



# Revised History

## The “Horse Trader”–Not Really

By Al Benson June 3rd, 2022

I had an interesting experience while in Oklahoma with one customer for my artwork. It was a new experience for me. I had had some of my paintings in art shows in the east. Back there when you put your work in a show you put a price on it and people either paid what you asked, or they just walked away.

I had one customer in Oklahoma who didn't operate quite that way. If he saw your work he'd ask you the price of a picture, and if you told him \$15, he'd stand and look at the picture almost upside down and backwards and then he'd say, "I'll give you \$8.00 for it." At that point, if you wanted to get somewhere near your asking price, you had to horse trade, or dicker with him to try to work him up to somewhere as close to your original asking price as you could. You never made it all the way back to your original price. Most times you ended up about halfway between his offer and what you originally asked for the picture.

I learned from him that if you wanted \$15 for a picture you had better tell him you wanted \$25 for it, and that gave you a bit of dickering, or horse-trading room. I thought at first this man didn't have much money and he was trying to get all he could on the cheap. I was half wrong.

I found out from someone in Bartlesville that this man had contracting business that had to do with tearing down old buildings. He was probably worth more than I ever would be.

The last time I sold him a picture I had to go out to where he was working on a building to talk to him about the picture he wanted to buy. We had our usual horse trading, or dickering session and I got closer to the price I originally wanted than I had previously. When I got to the building they were tearing down, I noted that my prospective customer didn't look as if he was worth a thin dime. He had on a pair of old bib overalls, a grubby tee shirt, with a beat-up old cowboy hat on the back of his head. As I said, I didn't get all I wanted for the picture, but I came closer than I had in previous encounters with him.

I finally figured out he was like a lot of folks in the west—he was well off enough that he didn't feel he had to impress anybody. So, he didn't try. He was just himself. And when it came to the artwork, he horse-traded, or dickered, not because he was short of cash, but just because he enjoyed doing that sort of thing. There was a certain challenge for him in it. Yet another interesting character I met while living in Oklahoma.