestern landscape. In the distance behind them is a progression from left to right of farm, small town, and finally, vast futuristic metropolis, with flying machines and shining skyscrapers. In front of these are the US Capitol Building, a river spanned by a truck-filled modern bridge, and a modernistic bullet train. The image is a romanticized epic of the American Dream, suggesting that the dreamlike supercity would be the result of the pioneers setting out on the Santa Fe Trail.

The second, published version simply emphasizes this theme, probably at the behest of the client. The city has doubled in size and is less lost in atmospheric perspective. A fort marked by an outsized flag has been erected between city and wagon train, and the mountain man's whiskers have been cut back so that he resembles Uncle Sam. He now turns and extends a solicitous hand to the wagon train and its mother and child. The patriotic theme is played up, with symbols of democracy mingling with those of colonialism. Curiously, inserting the fort, flag, and paternal Uncle Sam reduces the independent spirit of the first version. No longer venturing into the West alone, the pioneers now proceed under the protection of the state. Thus, Hinton's story here makes concrete the connection between the mythos of the West, nationalism, and prosperity, just as Turner and Gilpin imagined. The beautiful city of the future reminded the viewer that American potential still had a ways to go, and not to give up yet on what the pioneers had made sacrifices for.



Technique

The importance of the original art to the appreciation of a work of illustration is less crucial than it is for easel painting, because *the print* is the finished work of art seen by most.¹³⁰ Still, fidelity of the print to the original was important to Hinton – he was hard on inconsistent and poor printers because a measure of predictability in the process was necessary for his choosing color and line weight appropriately.¹³¹ But the original was for illustrators almost as an underpainting is for easel painters. For example, the original art of his Indians is much brighter than the printed covers

(compare Figures 52, 53). Printing techniques used for puzzle prints and pulps did not make use of the best paper or processes, yet they relied on screaming hues in order to compete on the newsstand and shop shelf, so Hinton had to compensate by making his artwork extra vivid in a way he never did for the portraits, land- and seascapes that he executed for his own walls. Illustrators' techniques, then, are best evaluated for how well they translated to print.

Hinton usually brainstormed thumbnail sketches in pencil or pen on one sheet of paper, then made comprehensive renderings first by drawing in charcoal, using a gum eraser to erase it down to a thin grey, then layered on watercolor, gouache, or ink in a limited color range (Figures 29, 30, 31, 32). Sometimes he carried this stage quite far, making the watercolor opaque and the finish quite polished, especially if it was to be shown to a new client during a cold call. Jurors at a county fair had once even mistaken his thick watercolor for oil.¹³² After a sketch was approved, he made further studies, then redrew the composition on board or canvas in charcoal, sprayed it with a fixative, and then painted over it in oils. Finished paintings deviated surprisingly little from the thumbnails.

When illustrating for the Westerns and other pulps, Hinton made thumbnails and comprehensive sketches just as he did for the

Figure 30 *Comprehensive sketch*, pencil, gouache, watercolor. Collection of Ewing Gallery.

130. This assertion is frequently made in conversations with illustrators.

131. Hinton, Washington interview.



Figure 31 *Comprehensive sketch*, watercolor. Collection of the Ewing Gallery.

132. Bill Rathje to Jaleen Grove.

Figure 32 *Comprehensive sketch*, ink highlighted with gouache. Collection of the Ewing Gallery.



133. Hinton, Washington interview.

134. Hinton, Washington interview.

sporting magazines, except that for pulps he claimed he relied solely on his visual memory.¹³³ Indeed, we have no figure studies for them, as we do for *Outdoor Life* and *Sports Afield*, which sometimes feature himself or his son as models. (He had also used models when he was doing clothing ads in the 1920s).¹³⁴ Working from his memory for the pulps may be the cause of slightly stiff figures with mannered faces, and occasionally of heads and forearms that turn to the side a little too far to be anatomically believable. For instance, the upper torso of the falling man in “Guns Don’t Repent” is a tad manikin-like, head craned back awkwardly (Figure 33). It is fruitful to compare it to the charm of the crabby old man’s face of *Sports Afield*, April 1938, which holds much individuality and character in the manner of Norman Rockwell’s kindly caricatures (Figure 34). We might regret that Hinton didn’t use more photographic reference material that would have allowed for more such realism, but Hinton himself respected the values of the fine art academic tradition that decreed a true artist was more genuine when he drew only from memory or life. Also, his early schooling at the Art Institute’s Illustration Department emphasized working from memory as a crucial part of the practical training they gave for run-of-the-mill newspaper and magazine illustrators who had to produce quickly and inexpensively. The *Circular* for 1902 says:

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Figure 33 *Guns Don’t Repent*, unidentified issue of probably Mammoth Western, circa 1949. Collection of the Hinton family.

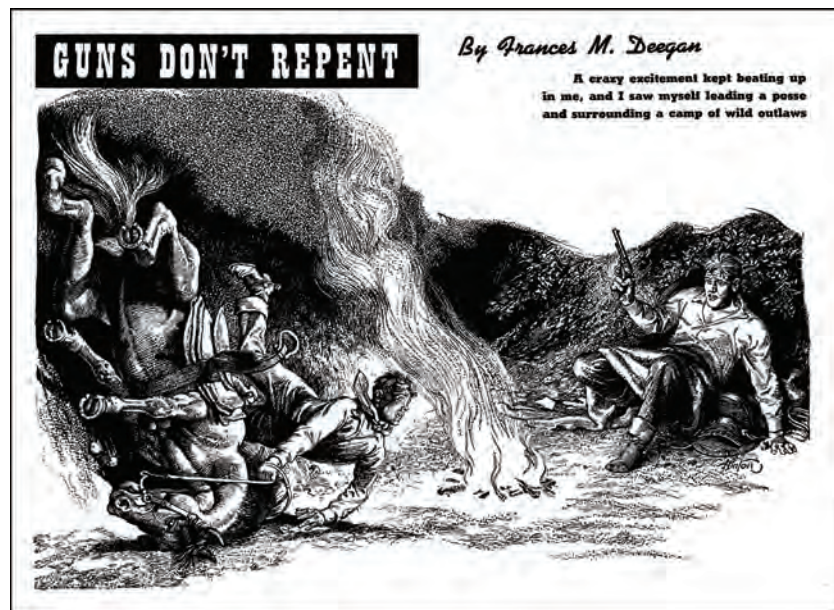




Figure 34 Cover, *Sports Afield*, April 1938.
Collection of the Hinton family.

Illustrations are pictures studied for special purposes, and often required to be produced with great rapidity and readiness, and under difficult conditions . . . A severe course of drawing is an absolute necessity . . .

*Memory drawing is stimulated by the assignment of subjects for illustration in which the student must rely upon previous study for the construction of human figures or the arrangement of objects. This encourages the attentive study of the living model and of nature, with a view to the use of the material so stored up for illustrative purposes. It is believed that whatever danger there may be in drawing without the model is more than compensated for by strengthening the artistic memory.*¹³⁵

Hinton therefore prided himself on his visual memory, scornfully saying that it was much easier to be a “copier” than an “originator”:¹³⁶

*I am not a copyist . . . Of course, that's one thing I admired [in] Norman Rockwell; [he could] make an old pair of shoes look interesting. But much to my amazement he got out a book on how he works [and] he photographs everything and he copies the photograph. Holy smackers! I'd never think of doing anything like that! . . . [I'm] the fellow with the camera mind.*¹³⁷

In fact, Hinton did occasionally use photographs; one survives of himself pretending to paddle a canoe, that guided his rendering for a sporting magazine cover. He also used a photograph when he painted a formal portrait of his mother

Figure 35 *Hinton at work*. Note the sketch pinned to the corner of his board, from a thumbnail appearing in Figure 29.
Collection of the Hinton family.

135. The Art Institute of Chicago, *Circular of Instruction* (1902-1903), 36-38.

136. Hinton, recorded conversation with Mr. B., 1980.

137. Hinton, Washington interview.



because she refused to pose, and was provided with photo reference when he later made pictures for Austin Western.¹³⁸ But there are very few such examples, and those who knew Hinton do not recall him using photos at all, and most cannot today even remember the filing cabinets of reference material in his studio. Hinton did depend on the odd photo, and very much on reference books, and he studied Remington's work, but Hinton's practice of pinning a small sketch or photo to the corner of his drawing board was much different from Rockwell's practice of tracing projected photographs (Figure 35). Although it was frowned upon as "cheating" among easel painters and even among illustrators at the time Hinton was a student, illustrators' tracing of photographs was entirely an accepted practice by the 1930s.¹³⁹ Hinton's distaste for dependence on tracing photos reflects not only his training and isolation from the illustration field's current methods, but his core values of moral rightness, independence and the self-made man. No matter what advantage projected photography might have offered, he preferred to do it the hard way and maintain what he considered to be integrity. Besides, adding in time-draining stages of photography and models would have cut into the narrow profit margin of doing pulps.

An advantage to working out of his head (besides impressing prospective clients) was that Hinton could make pictures of animals and riders in action positions that no photo reference or live pose could supply (Figure 36). This inventiveness allowed him to heighten drama, while the novelty of the poses would have stood out in the countless images of horses'n'cowboys flooding the magazine racks. The man and steed of "Guns Don't Repent," horse tumbling (a specialty of

138. Hinton, Washington interview.
Photo and portrait are in the collection of the Hinton family.

139. Arthur William Brown describes the early prejudice and how drawing from photos became ubiquitous in his autobiography, circa 1949, on file at the Society of Illustrators. The use of photographs and the camera lucida is also described by a number of illustrators in various handbooks and in the Famous Artists School lessons, 1940s-1950s (Westport CT).



Figure 36 Cover, *Western Story*, Oct. 29, 1938. Collection of the Hinton family. This is the image Hinton is working on in Figure 35.

Figure 37 Cover, *Western Story*, June 19, 1937. Collection of Steve Kennedy.

