



Fred Oldfield was born in Alfalfa, Washington in 1918 and grew up on the Yakima Indian Reservation. He never knew a permanent home during his early years and held many jobs as he was growing up. Most often, he worked as a cowhand. He remembers nights on the prairie so cold that he would literally set tumbleweeds on fire to lie down in the warm spot they left behind. "You could sleep for about two hours before the cold woke you up" he recalls. These early experiences would later populate his paintings.



One day when he was 17, Fred painted a flower on a bunkhouse wall. He also painted a frame around it and a nail to hang it on "and it really looked like a thistle." From that day on, his ability was a secret no longer.

While in Alaska a few years later – and not quite making regular rent – he began painting scenes on discarded linoleum tiles. His landlady began selling his work, bringing in as much as \$10 each – a fortune in 1941.

When World War II started, Fred joined the Army. There he became truly excited about painting, decorating travelers' leather jackets with patriotic scenes. After the war, he attended art school in Seattle under the G.I. Bill and began painting murals on walls in Alaska, Canada and the Northwest.

Buyers loved the landscapes of Mt. Rainier but it was Fred's evocative western paintings that became his trademark. He painted the crusty, rough and ready cowhand that he'd known so well. His hard work paid off, as buyers began to recognize the name of Fred Oldfield. In the latter half of 1964, Fred made an incredible \$4,500 selling artwork. In 1965, the figure jumped to \$7,500. He was on his way.



Today, collectors of Oldfield art can be found worldwide. He is acknowledged as one of the premier painters of the American West. He has been active in his community, in festivals and art shows throughout the Northwest, receiving awards and honors and continuing to paint murals along the way.

Fred recently released a teaching video called "Paint Like a Cowboy," and now KWSU-TV is proud to offer the television series PAINTING THE WEST WITH FRED OLDFIELD, which features thirteen original artworks, painted by the artist in front of the camera's unblinking eye and demonstrating the undiminished enthusiasm with which he tells his story through the magic of his



brush.
