

# A Sense of Place



The West has always blown winds of mystery and admiration for Mary Schmitt of Cayuse Western Americana. She has had a connection with the lands and wild frontiers surrounding her heritage since her childhood in California. However, it took some digging and a touch of intuition to uncover her family's roots in the early western states and, eventually, her own calling.

Mary recalls growing up in southern California, taking trips with her parents to vineyards that were rich in history. "My parents instilled a sense of remembering the past that stuck with me," explains Mary. However, it wasn't until years later that she discovered her grandfather had left her family's original Minnesota roots behind to move west to Montana and work for the Northern Pacific Railroad.

Spend a few moments with Mary today and it is quickly evident her passion for western art and antiques has enriched her life wonderfully. "One of the unique attributes of western history and cowboy culture is that it has a universal quality. Everyone understands that they own a small piece of it through their lineage. Or if they don't, it doesn't take long for them to become a believer," Mary explains. "Immigrants from all over the world share connections to the American West and its culture that shaped their own respective histories."

Mary split time between her passion and career as she juggled responsible adulthood. But eventually the weekend trips earnestly scouring flea markets for western antiques were not enough. She headed East to connect with the West in Jackson Hole. Twelve years later, she now owns and operates Cayuse Western Americana. The boutique shop specializes in cowboy, Native American and national park antiques dating from 1850-1940 in the western United States.

"I had to answer the 'what if?' question," Mary recalls about her move to Jackson and trading a high-profile marketing career to open her own western antique shop with little more than avid determination and a 401k. The bet paid off. Cayuse offers a wildly extensive collection of Native American artifacts, Navajo rugs and jewelry, western engraved silver and flat art, cowboy antiques — including leather, spurs, gauntlets, hats and boots — photographs, books and more.

Originally selling out of her home, Mary started Cayuse partially because she tired of hiding her own treasured pieces from eager buyers. "My taste resonated widely with collectors of all walks and I needed a gallery space to display the amazing pieces I found," she adds. The rest is history. Mary still purchases 90% of the art for sale in Cayuse and can hardly replenish the inventory fast enough. "It's a great feeling to share your passion with others and in the end, contribute to the preservation of a history of people and places that have inspired so many."

Above: **White woolly chaps**, Furstnow circa 1910, **Colt Revolver**, circa 1890, **Sioux beaded gloves**, circa 1880  
 1. **Sterling and gold bracelets and spurs**, Ricarda McCleary Clause  
 2. **Sterling and gold buckles**, Clint Orms Engravers & Silversmiths  
 3. **Silver cowgirl saddle**, Hamley circa 1920, and **Germantown saddle blanket**, circa 1890



4. Mary Schmitt gathers a few favorite pieces in Cayuse Western Americana. Left to right: **Cheyenne child's leggings and moccasins**, circa 1890; **Blackfoot pictorial hide painting**, circa 1900; **tooled saddlebags**, circa 1930 and **Navajo saddleblanket**, circa 1940; **California saddle**, circa 1890; **Hitched horsehair and leather bridle**, circa 1920

5. **Cheyenne child's leggings, moccasins and doll**, circa 1890  
 6. **Wyoming silver gelatin photograph of ZT branding**, Charles Belden, circa 1920