



# GEORGE WADE FOOTT

## *Contemporary Mining Artist*

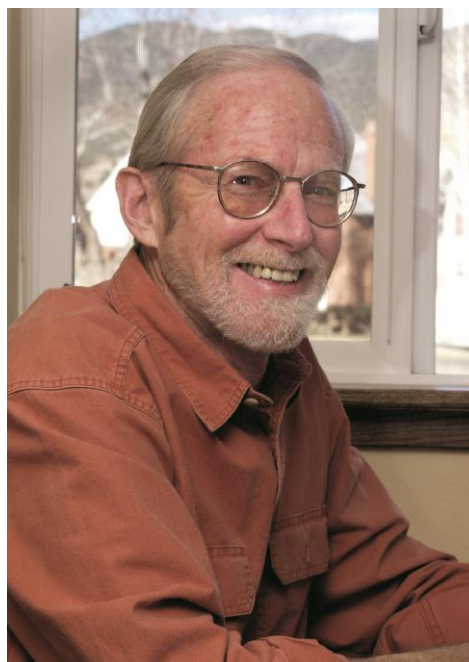
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Painting photo-realistic still life scenes in oil is extremely difficult, and very few artists have mastered the age-old technique. Of those, almost none have devoted themselves to depicting historical scenes related to mining, using authentic mining artifacts as props. George Foott is one of those rare artists who could produce a painted image of an object with such perfection that you feel you could reach out and touch it.

George Wade Foott III was born in Seattle, Washington on May 29, 1939, the son of Alice B. Laudien and George Wade Foott, Jr. (1907-1988), a travelling salesman for a manufacturing company. He enrolled at the University of Washington to study Industrial Design and took a number of art classes, receiving his degree in Mechanical Engineering in 1966. Three years later he moved to Denver where he spent his professional career designing medical equipment, and developed a deep fascination with the mining history of the Rocky Mountains. He also developed a fine hand for drawing pen-and-ink scenes of local historical interest.

George's interest in mining and geology became more focused after he purchased a historic business building in Victor, Colorado. He owned the building for nearly 20 years and spent many of those years doing restoration work in anticipation of some day opening an art

gallery and studio there. When he was not pounding nails, he was hiking through the hills exploring old mine sites. He also began to collect the old mining artifacts that he later used as props in his paintings. Unfortunately, legalized gambling and large-scale heap leaching operations had a damaging effect on local tourism, and he decided finally to sell the building in 1998. But his love of mining history remained strong and his collection of mining artifacts continued to grow.



**Figure 1. George Wade Foott (1939-2009).**

George told me that he was first inspired to create artworks of mining artifacts and scenes after seeing my pen-and-ink drawings in *A Collector's Guide to Antique Miners' Candlesticks* (1984). He was already a fine artist by that time, of course, and greatly enamored with Western mining history. In the evenings and on weekends, he spent his spare time sketching and painting, and after retiring in 1999 he was able to devote even more time to his art. He learned how to work with oil paints and how to mix colors from a neighborhood art teacher, and began producing oil paintings in 1990. He also began to incorporate his old mining artifacts (miners' candlesticks, carbide lamps, tools, blasting cap tins and the like) into his still life paintings. In addition, he has also produced beautiful paintings focusing on old western memorabilia of other kinds, like ranching, railroading and gambling themes.

George discovered that the best way to see the old mining artifacts in actual use was to study early photographs of miners at work. The original sepia-toned photos were usually made as contact prints from same-size glass-plate negatives and are therefore often extremely sharp—truly windows into the past. George began to painstakingly copy some of these old photos *into* his still-life oil paintings, achieving photo-realism in his depiction of the actual photos as objects. The oil paintings are painted on smooth-surfaced, gesso-coated masonite board which has no surface texture (like canvas would) and therefore allowed him to create very fine details. He only did one painting on canvas—"The Robert E. Lee Mine." He often included chunks of ore or (rarely) a crystal specimen in his paintings, though he did not consider himself a "mineral artist."

He said his style of painting was inspired by contemporary Western artists such as William Acheff, Jerry Venditti and Chuck Sabatino (famous for their paintings of Native American pottery and artifacts), Donald Clapper (co-founder of the Trompe l'Oeil Society of Artists and the International Guild of Realism), contemporary realist Scott Fraser, and others, but it really dates back centuries earlier to the highly realistic *trompe l'oeil* ("deceive the eye") is to convince the viewer, at least momentarily, that the objects painted are literally real rather than representations. I would say that George's work most closely resembles that of the prominent 19th-century American painter William Michael Harnett (1848-1892).

