



***A Dash for the Timber***  
**Frederic Remington, American, 1861-1909**  
**1889, Oil on canvas, 48 1/2 x 84 1/8 inches**  
**Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, Texas**

### **About the Artist**

Frederic Remington grew up in New York State, near the Saint Lawrence River. Though his artistic training was limited to only three semesters at the Yale College of Art and three months at the Art Students League in New York, he became an influential portrayer of the American West. His first trip to the western U.S. was in 1881, when he vacationed in the Montana Territory.

Two years later Remington moved to Kansas. While working to become a successful artist, he struggled at several different ventures that included a sheep ranch, a hardware store, and a saloon. He returned to New York City in 1885 and began to do illustrations for Harper's Weekly, the largest pictorial newspaper at that time in the world. He soon became one of their best artists.

From 1885 to 1888, Remington made several trips to the southwestern United States to report on the U.S. Cavalry and the Apache Indians. The landscape and the dramatic events he witnessed were an important influence on his development as an artist. He wrote observations in his diary, made many sketches, collected artifacts, and took photographs with the latest photographic equipment available. Back in his New York studio, Remington used these aids to develop paintings that were as realistic as possible in every detail.

*A Dash for the Timber* launched Remington's career as a major painter when it was first exhibited in 1889. That year, Remington and his wife, Eva, were wealthy enough to buy a large house with stables outside New Rochelle, New York. Only a few years earlier in Kansas, he had been a struggling artist. But, by 1890, at the age of only twenty-eight, he was a celebrity, one of the best known artists in this country.

### **About the Art**

“The dust flies, guns blaze away, the wind whips the big hat brims. There is no time for second thoughts. It is big action in big space” (Frederic Remington: *The Masterworks*, Michael Edward Shapiro).

In *A Dash for the Timber*, the viewer sees riders being pursued by a group of Indians. They all gallop toward the viewer across a dusty plain. Some of the eight cowboys or prospectors have turned in their saddles to shoot at the pursuing Indians. On the left side of the painting is the edge of a group of trees where the men might hope to find safety. The sun is shining brightly, and Remington has made the resulting shadows a deep blue-violet.

This painting had strong appeal for the American public who enjoyed the romantic notion of the disappearing world of action and adventure in the untamed West.

### **Additional Information**

Accuracy was very important to Remington, not only in the details of clothing and objects, but also in the humans and animals he painted. He shows us horses charging toward the viewer. They appear to be caught in a moment of intense action much like that which would be popular in Western films a generation later.

The action is on the viewer's eye-level with a shallow foreground that places the horses' legs very near to us. The way Remington has shown the horses with all four hooves off the ground is a view the public might not have been willing to accept earlier, but the photographs of Eadweard Muybridge showing how this actually does occur in galloping horses proved the authenticity of this presentation.

### **About the Time and Place**

Remington's subjects were definitely American but these were not the common subjects of other American painters of the time. Most artists felt that studying in Europe was necessary, and his rejection of this idea was unusual for the time.

In 1889, the year that *A Dash for the Timber* was exhibited, the United States was growing and changing. North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, and Washington became the 39th, 40th, 41st, and 42nd states.

New inventions and developments were changing the lives of Americans in their homes. Electric lights were installed in the White House, in Washington, D.C., but neither President Harrison nor his wife would touch the switches. An employee turned the lights on each evening, and they remained on until he returned the next morning to turn them off. The Singer Sewing Machine Company introduced the first electric sewing machine and sold one million of them. Aunt Jemima pancake mix was invented in St. Joseph, Missouri and was the first ready-mix food to be available commercially.

Important works of art and architecture were produced in 1889. Winslow Homer painted *The Gulf Stream*, and Vincent van Gogh painted *The Starry Night* and *Self Portrait with Bandaged Ear*.

The Eiffel Tower, designed by French engineer Alexander Gustave Eiffel, was finished in Paris for the Universal Exhibition that opened May 6. It was a 984.25 foot tall wrought-iron structure on a reinforced concrete base and had three hydraulic elevators, one of which was produced by the Otis Company of Yonkers, New York.

A change was made in our national government when Congress voted to give the U.S. Department of Agriculture a place on the President's cabinet. J. M. Rusk became the first Secretary of Agriculture.