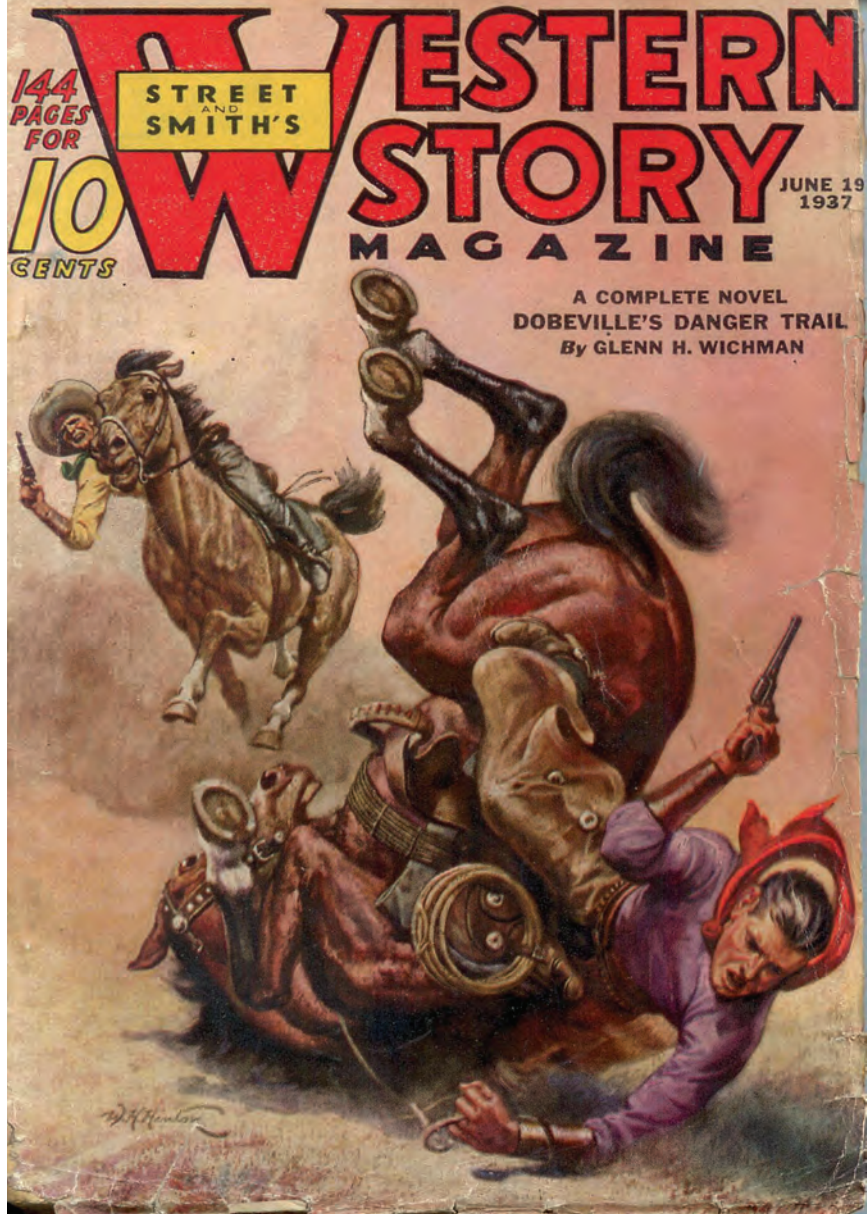


Figure 38 Detail of oil painting made for *Austin Western* (see Figure 60), circa 1950. Private collection.



140. Bill Rathje to Jaleen Grove.

141. Hinton, Washington interview.

Hinton's) and man thrown aside, engage the viewer with their crazy chaos; the manikin-like awkwardness actually emphasizes how like a rag doll a man thrown by a horse can be. Once again, Hinton was adding twists to tradition (literally!).

In the 1930s we can start to see a stylistic settling-down in Hinton's work, as he began to be more in control of the kinds of work he received as a freelancer. In his best Westerns, his love of Frederic Remington was expressed in dramatic compositions with peach-tinged dust clouds and energetic renderings of fine horseflesh in action (Figure 37). But increasingly, in his sporting art and calendar work where he could take his time, his style drew upon his roots in traditional academic landscape painting and observation from nature. He told his admirer Mr. B to always pull the paint rather than push it, and he trained his son Ray to work up the canvas all at once rather than completing it in sections; all standard academic advice. The vigorous painterliness of Remington and the Brandywine illustrators was scaled down and relegated to the handling of skies, grass, rocks, and trees. On these, he layered different colors in thick impasto over a stain, working in both wet and dry brush technique, adding and subtracting paint with brush, knife and blunt object, allowing scumbled colors laid down with more than one color on the brush to optically blend impressionistically at a short distance away (Figure 38).¹⁴⁰ This was skillfully combined with a more draftsmanlike precision for figures and manmade objects. Asked how long it took him to complete a large picture, Hinton replied that he worked very quickly because there was "no wasted movement."¹⁴¹

In his pulp and sporting covers, sometimes the final paintings lack the



Figure 39 *Comprehensive sketch*, watercolor and gouache. Collection of the Ewing Gallery.

Figure 40 *Cover, Mammoth Western*, February, 1948. Collection of the Hinton family.

142. Kitty Slater to Jaleen Grove.

143. Hinton, recorded conversation with Mr. B, 1980.

144. Bill Rathje to Jaleen Grove.

145. Hinton, recorded conversation with Mr. B.

Figure 41 *Advertisement designed and illustrated by Hinton*, circa 1930. Collection of the Hinton family.

146. This formulaic technique is best described by Sundblom-trained Andrew Loomis, in his textbook *Creative Illustration* (1947). Sundblom staff were required to all paint alike.

liveliness and gesture of the rough work (Figures 39, 40). Traces of a facile calligraphic touch laid down *alla prima* in just the right place at just the right time to convey movement and vitality, get replaced by carefully laid brushstrokes that satisfy a lust for accurate detail. Viewers today who have some art training tend to prefer the loose sketches to the finished works, but the precision of the final works was exactly what Hinton intended,¹⁴² for he referred to his rough work as “unpolished.”¹⁴³ As printing techniques improved, sharp detail became easier to reproduce. The tightening up also reflected a shift in what the public liked underway in the 1930s to a clarity of form deemed more objective and scientific. The hazy, atmospheric effects and pretty color harmonies of the 1920s farm magazines were stale, nodding to late nineteenth century Romanticism under the influence of Impressionism. Some of his late advertising work copied the new, hard-edge Art Deco of the 1930s that was expressed in the streamlined automobiles showcased at Chicago’s 1933 Century of Progress International Exposition, and the clean, plain, essentialized geometric shapes of the sphere and obelisk of the 1939 New York World’s Fair (Figure 41). Because he was not paid to do complex backgrounds, many of his Westerns’ backgrounds were generalized dust clouds or sky, or even just plain color fields, but this was the extent of his modernism on covers. It is not that he was against abstraction – he admired the designs of Northwest Native art – he just did not see skill, feeling, or authenticity in modern art.¹⁴⁴ He preferred the illusion of three dimensionality in his pictures to flatness of any kind.¹⁴⁵

Hinton also did not pick up the newer slippery, broad brushwork of the “buttery school” then prevalent in Chicago, promoted by the disciples of Haddon Sundblom’s studio. Sundblom, who is best known for his Coca Cola Santa Claus, created the look that came to dominate advertising art from the 1930s to the 1950s: cheery figures rendered in saturated, golden-edged color, with strong modeling and a formulaic technique that gave a sense of three-dimensionality but with little fine detail.¹⁴⁶ More traditional, Hinton’s style met the original definition of illustration: to





Figure 42 *Sketch of a country auction*, pencil, date unknown. Collection of the Ewing Gallery.

shine light upon, to show a subject clearly and unambiguously, with a wealth of visual information.

In 1944, art director Clair Fry of the Brown & Bigelow calendar company reported that the four most popular subjects were, in order of preference, Norman Rockwell's boy scouts, Andrew Loomis' Dionne Quintuplets (Loomis was a Sundblom illustrator), nudes by female pinup artist Zoë Mozert, and "the perennial Maxfield Parrish subject done with microscopic finish."¹⁴⁷ While Hinton's finish was never as "microscopic" as Parrish's, he still documented surfaces and textures more thoroughly than Rockwell, Loomis, and Mozert did. Fry also noted that public taste had not varied in years; Hinton's style was suited to the more conservative end of the calendar art market, which still valued the nineteenth century standards for academic painting and Currier and Ives' chromolithography.

Hinton said he had been criticized for painting everything "crisp and in focus," for not being "vague," as he characterized lack of detail.¹⁴⁸ We recall Albert Fleury's factual idealism, and the promises made in the 1920s Barnes-Crosby campaign: "convincing and realistic illustrations," in which "Your Story in Pictures Leaves Nothing Untold." Hinton is remembered as a perfectionist, wanting everything to be accurate down to the last bolt.¹⁴⁹ He was a communicator, and he knew a lot of people like to know exactly what is being depicted, that they enjoy the illusion of optical reality being duplicated on a two-dimensional plane. He was a stickler for authentic detail not just for his own preferences but because his clients demanded it too. He occasionally received letters from readers criticizing the minutiae of sporting magazine covers,¹⁵⁰ and he must have been quite irked when a sketch of a country auction intended for an unknown purpose – probably a commercial use, since the calendar market wouldn't be so picky – was returned to him with feedback from the client, who had shown the drawing to someone well versed in country auctions. The client listed eight errors and four improvements, from the placement of the buildings and goods to the auctioneer's hammer, which apparently ought to have been a cane or stick (Figure 42).

To this day, owners of Hinton's works most often praise them for their inventory of visual information. Mrs. B points out that his Native pictures do not dissolve into a disappointing mass of abstract slashes when viewed close up, while Mr. B, who had enjoyed art museums, said that he had been "ruined" by being exposed to Hinton's detailed work, which had shown him "what good art was."

147. "For Your Information," *News From National Advertising Center, Inc.* Vol. 3, No. 15 (Sept. 1944). Collection of NY Society of Illustrators.

148. Hinton, recorded conversation between Mr. B and Hinton, 1980.

149. Kitty Slater to Jaleen Grove.

150. Susanne Hinton, questionnaire.

151. Mrs. B to Jaleen Grove; Mr. B,
recorded conversation with Mr. B, 1980.

He complained that in the illustration of the current (1980) *Outdoor Life* one “can’t even see what the man’s mouth is like.”¹⁵¹ Detail for some is proof of the artist’s sincerity, and it plays a major role in the tacit exercising of sensibility. Mr. Greg Caron, a collector of patriotic art, impulsively bought a painting of men fishing made for *Sports Afield*’s May 1941 cover at auction, for a record amount. He wrote,

*Why?? Why was I so moved to purchase this painting when it is truly on the fringes of what I do collect? First, as a collector (a person who buys what moves them) . . . I was drawn to its attention to detail and striking image . . . After doing my research on Mr. Hinton I see why it did move me. It was done by a man of passion and a person who had true love for the things he did . . . In my eyes, as in many I’m sure, his works are every bit as good as Norman Rockwell’s. He, as many artists in this era, just lacked the attention at the time.*¹⁵²

152. Greg Caron,
email to Grove, Nov. 6, 2010.

153. Dippie, “In the Enemy’s
Country,” 15.

Brian Dippie notes that story telling through authentic detail is among the chief criteria of Western art.¹⁵³ At providing a narrative through detail, Hinton is exemplary.