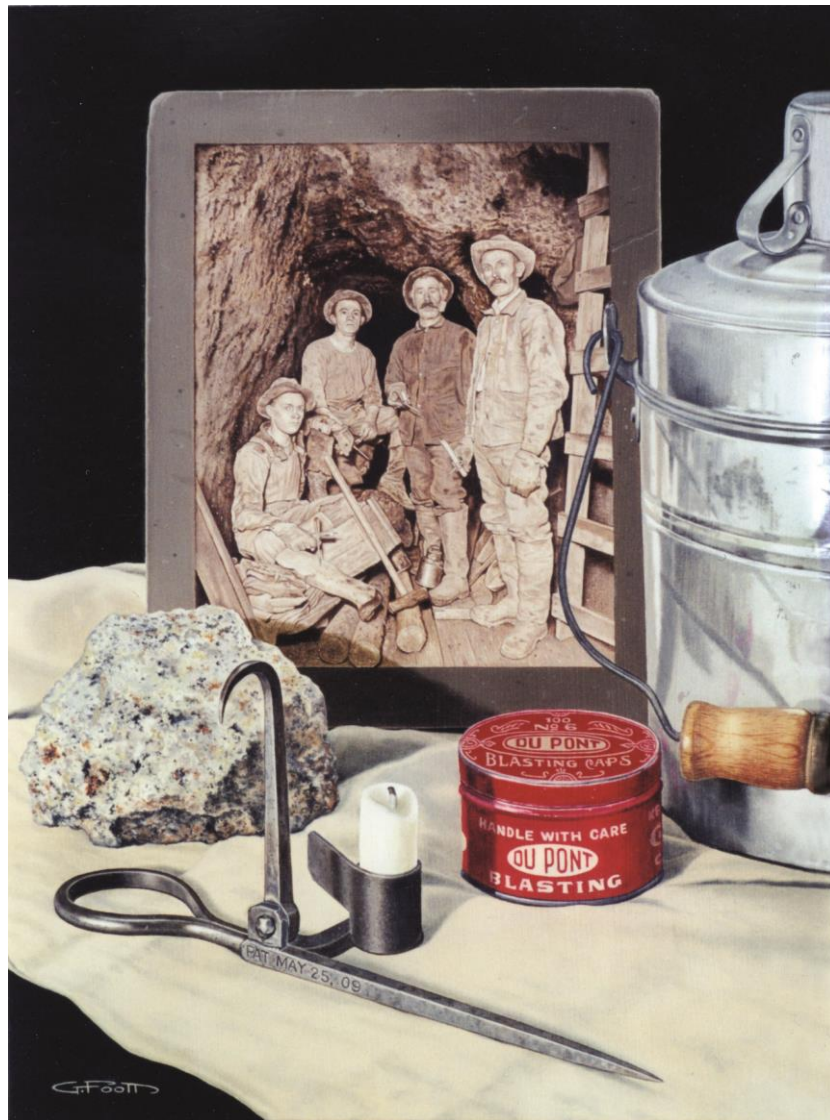
George's illustrations have appeared in a number of books on Colorado history, including *The Little Book Cliff Railway* (1984), *Cripple Creek Bonanza* (1996), *Pikes Peak Gold* (2000) and *The Great Pikes Peak Gold Rush* (2000). His artwork has also been published on notecards and calendars, and he designed a silver medal issued by the American Numismatic Association to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the town of Victor, Colorado where some of the richest gold mines in the state were located. His artworks have won numerous awards and have been displayed in many shows throughout Colorado and Wyoming. He was honored in 2004 to be included in the prestigious Colorado Governor's Invitational Art Show.

Some examples of his work are shown here. George generally did not take custom orders for paintings; he preferred living a low-stress life in his retirement, so he painted whatever he liked, in his own time, and then periodically made them available to interested buyers. He traveled to Tucson, Arizona, every February to show his latest paintings at the Mining Artifact Collectors Show, and he also traveled to several other art and antique shows in the western United States. Limited-edition prints of George's pen-and-ink drawings of historical Colorado and Western subjects have been sold through Colorado galleries, including the Riverside Frame Company, since 1992. He lived in the small central Colorado town of Salida where he was an avid white-water kayaker, skier and hiker when not painting.

