

Winter News

Mendota, where William Piller Studio is located, is a community with a rich, fascinating history. When Mendota was in its prime, it was a busy, bustling, trendy place to be. Several rail lines ran through town, bringing people, commerce, merchandise, and ideas to a place that could have been a sleepy little farm town. Several factors - access to water for steam engines, the lay of the land, and certainly politics of some sort - came together to make Mendota a crossing of rails and one of the largest cities in Northern Illinois.

One of our favorite historical figures is Wild Bill Hickok. Wild Bill was born James Butler Hickok on May 27, 1837 in Homer, IL (now Troy Grove), just down the road from Mendota. In time he became the Civil War hero, United States Marshall, and showman we see him portrayed as in TV movies. But to Mendota, Wild Bill was the local boy who made it big. His family remained in Troy Grove and Wild Bill visited frequently. Rumor has it that he attracted the attention of quite a few ladies when he came to town - no doubt due to his frequent bathing. One of the most famous photos of Wild Bill (which can be seen elsewhere in this newsletter) was recently discovered to have been taken in Mendota while he was here receiving medical treatment for a leg wound.

William Piller Studio is proud to announce that it has been commissioned by the Mendota Museum and Historical Society to sculpt a life-sized likeness of Wild Bill Hickok in this well-known pose. Bill has researched every detail of this photo to ensure the historical accuracy of the completed sculpture. Bill has been meeting with representatives from the Museum, as well as one of Wild Bill's family members who declares Bill's sculpture to be the best likeness of Wild Bill she has ever seen. Fund raising efforts have begun in earnest and plans are being developed to unveil the completed sculpture on May 27, 2007.

William Piller Studio is proud to bring this local history to the community.



Precast

William Piller Studio is pleased to present *Marsh Busters*. This 3' high sculpture is perhaps the most visually exciting bird sculpture Bill has done. This piece moves all the way from the splash of water at the base to the tips of the wings.

William Piller Studio is offering *Marsh Busters* to you for a special precast price until February 1st. Please visit williampiller.com or call for more information on this special precast opportunity.



In Pursuit
22"x10"x9"



P.O. Box 42
Mendota, IL 61342
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Inspiration



Bill's son Isaac loves elk. They are his favorite wild animal. He has tons of books about elk, and one of his favorite vacation memories is seeing a cow elk and her calf at Yellowstone. Isaac is jealous every year when Bill comes home from the Loveland Sculpture Show with more photos of these beautiful animals.

It is no wonder that Bill has sculpted *Itchin' to Fight*. Isaac's enthusiasm for elk has rubbed off on Bill, and this beautiful sculpture is the result.

Check This Out

With the holidays fast approaching, we at William Piller Studio find ourselves looking forward to Christmas music. We refuse to play any until after Thanksgiving, but starting November 24th, Piller Studio will be awash in Christmas carols of all kinds. We also look forward to meeting friends and family members at school and community concerts in the coming weeks. Check out what is going on in your own community and its schools and churches this holiday season. There is certain to be a Madrigal Dinner, a winter concert, or a do-it-yourself Messiah for you to enjoy with your own family and friends.

Process

One of the most common questions Bill hears at shows is "How do you do that?" Here we will try to share something of how bronze sculpture from William Piller Studio is created.

Bill strives for accuracy in all of his sculptures. He has a vast reference library with information on everything from animal anatomy to habitat and diet. This library is just one of the reference tools Bill uses in his sculpting. He has a personal photo library of pictures he has taken of animals both in zoos and in the wild. He visits museums wherever he travels. He has visited the Field Museum's specimen storage and measured and photographed specimens that are way older than he is. He has friends and associates he can call on if he needs information he can't find. Bill believes that the little things like the arrangement of primary feathers on a bird's wings can help a sculpture move and flow properly, just like in nature.

The Wild Bill Hickok memorial has presented Bill with interesting challenges. It is very important that every detail, from the fringe on Wild Bill's buckskins to his belt buckle, be correct. In order to get these things right, Bill has consulted with Steve Dancey, curator at the Mendota Museum and Historical Society. Mr. Dancey has photographic and archival documentation on these important little details as well as Wild Bill's life and times. All of this research helps Bill (the sculptor, not the legend) sculpt Wild Bill as he really was at this moment in time.

