EARL HEIKA, MONTANA SCULPTOR,
HIS LIFE AND HIS WORKS

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The purpose of this paper is to record for all interested persons the available facts concerning the life and works of Earl Heika, Montana artist/sculptor. Heika, who lived most of his life in Great Falls, Montana, depicted Western subjects in his art.

Information for the facts covered herein was obtained by personal interviews with relatives and friends of the artist, from public records, and from the archives of the Great Falls Tribune. Many biographical facts and photographs were provided by Heika's sister, Esther Egan, with whom he lived during his youth. Museums, galleries, and individuals who own Heika works allowed photographs and examinations to be made of such works.

The paper is divided into two major sections, one dealing with Earl Heika's life, the other with his art. Numerous illustrations accompany the biographical material, and both color and black-and-white photographs of the art are included. At the end of the paper is a list of over eighty clay sculptures, plaster castings, and dioramas, with the present location of each noted when such information could be determined.

Heika was born in Belt, Montana, in 1910; he died at the age of thirty-one in Great Falls, Montana, on May 18, 1941.
His father died when the boy was four years old. An older sister cared for him for seven years until his mother remarried. He stuttered badly throughout his life, a condition that worsened under emotional stress. He began painting and sculpting during his teen years, and, when he was nineteen, he had his first public display in Los Angeles. Subsequent showings of his sculpture were held in Great Falls, at Chicago's World Fair, 1933-34, at the Texas Centennial, 1936, at the San Francisco Exposition, 1939, and in New York at the Municipal Art Show, 1937.

Heika married Virginia Middleton in 1933; the couple had four children, the last born in the spring of 1941. A great blow to Heika was the sudden death of his favorite brother in 1936, a sorrow from which he never recovered. His suicide in 1941 followed family difficulties and a drinking problem.

Though primarily a sculptor, Heika painted in oil, made pen-and-ink sketches, and created dioramas in which he used sculptured figures or stuffed birds. The Western subject matter of his works includes horses, cowboys, miners, stagecoaches, hunters, prospectors, and Indians. Heika is a Western artist in the tradition of Russell and Remington. His small sculptures depict the romance of Montana in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
EARL HEIKA, MONTANA SCULPTOR,
HIS LIFE AND HIS WORK

THESIS

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For the Degree of

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In 1945, less than five years after the death of Earl Heika, I became aware of his work. In that last war year I married Frank Egan, whose mother, Esther Egan, is the artist's only living sister, an older sister Mamie having died during the Depression. It was more than twenty years later that I had the opportunity to examine certain Heika sculptures, and yet another three years before I gave serious consideration to writing a Heika biography and analysis.

The Montana Historical Society, in 1969, obtained several Heika models which they had cast in bronze. To use in conjunction with a showing of these, the director of the Museum in Helena wrote to my mother-in-law seeking information about her brother. At about the same time, the National Cowboy Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City published a short Heika brochure including some erroneous biographical material, which disturbed the family. These two situations, plus occasional requests for facts received from collectors and galleries, led my husband to suggest that I might be the logical person to "set the record straight," to record for all interested persons the basic knowledge available from family and friends concerning Earl's life and work.

With this in mind, I went to Montana in August, 1969. While there, I interviewed people who had known and worked
with Heika, several old friends, his brother Mike's widow, many owners of Heika sculptures, a former employer, and the director of the Russell Gallery in Great Falls. My mother-in-law provided invaluable assistance through both her many reminiscences and numerous photographs and other materials which she permitted me to borrow.

Many persons with whom I talked offered names of others who might have information that would be helpful. Some of these were contacted in person; others were reached by mail, with most confirming facts previously obtained. Dr. Robert Skinner of Great Falls gave me his collection of photographs of Heika works, including pictures of some sculptures he now owns. The editor of the Great Falls Tribune searched the newspaper's archives and found several photographic negatives as well as three engraving plates showing both the artist and some of his works. These plates were printed for me in the newspaper plant.

In September, 1969, I visited the National Cowboy Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City which has a collection of Heika pieces. There I was given the opportunity of photographing their Heika models and of interviewing the curator of the museum.

Since many sources provided the material compiled in this paper, and because the nature of much of the information was in recalling the past, I have not attempted to give individual credit for every fact. Instead a list is given in the bibliography of those persons with whom I talked about Earl Heika.
Several persons contributed collections of newspaper clippings about Earl's career. Mrs. Laura Stainsby, Mike Heika's widow, and Al Brix, a retired musician, who knew both Earl and his brother forty years ago, along with Esther Egan, provided nearly a hundred published recordings of showings in Montana, of exhibits throughout the country, of long-past events that are pertinent to the scope of this paper. Mrs. Egan also permitted me to read and to use her file of family correspondence insofar as it related to Earl. For the help of all of these people, especially that of my mother-in-law, I am grateful.

As the wife of Earl Heika's nephew, and thus a member of the family, I have had facts and information concerning the artist available to me that are not available to other scholars. It is my purpose that this record of Earl Heika, his life and his sculpture, will be a contribution to the history of Western American art.
CHAPTER II

BIOGRAPHY

Early Life

Life was hard in the West in the early 1900's. Jobs were scarce, especially for the foreign born with little or no knowledge of the language of their new land. Babies seemed to be the most abundant crop produced; to most families, each year brought another mouth to feed. Willy Heika and his young wife Lizzie tried to make a living in Oregon in the lumber towns that dotted the coastline. Just before the dawn of the twentieth century, they joined other Finnish families and moved to a new community in central Wyoming, taking along their two baby girls and a young son. In Rock Springs, Wyoming, Willy found little work in his trade as a butcher, so he began to tend bar in the flourishing saloons catering to the transient cowhands and miners. Two more sons were born to the Heika family, making the task of the breadwinner even more difficult, just at a time when work was slowing down. The great cattle drives through Wyoming from Texas to the grazing land to the north had ceased; cowboys were settling in Texas, along the western slopes of Colorado, or in the fertile valleys of Montana, no longer stopping in Wyoming to quench their thirst in the local bars. Without work, Willy Heika took his growing family and headed north, to central Montana, to the small
village of Belt, twenty-five miles southeast of Great Falls, in the foothills of the Little Belt Mountains, where he obtained intermittent employment as a barkeeper and established his young brood in a shabby frame house. (See Figure 1.) On May 3, 1910, the last child was born to Lizzie and Willy. They recorded his name as Wilber (1.), but he was to be called Earl all of his life. (See Figures 2 and 3.)

Figure 1. Heika home in Belt, Montana, where Earl was born.

Four years after the birth of his youngest child, Willy Heika died, leaving Lizzie alone to care for six children, a
woman who spoke no English and had few salable skills. They moved "to town," to Great Falls, where there was more opportunity for earning a living. Fourteen-year-old Esther found work in a bookstore; eighteen-year-old Mamie left home to go into show business to spend her life playing the piano in the saloons of Montana, while seventeen-year-old Charlie went to California, where he was followed by his younger brother Frank. Left with young Mike and Earl, Lizzie was unable to earn enough to feed them, having to rely on the charity of the community.

Figure 2. Earl Heika as an infant.

Figure 3. Lizzie Heika and infant son Earl.
Figure 4. House in Laurel, Montana where Heika lived with family of his sister, Esther Egan. In picture, left to right: Lizzie Heika, Esther Egan, Egan infant.

to survive. Esther soon married, and she and her husband, Ben Egan, took Earl to Laurel, Montana (See Figure 4.) where he was to spend the next seven years and, later, to move with them to Lewistown, Montana when Ben was transferred there.

As part of the Egan household, little Earl played along the tracks that were an integral part of the town. He learned to care for baby Billy, who was born soon after his own seventh birthday. A stray puppy, whom he named Coyote, was adopted by the boy. (See Figure 5.) The dog, who trailed him along the
dusty paths outside Laurel and went with him to fish in the nearby Yellowstone River, was to live out his life in Earl's care, (See Figure 6.) and was to be the subject of Heika's only dog sculpture. By the time he was in the second grade, he had learned the importance of earning money to help out at home. On Saturday mornings he sold the weekly newspaper throughout the village. (See Figure 7.)

