

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As we began our biographical narrative of Fred Darge and his journey through life in the Great Southwest, we soon discovered there was very little accurate biographical information available that one could “hang their hat on”, so to speak. There were many missing pieces of information and what was available, was sometimes contradictory. More often than not, we were left with many more questions than answers. If this book was ever to be completed, it was going to take a lot of digging to find and fit together all the pieces of the puzzle, if at all possible.

We learned through long hours of research that Darge’s intentions from day one after completing his studies at the Art Institute of Chicago, were to “**preserve for future generations the actual life of the ranchman as he lived in the early days, his habits, his mode of living and doing business before it was gone and forgotten.**” This was his mission and he more than accomplished his intended objective. The past is meticulously embedded in his legacy of colorful paintings. We have to give Darge credit for accomplishing exactly what he set out to do - paint the real West which was an opportunity other artists had not taken. Darge had the same thing the horses he painted had – horse sense.

First and foremost, this book could not have become a reality if it were not for Julia Nail Moss and Irene Vickers Burnham. We are greatly indebted to these two ladies for their willingness and generosity to share their time and knowledge of the Big Bend and the ranches and people connected to Darge. Their combined knowledge helped us make a transitional change to the direction we would take in our endeavor to bring forth, “*Fred Darge Paints the Big Bend and Beyond.*”

Julia Nail Moss, daughter of Sam and Nena Burnham Nail and Irene Vickers Burnham, wife of William (Bill) Burnham are a part of this inspirational story of families who lived in and were part of the Big Bend before it was taken over by the National Park Service in 1944. Upon contacting them we soon learned that our earlier knowledge and assumptions provided to us by other people concerning Darge were not entirely correct.

The first-hand knowledge that Julia and Irene were able to provide, prompted us to undertake the study of the people he met and places he stayed rather than the usual year to year biographical chronology so often found in many art books. We wanted this book to be different and they provided us with the basic foundation to get us started. The true stories in the Big Bend were the people and their surroundings associated with the paintings, rather than the sometimes monotony of detailed description of paintings.

Many art collectors buy art books and look at the pictures of the paintings and when finished viewing put the book on a shelf and there it remains. We hope our readers take the time to read the fascinating stories of the people, places and events that it seems only Darge could

find. He had an unbelievable nose for finding interesting people and places, sometimes out in the middle of nowhere. Along with Darge's knowledge of artists skills, he excelled at connecting with the unique and enduring people of this wild and desolate land.

When Darge began his trips to the Big Bend in the 1930's, there was a lot of activity. A number of people owned large parcels of land. They were engaged in building a life for themselves and their families. In the everyday, struggles and joys of their endeavors, they stepped back into to time to raise cows, sheep, goats and horses and to survive in the wilds of the legendary state of Texas. His legacy of paintings and the people connected with them is the story behind the stories. The vast majority of Darge's work, one way or another is related to an event, place or story. Darge loved the Big Bend area so much that he was still going there to paint in 1970 the last recorded visit of which we are aware. It was like his second home. *Seeing* the colorful and exciting life of Darge through his art inspired us to explore another time in the Big Bend and Beyond. It has been an adventure that has increased our admiration and respect of a man who stayed true to himself in spite of the struggles he endured.

We will always be eternally grateful to Julia and Irene for their generous time and gift of knowledge that only they could have contributed to making the realization of this book a successful endeavor for all involved. They held many pieces to the puzzle they did not know they even had. They gave us just the right information we so earnestly needed at the time that allowed us to unlock the real story of Fred Darge and his iconic painting of the Great Southwest and the legacy that is attached to all of them.

We also want to thank Friedrich Ernst (Fred) Darge for leaving us all a great story to write about. As one art collector so succinctly stated, "if you like Texas, you have got to like Fred Darge's body of work." And, so we begin!

The following is a list of the people who contributed their knowledge and information needed to complete this project.

[Claude C. Albritton III – Private art collector](#)

[Katie Alexander – Art specialist, Vogt Galleries, San Antonio, Texas](#)

[Killis Almond – Founder Killis Almond & Associates, Historical and restoration architecture](#)

[Richard Altermann – Altermann Galleries & Auctioneers](#)

[Ed Beardsley – Vice President Managing Director, Fine & Decorative Arts, Heritage Auctions](#)

[Hillary Bober – Dallas Museum of Fine Art, Archivist](#)

[Larry Boettigheimer – Collector and Private art dealer](#)

[Dr. Peter Briggs – Curator, Museum of Texas Tech University](#)

[Irene Burnham – Wife of Bill Burnham and daughter-in-law of Waddy, Jr. and Dessie Ferol Burnham](#)

**Billy Burnham – Son of Bill and Irene Burnham**

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