George Wade Foott, Jr. died of melanoma in Salida, Colorado, on December 17, 2009, at the age of 70. He left several completed artworks which were sold off shortly thereafter, some at the 2010 Mining Artifact Collectors' Show in Tucson.

In order to help preserve George's work, I am posting here all of the photos of his mining-related paintings that I have (and a few others as well). These would need to be of higher resolution to show the finest detail of George's work, but they are the best versions I have. If you have additional caption data (e.g. current ownership, unknown for many), or if you own a Foott painting not shown here, feel free to send it to me. I will then add it to this article and re-post it.

## A George Foott Album



**Figure 2.** “Ouray Folder” (2002), 11½ × 15½ inches, oil on panel, by George Foott.  
Note the patented Ramstead & Johnson candlestick.





*Figure 3. "Robert E. Lee Mine" (1993), 16 × 20 inches, oil on canvas (the only canvas painting he ever did), by George Foot; John Kynor collection. Note the rare folding candlestick with highgrader's handle, possibly attributable to Bartolo Battocletti (1867-1944).*





**Figure 4.** “Silverton Miners’ Union” (2003), 13 × 16½ inches, oil on panel, by George Foott; Dave Desmarais collection. Note the X-Ray carbide cap lamp.



*Figure 5. "Pikes Peak Flasks" (2000), 9 × 12 inches, oil on panel, by George Foott.*



*Figure 6. "Panning for Gold" (2002), 16½ × 21½ inches, oil on panel, by George Foott.*





*Figure 7. "Folders" (2005), 12 × 14½ inches, oil on panel, by George Foott; Robert Werner collection.*





*Figure 8. "Single Jacking" (2004), 18½ × 23 inches, oil on panel, by George Foott; Mike Bergmann collection.*



**Figure 9.** “Lighting Fuses II” (2002), 12½ × 14½ inches, oil on panel, by George Foott; John Kynor collection. The photo shows miners lighting fuses 1900 feet directly below the Butte, Montana post office.



**Figure 10.** “Arizona Copper Miners” (2003), 12 × 16 inches, oil on panel, by George Foott; Terry McNulty collection. The photo shows a group of miners at the Spray shaft of the Holbrook mine, Bisbee, Arizona, ca. 1895.





**Figure 11.** “Tools of the Trade” (2005), 17 × 25 inches, oil on panel, by George Foott; Jim Nicholls collection. Note the Lindahl match-safe candlestick.





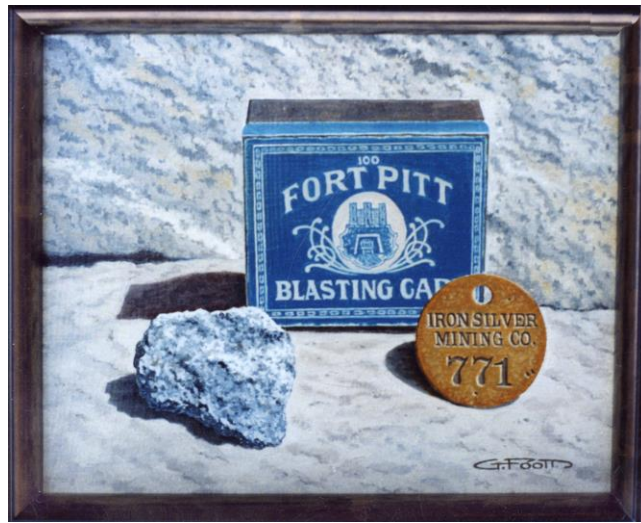
**Figure 12.** “Lighting Fuses II” (1999), 12 × 14½ inches, oil on panel, by George Foott; Leo Stambaugh collection. Note the Hercules Powder Company match-safe, and the patented cap-crimper. As in the painting in Figure 9, the photo shows miners lighting fuses 1900 feet directly below the Butte, Montana post office.