Although they had no automobile, the Egan family and young Earl made frequent trips to Great Falls to see and care for Lizzie Heika. (See Figure 8.) They made the two-hundred-mile trip by train, using the family pass, the bonus that went with employment by the railroad. The two Heika brothers looked forward to these
Figure 7. Earl Heika at age eight carrying newspapers.

Figure 8. Earl at age ten while visiting his mother and brother Mike.
visits. Mike, four and a half years the older, enjoyed playing with the baby of the family, while Earl looked with admiration to his light-hearted, cheerful brother. The intense love between them was evident to all who saw them together. (See Figure 9.)

His sister Esther recalls that Earl was a shy child, preferring to spend his time alone or with his dog, Coyote, rather than with playmates. (See Figure 10.) One of the few exceptions to this, when he became part of group activities, was when, at the age of twelve, he joined a troop of Boy Scouts in Laurel. The outdoor activities and the emphasis on camping appealed to him. Though slight of build, he cheerfully kept up with the huskier boys in the rough-and-tumble troop outings.
Finally, in 1923, when he was thirteen years old, Earl returned to his mother who had married Charlie Larsen, a hard-working smelter laborer employed by the Anaconda Company in Great Falls. It was about this time that Earl developed a stutter which plagued him throughout life. He feared school and the inevitable recitations because of his stutter and the resultant ridicule by fellow students. When he became excited, the stuttering was more pronounced, leading him to drop out of school during the ninth grade, telling his sister that it was not worth it to continue. Some stutterers outgrow their handicap with maturing years; Earl never did.

Spending his spare time in the outdoors, Earl began shaping small figures from the mud outside the family door. One day, after watching the older boy in this occupation, little Billy asked him to fashion an animal for him. Taking the mud, Earl formed a small whale, promising it to the child after it had had time to dry. He placed the model on the sill of the
basement window where the sun could reach it. Later in the day, a rainstorm drenched the area, blowing onto the whale and, in the eyes of the child, "melting" it. Earl looked at the soggy heap of mud and determined to find other material with which to work.

Too much emphasis cannot be placed on Heika's love of the outdoors. He loved the woods and the rivers and took every opportunity to hunt or fish. (See Figure 11.) The one consistent factor running throughout his life is his attraction to nature. In addition to being an ardent fisherman and hunter, he swam in the creeks and hiked in the forests. His intimate knowledge of animal life, the result of his life-long observation, is evidenced in the flawless movement found in his sculptures of animals.

Figure 11. Earl on fishing trip in 1925.
Forty miles east of Great Falls, in a valley below the Highwood Mountains, adjacent to the Lewis and Clark National Forest, was located the Skelton Brothers' Ranch on which Earl found occasional work as a cowhand. He joined his fellow hands at night and on weekends at the local bars. For three months each summer for many years, he worked as a guide at Glacier National Park in northwestern Montana. It was here that he found the first market for his art. He executed sculptures of cowboys and animals which he sold to tourists. Later, as he learned more of the ways of the trade, he made multiple plaster of paris castings of busts of Indians, of bison and bears, selling these for nominal fees in Glacier. (See Figure 12.)

Figure 12. Plaster casting of grizzly bear by Earl Heika.
Although it was necessary for Earl to find ways of earning money to supplement his meager receipts from his sculpture, friends, family, and a growing public recognized him as an artist. He obtained the use of a small brick building which sufficed as living quarters and studio. The stove in the sparsely furnished area served a multiple purpose. In addition to heating the building, it dried Earl's sculptures. As he completed a model, he placed it on the open door of the stove, where it remained for several hours. To construct the models, he first shaped a wire armature. Around this he wound strips of cloth for bulk. He added clay to create the form of the figures. By exposing the clay pieces to a blazing fire, Earl allowed the clay to heat, and, thereby, to harden. Today, after nearly half a century, most of the works are intact, with no sign of crumbling. After it had hardened, he painted the clay with artist's oils in a realistic manner. Finally, details, such as cigarettes, ropes, and reins were attached. (Fig. 13.)

While vacationing in Montana in 1929, William Andrews Clark, III, was introduced to Heika. The two became friends.
immediately. Clark, grandson of one of the great copper magnates of Montana, commissioned the artist to execute a series of six works which were shown at the Stendahl Galleries in Los Angeles. The Los Angeles Times included pictures and a review of Heika's work in its gravure section on May 31, 1931, in announcing the showing, which included three single horsemen on mounts and three multi-figured works. The largest of these, entitled Fresh Meat, shows two riders with a string of four pack horses returning from a hunt. (See Figure 14.)
Budding Career

Heika was sixteen years of age and untrained in any mar-
ketable skill when he dropped out of school. Unaware that the
sculpting which he considered a pastime might be a means of
support, he sought employment. His two older brothers were on
the West Coast. It was here that he went after unsuccessful
searches for work in Great Falls and Lewistown. On October 24,
1928, he wrote home from California to his mother, step-father,
and brother, Mike, telling them that he was working for the
railroad. He had first worked on freight, then on passenger
runs, often wearing a uniform belonging to his brother, Frank.
He missed the snows of Montana and the outdoor life, especially
"duck hunting and deer hunting." (2.) When, as the youngest
man and newest employee, he was laid off by the railroad, he
returned to Great Falls.

When he was nineteen, Earl entered his first work for
public observation: a watercolor sketch of a wolf submitted to
the Third Annual Art Exhibition of the Great Falls Chamber of
Commerce. With a price tag of five dollars, the wolf remained
unsold in that uncertain year of 1929. Later to come to light
were sculptures of cowboys that had been executed as early as
his fourteenth year, but these were found after Earl began to
consider seriously the art that had occupied his private life
for many years. His earliest known work is a bighorn sheep
which he made for his nephew, Bill Egan, and now owned by Bill's
brother, Joe Egan.
Banjo Player, a comic figure on horseback, Bronco Buster, and The Roper are the single works. (See Figures 15, 18, & 19.) The works which show several horses depict various types of hunt scenes. These are, in addition to Fresh Meat, a hunter with mount and pack animals retrieving his kill in Big Horn Hunt, and a mounted rider followed by two pack horses, called, simply, Bringing in the Deer. (See Figures 16 & 17.)
Later that same year, as recorded in the Great Falls Tribune, Gary Cooper, the movie actor who was a native of Montana, gave Earl the use of a cabin studio on the Cooper ranch near Cascade, Montana. The paper quoted the young artist as "hoping that the patrons of the ranch would become patrons of his as well." (3.)

When he returned to Great Falls, Heika exhibited his work in local retail stores, there being few other opportunities for display. The Great Falls Sporting Goods Company and the Paris Dry Goods Store were two locations that offered him space in their windows for exhibits. On June 9, 1930, the Tribune announced the showing at the Paris of two paintings on elk hides and four charcoal sketches, the only
notice found with mention of drawings or paintings. (See Figure 20.)

Here is also found one of the few listings of prices Earl charged for his work, these being, "from $30.00 for the small bucking horse up to $150.00 for horses carrying riders."( 4. )

The Young Artist

On the last day of December, 1930, when the Depression was fast gripping the nation, the Tribune carried a headline "Young Artist Has Real Rush for Christmas" over an article describing the booming business of the young, local sculptor, Earl Heika. By this time, in addition to William A. Clark, III, the twenty-year-old Heika counted among his patrons such wealthy men as John D. Ryan of New York, for whom he made a model showing two cowboys dismounted from their horses on the trail, "indulging in a little Christmas cheer." (See Figure 21.)

Figure 21. Christmas Cheer, Heika, 1930.
He made a unique bust that year for Frank M. Kerr, state manager of the Montana Power Company, showing Kerr in civilian dress except for an Indian war bonnet which he wore when he was adopted into a tribe at Polson, Montana, and given the Indian name "A-Kalt-Muc-Quait," meaning light. He modelled a four-horse pack outfit and a rider on a bucking bronco for John E. Corbetted, attorney for Anaconda at Butte. For Frank Bird, attorney for the Montana Power Company, he made a four-horse pack train and five single pieces the same year.