Popular Print: Calendar Art and Jigsaw Puzzles

In the 1930s, besides art for magazines and pulps, Hinton began to produce many scenes of the West – the American Progress picture described above, bucolic landscapes, farm scenes, historical images, and pictures of wild animals and native people in majestic wildernesses – for large printer-publishers such as John Baumgarth Calendar Co., UO Colson, Goes Lithographing Co., Brown & Bigelow, McLeery Co., and NOS Litho. Hinton came up with images known to sell well, and thought up the cute titles too. A sketch of a mother bear pushing cubs up a tree shows three possible captions: “Allez-Up,” “Booster” and “Up in the World.” These publishers provided paper ephemera in the form of calendars, art prints, cards, pin-ups and so on. Brown & Bigelow in particular developed the field of popular print, buying artwork from household name illustrators such as Norman Rockwell and Maxfield Parrish and they promoted illustrators as celebrities.¹⁵⁴ They approached corporations and small businesses alike aggressively, and became a major source of work for Hinton when they discovered his trick for selling ideas. Said Hinton:

154. Brown & Bigelow, “History,”
<http://www.brownandbigelow.com/BBCorpWebsite/history.htm> (accessed April 9th, 2010).

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Figure 43 *Thrilling Adventure* #2, print
used for jigsaw puzzles and calendars.
Collection of the Hinton family.



*They wanted me to travel with them – they wanted kind of a performing seal. . . . I would say, “I have an idea.” I’d take a piece of paper with charcoal – and [then] they’d see this thing suddenly being drawn and that all helps.*¹⁵⁵

The print publishers who made calendars also sold prints to puzzle manufacturers such as Joseph K. Straus, Perfect Picture Puzzles, Tuco, Fairchild, Croxley, Guild, Dover, Buckingham-Knight, and Saalfeld. *Thrilling Adventure* #2 (one of a series in which a romanticized Native couple repeatedly run into menacing bears – the Indian Maiden, a staple of calendar art, wears a pin-up décolleté buckskin dress) was used by both Tuco and Saalfeld, as well as reproduced as a calendar used by the Cash Oil Company of Willow Springs, Missouri (Figure 43). According to puzzle historian Anne D. Williams, jigsaw puzzles became something of a rage peaking in 1933 when new mass production techniques in die-cutting and cardboard brought the prices down to a level that most people could afford (previously, puzzles were all hand-cut in wood and considered luxury items). Another surge in popularity occurred during World War II. Clubs sprang up, and doctors prescribed them for therapy. Piecing puzzles reduced stress and brought people a sense of control and accomplishment in their lives during the difficult Depression years. It also contributed to family bonding, as well as providing an educational dimension in teaching geography in the case of map puzzles (that was in fact why puzzles had been invented in the eighteenth century) and spatial reasoning (as exercises used in Montessori schools do). It is estimated that at its height around 1933, millions of puzzles were being

Figure 44 Wooden jigsaw puzzle (No. 228) issued by Joseph K. Straus between 1958–1969. Collection of the Hinton family.

155. Hinton, Washington interview.

156. All jigsaw history here is derived from Anne D. Williams, *The Jigsaw Puzzle, Piecing Together a History* (Berkeley Penguin, 2004). Another excellent resource is Chris McCann's *Master Pieces: The Art History of Jigsaw Puzzles* (Collectors Press, 1999).

157. Williams, *The Jigsaw Puzzle*, 121.

158. Chris McCann, correspondence by email and post with Jaleen Grove.

Figure 45 Oil painting by Hinton for unidentified print publishers, date unknown. Collection of the Hinton family.

produced every month. They were given away by advertisers, and could be bought at newsstands, signed out at libraries, rented from department stores and drug stores, and, in Maine, ordered from the milkman.¹⁵⁶

Hinton was versed in the subjects puzzle buyers liked to spend hours examining inch by inch. The eminent puzzle designers Frank Ware and John Henriques (whose artfully custom cut wooden Par puzzles were commissioned for thousands of dollars by royalty and celebrities) once observed with some disgust that hunting scenes were a perennial favorite with even their elite customers;¹⁵⁷ perhaps puzzles – taken to cottages and used to amuse convalescents – were a means for any person to enjoy nostalgic or silly art without the stigma of being thought unsophisticated. Even finely wrought puzzles fell into the category of harmless games, after all. It is unknown how many of Hinton's pictures were used for puzzles, but 21 are owned by collector Chris McCann.¹⁵⁸

Puzzle manufacturers may have stockpiled images or possibly bought old stock at low prices from the printers, because the wooden puzzle in the Hinton family's collection was made between 1958 and 1969 by Joseph K. Straus using



159. Puzzle was dated by Anne D. Williams from the box.

160. Dee Garceau, "Nomads, Bunkies, Cross-Dressers, and Family Men: Cowboy Identity and the Gendering of Ranch Work," *Across the Great Divide: Cultures of Manhood in the American West*, edited by M. Basso, L. McCall, and D. Garceau (Routledge, 2001), 151.

161. Disturbingly little has been published on calendar art. One book with a brief discussion on the Indian Maiden fad is *Vintage Illustration: Discovering America's Calendar Artists*, by Rick and Charlotte Martin (Portland: Collector's Press, 1997).

a Western scene likely originally produced in the 1930s (Figure 44).¹⁵⁹ There are three known scenes in this series, in which the cowboy cooks for the girl over a campfire, lets her use his cup to drink from a stream while he drinks from his hat, and escorts her on a round-up. In real ranch life women rarely participated in cowpunching, but they had begun to compete in some rodeo events in the 1920s,¹⁶⁰ so the series is actually reflecting romantic ideals and shifting roles for women in general. That the puzzles comprise a series indicates people were collecting them in sets. The puzzle is hand-cut, with some pieces resembling figures and others following color lines of the picture itself. Puzzle cutting was and is considered an art form of its own, and the selection of a poster for a puzzle constitutes a part of the cutter's artistic expression.

Mythic Nature

Wildlife scenes where anthropomorphized animals have encounters with each other or humans are a common theme in Hinton's popular calendar images and puzzles.¹⁶¹ This genre was already well established in the "predicament paintings"



Figure 46 Pencil sketch. Collection of the Hinton family.

of Philip R. Goodwin, who was well known for his bear encounter images.¹⁶² It is difficult to say what Hinton personally thought of doing such pictures. In one case he lamented when a client insisted he “fix” a background that realistically included dead trees,¹⁶³ and he always valued factual accuracy. Yet alongside more naturalistic depictions, like the red fox hunting ring-necked pheasants that he made for the calendar market but kept for his own walls (Figure 45), he still turned out darling images of animals like a baby bear dancing with a camp bucket on its head (Figure 46). We know he had a deep respect for the natural world, but anthropomorphized bears undercut the dignity and wildness of animals. Why would he do this? For one, he cared about children – who likely comprised a significant portion of the calendar and print audience – and cute, accessible animal pictures could inspire them (and adults) to take more interest in the environment, as a kind of lure towards more serious appreciation. He did, for instance, paint a replica of his 1903 fawn for six year old Carolyn Biddle, who used to come watch him work.¹⁶⁴ Additionally, there was a market for nature pictures that operated on a metaphorical level, as *Aesop’s Fables* do. Hinton had a prankster’s sense of humor, and the cub’s haplessness stands as just deserts for a trespasser and thief while begging our sympathy for the innocence of youngsters. Such images were intended to amuse and delight, with a gentle lesson in them, much as Disney’s animations of the day did.

One print in particular of a bull elk fending off wolves from cows and calf offers an opportunity to further explore anthropomorphism. The scene is one in a series where the splendid stag challenges a rival, fights him, wins the cows, and forages for them and their calf. The elk are accurate down to the hooves, and are perfect and healthy in their natural habitat, just as they would be in an identification manual or museum diorama (Figure 47). The orderliness of the idealized bull, with his grand antlers and the textbook examples of cows and calf recall the nineteenth century prints of John James Audubon, which were derived from scientific texts with their perfect specimens rendered clearly for field identification. Hinton once told his granddaughter in the early 1970s, “Examining the natural world as I have in my work, it’s obvious an intelligence greater than mine created the world – I’m just not foolish enough to say what that is!”¹⁶⁵ He was not a church-goer and only treated religious themes when commissioned to do so, but imbuing his work with a sense of order found in science connoted this greater intelligence. This fit with his Thoreau-esque upbringing, where nature was the source of spiritual renewal.

While visually accurate, in order to tell a story, Hinton actually presented the elk’s behavior erroneously: in the season when calves are born, bulls do not

162. Erin Anderson, “Goodwin’s Life: An Illustrated Adventure,” *Philip R. Goodwin, The Studies* (Thomas Nygard Gallery, 2005).

163. Hinton, Washington interview.

164. John Higgins-Biddle, email June 1, 2010.

165. Elliott Willis to Jaleen Grove.

Figure 47 *Print*. Collection of the Hinton family.



have antlers and do not accompany cows, who defend calves successfully on their own. Hinton was too well read and familiar with game animals to have done this unwittingly; his interpretation of elk was guided by the expectations of his audience, who were thought to prefer an idealization not just of elk but of the virtues of patriarchal behavior, where the father always defends the women and children. Game animals carried enormous ideological power because nature also underlay patriotism, masculinity and stewardship of the land. Iconographically, in history stags were associated with virility and had been used in coats of arms for centuries in Europe, and so the elk was a fitting and familiar character to use to convey these values. The elk picture must be understood in the context of years 1935-1955, when the world was coping with the developing war and its aftermath. Most of Hinton's animal groups emphasize one male, one female, and offspring,

Figure 48 *Self portrait of Walter Haskell Hinton*. Oil on canvas, 1948. Collection of the Hinton family.

