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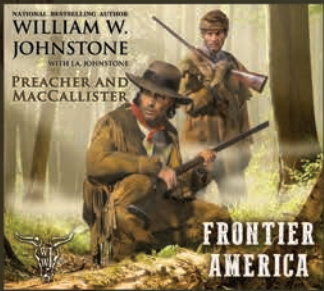
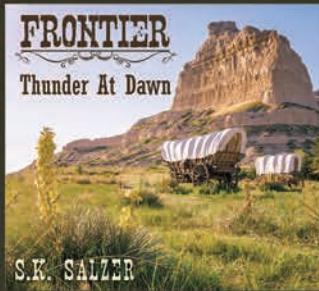
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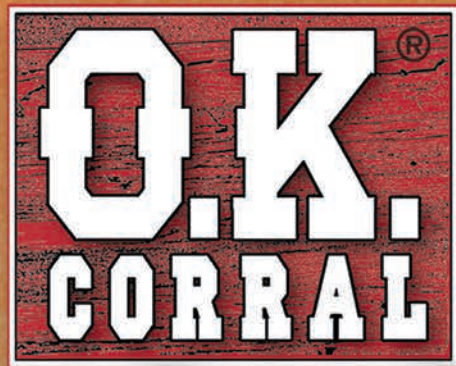
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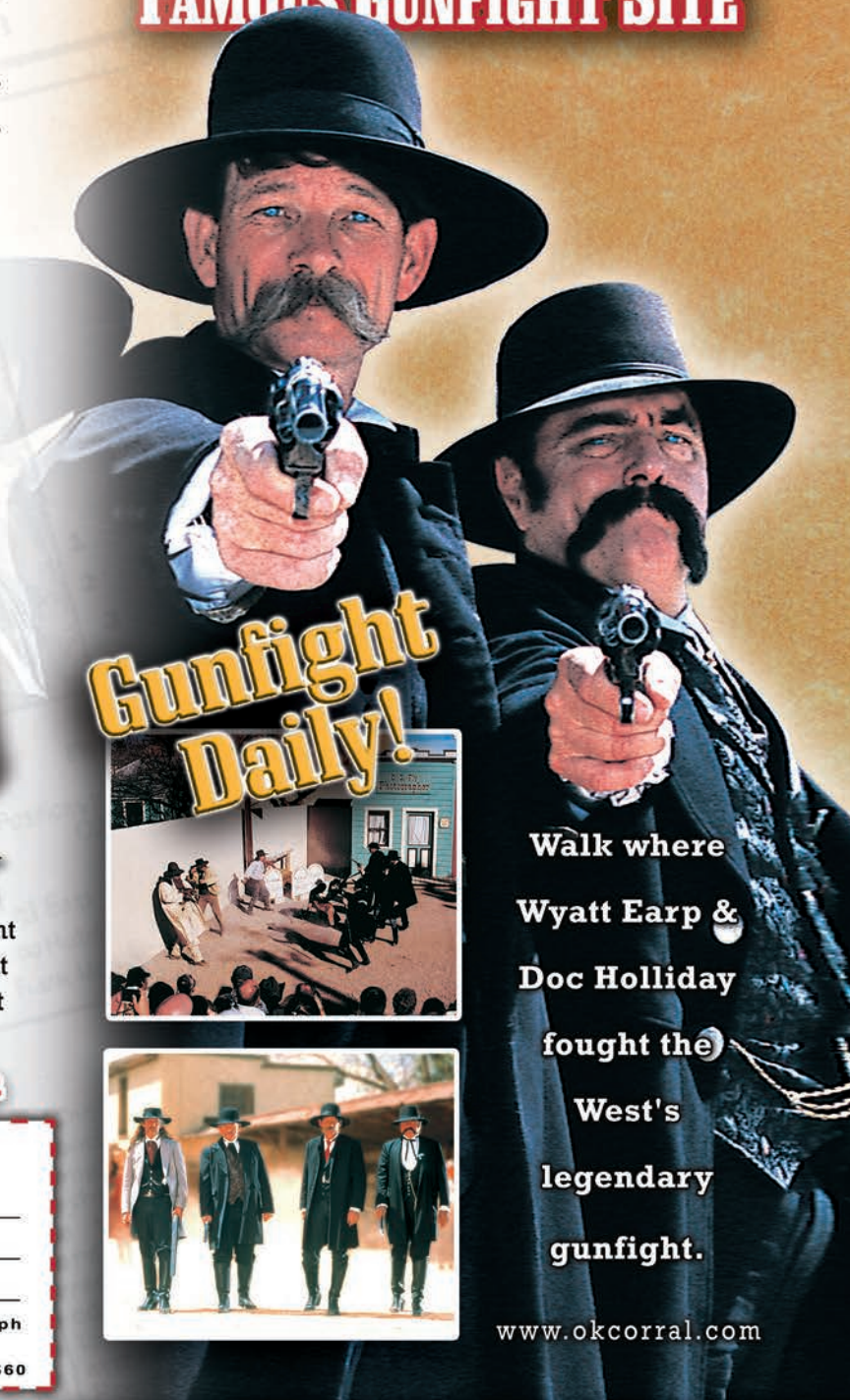
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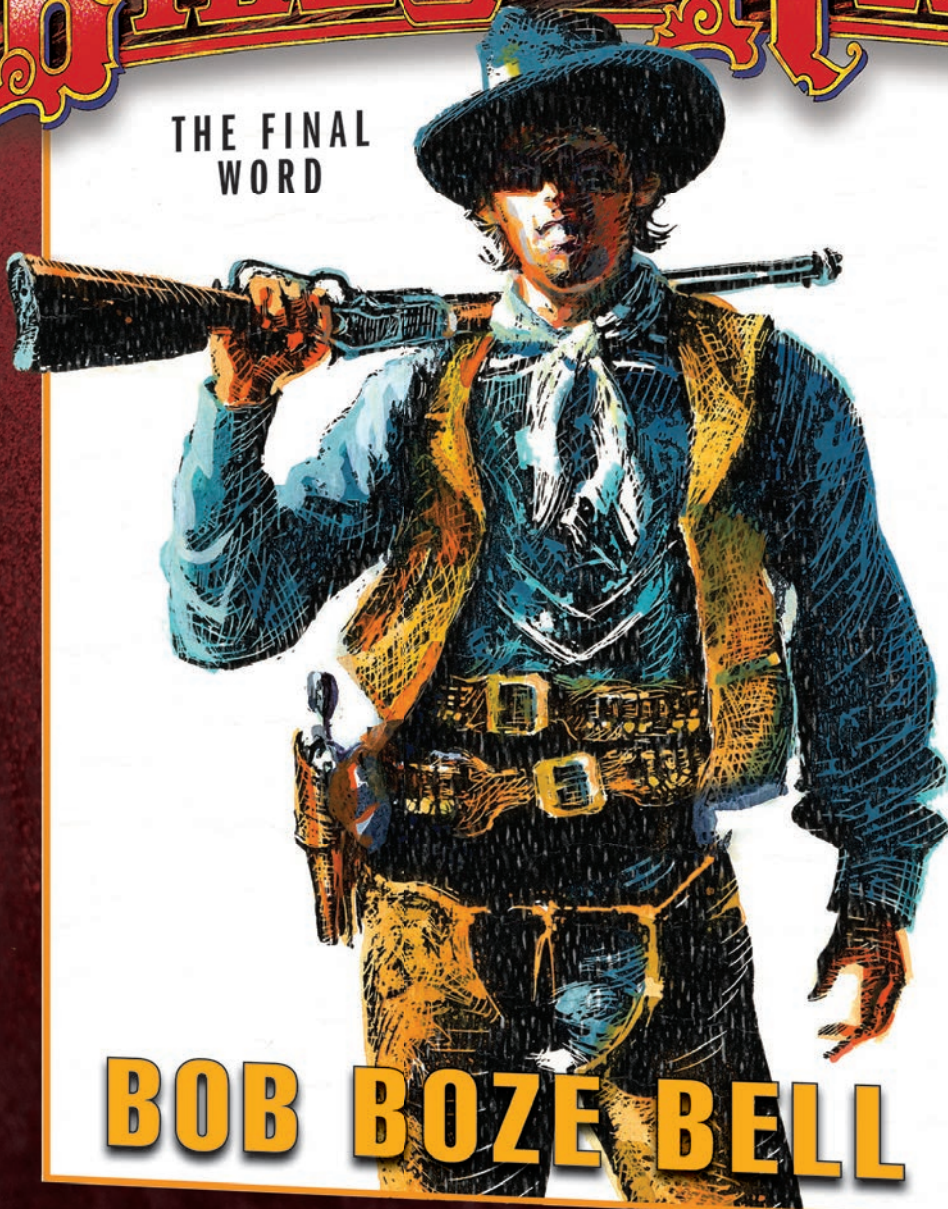
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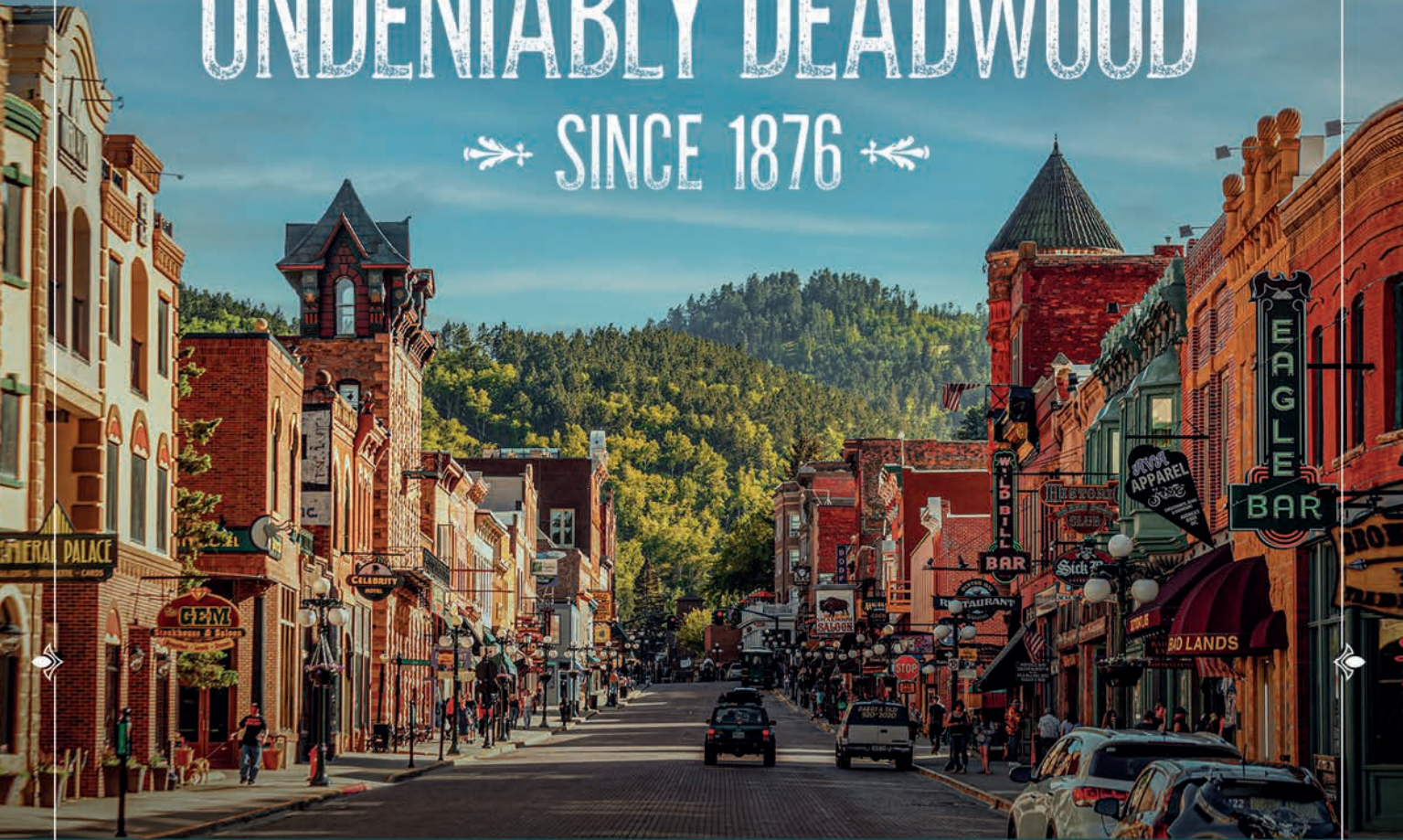
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True West captures the spirit of the West with authenticity, personality and humor by providing a necessary link from our history to our present.

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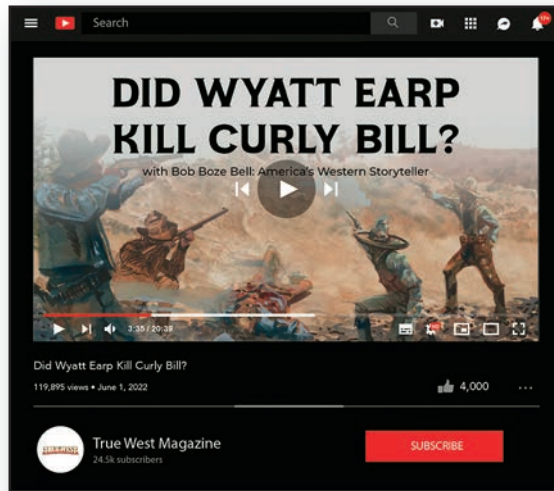
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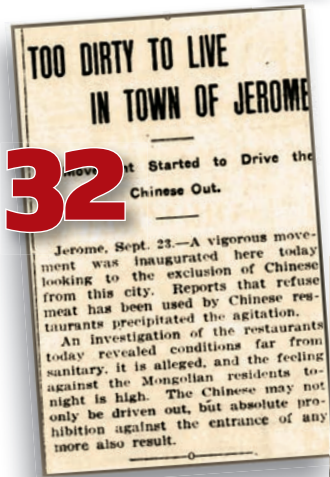
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The founding curator filled the blank canvas of Scottsdale's Museum of the West.

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Cover Design by Dan Harshberger

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Old Vaquero Sayings

"Be careful when you follow the masses; sometimes the M is silent."



Quotes

"Life can't defeat a writer who is in love with writing, for life itself is a writer's lover until death."

—Edna Ferber

"Every job is good if you do your best and work hard. A man who works hard stinks only to the ones that have nothing to do but smell."

—Laura Ingalls Wilder

"The hills of one's youth are all mountains."

—Marie Sandoz

"I cast my lot in with a soldier, and where he was, was home to me."

—Martha Summerhayes

Martha Summerhayes, author of *Vanished Arizona: Recollections of the Army Life of a New England Woman*

True West Archives



"The stupid believe that to be truthful is easy; only the artist, the great artist, knows how difficult it is."

—Willa Cather

"To swallow and follow, whether old doctrine or new propaganda, is a weakness still dominating the human mind."

—Charlotte Perkins Gilman

"By all these lovely tokens September days are here/ With summer's best of weather/ And autumn's best of cheer."

—Helen Hunt Jackson

"What women have to stand on squarely is not their ability to see the world in the way men see it, but the importance and validity of their seeing it in some other way."

—Mary Hunter Austin



Mary Hunter Austin, author of *The Land of Little Rain* and inaugural member of the Western Writers Hall of Fame

Photo by Charles Lummis, True West Archives

"As the sun broke through the mist a mirage appeared, which took up about half of the line of cavalry, and thenceforth for a little distance it marched, equally plain to the sight on the earth and in the sky."

—Elizabeth "Libbie" Custer, *Boots and Saddles: Or, Life in Dakota with General Custer*

"I never doubted that equal rights was the right direction. Most reforms, most problems are complicated. But to me there is nothing complicated about ordinary equality."

—Alice Paul

"The best-trained ditch can never be a river, nor the gentlest wife a girl again."

—Mary Hallock Foote, *The Watchman*



"... and those are my deepest, most intimate feelings about our friendship."

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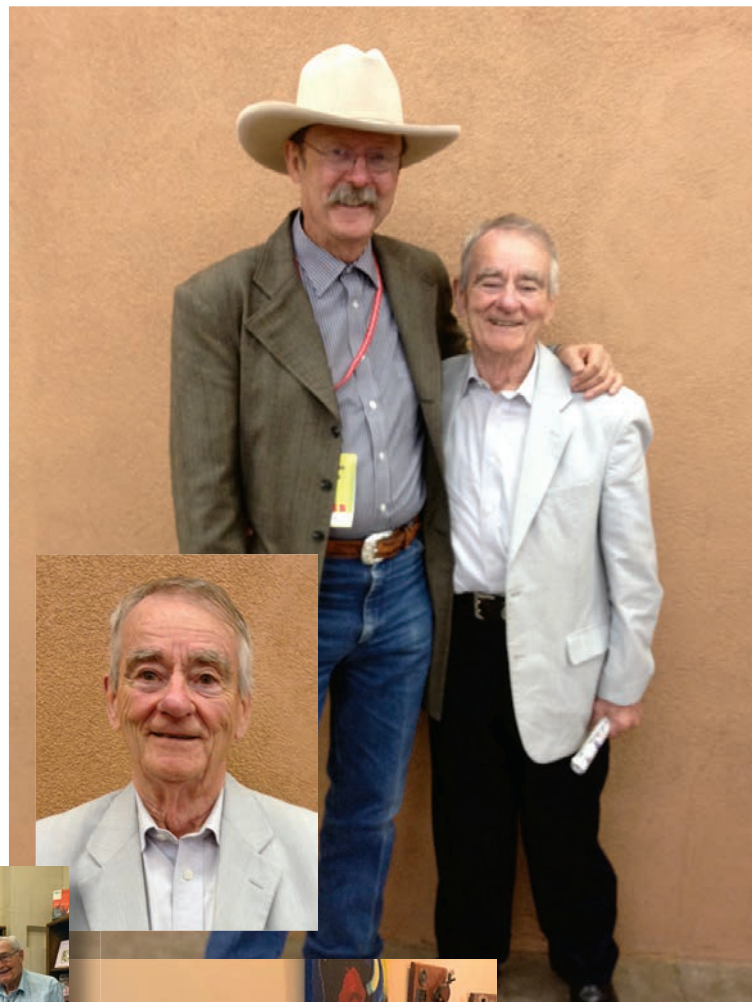
Fred Nolan and Robert Utley could riff with the best of them.

In April of 2012, I was giving a history talk in a tent on the concourse of Ruidoso Downs, where the annual Lincoln County Cowboy Symposium was being held, and it just so happened that the foremost Billy the Kid scholar, Fred Nolan, was visiting New Mexico from Chalfont St Giles, England. Fred and his wife, Heidi, came in the tent, unrecognized, and sat in the front row. The modest-sized tent could hold perhaps 45 people. I started my talk on Billy the Kid, and I kept quoting Fred Nolan and even wondering out loud what the great expert might say to all of this, and I kept pushing it and speculating on this and that, and then finally, I said, “Well, why don’t we find out what Fred Nolan really thinks?” and I invited him up on stage. The audience gasped, and we went right at it, trading facts and insults and banter and we absolutely slayed that crowd! You would have thought we were Laurel and Hardy and had been working the circuit for decades. Such a great memory.

Actually, the same could be said for The Old Bison, Robert M. Utley, who passed on June 7, 2022, eight days before Nolan’s death on June 15. In addition to being two of the foremost experts on the American West, Utley and Nolan were contributors and longtime supporters of this magazine. We give tribute to both (pages 12-15).

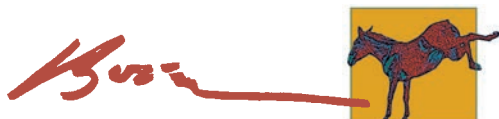
The Acolytes & The Old Bison

It was a privilege and an honor to be on this Peregrine Bookstore panel to talk about the Top Secret Writer’s new book, *The Apache Wars*, back in 2016. L.-r.: BBB, Paul Hedren, Paul Hutton and Robert Utley (The Old Bison).



A photo of Fred Nolan (above right and inset), taken at the Lincoln County Cowboy Symposium on the day we did the tent tag team event on the Kid (April 12, 2014), and myself with The Old Bison (near left), when I interviewed him for a *TW* video in 2019. Both will be missed.

Photos Courtesy True West Archives



For a behind-the-scenes look at running this magazine, check out BBB’s daily blog at TWMag.com

ROBERT M. UTLEY

OCTOBER 31, 1929-JUNE 7, 2022

A former student's personal tribute remembers a great historian, mentor and friend.

By Paul Andrew Hutton

Robert M. Utley—the Old Bison, as he styled himself—passed away on June 7, 2022, in Scottsdale, Arizona, where he had lived the past 13 years with his wife of 42 years, Melody Webb. He was my dear friend, professional mentor and surrogate father. He was also our greatest Western historian of the last half century.

Born in Bauxite, Arkansas, on October 31, 1929, Utley was mostly raised in Indiana, where he attended the rival Hoosier schools Purdue University (BA, 1951) and Indiana University (MA, 1952). His master's thesis, "The Custer Controversy," written under the direction of Oscar Osburn Winther, reflected his fascination with George Custer and the Battle of the Little Bighorn. It had been a viewing of Errol Flynn as Custer in the 1941 film *They Died With their Boots On* that had set the 12-year-old boy on this lifelong obsession. This led him to seek a position as an "historical aide" under crusty old Major Edward

Luce at Custer Battlefield National Monument in Montana. He spent six summers there, during which time he interviewed Charles



In 1965, historian Robert M. Utley was in his second year as the National Park Service's Chief Historian in Washington, D.C. Two years later he would publish *Frontiersmen in Blue: the United States Army and the Indian, 1848-1865* (Macmillan), the follow-up to his second book, *The Last Days of the Sioux Nation* (Yale University, 1963).

All images courtesy Paul Andrew Hutton unless otherwise noted

Windolph, the last 7th Cavalry survivor of Custer's last battle (in which he had earned the Medal of Honor). This gave Utley a personal connection to the battle that he always cherished.

His academic career was interrupted by a stint in the Army, where he eventually served as a historian in the Pentagon. He married not long after leaving military service, and the birth of two sons—Donald and Philip—ended any thoughts of returning to Indiana to study for a doctorate in history. In 1957 he accepted a position with the National Park Service as regional historian in the Santa Fe office. Thus began a long career with the NPS that soon took him back to Washington as chief historian for the agency from 1964 until 1972, as assistant director for historic preservation until 1977 and as deputy director of the President's Advisory Council on Historic Preservation until his retirement in 1980 to pursue writing full time. In this work Utley essentially wrote the guidelines



Young historians and mentors (l.-r.) Jerome Greene, Paul Andrew Hutton, Paul Hedren, Bob Utley and Ed Bearss gathered at the Western History Association Convention in Salt Lake City in 1983. Utley was a founding member of WHA in 1961 and served as its president in 1967-68.

and standards for historic preservation still in use today. He was a man of considerable certitude and could be rigid in his enforcement of preservation rules, but even those who tangled with him never questioned his bedrock integrity. Little wonder that in 2007 *True West* published a cover story on him titled “The Man Who Saved the West.”