In 1932, after successful showings in Los Angeles at the Ambassador Hotel and at Camp's Art Store in San Francisco, it was announced that the work of Heika had been accepted for inclusion in the Western section at the World's Fair in Chicago in 1933. Prior to sending the works to the East, he assembled them for a local showing at the Great Falls Sporting Goods Company. According to an article in the Tribune, the group included:

- Eskimo driving dog team, the sled carrying a dead polar bear (See Figure 22.);
- young Indian warrior on horse;
- Buffalo Bill on horse;
- Indian and squaw, both mounted, the squaw with papoose on her back;
- prospector and his burro;
- cowboy on horse, the latter shying at a rattlesnake;
- two other mounted cowboys;
- and, a stone carving of a bust of a Chippewa Indian, the first work of this kind Heika has done.

On June 16, 1933, the Lewistown paper reported the imminent departure for Chicago of the young artist who was fast becoming famous. To be displayed at "The Village of Paris"
on the fairgrounds were Heika's models of an old-time stage coach and a group of horses. Also announced at the time were the showings of additional works at the Sherman House and the Palmer House in Chicago.

Figure 23. Postcard from Virginia and Earl Heika to his parents, June 16, 1933.
At 9:30 on the night of June 16, 1933, Earl married his Great Falls sweetheart, Virginia Middleton. Witnesses for the ceremony were his sister, Esther, and her husband, Ben Egan. The next morning, after writing postcards to Earl's parents and his brother, Mike, and Mike's wife, Laura, in Great Falls, the couple left for Chicago. (See Figures 23 and 24.)

After a trip that included stops in Cheyenne, Wyoming and Custer, South Dakota, they arrived in Chicago on June 23, toured the city, and, on the 26th of June, went to "the Bronze
Company" to discuss the possibility of having some of Earl's works cast. The first exhibit was in the Travel and Transport Building, but, later, it was moved to what he considered a better location. (See Figure 25.) On the last day of June,

![Figure 25. Postcard written by Earl Heika to his parents from Chicago, June 25, 1933.](image)

Earl was successful in placing some of his models in the Art Department of Marshall Fields Department Store in Chicago. Finally, on July 5, after having seen "all the important things" at the Century of Progress, including Whistler's famous painting of his mother, which impressed the Montanans more by the fact that it was valued at more than a million dollars than by its artistic merit, Heika and his bride left the big city, to return to their native state until the following spring.
of promotion, had a marked influence on the young artist. For one thing, upon his return to Great Falls, he began an attempt at mass production of some small sculptured pieces. Aided by his friend, Melvin Cottier, who owns the Russell bust pictured in Figure 27, he learned to make multiple plaster castings. These included a buffalo.

While in Chicago, Earl had written to his family that selling his work was not so easy. Another time he told them that he had developed some new ideas about making money. Both of these factors, the discovery of the difficulty of merchandising and the awareness of the many methods...
an Indian head (Figure 26), a seated bear, and a bust of Charles Russell. The Russell work is especially interesting because of the accurate portrayal it gives of the famous Montanan. In it, Heika catches the Russell visage with sureness and clarity. The well-known cowboy artist lived in Great Falls and died when Earl was a boy of sixteen. It is doubtful that the younger artist ever had more than a passing glance at the older man, yet he was able to capture a remarkable likeness of him.

Heika offered the castings for sale both in Great Falls and, during the summer, to the tourists at Glacier National Park. Since the prices he placed on the works were nominal (around one dollar, according to several persons), the venture must have been successful, even in the dark of the Depression, for there are very few of the castings around today.

The following June, the Heikas returned to Chicago for the second year of the Chicago Fair. Back home the workers at Anaconda were out on strike, a concern to Earl as he wrote to his step-father and mother en route to the East. Arriving at their destination on June 11, Earl found that the Depression was taking its toll, for the business at the Fair was only a fraction of that of the previous year. He determined again to display his work at Marshall Fields and to make the current visit a brief one, after which he would seek work in the Black Hills of South Dakota. On this, his second trip to Chicago, Earl was escorted by "Mr. Moyer" to the Field Museum of Natural History, the highlight of the trip. Money was evidently
on his mind a great deal, for he wrote that he could get a job there (at the Field Museum) if things would pick up. In the same note, he repeated the emphasis on new stratagems to employ as means of making money. After less than a week, Earl and Virginia left Chicago. Apparently his attempt at finding employment in the Black Hills was unsuccessful, for he was soon in Great Falls, working for the Great Falls Sporting Goods Company as a taxidermist when there was work. When there was not, he drove a taxi to supplement his sparse income from his art.

The first week of January, 1936, brought tragedy to the Heika family with the sudden death from a kidney infection of Earl's beloved brother, Mike. The Heika brothers had always been close to one another, spending most of their spare time together. (See Figure 28.) They worked jointly on chores,
afterwards relaxing at the neighborhood pool hall or bar. They often went fishing on weekends. Mike and his wife, Laura, visited in the evenings with Earl and Virginia, who were expecting their first child in the late spring. The brothers spent much time hunting; deer, elk, ducks, all were challenges to the outdoors-loving sportsmen. After Mike's death, Earl began to lose some of the self-assurance he had gained with the recognition of his art. Neither friend nor family could help the bereaved brother recover from his sorrow. Earl wrote to his sisters in Lewistown, "It seems that no matter what I do or talk about, I can never release the feeling inside of me. I don't ever want to forget Mike; he will live forever in our hearts." (7.) His relatives and associates sensed the change that came over him. Always slight of build, he became thinner, more nervous. His visits to the bars lengthened, often lasting for days instead of hours. He continued to work; yet, he found little satisfaction in his art or in the babies that came. Virginia's poor housekeeping, always an annoyance, now became unbearable. His stuttering worsened. Only when drinking could he speak without hesitating. Yet his hands remained steady when holding the clay that yielded to his touch.

The Final Years

Without the enthusiasm that had marked his showing at Chicago's World Fair, Earl arranged for an exhibition at the
Texas Centennial in Dallas in the summer of 1936. With his wife and baby daughter, he arrived in Texas on July 2, reporting to his mother that the fair was not as big as the Century of Progress had been. Neither was the art market. Texas was hard-hit by the Depression in the mid-thirties and there was little money to be spent on non-essentials. The Centennial provided hardly more than an opportunity for the Montanan to show his work in the Southwest. He left after a week. Before returning home, he went to Cheyenne, hoping there to find work. Disheartened, he wrote to his mother, "Not much luck. On our way home." (8.)

The period from 1936 to 1938, though filled with mounting personal difficulties, marked the most productive of Heika's life. His intricate and carefully researched works show a maturing understanding of movement and form. Many of the sculptures from these years are multi-figures, with up to three pairs of animals in teams, measuring nearly six feet in length. Some required an extensive knowledge of specialized information; all utilized an amazing understanding of anatomy.

Perhaps the best of the many Heika "pack strings," The Trophy Hunters, is a group of five horses and two men created early in 1936 for E.B. (Hardrock) Coolidge, a pioneer Montana oil man. (See Figure 29.) In 1938, W.G. Ferguson, manager of the Montanans, Inc., an organization that arranged for the display of native works of art, contacted Coolidge,
Figure 29. The Trophy Hunters, a Heika "pack string," made in 1936 for E.B. (Hardrock) Coolidge, Montana oil man.
who agreed to permit The Trophy Hunters to occupy a place of honor in the Montana exhibit at the San Francisco Exposition in 1939. Prior to his death in 1953, Coolidge notified the Russell Gallery in Great Falls of his intent to leave this model for permanent display at the gallery, where it remains today. Coolidge, described as being one of Heika's faithful patrons, gave another of the artist's works in appreciation to a staff member of the famous Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota.

On May 20, 1937, the artist received word that his work was accepted for another major show in the East. During the summer of that year, his sculpture was part of the Montana section at the Municipal Art Show in New York City.

Although he received encouragement from both civic and business leaders of the state, the industrial giants native to Montana but living elsewhere provided the major financial support that enabled Heika to continue to work. William Andrews Clark, III, whose grandfather, William A. Clark, rose from a $2.50 a day laborer to amass a fortune of $47 million in the latter part of the nineteenth century in the Montana mining business, and Cornelius (Con) Kelley, the most illustrious mining lawyer in the West, whose father helped start the giant conglomerate, Anaconda, that Kelley himself lifted to the position of world-wide giant, were among the wealthy and famous men who discovered Heika's genius and commissioned him to create works of art for their private collections.
A Western scene indigenous to Montana, one unlike any other Western art, is Heika's mining scene showing a miner working at the face of a copper mine. Completed in June, 1938, the unique work required many months of tedious labor by the artist. It is a three-dimensional sculpture, with the figure of the miner standing in the foreground before a rich copper mine opening. (See Figure 30.)

