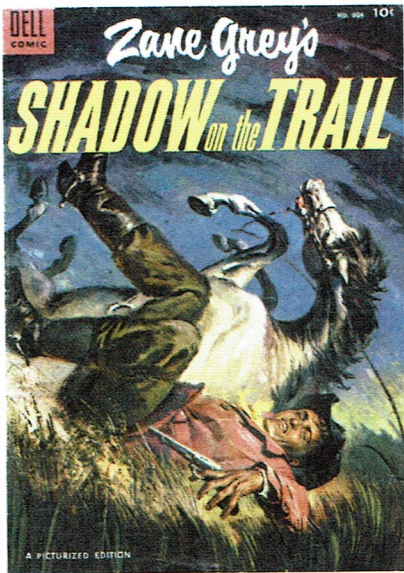


Illustration



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Cover illustration by

Sam Savitt

Zane Grey's Shadow on the Trail

Dell Comic #604, 1954

Gouache on Board

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Illustration

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From the Editor

The observant reader will once again notice the unpredictable and ever-changing contents, which seem to evolve randomly from one month to the next. Rather than dispensing with the almost meaningless "Coming Next Issue..." box (as some have angrily suggested) I hope to change my evil ways and actually start including some of the stories that have been advertised in the past (Al Parker, etc.) As you can imagine, assembling some of these features is a monumental and expensive task (photography for transparencies, etc.) so I hope you will understand that I cannot always bring everything together as quickly as I would like, and I hope that you will accept my apologies. All of the stories will appear in print eventually, it's just hard to pin down exactly WHEN. With any luck, the next issue will be another 64 pager, and will contain much more content than this issue. (As well as a letters column, which was dropped from this issue to make room for more great art.)

As always, we need your help with upcoming issues. Many of you have been very generous in offering transparencies, photographs and other information concerning some of the many illustrators we are seeking to cover in the years ahead. I hope that you will continue to get in touch and offer images from your collections for us to use. (4x5 transparencies from original art are in high demand.) We are all grateful for your assistance, and this magazine will suffer without it.

I am looking for any information about the lives and work of the illustrators whose work appeared in the Lionel electric toy train catalogs and advertisements between the 1920s and the 1950s. These artists included: Joseph Adda, Jon Brubaker, Salvatore Castagnola, Fernando Ciavatti, Walter Beach Humphrey, Percy Leason, Meinrad L. Mayer, Neff, Alex Ross, Robert Sherman, Archer St. John, and Raymond Thayer. If you have any information on these artists, please contact me or Roger Carp at *Classic Toy Trains Magazine*, 21027 Crossroads Circle, Box 1612, Waukesha, WI 53187; phone 262-796-8776 ext. 253; email: rcarp@kalmbach.com.

I hope you enjoy this latest issue!
Dan Zimmer, Editor

Sam Savitt

Painter, Author, Teacher, and Horseman

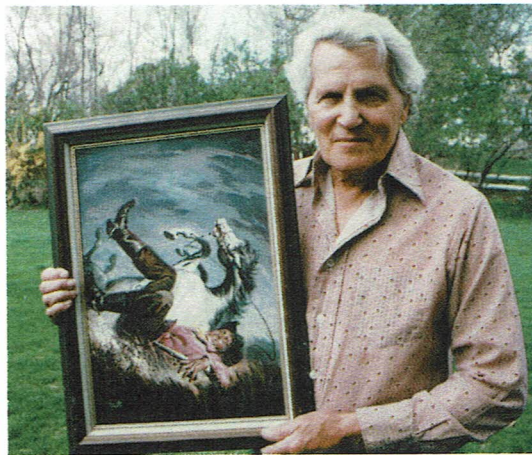
Being at the right place at the right time has an enormous influence on an artist's career, but it isn't everything. Good timing is nothing without passion, drive, and talent to back it up. Such was the case with one of the greatest horse painters this country has ever produced, Sam Savitt. Savitt came along when movie cowboys were the rage, in the 1940s and 1950s. Kids idolized Roy Rogers, Gene Autry, and The Lone Ranger, and after the Saturday matinee picture show, they headed straight for the local drug store to spend what was left of their allowances on comic books that featured their cowboy heroes. Back in those days before computer games, comic books, television, and movies were the major sources of entertainment for kids. The '50s was the "Golden Age" of comics and they sold in the millions.

Often, a cowboy star's horse was bigger in the eyes of many of his fans than the cowboy himself. Merchandisers picked up on this and produced hundreds of horse-related items, including comic books. The contribution Savitt made with his dramatic comic book cover paintings of Trigger, Champion, and Silver is responsible to a large degree for the popularity of the "horse characters" they became.

Savitt's skills in the studio were on par with his skills in the saddle, and that set him apart from the majority of his contemporaries. When a comic cover required a horse, Savitt was the man for the job. His unsurpassed love and knowledge of horses, combined with his artistic talents, would serve him well in a career that extended from the colorful world of comic books and pulps to highly competitive magazine, book, and advertising work and culminated in prestigious gallery and commissioned work.

Early Years, Education, and Influences

Sam Savitt was born and raised in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, in 1917. He studied at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, and by the time he graduated in 1941, he was earning a living illustrating pulp magazines. Savitt served in the army in Burma during World War II and rose to the rank of First Lieutenant. After he was discharged from the army in 1946, he married his sweetheart Bette Orkin. In 1956, the couple, their daughter Vicki, and son Roger moved to a beautiful house and property in North Salem, New York.



Sam Savitt in 1996. Photo by Leo Pando.

Savitt enrolled at the Art Student's League in Manhattan in 1951 and studied sculpture at the New School on 12th Street. While attending classes at night, Savitt continued to freelance during the day for national adventure and outdoor magazines. He produced full-color covers and interior illustrations of western scenes with plenty of equestrian action.

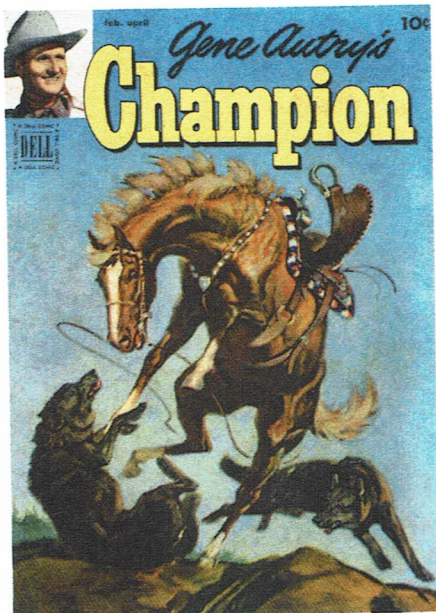
From the beginning, Savitt's admiration for horses was fueled by western movies and the books of the legendary cowboy painter and author Will James, which led to his exploration of the Southwest

one summer while he was still at Pratt. This experience provided Savitt with the opportunity to use his natural talent as an observer to learn how to ride and train horses of all types and temperament. He became a real "seat of the pants rider," picking up knowledge wherever he could. Over time, his accumulated expertise as a horseman encompassed both English and western riding disciplines. He mastered different aspects of the horse world including the training of hunters and jumpers. He gained a compassion for horses and a deep understanding of horse psychology.

BY LEO PANDO



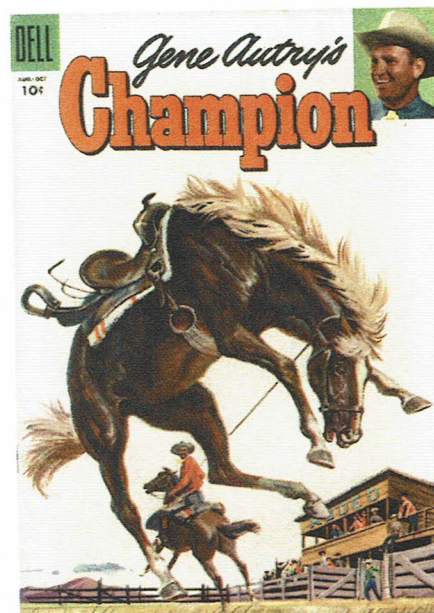
Sir Lancelot, FC #606. 1954. Gouache on board.



Gene Autry's Champion #5, Feb./April 1952.



Gene Autry and Champion #112, Nov./Dec. 1956.



Gene Autry's Champion #19, Aug./Oct. 1955.

From bucking broncs to thoroughbreds, Savitt's horsemanship and his unique perceptions as an artist gave him the inspirations he would use in paintings throughout his career.

Savitt idolized Harold Von Schmidt (1893-1982) who had earned a reputation for his detailed depictions of the American West. Von Schmidt cofounded the Famous Artists School and was elected to the Society of Illustrators Hall of Fame in 1959. Eventually Savitt studied under Von Schmidt and visited him at his Westport, Connecticut home.

Dell Comic Book Covers

Savitt began his association with the Western Printing and Lithographing Company in 1951 when he was hired to paint a series of Dell Comic book covers beginning with *Gene Autry's Champion*. At the same time, Dell was premiering *The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver* and *Roy Roger's Trigger* comics. Savitt was the natural choice for all three assignments. For comic book fans and horse enthusiasts, Savitt's illustrations would prove to be a match made in heaven. It is no wonder that these dramatic covers are collectors' items today.

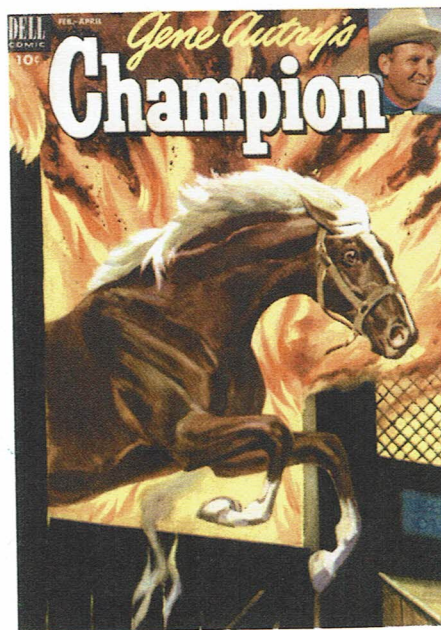
Many an illustrator has been called upon to render horses for Dell Comics; however, Savitt brought a whole other level to his work because he had a deep affection for and a profound understanding of these animals. "I know horses and I just sort of reconstruct them on canvas," he once told me. His strong foundation with horses allowed him, in whatever media he chose, to

render them as close to being alive and engaged in action as the laws of physics would allow. Savitt knew how a horse would react physically and psychologically in any situation. With his vast store of knowledge, Savitt could create work in which every detail, from horse to rider to equipment, was accurately depicted. Although Ed Marine, editor at Western Printing, provided Savitt with photo references of the tack used by cowboy stars, Savitt also happened to be working for the Miller Harness Company catalog, rendering equine paraphernalia and illustrating horse motifs on draperies, pillowcases, and calendars.