**Figure 13. “Sweet Home Mine,” showing a rhodochrosite specimen with Hansen Lamp” (date unknown), 11 × 11 inches, oil on panel, by George Foott; Wendell Wilson collection. This is one of George’s last paintings, in which he added a crystal specimen instead of the usual ore sample.**





**Figure 14. “Iron Silver Mining Company” (2007), 4¾ × 6 inches, oil on panel, by George Foott; John Kynor collection.**



**Figure 15. “C. Cleaves Candlestick” (2005), 11 × 14 inches, oil on panel, by George Foott; Leo Stambaugh collection. The candlestick, made by Charles Cleaves (1859-1918), has a folding hook which doubles as a fuse cutter.**





*Figure 16. "Single-Jacking II" (2003), 16 × 17 inches, oil on panel, by George Foott; current owner unknown. Note the "iron cross" thumb lever.*



**Figure 17. “Assay Scale” (1994), 16 × 20 inches, oil on panel, by George Foott; current owner unknown. Note the rare folding candlestick with highgrader’s handle, possibly attributable to Bartolo Battocletti (1867-1944) (the same stick as shown in the painting in Figure 3).**





*Figure 18. “Gal-Leg 4-piece Candlestick” (2004), 15 × 17 inches, oil on panel, by George Foott; current owner unknown. The gal-leg candlestick is of a type called a “puzzle stick,” which can be disassembled and then put back together again, if you know how.*





*Figure 19. "Machine Men" (2006), 14 × 15 inches, oil on panel, by George Foott; Steve Rush collection. Note the brass gal-leg thumb lever with copper show.*



**Figure 20.** “Cripple Creek Candlestick” (2006), 14 × 16 inches, oil on panel, by George Foott; current owner unknown. The candlestick with “internal” thumb lever was made by Peter Erbel (1859-1917), a blacksmith who settled in Cripple Creek, Colorado, in 1895.





*Figure 21. "Truax Ore Cars" (2007), 15 × 16 inches, oil on panel, by George Foott; Robert Hauck collection. Note the "iron cross" thumb lever.*





**Figure 22.** “Folding Candlestick” (2003), 11 × 14 inches, oil on panel, by George Foott; current owner unknown. The clasp-style folding candlestick with halberd hook is a very rare example of the 1883 John Jones patent.