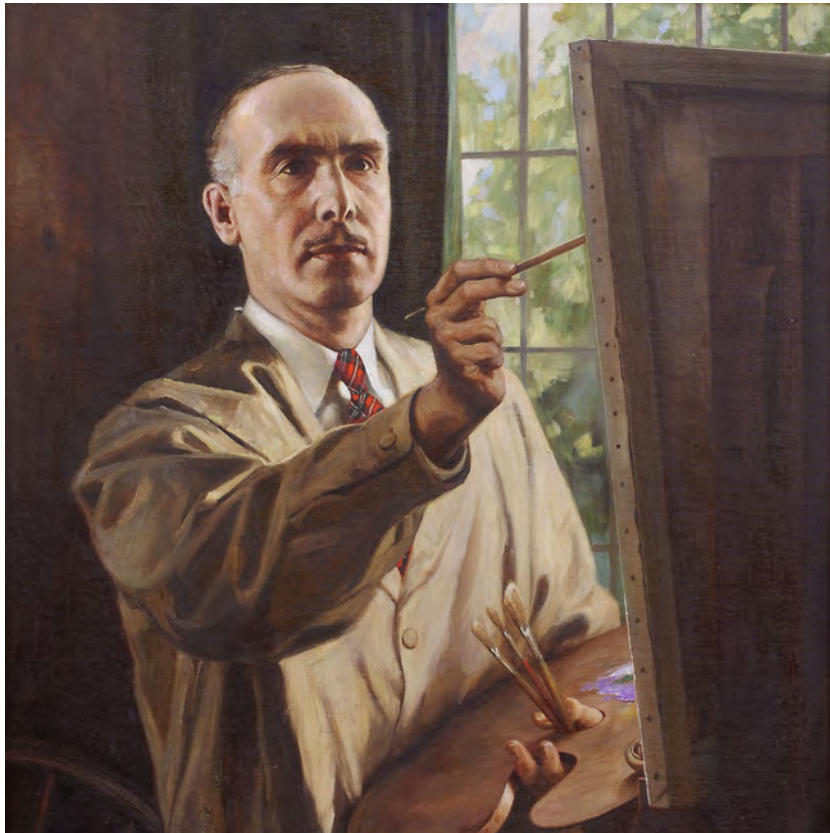




Figure 49 *Powwow*. Oil on board, 1947.
Private collection.

just like the idealized, typified human family that became increasingly central in the ideology and visual culture of the 1950s. The patriarchal stag is therefore a parable for the dutiful soldier or husband, defending his family in accordance with a divinely ordered universe.

166. Considerable disagreement circulates around terminology. The terms Native American, Indian, First Nations, Aboriginal and so on will therefore be used interchangeably.

62

Depicting Native Americans

In 1947, for the first time in his life, Walter Haskell Hinton arranged to keep the original art of a commission. Perhaps the death of his mother in 1944 coupled with the service of his son Raymond as a pilot during the war gave Hinton reason to want to create something important for posterity. Significantly, at the same time he started the only formal self-portrait he ever did, completed in 1948 (Figure 48). In it, he is a solemn figure in austere surroundings who does not make eye contact with the viewer; instead, he is intent on his work. For the special project, he turned to a theme that had entranced him since his childhood sketches at the Buffalo Bill extravaganzas: the American Indian in traditional garb and cultural practice (Figures 49-59).¹⁶⁶ The arrangement for him to keep his artwork was highly unusual; publishers of the day were accustomed to buying the original art as well as the full copyright when they acquired illustration. *Mammoth Western's* editor seems to have regretted the deal: "The cover is by

Figure 50 *Navajo*. Oil on board, 1947-48.
Private collection.



Figure 51 *Hopi*. Oil on board, 1947-48.
Private collection.



167. Raymond A. Palmer, "Ridin' Herd With the Editor," *Mammoth Western*, Vol. 4 #11 (Nov. 1948), 6.

168. Hinton, Washington interview. The locations of these commissions are unknown.

169. Ralph C. Hughes, "Walter Haskell Hinton," *John Deere Tradition*, Vol. 1 Issue 8 (December, 2001), 17.

170. Nine is the number cited by Washington National in *Coverage* [newsletter published by Washington National Insurance Company] (Dec 1961), 15. Collection of Deere & Company. It is not yet confirmed how many were actually printed.

171. Mr. B to Jaleen Grove.

the famous Western artist, Walter Hinton, and we think this painting [Seminole], done in oils, is worth hanging on our living room wall – and that's where we'd like to hang it, if we could steal it from the dirty rat who has already stolen it! Foozled again, dang it!"¹⁶⁷ Staff at Ziff Davis actually did commission similar works based on the series for their homes.¹⁶⁸

Previously, the "dirty rat" had found ways to illustrate Aztecs for Barnes-Crosby, and had slipped Native Americans into three of the paintings done for Deere & Company.¹⁶⁹ Now, he set out to document a variety of tribal practices. Of the ten resulting paintings, nine were destined for covers of Ziff Davis's *Mammoth Western* in 1948, the pulp he was doing more conventional cowboy art for already.¹⁷⁰ The one not used by Ziff Davis may have been the one depicting a powwow in a square format that he painted first to use to sell the idea for the series,¹⁷¹ because the square composition did not fill the format of the rectangular page. As was commonly done, the publisher purchased the proposed pictures and then asked authors to write stories to go with some of them afterwards, although most ran only with explanatory paragraphs by Hinton. We can surmise this from a manuscript where Hinton wrote, "As you wanted more data on the Birch Bark Canoe subject, it occurred to me that possibly your authors might

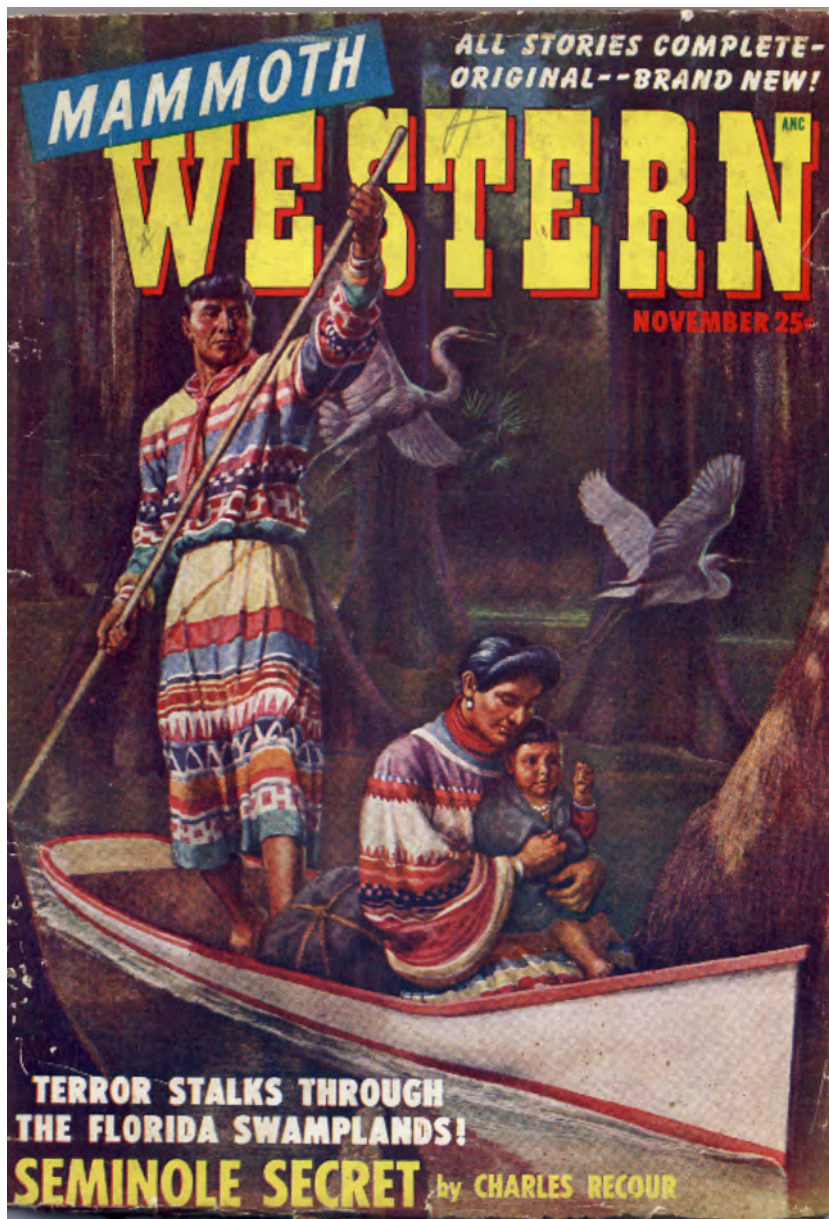


Figure 52 Cover, *Mammoth Western*, November 1948. Collection of the Hinton family.

Figure 53 *Seminole. Oil on board*, 1947-48. Private collection.

want to say something about Totem poles, if they had the space.”¹⁷² This would be why the cover image for *Mammoth Western* of November 1948, which is paired with the story “Seminole Secret” by Charles Recour, depicts a placid family group even though, as the byline “TERROR STALKS THROUGH THE FLORIDA SWAMPLANDS!” indicates, the family is desperately on the lam and the Seminole man is a killer, albeit a tragically righteous one (Figure 53). The trio in a canoe does figure in the story, but given his propensity for dramatic moments, if Hinton had been given a pre-existing story to illustrate, he and the publisher probably would have chosen a more exciting moment. Instead, made for his own enjoyment to the utmost of his abilities, Hinton preferred a more serious, considered portrait of America’s first peoples. Other images from the series are equally sober. Many show a single man hunting or fishing, thus repeating the strenuous life theme. One shows a Navajo woman at her loom, while others document iconic events such as the sending of smoke signals and a sacred rain dance. His favorite, according to Mr. B, was the Crow hunter slaying a rampaging buffalo because of how the figures seemed to leap from the frame.¹⁷³

In many respects this cycle of paintings represents the pinnacle of Hinton’s achievements. Because he planned from the start to keep them, he spent more time than he did for probably any other project researching the details, considering the specific subjects, thinking about what he wanted these pictures

172. Collection of the Hinton family.

173. Mr. B to Jaleen Grove. Roger Reed points out that this composition is very similar to one by NC Wyeth titled *Buffalo Hunt* from the book *The Oregon Trail* (Little, Brown, 1925).



to do, carefully rendering them, and displaying them with pride. Ideologically, Native characters figured as valuable teachers in the ideals of the strenuous life, and they were important as friends and foes in Western history and mythology.¹⁷⁴ Walter Haskell Hinton was engaging with one of the most culturally important themes of his generation; spending such a vast effort on these pictures was a tribute to that heritage.

