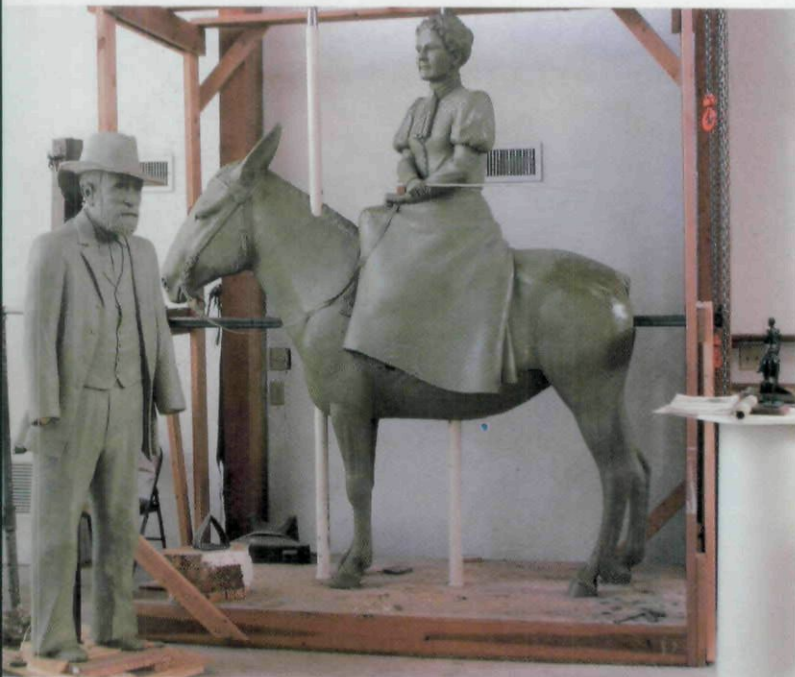


## Horse-loving sculptor George-Ann Tognoni has also honored Army chaplain Winfield Scott.

By Janice Arenofsky



Seen here as works in progress at George-Ann Tognoni's Phoenix studio, these two sculptures—one of Scottsdale, Ariz., founder Winfield Scott and the other of his wife, Helen, astride their retired Army mule—were bound for a location near the Scottsdale Historical Museum on the Civic Center Mall (Courtesy of Janice Arenofsky).

DESPITE A minor stroke, octogenarian sculptor George-Ann Tognoni moves purposefully around her Phoenix studio. A large airy room constructed by the artist's younger son, it combines workshop atmosphere with the feel of an exhibition hall. Bronze equine sculptures stand majestically next to works in progress. Recently, Tognoni has created sculptures that honor Scottsdale, Arizona, founder Winfield Scott, his wife, Helen, and a retired Army mule.

Tognoni, born in 1920, has had a love affair with horses since her childhood days living on the rural outskirts of Fort Dodge, Iowa. During high school, she and her sister cared for 10 horses and ran a

riding academy for children. Tognoni's first sculpture was a clay wave for a birdbath, but within hours, the wave had turned into an amorphous blob. "I learned about materials very quickly," she said, recalling the water's "dissolving" effect. A neighbor commissioned Tognoni's first bronze-cast sculpture—a foot-high walking horse.

Tognoni put her art on the back burner during World War II to help her father farm their 500 acres and, later, to work as a Red Cross volunteer in the Philippines. She met her husband, a geological engineer/lawyer,

at the island canteen. After the war, Tognoni split her time between raising children and sculpting in the style of famous Western artist Charles Marion Russell. "I always had something going," Tognoni says. Her formal training came from courses at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque and at Iowa State, where her mentor was sculptor-in-residence Christian Petersen (1885-1961). Tognoni also credits Malvina Hoffman's book *Sculpture Inside and Out* as an important influence.

Today, Tognoni relies on photos, stories and line drawings she sketches to jump-start the creative process. She uses the "lost wax bronze" procedure to cast her figures. First,

she forms a skeleton of the figure from aluminum wire and piping. Then with Plasticine, she builds up this skeleton. (Tognoni employs computer technology to help her go from a small model to a larger one.) "The bronzes are made hollow to reduce their weight," says Tognoni, who uses fabric or Styrofoam to honeycomb the insides of the figures. After this is done, she creates a mold of rubber and plaster into which hot wax is poured. Depending on the sculpture's complexity, the mold can be in one or more pieces. The last step is casting the wax molds and welding the various parts together. For this, Tognoni contracts with Loren Phippen's Bear Paw Foundry in Skull Valley, Ariz., near Prescott. "After the bronzing, I grind out any imperfections, such as welding lines," Tognoni says. "To give a sheen to the completed metal figure, I wax and buff it."

Some of Tognoni's better-known sculptures are *Orphan*, a rancher carrying a motherless calf on horseback; *Yearlings*, a larger-than-life sculpture of three running horses (exhibited at the Civic Center Mall in Scottsdale); and *Labor's O'r*, a bronze bas-relief of a cowboy hanging up his gear for the last time that she created for Scottsdale's first cemetery. Lately, Tognoni has worked on a project commissioned by the Scottsdale Cultural Council to honor Winfield Scott (1837-1910), the founder of Scottsdale.

Born in Michigan, Scott moved to western New York in the 1840s. While attending the Rochester Theological Seminary, he met and married schoolteacher Helen Louise Brown. He was wounded five times during the Civil War. Afterward, he became a pastor in Baptist churches in Kansas and Colorado before he was appointed an Army chaplain in July 1882. His first post was Fort Canby in Washington Territory. Six years later, the chaplain and his wife bought 640 acres of desert land in Arizona Territory outside Phoenix. Scott soon began encouraging others to move to the Salt River Valley. After Winfield retired from the Army in 1893, he and Helen moved to their home- stead, along with a retired Army mule named Old Maud. The next year, he helped developer Albert J. Utley manage the near- by town site that became Scottsdale. Win- field was elected to the Territorial House of Representatives and was appointed chan- cellor of the University of Arizona; Helen contributed to arts and education.

Even before Tognoni was asked to immortalize Winfield Scott in bronze, she had researched Scottsdale's history and created a life-size statue of Helen Scott on Old Maud. For inspiration, she used an old photo from the Scottsdale Historical Museum (formerly the Little Red School House, where Helen Scott taught).

According to Lois Fitch, a member of the Public Art Committee in Scottsdale, the city's cultural council has budgeted \$100,000 to purchase the Scott sculpture. Since the total cost for the two statues is projected at \$280,000, private donations will be raised. Meanwhile, the two clay sculptures, together easily weighing 1,000 pounds, stand in a corner of Tognoni's stu- dio, awaiting departure to the foundry. A pulley system helps to move them. This time, instead of Tognoni preparing the rubber molding, she will let the foundry do the physically demanding work. The sculptures' permanent location will be near the Scottsdale Historical Museum on the Civic Center Mall.

Tognoni's work has been on exhibit and is in private collections all over the world. Galleries and museums that have featured her sculptures and maquettes (miniatures of life-size pieces) include the Desert Caballeros Museum in Wickenburg, Ariz.; the Wichita, Kan., Gallery of Fine Art; the Desert Museum of Western Art in Palm Desert, Calif.; and the Nevada State Mu- seum in Las Vegas. The biography *George-Ann Tognoni: Life of an American Sculptor*, by Becky Boudway, is scheduled for publi- cation in 2005. The artist can be contacted at [www.tognonisculpture.com](http://www.tognonisculpture.com). ww

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