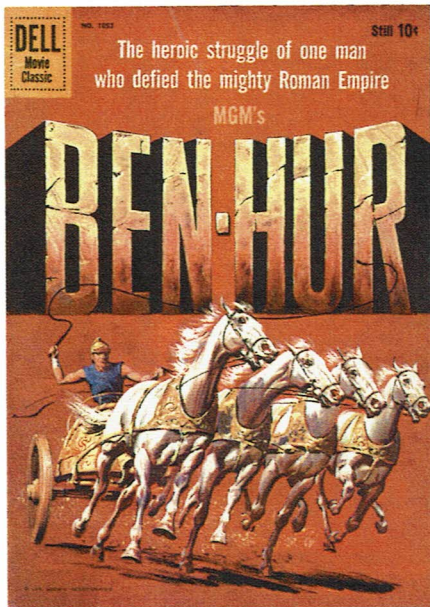
The editors at Dell knew they could depend on Savitt to create a vibrant cover painting that would feature a horse in a situation pulsating with action. It made no difference that what the subject was doing had little or nothing to do with

the interior stories, kids were drawn to the covers and bought the comic books by the truckloads.

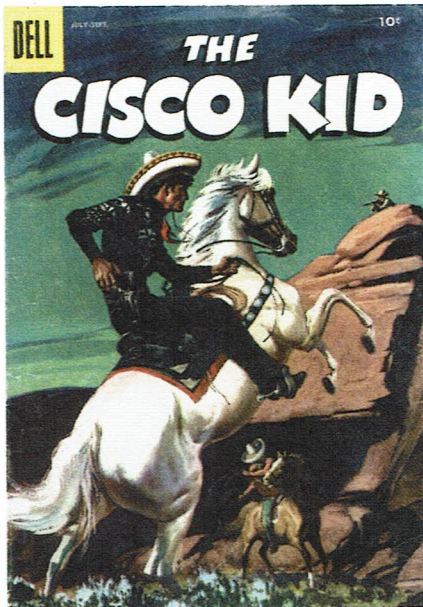
Savitt, who always freelanced on his own, never on staff, did two or three painted covers a month simultaneously, averaging 15 a year. He would usually do a pencil sketch to show an editor and had no more than a two-week deadline. "Every week I had to come up with some dramatic situation for the horses to be in," Savitt said. "Sometimes they got pretty farfetched. But the challenge of showing the grace, fire, and spirit in each horse as he battled whatever problem each week, was fun." On occasion, Savitt was also asked to submit an interior cover, illustrating some aspect of horsemanship, or a back cover breed portrait.



Gene Autry's Champion #9, Feb./April 1953.



Ben-Hur, Dell FC #1052, 1959.



The Cisco Kid, Dell FC #32, July/Sept. 1956.



Gypsy Colt, Dell FC #568, 1954.

Savitt was fearless in his approach to illustration. Of special note is the cover of *Zane Grey's Stories of the West* (number 28 titled "The Gunfighter") and the photo of Savitt himself posing for reference. He wasn't satisfied just painting an outlaw evading capture on a running horse; Savitt painted his subjects running at a foreshortened three-quarter pose and from a bug's eye point of view. Obviously, Savitt could pose himself for reference but he had to come up with the position of the horse out of his head. His expertise with horses was a great advantage when he was asked to paint horses in any situation an art director could suggest. He could render a hunter jumper as masterfully as he could paint a bronc rider. When Western Printing needed a cover for its comic book adaptation of the 1959 MGM mega-movie spectacular *Ben-Hur* (#1052), they got Savitt to do the honors.

Savitt's Dell Comic covers have been reproduced on lunch boxes, puzzles, pocket knives and even rodeo posters, most of the time with no credit. His comic book covers, which are reprinted worldwide, have shown up in some impressive places. A half-dozen Trigger covers are on permanent display at the Roy Rogers and Dale Evans Museum in California (Savitt's brother Al illustrated many of the interiors). The prestigious Gene Autry Western Heritage Museum in Los Angeles has copies of *Gene Autry's Champion* covers in its archives of which Savitt painted 26. Savitt's covers have been reproduced in books on The Lone Ranger. He painted three *Lone Ranger* comic book covers and all 36 of the *Hi-Yo Silver* covers. *Hi-Yo Silver* is arguably

one of the best western comics from the 1950s. Dell focused a powerhouse of writing and drawing talents to produce this western masterpiece and all were available in a single comic book for the modest price of 10 cents!

I had part of my Savitt comic book collection with me when I interviewed him in 1996 at his home in New Salem. Many covers he hadn't seen in forty years. Although he



Savitt posing for a Dell Comics *Silvertip* cover, 1950s.

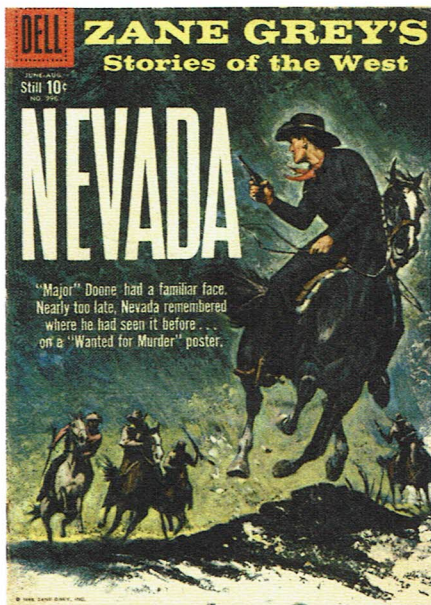
confirmed all as his work, he couldn't remember what he painted for Dell Comics. He was amazed at how prolific he'd been early in his career. When I showed him the *Ben-Hur* cover, his comment was, "No I don't remember anything about it but it's mine and I had a ball doing it."

Savitt gave each comic cover 100 percent and it was obvious that he took great joy in his assignments. However, he saw them not only as weekly challenges, but also as income and as opportunities to move on to greener pastures. It didn't seem to bother Savitt that Dell gave him no credit. He told me, "I never thought of those things. I never thought about copyright and all that. I did the job." The comic book industry was notorious at first for not

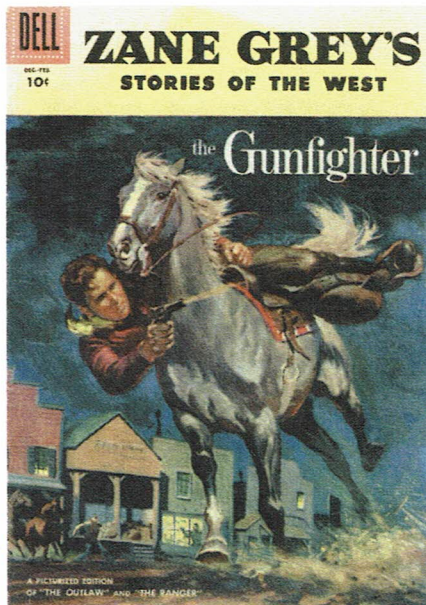
acknowledging individuals, never mind an artist's rights, royalty fees, and the return of original art. In the world of comic books, Savitt's name remained largely unknown for decades. In 1995 the prestigious *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide*, the blue book on comic book collecting, finally recognized Sam for his Dell covers. Essays on Savitt eventually appeared in *The Comic Book Buyer's Guide*, the best-known weekly journal on the genre.



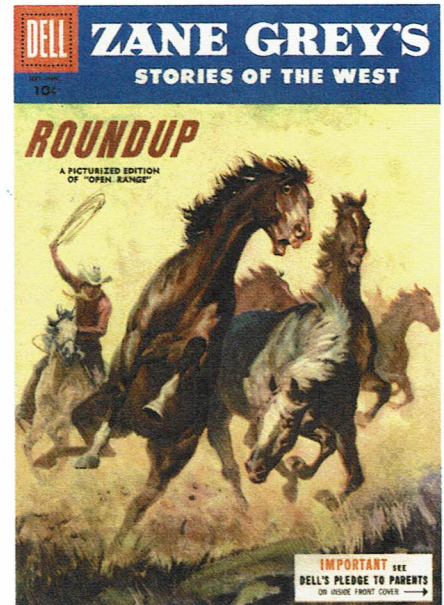
Gene Autry's *Champion* #15, Aug./Oct. 1954.



Zane Grey's Stories of the West, Dell #996, 1959.



Zane Grey's Stories of the West, Dell #28, 1956.



Zane Grey's Stories of the West, Dell #27, 1955.

Years after finishing work for Dell, Savitt returned to Western Printing in hopes of salvaging some of his originals, but by then it was too late. They had long since disappeared. He was able to locate only three of the 147 covers he had painted.

Work Methods and Mediums

Whether with dry media such as pencils and charcoal, to wet media such as oils, gouache, casein, watercolor, and ink, Savitt relished in the choreography of color, line, tone, and shape. He was always experimenting, seeing what he could and couldn't do. He was constantly testing the waters with regards to technique.

Savitt didn't just draw with pencils, he painted with them by employing a variety of graphite tips to arrive at the desired results. He would combine lead points right out of a sharpener with wedged points to get halftone effects. With Savitt's solid classical formal art training, he learned that the foundation of any good painting was a good drawing. He worked out most of the composition problems he faced in his painting with pencil and conté crayons. Before he began painting, he worked out the values in black and white.

Similarly, Savitt didn't just paint with brushes in a slow rendered manner, he drew with them. His media of choice was gouache, primarily because of its brilliance, its quick drying time, and it didn't have to be varnished. Another reason Savitt preferred gouache was because it could be washed away for a fresh start. (Gouache, a water-based medium that is primarily applied opaque, can be put down thinly, although it is never as transparent as watercolor.) Speed was important when working for print publications because



Savitt posing for cover above.