Even before he had shipped this masterpiece to the Long Island home of Cornelius Kelley, for whom it was created, he

Figure 30. Heika displaying his unique sculpture of a mining scene typical of those in Montana copper mines.
was at work on another Kelley commission. The longest, most unusual of his multi-figured works, it is entitled *The Quartz Team*. The six-foot-long model of an ore wagon being pulled upgrade by six straining horses depicts another early chapter in the copper mining industry in Montana. It was presented to Kelley as a fiftieth birthday gift by his wife. It remained in the Kelley home, prominently displayed over the mantle of the Copper Room, until February 3, 1961, at which time it was put on permanent display in the Russell Gallery in Great Falls.

Late in 1938, Earl modelled another three-dimensional work, a crèche, which he placed in the Great Falls Public Library during the Christmas season. The *Tribune* described it as follows:

![The Quartz Team, Heika, 1938. Six horses pull loaded ore wagon up a steep grade.](image-url)
The stable, standing in the northwest corner of the room gives the appearance of great perspective and reality with its sloping floor and lifelike figures. Above the heads of the Virgin Mary and the Christchild(sic) are halos of neon lights. At the feet of Mary and the Babe are shown the three wise men kneeling with their gifts of frankincense, gold, and myrrh. In the west is an open door with the blue light of night showing the camels tethered awaiting the return of the wise men. Goats and asses are feeding at the bins. (9.)

The crèche was Heika's only Christmas-related sculpture. It was not his only Christmas art. For seven or eight years he made and sold Christmas cards. This provided an additional source of income and was an interesting diversion. He once wrote that he was looking forward to making these pen-and-ink drawings each year. The cards shown in Figures 32 through 43 cover a wide range of subjects, from the simplicity of nature to low comedy. These twelve cards were sent by Earl to his sister in 1939.

As did many artists, Heika bartered his art for the necessities of life, including the work of skilled craftsmen who performed their work in return for one of Earl's models. Such a model was the meticulously made Pack Train, a three-horse grouping that he used as payment to Ben Edwards for a plastering job on the Heika home in 1940. In 1962, this sculpture was sold by the Edwards family to Richard Flood, owner of the Trailside Galleries in Idaho Falls. The following year, Flood had it cast in bronze and placed for sale on the open market.

As an off-shoot of his part-time work as a taxidermist for the Great Falls Sporting Goods Company, Earl made several
Figure 32. Christmas card, Heika. Egan collection.
Figure 33. Christmas card, Heika. Egan collection.
Figure 34. Christmas card, Heika. Egan collection.
Figure 35. Christmas card, Heika. Egan collection.
Figure 36. Christmas card, Heika. Egan collection.
Figure 37. Christmas card, Heika. Egan collection.
Figure 38. Christmas card, Heika. Egan collection.
Figure 39. Christmas card, Heika. Egan collection.
Christmas Cheer

Figure 40. Christmas card, Heika. Egan collection.
Figure 41. Christmas card, Heika. Egan collection.
Figure 42. Christmas card, Heika. Egan collection.
Figure 43. Christmas card, Heika. Egan collection.
large, framed dioramas. These "in-depth" works are curved, painted backgrounds combined either with a model or with stuffed birds. One of the latter may be seen today at the Great Falls Sporting Goods Company in the same spot it has occupied for over thirty-five years. It shows two pheasants, a male and a female. The male stands majestically, his tail extending across the front of the scene, while the less brilliant female bends in search of food. (See Figure 44.)

Another diorama is Heika's scene showing the country doctor racing the stork to a lonely cabin in the hills. The doctor in his carriage is one of Earl's earlier models. According to family legend, this is the country doctor who delivered the artist. (See Figure 45.)

Even as his work became increasingly well-known, life was more frustrating for the artist. His friends report that his drinking continued at an accelerated rate and that family friction was constant. The close proximity of the wife's family home to that of the Heika's was a problem. When disturbances arose, Virginia took the children and went to her parents'
home, often to remain there for several days. The emotional strain was difficult for Earl to hide. His stuttering, always a frustration to him, became noticeably worse.

In the early part of 1940, Earl received outstanding publicity for a lone rider, The Lookout, which was purchased by J.P. Medlin of Great Falls. The sculpture, a man seated on horseback with a rifle across his lap, was presented by Medlin to B.W. Kerr, president of the Railway and Industrial Engineering Company of Greensburg, Pennsylvania. Mr. Kerr gave it to his advertising department to be photographed. Eric Zimmerman of the Von Senden Agency of Pittsburgh placed the sculpture in
front of a picture on a Great Northern Railway poster; the combination produced a startling effect. It looked like a rider on watch along a ridge in the Rocky Mountains. (See Fig. 46.)

Figure 46. The Lookout, sculpture, Heika.
This Zimmerman photograph received wide distribution, providing Heika with his first national coverage. The model of The Lookout is now a part of the personal collection of Dr. Robert Skinner of Great Falls.

Particularly in small towns, the public is interested in the activities of the townspeople. As a local boy making a name for himself in the art world, Earl's comings and goings were often noted in Great Falls. On May 8, 1940, his picture, with three other Montanans, appeared in the Great Falls Daily Leader, announcing his participation in "the famous trek of the Rancheros Vistados of Santa Barbara, California." Upon his return, he completed the log-cabin home and studio he constructed with his father-in-law's help. The house, with a low, sloping semi-A-frame roof, was located near the edge of Great Falls, south of the county poor farm, and adjacent to the home of his wife's parents, the E.W. Middletons. (See Fig. 47.)

Early in the spring of 1941, the fourth child, a son, was born to Virginia and Earl. The other children were a daughter, Kathleen, and two small boys, Earl and Gary. The children were the pawns in the recurring disagreements between the two parents. On the fifteenth of May, culminating a family argument, Virginia took the children and went to her parents' home. Despite the pleadings of her husband, she remained. Earl went on a roaring "binge" which lasted for two days. On Sunday morning, May 18, he drove up to the Middleton home, honking his horn, and began buming the house with...
demanding a conference with his wife. At six o'clock, his brother-in-law, Gordon, called the sheriff, who arrived at six-fifteen. Approaching the car, the sheriff found Heika dead of a self-inflicted wound; he had shot himself through the chest with a .32 automatic rifle and had died immediately. He had threatened before to commit suicide, but no one took his threats seriously. His life ended on a spring morning fifteen days after his thirtieth birthday and twenty-five miles from his birthplace. His life, which held such potential, had become too complicated; his genius, which had only begun to be recognized, was gone.

Earl was buried, after Christian Science rites, in the Highland cemetery in Great Falls. Virginia moved to California, where she remarried and remained until her death in February, 1971. The children were raised in Los Angeles, where they still reside.
Recollections

Having spent a good portion of his youth with the Egan family, Heika continued a close association with them after he moved to Great Falls. Esther Egan looked with motherly love on her younger brother. She overlooked his faults and saw only his gentleness and potential, which may account for the fact that Earl rarely stuttered around her or her family.

Bill Egan, only seven years younger than his uncle, thought of Earl as an older brother. As a child, he trailed after the older boy and tried to copy everything he did. After Earl, as a young man, had decided on an art career, he had a studio in a small, rectangular brick building on 2nd Street, North. Bill and his younger brother, Frank, visited there and slept in the rear of the building on a day bed. Heika cooked for them on the wood stove and took them to the fairgrounds to view the wonders of the North Montana State Fair, thereby cementing the love of the boys for the artist. Today, after forty years, that visit is a vivid memory to both men.

During the late 1930's, Bill, a student at Montana School of Mines in Butte, watched his uncle create one of Heika's largest works, a relief map of the State of Montana, made for the Montana Power Company. The huge map still adorns the offices of that company in Butte. When he began to build his log-cabin home, Earl asked Bill to assist, which he did.

Back in Lewistown, the Egan boys (there were five) looked forward to visits from their uncle. He came often in the
years after his schooling ended and he always stayed long enough to take his nephews fishing in Spring Creek. During summer visits, he joined in the noisy gatherings of neighborhood boys as they swam in the chill, 58°, waters of Spring Creek north of town. He came in the early fall to attend the Fergus County Fair, first to watch the rodeo with the family, then to join the riders at the cowbarn for an all-night game of poker. His enthusiasm was greater than his skill at card playing, so he frequently arrived at home broke.