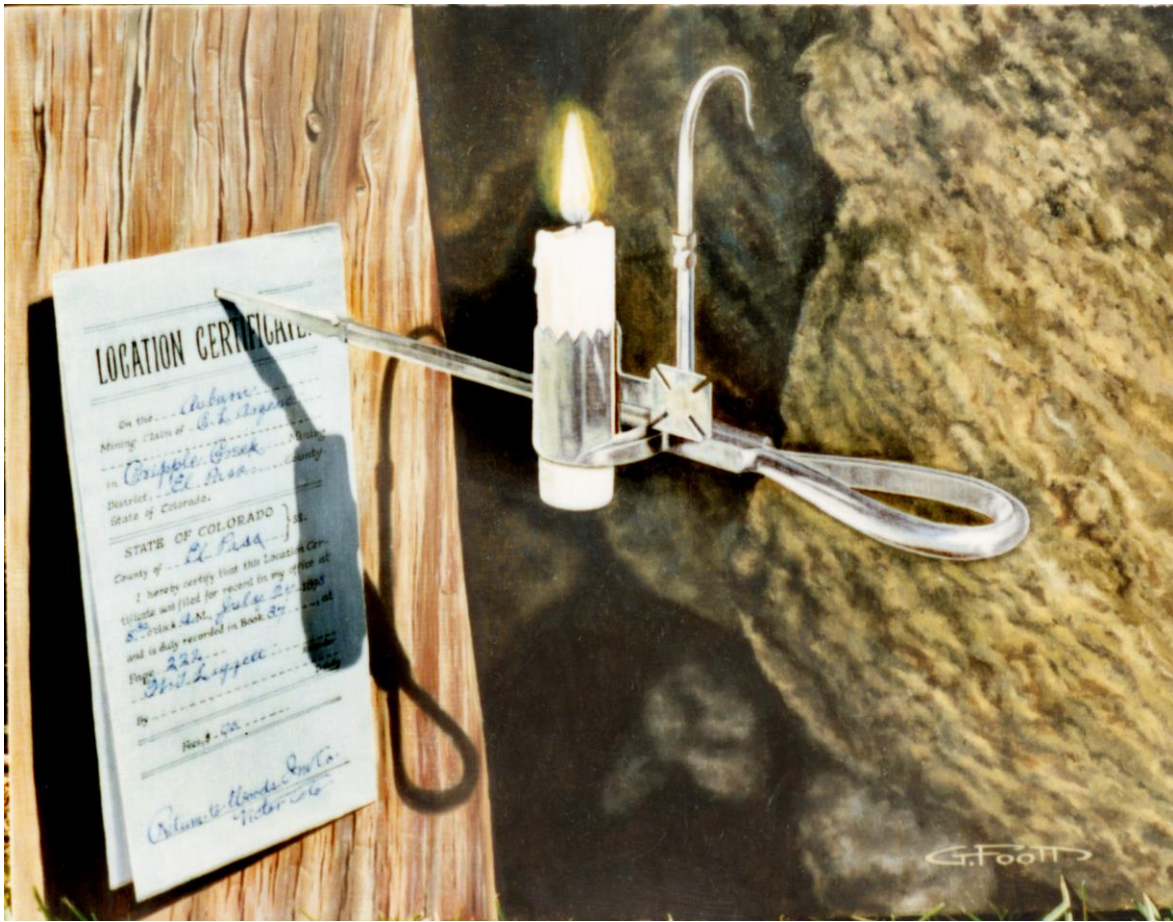


**Figure 23. “Pikes Peak Flask II” (2000), 14 × 16 inches, oil on panel, by George Foott; current owner unknown.**



**Figure 24. “Victor Assay Office” (2002), 14 × 17 inches, oil on panel, by George Foott; John Kynor collection.**





**Figure 25. “Location Certificate” (1995), 9 × 11 inches, oil on panel, by George Foot; current owner unknown. Note again the “iron-cross” thumb lever on the candlestick. This is the only painting George did with a lit candle.**



*Figure 26. "Silverton Miners' Union" (2003), 13 × 16½ inches, oil on panel, by George Foott; current owner unknown. Note the X-ray carbide cap lamp.*





*Figure 27. “Leadville Lunch Pail” (2004), 13 × 15 inches, oil on panel, by George Foott; Steve Rush collection. Note again the “iron-cross” thumb lever on the candlestick, as in the paintings shown in Figures 16, 21, 25, 35 and 44. This was apparently one of George’s favorite props. The photograph of a miner and ore bucket was taken at the Leadville, Colorado studio of Charles Francis O’Keefe, a famous Old West photographer.*



*Figure 28. “Sun-Ray Cap Lamp” (2005), 14 × 16 inches, oil on panel, by George Foott; current owner unknown.*





*Figure 29. "Lighting Fuses II" (2002), 12½ × 14½ inches, oil on panel, by George Foott; John Kynor collection.*



*Figure 30. "Panning for Gold" (2002), 16½ × 21½ inches, oil on panel, by George Foott; current owner unknown.*





*Figure 31. "American Blasting Caps" (2007), 5 × 6 inches, oil on panel, by George Foott; John Kynor collection. Note the rare folding candlestick.*



*Figure 32. "Lindahl Candlestick" (2003), 12½ × 18 inches, oil on panel, by George Foott; current owner unknown. Note the patented Lindahl match-safe candlestick.*



**Figure 33. “Wolf Carbide Lamp” (2004), 15 × 17 inches, oil on panel, by George Foott; Terry McNulty collection.**



**Figure 34. “San Juan Gold” (1994), 14 × 17½ inches, oil on panel, by George Foott; current owner unknown.**





*Figure 35. "DuPont Blasting Caps" (2000), 12 × 13½ inches, oil on panel, by George Foott; John Kynor collection.*

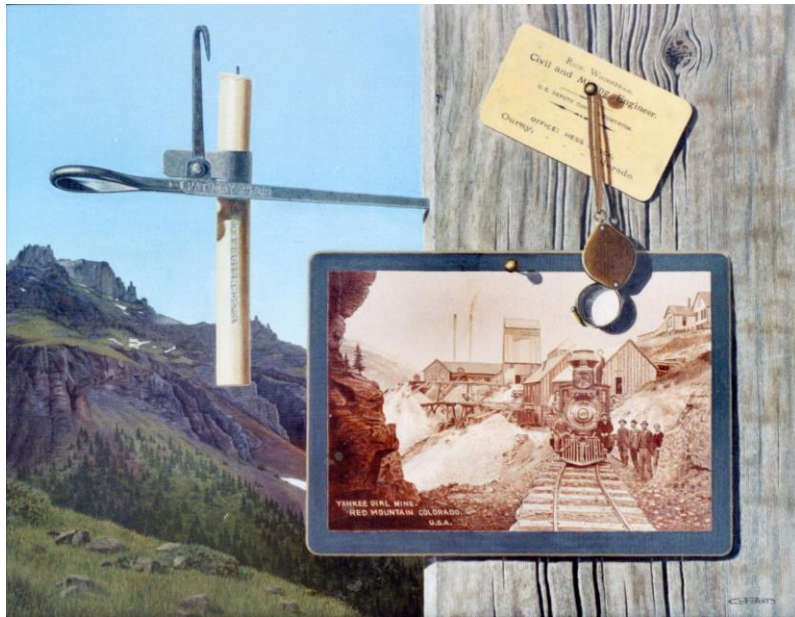


*Figure 36. "Arizona Copper Miners" (2003), 12 × 15 inches, oil on panel, by George Foott; Terry McNulty collection.*