Utley began his writing career in 1949 with a self-published 52-page pamphlet titled “Custer’s Last Stand,” which was sold in a little gift shop (at 75 cents a copy and it quickly sold out) just down the hill from the battlefield. Today it is quite the collector’s item, although it later proved something of an embarrassment to its distinguished author. He was much prouder of his next publication, *Custer and the Great Controversy* (his revised master’s thesis) in 1962, which he followed up with his highly regarded *Last Days of the Sioux Nation* in 1963. In the years to follow he would publish 23 acclaimed books on a wide variety of Western topics—from the military frontier to the mountain

men and from celebrated outlaws to the Texas Rangers. Utley proved particularly adept at biography, writing prize-winning books on Custer, Billy the Kid, Sitting Bull and Geronimo. He received many awards for his writing, including the Caughey Prize from the Western History Association, four Spur Awards from Western Writers of America (as well as the WWA Wister Award for lifetime achievement in 1994 and induction into the WWA Hall of Fame in 2015), and four Western Heritage Wrangler Awards from the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum.

As one of the founders of the Western History Association in 1961, Utley kept his feet firmly planted in the worlds of both academic and popular history. Although he enjoyed the respect and friendship of many academics, he nevertheless wrote not for the professor crowd but for the greater interested public (the audience of this magazine). His goal was to convey through his writing his own passion for our rich Western heritage—and he



Historians Bob Utley and Melody Webb rarely missed a Western History Convention, including the gathering in Lincoln, Nebraska, in 1996. They were both active leaders of the Western History Association, which Bob helped organize in 1961.

certainly achieved that goal. He has long been regarded as the “Dean of Western Historians,” and his passing marks the end of an era in the writing of Western history. We shall not see his like again.



Distinguished Professor of History **Paul Andrew Hutton** is the author or editor of a dozen books, including the award-winning *Phil Sheridan and His Army* and *The Apache Wars*. He is currently writing a history of the American frontier movement, *The Undiscovered Country*, to be published by Dutton/ Random House.

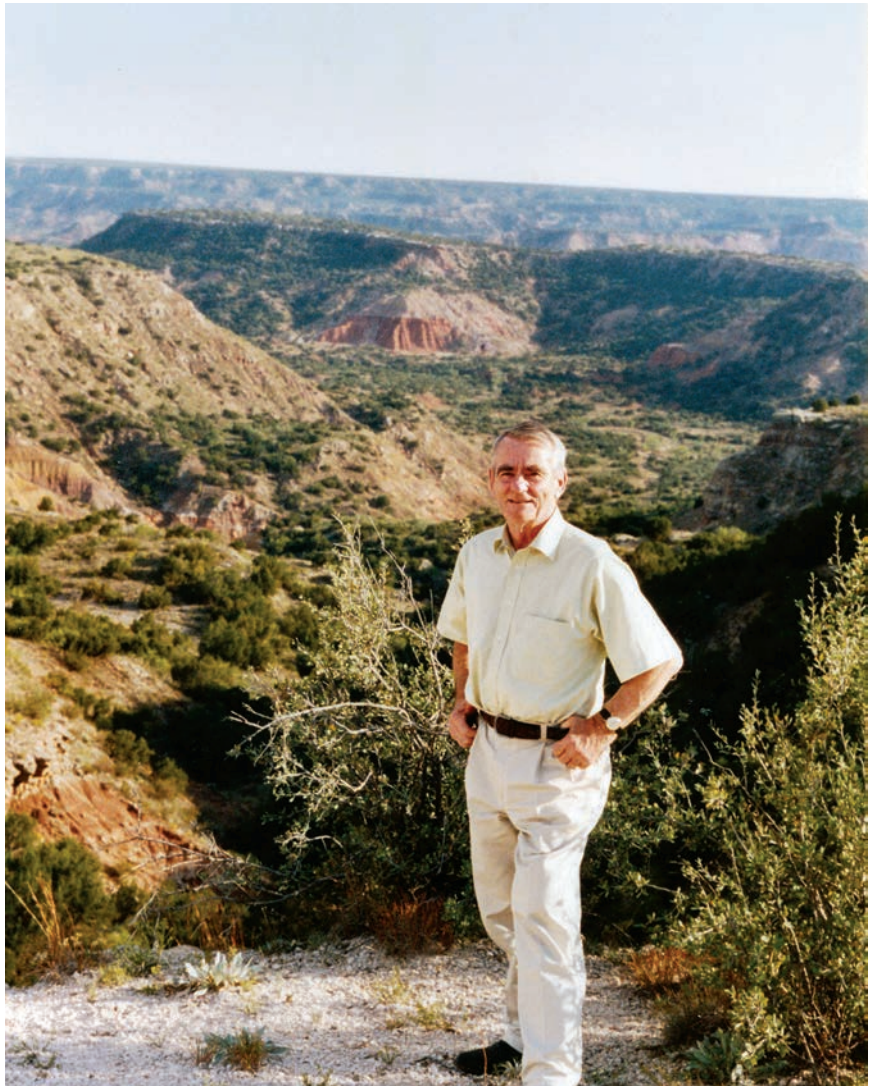
FREDERICK NOLAN

MARCH 7, 1931-JUNE 15, 2022

An English historian redefined the scholarship on Billy the Kid.

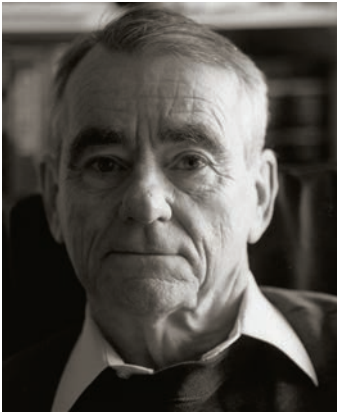
The one thing that needs to be said about Fred Nolan's legacy is just how much damn fun he was to hang with. We spent many a mile couped up in cars together on serious-rutted back roads to out-of-the-way historic sites, and if he wasn't singing some show tune, he was riffing on the absurdities of all our Kid Crazy compadres. To boot, the English dude was generous to all the upstarts and understudies in the Lincoln County War field. When I attended the 1991 Billy the Kid conference in Ruidoso, I was an unpublished Kid buff who sought out his counsel and his advice. He was generous with both. To this day, when someone says his name, I always smile. I have a strong hunch I always will.

—Bob Boze Bell



Englishman Fred Nolan loved to tour the American Southwest when working on his latest book, especially his beloved adopted American state of New Mexico.

All Images Courtesy True West Archives Unless Otherwise Noted



Born in Liverpool, England, on March 7, 1931, Frederick Nolan began his career as an author and editor in 1952. Cofounder of the The English Westerners' Society in 1954, the award-winning and beloved Western author was considered the world's leading authority on Billy the Kid.

A Renaissance Man

On the face of things, Fred Nolan was just your average guy with a British accent. He was short and wiry and often unassuming.

But those characteristics belied a giant intellect and understanding of many subjects—the Lincoln County War was just one of his interests. He also was a highly successful book editor and publisher, and he wrote adventure novels and studies of American popular song.

Make no mistake, this unassuming guy had a fire and passion that sometimes exploded. He demanded accuracy and citations to back up any statements.

But Fred was also a gentle raconteur, kind and generous with his time and research. And I can tell you from personal experience: his critiques of somebody else's work (like mine) were genuine, considered and came from a man who just wanted to help.

I miss Fred already. He was an example, a mentor, a guide and trusted friend.

—Mark Boardman

A Historian of Style and Grace

Fred Nolan was a fine scholar. He was helpful, humorous and amazing in the knowledge he developed, shared and wrote regarding the Lincoln County War and Billy the Kid. Lincoln County and Historic Lincoln became part of Fred's DNA. He loved our region, and every year he would visit our nation along with his lovely wife, Heidi. Fred admired the rugged landscape and the two most-visited New Mexico Historic Sites in New Mexico (Lincoln and Fort Stanton). He understood their importance, and he was thrilled when Fort Stanton finally was established as a state monument in 2007.

Fred wrote history with style and a respect for the characters and land that few authors develop during their careers. Although he is known for his Lincoln County War era biographies and historical accounts, he wrote dozens of Western novels, spy and war stories. One about the Russian Revolution should be read now! And he wrote biographies of our two great composers, Rogers and Hammerstein. A most talented man, his writing of books, articles and the way he reached out as a mentor to others will be part of his valued legacy. He even has had a couple of his fiction works made into movies...with Fred Nolan you just never knew what he would come up with next.

Fred Nolan, you will be greatly missed.

—Lynda Sánchez



FREDERICK NOLAN, AGE 3, 1934

"When I was 19, I suffered an injury and was laid up for a long while, and I began to read.

I found a reissue of Walter Noble Burns's book *The Saga of Billy the Kid*, and I became fascinated by the story," said Fred, who not only located John Henry Tunstall's birth certificate,

but also found and spoke to Tunstall's 82-year-old sister, Mabel. Fred went on to write the definitive book on Tunstall, and later wrote numerous books on the Lincoln County War and Billy the Kid. He was considered one of the foremost authorities on the life and times of the Kid.

He lived with his wife, Heidi, in Chalfont St Giles, England. When he visited the colonies, we all rocked out!



BY MARK BOARDMAN

Raising Them Right

Dellie Blachly overcame tragedy to bring higher education to her sons.



The widow Dellie Blachly and her eight sons.
 Top Row: Fred, Arthur, Dellie, Clarence and Howard. Bottom Row: Ralph, Louis, Edward and William

Photocopy Courtesy Frederick Blachly

Dellie Blachly was a shrewd, driven and courageous woman—in her time or any time.

Her time was the early 1890s. Dellie was married to Andrew Trew Blachly, and the couple had eight boys (with a ninth on the way). She ran the house and was the rock of the family. Trew was a wanderer, moving his brood from place to place in search of riches. He'd been a miner, a lawyer, a merchant and a bank manager. That last one proved fatal.

On September 7, 1893, the McCarty Gang tried to rob Blachly's bank in Delta, Colorado. Blachly was gunned down. (Two of the outlaws were also killed trying to escape.) On hearing the news, Dellie miscarried the baby.

She faced what seemed to be an impossible situation. There was no insurance on her husband's life. Trew had been the main breadwinner. Families in similar circumstances

were impoverished and forced to break up, every member for him or herself.

But Dellie quickly got control of the situation. Perhaps that came from her upbringing; Dellie was born and raised in China, where her parents were missionaries. There, she'd learned the value of hard work and ingenuity. Some of it came from her deep, abiding faith. In any case, Dellie Blachly was prepared to deal with the tragedy and its aftermath.

She and her late husband had promised that the boys would be educated and have it better than the parents. Dellie didn't let go of that dream.

The family lived on a subsistence farm, so many of their basic needs were taken care of. Dellie also did some sewing and other jobs to bring in money. The older boys worked on farms and ranches around the area. Some of the proceeds went to the family necessities, and

the rest were put in a college fund. When they'd collected enough money, the oldest son, Arthur, went to college. When he graduated and took a job, a percentage went back into the college fund. And when there was enough money, the second son, William, went off to college.

And so it went, for more than two decades. Some of the boys didn't start college until they were in their mid to late 20s. But the family dream was ultimately realized. All eight of the Blachly boys got a higher education.

They all went on to bigger things. Several of the young men served their country in World War I. Two became presidential aides. Three were highly successful ranchers. The other three became doctors.

Dellie Blachly had a dream that came to fruition by the time she died in 1926 at age 71. Her legacy was in family—and what a legacy it was.



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BY JANA BOMMERSBACH

Thank You, President Lincoln

Here's how we got home, home on the range.

Free Land!" In 30 states. Offering 270 million acres—one tenth of the entire United States. Over two million claims. Perhaps the most important piece of legislation in the history of the nation,

All that was The Homestead Act of 1862, signed by President Abraham Lincoln after the southern states seceded.

It was revolutionary for its time—distribute “public land” to private citizens; 160 acres at a time, with the provision they “proved up” the land: Build a house, till the soil, plant trees, fence a corral. Five years later, for a small fee, it was theirs—earned by hard work.

The first day the Homestead Act went into effect, January 1, 1863, a farmer named Daniel Freeman filed his claim on land near Beatrice, Nebraska. Seventy-three years later, in 1936, this claim became the site of the Homestead National Monument of America.

Today, 75,000 to 85,000 people visit this monument and National Historical Park every year, according to historian John Fairchild.

He notes that so much of the history of the West is told through this one piece of legislation. As the website notes, “To settlers, immigrants, and homesteaders, the West was empty land. To Native Americans, it was home.”

The Homestead Act didn't start the conflict between America's indigenous tribes and newcomers, but it certainly added to an already tense situation.

To millions, this was a new lifeline. The monument's museum is filled with exhibits, and information panels on the park's trail show the wide swipe of the Homestead Act. One of the monument's growing projects is to explore Black homesteaders. This project started with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and is now studying six Black homesteading communities in six Great Plains states.



The park protects Daniel and Agnes Freeman's graves and homestead, the first homestead in the United States.

Historic Photos Courtesy Library of Congress



Fairchild has also launched a fascinating new project to explore the connection of homesteading with the suffrage movement. He said he got the idea during the celebration of the 19th Amendment's Centennial in 2020. Western states led the nation in giving women the right to vote—all but New Mexico had women voting long before the Susan B. Anthony Amendment was ratified as the 19th to the Constitution.

“I started seeing a lot of women homesteaders were leaders of the suffrage movement,” Fairchild notes. “Of the 30 states, 26 had big-time players




The Homestead National Monument of America in Beatrice, Nebraska, commemorates the homestead movement, which started when President Abraham Lincoln signed the Homestead Act into law in 1862.

Images Courtesy NPS.gov

in the movement.” An exhibit is being designed, as well as a digital record and a book pending from the University of Nebraska Press.

“One big takeaway from the park is that we are not just here in Nebraska, but we show homesteading across the country. We're digitizing all 30 million records, and we found up to 93 million Americans are descended from homesteading. People come here to search their genealogy.”

And they come to learn more about one of the bedrocks of America. 

Jana Bommersbach has earned recognition as Arizona's Journalist of the Year and won an Emmy and two Lifetime Achievement Awards. She cowrote the Emmy-winning *Outrageous Arizona* and has written three true crime books, a children's book and the historical novel *Cattle Kate*.



FIND
YOURSELF
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John Coleman,
Mans Prelude to
Honor, 1910.
Layered Bronze,
Edithoria.
The Frank &
Howard Allen
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BY STEVE FRIESEN

Artful Persistence

The National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum's Annual Prix de West showcases the best in Western art.



Kyle Polzin's *Rough Passage*, a still life of luggage strapped to a stagecoach, received the 2022 Prix de West's Purchase Award, bringing a price of \$65,000.

It will go into the collection of the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum.

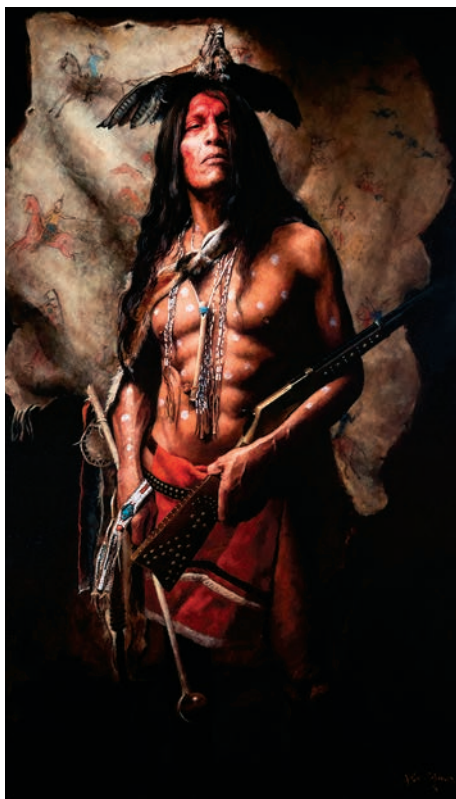


The Buyer's Choice Award went to Curt Walters' *Inexorable Shiprock*. The painting, which depicts the stone sentinel surrounded by clouds and prairie grasses, sold for \$62,000 to a private collector.

Western art as a genre did not disappear with the closing of the American frontier in the 1890s but thrived throughout the 20th century. That it continues to thrive in this century was demonstrated at the annual Prix de West Invitational Art Exhibition and Sale at Oklahoma City's National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum. Showcasing new art inspired by the West, it is the museum's largest fundraising event, with a special exhibit, educational programs and luncheons. The 2022 event, held on June 17 and 18, gathered \$3,833,200 for the museum.

Each year art pieces in the sale that are of exceptional merit are recognized by the museum, with the top award being the prestigious Purchase Award. The piece receiving that award is purchased for the museum, joining the Remingtons, Russells and other outstanding works of art in the museum's collection. This year's Purchase Award went to Kyle Polzin's *Rough Passage*, which brought a price of \$65,000. Curt Walters' *Inexorable Shiprock* received the event's Buyer's Choice Award and sold for \$62,000 to a private collector.

Other special awards at the event included the Wilson Hurley Memorial Award for outstanding landscape, given to T. Allen Lawson for his \$65,000 oil painting *Two of Us* and the James Earle Fraser Sculpture Award, given to



There are no known period images of Crazy Horse, a fact that did not dissuade John Coleman from giving his take on a portrait titled *Crazy Horse, 1876*. A buyer decided it was a pretty good effort and spent \$75,000 on it.

Steve Kestrel for his \$20,000 *Heir of Aries*. The 1903 *Wickedest Town in the West & Christianity* by Dean Mitchell, which also sold for \$20,000, received the Donald Teague Memorial Award for the best work of art on paper.

The National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum was established in 1955 to honor the American cowboy, so one of the awards at the Prix de West recognizes the best portrayal of the cowboy. This year the award went to Thomas Blackshear II for his \$38,000 painting *Two Americans of the Old West*. Bruce Green's \$14,500 *Saddled before Sunup* depicts what, in one's imagination, could have been those two cowboy's best friends, ready to ride.

The annual Prix de West event at the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum celebrated its 50th anniversary this year. During the past 50 years, the event has encouraged the creation of new works about the American West and supported the artists who produce those works. The quality and popularity of the artwork at this year's Prix de West has proved that, unlike the frontier, Western art persists and is not disappearing any time soon.

All Images Courtesy Prix de West, National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum

Steve Friesen comes to "Collecting the West" with over 40 years of experience in collecting for museums, including evaluating and acquiring artifacts from the American West.



Two of the award-winning pieces at the Prix de West have intriguing titles that pose more questions than answers. T. Allen Lawson's painting *Two of Us*, a high desert landscape with mesas in the background and clouds gathering above, sold for \$65,000. A grim townscape was the focus of *The 1903 Wickedest Town in the West & Christianity* by Dean Mitchell. It sold for \$20,000.



Two Americans of the Old West by Thomas Blackshear II, a portrait of two African American cowboys, brought \$38,000. It received the Great American Cowboy Award at the Prix de West.

UPCOMING AUCTIONS

August 18-21, 2022

The Russell Sale
C.M. Russell Museum (Great Falls, MT)
CMRussell.org • 406-727-8787

August 26, 2022

Premier Firearms Auction #86
Rock Island Auction Co. (Rock Island, IL)
RockIslandAuction.com • 309-797-1500

September 19-24, 2022

Buffalo Bill Art Show & Sale
Rendezvous Royale (Cody, WY)
RendezvousRoyale.org • 307 587-5002



A buyer paid \$20,000 for Steve Kestrel's sculpture *Heir of Aries*, the head of a ram carved from California granite. The Latin term for "ram," Aries is a sign in the Zodiac and associated with the golden fleece of Greek mythology.



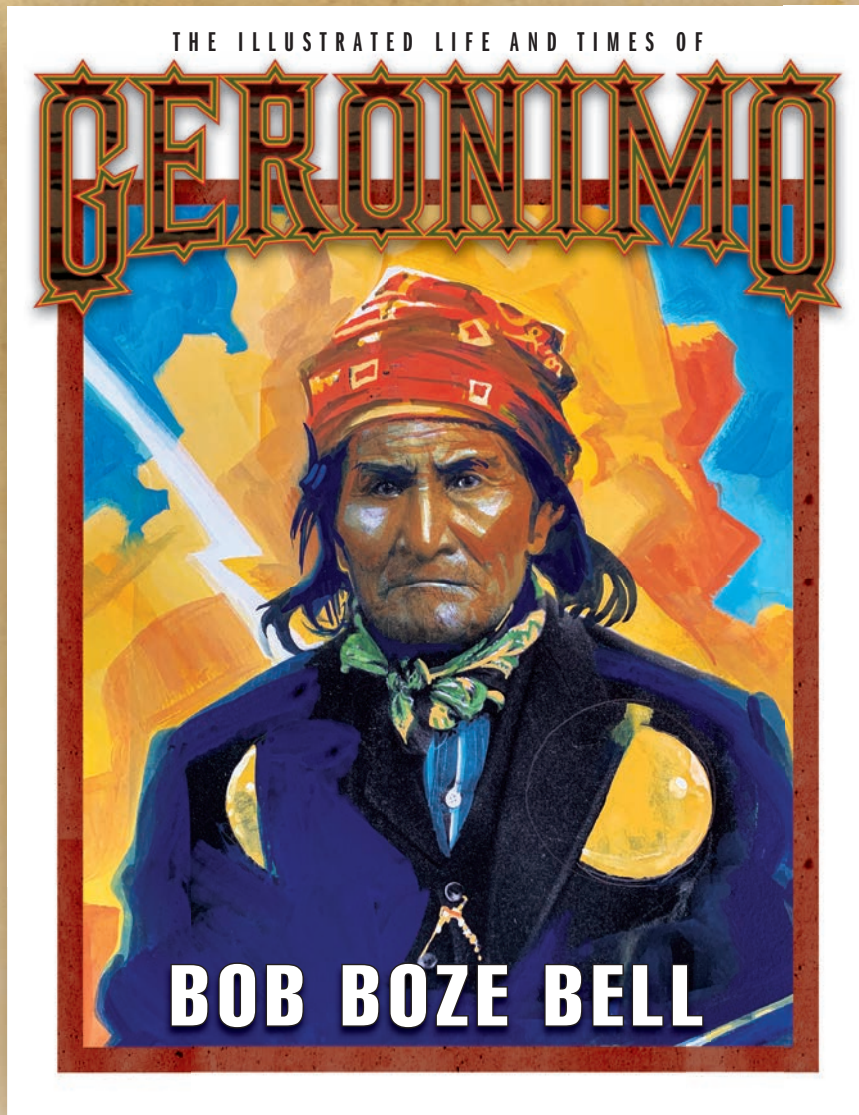
While it did not receive any awards, Logan Maxwell Hagege's *Where the Sagebrush Grows Free* did receive a healthy sale price of \$150,000. Works by Hagege continue to grow in popularity among collectors of Western art.



Bruce Green's *Saddled before Sunup* captured a moment before the workday began for two cowboys and their horses. It captured \$14,500.

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—Paul Andrew Hutton



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BY PHIL SPANGENBERGER

All Tacked Up

Using brass or iron furniture tacks was one of American Indians' favorite ways of dressing up their firearms.



This Canadian Blackfoot brave has tacked up about everything he owns, including his 1873 Winchester carbine, his knife scabbard, riding quirt, waist belt and the collar around his neck—even his pony's headstall. Interestingly, he's also employed brass serpentine side locks from old trade guns, to fashion his unique breastplate.

True West archives.



If this M-1860 Spencer carbine could talk! Its serial number 57xxx reveals that it is from the last Spencer contract to be delivered to the Army of the Potomac just weeks before the end of the Civil War. It was most likely issued to General Phil Sheridan's cavalry. On the upper left of the stock is a hardly visible military "B" stamping (inset). Afterward, the gun probably went west, where it may have been owned by an American Indian. It has a copper, 1874 Indian-head penny inlaid and tacked into the stock, along with a German silver sunburst motif, and four holes, in the "four winds" design, showing where tacks had been removed years ago.