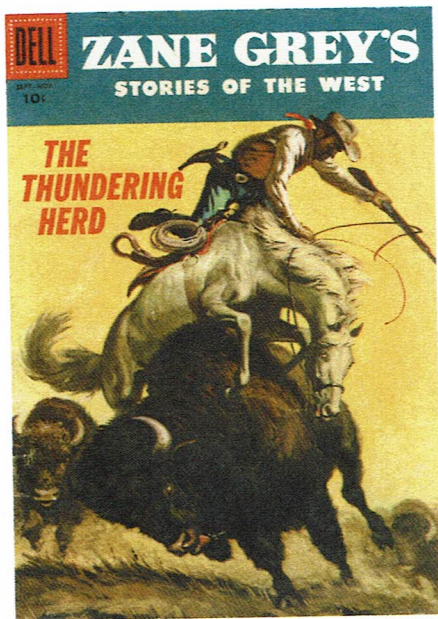
deadlines were critical. There were also times when corrections were necessary and oil would take too long to dry.

Savitt knew that his skills as a draftsman were superficial at best without a solid foundation in equine anatomy, dynamics, psychology, and history. He also sketched from living horses, working quickly just to capture the action with a few lines on paper. Once back in the studio, Savitt was able to transform his visual shorthand into more realized

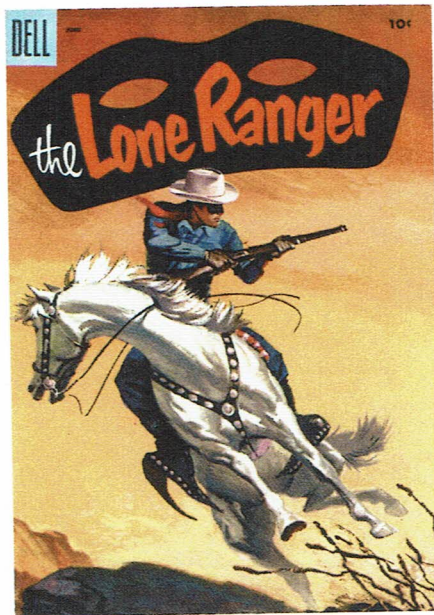
work. Like any good horseman, observing horses was one of his great natural talents.

Savitt's painting approach was a tight drawing but a loose attack. He did his preliminary drawing on a kind of vellum/tracing paper, and then he would lay a graphite tone in back of the paper. Next he attached it to his working surface securely so it wouldn't move, then trace it on his working surface making sure to stay within the boundaries of the illustration. He could then flip it back, and it was always on the same spot. Savitt did not use canvas but top illustration board (Whatman Board or Bainbridge 80) because the surfaces could take heavy beatings without degrading, a big advantage with regards to corrections.

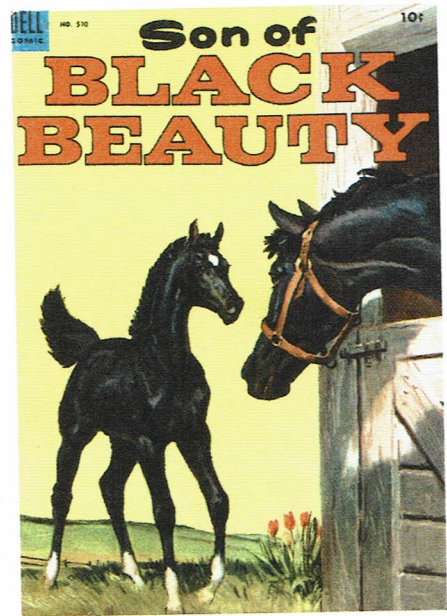
Savitt used waterproof ink to tighten his transferred drawing so that, in the event of a mistake while painting, he could wash off the gouache pigment and the drawing would still be visible. He would first lay a general gouache tone over the illustration board, then work into the tones with the drawing showing through. Savitt began with wide brushes and bold, quick strokes. As he defined his subject, he would switch to smaller brushes for a more detailed and refined work. As he roughed in the background texture, such as clouds and sky, the pigments would get more



Zane Grey's *Stories of the West*, Dell #31, 1956.



The Lone Ranger, Dell #84, June, 1955.



Son of Black Beauty, Dell #566, 1954.

opaque and partially obscure his traced drawing. He could always retrace over the dried pigments if necessary by flipping the vellum drawing of his subject back over his surface, which would save him from having to dig down and lose all the paint he was building up.

Savitt's weeks of preliminary work allowed him to work quickly in his final execution. The final product always suffered when he took shortcuts. He produced many rough drafts to get a horse's action and expression right, while at the same time making sure the equipment and attire were authentic.

Savitt, who saw the composition as a whole, really had a feel for art far removed from just horses. Other elements, such as human subjects, clothing, and terrain, weren't simply background but filled out the painting and rendered it complete. In this way, it can be said that Savitt's classic Dell covers stand as fine western paintings.

When it came to oils, Savitt often began a painting with a very bold and direct casein lay in. Casein reminded him of working in gouache, as it, too, is water-based. When the casein stage was finished, he would varnish it to pick up the light and then work his oil pigments right on top. Savitt did not use speed driers with oil paints; instead, he used very little medium and a lot of turpentine for his primary lay in. When the painting was finished one couldn't tell which areas were casein and which were oil. Savitt's technical approach to painting was the subject of a 1973 publication by the M. Grumbacher Company, *The Art of Painting Horses*.

Savitt provided horses with the personality one usually finds only in human beings, and in doing so, he also cap-



Sam's brother Al Savitt posing for cover, above.

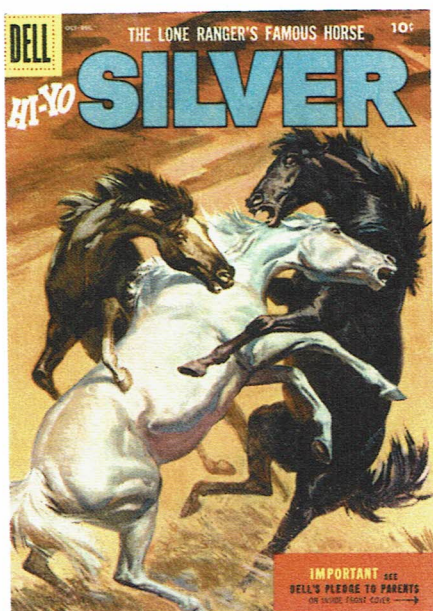
tured their souls. Although he never tried to improve on a horse's God-given beauty, to simply refer to Savitt as a representational painter would miss the mark. He abstracted his subject matter to the extent that any master painter would with regards to composition and good design. Savitt took great care to render horses with the utmost accuracy, but he emphasized and distorted only for effect.

While his approach was a realistic depiction of equine nature, the artistic license he took served to accentuate the nobility and spirit innate in horses. When he blended that foundation with his powerful imagination, the result was

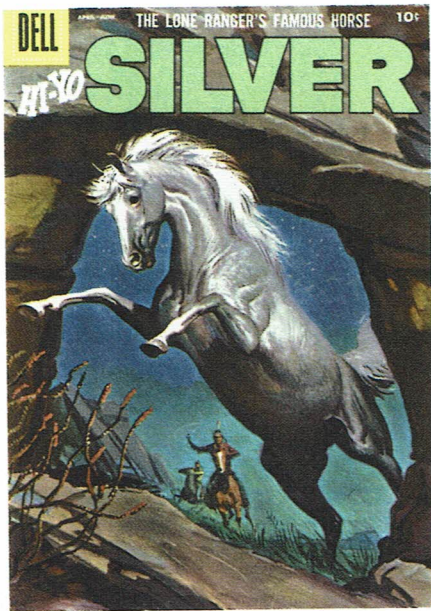
one equine masterpiece after another. As with Degas and his ballerinas, Savitt used the endless variety of action poses that horses are capable of to convey beauty and movement. He was often quoted as saying, "To draw horses, I think, is to take a test on how well you know them. You have to know all the shapes of a horse's anatomy and understand how it works. You have to be able to make a horse do anything it could do in real life. And what's more, you have to be able to do this from memory and a knowledge of your subject."

Magazines and Books

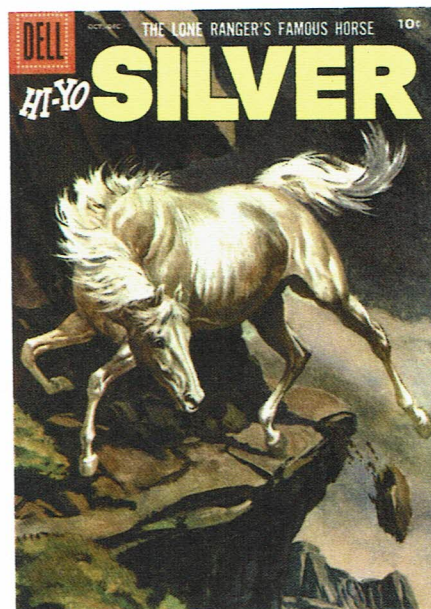
From his experience illustrating comic books, pulps and magazines, it was inevitable that Savitt would find work in the field of book publishing. Beginning in the 1940s Savitt worked for Fiction House, Dell, Popular, Argosy and Standard Publications who put out a whole series of pulp magazines such as *Ranch Romances*. He contributed regularly to such periodicals as *True*, *Real (For Men)*, *Field and*



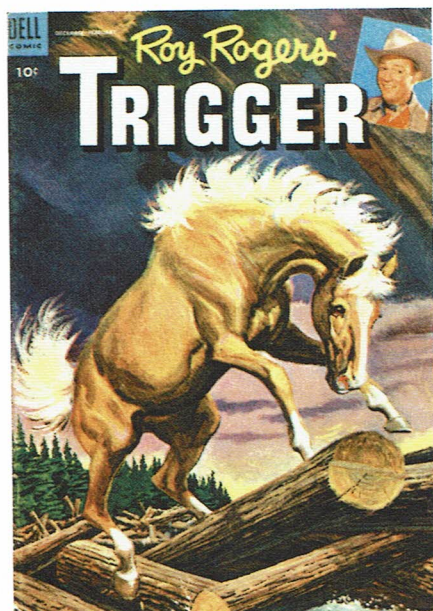
The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver, #16, Oct./Dec. 1955.



