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Review of *A Western Legacy: The National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum* Foreword by Charles P. Schroeder

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A Western Legacy: The National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum. Foreword by Charles P. Schroeder. Introduction by David Dary. Photography by Ed Muno. Contributions by Steven L. Grafe, Susan Hallsten McGarry, Charles E. Rand, Richard C. Rattenbury, and Donald W. Reeves. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005. ix + 246 pp. Photographs, illustrations, bibliographical references, index. \$59.95 cloth, \$29.00 paper.

The National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City is the subject of this inaugural volume in the University of Oklahoma Press's Western Legacies Series. The museum was the brain child of Chester Arthur Reynolds who in 1955 suggested there should be a hall of fame for cowboys. After a decade of planning and fund raising, the institution opened its doors. Now, fifty years later, the museum houses more than 30,000 historical objects and works of art. This book commemorates the museum's founding and details its history, activities, collections, and exhibits. It is a beautiful work, including eighty full-page color illustrations of art and displays, accompanied by essays written by professionals associated with the museum.

David Dary's history of the museum emphasizes challenges and transitions, including a name change from the National Cowboy Hall of Fame and Museum to the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum to reflect its expanded mission. Besides exhibits depicting cowboy life, rodeo contestants, and western performers, its collections now emphasize Native Americans in the trans-Mississippi West; works by Charles M. Russell, Frederic Remington, and other well-known western artists; contemporary and traditional Native American art; western photographs; objects related to the frontier military; decorative firearms; memorabilia from the entertainment world; and archival materials.

Dary's refreshingly frank history not only discusses the museum's changed themes, but relates the difficulties its directors faced as they built its collections and raised funds for buildings and operations. These challenges became especially complicated during the tenure of its first managing director, Dean Krakel, who became involved in a power struggle with his own board of directors. Fortunately, the museum managed to overcome these conflicts and thrive in the following years.

The National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum and the University of Oklahoma Press are to be complimented for producing this excellent introduction to one of the West's premier institutions preserving and interpreting the region's history. Anyone interested in the Great Plains will find this volume attractive and useful.

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