One of the reference books Hinton used was the Smithsonian's Encyclopedia of the American Indian.¹⁷⁵ As a group, the suite is clearly intended to be scientific, presenting tribal groups from all parts of America in traditional garb and engaging in traditional pursuits such as weaving, hunting, and dancing, idealized just like the elk picture is. Considering the regal posture of the Tlingit chief in his regalia pictured in the image (mistakenly labeled *The Nootka* by an interfering hand),¹⁷⁶ these are not portraits of individuals, but examples of types, just as Velvet Joe was. The emphasis is on educating and entertaining the viewer, showing as much authentic detail as possible and presenting each tribe in a "typical" setting. As a boy Hinton would have seen similar arrangements in the living ethnographic displays at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, where native peoples were hired to dress in traditional clothes and act out their ancestors' ways for sightseers. The anthropology displays at Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History, which Hinton presumably visited, grew out of the Exposition's attractions.¹⁷⁷ It therefore reinforced this approach with cases of life-sized manikin groups "illustrating the

174. Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (Yale, 1999).

175. Hinton cites this book in his own hand on his letterhead attached to the back of the *Smoke Signals* painting, and quotes directly from it.

176. If Tlingit, the representation of the seated chief is very accurate, according to Dr. Leslie Dawn of the University of Lethbridge. The exception is that the Tlingit did not traditionally paint their totem poles. Hinton based the coloration on a small tourist pole he acquired on his trip to Alaska circa 1928.

177. Field Museum, "The Fair and the Development of Anthropology in the United States" http://www.fieldmuseum.org/columbianexpo/history_anthropology_2.asp (accessed Aug. 9, 2010).



Figure 54 *Assiniboin (sic) (Sign Language)*. Oil on board, 1947-48. Private collection.

178. *Field Museum of Natural History: General Guide* (1928), 15–17.

179. Hinton, Washington interview.

180. William J. Slater, “Biography for Walter Hinton,” AskArt.com.

181. *Coverage* [newsletter published by Washington National Insurance Company] (Dec 1961), 15. Collection of Deere & Company.

182. This paragraph summarizes too many sources to list here. Literature consulted in preparation for this essay includes Gretchen M. Bataille, ed., *Native American Representations: First Encounters, Distorted Images, and Literary Appropriations* (University of Nebraska Press, 2001); Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (Yale, 1999); Shari Huhndorf, *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination* (Cornell, 2001); Robert Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian* (Vintage, 1979). Also of use were the discussions held at the Popular Culture Association conference in St. Louis, April 1, 2010, in the session titled “American Indian Literatures and Cultures IV: Content and Pedagogy,” chaired by Richard Sax and Constance Bracewell.

life” of Indians from a survey of geographic locales, as a 1928 pamphlet puts it. These included most of the cultures Hinton chose to depict (only Seminole does not appear).¹⁷⁸ Hinton also used real artifacts from his collection for reference, as well as whatever other books and magazines he could obtain. Like most illustrators, he had a subscription to *National Geographic*,¹⁷⁹ and these paintings resemble the sort of illustration commonly seen in those. Hinton’s ethnographic intentions are in keeping with how he planned to display the works. William Slater recalled,

*I think my favorite [room in Hinton’s house] was his basement. He had a virtual museum of artifacts from varying Indian tribes. Some from the plains, some from the Northeast and, the one I remember best, the Tlingit Indians from the Pacific Northwest.*¹⁸⁰

The paintings hung in a row along one wall, with the artifacts arranged around the room in elaborate patterns. Hinton used the fireplace in the room as a campfire, grilling steaks over the open flame.¹⁸¹

Having taken so much care, were Hinton still alive, he would be shocked and heartbroken to learn that more recently cultural historians, anthropologists, native scholars and activists have severely criticized this sort of representation and display.¹⁸² They argue that depicting tribes in period costume doing the things of



Figure 55 *Plains (Smoke Signals)*. Oil on board, 1947–48. Private collection.



Waller
Haskell
Hinton

Figure 56 *Iroquois*. Oil on board, 1947-48. Private collection.

the past teaches people nothing about those tribes in the present, impeding real cross-cultural understanding. By also omitting the painful history of colonization, it avoids accounting for contemporary conditions, which were for native people very poor in 1948. Furthermore, according to these theories, just as Hinton's idealized depiction of elk was dissociated from true elk behavior, so did these portraits fail by making present-day real natives seem deviant from their glorified past no matter how successfully modernized they might be. By replicating the "authority" or ideology of the time-worn aesthetics of scientific illustration practiced by revered (but foreign, to aboriginals) European-American bastions of learning that had relegated Indians to an inferior racial status, such pictorial defining of what it is to "be native" displaced native people's own understanding of their cultures. Through this reasoning, scholars and activists have argued that depictions of native peoples such as Hinton's constitute the final stages of colonialism, symbolically killing off current aboriginal culture just as the tribes were devastated by guns and disease before.

183. Bill Rathje, interview; Susanne Hinton, questionnaire.

Such a hard-line approach is not sufficient for our understanding of Walter Haskell Hinton and his efforts to illuminate Native life. Those who knew Hinton recall that he admired Native cultures.¹⁸³ For him, the past splendor of traditional life was a subtle criticism of history, of the colonialism that had decimated those cultures, and a plea for fair treatment. We know this because Ziff Davis used the series to promote Indian rights, with Hinton's assent and active participation.

The characterization of pulp Westerns as "lowbrow" ignores the fact that this periodical took its subject matter very seriously and used its pages to educate, interspersing generic fiction with "Did you know . . ." factoids. Ziff Davis also advanced political causes just as more sophisticated magazines did. In 1947 debate was raging over Indian rights, especially the right to vote. Amidst this, *Mammoth Western* (and all the other fiction titles issued by Ziff Davis simultaneously) broke the story that the Navajo, whose cultural uniqueness as "code-talkers" had led to

Figure 57 *Algonquin*. Oil on board, 1947-48. Private collection.





Figure 58 *Tlingit*. Oil on board, 1947-48.
Private collection.

Figure 59 *Crow*. Oil on board, 1947-48.
Private collection.

victory in the Pacific during World War II,¹⁸⁴ were being denied GI Loans despite starvation on the reservations.¹⁸⁵ Newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst subsequently picked up the story, which got Congress's attention.¹⁸⁶ Soon after, the *Mammoth Western* editor wrote,

*Your editor is feeling mighty proud these days. In last month's editorial we raved and ranted for one of the best causes we could think of—the Navajos and their rough situation. The response was so overwhelming . . . thanks to you Americans who realized what an injustice was being done. We can say once more—they were good enough to die for their country and they're certainly good enough to live for it! . . . By the way, we don't need to tell you to pay particular attention to the American Indian series [by Hinton] we've been running lately.*¹⁸⁷

They also printed a letter of thanks from Chief Zhealy H. Tso that read in part:

*We salute you for what you have done for the Navajo Nation . . . We want a chance to earn our own way in life, and we want more direction in our affairs. We want the vote like all other tribes want that vote. Would it be asking too much to ask you to print this, so that those kind people who sent us food will push their congressmen a little for us? . . . We want to stand on our feet like men.*¹⁸⁸

An accompanying essay by the editor compared reservations to concentration

184. Harrison Lapahie Jr., "Diné Bizaad Yee Atah Naayéé' Yik'eh Deesdlíí," <http://www.lapahie.com/index.cfm> Accessed Sept. 19, 2010.

185. "Plight of the Navajo," *Mammoth Western*, Vol. 4 #1 (January 1948).

186. Raymond A. Palmer, "Riding Herd With the Editor," *Mammoth Western* Vol. 4, #4 (April, 1948), 6, 163.

187. Raymond A. Palmer, "Ridin' Herd With the Editor," *Mammoth Western* Vol. 4, #5 (May, 1948), 6.

188. Zhealy H. Tso, "Riding Herd With the Editor," *Mammoth Western* Vol. 4, #4 (April, 1948), 6.



Walter
Haskell
Hinton



Figure 60 *General Washington and a chief.*
Oil, date unknown. Collection of the
Ewing Gallery.

camps and urged readers to support Native self-governance and having the vote.

Hinton clearly supported Native rights too. In a mini-article, he emphasized the Iroquois' role leading up to Independence. Politely noting that the Iroquois were a confederation of tribes who preferred to be called Six Nations, he wrote:

*Both the French and the English tried for their support, with the English finally obtaining it. This was a lucky thing for us . . . most certainly the English colonists, our forefathers, would have been driven from the land, if the Iroquois hadn't sided with them. . . . But the French tactics of treating the Indians even more shamefully than we, brought them over to our side.*¹⁸⁹

189. Hinton, "The Iroquois," *Mammoth Western* (May 1948), 177.

Describing them as loyal political allies and acknowledging shameful mistreatment suggested there was a debt to be repaid; this helped the case for their full citizenship. Notably, in another project where he illustrated the life of George Washington for the Washington National Insurance Company, he painted Washington and a chief seated as equals, the same size, with Washington showing deference to the Elder (Figure 60).

Hinton made Native Americans politically sympathetic figures to whites by showing the sophistication of their cultures and drawing favorable comparisons with European traditions. In the manuscript to the publisher discussing how writers could expound upon the birch bark canoe, he continued,

Many people have the idea that Totem poles are some sort of idol. In reality they are heraldic, a sort of family tree of both the male and female branches. Each clan has adopted for its crest or family coat of arms a certain bird, fish, animal or insect. For proper names of children were named for animals, birds, fish, reptiles, etc. Hence all sorts of forms are carved on poles along with the principal totem of the family.

Therefore, the Tlingit image's caption reads:

A high artistic ability was found in elaborate totem poles, heraldic in nature and signifying the owner's mythologic ancestry.

Later, Hinton used to guide visitors from picture to picture lecturing on each tribe's way of life, in the tradition (whether he knew it or not) of the "Indian Gallery" where nineteenth century artists – George Catlin was one – toured their pictures of Native types to audiences who paid to hear the artist speak informatively about them.¹⁹⁰ Says William Slater,

190. Sandweiss, *Print the Legend*, 78.

I grew up with Westerns on TV and all that. I didn't know the difference between an Apache, a Crow; Mr. Hinton opened me up to the concept that that Indians came from all over, like the Southwest or Alaska, and that they had different cultures. And he was thrilled to be telling you about it. He would point out the differences between costumes and weapons of all the different tribes. My previous idea of Indians was [that they] circle the wagons and they shoot everybody.¹⁹¹

191. William Slater to Grove.

Hinton's granddaughter also credits early exposure to her grandfather's recreation room with prompting her interest in studying native traditions in her later life.¹⁹²

192. Elliott (Hinton) Willis to Grove.

193. The culture depicted is certainly not Nootka, as the Nuu-Chah-Nulth peoples wore cedar bark robes and built their longhouses with horizontal boards and no gables. The group called "Nootka" is also Canadian, not American, while the Tlingit inhabit southern Alaska.