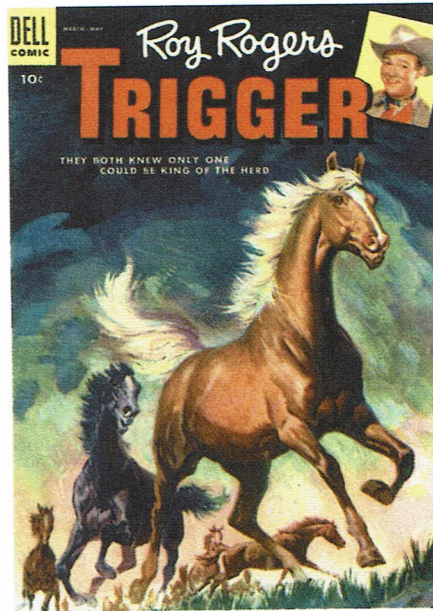
The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver, #30, April/June 1959.



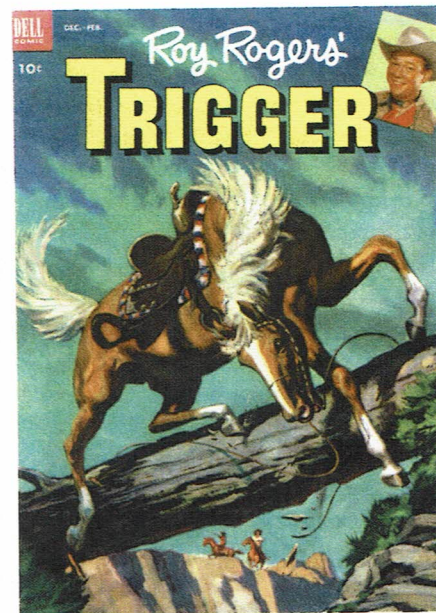
The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver, #20, Oct./Dec. 1956.



Roy Roger's Trigger, Dell #15, Dec./Feb. 1955.



Roy Roger's Trigger, Dell #16, Mar./May 1955.

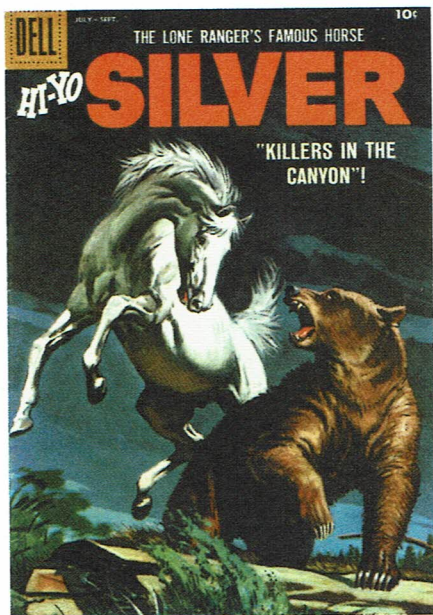


Roy Roger's Trigger, Dell #7, Dec./Feb. 1953.

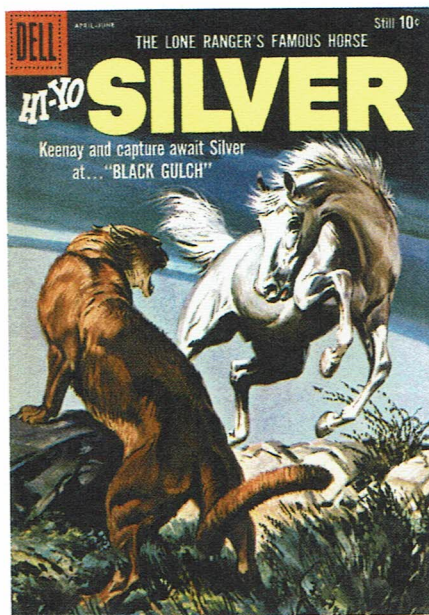
Stream, Outdoor Life, Sports Afield, American Weekly, Sports Illustrated, Reader's Digest, Chronicle of the Horse, Boy's Life, Country Gentleman, Practical Horseman, and Equus. A "Draw Horses with Sam Savitt" page appeared monthly in *Western Horseman* magazine off and on for years. Whenever an equine related project came along, Savitt would go for it. Although his specialty was horses, Savitt painted a variety of animal subjects, especially dogs. A typical work procedure between Savitt and a book editor would be to first agree on a cover concept and technique. Next Savitt would concentrate on interior illustrations. As he read a manuscript he was always looking for interesting picture spots, getting at least one in each chapter.

The first book Savitt illustrated was *Learning to Ride, Hunt and Show* for well-known riding instructor Gordon Wright.

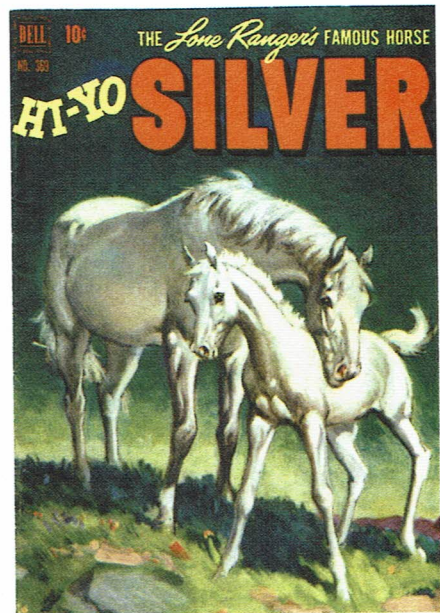
Wright was friends with another one of Savitt's boyhood heroes, illustrator Paul Brown (1893-1958), who specialized in painting horses in sports and in violent action. Wright had originally asked Brown to illustrate the book. Brown was too busy and, being familiar with Savitt's work, recommended him. Savitt lived in the area and went to Wright's riding academy for an evaluation of his horsemanship and brought his portfolio. Wright saw that Savitt had raw talent as a horseman and agreed to trade riding lessons for book illustrations. Savitt's formal education with horses started with Wright. The illustrations Savitt produced for *Learning to Ride, Hunt and Show* are not merely utilitarian; his horses came alive as part of the learning process of becoming a good rider. In action scenes, which Savitt preferred, his horses positively leap off the page.



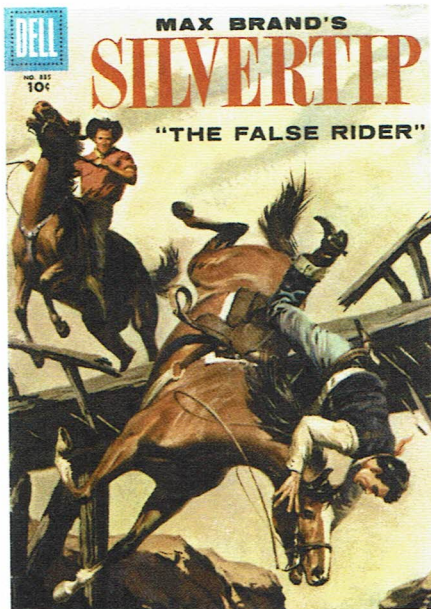
The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver, #27, July/Sept. 1958.



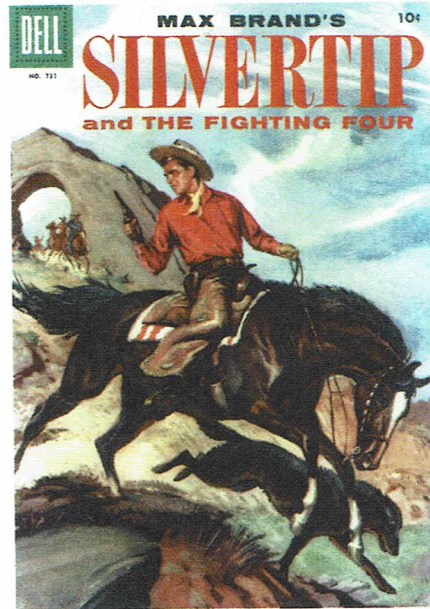
The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver, #30, April/June 1959.



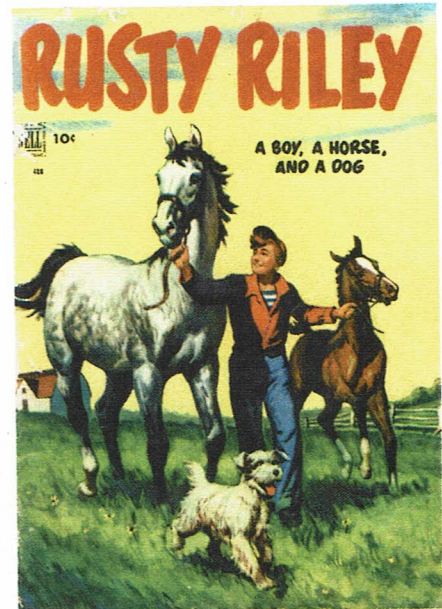
The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver, #369, 1951.



Max Brand's Silvertip, Dell #835, 1957.



Max Brand's Silvertip, Dell #731, 1956.



Rusty Riley, Dell #418, 1952.

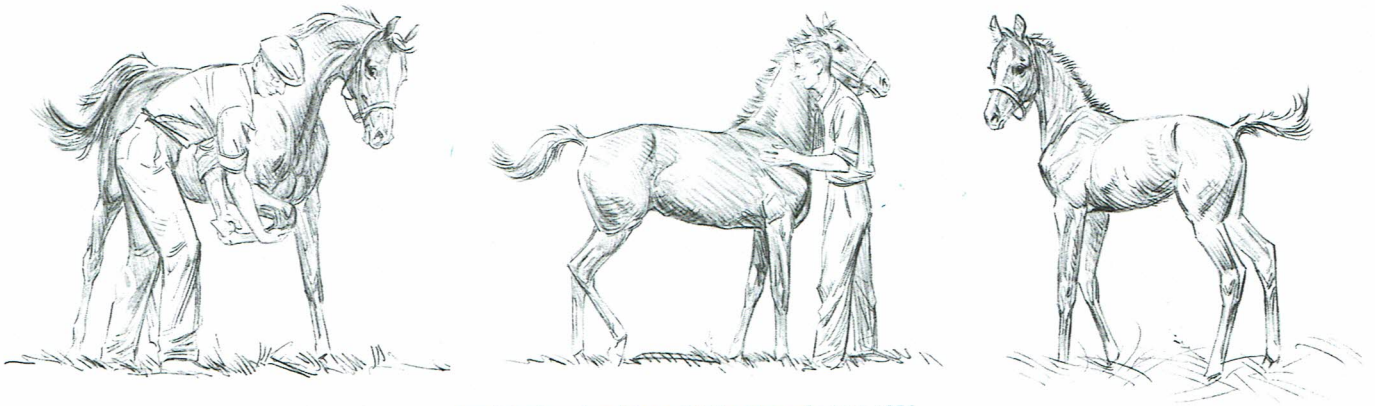
As a creative person, Savitt was not only motivated to paint horses, but eventually he felt the need to write about them. He was at first cautious about his writing ability but was convinced by his editor to be himself. He recalled that his idol, the legendary western painter and author Will James, was not edited either. James' editors had the wisdom to let him write in his own voice, retaining an authentic cowboy feel.