Courtesy Phil Spangenberg Collection

Decorations on firearms and other weaponry are as old as firearms themselves. Examples of elaborately embellished guns can be found on European matchlocks and wheellocks, the jezails of the Middle East and miquelets of North Africa. In America, our earliest Pennsylvania rifles were often adorned with inlays, carvings and other enhancements to beautify or personalize them.

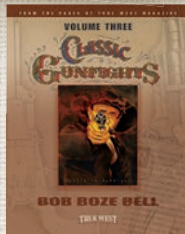
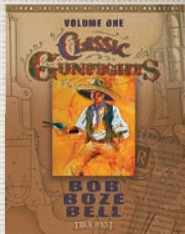
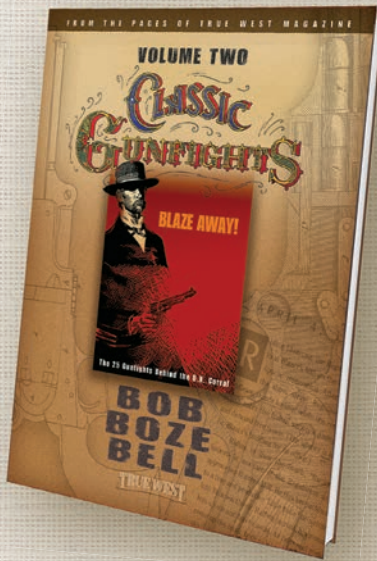
Although American Indians had long been decorating their primitive weapons with animal skins, feathers and other locally obtained materials, with the appearance of the White man's goods on the frontier, tribesmen quickly found that simple brass and iron tacks, which were intended for holding cloth coverings on trunks and furniture, were ideally suited for personalizing firearms, tomahawks, war clubs, smoking pipes and other tools. Brass tacks rapidly became staples of the Indian trade up through the end of the 19th century. Traders sometimes decorated firearms beforehand to increase a gun's appeal to a potential customer.

Studding or tacking a weapon was not only practiced by, or for, Native Americans. Many White explorers and mountain men also used common furniture tacks and inlays of German silver, mother of pearl, ivory, bone, brass and of course gold, silver and copper coins to personalize their arms. For example, one of Kit Carson's half-stock rifles was adorned with inlays and tacks, while mountain man Mariano Modena favored a half-stock Hawken rifle that sported several inlaid metal stars around the edge of the gun's patch box. This simple way of embellishing firearms continued well into the age of metallic cartridge arms and can be seen on many later shoulder arms and handguns like Winchester, Sharps, Spencer, Colt, S&W and others. The practice was also carried over to other gear like saddles, knife handles and scabbards, holsters, tomahawk handles, riding quirts, belts and a host of other frontier tools.

Commonly used designs in rifle and pistol stock tacking were the ever-popular five-point or "Texas" star, the federal shield, Christian

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Here, an M-1863 Sharps .50-70 conversion shows definite Native American ownership with its generous use of brass tacks on the stock and underneath the forearm. Due to their short length, and relatively light weight, the powerful Sharps carbines were among those firearms that were favored by Indians, as they were handy to carry while mounted.

Courtesy Brian Lebel's Old West Events



Iron tacks were also used, although brass was preferred, as iron tacks tended to rust.

As can be seen on this J. Henry .54 caliber, percussion plains rifle, many of the iron version tacks have rusted to a patina. The yellow brass added more color to the decoration of the arm.

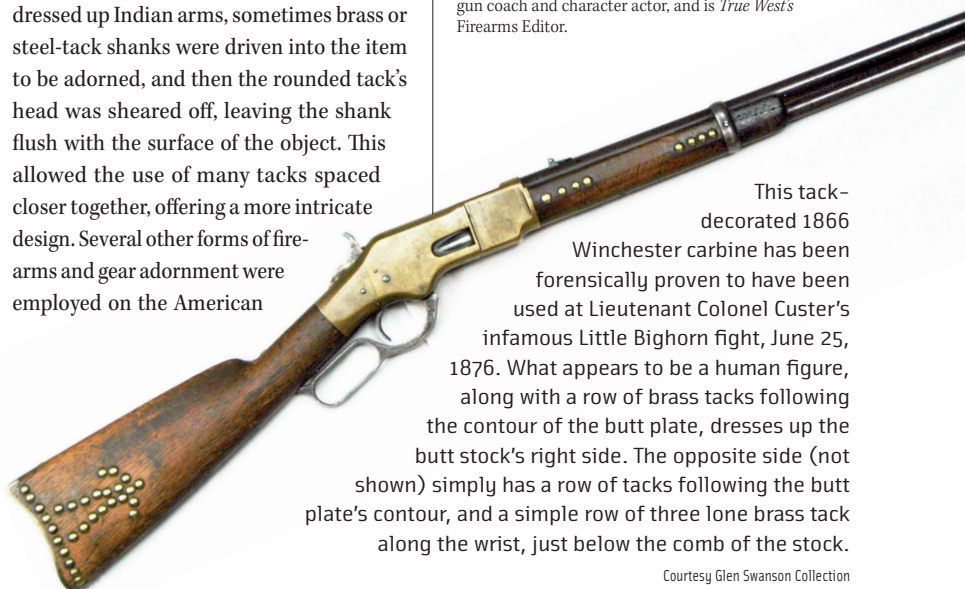
Courtesy Brian Lebel's Old West Events

cross, sunburst designs, arrows, serpentine, fish, birds and various other shapes. Some firearms sported literally hundreds of tacks, while others contained just a single, or perhaps a couple of studs, to mark its owner's identity. Often, tacks were used not for decorative purposes, but simply to repair or reinforce a broken or cracked rawhide-wrapped rifle stock.

Brass was by far the most popular type of tack or stud used, as it could be polished brightly and the yellow metal retained its color and would not rust as did the iron tacks. Although dome-headed tacks most often dressed up Indian arms, sometimes brass or steel-tack shanks were driven into the item to be adorned, and then the rounded tack's head was sheared off, leaving the shank flush with the surface of the object. This allowed the use of many tacks spaced closer together, offering a more intricate design. Several other forms of firearms and gear adornment were employed on the American

frontier. Carving, rawhide wrapping, animal skins and charms—beads, feathers, medallions or even an enemy's trigger finger—hanging from the gun's trigger guard, might bedeck an Indian's firearm. However, brass tacking a gun stock was by far the Indians' favorite form of enhancing their “fire sticks.” While most documented Indian-owned firearms remain unadorned, the cool-looking weapons studded with tacks have come to boldly epitomize the “Indian gun.”

Phil Spangenberg has written for *Guns & Ammo*, appears on the History Channel and other documentary networks, produces Wild West shows, is a Hollywood gun coach and character actor, and is *True West's* Firearms Editor.



This tack-decorated 1866

Winchester carbine has been forensically proven to have been used at Lieutenant Colonel Custer's infamous Little Bighorn fight, June 25, 1876. What appears to be a human figure, along with a row of brass tacks following the contour of the butt plate, dresses up the butt stock's right side. The opposite side (not shown) simply has a row of tacks following the butt plate's contour, and a simple row of three lone brass tacks along the wrist, just below the comb of the stock.

Courtesy Glen Swanson Collection



A classic example of the popularity of brass tacks with American Indians is this brave's tacked plains rifle, knife scabbard, belt and war club/riding quirt. Brass tacks rapidly became staples of the Indian trade up through the end of the 19th century.

Courtesy Bob Coronato Rogues Gallery

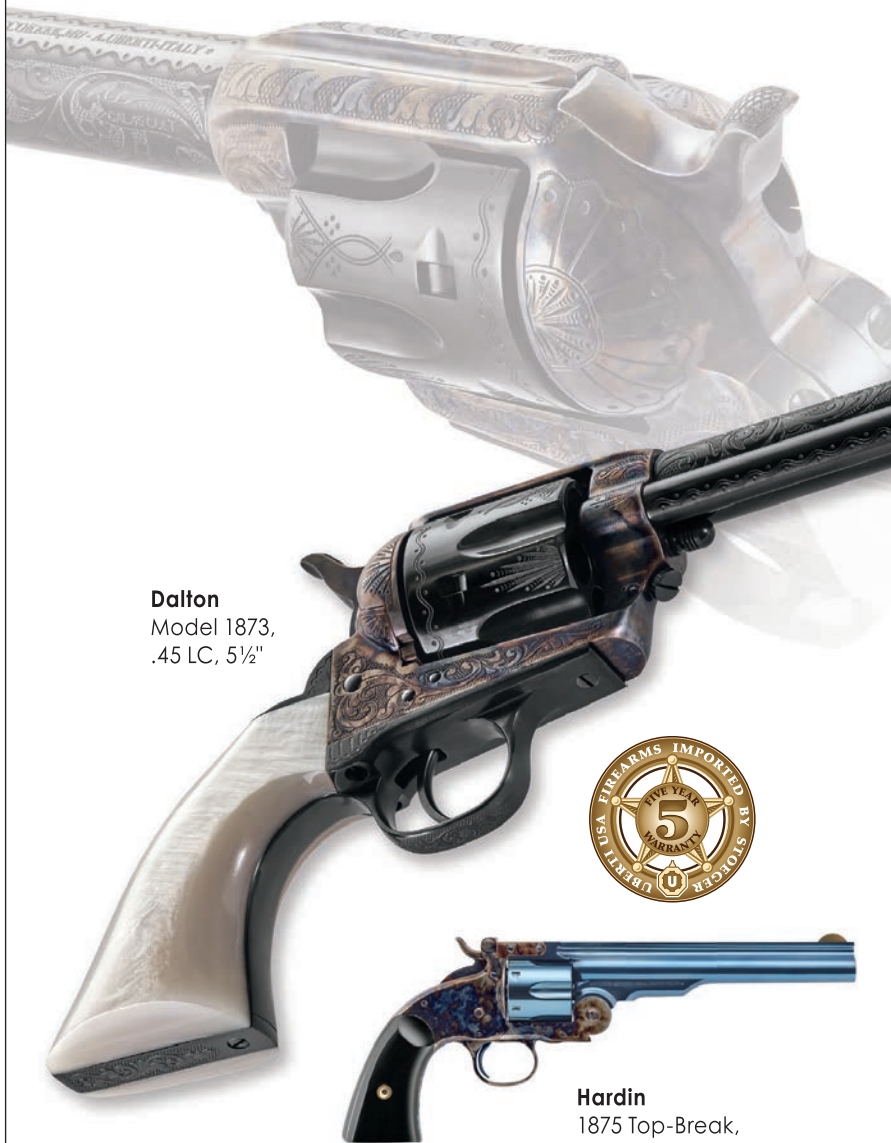


Courtesy Phil Spangenberg

DECORATE YOUR GUN

Decorate your replica smoke pole with brass tacks or period inlays and give it the looks of an Indian-owned or frontier original, like the Green River Rifle Works Hawken shown here. Here are a couple of outfits that can supply what you'd need. For an authentic look, use only solid brass tacks, not brass-plated tacks, from which the brass finish can eventually wear off. Crazy Crow Trading Post (CrazyCrow.com) offers a selection of old-style, dome-head, solid brass tacks and other American Indian and reenactor supplies. Although Dixie Gun Works (DixieGunworks.com) no longer stocks brass tacks, they do offer a wide selection of die-cut brass or German silver, period-type gunstock inlays.

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HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF

BY CHRIS ENSS AND HOWARD KANZANJIAN
WITH CHRIS KORTLANDER

PATHS OF GLORY AND DAYS OF DARKNESS

AFTER THE BATTLE OF LITTLE BIGHORN, THE SEVEN OFFICERS'
WIVES HAD AN IMMORTAL BOND.

On July 29, 1876, Elizabeth Custer requested an audience with the widows and children of the enlisted men lost at the Battle of Little Bighorn. She struggled to maintain her composure while waiting for all to gather on the steps of her home. The sound of little ones laughing and talking drew her attention away from her own hurt. She greeted the children and their mothers as they slowly arrived with a smile; when everyone had assembled, she thanked them for their friendship and loyalty and wished them well in their lives beyond Fort Abraham Lincoln. Before saying goodbye, she presented each child with a picture of General Custer.

The following morning Elizabeth, Maggie Custer Calhoun, Nettie Bowen Smith, Annie Yates, and her three children, three-and-a-half-year-old George, twenty-two-month-old Bessie, and seven-month-old Milnor, Annie's brother, Richard Roberts (a civilian herder and part-time newspaper correspondent), and David Reed (Elizabeth's brother-in-law and father of Henry Reed) traveled to Bismarck, in the Dakota Territory via carriage and steamboat. All the ladies were dressed in black, and all but Elizabeth were seen crying as the steamship carried the sorrowful party down the river. In Bismarck, the widows were met by Col. J. W. Raymond and were guests overnight in his home. The next morning, they boarded a special



A group photograph of Elizabeth and George Custer with a few of their friends was taken on the porch of their quarters at Fort Lincoln. Lieutenant James Calhoun is seated in the middle of the top row, while Margaret Custer Calhoun is seated to the right of him.

railroad car to begin the long journey back to Monroe.

The travels of the "widowed ones," a name given the women by the editor of the Minneapolis, Minnesota, *Star Tribune*, were covered extensively by newspapers across the country. Reporters eager to get a glimpse of the forlorn women, especially Elizabeth, gathered at the train's first stop in St. Paul. They noted they were able to see the widows through the window of the vehicle. "It is a tragic sight," an article in the August 4, 1876, edition of *The Findlay Jeffersonian* read. "It is now thought that Mrs. Custer will not long survive her husband. Her condition is a critical one, and her death may be looked for at any time. The bullet that pierced the brave Custer was also the death wound for his loving wife."

Before the train pulled out of the station in St. Paul the following day, another passenger boarded. Reverend Richard Wainwright had been asked by H. A. Town, the superintendent



The daughter of a judge, Elizabeth "Libbie" Bacon married George Armstrong Custer in Monroe, Michigan, while he was home on leave from service in the Civil War, on February 9, 1864. Their very public marriage lasted a little more than 12 years, but she remained devoted to his memory for the rest of her life.

All Images, Including the portrait of Libby Custer Courtesy Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, NPS.gov, unless otherwise noted/George Armstrong Custer Image Courtesy National Photographic Art Gallery

When Lt. Col. George A. Custer led the 7th Cavalry on the Black Hills Expedition of July 1874, the erstwhile Army officer and his officers and trooper families would not have known their actions would precipitate the Great Sioux War of 1876.

True West Archives



of the Northern Pacific Railroad, the railroad that provided the special car for the widows, to ride along with them and provide any comfort needed. Maggie Calhoun, in particular, was sick with grief, and nothing anyone did relieved her anguish for a single moment. Reverend Wainwright agreed to accompany the group until they reached their destination.

When the train reached Fargo, where the passengers were to disembark for the evening, they found a large, respectful crowd waiting for them. All was quiet as the widows stepped off the train and walked by the solemn onlookers. Men removed their hats, and women and children lowered their heads. Stooped over and ashen-faced, Elizabeth led the way. She moved slowly as though the weight of overwhelming sadness had become almost too much to carry. As the last of the stricken widows passed the sea of townspeople, several citizens could be heard crying. Even the men felt sorry for the unfortunate souls. They backhanded tears streaming down their faces or wiped their eyes with handkerchiefs.

From Fargo, the mourners boarded the Chicago and Northwestern to continue their trip into Illinois. They arrived in Chicago on August 3. From the train station, the women were escorted by Col. William Moore to a hotel



known as the Palmer House. General Phil Sheridan had ordered the colonel to be there to welcome the widows to the city and to offer any assistance they might need. Newspaper accounts of the widows' visit reported that, with the exception of Annie Yates, the distressed ladies were "very much prostrated." Had Annie not needed to watch over her three children, her head would have been down as well. Porter Palmer, owner of the Palmer House, and his wife, Bertha, offered their own private rooms to the widows and refused to charge them for their stay. The Palmers were so moved by the tragic event that brought about the loss of human life and the dignified manner in which the women comported themselves, they

Charles M. Russell's 1903 *The Custer Fight* captures the tumult and violence that engulfed the men of the 7th Cavalry as they fought to the death against the superior forces of Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull's alliance of tribes, who were defending their homeland across the territories of Montana, Wyoming and Dakota.

Courtesy Library of Congress



Lieutenant James E. Porter
True West Archives



Captain Algernon Smith
True West Archives



Lt. Col. George A. Custer

decided to start a fund to benefit the officers' wives. The Palmers contributed the first \$250.

Five days after leaving Fort Abraham Lincoln, Elizabeth and the other widows reached Monroe. When Elizabeth stepped off the train, all efforts to control her feelings abandoned her, and she burst into tears. Perhaps it was the relief of finally making it home after experiencing unimaginable devastation. Maybe it was the memory of lost loves in such a familiar setting, or a combination of both. She had held herself strong for the others, but at that moment simply could not hold back the emotion.

Reverend Erasmus J. Boyd, longtime president of the Monroe Seminary and Elizabeth's teacher for many years, met the widows at the depot. When Elizabeth saw Reverend Boyd, she flung herself into his arms, weeping and then fainting. The reverend and other members of the church revived her, then led her to the clergyman's carriage.

Maggie followed Elizabeth out of the train and was so overcome with emotion she could not make it down the steps on her own. David Reed and Richard Roberts helped her to the reverend's carriage

and seated her beside Elizabeth. Annie Yates, her children, and Emma Reed exited the train last. Nettie Smith stayed on board. The trip would not end for her until she reached her parents' home in Herkimer, New York.

Former 1st Lt. Frank Commagere was present at the station when the widows' train stopped in Monroe. Commagere was a reporter who had been asked to cover the arrival of the bereaved for the *Toledo Journal*. In 1866, Commagere had been assigned to the 7th Cavalry under then Lt. Col. George Custer at Fort Riley, Kansas. During his time there, he had met Elizabeth and grown fond of both Mr. and Mrs. Custer. The editor of



Margaret "Maggie" Custer Calhoun lost her husband James, three brothers, George, Thomas and Boston, and her nephew Henry Armstrong Reed at the Battle of Little Bighorn. She had a successful career in dramatic elocution before passing at the age of 58 in 1910.

Courtesy Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, Texas

the *Toledo Journal* had tasked Commagere with interviewing the widows. Given his prior association with Elizabeth and witnessing the low state of health she was in, Commagere refused to question her or any of the other afflicted women.

"[I] contented myself with the barren formality of a card par condolence," he wrote in the article dated August 5, 1876. "Mrs. Calhoun, the sister of General George A. and Colonel Tom Custer, and widow of a third dead hero, Lieutenant Calhoun, is with Mrs. Custer, staying at General Custer's homestead, where the father and mother of the dead sabreur have long kept the home fire burning.

"Mrs. Yates, the widow of Geo. A. Yates, who died in the massacre of June at the head of his company, is the daughter of Mr. W. Milner Roberts, engineer in chief of the Northern Pacific Railway, and a granddaughter of the late Chief Justice Gibson of Pennsylvania. [S]he had decided to establish her residence here, so that she may be near her loved companions in suffering and has already rented a beautiful cottage on Monroe Street opposite the residence of David Reed."

The widows spent the days after their arrival in Monroe visiting with family and close friends.



Captain Thomas W. Custer

They rejected unknown callers who felt compelled to stop by and pay their respects. Elizabeth warned Annie and Maggie against talking to strangers pretending to be concerned for their welfare, as some might be newspaper reporters hoping to get information about Custer's command by capitalizing on their vulnerability. Some publications continued to insinuate that General Custer's ego and recklessness contributed to the outcome at Little Bighorn. The widows continued to be annoyed by the rumors. All found solace in reading the letters of condolence that continued to pour in from all parts of the country.

Major General George B. McClellan, whom Custer served under during the Civil War, wrote to Elizabeth in early August to offer words of comfort. "As a man, I mourn in your noble husband's death the loss of a warm, unselfish and devoted friend. As a soldier and a citizen, I lament the death of one



The widow Elizabeth "Libbie" Custer took on a leadership role with the six other 7th Cavalry widows from the day she learned of her husband's death, July 6, 1876, until her passing on April 4, 1933. She had outlived the last of the widows by 14 years.



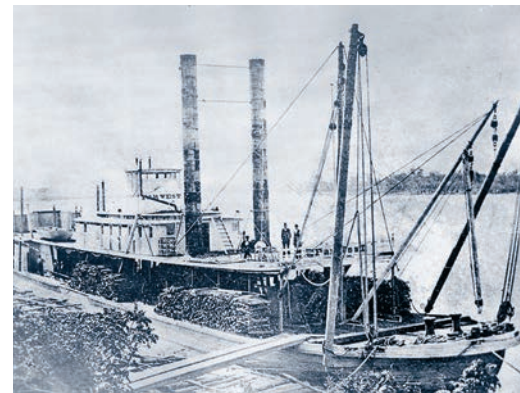
Captain George W.M. "Walter" Yates

of the most brilliant ornaments of the service and the nation, a most able and gallant soldier, a pure and noble gentleman. At my time of life, I can ill afford to lose such a soldier and such a citizen. It is some consolation to me, I cannot doubt it is to you, that he died as he had lived, a gallant gentleman, a true hero, fighting unflinchingly to the last desperate odds...

"My wife joins me in heartfelt sympathy... May God give you strength to bear under your burden of sorrow, teach you to look with calm resignation to the day when He permits you



Lieutenant James Calhoun



On May 27, 1876, wives of 7th Cavalry officers appealed to the *Far West's* captain for passage upriver from Fort Lincoln to visit their husbands encamped on the Yellowstone River, but it was to no avail. The ship's captain refused.

to rejoin him. Always your sincere friend, George B. McClellan."

In a letter dated September 12, 1876, George G. Roberts, Annie Yates' brother, wrote to express his sorrow and share what life was like at Fort Abraham Lincoln since Elizabeth and the other widows and children were gone.

"My Dear Mrs. Custer, Mrs. Godfrey will write to Annie today, so I will mail a short letter to you, my kind friend. My thoughts are often with you and all the dear ones in Monroe. I look forward to my visit. [I] expect to fill Annie with so much pleasure, yet I dare not say for

Seventh Cavalry officers and their wives were photographed at Fort Lincoln in 1875. Lieutenant Donald McIntosh is seated at the far right, with his wife, Molly, standing next to him.

a reliable fact that I can get a leave.

“No news in the post. Did I mention the new clubroom at the end of the lane? ...It is almost finished.

“The weather for ten days or more has been of the dark, rainy, ... unagreeable kind, yet I have not allowed it to tolerate any depressing feelings in me.

“How can I say thank you to you at such a distance when I feel a great large thank you always in my heart to you on the interest you have shown in my sister? I hope Maggie is doing better so that Annie can have more of her company. Annie can always tell you and Maggie anything that is in my letter.

“Larry Milnore is sick. I hope he will be well again.

“With kindness to you and Miss Emma Reed. Love to Maggie, hello to Annie and the children. You are all sorely missed. George Roberts.”