194. Walter H. Hinton II to Grove.

When Hinton compared totem poles to European heraldic devices and borrowed the visual traditions of science, he made an important *translation* between cultures. The meeting of cultures is never easy, and the medium of pulps – while reaching a broad audience – was compromised by lack of intellectual rigor. The erroneous labeling of the Tlingit man as a Nootka (properly, Nuu-Chah-Nulth) demonstrates the limitations: someone at Ziff-Davis unilaterally changed the title, as Hinton himself clearly labeled his rough sketch "Tlingit," told Bill Slater it was Tlingit,¹⁹³ and wrote Tlingit on a slide of the painting shot by his grandson.¹⁹⁴ Additionally, the truth is inescapable that *Mammoth Western* replicated certain relations of power – it remains a Caucasian periodical speaking for the Indian, putting native concepts into English words. Hinton's comparison of totems to heraldry left out the spiritual and folkloric significance of Northwest Coast peoples' totemic symbols for which there is no equivalent in European heraldry. Nevertheless, aboriginal cultures were depicted with grace and dignity. By using vocabulary and concepts of heraldry that the pulps' white readership would find familiar, Hinton facilitated that readership's openness to learning more by giving them a pleasurable and unthreatening context to begin from. At a time when even expert native spokespersons had little voice in mass media, translators like Hinton working in accessible formats provided a crucial step towards a more positive reception of modern Indians.

In the context of the pulps where he was speaking to an audience assumed to be white, the romantic image of the valorous native stood for the values of the ideal American citizen. As an exemplar of human nature, the Indian as a symbol is a subtle critique of contemporary social conditions. Hinton chose to avoid repeating the bloodthirsty Indian of Remington's paintings and instead emphasized communication, co-operation, art, subsistence in harmony with nature, and respect for history's lessons – not conflict. These paintings were completed on the heels of the Second World War; perhaps Hinton and the readers of pulps were at this point especially thoughtful about alternative ways of being in the world. The pictures hinted that native culture might provide clues as to what those might be.

MORE THAN 850,000 CIRCULATION

SUCCESSFUL FARMING

SEPTEMBER

1925



Calendar Art in the Service of Advertising

Figure 61 Cover, *Successful Farming*, September, 1925. Collection of the Hinton family.

The print ephemera companies such as Brown and Bigelow (with 62 offices nation-wide in 1954) produced calendars and other objects as advertisements for businesses large and small. According to their annual report for 1953, 93 percent of homes used calendars. Hinton's reputation as a popular artist combined with his participation in sales meetings with potential clients brought him his best advertising work in this medium. Brown and Bigelow's annual report called such items "remembrance advertising," and stated that:

Advertising messages imprinted on the products are brought into the range of vision of all those who use them. Recipients, seeing the advertisements several times a day, memorize them thoroughly . . . so thoroughly that when they need what the firms sell, they immediately think favorably of them.

195. Brown and Bigelow, Annual Report for 1953. Collection of the Norman Rockwell Museum, RC.2007.18.2.2.

196. Roland Marchand, "The 1930s: Save the System," in *Creating the Corporate Soul: The Rise of Public Relations and Corporate Imagery in American Big Business* (University of California Press, 2001).

Calendars, they noted, "are recognized and accepted by business men as a powerful medium for keeping their message before present and potential customers every day of the year," and that a customer who received one as an expression of "hospitality" would "retain the feeling of having been singled out and favored."¹⁹⁵

In the 1930s there was a shift in advertising when the public began blaming corporations for the Depression and union agitation was troubling manufacturers. The industry as a whole was switching from the dictatorial tone of the 1920s to a friendlier demeanor; not screaming "Buy it!" but explaining, "Here's our story."¹⁹⁶ Illustrators were sought after to put into pictures these narratives of how an ingenious but regular guy founded the company and how they contributed to the towns where their factories resided. Such tales typically celebrated the working class man. In 1936 Hinton illustrated the life of the innovating blacksmith John Deere in 12 images (six based on his original 1926 drawings for them); and 24 pictures on the themes of *A Story of American Transportation, Men and Machines*, and *Civilization Follows Transportation* for Fairmont Railway Motors (now Harsco Corporation) that ran in magazine advertisements and booklets. He also made a suite of perhaps a dozen paintings of earth moving equipment at work for Austin-Western, and the set of 20 scenes illustrating General Washington's life for Washington National Insurance. Most of these images made their way into calendars.

All of these campaigns shared themes Hinton had been developing for years: American history, patriotism, the bountiful landscape, masculine virtues, the beauty of nature, and collective social values. Because these values run consistently through all of Hinton's art including his personal work, we know that making such promotional materials was not simply a case of commercial messages pumped out for money. They were expressions of his own cherished beliefs made with conviction; customers liked working with him because his enthusiasm in developing concepts was not faked. Hinton was successful as an advertising artist his entire life because he didn't promote products, about which his personal opinion is unknown – he promoted ideals, which he believed in very much. His pictures show people living happily and morally, where the product is just a supporting character. All studies of advertising agree that consumer habits are influenced by such images, but there is an enormous difference of opinion whether advertising is a dangerous force or a necessary, beneficial one. That Hinton chose to continue his advertising career after being laid off from Barnes-Crosby rather than going into fine art or sticking to magazine covers suggests he sided with those who felt advertising was legitimate and necessary aspect of modern life.

197. *Twenty-Seven Chicago Designers*, 1936. Promotional book in collection of the Chicago Public Library.

198. Brown and Bigelow, Annual Report for 1953. Collection of the Norman Rockwell Museum, RC.2007.18.2.2.

He was not alone. Chicago graphic artists in 1936 promoted themselves by arguing designers created order and beauty, and said, "Good design is good economy."¹⁹⁷ They were right. Business provided for the wellbeing of communities, and advertising ensured their continuing viability. Brown and Bigelow in 1952 grossed \$46,013,065, with net earnings of \$2,325,088 – and \$28,325,574 of their expenses was employees' pay. A local company, their shareholders included 2,183 in Minnesota, 774 in New York, 534 in Ohio, 345 in Illinois (6,738 in total).¹⁹⁸

Meanwhile, Larry Tvedten, Director of the Martin County Historical Society in Minnesota has noted that Fairmont Railway Motors can be “considered the most significant industry in the early history of Fairmont, Minnesota, and Martin County”; that they “undoubtedly had far reaching effects on the economy of this area.”¹⁹⁹ It is plausible that it was because of their role in small town economics – and not simply faddish corporate image spinning – that Fairmont chose to celebrate the history of technological progress and the nobility of the working man in order to associate the company with the rewards of cooperative industriousness and the building of the nation.

Similar themes also appear in the 1950s calendar images made for heavy equipment manufacturer Austin-Western, based in another small city, Aurora, Illinois (previous to 1939 they had done business out of Chicago).²⁰⁰ Each picture took about a month to complete,²⁰¹ and Austin-Western paid Hinton \$1500 for each, with a bonus for extra machines in the scene.²⁰² In these, impressive heavy equipment operated by cheerful men modify even more impressive landscapes. The towering mountains and thick forests become characters in their own right, characters that both challenge the machines to do their worst yet gallantly sort themselves into picturesque order under the civilizing force of progress. Hinton drew upon his early *en plein air* apprenticeship with Fleury to invent these convincing backdrops to the theater of human drama, but as noted above, he used photographs supplied by the client for the machines, which had to be very exact.²⁰³ As in his Westerns, the mixture of the real and the romantic served to build upon the Gilpin/Turner tradition of the heroic, patriotic taming of the savageness, a message that was supported in Austin-Western’s promotional text:

*It is impossible to overestimate the importance of roads in the development of civilization. They are the veins and arteries of the social body and without them the interchange of ideas and commodities would have ceased and man reverted into a state of savagery . . . The Union had hardly been formed before there were enthusiastic proposals for a coast-to-coast highway . . . It has remained for this age with the aid of modern machinery to make the hopes of our forefathers a reality . . .*²⁰⁴

At an early stage, Hinton also included a yellow dog, said to belong to the company’s owner.²⁰⁵ Inserting dogs was a favorite device of his and they appear in numerous scenes from the farm magazines onwards (the brown and white dog seen in the John Deere images appeared early on a *Successful Farming* cover, Figure 61). The touch of sentimentality humanized the workers and imbued the scenes with emotional warmth. Austin-Western loved it, and requested the dog be included in all subsequent pictures and it became a kind of mascot.²⁰⁶ Hinton completed many calendar images until the company was bought up by Armour & Co. in 1965, who dropped the calendars. When the buy-out happened, the Austin-Western people called Hinton and let him pick out one of his original paintings to keep (Figure 62).²⁰⁷ He selected a majestic mountain scene with a fine grader in the foreground – the company’s best known machine. The flop-eared dog cutely cocks his head at us, seated next to a slightly dapper older man who gravely concentrates on shoveling soil off the high embankment beside a white water river. The atmospheric perspective is particularly well handled in this landscape, while Hinton’s scumbling of blues and oranges effectively captures the texture and lighting of the rocky environment (Figure 63). The dirt and stones falling from the shovel are given a motion blur that is especially naturalistic. The overall effect of the dangerous terrain, spiky mountain peak, and falling debris hearkens back to the nineteenth century’s taste for the overwhelming sublime in nature, but here, the threat of nature is safely mastered by the competence of the machinery and the road and bridge that intercede between us viewers and the impressive wilderness in the background.

199. Larry Tvedten, “Finding Fairmont,” *Gas Engine Magazine* <http://gasengine.farmcollector.com/gas-engines/Finding-Fairmont.aspx> Accessed July 4, 2010.

200. The archives of Austin-Western are held by the Historical Construction Equipment Association; an overview of them is available online.

201. Bill Rathje to Jaleen Grove.

202. Hinton, Washington interview.

203. Bill Rathje witnessed Hinton painting an Austin Western background out of his head; Hinton mentioned using photos for the machines in the Washington interview.

204. Austin-Western, “The Romance of the Roads,” photocopy from unidentified source. Collection of the Hinton family.

205. Terrance Green, an employee of Austin-Western, email to Grove, Nov. 10, 2010.

206. Bill Rathje to Jaleen Grove. Green says that after 1977 the remaining paintings were given to long-time employees.

207. Mr. B to Grove.

Figure 62 Oil painting made for *Austin Western*, circa 1955. Private collection.