The first book Savitt wrote was *Step A-Bit, Story of a Foal*. When he first came up with the idea, he had been making drawings of a foal from the time it was born through its first days growing up. One day it occurred to Savitt that maybe he ought to send photostats of his sketches to different publishers. Sharon Banagan, editor at E. P. Dutton, made Savitt an offer. "I want you to do this book just the way these

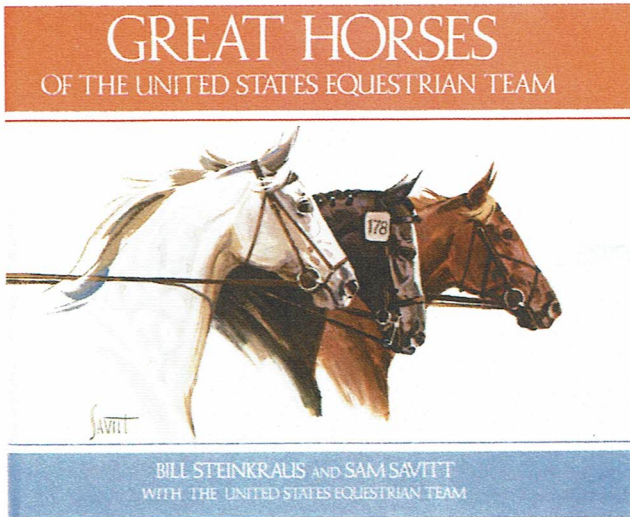
sketches are made, right off the top of your head. Don't embellish them, and don't try to get photographs in it, just use these drawings," she suggested. That's what he did. When they were completed she asked, "Write some words to pull it together." Savitt replied, "I can't write." Banagan suggested, "Oh sure you can, just little simple sentences. This is his first day out, etc." And that's how it started.

Savitt's second book was the more ambitious *Midnight: Champion Bucking Horse*, which received the Boy's Clubs of America Award. Bucking horses were a specialty of Savitt's and the subject of several of his books including *Rodeo: Cowboys, Bulls and Broncos*. Sam Savitt, a westerner at heart with similar sensibilities to Will James, was also strongly motivated by a love for horses.

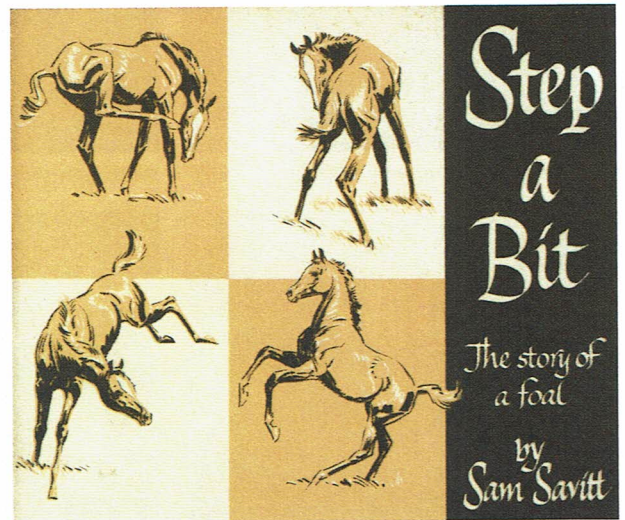
Savitt went on to write and co-write 17 books on horses.



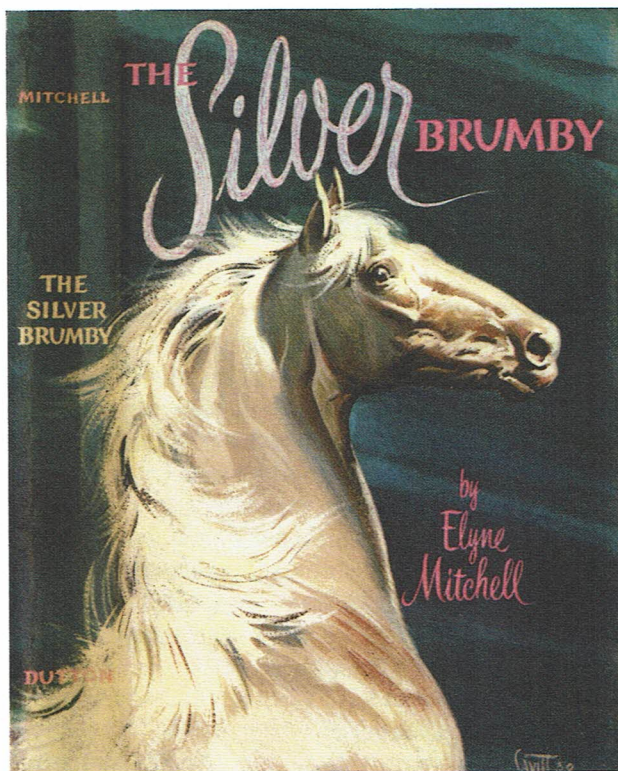
Drawings above from *Step a Bit, The Story of a Foal*, 1956.



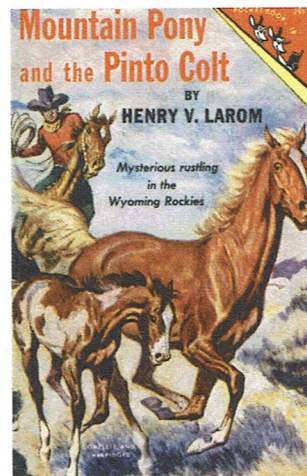
Great Horses of the U.S. Equestrian Team by Sam Savitt and Bill Steinkraus.



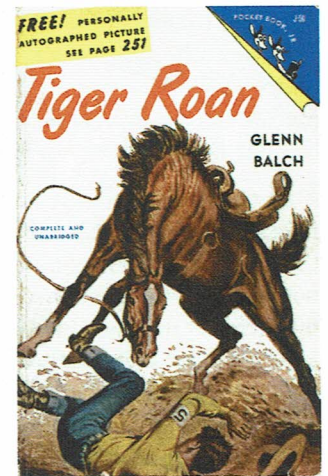
Step a Bit, The Story of a Foal by Sam Savitt. 1956.



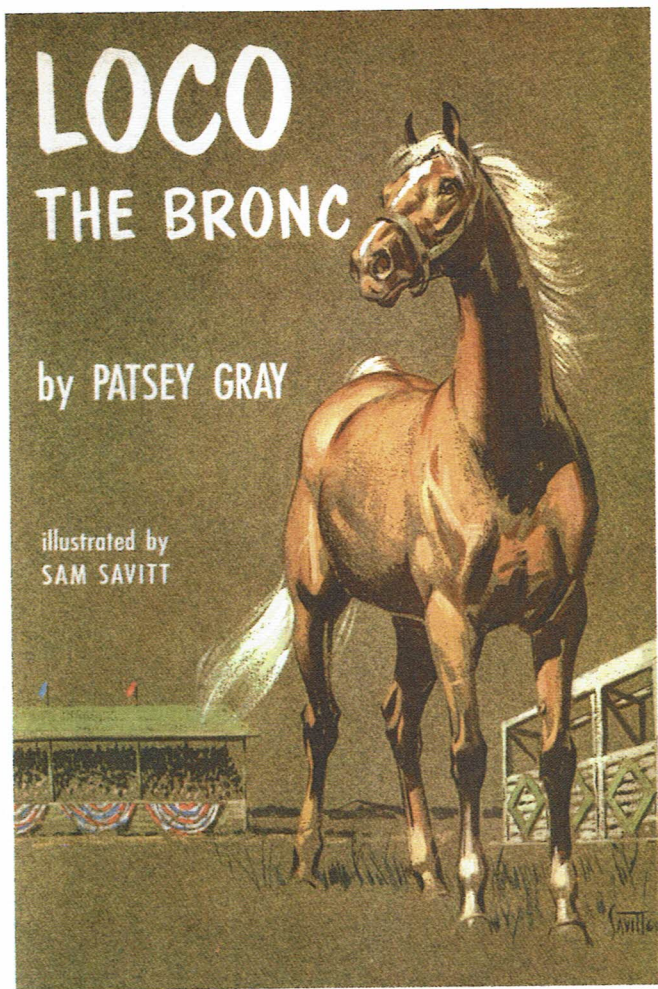
The Silver Brumby by Elyne Mitchell. 1959.



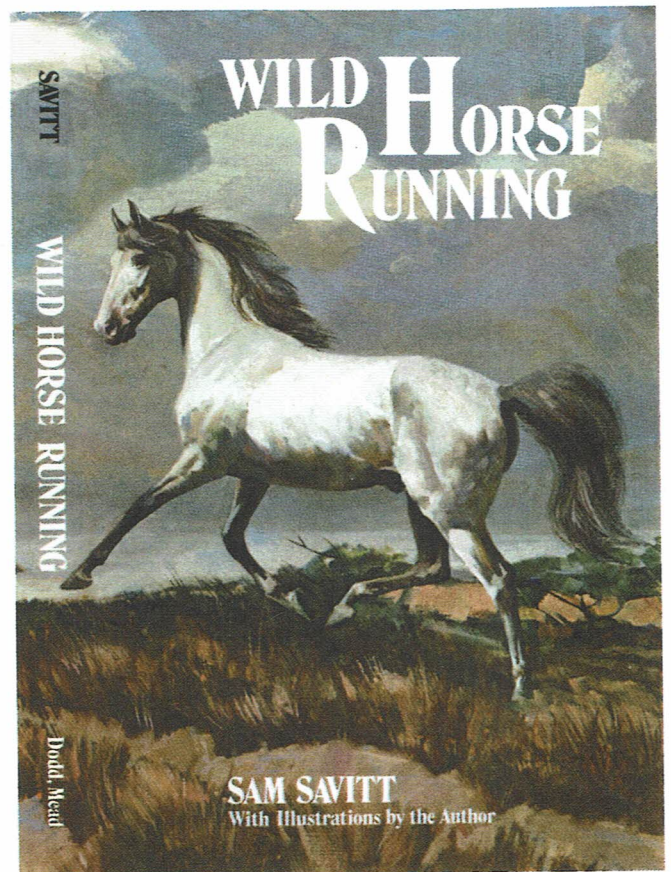
Mountain Pony and the Pinto Colt by Henry V. Lalom. Pocket Books, 1951.