Neither Elizabeth, Maggie, nor Annie was in any state to respond to any letters. They were brokenhearted and lacked the will to do much more than make it through to the next day. Maggie’s grief had affected her physical health. She suffered with migraines and vertigo and spent most of her time in a quiet, dark room, seldom moving from her bed. Annie kept herself busy with her children and tending to her home. Nights were especially hard. She shared with Elizabeth that she often imagined hearing George’s voice calling her. She had trouble sleeping, and when she did sleep, she dreamed she was back at Fort Abraham Lincoln waiting for her husband to return. Elizabeth transformed the room she occupied at her in-law’s home into a shrine to Custer. His desk with his books, papers and journal was set up exactly as it looked at their



The officers of the 7th Cavalry and their wives enjoyed a quiet evening at the Custers’ home at Fort Lincoln in 1875, with Margaret Custer Calhoun playing the piano.

quarters at Fort Abraham Lincoln. She hung the stuffed heads of the elk and deer Custer had hunted over the desk with his favorite pictures beside them. His uniforms were placed in the wardrobe next to her dresses.



“God and Time Alone: After the Battle of Little Bighorn, the seven officers’ wives had an immortal bond” is an excerpt from *The Widowed Ones: Beyond the Battle of Little Bighorn* (TwoDot, \$26.95) by **Chris Enss and Howard Kazanjian with Chris Kortlander.**

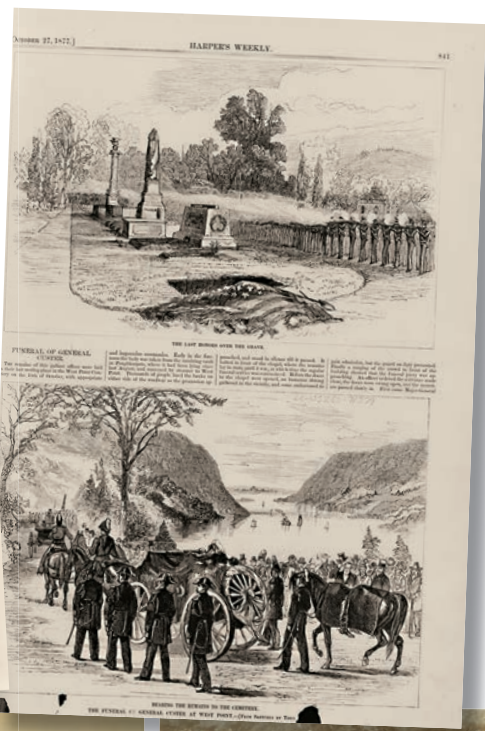
Editor’s Note: A review of *The Widowed Ones* appears on page 60.





On August 4, 1877, the remains of officers killed at Little Bighorn were reinterred from their battlefield graves to the Fort Leavenworth National Cemetery in Kansas. Their leader, Lt. Col. Custer, was reburied at West Point, New York.

Courtesy Library of Congress

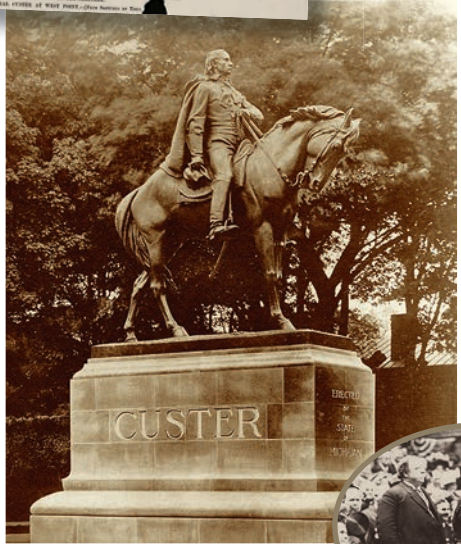


Libbie Custer had her husband George Armstrong's remains exhumed from his Little Bighorn grave and reburied with full honors at his alma mater West Point on October 10, 1877.

Courtesy Library of Congress



Survivors and their wives returned to Little Bighorn to pay their respects in 1886.



Elizabeth B. Custer spent much of her life after her husband's death at Little Bighorn honoring his life and service, including the dedication of a bronze statue of George Armstrong Custer on horseback in his hometown of Monroe, Michigan, with President William H. Taft in 1909.



BY JANA BOMMERSBACH

Slinging Lead, Hot Type and the Truth

History tried to erase the courageous Arizona journalist, but her remarkable life and work as a publisher is a testament to her courage and her undefeatable spirit.

This isn't a story about a woman history ignored or forgot nor diminished. That wouldn't be news.

This is a story about a woman history tried to erase. Her enemies wanted to be sure she was buried—without a gravestone. And they almost got away with it.

I stumbled on Laura Nihell while visiting friends in Jerome, Arizona, on March 28, 2014. I picked up a book in their library written in 1964 by Herbert Young titled *Ghosts of Cleopatra Hill: The Men Who Built Jerome*.

Luckily, this wasn't an original copy, but one issued 37 years later, in 2001, when Alene Alder added her chapter on "Women of Cleopatra Hill." It was, of course, at the back of the book.

That's where I found Laura Nihell, described in 131 words.



Bells and whistles started going off. As a journalist, why didn't I already know about this woman, who had owned and edited a newspaper in Jerome in the early 1900s? Why wasn't she in the centennial book just published on the history of female journalists in Arizona? Even I'm in that book.

When I got back to Phoenix, my first stop was the Arizona Archives, one of the state's true treasures. They have everything you want to know about territorial days in that wonderful library—but not one word about Laura Nihell. They've never heard of her.

She wasn't in the Arizona Women's Hall of Fame. Or in the Arizona Room at the Phoenix Public Library. Or mentioned in any of the state's three university libraries.

Nothing.

Laura Nihell became Arizona Territory's third female newspaper publisher in 1909. Her decision to buy the weekly *Jerome Copper Belt* led to one of the most sensational cases of a journalist and a paper fighting for justice in territorial history.

Courtesy Jana Bommersbach

I even found a publication of the Jerome Historical Society titled "Herstory of Jerome." There's not a hint about Laura Nihell.

So, 131 words was all she gets? I already knew that wasn't fair.

Because those 131 words had grabbed ahold of me and yelled, "Hi there, honey. Meet a bona fide Western heroine."

They told me Laura Nihell, a 52-year-old former teacher and married-into-a-good-family-mother-of-two-sons, had done something brave.

They told me that Laura Nihell, a woman who couldn't vote or sit on a jury in Arizona Territory, whose "sphere" was supposed to be her home and children, had fearlessly stepped out of that role into a man's world and went to battle.

They told me that Laura Nihell was a woman unafraid to fight for truth and honesty. That she valiantly stood against bigotry and bullshism.

A Life-Changing Move

The census tells us that Laura's family moved to Jerome by 1900—37 years after Arizona was finally named a territory; 24 years after the first mine claims were filed on Cleopatra Hill in a mining camp that would become Jerome; 15 years after Territorial Governor Frederick Tritle took Jerome copper samples to the New Orleans World Exposition and caught the eye



of a Montana tycoon named William Clark; and 12 years since Clark became the king of this hill with his United Verde Mine that would become the richest copper mine in the world. (By the way, Clark bought the mine on February 14, 1888—exactly 24 years to the day before Arizona became the 48th state.)

By the time the Nihells arrived, Jerome had incorporated as the fifth-largest city in Arizona Territory and had a population of 2,861 residents—78 percent of them men. It would grow to be the territory’s third-largest city with a population over 15,000 but that was a ways off. Even farther off was the day it became a ghost town, or as one historian put it, “the town emptied like a fish stand after a case of salmonella.” But that was decades after this heyday chapter of Jerome’s life.

Jerome already had an opera house, a half dozen hotels, a public library. It had telephones but not electricity. It had three newspapers and four churches.

The Nihell family lived in the better part of town. Laura’s husband, Isaac, was a tinsman and a plumber. The boys were in elementary school. Laura was the Jerome correspondent for the *Prescott Journal Miner*, which billed itself as “The Pioneer Paper of Arizona.”

Laura was welcomed and praised when she

bought the *Jerome Copper Belt* weekly newspaper in 1909. The praise came from her competition, the long-standing editor of the *Jerome News*, William Adams.

Mr. Adams told his readers that Laura was “one of the best news rustlers in the country.” He liked her so much, he even enlisted her to take over his paper when he was out of town.

Her purchase put her in a very rare sorority—she became the third woman in the territory—at that very moment—to own a newspaper.

The first was Josephine Brawley Hughes, who owned the *Tucson Star* with her husband, Louis. They became quite a force in Arizona. He became a territorial governor; she headed both the temperance and suffrage societies.

The second was Angela Hutchinson Hammer, who, on her own, had newspapers in Wickenburg and Phoenix. And she founded the *Casa Grande Dispatch*.

And now here came Laura as the third. Did any other territory have that bragging right?

Jerome was then known as one of the territory’s most melting-pot communities and quite a notorious place. An Eastern paper called it the “wickedest town in America.” Somebody said with a wink, “Jerome is not a city of churches, but hopes to be worse by and by.” But Jerome didn’t see itself like that. It once tried to contrast

In 1909, nearly 80 percent of Jerome’s residents were men, most of whom worked for the United Verde Copper Mine. Residents of the mining town had to carve narrow streets out of the steep hillsides of Cleopatra Hill on the side of Mingus Mountain.

True West Archives

itself to sinful Tombstone by bragging that Jerome was a “sinless, model community inhabited by honest men and pure women.” Nobody believed them.

I’m betting Laura was a supporter of the important issues for women in 1909 as she took over the *Copper Belt*.

Like everyone else in town, Laura and her family regularly ate at the most popular restaurant in town, Charlie Hong’s English Kitchen. Of course, she knew him; everyone did. He was one of the most popular guys in Jerome—also one of the richest, and he paid more property taxes than most of the White business owners. He was a real celebrity.

William Adams of the *Jerome News* had praised Hong more than once in print—that, in itself, a

pretty remarkable thing, considering that territorial newspapers were almost universally railing against Chinese people being in the territory at all.

Mr. Hong escaped that wrath for a decade—and he may have been the only Chinese man in the territory who got any good press.

Adams lavished on the praise when Mr. Hong was the first business to rebuild and reopen after the fire of 1899 that destroyed most of the Jerome business district. Mr. Adams breathlessly wrote: “There is no more popular man in Jerome than little Charley Hong, and he numbers his friends among all walks of life.... His credit is good for any amount with merchants, and he enjoys the enviable reputation of feeding more people than any other restaurant in town. He is American in all but birth. What more could be said.”

Okay, patronizing praise, but still praise.

In the summer of 1909, Mr. Hong went home to China to visit his family. He returned, making the mistake of coming through Nogales, which wasn't a registered port. The government threatened to deport him. But he was defended by the *Jerome News*. Editor Adams reminded his readers in July that “Hong is classed with the best Chinese in Jerome.”

But he also added, “If we must have them with us, there can be no objection to Hong as one of them.”

In two months, all that changed.

In mid-September, Jerome was scandalized when the *Jerome News* unleashed an expose: Constable Charles King was charging that Chinese restaurants were raiding garbage boxes and serving “filthy meat” in their restaurants. King said he followed one Chinese crew right to Charlie Hong's restaurant!

The charge came from a suspicious source: Charley King's wife was trying to open her own



While publisher Laura Nihell was fighting racism in Jerome in 1909, saloons and prostitution were a major source of income for working women in the mining town.

Courtesy Jan MacKell Collins

restaurant, and Adams was using his newspaper to promote it as a “white restaurant” with “a clean white kitchen.”

We're indebted to historian Kathryn Reisdorfer of Yavapai College in Prescott, whose excellent examination of what happened next appeared in the *Journal of Arizona History* in 2003. She pulled no punches: “Charlie Hong, Racism, and the Power of the Press in Jerome, Arizona Territory, 1909.”

(This is the only historical article I found that mentions Laura Nihell—she's not a

major character in the story—and that it didn't inspire other historians to take a closer look at her still puzzles me.)

Mr. Hong immediately protested, saying the charge was a lie. Hong said that he used refuse meat to feed his pigs at his farm in the valley, but certainly not in his restaurant. When Adams wouldn't listen to his pleas, Mr. Hong went looking for help from the other newspaper in town, Laura's *Copper Belt*.

She was printing her paper every Thursday from her offices in the basement of the New York Store on Main Street. She charged five cents a copy, \$2 for a yearly subscription.

If I could be a fly on the wall of history, I'd want to be in that basement when Charley Hong came in to tell Laura Nihell his story. Did she grill him? Did she worry this would be an unpopular mess to get mucked up in? Did she hesitate?



In 1909, during the newspaper war between Laura Nihell's *Copper Belt* and William Adams' *Jerome News*, mining baron William A. Clark's United Verde mine and smelter employed over 800 men blasting out gold, silver and copper from the rich veins far below the surface.

Courtesy Library of Congress



It surely struck her that a White woman—already infringing on a man's world just by owning her own paper—would really be pushing the boundaries if she stood up for a Chinese community that was being slandered by the most powerful male-owned newspaper in town. There could be disastrous consequences—she certainly knew that.

But from what happened next, I'm betting she didn't need a lot of convincing, she didn't hesitate, and she didn't flinch. She had the backbone to stand up against the drumbeat of racism, knowing she'd probably be standing alone.

Laura printed Mr. Hong's letter with his strenuous denial and his countercharges on why he was being attacked: No. 1, Constable King was trying to kill the competition for his wife's restaurant, and Adams was helping him. Plus, Hong wondered, how could his food be so filthy when the constable regularly stopped in to help himself from the kitchen—never paying?

And speaking of being a freeloader, so was Mr. Adams from the *Jerome News*. No. 2, Hong charged that Editor Adams was on the bandwagon against him because he had demanded Adams pay his outstanding bill.

Laura not only let Charlie Hong speak directly to the people of Jerome, but she also added her own voice. Her exact words haven't been preserved, but we can figure out what she said by the reactions she got.

She supported Mr. Hong without equivocation.

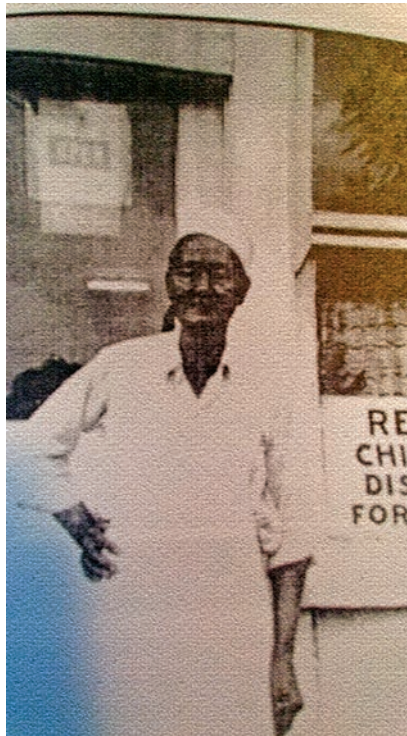
She dismissed the charges as ridiculous and vile.

She reminded Jerome that Editor Adams had lavished praise on Mr. Hong just months earlier.

And she mocked his accusers in a way that

cut to the quick. She always referred to Constable King as the "gallant officer," clearly meaning he was anything but. And here's how we know she had a wicked sense of humor—she called Editor Adams—"Confucius 11."

At some point she must have written



After the fire of 1899, Charlie Hong, who had been working at the kitchen of the nearby Connor Hotel, was one of the first to reopen a business, and his English Kitchen was popular with young and old residents of the multi-ethnic copper town.

Charlie Hong photo courtesy Jana Bommersbach

something like, "It's a privilege to stand with an honest, decent human being who's being slandered by freeloading bigots." Or words in that neighborhood.

We know all that because this was the reaction printed in the *Jerome News*: "God, the pity of it, that White people should stoop so low as to crave the privilege of protecting them."

In his September 18 edition, Editor Adams had his own say and printed his own open letter to Jerome—this one from Constable King.

King declared: "If the men, women and children who patronize them knew but half of the filth that is passed out to them, they would never eat a meal in a Chinese restaurant."

Editor Adams wrote that King could have gone farther: "...he might have added that those whom they feed are blind to everything or they would not partake of food that must be unfit for any human being to eat, and in doing so, keep the life blood in leeches and in this way, assist in keeping a white restaurant from doing business in our city."

But Adams wasn't content to rest his argument on the charge of filthy food. He didn't want to just destroy Charlie Hong's business, he wanted to destroy Charlie Hong. Now he called for him to be deported.

He wrote. "Hong is what they call in New York City a 'Christianized Chinaman.' The Christianizing of Hong has been his downfall." He claimed Mr. Hong was "butting in on all church social affairs" and dared participate in a basket social, where the single girls of the parish offered a picnic basket, sharing the meal with the highest bidder. Adams said Hong "humiliated a white woman," by outbidding everyone for her basket. (Adams

particularly favored the “lusting-after-white-women” attack.)

On October 2, Adams printed his most hysterical piece: “Found Maggots in Soup in Hong Restaurant....”

Every week there was a new horror story. Some are so absurd you want to laugh out loud. Like the one where he claims a couple found cockroaches in their salad...and bedbugs in their pie—WHAT? They ate the whole meal? Did they pick around the bugs?

Adams now was attacking all Chinese residents in Jerome, not just Hong. And he didn’t hesitate to use racial slurs. He wrote, “We believe in the doctrine of America and Americans and will always be found preaching it against a dirty, greasy chink.”

Then he demonized the entire race and any Americans who didn’t see it his way. He wrote: “In their crazy frenzy, the chink protectors forget that they are Americans and are attempting to uphold at the expense of American labor, institution and citizenship, the lowest tribe on earth.”

Laura was giving tit for tat, rebutting the hysteria of the *Jerome News* and reminding Jerome about the Charley Hong they all knew and respected. It was too much for Adams to take.

On October 16, he published a front-page cartoon to humiliate Laura. He called her their “missionary” and declared, “A chink protector is a worse menace to American manhood and womanhood than a chink.” He called her “Old Mother Petticoats” and an “old hen.” He complained, “Laura Nihell for the last few weeks has indulged in expletives not taught her sex where good breeding is inculcated.... It is not to our liking that we notice the mudslinging of a woman; it would be far preferable to wield a pen in defense of the gentler sex; nothing could please us better than were the female sex never in need of vindication.”

And worse yet, Adams insinuated, several times, that there was a sexual component to Laura’s defense of Mr. Hong.

While Arizona records show us years of editions of the *Jerome News*, and all these articles—preserving forever their racist headlines—suspiciously, not a single issue of the *Copper Belt* published by Laura has



Burro trains and prospectors were still part of day-to-day life in Jerome in 1910 when newspaper publisher Laura Nihell was waging her war against racism in the copper camp.

True West Archives

survived. There are copies of the paper before her editorship, and after her editorship, but not during. So, you could read territorial newspapers all day, and believe that everyone, universally, hated the Chinese. And never realize that in one town at one time—and this may be the only example we have—the Chinese had a champion, thanks to a female journalist.

No, we didn’t have any of Laura’s papers that survived.

Until I went digging into a libel suit Constable King filed against Laura Nihell. This was news throughout the territory, reported in several papers. He claimed she published “a malicious defamation...which tends to bring himself and his family into disrepute and ridicule.” It was filed on October 23, 1909.

I figured it had to be filed at the Yavapai County Courthouse in Prescott. I never dreamed it would hold such a treasure.

I got copies of the whole file: Laura had been arrested, but the judge released her on a \$300 bond until a trial date, set for the next week. All that paperwork was there, along with the complaint King had filed—and Exhibit H.

To prove his point, King submitted the entire edition of the *Copper Belt* that included the “libelous” article. The court called it Exhibit H.

It is the only copy of Laura’s paper that has survived.

We no longer must guess what Laura said or glean her words from the reactions. We can hear from her own pen how she faced off against Adams.

She wrote: “The *Copper Belt* regrets that in justice to itself, it is compelled to again refer to that dirty and villainous plot of the *Jerome News*.... The climax in the fight of W.S. Adams, alias Confucius 11, and his gallant officer friend was reached this week when they tired in their unsuccessful efforts to draw the *Copper Belt* into their dirty, unjust fight against the Chinese restaurant keepers of Jerome.

“Why did this gallant officer go to Charlie Hong’s and demand to know why he wrote his article, and threaten to run him and all the other Chinamen out of town within 24 hours?”

Laura wondered how Charlie King could so attack the Chinese restaurants when his own family, including Mrs. King, “had been averaging one meal a day there up to this time and passed directly by a white restaurant to get there.” [That was the libelous part! That the King family ate in Hong’s restaurant!]

And, she asked, “Why should this gallant officer visit these Chinese kitchens at night, when he was on duty, helping himself to their pots and pans and standing while he ate, when things were so dirty?”

FISTICUFFS FEATURE NEWSPAPER WAR IN JEROME

BY MRS. LAURA NIELL
(Editor Jerome Copper Belt)

TOO DIRTY TO LIVE IN TOWN OF JEROME

A Movement Started to Drive the
Chinese Out.

Jerome, Sept. 23.—A vigorous movement was inaugurated here today looking to the exclusion of Chinese from this city. Reports that refusal has been used by Chinese restaurants precipitated the agitation.

An investigation of conditions far from today revealed conditions far from sanitary, it is alleged, and the feeling against the Mongolian residents tonight is high. The Chinese may not only be driven out, but absolute prohibition against the entrance of any more also result.

EDITRESS GETS ARRESTED

Jerome Anti-Chinese Fight
Leads Woman Wielder
of Pen to Jail.

GLOBE, Oct. 22.—Mrs. Laura N. Niell, editor and proprietor of the Jerome Copper Belt, has been arrested in this city on a charge of criminal libel, the complaining witness being Night Office King. Mrs. Niell was taken before Justice DeLoach, who had her bonds at \$100, which were promptly furnished, and the preliminary examination set for Tuesday at 2:30 p. m. At that time it will be decided whether or not the case shall be referred to the grand jury.

The terms of the indictment in the prosecution of a latter contributor that has agitated Jerome for several weeks and which she divided the town into two factions. It started a sensationalist libel matter over the remaining half between the two newspapers of the town dependent into prosecution between the Jerome Copper Belt and the latter. The Copper Belt, which was owned by Night Office King, published a sensationalist libel against the former contributing references to the editor of the latter, and it was accordingly these references that caused the editor to take legal steps to have her name mentioned in a libel suit. Plaintiff in Jerome has said he had a white lead, for the suit and his opponent, W. S. Adams of the Jerome Mining News, and the Niell of the Copper Belt, all are their friends.

Jerome News publisher William Adams filled his paper with racist, anti-Chinese rhetoric and cartoons aimed at his rival *Copper Belt* publisher Laura Niell. This did not extinguish her fight for truth and justice, but rather flamed her passion to defend Charlie Hong and the Chinese residents of Jerome against such vitriolic hatred.

Courtesy Jana Bommersbach and Newspapers.com

His English Kitchen kept its status as the most popular restaurant in Jerome, until he moved on in 1913 at the request of none other than William Clark himself, who built a restaurant for Charlie Hong in the community he created for his mine workers, called Clarkdale. Mr. Hong eventually went back to China for his final years.

In contrast, Constable King had a horrible ending. He was shot and killed.

Mr. Adams died in 1932 at age 74 and got a very nice obituary in the *Verde Copper News*: “Prominent Pioneer of Southwest Dies in Hospital Here.”

Laura Niell died of bladder cancer on May 8, 1916. Her obituary in the *San Diego Union* called her a “philanthropist who once ran a newspaper in Arizona.” She was 59. She had been president of San Diego’s Pioneer Society.

In the summer of 2019, I visited her grave in Mount Hope Cemetery in San Diego. It was a very emotional moment—having searched for over five years, I could finally pray at her grave and tell her how proud I am of her.

I want Arizona to acknowledge Laura Niell as a point of pride. I want American journalism to celebrate her courage.