Earl's older brothers, Frank and Charlie, married while he was quite young. His favorite brother, Mike, married in 1927. Until the two older men left Great Falls, he was a regular visitor in their homes. After they moved to California, he went there to visit and stayed for nearly a year after he found a job on the railroad.

Heika was quite devoted to his family. He was anxious to please them and was thoughtful of them. When he travelled, he wrote regularly to his mother and step-father and, often, to his sisters and brothers. After he married, he continued this practice.

After Virginia and Earl married, they lived in a series of inexpensive apartments. One room of their dwelling was Earl's studio, which was filled with his equipment and a collection of Indian artifacts. An elderly Indian, whose name is now forgotten, met Earl, liked his sculpture, and gave him his treasured keepsakes, fearing they would be lost in
the event of his death. These included a headdress, a tubular breastplate, a medicine bag, and some moccasins.

Laura Stainsby recalls that she and her husband, Mike Heika, spent several evenings a week with Virginia and Earl. First at one home, then at the other, they dined together and shared experiences. Earl was a sensitive young man whom Edna Hendrickson, the widow of Earl's uncle Dick, knew as having spells of moodiness and brooding. She felt that he desired a better life for his family than he was able to provide. His travels to both coasts and to the Southwest had given him opportunities of seeing ways of life new to him. He was frustrated by his life. After his death, Virginia stayed at the home of the Hendricksons for some time. She told them that Earl had dreamed of improving the quality of their lives, but that she had not shared his concern. While Mike lived, he had provided the "cheerful attitude and good-natured optimism that Earl needed." Without Mike, he could not face life. (10.)

It has been suggested that Earl's stuttering and his drinking were escape mechanisms, that he had an unhappy family life. Evidence seems to support that his was, indeed, a troubled life. But, it was not one without the love provided by close family ties. He lived in a rough, tough land, one where hard drinking was part of everyday experience. Saloons and bars were the gathering places for the men of the community. It was natural and normal, in that time and place,
for him to seek a familiar escape from his troubles. That he was unable to control his drinking and ended his life while under its influence is regrettable.

Figure 48 shows the photograph of him used with publicity for his exhibits. It was taken several years before his death.

Figure 48. Earl Heika, Montana sculptor, 1910-1941.
CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY


2. Earl Heika, letter to Mrs. C.M. Larsan (sic), October 24, 1928.


5. Great Falls Tribune, December 31, 1930.


CHAPTER III

HEIKA'S ART

Types of Works

Heika came from a family that possessed artistic skills. His brother, Mike, was a cartoonist. It was this brother who persuaded Earl to try his hand at pen and ink drawings for Christmas cards, a seasonal work that provided Mike with a small income. Esther Egan, the artist's sister, is a talented amateur artist who has exhibited pastel portraits and still lifes in her hometown. When the youngest brother displayed an interest in art, his family encouraged him.

During the approximately twelve years that Earl practiced art professionally, his work fell into four categories. These are sculpture, three-dimensional, painting, and drawing. Most of his time was devoted to sculptured pieces, which, like Charlie Russell, he called models. Occasionally, and only on a commissioned basis, he made dioramic scenes which often included some of his models. Painting was an art form that he attempted periodically, there being records of less than half a dozen completed Heika paintings. His drawings were of Western scenes which he made for reproduction on Christmas cards. The non-permanent nature of these has resulted in very few examples remaining.

Earl's sculpting technique was self-taught; he had no
formal art training, though his ambition was to study in Europe. Before he began a sculpture, he made several pencil sketches. When he achieved what he was seeking, he used that drawing as a guide to developing the model. Figure 49 shows the sketch from which he made Heading for the High Country, a work that is now part of the collection of the National Cowboy Hall of Fame. (See Figure 50.) He devised a successful method of assembling his materials for his models and he never changed it. He applied Marble-X, a taxidermist's clay, over a wire armature, around which he had wound narrow strips of cloth. The wire was attached to a wooden base which he covered
with clay. On some types of works, bucking horses, for instance, he attached the wire at only one point. In spite of the delicate balance needed for such structures, he managed to secure them so firmly that there is no flexibility. While the clay was drying, Earl set the model on an open stove door. This procedure heated the clay and dried it. He used artist's oil paints to cover the clay completely, thereby sealing it.

Heika's method was simple but successful. It worked with single, small animals, such as the sheep in Figure 51, on numerous large animals, as a harness team on a stagecoach seen in Figure 52, or groups of human figures, as in the stagecoach robbery scene in Figure 53.

The dioramas Earl made were commercial undertakings. Most of them were constructed for the Great Falls Sporting Goods Company, where they were displayed for the promotion of seasonal sales. Duck hunting is seen in the Heika diorama in
taxidermy skills as well as his art.

Figure 54. After being used, the dioramas were placed in a storeroom at the Sporting Goods store. There they were broken or lost. The only one remaining intact is the pheasant work seen in Figure 44. It is an example of the excellence of Earl's
Figure 53. Stagecoach Hold-up, Heika.

Figure 54. Duck-hunting diorama, Heika.
Figure 55. Wolf, watercolor, Heika, 1929.
On March 20, 1929, Earl submitted a small, 5"X7" watercolor painting to an exhibition in Great Falls. (See page 13.) It was a poorly executed picture of a wolf. (See Figure 55.) On the wall of his studio, amidst his Indian artifacts, he hung his painting of a group of four Indians crossing frozen winter grass. (See Figure 56.) Another winter scene is his painting of a returning hunting party. (See Figure 57.) In this work, two riders are accompanied by pack animals which carry freshly killed deer across a snow-covered hill.
Figure 57. Hunters in winter with laden pack horses, oil, Heika.

Figure 58 is an autumn hunt scene. Here, the hunter has just fired at a buck on a mountainside in the background. Earl varied the signature he placed on his works. The wolf painting and autumn hunt painting are signed "Heikka," a variation he employed half-a-dozen times.

Heika's drawings are illustrated in Figures 32 through 43. Few other examples of these have been found. There is one other drawing of a different type, a 7"x12" nude sketch of his wife. This ink and watercolor drawing is part of the Egan collection.
Subjects of Works

Heika's works are uniquely Western in subject matter. Hunting and riding are predominant themes, but there is a wide variety of other material. With few exceptions, he incorporates animal life into his art. Only the Indian and Russell busts (Figures 26 and 27), the miner (Figure 30), and the relief map (See Page 51) omit animal figures. Included in his works are the following: animals (bison, bears, horses, skunks, deer, sheep), Western lore (stagecoach, covered wagon, stagecoach robbery), hunters, rodeo riders, ranch hands, mining, guides,
Indians, Russell, and Montana geography (in dioramas). Other than in his drawings, he never depicted women. Only the rugged outdoorsman is part of Heika's view of the West.

In the original ink sketch seen in Figure 59, Heika shows an animal long vanished from the Montana landscape. Made in 1940, this work is part of the Egan collection. The paint pony carrying the hunter's kill is a 1936 Heika oil painting. (See Figure 60.) The angry grizzly bear in Figure 61 is protecting her cubs from approaching riders. Three more

Figure 59. Ink sketch of buffalo herd, Heika, 1940.
Figure 60. The hunter's kill carried downhill by paint pony, oil, Heika, 1936.
Figure 61. Grizzly Bear. Detail of Too Crowded, National Cowboy Hall of Fame.

Heika bears are seen in Figures 62, 63, and 64. The small one in Figure 62 was made in 1934 for the Great Falls Sporting Goods Company. The picture was taken in their office in 1969. The slightly damaged bear in Figure 63 is owned by Esther Egan, whose children played with this model. The group of grizzly and cubs in Figure 64 was an early Heika work.

A Heika diorama showing a lone hunter returning from a successful hunt is seen in Figure 65. Figure 66 is a painting that
depicts the return of two hunters from a hunt. With them are three pack horses. The diamond hitch pictured on the horses helped hold their loads.

Figure 63. Grizzly Bear, Egan Collection.