Tiger Roan by Glenn Balch. Pocket Books, 1950.



Loco the Bronc by Patsey Gray, 1961.



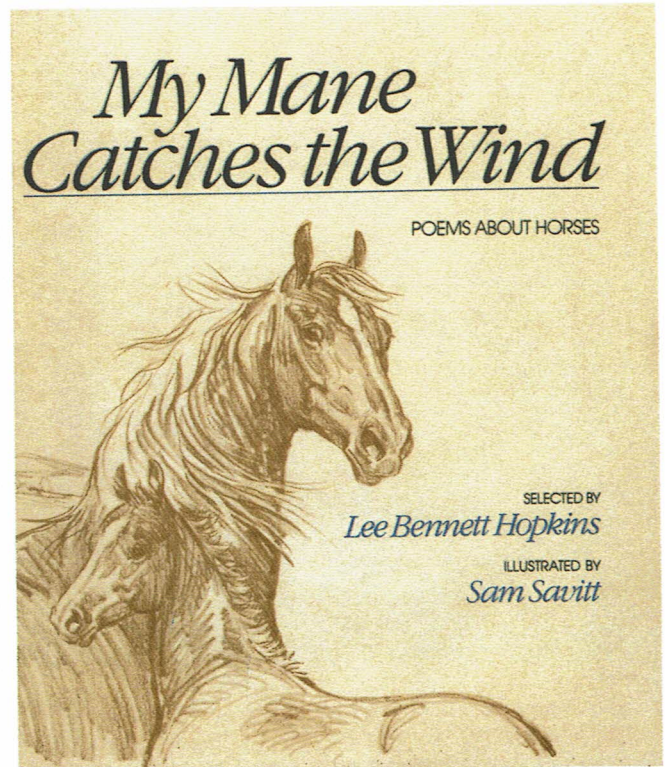
Wild Horse Running by Sam Savitt, 1973.

His *Draw Horses With Sam Savitt* is considered a classic in the field and continues to be reprinted. *Wild Horse Running* won the Literary Guild Award. Over his career Savitt illustrated more than 135 books by other authors.

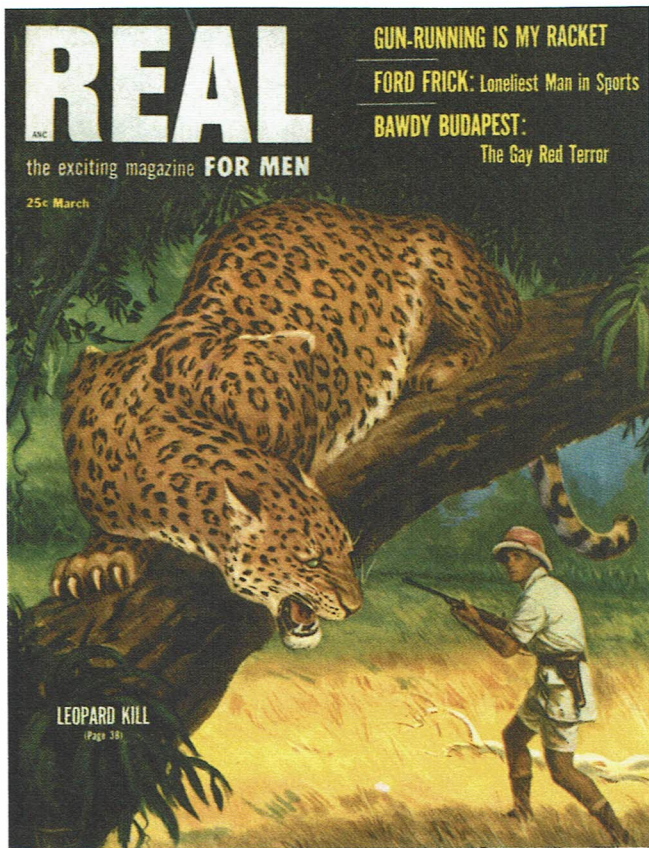
Black Horse Press

Savitt's success as an illustrator was due to a large part to the support of his wife Bette Orkin. He could not have been the artist he became without her. She took over the business aspects of his career, freeing him to concentrate on his work. In 1963 she started Black Horse Press, a home-based business, to publish, market and distribute his work. Bette ran the business from a studio that they shared on the top floor of their home in North Salem.

Black Horse Press became a cottage industry, offering a number of items such as posters, portfolios, prints, charts, books, original art, etc. Their first project was the "Sam Savitt's Guide To Horses" chart produced by a printer who lived down the road. It was he who suggested that they always prefix titles with Savitt's name. Savitt's illustrated horse charts have been used by a number of encyclopedias including *Grolier's*, and as teaching aids by the Smithsonian Institute. "Sam Savitt's Guide to Horses" went on to sell more than half a million copies. Eventually an entire Savitt



My Mane Catches the Wind by Lee Bennett Hopkins, 1979.



Real for Men Cover illustration, Vol. 1, No. 6, March, 1953.

series of large, full-color charts were offered depicting a wide range of equestrian subjects from dressage to rodeo. Black Horse Press was later bought by Half Halt Press.

Special Assignments, Gallery Work, Private Commissions, and Awards

Savitt's work can be found on placemats, coasters, mugs, and so forth. In the late 1960s, a series of 500-piece jigsaw puzzles were released through Springbok Editions. Savitt painted a number of colorful horse-related motifs, including a circular puzzle celebrating the Racing Hall of Fame, and octagon puzzles titled "International Horse Jumping" and "Mares and Foals."

Savitt was named the official artist for the United States Equestrian Team in 1956. In 1968 he was commissioned to cover the equestrian events at the Olympic Games in Mexico. He also executed a poster in 1991 for the Kentucky Derby and covered the 1992 Grand National in England for *Equus* magazine.

Savitt did not differentiate commercial art from easel art, because for him they were the same thing. He viewed all of his work as fine art. Savitt earned a reputation as one of this country's finest equestrian artists, and articles on him followed in such publications as *Art Director and Studio News*, *Equus*, *Equine Images* and *Chronicle of the Horse*. He had a number of one-man exhibitions, and his equestrian paintings and drawings are in many private collec-

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tions, including the Grumbacker Collection, August Busch, Raymond Firestone, and Jean Kennedy Smith.

In 1982, while Savitt was in Kentucky judging an art show at the Red Mile Track, he took a day to visit Claiborne Farms, the home of Triple Crown racing legend Secretariat. Savitt was given a close look at the great thoroughbred. He made sketches and, once back in his studio, he completed a portrait.

A private commission of note by Savitt was done in 1985 for Mrs. William Randolph Hearst Jr. Savitt did the cover and a series of interior paintings and drawings for a limited edition book titled *Horses of San Simeon*. Only 1,500 copies were produced, and each came signed with a handsome outer sleeve and over 275 pages of artwork, photos and text. Savitt and his wife stayed at the Hearst Castle in San Simeon while he was working on the project.

In 1986 Savitt received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the North American Horseman's Association, which also honored him as "Equine Artist of Distinction." *Equus* magazine referred to him in its 10th anniversary issue as one of the "movers and shakers in the horse world." He was the only artist honored.

Drawing and Painting Workshops

Savitt gave drawing and painting workshops across the country, sharing techniques he'd developed over the years. He instructed his students in horse anatomy and in techniques for drawing from memory. His classes began with a concentration on drawing fundamentals, then moved on to painting the standing horse and finally advancing action poses. Savitt also recognized that being able to draw enabled his students to correct distortions found in photographs, which were a common mistake novices made. Savitt said, "In order to create a good painting of a horse from life or from a photograph, an artist must paint what he or she knows in addition to what he sees, and he must know a great deal more than he sees." He complained that, "Many equestrian painters today do not really draw horses. They copy with paint all the lights and darks they see in a photograph, but what they do not seem to know is that photographs often distort form. Unless an artist understands the construction of the horse and how it functions, his pictures are no more than a meaningless collection of light and dark areas."

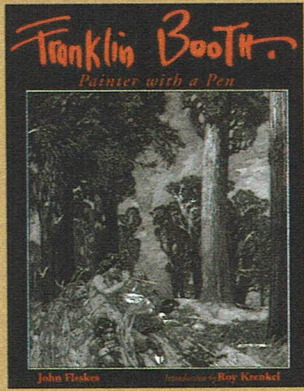
Savitt gave seminars at the Equine Artists Workshop in Tryon, North Carolina, and the Scottsdale Artist's School in Arizona. He was a founding member of the American Academy of Equine Art in Lexington, Kentucky, and served as its Dean of Education.

Savitt loved to teach and related to it as "a two-way thing. It was gratifying. I had to reevaluate a lot of the things that I did automatically so I could help somebody. I could do a thing and think nothing of it, but what if I'm trying to explain it to somebody? What do I do? So I had to think of things like that. And it made it interesting for me. . ."

Savitt ultimately taught his students "sight is a faculty, but seeing is an art." He learned over years of experience that,



Real for Men cover illustration. June, 1953.



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Portrait of Secretariat by Sam Savitt. 1982.

“All you learn is the craft. You can learn the fundamentals, how to draw, [but] that won’t make you an artist.” Many artists are born, not made. Artistic sensibilities may be with in a person already and, if they’re lucky and hard working, through education and experience, those important sensibilities are brought out.

The Last Ride

Savitt was a man of deep passion and boundless energy both in his work and in his private life. It was fitting that the spirit of the horse in action, a creature that can stir feelings and impart a profound sense for being alive, fascinated him more than anything else and permeated his art. Savitt was not the kind of man who dwelled on the past, and he remained focused on current projects and the planning of future work. Once, when he was stranded in a hospital room for five days due to a back operation, he used the time to fill a sketch pad with scores of the horse-related drawings that seemed to flow out of him like water. “I would sit there and tell Bette, I don’t want any visitors, I just want to sit here with this pad. I’d think, what am I going to work on? Let my mind go and then start doing it.”