Why did history try to erase her? Because she dared buck the tide. She had the courage to stand up for an unpopular cause.

I think her courage embarrassed the bigoted leaders she challenged, and her ridicule mortified them. And then she won—she bested those bigots! And the only way her enemies in Jerome could get even was to be sure history ignored her.

They almost got away with it.



Jana Bommersbach, the Preservation Editor of *True West*, spent five years piecing together the story of Laura Niell. “It’s an amazing feeling to unearth a genuine Old West heroine that history tried to bury,” she says.

Her last big blast made it clear she felt he was a poor excuse for a constable: “If Officer Charles King will attend to the business for which he is paid, and devote less time to dog fights, he may save himself from a fate that awaits him as chamber maid at a livery stable.”

And Laura pleaded for her town: “Why should the fair name of Jerome be besmeared with such scurrilous articles as have been appearing in the *Jerome News*?”

Editor Adams now demanded the Jerome City Council do something, and it did. It sent an inspector to Charley Hong’s English Kitchen. It found absolutely nothing wrong.

I couldn’t find a headline in the *Jerome News* acknowledging that Mr. Hong had been exonerated by the City of Jerome. But I bet there was one in Laura’s paper. Maybe a stacked headline in the style that was so popular in that day, reading something like: “Charley Hong Cleared. No evidence of wrong-doing, city says. *Jerome News* discredited for racist attack. Mr. Hong thanks residents for standing with him during these trying days.” Or something like that.

Territorial newspapers started paying attention when it turned into a street fight.

Thankfully, we have both sides of this story, courtesy of the *Prescott Weekly Journal*, which solicited columns from both editors for their story on “The Newspaper War in Jerome.”

Here’s how Laura told the story: “The *Jerome News*, edited by W.S. Adams, in its last issue contained remarks toward me that were slurring, unprincipled, undignified and not becoming anyone in the newspaper profession. My son, who is a slender boy, weighing but 125 pounds, while Adams weighs about 195, resented the attack on me and engaged Adams physically on the street. How much he would have punished Adams had not an outsider interfered I do not know, but I stand by him in everything he has done.”

She went on to declare:

“I am not to be bluffed nor bullied and I propose to continue to write things as I see them, free and unhampered by any influences. Those are my sentiments and I believe that they

meet with the approval of the vast majority of Jerome people.”

When Adams told his side, he said he was attacked from behind as he returned from the post office on a Sunday morning. He described Mrs. Niell’s son as “an athletic youth but 21 years old while I am 53 years of age.” He said his glasses were ripped off, leaving a cut on his face, and for the life of him, he couldn’t figure out the motive because, and let me quote, “In all of my writings, I have endeavored to keep from becoming personal and have referred to the *Jerome Copper Belt* simply as a newspaper. I consider the attack unwarranted and unjustified.”

By Thanksgiving, everything died down. And it was clear that Laura Niell and Charley Hong were the victors.

The court dismissed the libel suit against Laura, and she got back her \$300 bond. She continued editing her newspaper for three more years, until 1912, after Arizona finally became the 48th state. The family moved back to San Diego.

Mr. Hong wasn’t deported. He wasn’t forced out of his restaurant. He didn’t leave town.

He became a naturalized citizen and registered to vote.

BY THE EDITORS OF *TRUE WEST*

THE REAL WOMEN OF

A PORTFOLIO OF BOLD AMERICAN WOMEN WHO CHANGED THE WORLD



Four Sisters at the Soddie

These four sisters (l.-r.), Harriet, Elizabeth, Lucie and Ruth Crisman, photographed in 1886, near Custer County, Nebraska, knew how blessed they were to have each other, as so many other women suffered the loneliness of the frontier. "It was a frontier saying that homesteading was a gamble: 'Yeah, the United States Government is betting you 160 acres of land that you can't live on it eight months.'"

—*Edith Eudora Kohl in her homesteading memoir, Land of the Burnt Thigh*

Solomon Butcher, Courtesy Library of Congress

Spirit of the West

This is one of the only known photos of a Black cowgirl; she's called Nellie Brown. But there is no Nellie Brown recorded in Western history—she's just as anonymous as the many Black women labeled only as "unknown." However, they all knew something important. As one historian said, "More than anywhere else in the United States at the time, the frontier offered African Americans a chance in life!"

All Images Courtesy True West Archives Unless Otherwise Noted



Alexis de Tocqueville came to America to study democracy. At the end of his two-volume *Democracy In America*, he wrote, "if one asked me to what do I think one must principally attribute the singular prosperity and growing force of this people, I would answer that it is to the superiority of its women." With that spirit in mind, we present a photo essay of the strong, bold, sassy, bawdy, stubborn, bodacious and superior women of the Old West.

THE WILD WEST



Arizona's Sharlot Hall

"I am not unwomanly—
don't you dare to think
so—but God meant
women to joy in his
great, clean, beautiful
world, and I thank Him
that he lets me see
some of it not through
a windowpane!"

Courtesy Sharlot Hall Museum Library &
Archives, Prescott, Arizona

Cowgirl Joella Irwin

An early cowgirl performer at the turn of the 20th century, Ms. Irwin performed in a variety of events but was most famous for her relay race riding.



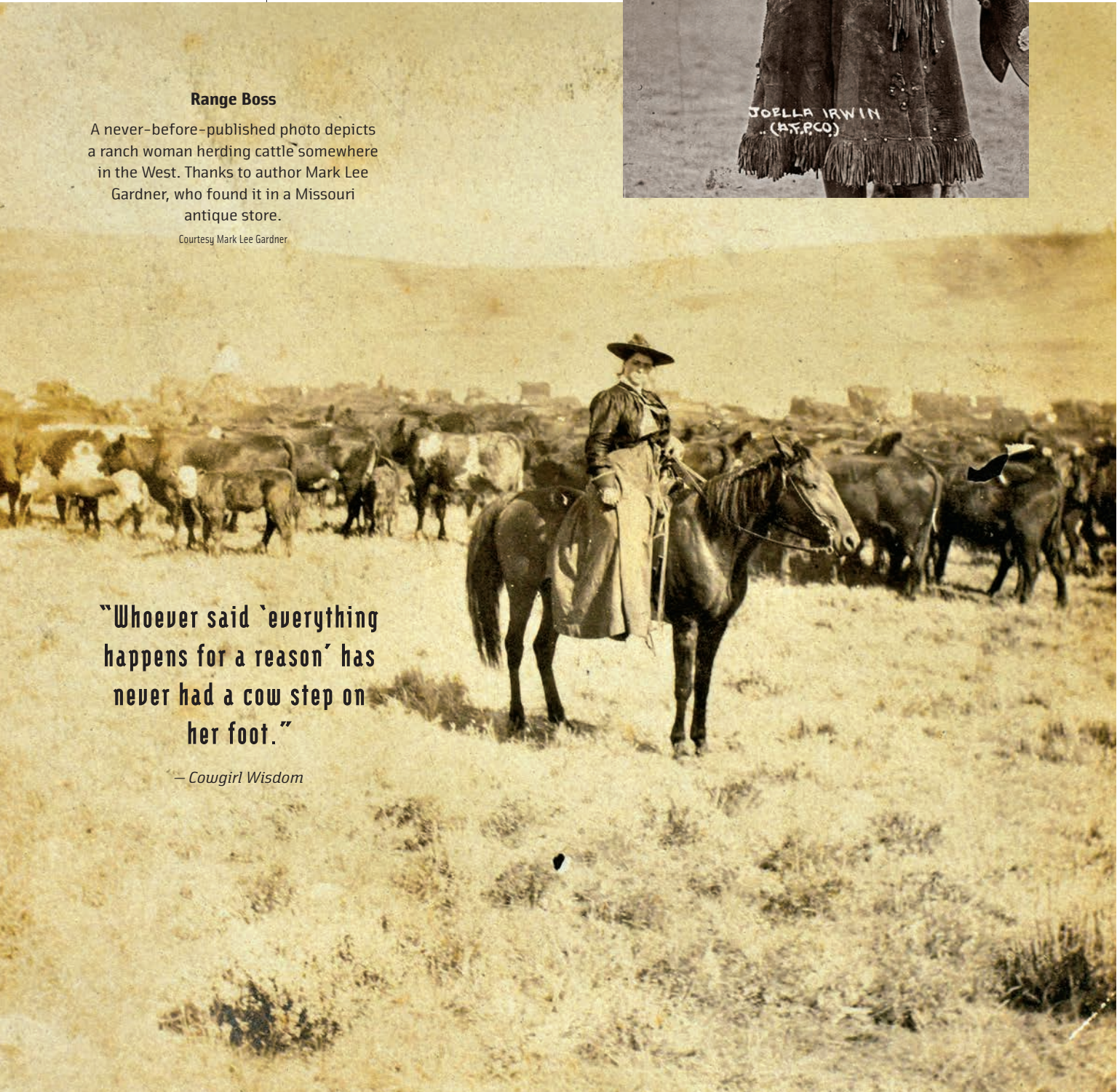
Range Boss

A never-before-published photo depicts a ranch woman herding cattle somewhere in the West. Thanks to author Mark Lee Gardner, who found it in a Missouri antique store.

Courtesy Mark Lee Gardner

“Whoever said ‘everything happens for a reason’ has never had a cow step on her foot.”

— *Cowgirl Wisdom*





**"I ain't afraid to love a man.
I ain't afraid to shoot him either!"**

—Annie Oakley

Annie Oakley

This is Annie, circa 1902, starring in a stage play created just for her, *The Western Girl*. A year later, prim-and-proper Oakley might have been pretending the man at the end of her sights was William Randolph Hearst. She sued him 55 times because he falsely printed a story on August 11, 1903, that the beloved 43-year-old entertainer had been arrested for cocaine possession in Chicago, Illinois. The real perpetrator's stage name was Any Oakley aka Maude Fontanella.

Annie won 54 lawsuits.

Courtesy Buffalo Bill Center of the West, Cody, WY, USA.
MS 6 William F. Cody Collection. P.69.71



Stagecoach Mary

The Natives called her White Crow because she "acts like a white person but has black skin!" She was only the second woman in the nation to win a contract to carry the U.S. Mail. She was rough and coarse, but beloved, too. "Mary lived to become one of the freest souls ever to draw a breath, or a .38!"

— Montana native Gary Cooper



Nellie Bly

The most famous female journalist in the nation was told by one editor that it was impossible to think a woman could go around the world in 80 days, like Jules Verne's popular novel. "Very well," she said angrily, "start the man and I'll start the same day for some other newspaper and beat him." She completed the trip in 72 days and then wrote a successful book about it. She is seen at right wearing one of her road outfits.

Both Photos Courtesy Library of Congress



Squirrel Tooth Alice

Elizabeth "Libby" Thompson was a prostitute and dance hall girl who worked in Dodge City, Kansas, and other frontier cattle towns during the 1870s. She later became famous as Squirrel Tooth Alice, madam of a brothel in Sweetwater, Texas. She is seen here with her pet squirrel posing for her admirers.



**“Leave me
alone and let
me go to hell
by my own
route.”**

—Martha Jane Canary

Calamity Jane

She often dressed like a man but had a woman's desire for Wild Bill Hickok. When people called her Calamity Jane, she probably got so puffed up she bought drinks for the house. She was her own woman.

H.R. Locke, Courtesy Library of Congress



A Bull Rider Extraordinaire

Oklahoma trick rider Opal Crouch Reger was photographed riding atop “Bobby the Steer,” a trained Brahma/longhorn cross. Born in 1906 in Beckham County, Oklahoma, Opal traveled the country with her husband, Monte, and their three children in their trick riding outfit in which everyone performed.

Courtesy National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum, RR Doubleday Collection

Scout Deluxe

This wonderful 1880s era photo allegedly depicts a female scout. Her name is unknown, and we don't know if she is the real deal or the photographer's daughter. Either way, we love the gear and the attitude.





Navajo Girl

How rare to find a photo of any Victorian-era woman smiling, much less an American Indian woman smiling. But this happy Navajo woman obviously loved her life. The same is true of the Jemez Pueblo mother with the laughing papoose. Both are wonderful examples of the humanity that existed beyond the cliches of the era.

Photo of Navajo Woman Courtesy Library of Congress/
Photo of Jemez Pueblo mother and child by Jesse
Nusbaum, 1912, Courtesy Palace of the Governors Photo
Archives 61712

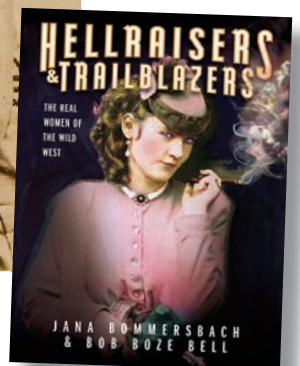
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Olive Oatman

We have found new revelations in one of the Old West's most stunning stories and, in the forthcoming book *Hellraisers & Trailblazers*, we take a dive deep into the real life of this tragic Western woman. The

sixth sentence of her speech giving during her nationwide speaking tour said: "...my Captivity among the Indians passes all the material of a thrilling romance." True that.



From the forthcoming book,
by Jana Bommersbach and
Bob Boze Bell

BY CAROLYN GRATTAN EICHIN

A Bright Particular Star

Ella La Rue and the Performing Variety Women
of the Old West

Historian Jill Lepore recently observed that microhistories of unknown people find their lives serving as allegories for the larger American culture; a microhistory of one life takes us closer to the lives of many. The often nameless, largely forgotten women of the Old West's variety stage lived their struggles in ways singular yet representative of many.

Performing women—singers, dancers, and the like—came from saloon owners' needs to keep a largely male population happy. The saloon in the Old West was a male institution but found the use of waiter girls and women who sold companionship a complement to the liquid refreshment offered. Pretty waiter girls took a turn onstage in seductive costumes that encouraged male patronage, becoming the first entertainers in many a Western settlement. Coy, flirtatious behavior coupled with liquor and an environment of merriment enhanced by music, minstrelsy, salacious theatricalities and short skits became variety theater in the mid-1800s and later in the century morphed into vaudeville. For some women, variety performance became an avenue to self-realization, wealth and fame.



Beautiful Ella La Rue became a versatile performer who sang, danced, acted, walked a tightrope, played banjo and cornet, performed in minstrel shows and organized and led her own theater company. She delighted male patrons in Old West theaters from 1866 until about 1890.

All Images Courtesy UNR Special Collections
Unless Otherwise Noted

Ella La Rue mastered her own narrative by subverting traditional feminine performance codes and gendered expectations. She embraced the mobility needed to traverse the far-flung towns of the West, and she sold sexuality rather than sex.

The “queen of the banjo” first opened in San Francisco’s Olympic variety theater in mid-1866 in musical skits based loosely on minstrelsy, then toured the interior melodeon theaters, performing in farces and skits, in addition to singing and dancing. The consummate performer, she was billed as “The Startling Sensation, Ella La Rue in Mazeppa or the Wild Horse of Washoe,” in one of her most famous impersonations. La Rue burlesqued the story of Mazeppa based on a romantic poem by Lord Byron. The erstwhile lover, a

young man, is punished by being stripped naked and tied to the side of a horse to roam Eastern Europe in a melodramatic story of suffering and near-death experiences. When it was performed on stage, La Rue was tied to a live horse and sent on a wild ride into the hills, simulated by ramps painted as mountains. The spectacle of the almost nude woman dressed in flimsy flowing gauze and pink or flesh-colored tights, drew on audience voyeurism, and was the true draw of both serious and burlesque renditions of the Mazeppa role.



Ella's early years demonstrate several themes that would hold true throughout her career as well as those of other female variety stars. The variety stage required versatility with multiple performance genres including music, burlesque and derring-do, as well as using the distinctive female form as a titillating advantage in selling sexuality to the men who frequented the West's melodeon saloons.

Women in the Victorian mindset were stereotyped as either respectable "true women," who needed to be protected by a man, or temptresses who needed male control. Variety stage women like Ella La Rue were neither, but as sexualized variety performers they were able to parlay beauty, multifaceted performance talents and business acumen into a degree of personal independence. Ella's execution of roles typically assigned to men challenged entrenched Victorian notions of respectable female behavior. She defied the dominant tropes of women as weak and powerless.

As a prelude to an 1868 engagement, Ella walked a tightrope stretched above the ground from the Piper's Opera House balcony to a brick building on the corner of D and Union Streets in Virginia City, Nevada. The rope was about 30 or 40 feet above the ground, and the distance between the buildings forced a walk of about 160 feet. Her

Pictured is the interior of the Gem Theater in Deadwood, South Dakota, where Ella La Rue appeared in April 1877. Notice the boxes on the upper left side where patrons enjoyed trysts in privacy behind heavy curtains.

Courtesy Deadwood History, Inc.

later career would see higher tightropes and longer processions, but this escapade was thrilling enough to draw a crowd of 500 spectators, many of whom retired to the theater to see her other theatricals. She walked from the Opera House and back in the moonlight enhanced by a bonfire in the middle of the street and a red fire burning at each end of the rope. To a star-struck newspaperman, she was a beautiful sight in a short frock, tights and trunks, carrying a balancing pole. That night Ella appeared in the farce afterpiece of *Never Send Your Wife to Carson*. In a simple plotline, the wife returns to find her husband in bed with another woman—slapstick comedy ensued.

In later shows Ella walked a tightrope inside the theater strung the entire length to the back of the stage. This type of spectacle titillated Victorian audiences with achievements believed unattainable by women. A high degree of self-discipline, practice and skill underlay Ella's professional life.

Women in Ella's profession, one which relied on showing their bodies as commercial commodities, drew unsolicited attention from prospective suitors. While in Virginia City, Ella attracted the attention of bachelor newspaperman Alf Doten who met her backstage for a pleasant chat after her first show. The quintessential diarist, Doten came West with the California Gold Rush, documenting his exceptional experiences in dozens of finely detailed journals now in the University of Nevada, Reno Library's Special Collections.

Doten's diary entries recount his failed attempts to court Ms. La Rue during her months-long sojourn in the mining town in late 1868. Doten was seldom at home in the evenings, visiting La Rue at 6 p.m. in her room and then returning to the Opera House to witness her shows. Doten presented Ella with copies of the good notices of her performance that he had written for the *Gold Hill News*. He visited her room on several occasions but was rarely alone with her. On most occasions, Ella outmaneuvered Doten by having fellow minstrel performer Charley Rhoades with her for their get-togethers. On one occasion she was not available.

Doten brought his banjo with him to their meetings, but carelessly left it in her room on Christmas Day. He returned with a harmonica and later a flute, but the

unflappable Rhoades became the musical partner in Doten's improvised jam sessions in Ella's room. His attraction to the star resounded in newspaper reports that Ella would play Keket, the Man Catcher, in the *Happy Man* skit. "She is handsome enough to attract almost any man to ineffable happiness or exquisite misery," Doten opined to the *News*, perhaps while he was in the throes of exquisite misery.

The newspaperman was smitten with the star, not an unusual turn of events for women who performed on stage. The burlesque performances switched from Mazeppa to Black Crook, and Ella proffered a banjo lesson for Doten, but dashed his hope of a relationship. Her holiday pastime of banjo practice paints a rather dull picture of a dedicated performer, and although she recognized his interest in her, she balanced his ardor with the presence of other people so that he had few opportunities to become emboldened. As Ella La Rue dropped her clothes and got packed off on a "Chinaman's jackass" in her Mazeppa burlesque, the *News* claimed she "displayed ravishing 'shape' enough to gratify the eyes of the greediest in that respect." The comment says more about the critic's greed than about the performance. Doten sent his last review with a letter to Miss La Rue after her departure from Nevada. She reciprocated by sending him three photos of herself through the intermediary, Charley Rhoades. Doten subsequently wrote to her, but painfully, did not receive an answer.

From Ella's story may be drawn inferences about the success of sexualized variety show women who demonstrated an advanced sense of self-preservation offstage, while demonstrating a woman's power to disrupt traditional hierarchies onstage. Ella was a professional whose somewhat boring life of practicing the banjo—she was considered on a par with the infamous Lotta Crabtree on the instrument—underscores her



Ella La Rue is costumed here as Mazeppa. She would have removed the outer layers of the costume before being tied to a live horse on stage. She performed the role both as high drama and in mocking travesty in minstrel show parodies.

Courtesy the Author's Collection

personal commitment to the performing life. La Rue also took the place of the leading minstrel performer and became the minstrel show's "end man" when he resigned, arguing for her talents in quick-thinking, conundrums and the repartee of the traditionally male minstrel character. Her talents were significant, and she challenged the notion of the correct place for women in the social strata of the Victorian world. Where other women may have found the option of marriage to a man a salvation

Alf Doten became the quintessential diarist chronicling first the gold rush, then Nevada's silver rush. As a bachelor, he attended local theaters almost every night of the week, falling helplessly for Ella La Rue. He eventually married a schoolteacher with whom he had several children.





Gold Hill, Nevada, occupied a ravine at the northern end of Gold Canyon, where early miners panned for gold and threw out the more valuable silver. By 1862 Gold Hill enjoyed a variety theater featuring traveling minstrel shows and occasional melodramas.

Pictured is the Gold Hill News office building on Main Street, Gold Hill, Nevada, in the 1880s where Alf Doten

had previously captured national and local events for his reading public. He rose from reporter to respected editor there.



permanently on the Eastern seaboard after interior tours and stardom in some of San Francisco's Barbary Coast saloons. O'Neil, as Kitty From Cork, played Piper's Opera House in November 1867, and a fight

with another actress over earrings forced her to leave the area in a huff after her husband had been slipped a cathartic. The *San Francisco Chronicle* labeled Kitty a true talent whose genuine Irish brogue carried ineffable sweetness, although she was jailed on one occasion after a fight with a fellow minstrel performer. She played San Francisco's notorious Bella Union, toured California with her own troupe, then stormed New York in 1871 as part of the San Francisco minstrels and remained a fixture there through the 1880s. For vaudeville audiences, Kitty wrote and performed her own composition, "No Irish Need Apply."

Breaking All the Rules

Women of the variety stage rejected Victorian notions that tied so many women to their homes, families and volunteer

from the uncertainties of wage labor, professional performing women could avoid men intent on self-serving temporary liaisons. The *Gold Hill Daily News* theater critic lamented the loss of Ella La Rue: "She will be missed considerably by the patrons of the Opera House. She has gone from their gaze like a beautiful dream; they may never see her like again." Indeed, during a long career she never returned to Virginia City to perform. Ella's gender-bending foray into tightrope walking, cross-dressing and minstrelsy served her throughout the century, and infused the national debate of a woman's proper place in society.

Ella was witty and intelligent, traits that served her well in the Wild West. She thwarted a stagecoach robbery near Deadwood, South Dakota, in 1877 by securing her earnings of 500 dollars into a coiled hairpiece and leaving only three dollars in her skirt pocket. The stagecoach robbers took the paltry sum and missed the money hiding in her hair. Newspapers had a field day with the escapade and hinted that the robbers should have searched the star entirely, perhaps focusing on the stripes in her stockings as a possible hiding place, a titillating reminder of the star's sexuality.

A few years later, the Deadwood newspaper praised her talents: "Ella La Rue is a big card. She is perhaps the most versatile lady west of the Mississippi. She plays the cornet, the bones, dances a jig, sings well and talks like a yellow covered novel. Fact is, she is an artist in her profession."