**Figure 37. “Davis Horse Whim” (2006), 13 × 15 inches, oil on panel, by George Foote; current owner unknown. Note the fancy candlestick with miniature mining tools,**

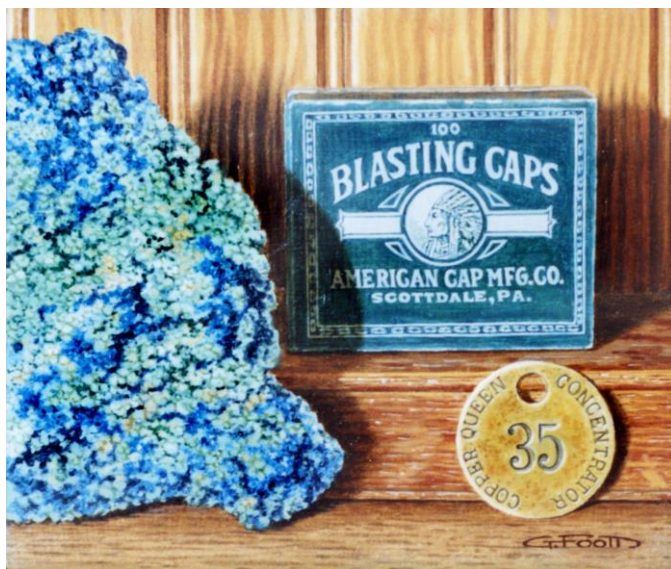




**Figure 38.** “Yankee Girl Mine” (2005), 14 × 18 inches, oil on panel, by George Foott; Leo Stambaugh collection. Note the Ramstead & Johnson patented folding candlestick.



**Figure 39.** “Miners and Puddlers” (2006), 15 × 15 inches, oil on panel, by George Foott; Roger Peterson collection.



*Figure 40. “Copper Queen Group” (2007), 5 × 6 inches, oil on panel, by George Foott; John Kynor collection.*



*Figure 41. “Ramstead & Johnson patent” (2007), 9 × 12 inches, oil on panel, by George Foott; current owner unknown.*





*Figure 42. "Highgrader's Folding Candlestick" (2001), 14¼ × 18 inches, oil on panel, by George Foott; Terry McNulty collection. Note the folding candlestick with highgrader's handle, attributed to Bartolo Battocletti. The photo shows a group of miners at the Copper Queen mine, Bisbee, in 1906..*



**Figure 43.** “Miner’s Day Off” (1999), 11 × 14 inches, oil on panel, by George Foott; current owner unknown. Note the Sun-Ray carbide cap lamp.



**Figure 44.** “DuPont No. 5” (2002), 10 × 15 inches, oil on panel, by George Foott; current owner unknown. The photo shows a group of miners at the Spray shaft of the Holbrook mine in Bisbee.





*Figure 45. "Fielding and Peterson Folder" (1999), 13 × 15 inches, oil on panel, by George Foott; Steve Rush collection. The ore bag is from the Isabella mine at Cripple Creek, Colorado; the photo was taken in an unknown Colorado mine.*



Figure 46. “National Western Stock Show 1901” (date and size unknown), oil on panel, by George Foott; current owner unknown.



Figure 47. “Pedro Cut Plug” (date and size unknown), oil on panel, by George Foott; current owner unknown.





*Figure 48. "The Trail Boss" (date and size unknown), oil on panel, by George Foott; current owner unknown. Note the Wells Fargo strong box.*



**Figure 49.** “Tombstone Cowboy” (date and size unknown), oil on panel, by George Foott; current owner unknown. The photo was taken in the studio of Camillus Sydney Fly (1849-1901), a famous Old West photographer in Tombstone, Arizona Territory.