Figure 64. Grizzly family confronted by skunk, sculpture. Heika.
Figure 65. Returning hunters, Diorama, Heika.
Figure 66. Hunting party, oil, Heika.
Heika's sculptures of hunters fall into two categories -- the lone horseman, and pack trains. In the first of these types, he shows one or two men on horseback departing for a hunt; or, he depicts them returning from the hunt, afoot, beside the horse which carries the kill from the hunt. A departing hunter is seen in Figure 69; additional views of this work are in Figures 67 and 68. Two sculptures showing returning hunters are in Figures 70 and 73. An additional view is in Figure 71, and a detail is in Figure 74.
Figure 69. Heading for the High Country, Heika, National Cowboy Hall of Fame.
Figure 70. Down from the High Country, Heika, National Cowboy Hall of Fame and Western Heritage.
Returning Hunter in Figure 72 shows the sculpture as it looked when Heika completed it; Figure 73 shows it as it is today.

Just before his death in 1941, Heika sold several models to C.R. Smith, President of American Airlines. Smith later presented the collection to the noted Oklahoma aviation pioneer, O.M. (Red) Mosier, Executive

Figure 71. Detail from *Down from the High Country*.

Figure 72. Hunter's Return as it originally appeared.
Figure 73. Additional view, Hunter's Return.
Vice President of American Airlines. When Mosier died six years ago, his widow, Francys Mosier, donated seven Heika sculptures to the new Cowboy Hall of Fame and Western Heritage in Oklahoma City. Recognizing the fragile nature of the unfired clay sculptures, the director of the museum had them sprayed with a thin coating of metal, which gives them a bluish appearance. This is the coloration seen in some of the illustrations of the Oklahoma collection. When the Cowboy Hall of Fame received the works, they were untitled. For ease of identification, the staff gave them names.

Heika's pack trains show groups of three or four horses bearing packs and deer or sheep. Two riders direct the train, one in the lead and one near the rear. An example of a six-horse train is shown in Figures 75 and 76. This work is displayed in the Great Falls Sporting Goods Company. Another six-horse train, one that was once owned by W.A.Clark,III, is in Figure 77. The five-horse train in Figure 78 is an early Heika work.
Figure 75. Pack Train at Great Falls Sporting Goods Company, Heika.

Figure 76. Additional view, Pack Train.
Figure 77. Six-horse Pack Train once owned by W.A. Clark, III.

Figure 78. Five-horse Pack Train, an early Heika.
Since Indians were part of the Western scene, Heika dedicated part of his talent to their depiction. More sculptures of native Americans are found among his early works than among his later ones. In 1928 he modelled an Indian brave astride a pony. On this, he place a stylized "EH" signature. (See Fig. 79.) Other examples of early Heika Indians are a standing Indian with spear (Figure 80) and a Peigan Indian on horseback, the
latter owned by Mike Heika's widow. (See Figures 80 and 81.) When he prepared the works for exhibition at the Chicago World's Fair in 1933, Heika made his only stone carving (Page 20), which depicted a Chippewa Indian. (See Figure 82.) The Indian couple with papoose was also part of the sculptures he showed in Chicago. (See Figure 83.)

Figure 82. Stone carving of Chippewa Indian, Heika, 1933.

Figure 83. Indian couple on horseback with papoose, Heika. Part of exhibit to Chicago World's Fair, 1933.
Figure 84. Pack Horse, Charles Russell Galleries, Great Falls.
Figure 85. Pack Horse.
Figure 86. Saddle Horse, Russell Galleries, Great Falls.
Figure 87. Saddle Horse.
Although Earl rarely modelled single, riderless horses, two excellent examples of these are shown with two views of each in Figures 84 through 87. Both are bronze castings of original works.

Many of Heika's works are horsemen. These take many forms, but they generally fall into two divisions, those showing action in progress and those without action. As he learned to handle the balancing problems, more of the pieces showed action. Figure 88 is a rider playing a guitar. The horse, though his feet are raised, has an awkward stance because of the wires the artist used to attach his feet to the base. The same problem is evident in the work in Fig. 89. One solution seemed to be in placing all of the feet of the animals securely on the ground,

Figure 88. Horseman playing guitar, Heika.
Figure 89. Horseman, an early Heika work.

as he did in Early Montana Cowboy (Figure 90) and the cigarette smoker in Figure 91.

Frontiersmen are the subject of the works in Figures 92, 93, and 94. The model in Figure 95, Buffalo Bill, was part of the exhibit at the Chicago World's Fair in 1933. The Road Agent in Figure 96 shows the rider dismounted from his horse, as does the work in Figure 97. The latter is a print of an original photographic negative made by the artist upon his completion of the sculpture.
Figure 90. Early Montana Cowboy, Heika.
Figure 95. Buffalo Bill, Heika.

Figure 96. The Road Agent, Heika.
Figure 97. Seated cowboy beside his horse, printed from the original photographic negative made by Heika upon completion of this sculpture.

A hold-up man, or a road agent, was a popular subject with Heika. He made several models on this theme. A single figured work is seen soon after Heika completed it. (See Figure 98.) A bronze of another Road Agent is shown in Figure 98. The Road Agent, photograph of original.
Figure 99. Another bronze Heika Road Agent is being offered for sale at this time by the Classic Bronze Company of Pittsburgh. The Road Agent with wounded man, a multi-figured work is shown in Figure 100 as it looked when Heika completed it.

A single cowboy brandishing a gun is shown in Figure 101. The hatless rider on a bucking bronco in Figures 102, 103, and 104 is titled The Contestant. Heika gave this sculpture to
his sister, Esther Egan. A group of five "bronco busters" is shown in Figures 102, 105, 108, 109, and 110. Details of some of the hard-working cowhands are in Figures 103, 104, 106, and 107. The last two figures in this group, Figures 109 and 110, are examples of two closely related works. Superficially, they are identical; close examination reveals that they are not. Trappings under the saddles, placement of the coiled rope, the horse's mane, the angle of the reins, and the slant of the hat are some of the differences.
Figure 101. Cowboy with gun, Heika.
Figure 103. Detail of the Contestant.

Figure 104. Detail of the Contestant.

Figure 102. The Contestant, Heika. Egan collection.
Figure 105. Bronco Buster, Heika, Egan collection.

Figure 106. Detail of Bronco Buster in Fig. 105.

Figure 107. Detail of Bronco Buster in Fig. 105.

Figure 108. Bronco Buster, Great Falls Sporting Goods Co.
Heika's multi-figured works are composed of combinations of different kinds of figures. He puts animal and human forms together to picture adventures of the West. In these group sculptures, his skill with movement and form is most effective. The prospector who, with his burro, traversed Montana in the nineteenth century is seen in his work in Figure 111. This sculpture was part of Heika's exhibit in Chicago at the World's Fair in 1933. Figures 112 and 113 show the work entitled Prospector's Decision from the collection at the Cowboy Hall of Fame. A miner on the trail, followed by his pack horse, is shown in Figure 114. Titled Ready to Hit the Trail, this is also part of the collection in Oklahoma City.

A cowboy on the trail accompanied by his pack horse is
Figure 112. Prospector's Decision, Heika, 1941. National Cowboy Hall of Fame.
seen in each of the two works in Figures 114 and 116.

A buffalo hunter who has met with difficulty is shown in Figure 117. This is another work from 1933.

Figure 113. Prospector's Decision.

Figure 114. Cowboy on the trail, Heika.
Figure 115. Ready to Hit the Trail, Heika, 1941. National Cowboy Hall of Fame.
Figure 116. Cowboy on the trail, Heika.

Figure 117. Buffalo hunter, Heika.
One of Earl's more unusual sculptures is seen in Figure 118. This is a covered wagon pulled by two yoke of oxen. A horseman points out directions to the occupant of the wagon and the man walking alongside the oxen.

Figure 119. Detail from Too Crowded, Heika, 1941. National Cowboy Hall of Fame.
From the National Cowboy Hall of Fame comes the work, Too Crowded, seen in Figures 119, 120, and 122. The picture in Figure 121 shows the same work as it looked when Heika completed it. The other illustrations show the sculpture as it looks after

- Figure 120. Detail of Too Crowded.

- Figure 121. Too Crowded as it appeared when Heika completed it in 1941.
Figure 122. Too Crowded, Heika, 1941. National Cowboy Hall of Fame.
a metal coating was applied by the museum in Oklahoma City.