Triumph and Tragedy

In contrast to La Rue, variety star Fanny Hanks, known for clog dancing and her performance of the epic poem *Sheridan's Ride* with a live horse on stage, died in abject poverty in an alms house. Although Ella and Fanny had appeared together in Chicago in 1867 in a short-lived variety show from San Francisco's Theater Comique, Fanny performed mainly in the far West, where she reportedly made 700 dollars a week during her best years. Her marriage to a melodeon theater manager resulted in extreme domestic brawls. Her obituary hinted at retribution for her husband's actions by audience members who took the law into their own hands and punished him severely for beating Fanny.

Another woman of the variety theater, Kitty O'Neil, found the West too wild after less than four years there. She settled

organizations. Ideals of domesticity held that women would be corrupted should they leave the traditional roles of wife, mother and caregiver. The world was a dangerous place and women were moral souls created to stay within their spheres of influence as homebound wives. Variety women, as Ella La Rue demonstrated, could maintain a sense of distance from the "stage-door johnnies" who sought liaisons with them, and parlay their talents into a well-paid wage labor. The variety stage empowered women to develop talents that empowered them to pursue lives of meaningful employment. The fact that variety women showed their bodies in "visual trade," means the larger society equated them with prostitution, but instead of selling their bodies to one man, they sold only their sexuality to many. The abilities of women in the variety theater enabled them to recast traditional gender values. Underscoring these talents was the not-insignificant willingness to travel without a male escort. Mobility during the Victorian era does not equate unilaterally to emancipation, however, performing women who did travel the West were better able to realize the success and affluence that could bring about emancipation.



Fanny Hanks (left) and Ella La Rue partnered in theatricalities in 1867 Chicago. Fanny was considered one of the West's best clog dancers, a form brought to America by the Irish. Fanny performed the epic poem "Sheridan's Ride" about General Phillip Sheridan with a live horse.



The End of the Road

The *Bismarck Tribune*, in November 1879, reported that Ella La Rue snatched an orchestra leader from the local theater to take him with her to New York. The newspaper stated that Ella said, "she had wealth enough to take both him and her to New York." This liaison ended badly, but Ella did eventually marry Samuel Murdy, a minstrel performer-turned-Leadville, Colorado silver miner, whom Ella met in the early 1880s. He became her wedded partner as well as theatrical cohort, and in 1885 they toured in a vaudeville company in which Ella usually received top billing. In the late 1880s Ella appeared briefly with her brother in trapeze artist programs, possibly signaling the end of



Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper ran this photo of the interior of a Cheyenne, Wyoming, variety theater in 1877. The women in the boxes could provide more personalized entertainment for male patrons. Notice the scantily clothed dancer on stage.

"Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper," 1877, Courtesy the Author

In 1863, Kathleen O'Neil wrote "No Irish Need Apply" from a woman's perspective. Some lyrics ran: "Ah! But now I'm in the land of the 'glorious' and 'free'; And proud I am to own it, a country dear to me!"



Pictured is the Bella Union Theater in Portsmouth Square in about 1855 which seated over 1,000 patrons. It became San Francisco's premiere variety theater in the 1860s and showcased many of the nation's best variety performers.

Courtesy Museum of Performance and Design, San Francisco

This Currier and Ives lithograph of Lord Byron's epic poem "Mazeppa" dates to the 1860s. In the poem a naked young man is carried by horse. Various actresses played the part in flimsy costumes with enhanced sexuality and sensationalism.

Courtesy Author's Collection

her relationship with Murdy. The two divorced in 1890.

Minstrel performers rarely settled down until confronted with no other option, but the owner of the Park Theater in Great Falls, Montana, convinced Ella of the growth and real estate potential of Great Falls. She purchased land from him as early as 1888, and then settled into semiretirement there for the last 28 years of her life. Even in retirement Ella was something of a novelty to the folks of Great Falls, where she achieved local notoriety for her frequent real estate purchases. Her wealth and generosity were extensive; she bought farms for her parents and brother. In 1920 she purchased a winter home in southern California where she died leaving an estate of over 10,000 dollars—its relative worth in today's money in the hundreds of thousands—to family and friends. Ella saved her money, invested in real estate and lived her retirement years in prosperity—a testament to her many talents.



Carolyn Grattan Eichin is the author of *From San Francisco Eastward, Victorian Theater in the American West*, a finalist in the scholarly nonfiction category for the 2021 Willa Awards from Women Writing the West and a finalist for the 2021 Will Rogers Medallion Award in Western nonfiction.



TRUE WEST
EXCLUSIVE

CLASSIC GUNFIGHTS

CLASH OF THE MAD MADAMS

ALICE ABBOTT
VS
ETTA CLARK

THE WAR OVER
BEAUTIFUL, BUSTY
BESSIE COLVIN



Bessie Colvin, "soiled dove" extraordinaire

All images courtesy True West archives

BY BOB BOZE BELL

Based on the research of H. Gordon Frost and Bob Boze Bell

APRIL 18, 1886



Shot in the "public arch."

Illustrations by Bob Boze Bell

The beautiful Bessie Colvin is fed up. After a year of arguing over "extracurricular activities" and bad accounting, the star attraction at Alice Abbott's bordello in El Paso, Texas, is quitting to seek better working conditions elsewhere.

Bessie's also drunk. Sashaying through the brothel parlor, the angry "soiled dove" swears at the customers, telling them how foolish they are for shopping at "Fat Alice's Belly Bazaar." At the front door, Bessie informs everyone within hearing that the "prime cut will soon be found across the street."

Storming out the front door, Bessie crosses Utah Street, heading for Etta Clark's sporting house. Passing a trio of amused men, she mutters, "I'm not going to stay in that damned hooker shop any longer."

After hearing Bessie's tale of woe, Etta Clark readily agrees to hire the ravishing beauty. With gainful employment assured, Bessie marches back across Utah Street to retrieve her belongings. As Bessie packs her trunk in her room, Madam Alice Abbott comes in and demands to know what's going on. Hearing Bessie's avowed defection, Alice flies into a rage and tries to slap her, but Bessie ducks the blow and flees the premises.

Alice first sends two of her other girls to retrieve her errant prostitute, but when they return empty-handed, she crosses the street and climbs onto Etta's porch. Banging on the front door, Alice demands to be let in.

Etta opens the door a crack. For protection, she is wielding a yard-long, brass gas lighter that she has been using to adjust the gas jets in her house.

"What do you want?" Etta asks.

"I want to see Bessie," Alice barks.

"Don't let her get me!" pleads Bessie from behind Etta. "She'll hurt me if she gets ahold of me. She'll beat me to death!"

"She doesn't want to see you," Etta tells her rival. "Get out of my house."

"It doesn't make a damned bit of difference whether she wants to see me or not," bellows Alice, as she flings her hefty body against the door, sending Etta staggering backwards.

Through the open door, Alice starts for Bessie. Etta takes a swing at her rival with the gas lighter. Deflecting the blow, Alice says, "I owe you this anyhow" and punches Etta in the face, sending the madam sprawling into her bedroom.

Alice grabs the hysterical Bessie by the wrist and begins dragging her out the door. Screaming and kicking, Bessie breaks free and runs back inside.

Retrieving a bone-handled, .44 caliber Iver-Johnson "Bulldog" revolver from her dresser drawer, Etta reenters the parlor. "Miss Alice," says Etta, aiming the piece directly at her rival, "I want you to leave my house."

"I'll leave your house," jeers Alice, as she advances on her smaller foe.

"I'll kill the damned bitch!" cries Etta, pulling the trigger.

Clutching her groin, Alice screams: "My God! I'm shot!"

Alice staggers out of the house and down the porch steps, before she collapses in the street. Etta steps onto the porch and fires again, but she misses.

Three of Alice's girls rush across the street to carry their employer back inside her house. The fight is over.





Dueling Madams

Alice Abbott (above, left) kept a photo album of her days as an El Paso madam. On the first page of the album, Alice staked the claim as the “Best House Keeper . . . U.S.A.” The fiery and hefty madam (reportedly, she tipped the scales at 230 lbs.) also put the letter “A,” surrounded by a heart, on numerous photos in the album, possibly denoting customers and girls who were extra special to her. (Some believe the “brand” suggests lesbian status.) The photo of Etta Clark (above, right) was crossed out by Alice, but the fact that the photo was in Alice’s album suggests they had been friends at an earlier date. Evidently, Etta was an equal opportunity madam.

Aftermath: Odds & Ends

The summoned Dr. A.L. Justice determined the bullet had penetrated to the right of Alice Abbott’s pubic arch and passed through her body. No vital organs were hit.

The next day’s *El Paso Herald* mistakenly told readers that Alice had been shot in the “public arch.” Long after she recovered, Alice was often asked, “How’s your public arch feel today?” The phrase later became a part of Western folklore.

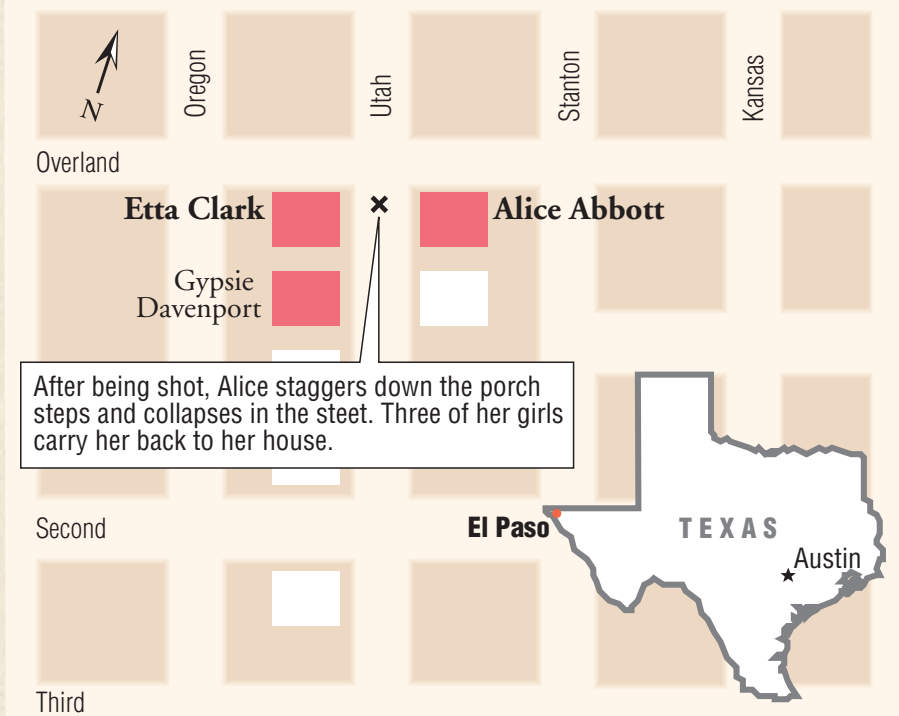
Etta Clark turned herself in to the police and was charged with attempted first-degree murder. On May 13, a jury found Etta not guilty on grounds of self-defense.

Incredibly, after the dust had settled and the wounds healed, Alice Abbott sweet-talked Bessie Colvin into returning to work at her brothel.

Recommended: *The Gentleman’s Club: The Story of Prostitution in El Paso* by H. Gordon Frost, published by Mangan Books.

EL PASO’S TENDERLOIN DISTRICT, 1886

Major brothel locations

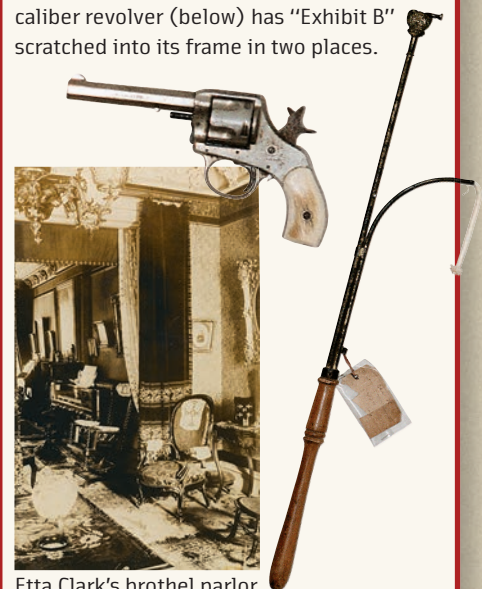


After being shot, Alice staggers down the porch steps and collapses in the street. Three of her girls carry her back to her house.

Map by Gus Walker

Etta's Weapons

Etta Clark’s gas lighter (below, right) was entered as evidence at her trial (note the “Exhibit A” tag still attached). Her .44 caliber revolver (below) has “Exhibit B” scratched into its frame in two places.



Etta Clark’s brothel parlor

BY JOHNNY D. BOGGS

Showman of the West

A rich historic trail will be discovered following Buffalo Bill's path to celebrity.



Buffalo Bill Cody was a self-promoter from the earliest years, as seen in this staged photo with guns and game reportedly taken at Fort McPherson, Nebraska, circa 1871.

True West Archives



Cody established Scout's Rest Ranch in 1878 and, thanks to the income generated by his Wild West exhibition, had "The Mansion on the Prairie" built in 1887. The Second Empire-style house, Cody's home until 1913, is part of Buffalo Bill State Historical Park, established in 1965 in North Platte, Nebraska.

All Images By Johnny D. Boggs Unless Otherwise Noted

You can find William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody practically everywhere in the West: his boyhood home in Scott County, Iowa...his Scout's Rest Ranch home at the Buffalo Bill State Historical Park in North Platte, Nebraska...the wonderful Buffalo Bill Center of the West in the town he helped found, Cody, Wyoming...and his final resting place on Lookout Mountain at the Buffalo Bill Grave and Museum in Golden, Colorado.

But just try to find the place where his actions won him the Medal of Honor in 1872.

That April, a group of Miniconjou Lakotas stole horses from a Union Pacific depot near Fort McPherson in Nebraska. Capt. Charles Meinhold was ordered to lead the pursuit. Cody and Texas Jack Omohundro were scouts. Two days later, Meinhold's command reached the South Fork of the Loop River (aka South Loop River, aka Loupe Fork of the Platte River). Meinhold sent Cody with Sgt. John H. Foley and 10 troopers on the south bank while Meinhold led the rest across the north side.

"Mr. Cody had guided Sergeant Foley's party with such skill that he approached the Indian camp within fifty yards before he was noticed,"

Meinhold wrote. "The Indians fired immediately upon Mr. Cody and Sergeant Foley. Mr. Cody killed one Indian; two others ran toward the main command and were killed."

It was, writes Louis S. Warren in *Buffalo Bill's America: William Cody and the Wild West Show*, "a small, nameless skirmish."

And it won Cody the Medal of Honor. Foley, Sgt. Leroy H. Vokes and Pvt. William H. Strayer each were also honored with a Medal of Honor.

But not until last year did the state transportation department and History Nebraska agree to erect a historical marker near the site on State Highway 92 near Stapleton.

Oakley, Kansas, considers itself "The Birthplace of The Legend," and the 2004 massive bronze by Kansas artists Charlie and Pat Norton at the Buffalo Bill Cultural Center celebrates Cody's 1868 contest with Bill Comstock.

Medal and Mettle

"How many Medal of Honor recipients do you remember?" asks Steve Friesen, former director of the Buffalo Bill Museum and Grave and author of *Buffalo Bill: Scout, Showman, Visionary*. "How many went into show business?"

Hey, Audie Murphy. But he never played Buffalo Bill, though he did play Billy the Kid (*The Kid from Texas*), John Clum (*Walk the Proud Land*), Jesse James (*Kansas Raiders* and *A Time for Dying*) and Audie Murphy (*To Hell and Back*).

"The importance of the Medal of Honor to the Buffalo Bill story is that it demonstrates his legitimacy," Friesen says. "He was not simply a creature of the dime novels or a show-business character; his reputation was built on real experiences on the frontier and true heroism."

Until World War I, the Medal of Honor was the only medal the Army awarded. "Valor," Warren writes, "was not an exclusive requirement." In 1917, Cody's medal was rescinded because of his civilian status, but his medal, and the medals of four other civilian scouts, were restored in 1989.

Other Paths

One could argue that Cody's path to celebrity began with the Pony Express (Pony Express National Museum, St. Joseph, Missouri; Marysville Pony Express Barn, Marysville, Kansas)—if he ever really rode for the short-lived venture. Or his buffalo-killing contest with Bill Comstock in 1868 near present-day Oakley, Kansas (Buffalo Bill Cultural Center), which Cody reputedly won, 69-46. Or the 1869 battle at Summit Springs, near Sterling, Colorado (Overland Trail Museum), in which Cody, maybe, killed Cheyenne leader Tall Bull. (The battle site is on private property.)

In reality, the trail began about 17 miles southeast of North Platte, Nebraska (Lincoln County Historical Museum), because it was at Fort McPherson where Edward Carrol Zane Judson, according to legend, asked scout Frank North for details about the Summit Springs fight. North declined the interview but directed the writer to an associate sleeping underneath a nearby wagon.

(Fort McPherson no longer exists, but check out Fort Kearny, a state historical park near



Kearney, Nebraska, which Cody frequented in the line of duty.)

On a Dime

Young Cody was delighted to regale Judson with plenty of stories, and on December 23, 1869, *Street & Smith's New York Weekly* published the first installment of *Buffalo Bill, The King of the Border Men* under Judson's Ned Buntline pen name. "Had [Judson] not stumbled upon

William Cody lying asleep, and possibly drunk, under a wagon on a late summer's day in 1869," Clay Reynolds writes in *The Hero of a Hundred Fights: Ned Buntline*, "chances are good that the handsome young man with greasy buckskins and long flowing curls would have merely continued his work foraging and scouting for the army."

In 1872-73, Judson wrote four more novels about Buffalo Bill. The prose won't draw



Cody's scouting missions took him to Fort Kearny. The 1848-71 fort became a state historical park in 1959 and features several reconstructed buildings.

comparisons to Steinbeck or McMurtry, but 19th-century readers ate them up.

“Judson was no Mark Twain,” says Sandra K. Sagala, author of *Buffalo Bill on Stage*. “Nevertheless, the Buffalo Bill of his prose...shot farther, rode faster, spoke more eloquently and exemplified the truest of the true frontiersmen.”

Treading the Boards

Fred G. Maeder adapted *Buffalo Bill, King of the Border Men* into a play that premiered at New York’s Bowery Theater in February 1872, starring J.B. Studley as the scout.

Not to be outdone, Judson then talked Cody and Omohundro into playing themselves in a play written by Judson that premiered in Chicago (Chicago History Museum) later that year to a review citing “incongruous drama,” “execrable acting” and “intolerable stench.” But theaters were always packed.

That led Cody and Omohundro to go out the next season without Buntline. (Wild Bill Hickok tagged along during most of the 1873-74 season.) Cody’s theatrical combination continued through 1886.

Show Must Go On

Cody had bigger dreams, which led to an Independence Day celebration in North Platte in 1882 and then, after dress rehearsals in Columbus, Nebraska (Platte County Historical Society Museum), the grand opening of Buffalo Bill’s *Wild West* in Omaha (The Durham Museum) on May 17, 1883.

The legend grew even bigger.

“Cody’s *Wild West* became the overachiever of his stage show,” Sagala says. “When the country’s theatrical boards could no longer contain all the animals, Native Americans and professional actors, shooting exhibitions, plus the drama *du jour*, Cody was left with no option but to move the show to an outdoor arena. The lessons he learned about staging, timing, logistics, scenery and personnel management were a valuable leg-up over his competition.”

Meanwhile, Cody’s path to legend goes on forever.



Johnny D. Boggs fictionalized the 1873-74 theatrical tour of “actors” Buffalo Bill Cody, Wild Bill Hickok and Texas Jack Omohundro in his novel *East of the Border*.



The graves of Cody and his wife, Louisa Frederici Cody, are at Lookout Mountain near Golden, Colorado. The Buffalo Bill Museum and Grave houses one copy of the Medal of Honor he reputedly won in 1872. The Buffalo Bill Center of the West houses another—just more proof that Cody sure knew how to market himself.

NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAILS INTERPRETIVE CENTER
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A WIDE SPOT IN THE ROAD



Left to Right:

Pawnee scout Spotted Horse's grave is at Fort McPherson National Cemetery.

Buffalo Soldier and Medal of Honor winner Emanuel Stance was found murdered in 1887 on the Nebraska road between Crawford and Fort Robinson.

The marker at Fort McPherson National Cemetery honors the enlisted men under Lieutenant John Grattan killed in the 1854 debacle in Wyoming that launched the U.S.-Lakota conflict that lasted 36 years.

FORT MCPHERSON NATIONAL CEMETERY

Established in 1863 near present-day Maxwell, Nebraska, Fort McPherson has all but disappeared. "Nearly everything movable has been taken to Fort Niobrara," the *Columbus* (Nebraska) *Era* reported on June 4, 1880, "and the remainder is going as soon as it can be moved."

But the national cemetery, which started in 1873, has several notable graves, including that of Sgt. Emanuel Stance (1843-1887), the first Black soldier awarded the Medal of Honor after

the Civil War. Stance joined the 9th Cavalry in 1866, winning the medal in 1870 for his actions at Kickapoo Springs, Texas.

More than 60 other Buffalo Soldiers are interred here, including another Medal of Honor winner, Sgt. George Jordan (1847-1904), honored for his actions with the 9th Cavalry in New Mexico Territory in 1881.

One-time George Custer scout California Joe Milner also rests here, as does Pawnee scout Spotted Horse, killed in 1862 by a Brule Lakota. And



the bodies of the enlisted men killed in the Grattan Fight in Wyoming in 1854 were reinterred here.

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Montana huckleberry season on the Kootenai National Forest is typically from mid-August to mid-September. An Indian huckleberry picker displays his harvest at a Forest Service camp on the West Fisher River, circa 1939.

KD Swan, Courtesy USFS

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On June 3, 1805, William Clark wrote this in his journal as the Lewis and Clark Expedition traveled through Montana: "This morning early we passed over and formed a camp on the point formed by the junction of the two large rivers... the choke cherry grows here in abundance both in the river bottoms and in the steep ravines [stet] along the river bluffs...saw the yellow and red courants [stet], not yet ripe; also the gooseberry which begins to ripen."

As Montana pioneers arrived, they too found the berries Clark mentioned, but others as well, like the famous huckleberry and saskatoon aka serviceberry. The native peoples used various berries and their roots for medicinal teas for treating coughs and other ailments. They also used serviceberries as a food staple for centuries to make pemmican.

Clark's companion, Meriwether Lewis wrote about the berries too. On August 16, 1805, he noted: "at 7 A.M. Capt. C. [Clark] set out after breakfast. Willow, service berry and currant bushes were the growth of the river bottoms. They gathered considerable quantities of service berries and caught some trout." Lewis also noted that wild huckleberries, which are tangy and tart, are small roundish berries that look like blueberries, grew in abundance, and the elk loved to eat them.

As Montana was settled in the 1800s, pioneers found many uses for the berries. At the 1890s Fergus County fairs a variety of items were offered for sale. Jams included gooseberry, currant, serviceberry and buffalo cherry, and wines made of currant, chokecherry, gooseberry and raspberry were offered.

Huckleberries were wildly popular and often made the newspaper. *The Daily Inter Mountain* in Butte noted in August 1899 that the huckleberry season was in full swing and reported, "Huckleberries having taken on the purple hue, many parties are preparing for a raid on the different patches in the mountain ranges hereabouts. The crop is said to be good this season. As there is nothing finer than a huckleberry pie, they are much sought after." In November 1909, Luteys tempted its customers in *The Anaconda Standard* with a large ad that asked, "Why not make huckleberry pie for Sunday? Two pounds will make three fat, healthy pies or four nice size ones. Huckleberries are extra fresh today. Special, 2 lbs...25c." Luteys had a similar ad for gooseberries, too. In October 1910, *The Butte Miner* ran an ad for the Montana Cash Grocery company which advertised, "Have you had a huckleberry pie this season? If not, you have missed a treat; they are delicious. The season is almost over. Pound...15c."