Figure 63 Detail.



John Deere

208. Hinton, Washington interview.

It was probably because of the excellence of the farm magazine covers that Deere & Company soon hired Hinton – they actually remarked on how knowledgeable he was about farming.²⁰⁸ Little did they know Hinton had lived his entire life in cities! The John Deere work is what he is most remembered for today, because it is so collectable.

The John Deere Model D was the first tractor on many farms. It was produced from 1923–53, the longest production of a model ever in American tractor history, a record that attests to the reputation for quality and longevity John Deere tractors came to have. This reputation eventually clinched an intense brand loyalty, but in order for John Deere (a latecomer in the tractor market) to achieve it, they first had to employ smart advertising. According to John Deere historian Ralph C. Hughes, Hinton first worked for Deere & Company in 1926, when he supplied black-and-white line illustrations of historical scenes for a spread that ran in the *Moline Daily Dispatch* of July 31, 1928. Then in 1934 he completed a calendar picture; this was followed with a series of twelve paintings used in a calendar celebrating Deere & Company's 1937 centennial. This calendar was a

lavish production using fine paper and reproductions, and Hinton said it won an award in *Printers' Ink*, the advertising industry journal.²⁰⁹ Other pictures followed for calendars and magazine advertising until probably after the War. Hinton also helped develop the leaping deer logo in use from 1950-1968.²¹⁰

In calendar images that John Deere continues to reproduce as collectibles and memorabilia, we are treated to idyllic scenes of the perfect American family farm. Mother, pie in hand, calls from the front porch to Father coming in on his John Deere, with Junior and the farm dog close by (originally issued in 1938). Or, Grandpa holds Junior on his knee, telling him about the days of horses and hand-plowing, while Father plows along on his tractor. Or, Father hurries from the tractor to help Junior with a turtle caught on his fishhook. Or, he assists Junior in the field with his own makeshift toy tractor (Figure 64).

From the vantage point of the twenty-first century and our present familiarity

209. Hinton, recorded conversation with Mr. B, 1980; Hinton to CL Anderson of Deere & Company, Sept. 23, 1963. Collection of Deere & Company.

Unfortunately, documentation of this award has not been found in a cursory review of issues of *Printers Ink* 1936-1939 and *Printers Ink Monthly* 1937-1938.

210. Ralph C. Hughes, "Walter Haskell Hinton," *Green Magazine* (Sept. 1989), 13; "Walter Haskell Hinton," *John Deere Tradition*, Vol. 1 Issue 8 (December, 2001), 14.



with automobiles and other machines, we are accustomed to thinking of the intimate family farm as a piece of nostalgia. It is only with a great effort that we remind ourselves that Hinton's John Deere pictures and their close relations – such as his *Successful Farming* magazine cover of a smiling farm wife waving to her husband on his shiny new tractor (Figure 61) – were in their day very *modern* scenes, even a bit futuristic. To be sure, the *Successful Farming* picture is honeydipped, with the golden rays of an ideal summer morning giving a sense of hallowed, old-fashioned blessedness to this perfect little Eden of a farm, in the yeoman tradition. But the contemporary reader of 1925 would have noticed the lady's stylish hair, her fashionably cut dress with hose rather too daintily sheer for farm work, and the youthfulness of the couple. Their cheery and loving reciprocated salutes hint at a "companionate marriage," the new ideal of holy matrimony being debated in magazines, where a couple's happiness was based on a partnership of friendship and equality. This husband and wife are clearly business partners, serious about making their joint enterprise not some replica of their grandparents'

Figure 64 *Dinner Time*, circa 1937. Image courtesy of John Deere.

211. Roger Welsch, *100 Years of Vintage Farm Tractors: A Century of Tractor Tales and Heartwarming Family Farm Memories* (Voyageur Press, 2003).

212. Wayne G. Broehl Jr., *John Deere's Company: A History of Deere and Company and Its Times* (Doubleday, 1984), 241. Broehl cites that US Department of Agriculture figures from 1940 indicate "upwards of 60%" of farms large enough for tractors had them.



Figure 65 *Little Wheels - Big Wheels*, circa 1937. Image courtesy of John Deere.

pioneering, drudgery-filled days, but rather a model of up-to-date efficiency and scientific agribusiness that would bring them genteel prosperity and happiness. We know this not just by the lady's stockings but from the real alien on the scene, the tractor.

According to Ford-Ferguson designer and engineer Harold Brock, in 1938 the major challenge for tractor manufacturers was convincing farmers to give up their beloved but less productive horses.²¹¹ Even in 1940 as many as a third of larger farms still lacked tractors.²¹² Not only were tractors an alarming contraption

that necessitated learning mechanics, buying fuel, and considerable debt, tractors violated tradition. Justin Usherwood, in his humorous autobiographical 1988 book *The Farm West of Mars*, gives a tongue in cheek but accurate description of how the newfangled machinery was received by some:

*Uncle Jim was to remain devout to horses throughout his life and equally hate tractors for the same duration. Tractors, to Uncle Jim, were an abomination of human purpose and good sense. Horses were the true destiny as ordained by God, also Jehovah, Yabweh, Jesus Christ and St Paul, and the perfect use of human and animal talent Any fool can learn the way of horses, but engines? No sir, America was built by horses, fought over by horses. Did not all of the Presidents of these colonies have horses?*²¹³

213. In Welsch, 33.

The god-given, patriotic horse was the noblest and most important farm animal, indispensable in plowing and harvesting, and therefore the heart and soul of farming, a potent symbol of the farmer's responsibility and identity as steward of the land, a vital part of American manifest destiny. The usurping tractor seemed soulless by comparison, a threat to the sacred order of nature. Therefore, Walter Haskell Hinton's job as a commercial artist for John Deere, and for periodicals that were supported by the advertising dollars of equipment manufacturers, was to transplant the horse's soul to the tractor, to interpret the tractor as a member of the family. That he was successful is proven by the continuing popularity of his images, which now appeal to a love for vintage tractors that had originally been felt for horses (Figure 65).

Providing narratives of close knit family life is how Hinton accomplished the metamorphosis of the reigning horse iconography and ideology. In the father-son bonding moments, he suggests rhetorically that the tractor brings the family together and facilitates the handing down of the family farm skills, and by extension the farm, to the next generation. Nothing, the images imply, would change with the simple purchase of a labor-saving tractor. In fact, family life might get better if Father had more time to spend with Junior.

However, the tractor and other automated machinery had an immediate and lasting effect on not just the technical aspects of farming but also on human relationships in farming communities. The companionate marriage of *Successful Farming's* loving farm couple is also obliquely a token of their isolation and the harbinger of the ideal nuclear family of the 1950s: no extended family or hired hands are visible. In an account by Iowa farm boy Jerry L. Twedt, the John Deere Model A – an immensely popular machine – replaced the steam engines that powered the threshers. By the 1950s this reduced threshing time from two weeks to two days, and the work team from some eighteen men in the field and corresponding womenfolk cooking at home to two or three men and one wife serving them. When efficiency went up, interdependence went down; old timers felt the romance of threshing went out with the steam engine circa 1940.²¹⁴ Hinton's intimate nuclear families compensate for the loss of community, replacing cooperative networks and a more communitarian way of life with the advancement of the interests of the independent family. This appealed to the values of the self-made man, who wished to be his own master and to enjoy a modern lifestyle. Accordingly, men or boys are usually the stars of Hinton's farm scenes. Even in *V for Victory*, the woman on a tractor during wartime deflects attention from herself to the departing troops she waves to.

214. Jerry L. Twedt, "The Harvest," in Welsch, 77; reprinted from *Growing Up in the 40s: Rural Reminiscences* (Iowa State University Press, 1994).

Tractors did bring certain advantages to the harried farmer, who had to find some way to cope with the industrial changes going on around him. Tractors were faster than horses, and, as salesmen said, they didn't need to be fed all winter when idle. They could also be handled by anyone, unlike a team of draft horses. But mechanization affected family farms by introducing a different economic balance. Because many had to take on debt in order to finance machines, women often had to take on outside jobs.²¹⁵ Gas cost money, as opposed to horse feed, which cost only labor. Crops then had to pay more, which encouraged large scale production and specialization, often compromising the small, diverse family farm with its assortment of crops and animals. This led to more farms eventually being

215. Patricia Penton Leimbach, "Another Dream Fulfilled," in Welsch, 115.

216. Broehl, *John Deere's Company*, 523.

consolidated, rather than passed on to children. John Deere helped postpone this fate by offering more affordable machines for mom and pop operations; they especially excelled at providing tractors that were fuel efficient.²¹⁶ Based in the heart of the Midwest, Deere & Company knew exactly the predicament their community faced and the images they commissioned paid tribute to both what was lost and what could be gained.

217. Harry L. Rinker to Jaleen Grove, Popular Culture Association conference, March 31, 2010.

It is against this backdrop that we must now understand the significance of the consistent love people have for the John Deere advertising images, and the complex role advertising art plays. Harry Rinker, an expert in collectibles markets, compares John Deere fans to gangs because they are so brand loyal.²¹⁷ Because Hinton saw what actually mattered to people was not really the machine but warm family ties and a sense of security, his commercial art began to transcend salesmanship and become not cute, kitschy nostalgia but loaded and meaningful symbols of a century's worth of large scale social and environmental change in the West. The sentimental images speak to both the demise and the survival of the traditional farm, and so they are resonant in complex ways for those who come from farming backgrounds. For today's audience, Hinton's scenes now read nostalgically and represent a sense of loss. Ideologically, the John Deere pictures speak to the wished-for rightness of the yeoman farm family's internal bonds and independence, free from the twenty-first century pressures of industrialization, debt and consolidation, and the vintage tractor has become an icon of this conviction. Thus, his works have begun to signify resistance to the very forces of progress that they originally promoted.

Later Life and Mentorship

218. Kitty Slater to Grove.

Walter Haskell Hinton kept his independent lifestyle to the very end. From the 1940s onwards, with his mother deceased and his son and grandchildren living in Connecticut and visiting infrequently, he remained self-directed (Figure 66).²¹⁸

219. Susanne Hinton, questionnaire.

He found pursuing his art and his reading quite fulfilling, so he did not join clubs or cultivate many friendships. Nor, it seems, did he even associate with other artists.²¹⁹ Buying the house in Glen Ellyn did, however, bring him long-term residence in one place for the first time in his life, and with it gradually came more friendships and participation in a community. He became an especially important figure for a few local children. David Apatoff suggests his travels and his enjoyment of a permanent home at last may have influenced the sentimentality of his paintings of happy homes and people.²²⁰

220. David Apatoff to Grove, email, July 28, 2010.

As mentioned above, John Higgins-Biddle remembers Hinton as a friendly man who promoted environmental protection and who allowed his sister Carolyn to come watch him paint, giving her peanuts and eventually the copy of his fawn painting. Still, it seemed to some that he was not especially well known in the neighborhood. When the Slater family moved into the Biddles' old house in about 1954, Kitty Slater thought Hinton rather reclusive and isolated, and so she began to invite him to gatherings. He started to get to know the community better, and he eventually became a regular at the Slaters' table on holidays.²²¹ The Slaters' friendship was especially precious as Hinton moved into his late seventies.