Changing Riders on the Pony Express, one of Heika's final sculptures, is shown in Figure 123 as it looked when the artist finished it. Figure 124 shows it as it is today in the National Cowboy Hall of Fame.

Figure 123. Changing Riders on the Pony Express as it appeared when Heika completed it in 1941.
Figure 124. Changing Riders on the Ponay Express, Heika, 1941. National Cowboy Hall of Fame, Oklahoma City.
Context of Works

Like his fellow Montanan, Charlie Russell, Earl Heika portrayed in his art those facets of the West with which he was familiar. In paintings, sculptures, and dioramas, he showed the miner, the cowboy, and the Indian as they existed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Earl and his brother Mike often visited the Blackfeet Indians on the reservation at Browning, Montana. In his studio in Great Falls, he had a collection of Indian memorabilia which was given to him by an Indian friend. His knowledge of the Montana Indians was first-hand information, gleaned by close association with them. In painting and in sculpture, he captured the spirit of the Red man before his complete capitulation to the white man's civilization.

Frederick Remington saw the West from the vantage point of his Eastern studio. He made periodic trips through the western part of the United States to obtain material for his paintings and sculptures of Western subjects, works which he returned to the East coast to complete. Heika and Russell lived the lives they portrayed in art, and they produced their works amidst that which they depicted. They lived among the Indians and cowboys and understood them. Remington saw only the soldiers who came to the West to conquer the Indians. To him, the Indians were the bad guys; to Russell and Heika, they were the heroes.
Charlie Russell was a cowhand-turned-artist; Earl Heika was an artist who worked on a ranch. Their views of their co-workers are, consequently, somewhat similar. Both saw the drunken frolic of the cowboy in his spare time. Each showed the cowhand as he tried to subdue the wild horses that roamed Montana between the Missouri River and the Canadian border. Heika, like Russell, expressed his love of the Western land and of the people who tamed it.

Heika's cowboys are hard-working, hard-drinking, sunburned men who wear leather vests and chaps. Their boots are high-heeled, and their hats are wide brimmed and well-worn. They sit their horses well, rising high in the saddle when the mount resists the rein or shies at a rattlesnake.

Russell and Remington were, primarily, painters whose interests in sculpting were secondary. Heika was a sculptor who occasionally painted. These differences in major emphases may account for the superior nature of Heika's models over those of the other cowboy artists. His horses, particularly, have a grace found only in the original animal. In teams, they strain together; yet, each animal is a unique individual. While his cowboys are lean and rugged, Heika's horses are strong and muscular.

Earl's miners are unique in the annals of Western art. No other artist portrayed the prospector or the copper miner, both of whom contributed mightily to the history of Montana. He sculpted the lone prospector, walking the mountains accompanied only by his burro; he modelled the more
successful miner who rode a horse and led a pack animal. Of all Heika's miners, the most unusual is his sculptured miner working the face of a copper mine. It has no equal in subject matter nor in execution.

True to his love of the outdoors, Heika shows every type of hunting party apt to be found on the Montana scene. His pack trains are groups of men with horses who ascend the heights of the Rocky Mountains in search of deer, antelope, or sheep. They return from the mountains with the animals they killed strapped securely to their horses' backs. Sometimes there is only one hunter with two or three horses; more often, there are two or more hunters with as many as six horses. The accuracy with which he depicts hunting scenes is the result of his own personal participation in many such hunts.

Other than public school classes, Earl had no formal art training, certainly none in the art of sculpture. Charlie Russell always kept wax with him so that he could form figures for casting. Earl worked only with clay, with no interest in a more permanent material. As near as can be determined, he was unaware of the lost-wax process. Only one mention of bronze casting is found among his memoirs, and it seems doubtful that he took positive steps in that direction.

His sculptures fall within a narrow size range. The smallest are single animals, such as bears, skunks, and
sheep, which range from five to seven inches high. Single horses average being seven inches tall and ten inches long. In groupings, the horses are slightly smaller. Some of the longest pack trains, those with six horses and four men, are three feet in overall length. Horses with riders, and bucking horses, some with riders, are never over sixteen inches tall. He was comfortable with works in the range of six to sixteen inches.

Since he worked with unfired clay, the limited size of his pieces was important. Only on small works was he able to maintain a consistent moisture content. Keeping a work moist was always a problem to him. He kept a wet cloth over the finished portions of a figure to slow the drying time and eliminate cracking.

Earl worked swiftly but carefully. He often continued through the night to finish a sculpture. Only once did he take longer than a few days to complete a work. He spent more than four months on The Quartz Team. (See Figure 31.)

As a product of the Westward Expansion, Earl Heika preserved for posterity through his art the rugged life that was part of the Montana experience. Isolated from the mainstream of the United States, the north Rocky Mountain area was slow in giving up the life of the frontier. Heika saw the romance of his land and recorded it in his own way.
CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

The problem posed for this study was to set the record straight about Earl Heika's life and art, to write a Heika biography and analysis. The assembling, sorting, and close examination of much information about Heika was necessary in the accomplishment of such an undertaking. The study required the careful scrutiny of interviews with sixteen persons and of personal records of family members. Duplicate information was set aside, after being used for verification of facts. Hundreds of photographs were viewed for the determination of those that were most representative of his life activities and his artistic endeavors.

The biographical information included in this paper is authentic. It is not intended to be all inclusive. This paper does not include pictures of all of the works done by Heika. It only offers examples of his art. He was a prolific artist who worked compulsively. His total output during the twelve years he was active in the pursuit of art is unknown. If he kept careful records of his creations or his sales, such records have not been uncovered during the research for this paper.

No extensive evaluation of Heika's work has been attempted. It is beyond the scope of the problem set forth for this paper.
Earl Heika was a talented Western artist in the tradition of Russell and Remington. Until recently, his work has been obscure, since most of it is privately owned. As it becomes better known, he will take a place among the other great Western artists.
APPENDIX

LIST OF HEIKA CLAY SCULPTURES, PLASTER CASTINGS, AND DIORAMAS WHICH INCORPORATE CLAY SCULPTURES AND/OR STUFFED BIRDS

(This list is not intended to include all of the clay sculptures, plaster castings, or dioramas made by Earl Heika. It includes only those works known by the author to have been made. Because of Heika's prolific production during his relatively short life, there are, no doubt, other Heika works.)

Banjo Player
Clark commission, 1931
Clay
Location unknown

Bear, seated
ca 1931
Plaster
6" in height
Egan Collection
Lewistown, Montana

Big Horn Hunt
Clark commission, 1931
Clay
Location unknown

Bighorn Sheep
ca 1928
Clay
8" in height
Joe Egan
Helena, Montana

Bringing in the Deer
Clark commission, 1931
Clay
Location unknown

Bronco Buster
Clark commission, 1931
Clay
Location unknown
Bronco Buster
ca 1938
Clay
Location unknown

Bronco Buster
ca 1939
Clay
Location unknown

Bronco Buster
ca 1939
Clay
14" in height
Egan Collection
Lewistown, Montana

Bronco Buster
ca 1939
Clay
12" in height
Great Falls Sporting Goods Company
Great Falls, Montana

Buffalo Hunter
ca 1939
Clay
Location unknown

Buffalo, seated
ca 1933
Plaster
8" in height
Egan Collection
Lewistown, Montana

Buffalo Bill
1932
Exhibited at Chicago World's Fair
1933
Clay
Location unknown
Changing Horses on the Pony Express
1941
Clay (sprayed with metal coating)
National Cowboy Hall of Fame
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Chippewa Indian (bust)
1932
Exhibited at Chicago World's Fair, 1933
Stone
Location unknown

Christmas Cheer
John D. Ryan commission, 1930
Clay
Location unknown

The Contestant
ca 1940
Clay
13" in height
Egan Collection
Lewistown, Montana

Cowboy on horseback
ca 1935
Clay
Con Robinson
Great Falls, Montana

Cowboy on horse, and rattlesnake
ca 1932
Exhibited at Chicago World's Fair, 1933
Location unknown

Two Cowboys on horses
ca 1932
Exhibited at Chicago World's Fair, 1933
Clay
Locations unknown