One doesn’t retire from the kind of life Sam Savitt had. Instead, it is taken away. Savitt continued to ride his thoroughbred McClaurey into his 80s until he finally had to refrain and hang up his spurs. A few years later he suffered a minor stroke and, though it was not completely disabling, it took away the independence he cherished and his ability to draw and paint. Once he lost his artistic gifts, Savitt became depressed and lost his will to live. He died on Christmas Day of 2000 at the age of 83.

When I was young, comics were magical. It seemed to me that they were created in some far off land by people who remained anonymous at worst and elusive at best.



Leo Pando with Sam Savitt, 1996.



The Morgan by Sam Savitt. From *America's Horses*, 1966.

Never in my wildest dreams did I think that I’d meet, much less become friends with, someone I admired from the world of comic books.

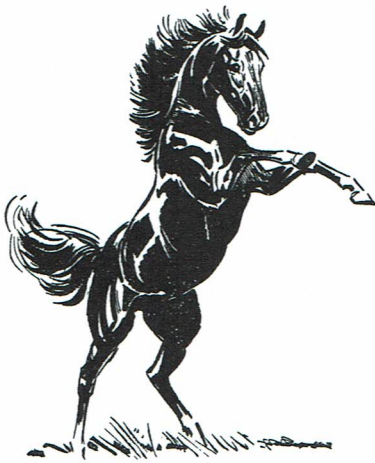
I was tremendously honored when I got to deliver one of the eulogies at a memorial service for Sam in the spring of 2001. As I stood before his family, friends, and admirers, I spoke of how I came to be there because of a comic book I bought in 1953 when I was six years old. It was issue number nine of *Gene Autry's Champion*, with a spectacular cover rendering of a sorrel stallion escaping from a burning barn. It had a powerful and enduring impact on me. It wasn’t until 1990 that I finally found out who painted it when I bought a copy of *Equus* magazine #150 featuring an article titled “The Mustangs of the West,” with accompanying paintings by Sam Savitt. I wrote him in care of *Equus* asking if he had painted covers for Dell Comics. A few weeks later a letter of confirmation arrived from Savitt himself.

Sam Savitt was one of those fortunate people who turned two passions into his life’s work. From his early comic book covers to his last gallery paintings, Savitt proved to be master observer and translator of the life lessons that horses teach us: patience and grace. I continue to be enriched by Savitt’s work, and I picture him now as I always have—riding a fine horse with a pencil and sketch pad close at hand. ●

(The author would like to thank Bette Orkin, Robert W. Phillips, Diane Bowen, Eva Radford, Brian Speer, and Richard Oberg for their time and effort towards the preparation of this essay. Article copyright 2002 by Leo Pando. Photographs copyright 2002 by Sam Savitt.)

Leo Pando: Born in Santa Fe, New Mexico, Pando attended the Art Center College of Design in Los Angeles. He worked as a freelance illustrator in New York City for eleven years. He is co-editor of *The Old Cowboy Picture Show*, a monthly newsletter devoted to B-western films from the 1940s and 50s. Currently, Pando is working at Colby College in Maine, where he lives with his wife Diane and their American paint mare Navajo.

Sam Savitt Checklist:



From *Fury and the Mustangs*, 1960

In Memory of Robert W. Phillips

Very special thanks must be given to Robert W. Phillips for his contribution to this Sam Savitt comicology.

Sam Savitt Comicology

One hundred forty-seven painted comic book covers by Sam Savitt have been accounted for, each confirmed by the artist. Eighteen supplemental pages were also identified. A supplemental page is an interior cover illustrating some aspect of horsemanship or an inside-cover breed portrait. They are noted after each entry; ef = educational filler; bp = breed portrait. According to Savitt, there exists one interior story titled "Sundown Saunders" that he created, wrote, and illustrated (the comic book it was published in is unknown). Sam Savitt worked for Dell Comics from 1951 to 1961. Some of his Dell covers were later reprinted through the 1970s by Gold Key Comics, Dell's predecessor (listed in parenthesis below). Savitt also painted two covers specifically for Gold Key. List compiled by Leo Pando and Robert W. Phillips; corrections and additional information welcome.

The Dell covers may be divided into three categories: **Four Color Comics** (32): Some comics for this versatile title were one-time shots; some more than one issue; some were based on stories by western writers Zane Grey, Max Brand, and Luke Short; and some were based on movies such as *Ben-Hur*. **Miscellaneous Comics** (39): Sam Savitt produced a variety of work for Dell comics, including a series of covers for *Western Round-Up* and *Zane Grey's Stories of the West*. He also did covers for such favorites as *Red Ryder*, *The Cisco Kid*, and *The Lone Ranger*. **Equine Stars** (76): Equine stars, such as Trigger, Champion, and Silver, started under the Four Color Comic imprint, then went on to receive their own title. These horses were the on-screen partners of the most famous cowboys of the day.

Equine Stars

Gene Autry's Champion:

- Gene Autry's Champion 3 (Aug./Oct. 1951)
- Gene Autry's Champion 4 (Nov./Jan. 1952)
- Gene Autry's Champion 5 (Feb./April 1952)
- Gene Autry's Champion 6 (May/July 1952)
- Gene Autry's Champion 7 (Aug./Oct. 1952)
- Gene Autry's Champion 8 (Nov./Jan. 1953)
- Gene Autry's Champion 9 (Feb./April 1953)
- Gene Autry's Champion 10 (May/July 1953)
- Gene Autry's Champion 11 (Aug./Oct. 1953)
- Gene Autry's Champion 12 (Nov./Jan. 1954)
- Gene Autry's Champion 13 (Feb./April 1954)
- Gene Autry's Champion 14 (May/July 1954 - ef)
- Gene Autry's Champion 15 (Aug./Oct. 1954 - ef)
- Gene Autry's Champion 16 (Nov./Jan. 1955)
- Gene Autry's Champion 17 (Feb./April 1955 - ef)
- Gene Autry's Champion 18 (May/July 1955)
- Gene Autry's Champion 19 (Aug./Oct. 1955 - ef)

Gene Autry and Champion:

- Gene Autry and Champion 112 (Nov./Dec. 1956)
- Gene Autry and Champion 113 (Jan./Mar. 1957)
- Gene Autry and Champion 114 (April/June 1957)
- Gene Autry and Champion 115 (July/Sept. 1957)
- Gene Autry and Champion 116 (Oct./Dec. 1957)
- Gene Autry and Champion 117 (Jan./Mar. 1958)
- Gene Autry and Champion 118 (April/June 1958)
- Gene Autry and Champion 119 (July/Sept. 1958)
- Gene Autry and Champion 120 (Oct./Dec. 1958)
- Gene Autry and Champion 121 (Jan./Mar. 1959)

The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver:

- The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver 3 (July/Sept. 1952)
- The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver 4 (Oct./Dec. 1952)
- The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver 5 (Jan./Mar. 1953)
- The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver 6 (April/June 1953)
- The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver 7 (July/Sept. 1953)
- The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver 8 (Oct./Dec. 1953)
- The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver 9 (Jan./Mar. 1954)
- The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver 10 (April/June 1954)
- The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver 11 (July/Sept. 1954)
- The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver 12 (Oct./Dec. 1954)
- The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver 13 (Jan./Mar. 1955 - ef)
- The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver 14 (April/June 1955)
- The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver 15 (July/Sept. 1955)
- The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver 16 (Oct./Dec. 1955)
- The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver 17 (Jan./Mar. 1956)

- The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver 18 (April/June 1956 - bp)
- The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver 19 (July/Sept. 1956)
- The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver 20 (Oct./Dec. 1956)
- The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver 21 (Jan./Mar. 1957 - ef)
- The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver 22 (April/June 1957 - bp)
- The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver 23 (July/Sept. 1957)
- The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver 24 (Oct./Dec. 1957)
- The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver 25 (Jan./Mar. 1958)
- The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver 26 (April/June 1958)
- The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver 27 (July/Sept. 1958)
- The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver 28 (Oct./Dec. 1958)
- The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver 29 (Jan./Mar. 1959)
- The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver 30 (April/June 1959)
- The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver 31 (July/Sept. 1959)
- The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver 32 (Oct./Dec. 1959)
- The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver 33 (Jan./Mar. 1960)
- The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver 34 (April/June 1960)
- The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver 35 (July/Sept. 1960)
- The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver 36 (Oct./Dec. 1960)

Roy Rogers' Trigger:

- Roy Rogers' Trigger 3 (Dec./Feb. 1952)
- Roy Rogers' Trigger 4 (March/May 1952)
- Roy Rogers' Trigger 5 (June/Aug. 1952)
- Roy Rogers' Trigger 6 (Sept./Nov. 1952)
- Roy Rogers' Trigger 7 (Dec./Feb. 1953)
- Roy Rogers' Trigger 8 (Mar./May 1953)
- Roy Rogers' Trigger 9 (June/Aug. 1953)
- Roy Rogers' Trigger 10 (Sept./Nov. 1953)
- Roy Rogers' Trigger 11 (Dec./Feb. 1954)
- Roy Rogers' Trigger 12 (Mar./May 1954)
- Roy Rogers' Trigger 13 (June/Aug. 1954)
- Roy Rogers' Trigger 14 (Sept./Nov. 1954)
- Roy Rogers' Trigger 15 (Dec./Feb. 1955)
- Roy Rogers' Trigger 16 (Mar./May 1955 - bp)
- Roy Rogers' Trigger 17 (June/Aug. 1955)