Gooseberries are native to the mountainous hillsides and valleys of Montana and are seasonal staples for the people and wildlife of the region.

Courtesy DCRJSR, Creative Commons 3.0

The Butte Daily Post ran an ad that had a slightly different take on the dark fruit. On page eight of the November 5, 1910, edition, readers viewed an ad from the Fels-Naptha soap company that featured "Aunty Dredge," who was their mascot at the time. The ad read, "Cross Mother—Those children are worrying the life out of me to bake them a huckleberry pie. But I daren't do it. It nearly kills me trying to rub the stains out of their clothes, as well as the table linen."

Aunty Drudge replied, "That's 'cos you don't wash the Fels-Naptha way. Let the children have all the pie that's good for 'em. Fels-Naptha and cold water will remove the stains in a jiffy."

Native fruit pies often appeared on menus all over Montana. The ladies of the congregational church in Billings held a fundraiser in 1897 at which they served a variety of items including quince and gooseberry pie. The Bon Ton restaurant in Helena, The Grand in Philipsburg, the Bristol Café in Great Falls and the Hotel Missoula all served gooseberry pie.



GOOSEBERRY PIE

4 cups fresh gooseberries
 2/3 cup sugar • 1/4 cup flour
 1/8 teaspoon salt

1 tablespoon cold butter, cut into pieces
 2 piecrusts, unbaked

Snip the ends off the gooseberries. In a large bowl, combine the berries, sugar, flour and salt. Mix well.

Line a 9-inch pie pan with 1 crust and fill with the berry mixture. Dot the top with the butter and cover with second pie crust; seal. Make four or five slits in the top crust to allow the steam to escape.

Bake at 375°F for 45 minutes. If the crust starts to brown, cover it with aluminum foil. Cool completely before cutting.

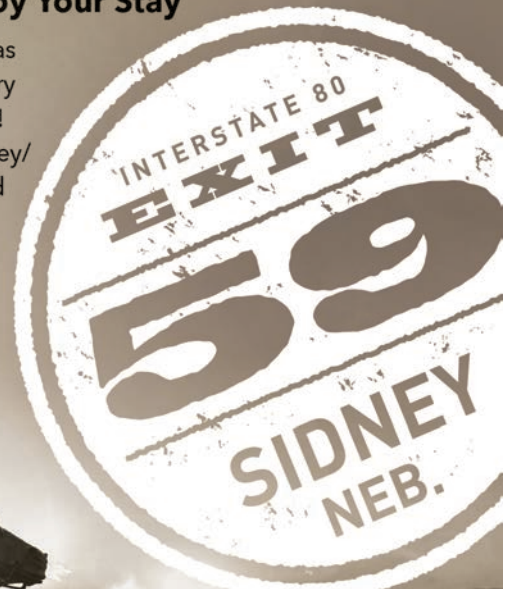


Recipe adapted from Helena, Montana's *Daily Independent*, July 2, 1895.

Sherry Monahan kicked off her journey into Old West cuisine, spirits and places by authoring *Taste of Tombstone*. Visit SherryMonahan.com to learn more about her books, awards and TV appearances.

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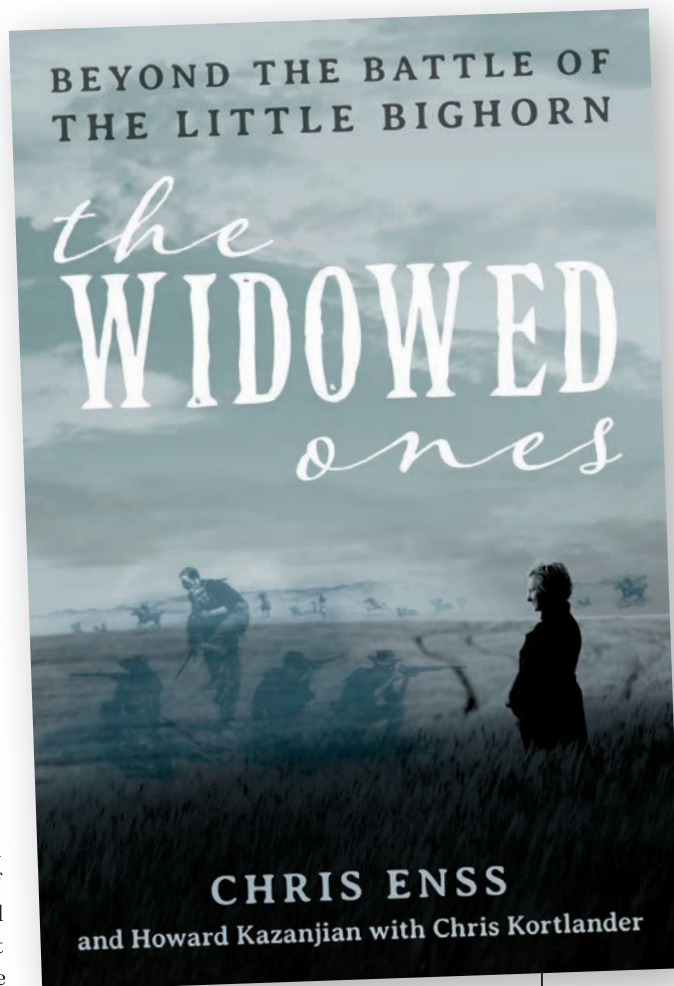
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Reveille to Taps

A poignant biography of the survivors of Little Bighorn, a new collection of short stories, a biography of a Chinese frontier leader, a history of a new people of the West and a stark Western tale.

Over the past two decades, Western Writers of America President Emeritus Chris Enss has established herself as one of the preeminent authors of Western women's history. Her most recent, *The Widowed Ones: Beyond the Battle of the Little Bighorn* (TwoDot, \$26.95), sets a new standard for Western researchers seeking a greater understanding of the stories of survivors of war, epidemics and natural disasters in the post-Columbian era of the Western United States. Written with her longtime collaborator Howard Kazanjian and Chris Kortlander, a noted collector of George Armstrong and Elizabeth "Libbie" Bacon Custer primary materials, Enss's book places the reader into the storyline of the lives of the 7th Cavalry officers and their ignoble leader Lt. Col. Custer just after the Battle of Little Bighorn. The authors' narrative recounts the story of the widows of the seven married officers, before, during and after the battle—and how each of their lives were fated to be assigned to Custer's 7th Cavalry at Fort Lincoln, Dakota Territory. At the center of the seven-decade chronicle is Libbie Custer, the acknowledged leader of the 7th Cavalry's officers' wives, a role she would hold until her passing in 1933. As the authors note, until her final breath four days



before her 91st birthday, Libbie championed her late husband and lived her life as positively as possible in support of herself and those who survived those killed at Little Bighorn on June 25, 1876.

I particularly like *The Widowed Ones* for its expansion of our understanding of the well-chronicled Battle of Little Bighorn and the leadership of both the American and Indian allies

and enemies of the Great Sioux War of 1876. I have thought for many years that historians of post-Civil War America still have a lot of material to quantify and qualify related to the aftermath and long-term effects of the violence meted out and absorbed by so many Americans of all ethnicities, races and religions. The post-traumatic effects of the War Between the States, which contributed to the frontier violence between settlers, Native peoples and the American military, also affected subsequent generations, especially those who had family killed or maimed in conflict during the settlement of the Western half the United States after 1865.

Enss' next book, *Along Came a Cowgirl: Daring and Iconic Women of Rodeos and Wild West Shows* (TwoDot), will be on shelves in September 2022, but I believe she will be willing to shed tears on the page to write the stories of more women and their children, whose voices have been rarely or never heard before.

—Stuart Rosebrook



Photo by Robert Ray

GREAT WESTERN HISTORY

To align with our great features in this issue on women's history, I researched some of the best published histories on the role of women in the settling and building of the West.

I highly recommend the following books on women in the West. Three of them are by Glenda Riley, who broke the ground for everyone to follow on the subject.

The Life and Legacy of Annie Oakley by Glenda Riley (University of Oklahoma Press, 1994)

A Place to Grow: Women in the American West by Glenda Riley (Harlan Davidson, 1992)

The Female Frontier: A Comparative View of Women on the Prairie and the Plains by Glenda Riley (University Press of Kansas, 1988)

Race and the Wild West: Sarah Bickford, the Montana Vigilantes, and the Tourism of Decline, 1870-1930 by Laura J. Arata (University of Oklahoma Press, 2020)

My Captivity: A Pioneer Woman's Story of Her Life Among the Sioux by Fanny Kelly (Skyhorse, 2014)

Soiled Doves: Prostitution in the Early West by Anne Seagreaves (Wesanne Publications, 2003)

Frontier Teachers: Stories of Heroic Women of the Old West by Chris Enss (TwoDot, 2008)

Doctor Wore Petticoats: Women Physicians of the Old West by Chris Enss (TwoDot, 2006)

Land of the Burnt Thigh: One Woman's Conquest of the Wild, Wild West (Conquering the Wild West Trilogy) by Edith Adora Ammons Kohl (CreateSpace, 2017)

New Women in the Old West: From Settlers to Suffragists, an Untold American Story by Winifred Gallagher (Penguin Press, 2021)

Their Own Frontier: Women Intellectuals Re-Visioning the American West edited by Shirley Anne Leckie and Nancy J. Perez (University of Nebraska Press, 2008)

—Stuart Rosebrook



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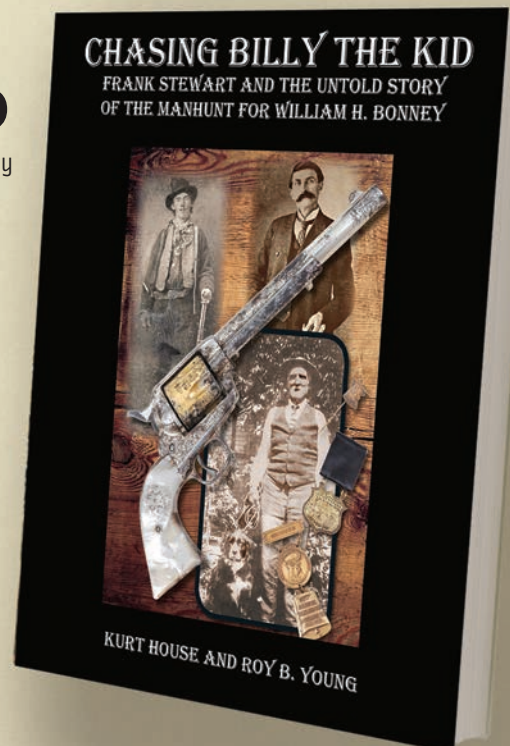
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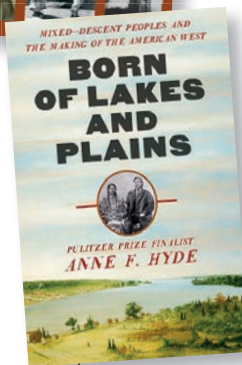
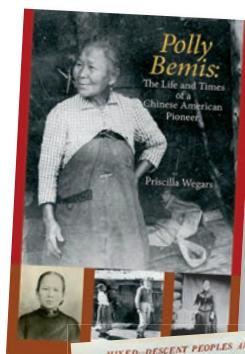
An extensive study of a woman whose life story was, until this book, shrouded in myth, *Polly Bemis: The Life and Times of a Chinese American Pioneer* by Pricilla Wegars (Caxton Press, \$29.95) tells the harrowing account of a young Chinese woman enslaved at an early age and brought to the American frontier. Hardships for young Polly continued in the western mining camps and boomtowns, yet she emerged as a strong and leading entrepreneur in Idaho. Author Wegars tells the story of Bemis, the surname of her Euroamerican husband, through an exhaustive amount of research, as there are over one hundred pages dedicated to endnotes alone. Wegars carefully tracks the life of Bemis chronologically with diligence while managing the story of Bemis with care and grace and dispelling the many myths surrounding Bemis with authority. *Polly Bemis* is more than the biography of a Chinese pioneer in the West, but a model of thorough research into the life and times of a marginalized member of frontier society.

—Erik J. Wright, assistant editor of *The Tombstone Epitaph*

On the Western Trail

The Westering Trail Travesties (Five Star, \$25.95) is a fun collection of five Old West stories by Mark Warren, who produces top-notch creative writing that is generously sprinkled with humor and smile-producing similes. Most of the stories are written in first person, which grabs the reader right from the get-go. Warren writes about an outlaw gang of oddballs who make an extraordinary discovery; a reporter from the East who is thrust onto the Kansas frontier to record his Wild West experiences; a group of 1906 Arizona Rangers who chase a Texas outlaw and get into the thick of things; a 14-year-old orphan, whose parents met tragic ends, continues to work the family farm in a surprising, and spooky, way; and a coming-of-age tale about a trio of youngsters in Nebraska. Always entertaining, Warren's work is first-rate.

—Denise F. McAllister, co-author of the *Wild Cow Ranch series*



Lakes and Plains: Mixed-Descent Peoples and the Making of the American West (W.W. Norton, \$40) looks to expand on this piece of history with Hyde following five mixed-descent families whose lives witnessed a panorama of noteworthy events in the development of the West.

—Erik J. Wright, assistant editor of *The Tombstone Epitaph*

Families Who Shaped the West

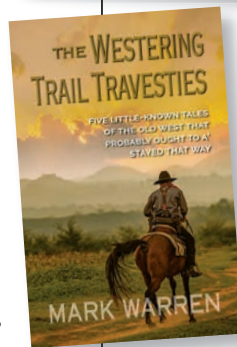
Author Anne F. Hyde, a preeminent scholar of the American West has brought her attention to an underserved chapter in American frontier history: mixed-blood families and how they helped to shape the growing country in the era of westward expansion. Hyde argues that beginning as early as the 17th century many Indigenous tribes began to develop new family branches with Europeans and American fur traders who would often shelter with the tribes in the winter or trade with them in the summer.

End of the Road

Against the stark Western frontier desert, Rod Miller weaves a riveting tale of human weakness, which explores the nature of evil and its presence among and in us. The storyline of Miller's newest book, *All My Sins Remembered* (Five Star, \$25.95), will resonate with the reader long after the book is read. There are many compelling and intriguing elements to the story. Miller chooses to have his characters nameless with an anonymous narrator, giving the story an aura of mystery. Frequent foreshadowing adds tension as things may not be as they seem, which creates uneasiness and suspense.

The action is centered on a roadhouse—an old, abandoned stagecoach station where the few travelers who do pass by soon learn that the owner's hospitality of food and drink comes with a cost. For some, the road ends there.

—Sue Ready, *EverReady Book Reviews*



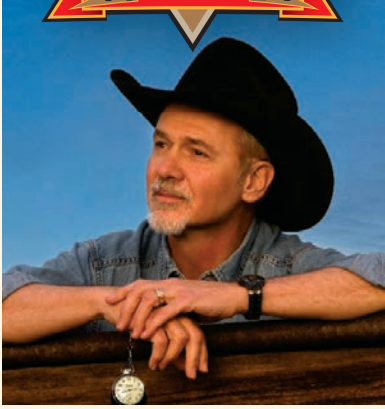


Photo Courtesy Jim Jones

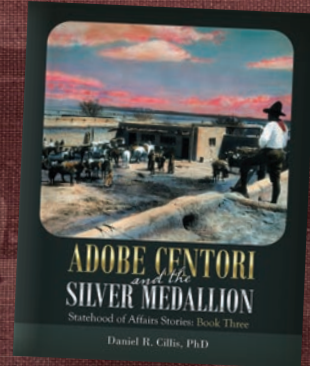
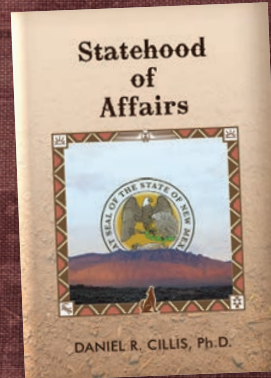
NEW MEXICO AUTHOR SHARES THE FAVORITES THAT INSPIRED HIS WRITING

Jim Jones is a winner of the 2022 Western Heritage Wrangler Award for Outstanding Original Western Composition, the IWMA 2019 Song of the Year, AWA 2016 Western Song of the Year and Western Writers of America 2013, 2017 and 2021 Spur Awards for Best Western Song. Western novels include his Jared Delaney/Moon series and his Tommy Stallings series. His novella, *Scarecrows*, is included in the Five Star anthology, *Perilous Frontier*.

- 1 **Lonesome Dove** by Larry McMurtry (Simon & Schuster): The sweeping historical saga features two of the great characters in Western literature, Gus McCrae and Woodrow Call. The book inspired my song, "Rustler's Moon," which inspired my first novel of the same name.
- 2 **The Time It Never Rained** by Elmer Kelton (Doubleday & Company): Kelton's answer to Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* is a realistic portrayal of a Texan's courageous struggle to survive Texas's terrible drought of the 1950s.
- 3 **Ride the Wind** by Lucia St. Clair Robson (Ballantine Books): An intimate novelization of Cynthia Ann Parker's life with the Comanches, it's a powerful tribute to the notion that we are all more alike than not.
- 4 **Dancing at the Rascal Fair** by Ivan Doig (Atheneum Publishers): Doig shows there's more to the West than cowboys in his insightful account of Scottish immigrants who came to wild Montana to carve out a new life as sheepherders.
- 5 **Little Big Man** by Thomas Berger (Dial Press): Once you've seen the West through the eyes of Jack Crabb, history will never be quite the same. Berger's character, Crabb, shares multiple perspectives that make you laugh, cry and think.

TALES OF NEW MEXICO

by Daniel R. Cillis, Ph.D.



Fast-paced adventures and high-stakes political intrigue are within the pages of *Statehood of Affairs* and *Adobe Centori and the Silver Medallion*. Centori's challenges are set within territorial New Mexico and extend to the struggle for statehood and beyond. The author's words flow to express ideas, scenes and vivid character images that provide insightful and entertaining historical fiction.

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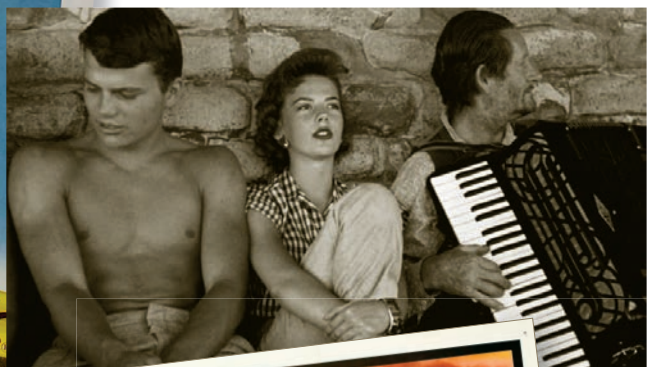


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Patrick Wayne

An actor in his own right, the Duke's son entertained audiences for decades in Westerns and action movies.



Patrick Wayne received his first top billing as a film's leading man for the 1959 Western *The Young Land*. The 20-year-old was soon a sought-after star and costar in movies and television.

Courtesy Columbia Pictures

In the golden years of Hollywood, a star could always get their kid a bit part in their movie, to keep them busy and quiet. That's usually as far as it went, including for most of John Wayne's children. But not for Patrick. "It was an amazing experience; I enjoyed the work. And one of the greatest things about it was that my brothers and sisters had no interest in doing this. So, when I'd go away with my dad and work on a film, I had him all to myself."

Born in July of 1939, Patrick can't remember when he started visiting movie sets. But, about *Rio Grande* (1950), I do have fond memories," he said. Two years later, when he was 12, his father was preparing to star in *The Quiet Man*. "I remember flying out of L.A. with my brother

Michael. Seven hours to New York on a prop-plane, and another eight or nine hours to Ireland. Where the overhead luggage-racks are now, there were berths; you had beds up there."

It was a long way to travel to be an uncredited boy on a wagon at a horse race. But his roles in John Ford movies would grow more substantial. "I had an ace in the hole, because he was my godfather. In fact, I worked in several films with Ford, without my father: *Mr. Roberts*, *The Long Grey Line*, *Cheyenne Autumn* to name a few."

If he played a callow youth well, that was at least in part because when he played Lieutenant Greenhill in *The Searchers*, he was 14 years old. "I was a big kid. I was a quick study, so I was prepared," but nothing could prepare him for



A young Patrick Wayne (top, left) costarred with Natalie Wood and Danny Borzage in what many consider his father's finest film, *The Searchers*. The three costars are pictured here relaxing between takes in the summer of 1955 at the film location's headquarters, Goulding's Lodge, near Monument Valley, Utah/Arizona.

Courtesy Warner Bros.

when his father and Ward Bond went playfully off-script. "These clowns are ad-libbing the stuff about 'the joint punitive action' that wasn't in the script, putting me off; but actually, it worked perfect for the part."

For all the time Pat spent with his dad, he didn't get a lot of direct advice. "He didn't advise his kids on anything. He led by example; that's where you learned." As for acting, "his big deal was preparation. When you're going to do a part, you've got to know who that character is. And if he has anything physical to do, it has to be second nature to you."

In 1960, Patrick was juggling attending Loyola University with playing Capt. James Bonham in *The Alamo*, observing his father not only starring, but directing the epic. "This is before CGI, so those battle scenes with thousands of Mexicans outside the fort, those were real people. It was a Herculean task; it would've killed an ordinary man, but he was ready to do this, knew what he wanted."

Patrick was not so sure about what he wanted. "I graduated with a degree in biology, and I decided that [acting] is something that I wanted do. So of course, all the work stops." Actually, in rapid succession he was soon seen with his dad in *The Comancheros*, *Donovan's Reef* and in *McLintock!*, in which he worked with Maureen O'Hara. "She gave me my first screen kiss, in *The Long Gray Line*. And when my father passed away, she spoke



After Patrick Wayne made his debut in films in the 1950s, the actor worked steadily for over four decades in all genres of film and television, including in the Ray Harryhausen sci-fi cult classic *Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger*. His costar Taryn Power (above, right) was also the child of Hollywood actors, leading man Tyrone Power and Mexican actress Linda Christian.

Courtesy Columbia Pictures

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Big Jake was the ninth and last film in which Patrick Wayne appeared on screen with his father John Wayne, as Jake McCandles (left.) In the 1971 Batjac Production for Paramount Pictures, Duke cast his son Patrick (right) to play his son James McCandles in the ensemble Western, which included Wayne's friend and Batjac film company member Bruce Cabot as Sam Sharprose (center).

Courtesy Paramount Pictures

to Congress for my dad to get the Congressional Medal of Freedom.”

In 1973, Patrick began a new, swashbuckling phase of his career as the star of fantasy adventures, beginning with *Beyond Atlantis*, a quest for a lost civilization and a fortune in pearls. “They were looking to make a sea version of *Treasure of Sierra Madre*. In the Philippines, you're in a paradise.” This was followed by the far more elegant *Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger*. Not an experienced swordsman, he was assured that a stuntman in Europe would cover for him, “I put my foot down. I've really got to do it. I'm not going over there unprepared. I made such a fuss that they finally let me work with this fencing

guy, Buddy Van Horn, Clint Eastwood's double. I worked with him every day and by the end I could have joined the Olympic team. Our first location was Malta. [Animator] Ray Harryhausen was very involved in the action sequences because he was the one making the little models, all the demons I was fighting, and they get added later.

