

John Hampton

John Hampton (1918-1999)

Painter and sculpture of the Old West, born in New York City in 1918 and living in Scottsdale, Arizona. “I loved old Tom Mix movies,” he remembers. “All boys are interest in cowboys, but most of ‘em outgrow it after they get practical minded...yet. I like to paint the romance of the West, not somebody getting a saddlesore or a hernia.”

After practicing roping with his mother’s clothesline in Brooklyn, Hampton won first prize in a rodeo sketching contest in 1935. He began illustrating Western pulp magazines while he was in high school and served in Intelligence in World War II. On the proceeds of assisting Fred Harman in drawing the comic strip, “Red Ryder,” Hampton bought a small ranch near Silver City, New Mexico, and “became a one-cow cowboy,” in order to act out the life so he could draw it. The experience he gained was part of the credo of the Cowboy Artists of America helped form. He says that “it has to be a part of the recipe that to depict range life correctly, the artist had to know how to do some cowpunchin’. It’s as simple as that. And this half-breed cross between and artist and a cowboy produces a cowboy-artist.” After “we set the stage,” he observes, “young kids, today, are making a killing in Western art.”

In 1977, Hampton tried his first bronze and promptly won the gold medal at the CAA show. He now “likes doing bronzes” because he can “keep one for himself” and “the money is better than in painting.”

#18 Lufkin City Hall – “Movin the Herd” Oil on canvas. Indian in coral shirt, silver belt behind trail of horses on hilltop.