

Letter from Prescott Mayor Phil Goode

Sculpting Prescott's Cultural Heritage

Last month I was privileged to speak at the dedication ceremony for a monument honoring Lt. Ernest A. Love at Prescott Regional Airport. This larger-than-life bronze statue stands outside the terminal, welcoming visitors to our fine airport, and reminding us of one of Prescott's true hometown heroes. Renowned local Western artist, Bill Nebeker, was commissioned to create this important piece and his works can be found all over the country, including right here in Prescott. In its long history, Prescott has many heroes, and individuals worthy of our admiration, including artists like Bill, who have graced our city with significant public sculpture. Here are three such sculptors who are represented in Prescott.

Solon Borglum

Solon Borglum was an American sculptor born in Ogden, Utah, who created the famous "Roughrider" statue on the Courthouse Plaza in 1907. His work "Cowboy at Rest" resides on the south side of the Plaza as well. Solon's work is most notable for frontier life, especially his experiences with cowboys and Native Americans. He was the younger brother of Gutzon Borglum and uncle to Lincoln Borglum, the team responsible for the presidential carvings at Mt. Rushmore. Solon's works were renowned and appeared all over the world, including the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis in 1904.

George Phippen

George Phippen was a well-known, local Western Artist and the namesake for the Phippen Museum. From the earliest age, he could be found creating scenes of cattle drives on the chalkboard of his one-room schoolhouse, or molding livestock from the clay he scrounged from the banks of a nearby creek. And throughout his career, depicting the real life of the working cowboy was incredibly important to him, noting that the compliments he appreciated most were from those who knew the details and said he got it right.

The George Phippen Memorial Foundation was founded in 1974 in honor of George's inspirational character and artistic talent. His famous work "Cowboy in a Storm" was unfinished at the time of his death in 1966. However, in 2018 the piece was cast as a 15-foot monumental bronze which now resides at the SR89 roundabout directly outside the Phippen Museum. George was a member of the Mountain Artists Guild and first president

and co-founder of the Cowboy Artists of America. His paintings and sculptures are world renowned.

Bill Nebeker

Bill Nebeker was raised in Prescott from early childhood. He was inspired to begin sculpting in 1964 when he attended a show of George Phippen's artwork. In 1978 Bill joined the Cowboy Artists of America, the group Phippen co-founded. Perhaps Bill's most prominent monument in the area is "Early Prescott Settlers", located at the intersection of SR89 and SR69. He also sculpted the Fallen Officers Memorial at the Yavapai County Courthouse Plaza, as well as "If Horses Could Talk" at the SR 89 and Deep Well Ranch Roundabout. Bill's work can also be found in galleries and museums throughout the west and beyond.

Indeed, Prescott is a city blessed with many talented artists, who with their works of public art, from murals to memorials, have made our city a more beautiful place to live and visit. Many more artistic works can be found in the various galleries and collections here in Prescott. Thanks again to Bill Nebeker and to all of our local artists for their contribution to Prescott's culture and heritage, as well as the private donors whose financial support has helped make the art available for the public to enjoy. Finally thanks to Phippen Museum Director Edd Kellerman and his staff for their contributions to this letter.

To see more examples of the works of these three artists and many more talented Western artists, visit the Phippen Museum of Western Art, and be sure to attend their 50th Western Art Show and Sale on Memorial Day weekend at the Courthouse Plaza.