Cowboy, seated on ground beside horse
ca 1937
Clay
Location unknown
Cowboy holding gun
ca 1935
Clay
Location unknown

Cowhand with beard, standing
ca 1935
Clay
Con Robinson
Great Falls, Montana

Creche
1938
For Great Falls Public Library
Clay figures
Location unknown

Cree Indian Warrior and pony
ca 1936
Clay
Walter Jensen
Helena, Montana

Dog Team
ca 1933
Exhibited Chicago World's Fair, 1933
Clay figures, with wood, fur, and leather
Scottish Rite Bodies
Great Falls, Montana

Down from the High Country
1940
Clay (Metal coating)
National Cowboy Hall of Fame
Oklahoma City

Duck hunting diorama
ca 1935
For Great Falls Sporting Goods Company
Clay figures
Private collection
Great Falls, Montana

Early Montana Cowboy
ca 1930
Clay
Location unknown
Fresh Meat, a pack train
   Clark commission, 1931
   Clay
   About 3' in length
   Location unknown

Frontiersman on horseback
   ca 1932
   Clay
   14" in height
   Egan Collection
   Lewistown, Montana

Frontiersman with rifle
   ca 1936
   Clay
   [Bronze casting:
      Classic Bronze, under title
      The Day of the Slow Gun]

Gambler's Luck
   ca 1935
   Clay
   Dr. William McMann
   Great Falls, Montana
   [Cast in bronze by the Montana
    Historical Society]

Guitar player on horseback
   ca 1932
   Clay
   Location unknown

Grizzly Bear
   1934
   Clay
   6" in height
   Great Falls Sporting Goods Company
   Great Falls, Montana

Grizzly Bear
   ca 1934
   Clay
   5" in height
   Egan Collection
   Lewistown, Montana

Grizzly family
   ca 1935
   Clay figures
   Location unknown
Hangover  
1939  
Bronze  
Classic Bronze Company  
Pittsburgh

Pittsburgh

Heading for the High Country  
1940  
Clay (Metal coating)  
National Cowboy Hall of Fame  
Oklahoma City

The Hold-Up  
Modelled after Russell's painting of same name  
1931  
Clay figures  
Location unknown

Horse and rider  
ca 1930  
Clay  
Location unknown

Horse with rider lighting cigarette  
ca 1936  
Clay  
13" in height  
Melvin Cottier  
Great Falls, Montana

Hunter on horseback with pack horse  
ca 1936  
Clay  
Mrs. Kenneth Lord  
Great Falls, Montana

Hunter's Return  
1940  
Clay (Metal coating)  
National Cowboy Hall of Fame

Indian and squaw with papoose  
1932  
Exhibited at Chicago World's Fair,  
1933  
Clay  
Location unknown
Indian brave on pony
1928
Clay
Location unknown

Indian chief on horseback
ca 1938
Clay
14" X 12"
Dr. Ivan Allred
Great Falls, Montana

Indian head
ca. 1933
Plaster, with oil paints
Melvin Cottier
Great Falls, Montana

Indian warrior on horse
ca 1932
Exhibited at Chicago World's Fair
Clay
Location unknown

Indian warrior on pony
[Also called Piegan Indian on Horseback]
ca 1934
Clay
12" in height
Stainsby Collection
Great Falls, Montana

Indian with spear
ca 1929
Clay
Location unknown

Bust of Frank M. Kerr in Indian dress
1930
Clay
Location unknown

The Lookout
1940
Clay
Dr. Robert Skinner
Great Falls, Montana

Man on horseback
ca 1935
Clay
Dr. Ivan Allred
Great Falls, Montana
Man with gun, standing beside horse  
ca 1937  
Clay  
Con Robinson  
Great Falls, Montana

Mare and foal  
ca 1940  
Clay  
Al Bergman  
Great Falls, Montana

The Mine Face  
1938  
Clay figure  
Location unknown

Miner with pack horse  
ca 1939  
Clay  
Location unknown

Old-time Stagecoach  
1933  
Clay figures; coach mixed media  
[Bronze casting: Classic Bronze Company]

Pack horse  
ca 1940  
Bronze  
Charles Russell Gallery  
Great Falls, Montana

Pack outfit - four horse  
John E. Corbetted commission  
1930  
Clay  
Location unknown

Pack Train  
ca 1939  
Made for Ben Edwards, Great Falls  
Clay  
Trailside Galleries  
Idaho Falls

Pack Train - five horse  
ca 1935  
Clay  
Location unknown
Pack Train - four horse
Frank Bird commission
1930
Clay
Location unknown

Pack Train - six horse
Clark Commission, 1931
Clay
Location unknown

Pack Train - six horse
ca 1938
Clay
Great Falls Sporting Goods Company
Great Falls, Montana

Pheasant diorama
ca 1938
Clay, natural materials, stuffed birds
Great Falls Sporting Goods Company
Great Falls, Montana

Piegan Scout
1931
Bronze
Classic Bronze Company
Pittsburgh

Pronghorn Antelope
ca 1933
Clay
Mrs. J.E. Baker
Great Falls, Montana

Prospector and burro
1932
Exhibited at Chicago World's Fair, 1933
Clay
Location unknown

Prospector's Decision
1940
Clay (Metal coating)
National Cowboy Hall of Fame
Oklahoma City
The Quartz Team
1936
Clay figures
Charles Russell Gallery
Great Falls, Montana

Racing the Stork, diorama
ca 1935
Clay figures
Private collection
Great Falls, Montana

Ready to Hit the Trail
1940
Clay (Metal coating)
National Cowboy Hall of Fame
Oklahoma City

Relief Map, State of Montana
Montana Power Company
1938
Office, Montana Power Company
Butte, Montana

Rider on bucking horse
ca 1937
Clay
Con Robinson
Great Falls, Montana

Road Agent
ca 1935
Clay
Location unknown

Road Agent *
ca 1940
Bronze
Location unknown
*[ A bronze by this title is offered by Classic Bronze
Company. It is a different work from that cited here.]

The Road Agent
ca 1935
Clay
Al Brix
Helena, Montana

Charlie Russell, bust
ca 1933
Plaster
Melvin Cottier
Great Falls, Montana
The Roper
Clark commission, 1931
Clay
Location unknown

Saddle horse
ca 1940
Bronze
Russell Gallery
Great Falls, Montana

Too Crowded
1941
Clay (Metal coating)
National Cowboy Hall of Fame
Oklahoma City

The Trophy Hunters, a pack string
E.B. Coolidge commission
1936
Clay
C.M. Russell Gallery
Great Falls, Montana

Woman on horseback
ca 1937
Clay
Del Lowry
Great Falls, Montana

Woman on jumping horse
ca 1937
Clay
Del Lowry
Great Falls, Montana
CHRONOLOGY

1910  Born May 3 in Belt, Montana
1916  Moved to Laurel, Montana to home of married sister
1923  Returned to mother's home in Great Falls, Montana
1926  Left school in ninth grade
1927-28  Lived in California with brother Frank
1928  Earliest sculpture, a bighorn sheep
1929  Entered watercolor painting in show in Great Falls
       Met Wm. Andrews Clark, III, who became his first patron
1929-33  Worked during summer months as guide in Glacier National Park; sold art work to visitors there
1931  First public showing at Stendahl Gallery, Los Angeles
1933  Married Virginia Middleton of Great Falls
1933-34  Works displayed at Chicago World's Fair
1933-39  Worked part-time as taxidermist at Great Falls Sporting Goods Company
1936  Death in January of favorite brother, Mike Heika
       Birth of daughter Kathleen
       Showing of works in Dallas at Texas Centennial
1938  Completed The Mine Face, unique work on copper mining
       Birth of son Earl
1939  Exhibition at San Francisco Exposition
       Birth of son Gary
1940  National press coverage of The Lookout
       Completed building log-cabin home near Great Falls
1941  Birth of son Michael
       May 18, committed suicide after family disagreement
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Melton, Terry, Director, Charles Russell Gallery, Great Falls, Montana, August, 1969.

Mosier, Francys, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, April, 1973.


Skinner, Robert, Great Falls, Montana, August, 1969.

Stainsby, Laura (Heika), Great Falls, Montana, August, 1969.

Thisted, Walter, Great Falls, Montana, August, 1969.

Williams, Mrs. Robb. Great Falls, Montana, August, 1969.