Four Color Comics

- The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver #369 (1951)
- Zane Grey's Riders of the Purple Sage #372 (1951)
- The Lone Ranger's Hi Yo Silver #392 (1952)
- Zane Grey's Furlow River #395 (1952)
- Rusty Riley, a Boy, a Horse and a Dog #418 (1952)
- Zane Grey's Wildfire #433 (1952)
- Rusty Riley, a Boy, a Horse and a Dog #451 (1953)
- Rusty Riley, a Boy, a Horse and a Dog #486 (1953)
- Son of Black Beauty #510 (1953)
- Zane Grey's Stories of the West - The Rustlers #532 (1953)
- Walt Disney's Stormy #537 (1954)
- Rusty Riley, a Boy, a Horse and a Dog #554 (1954)
- Son of Black Beauty #566 (1954 - ef)
- Gypsy Colt #568 (1954)
- Zane Grey's Shadow on the Trail #604 (1954)
- Sir Lancelot #606 (1954)
- Earnest Haycox's Western Marshall #640 (1955)
- Max Brand's Silvertip and the Stolen Stallion #667 (1955 - bp)
- Max Brand's Silvertip and the Fighting Four #731 (1956)
- Luke Short's Bounty Guns #739 (1956)
- Luke Hunter Indian Fighter #779 (1957)
- Luke Short's Savage Range #807 (1957)
- Walt Disney's Paul Revere's Ride #822 (1957 - Gold Key #34)
- Tales of the Pony Express #829 (1957)
- Max Brand's Silvertip and the False Rider #835 (1957)
- The Vigilantes #839 (1957)
- Luke Short's Trumpets West #875 (1957)
- Luke Hunter Indian Fighter #904 (1958)
- The Grey Ghost #911
- Tales of the Pony Express #942 (1958)
- Zane Grey's Stories of the West - Nevada #996 (1959 - Gold Key 10131-41)
- Ben Hur #1052 (1959)

Miscellaneous Comics

- Ben Bowie and His Mountain Men #7 (May/July 1956)
- Ben Bowie and His Mountain Men #9 (Nov./Jan. 1957)
- Ben Bowie and His Mountain Men #16 (Aug./Oct. 1958)
- Boys' and Girls' March of Comics #170 (Indian Chief, 1961)
- Boys' and Girls' March of Comics #215 (Hi Yo Silver, 1961)
- The Cisco Kid #32 (July/Sept. 1956)
- The Golden West Rodeo Treasury #1 (1957)
- Indian Chief #7 (July/Sept. 1952)
- Indian Chief #8 (Oct./Dec. 1952)
- Indian Chief #9 (Jan./Mar. 1953)
- Indian Chief #10 (April/June 1953)
- King of the Royal Mounted #24 (Mar./May 1957)
- The Lone Ranger #84 (June 1955) (Gold Key #5, Jan. 1967)
- The Lone Ranger #102 (Dec. 1956)
- The Lone Ranger #105 (Mar. 1957 - Gold Key #7)
- Red Ryder Ranch Magazine #146 (Jan./Mar. 1956)
- Red Ryder Ranch Magazine #147 (April/June 1956)
- Red Ryder Ranch Magazine #148 (July/Sept. 1956)
- Red Ryder Ranch Comics #149 (Oct./Dec. 1956)
- Red Ryder Ranch Comics #150 (Jan./Mar. 1957)
- Ripley's Believe It Or Not #78 (June 1978)
- Roy Rogers and Trigger #100 (April 1956)
- Walt Disney's The Scarecrow #1 (Gold Key, 1964 - Showcase #53, 1979)
- Walt Disney's The Scarecrow #2 (Gold Key, 1965)
- Western Roundup #16 (Oct./Dec. 1956)
- Western Roundup #17 (Jan./Mar. 1957)
- Western Roundup #18 (April/June 1957)
- Western Roundup #20 (Oct./Dec. 1957)
- Western Roundup #21 (Jan./Mar. 1958)
- Western Roundup #23 (July/Sept. 1958)
- Western Roundup #24 (Oct./Dec. 1958)
- Western Roundup #25 (Jan./Mar. 1959)
- White Eagle Indian Chief #28 (Oct./Dec. 1957)
- Zane Grey's Stories of the West #27 (Sept./Nov. 1955)
- Zane Grey's Stories of the West #28 (Feb./Apr. 1956)
- Zane Grey's Stories of the West #31 (Sept./Nov. 1956)
- Zane Grey's Stories of the West #32 (Dec./Feb. 1957)
- Zane Grey's Stories of the West #34 (Aug./Oct. 1957)
- Zane Grey's Stories of the West #37 (Mar./May 1958)
- Zane Grey's Stories of the West #38 (June/Aug. 1958)

Savitt inside supplemental material.

- Wild Bill Elliott #15 (1955 - ef)
- Roy Rogers and Trigger #52 (ef)
- Roy Rogers and Trigger #102 (ef)
- The Lone Ranger's Western Treasury #1 (pages 83 and 84 - ef)
- Ranwild #1028 - Trail to Freedom (FC, 1959 - ef)

Sam Savitt Bibliography

Sam Savitt wrote and illustrated 17 books. He also illustrated over 130 books for other authors. For books that Savitt illustrated, the title, publisher, and date published are noted. Additional information has been provided for the books Savitt both wrote and illustrated. Corrections and additional information are welcome. This list was compiled by Bette Orkin and Leo Pando.

Books illustrated and written (or co-written) by Sam Savitt:

- Around the World with Horses:** Dial Press, Redwing Publishers, 1962. Hardbound with dust jacket, interior gouache illustrations.
 - America's Horses:** Doubleday and Company, 1966. Hardbound with dust jacket, painted color cover with interior gouache and pencil illustrations, 93 pages.
 - A Day at the LBJ Ranch:** Random House, 1965. Hardbound color cover and interior illustrations, 54 pages.
 - The Dingle Ridge Fox and Other Stories:** Dodd, Mead & Company, New York, 1978. Hardbound color cover with interior ink wash illustrations, 112 pages.
 - Draw Horses With Sam Savitt:** Bonanza Books distributed by Crown Publishers, Inc. by arrangement with Viking Penguin Inc. New York, 1981 and 1985. Hardbound with dust jacket and interior pencil illustrations, 96 pages.
 - The Equestrian Olympic Sketchbook:** South Brunswick and New York A.S. Barnes and Company Company, New Jersey, London: Thomas Yosefow Ltd. 1969. Hardbound with dust jacket, color cover and pencil illustrations, 136 pages.
 - Great Horses of the United States Equestrian Team:** coauthored by Sam Savitt, Bill Steinkraus and each individual rider. Hardbound with color dust jacket, pencil illustrations, 96 pages.
 - A Horse To Remember:** New York, Viking Press, 1984. Hardbound with color dust jacket and interior ink wash illustrations, 119 pages.
 - Midnight: Champion Bucking Horse:** Parent's Magazine Press, 1957. Hardbound two-color cover with interior pen and ink illustrations, 122 pages. - Paperback edition by Scholastic Book Services, 1972, 96 pages - Parent's Magazine Press, 1974. (Not a reprint, but a second publishing by a different company.)
 - One Horse, One Hundred Miles, One Day:** Dodd, Mead & Company, New York, 1981. Painting on dust jacket with interior illustrations.
 - Rodeo: Cowboys, Bulls and Broncos:** designed and produced for Doubleday and Company Inc. by The Redwing Publishers, Garden City, New York, 1963. Hardbound with color dust jacket, interior color paintings and pencil illustrations, 102 pages.
 - Sam Savitt's True Horse Stories:** Dodd, Mead & Company, New York, 1970. Hardbound, color dust jacket with interior pencil illustrations, 90 pages.
 - Step-A-Bit, the Story of a Foal:** E. P. Dutton and Company, Inc. 1956. Hardbound with two-color dust jacket and interior pencil illustrations.
 - There Was a Horse:** New York: Dial Press, 1961. Hardbound plain cover with dust jacket and interior illustrations, 94 pages.
 - Vicki and the Black Horse:** Scholastic Book Services Inc., Doubleday and Company, 1964. Paperback, color cover and interior pencil illustrations, 140 pages. - Xerox Education Publications, 1976, Middletown, Connecticut. Paperback with color cover and pencil illustrations, 155 pages.
 - Vicki and the Brown Mare:** Xerox Education Publications, 1976 - Paperback with color cover and interior pencil illustrations, 157 pages.
 - Wild Horse Raising:** Dodd, Mead & Company, New York, 1973. Hardbound, color dust jacket and interior pencil illustrations, 128 pages. Also in paperback.
- Sam Savitt illustrated books by other authors:**
- A Boy and a Pig, but Mostly Horses:** Dodd, Mead & Company, 1974. Alcatraz: Pocket Books, 1961.
 - American Girl Book of Horse Stories:** Random House, 1963.
 - Animal Anthology:** Scholastic, 1961.
 - The Art of Painting Horses:** Grumbacher Library, 1973.
 - Back Yard Pony: Selecting and Owning a Horse:** Franklin Watts, 1975.
 - Beyond the Rope and Fence:** Pocket Book Jr., 1951.
 - The Big Book of Favorite Horse Stories:** Platt and Munk (Grosset and Dunlap), 1955.
 - Big Jump for Robin:** St. Martin's Press, 1965.
 - Black Beauty:** Scholastic, 1958.
 - Blizzard Rescue:** Franklin Watts, 1959
 - Blue Ribbon Summer:** W.W. Norton.
 - Bold Passage:** Pocket Book, 1955.
 - Born to Race:** St. Martin's Press, 1959.
 - The Boys' Life Book of Horse Stories:** Random House, 1963.
 - Buffalo Bill:** Garrard Publishing Company, 1962.
 - Care and Training of Dogs:** Doubleday & Company, 1963.
 - Challenger:** Coward McCann, 1959.
 - Charity Finds a Rider:** Ives Washburn, 1965.
 - Cowboy:** Pocket Book, 1950.
 - Cowboy:** Scholastic Book Services (Tab Book Edition), 1956.
 - Dark Colt, Light Filly:** Scholastic, 1959.
 - Daughter of the Silver Brumby:** E.P. Dutton, 1960.
 - Dave and His Dog Mulligan:** Dodd, Mead & Company, 1966.
 - Desert Dog:** Holiday House, 1956.
 - Dictionary of American Medical Biography:** Greenwood Press, 1984.
 - Dionary and Dreamland:** Doubleday & Company, 1962.
 - Diving Horse:** Coward McCann, 1960.
 - Drum Pony for Robin:** St. Martin's Press, 1962.
 - Elementary Dressage:** A.S. Barnes, 1970.
 - Encyclopedia of Horses:** Thomas Y. Crowell.
 - Fawn in the Forest:** Dodd, Mead & Company, 1962.
 - Forever of the Wild Hares:** Dodd, Mead & Company, 1963.
 - Fury:** Franklin Watts, 1959.
 - Fury and the Mustangs:** Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1960.
 - Gallant Grey Trotter:** Dodd, Mead & Company, 1974.
 - Ghost Hound of Thunder Valley:** Dodd, Mead & Company, 1965.
 - Gift of Gold:** Dodd, Mead & Company, 1973.
 - Gimmery:** Dodd, Mead & Company, 1958.
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