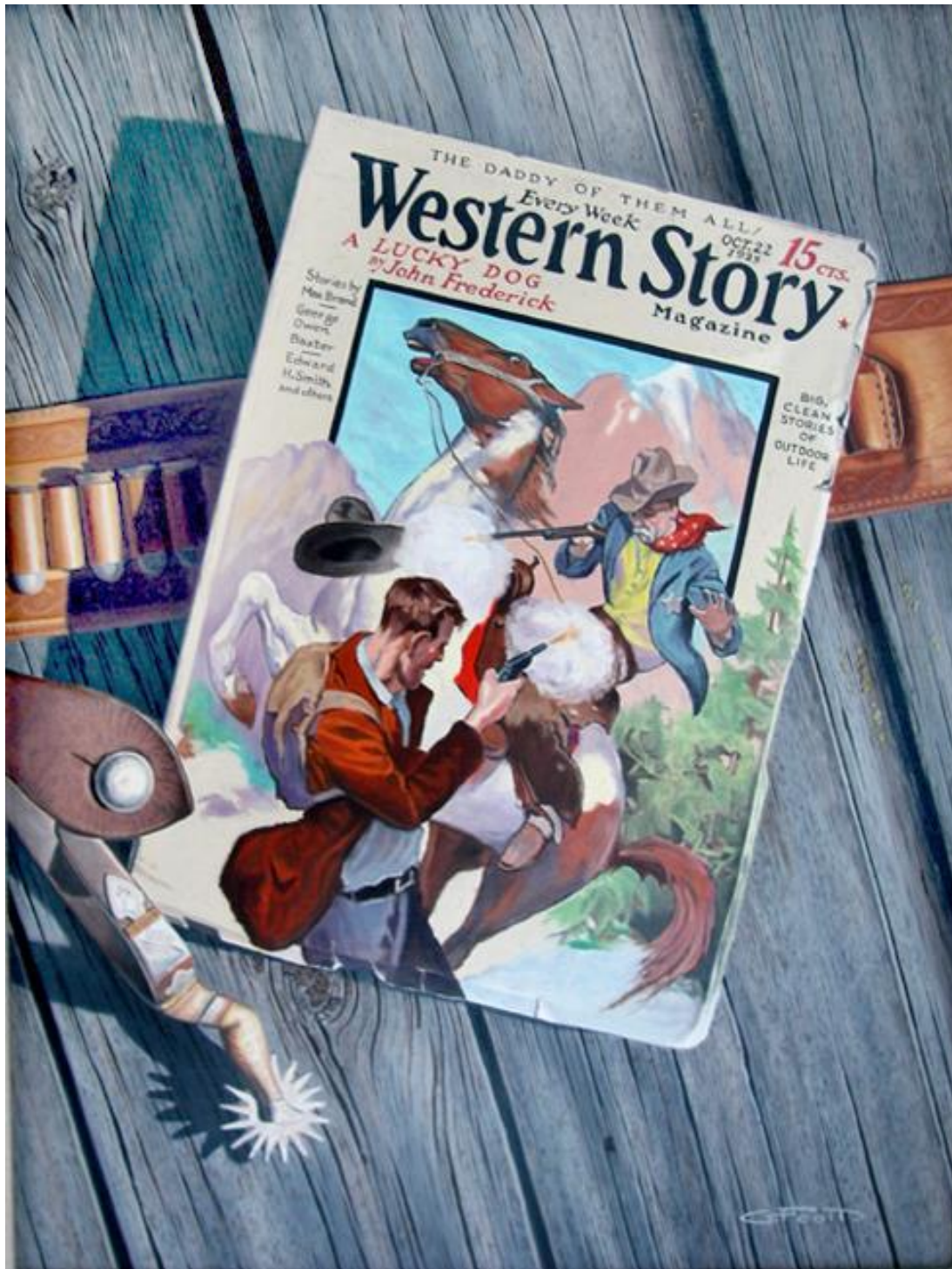


**Figure 50.** “Four Aces” (2001) (size unknown), oil on panel, by George Foott; current owner unknown.





**Figure 51. “Schedin & Lehman, Cripple Creek” (date unknown), 13 × 17 inches, oil on panel, by George Foott; Leo Stambaugh collection. Note the candlestick made by Cripple Creek blacksmith Peter Erbel (1859-1917).**



*Figure 52. “Western Story Magazine, 1925” (date unknown), 12 × 16 inches, oil on panel, by George Foott; Note the gal-leg spur. Brian Levine collection.*