221. Kitty Slater to Grove.

Hinton may have seemed reclusive at times, but really he was just self-sufficient, even teaching himself how to cook at age 74. In fact, when he was socializing, he was an engaging, extroverted speaker who could fascinate listeners with his encyclopedic knowledge and colorful tales – a few of them tall. Self-confident and widely read, Hinton never shied from a sporting argument. Memories of his personality differ. Bill Rathje does not recall Hinton ever holding any prejudiced ideas and says it was not in his character to make snap judgments, while Kitty Slater – who was a close friend and a lot older than Bill – remembers Hinton as a man of his times who did not easily let go of sexist and racist beliefs that had been quite normal for his generation, and that he could hold a grudge for a long time.²²² Yet Hinton also had an impish streak, decanting cheap wine into expensive bottles and dressing up at Halloween for the kids who

222. Kitty Slater to Grove.



Figure 66 *Walter Haskell Hinton and his son W. Raymond Hinton*, circa 1945. Collection of the Hinton family.

223. Kitty Slater recalls the spats; Bill Rathje, the corduroy and plaid.

224. William Slater to Grove.

225. William Rathje to Grove.

226. Coverage [newsletter published by Washington National Insurance Company] (Dec 1961), 16. Collection of Deere & Company.

wended their way past the big bushes and trees to his door. Mrs. Slater calls living next door “a gift” for her children because of how much they learned from him about art and the fine things in his house. All the Slater children went to visit and watch Hinton paint, as Carolyn had before. But for kids who didn’t know him, he was a figure of mystery: he had the air of a Victorian eccentric, occasionally wearing spats into the 1950s (although his preferred garb was corduroy trousers and plaid shirts),²²³ and his house with its rather bushy yard was decorated with carved faces and animals. Kitty’s son William recalls that fellow local children regarded the house as spooky.²²⁴

Yet Hinton really liked kids, and for those who knew him he was an awesome figure who had a significant impact on their lives. In 1952, another neighbor, Bill Heald, asked if Hinton would teach his grandson, six-year-old William Rathje (called Bill), how to draw and paint. Hinton declined, saying that painters who teach cease to be painters. So Mr. Heald asked if the little boy could come do some yard work on Saturdays, and then as a reward sit and watch Hinton work. This Hinton heartily agreed to – and over about ten years, young Bill gradually developed into a kind of apprentice, although not the traditional kind who would have assisted Hinton on his work. Instead, Bill completed his own drawings and paintings of objects he picked from around the house, and Hinton would then – with Bill’s permission – touch them up here and there “with a lick and a promise,” to demonstrate an improvement rather than critiquing or questioning Bill’s efforts. He says today, “After my immediate family, Mr. Hinton had the most influence in my life.” He is especially grateful Hinton never once said a critical word, but let him develop at his own pace in a process of self-directed discovery, always treating him as an equal. Dr. Rathje’s eventual interest in anthropology and indigenous life of the past had been stimulated by Hinton’s collection of non-Western art and his knowledge of other cultures. He is now a renowned expert on the anthropology of refuse.²²⁵

Around 1960 Hinton went into semi-retirement, taking commissions only from established clients and friends.²²⁶ About this time, the fourteen-year-old grandson of the man who owned the local shooting range met Hinton when Hinton came to spend some leisure hours there. This boy, Mr. B, got to know Hinton better in the late 1970s when he would come by to work on the house. Through visiting and being treated to Hinton’s lively lectures about the series of Native American portrayals made for *Mammoth Western*, young Mr. B developed a deep respect for Hinton’s art. The series, which Hinton eventually gave him in recognition of Mr. B’s deep appreciation for them, were Mr. B’s most prized possessions, and he proudly displayed them in his living room in the exact order that Hinton had arranged them in his recreation room. Shortly after, Hinton passed away on December 24, 1980, age 94.

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Finding a Place for Walter Haskell Hinton in Art History

Way back when his mother was still living and son Raymond was at home, Hinton made little cards as part of their Christmas celebration. Each card illustrated a person’s wish: his mother’s was to return to California, Ray’s was a pony, and Walter’s was fame (Figure 67). While Hinton never became famous, he nevertheless did enjoy appreciation and attention from his immediate community while still alive. Since his death, his work has largely escaped the notice of illustration art collectors because he never did quite enough in any one genre to attract notice – his preference to keep on trying new things worked against his renown in the long run. In conducting research for this biography, several collectors acknowledged the Hinton name was familiar, but each remembered him for something different. “He did that *too*?” was often heard. Now that his importance to American print culture has been traced, perhaps Hinton will be remembered for his versatility in many subjects.

In Walter Haskell Hinton’s lifetime, social and cultural connectivity between self and audience was the special province of illustrators since modern fine artists



Figure 67 Holiday dining table place card.
Collection of the Hinton family.

eschewed (or claimed to eschew) popular appeal, which they likened to pandering to or dictating to the masses. Hinton would have called his job not pandering, nor dictating, but *serving*. As a witness to the evolution from lightbulb to personal computer, from agrarian economy to information economy, Hinton found that traditional nineteenth century symbols of independent pioneer spirit and indigenous stoicism remained “true” emblems of the hopes, fears, and dreams of the twentieth century’s average white Americans. He interpreted this iconography in keeping with his personal cultural background and his generation’s ideology, which in turn constructed collective meaning and identity, bolstering communities against swiftly changing times (Figure 68).²²⁷

Especially before television, popular media saturated people’s lives with fewer images than today, but those images were enjoyed for longer. Periodicals were so cheap that every family had several subscriptions, and magazines lay about for weeks before being passed to others. Frequently covers were torn off and used for decorative or school purposes. The calendars of the mid-twentieth century consisted of one image only with a pad of the months stapled below it to be torn off as time passed. One image, therefore, was looked at for an entire year. The act of piecing a puzzle brought the piecer into intimate contact with a picture, forcing him or her to examine every small segment in detail. Puzzles were selected with discernment for personally meaningful content and attractiveness of execution, and completed puzzles were (and are) often framed and hung as paintings. Bigger than magazine covers and scrutinized more intently, the millions of puzzles issued in the 1930s would have brought people into closer contact with art than any other medium of the day. For those with little access physically, financially, or culturally to art galleries, the puzzles, calendars, advertising and magazines were a means to have art.

In Hinton’s last year of life, some of his interpretations were beginning to seem a little corny: a 1979 *Sports Afield* writer noted their vintage covers of the 1930s and 40s “will provide a few smiles, especially when compared to the beautiful photographs that now grace front of the magazine.”²²⁸ Image-makers that succeeded Hinton had taken up the visual culture “rocks” of his day and

227. The importance of collective memory was first explored by Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia*, (Free Press, 1979).



Figure 68 Comprehensive sketch. Pencil, watercolor and gouache, date unknown.
Collection of the Hinton family.

228. “Sports Afield Classics: Vintage Covers,” *Sports Afield*, July, 1979, 44.

continued to reshape the stream of what people liked, according to the times, making his work look dated just as he had done with his own forefathers' dime novels and chromolithographs. But a curious thing happens with continued distance: eventually things cease to be funny and instead take on the dignity of the antique. Now we begin to see Hinton's works as sober indices of a period, keys to understanding not just our culture's embarrassing past foibles, but its sincerest

Figure 69 *The Great Masterpiece*, advertising design, illustration, and possibly also concept by Hinton circa 1930, for Barnes-Crosby. (Cropped). Collection of the Hinton family.



good intentions as well. Studying the ways Walter Haskell Hinton took up the best known and loved themes of his time and retold them by adding in the subtleties of his own interpretations allows us greater insight into the making of the thing we call “culture.”

Hinton's art, when it was embedded in a magazine or advertising calendar, delivered messages extrinsic to the artwork itself. Because of this, as long as “real” art is imagined to be free of all commercial taint, as was supposed by High Modernists, Hinton's work will not be considered art. The modernist definition has, however, been increasingly challenged in recent years. A significant part of the history of art is that the definition of art has been under constant revision, and “Art” is understood now to be a construct contingent upon the formations of elite social and economic power, rather than embodying some unchanging, classical truth. The commercial presence in Hinton's work helped perpetuate consumerism, but at the same time it was also a cultural documentation and artistic expression of a society already defined by consumption, trade and industry, not unlike how Dutch and Flemish Old Master paintings are expressions of the changing economic conditions of the Early Modern period. Hinton's advertising illustration *The Great Masterpiece* shows he was quite aware that even the most revered European art had been made for a client, subject to his whims (Figure 69). Yet significantly, the court painter looks not imploringly or gratefully to his lord, but stands firmly before his own work, ready to make adjustments of his own volition. Hinton thereby suggests the patron-craftsman relationship was a partnership between equals.

The work of Walter Haskell Hinton was enjoyed by people from all walks of life, from farmers with John Deere tractors and working class producers and readers of Ziff Davis' pulps, to the middle classes of Washington National's employees and customers, to the affluent, outdoorsy residents of Glen Ellyn. It therefore facilitated common understanding between disparate groups. At the same time, in being so richly expressive of Chicago and Western tastes, promoting local mid-Western businesses, and reflecting the lifestyles and landscapes of the region, Hinton's work comprises a specific regional identity



and sense of difference from America's northeastern culture, especially that of New York, which dominated publishing and became the center of modern art and advertising following the Second World War. If art reflects social change, then Walter Haskell Hinton's art expresses the West's search for self-definition and governance, or to use more familiar terms, freedom and independence. It also expresses America's struggle to reconcile these ideals with the pressures of rising consumerism and increasing imbalance of wealth with other nations throughout the twentieth century (Figure 70).

Figure 70 *Columbia, allegorical figure of America, gives milk products to the world.*
Advertising illustration, date unknown.
Collection of the Hinton family.

Author's note

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Jaleen Grove is a Canadian art historian who specializes in the visual culture of Canadian and American illustration and commercial art.