“We were in Malta, Spain, Jordan. We were in London, at Pinewood. It was so much fun, and I was working with Jane Seymour and Taryn Power, beautiful women, and my God, getting paid for it!”

“You know,” Patrick said, “there've been things written about how my dad drank on set. It's not true. And that he wasn't prepared:



Patrick Wayne costarred as Sheriff Pat Garrett in *Young Guns* in 1988. Wayne continued to work as an actor until he retired from the craft in 1997. After his brother Michael's passing in 2003, he became chairman of the John Wayne Cancer Institute.

Courtesy Twentieth Century Fox

wrong. He was always prepared. He could abide a lot of things going wrong on set, but he could not deal with a person who was not prepared to come to work and do what he was supposed to. That was not acceptable; for that he would read you the riot act."



BLU-RAY REVIEW

STRANGER ON THE RUN

(Kino Lorber Blu-ray \$24.95, DVD \$14.95); Considering his success with *12 Angry Men*, Henry Fonda surely jumped at the chance of doing another Reginald Rose story, even if it was for a Western movie-of-the-week, using leftover, half-burned sets from *Welcome to Hard Times*. Fonda plays a drunken hobo tossed off a train in a one-block desert town, who puts a target on his back when he starts inquiring about his former cellmate's sister. Directed with Don Siegel's usual elegance, it's a wonderful character study, from Fonda, to cattle-woman Anne Baxter, to sheriff Michael Parks, to his deputy Dan Durveya—who walks off with the movie. But despite the structure, it's not a mystery. The final denouement of what happened to the missing lady, along with Parks' mumbling, will leave you shrugging.



Henry C. Parke, Western Films Editor for *True West*, is a screenwriter, and blogs at *HenrysWesternRoundup.blogspot.com*. His book of interviews, *Indians and Cowboys*, will be published later this year.



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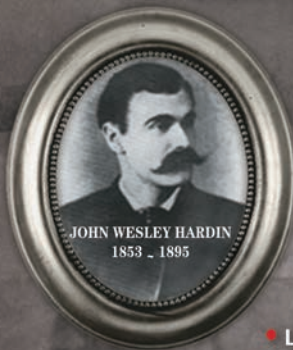


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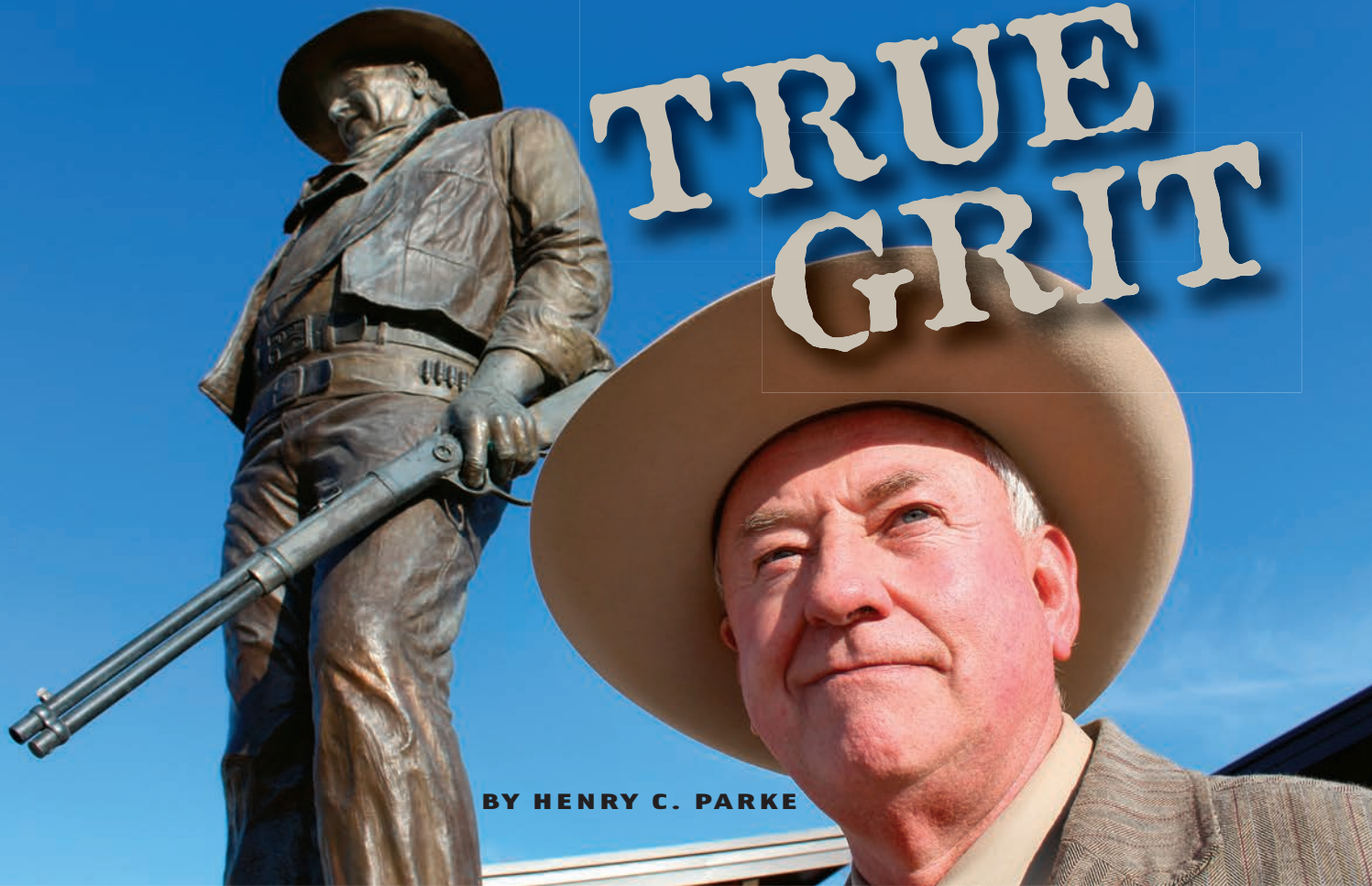


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• Exciting Monthly night time Ghost Tours held Saturday nights, 8-10 p.m. Check website or Facebook for dates!

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BY HENRY C. PARKE

Director Brian Downes has made it his life's work to build and fill the expanded John Wayne Birthplace Museum.

If you've visited the John Wayne Birthplace Museum in Winterset, Iowa, prior to June of 2022, you've only seen half of it. That's because it's just doubled in size. "It's now 10,400 square feet," explains Brian Downes, director of the museum. While little attention had been paid to the place beforehand, with the passing of the Western movie icon in 1979, "suddenly there was a great hunger to see the place where John Wayne was born. So, the old-timers in town who remembered the Morrison family pinpointed the house, and the birthplace organization bought it and opened it for tours 40 years ago this year."

While Downes' association with the museum is of comparatively recent vintage, his enthusiasm for the Duke goes back to his youth. In 1977, as an employee—but not a reporter—for the *Chicago Tribune* (where he would work for 35 years), "having a press card and the

Tribune letterhead," and a lot of Irish chutzpah, he requested an interview with Wayne. Incredibly, he says, "He invited me to his home and devoted the whole day to the visit," even after he figured out it was the kid's first interview. The meeting served them both well, as Downes became a pipeline from the Duke to the *Tribune*, running articles and letters from Wayne on topics from the Panama Canal (he thought Panama should own it) to mandatory retirement at age 65 (he was against it).

Until 2007, the centennial of Wayne's birth, the museum consisted solely of his modest birth home. Downes, who in the summers ran a 40-person travelling Buffalo Bill's Wild West show, offered the show to the museum. Not only did they accept, but soon after asked if he'd leave the *Tribune* to develop a new museum building.

He agreed. "We had all these promises of collections, but we needed a building." About \$4

million was raised, "I'd say 75 percent was from ordinary John Wayne fans from around the world."

One of the first items, from a friend of Wayne's, was the Duke's own station wagon, with its roof raised six inches, so he could drive with his cowboy hat on. A private collector, Joe Zuckschwerdt, was another donor. "His collection represents close to 90 percent of the items on display."

Among the Wayne memorabilia are original movie posters, contracts, wardrobe from *Rio Lobo*, *Hatari*, *The Green Berets*, uniforms from *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*, Wayne's saddle from *The Cowboys*, and, of course, a *True Grit* eyepatch. The museum even has the Irish jaunting car from *The Quiet Man*, which was bequeathed to the museum by Maureen O'Hara.

The most wanted items among John Wayne collectors are the personalized coffee mugs that he would give to each cast and crew

Brian Downes (left), founding curator of the John Wayne Birthplace & Museum has dedicated the last 15 years to managing and expanding the museum in the Duke's hometown of Winterset, Iowa.

Photo by Wayne Davies, Courtesy John Wayne Birthplace & Museum

When Brian Downes began to manage the John Wayne Birthplace & Museum in 2007, John Wayne's parents' home (right) was the centerpiece of the visitors' experience, plus a small visitor's center, until the first expansion opened in a gala affair in May 2015.

Photo by Wayne Davies, Courtesy John Wayne Birthplace & Museum



member on every film. "We have ten on display, from *The Alamo*, *True Grit*, *Comancheros*, *McQ*," Downes recalls. "We had our fundraising auction a couple weeks ago and we sold an extra *Alamo* mug for \$7,600."

At least in part because Iowa is an early voting state in presidential elections, many politicians have visited. "Ronald Reagan was here the day before the 1984 election. And the next day, he won 49 states, so it was lucky stop for him. Donald Trump was here twice; Jimmy Carter loved it."

While the museum is not a part of John Wayne Enterprises, all the Wayne children have visited, and Aissa Wayne is on the board of directors. She also introduces the documentary

shown in the museum's theatre, which contains 24 seats from Grauman's Chinese Theatre in Hollywood. One third of the new exhibit hall is devoted to *The Alamo*. The presentation is narrated by Barry Corbin, a good friend of the museum, and highlights of the display include a cannon from the film, and a scale model of the set.

Of course, Downes is always looking for more to add to the museum's collection. "In Ridgway, Colorado, there's the old jail cart from *True Grit*. I asked for it twice. At first there was talk, and then the chamber of commerce said absolutely no way: that's all we've got!"



In June 2022, the John Wayne Birthplace & Museum opened its new wing, adding an additional 5,200 square feet to the popular Winterset, Iowa, destination.

Photo by Carol Bassett, Courtesy John Wayne Birthplace & Museum

75th Anniversary
1947-2022

BOOT HILL MUSEUM

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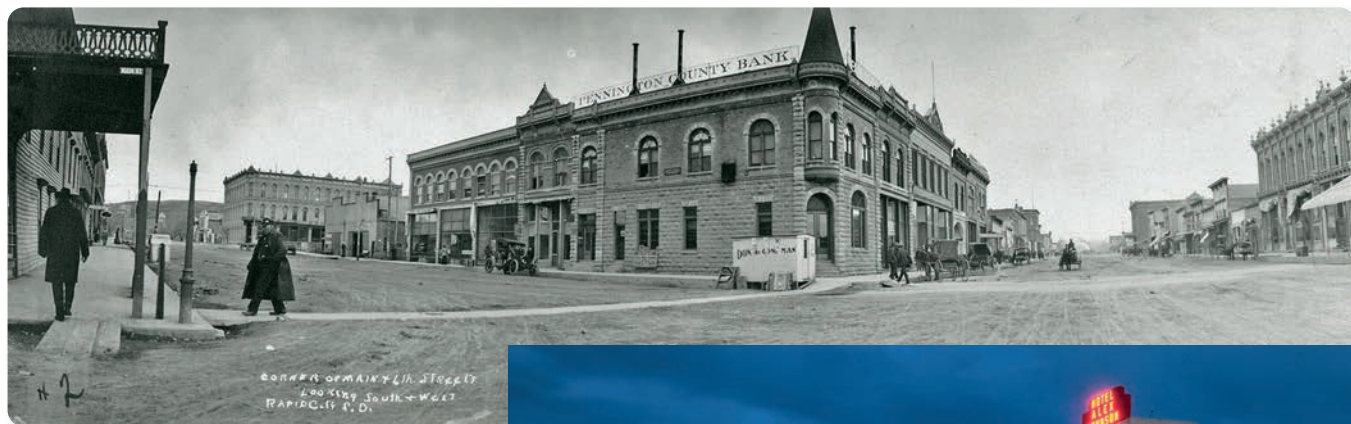
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BY PETER CORBETT

Rapid City, South Dakota

The "Gateway to the Black Hills" is the place to stay when exploring the region's parks, monuments and historic sites.



Downtown Rapid City, near Main and Sixth streets, with its entertainment district, restaurants, hotels and museums, is a great place to make a base camp when exploring the Black Hills.

Historic Rapid City Photo Courtesy Library of Congress/
Image of Rapid City Courtesy South Dakota Office of Tourism

The state's second largest city was first called Hay Camp. Founded in 1876, the boomtown served prospectors, miners and others who sought fortunes in the Black Hills. Now the place is known as Rapid City, and it's a base camp for travelers visiting Mount Rushmore, Crazy Horse Memorial and Custer State Park.

Rapid City, named for its location on Rapid Creek, is also convenient for day trips to Badlands and Wind Cave national parks, Jewel Cave National Monument, Deadwood and other Black Hills attractions.

Kelsy Peterson, Visit Rapid City's digital marketing manager, said the most common feedback from tourists is they had no idea how much there is to do in the western part of the state.

"South Dakota kind of has the underrated opinion about it that it's a one-trick pony, where we have Mount Rushmore and that's it," she said. "But there's so much history, so much



The Crazy Horse Memorial in South Dakota's Black Hills features Korczak Ziolkowski's visionary sculpture that has been in progress since 1948.

All Images Courtesy South Dakota Office of Tourism Unless Otherwise Noted



culture, so many things to explore and do. I think it blows people away.”

It starts with Mount Rushmore National Memorial. Last year, 2.5 million Americans and others visited, taking photos of the four presidents—George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln—their faces carved into the granite cliffs.

The memorial includes an Avenue of Flags of the 50 states and the studio of sculptor Gutzon Borglum, who carved the iconic images from 1927 until his death in March of 1941. His son, Lincoln, finished the monumental sculpture seven months later.

Crazy Horse Memorial, with an 87-foot rock-face sculpture of the Lakota Sioux war chief, was started in 1948. Much work remains to complete the hand, forearm and shoulder of the chief. The memorial has a popular Volksmarch in June and October that allows hikers to traverse a 6.2-mile route around the mountain and on to the figure's outstretched arm.

At Custer State Park, visitors can watch a herd of 1,400 buffalo charging across the prairie during an annual late September round-up. The 2,000-pound mammals graze year-round and often congregate on park roads, blocking traffic in a so-called “buffalo jam.”

Rapid City itself has its attractions as the second largest city in the state with about 75,000 residents. It's known as the City of Presidents for the proximity to Mount Rushmore and life-size bronze statues downtown of every president through Barack Obama. One is in the works for Donald Trump.

Downtown Rapid City is also home to the Dahl Arts Center with contemporary visual and performing arts.

Enjoy a craft beer nearby at Hay Camp Brewing Co. or Firehouse Brewing Co., in the city's former 1915 fire station.

Western film fans can take a short drive south to see the South Dakota Movie Museum, including a film set of *Dances With Wolves*. It's part of a Western town experience that includes the Fort Hays Chuckwagon and Supper Music Show.

A good place to start or end a Black Hills trip is the Journey Museum and Learning Center in Rapid City with exhibits on the region's geology, paleontology, archaeology, Native American and pioneer history.

“We are very honest about the history of conflict,” said Troy Kilpatrick, museum executive director. “We're very honest about the gold rush, Custer's expedition, treaties, Wounded Knee and the Battle of Little Bighorn. That's all here.”

There is an ongoing legal dispute over ownership of the Black Hills 154 years after the Fort Laramie Treaty ceded the region to the Sioux. But that was ignored after the Black Hills gold rush in 1876.

“I would never tell you our community is completely healed,” Kilpatrick said.



Peter Corbett moved West to Flagstaff in 1974 to attend Northern Arizona University, where he studied English and American Studies. He's been exploring Arizona and the West since then and had a 35-year career in Arizona journalism.



The Journey Museum in Rapid City provides visitors with introspective exhibits on the history and culture of the region's Indian tribes, trappers, miners, soldiers and settlers.

WHERE HISTORY MEETS THE HIGHWAY



Mount Rushmore National Memorial

Keystone, South Dakota

FIRST STOP

Visit Rapid City tourism office offers information about Black Hills attractions, 512 Main St., Suite 240.

VisitRapidCity.com

GREAT WALL OF PRESIDENTS

Mount Rushmore National Memorial, 30 minutes from Rapid City, is home to one of America's most iconic landscapes.

NPS.gov

CRAZY HORSE

See the work in progress on the Crazy Horse sculpture started in 1948 by Korczak Ziolkowski.

CrazyHorseMemorial.org

DANCES WITH WOLVES SET

Fort Hays Old Town Square includes buildings from the *Dances With Wolves* set and the South Dakota Film Museum.

MountRushmoreTours.com

BLACK HILLS HISTORY

The Journey Museum and Learning Center highlights the heritage, culture and environment of the Black Hills.

JourneyMuseum.org

NORTHERN PLAINS TRADING POST

Prairie Edge Trading Co. is a gallery for Northern Plains artists and a trading post for blankets, quilts, books, music and jewelry. It is housed in a restored 1886 building.

PrairieEdge.com

SAVING THE WEST



BY CANDY MOULTON AND THE EDITORS OF *TRUE WEST*



OUR TOP WESTERN MUSEUMS FOR 2022 REFLECT THE DEDICATION OF COMMUNITIES TO THEIR HERITAGE.

The icons of the West, like the Duke and the American cowboy, are among the featured exhibits in the best museums of the American West, and they are being joined by new cultural characters including Hank the Cowdog. That loveable pup—the literary creation of West Texas rancher and writer John Erickson—has his own exhibit designed to educate kids and adults about the importance of ranching.

In addition to new exhibitions and even entirely new or expanded facilities, museums are making their collections accessible through multimedia and online exhibits, so it is possible to experience and learn about the art, artifacts, culture and stories of various institutions while remaining at home.

But trust us, it is so much better to get on the road and visit in person these great displays of our Western heritage.

“What’s in the Cowboy Name?” is one of the most popular exhibits at the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

Courtesy National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum



I. NATIONAL COWBOY AND WESTERN HERITAGE MUSEUM (OKLAHOMA CITY, OK)

“Colter’s Hell: Yellowstone Park at 150” is a special exhibit at the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum this year. It features art from the Cowboy Museum collection as well as items borrowed from other institutions including the Gilcrease Museum. On National Root Beer Float Day (August 6), kids took over

Native American Gallery, National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum

Courtesy National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum

the Cowboy for their own exploration of Yellowstone, looking for animals in the artwork during a scavenger hunt, and seeing a geyser in action. Among the exhibits opening late this year and on into 2023 are “Looking into the Windows of the West,” “Art of the Northwest Coast” and “Sombreros Texas Bosses of the Plains: Cowboy Hats from the Permanent Collection.” NationalCowboyMuseum.org

into 2023 providing an opportunity for visitors to see the fabulous photographs Curtis made during his travels in the West. The train clubs of Scottsdale’s McCormick-Stillman Railroad Park worked with Western Spirit on an exhibition that features period HO and G scale train sets that operate hands-free. This multimedia and tactile exhibition gives a glimpse into the trains of the American West and includes images and sounds appropriate to the various vignettes, including the driving of the Golden Spike, Harvey Houses, the Harvey Girls, the El Tovar Hotel (Grand Canyon, AZ), the La Posada Hotel (Winslow, AZ) and Los Angeles Union Station. ScottsdaleMuseumWest.org.

2. WESTERN SPIRIT: SCOTTSDALE’S MUSEUM OF THE WEST (SCOTTSDALE, AZ)

“Light and Legacy: The Art and Techniques of Edward S. Curtis” remains on exhibition



First Americans Museum (Oklahoma City, OK): Occasionally the museum world has an opening that surpasses all expectations, and that is the case with First Americans Museum in Oklahoma City. Exhibitions created by Native Americans recognize the stories of all 39 tribes in Oklahoma today. They also celebrate objects important to indigenous culture that, after 100 years, are being returned to the Oklahoma tribes from the Smithsonian Institution. The Exhibition “FAM, Winiko: Life of an Object, Selections from the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian” shows how tribal objects reflect values and possess spiritual significance. FAMOK.org

“Winiko: Life of an Object”
First Americans Museum, Oklahoma City, OK

Courtesy First Americans Museum



Western Spirit: Scottsdale Museum of the West, Scottsdale, AZ

FrontRowSociety.net, Andreas Conrad, Courtesy Scottsdale Museum of the West



National Historic Trails Interpretive Center, Casper, WY
Courtesy NHCF.org

3. NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAILS INTERPRETIVE CENTER (CASPER, WY)

Celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, the National Historic Trails Interpretive Center not only highlights the history of the overland trails that converged at the last crossing of the North Platte River, but also opened “The Battle of Red Buttes,” a new exhibit that centers on the July 26, 1865, battle involving the Cheyenne, Arapaho and Lakota people in the first significant attack in what is now Wyoming. The Red Buttes fight was planned and executed by Little Wolf, Hump and other tribal leaders in direct retaliation for the November 1864 massacre at Sand Creek. It resulted in the death of Sgt. Amos Custard, and more than 20 men from the 11th Kansas Volunteer Cavalry who died—and are still buried—on the battle site just west of Casper. Fighting earlier in the day near Platte Bridge Station resulted in the loss of several additional cavalry troopers, including Lt. Caspar Collins of the 11th Ohio Volunteer Cavalry, for whom the frontier station—and ultimately the city—were named. The exhibit and 25-minute documentary film about the battle highlight descendants of the native participants including Little Wolf, Hump, Crazy Horse and Dull Knife or Morning Star and the Arapahos who were attacked at Sand Creek. NHTIC.org

4. BOOT HILL MUSEUM (DODGE CITY, KS)

Boot Hill has a double-header this year as the town celebrates its sesquicentennial and the museum recognizes its diamond jubilee. These 150- and 75-year anniversaries mean it's time to pull out all the stops, so the museum featured a display of Miss Kitty dresses dating back to the 1950s and '60s, a banner from the



Boot Hill Museum, Dodge City, KS

Courtesy Boot Hill Museum

Dodge City Fiesta, predecessor to Dodge City Days and a six-foot-tall Evans drumhead used by the Dodge City marching band. The community celebrated with Founder's Day weekend in June and, not to be outdone, the Long Branch Saloon Variety Show literally kicked off its 65th annual season. These events mark the end of the first year of operation for the newly reimagined museum, which completed a \$6 million upgrade in 2021. So even if you think you've been to Dodge City and seen all there is to see, there's a pretty good bet that you haven't. Featured in the new exhibit are signature pieces on display each for a year at a time that includes

three Plains Indian artifacts, including a beaded dress belonging to a wife of Morning Star Chief and another dress that was owned by the wife of Elk Eye Tooth Chief, along with a fully beaded cradleboard.

Boothill.org

5: THREE RIVERS MUSEUM (MUSKOGEE, OK)

“Then Came the Law,” an exhibit focused on the early law enforcement history of Muskogee and Indian Territory, features original artifacts, historical photographs, interactive elements and an audiovisual presentation on law enforcement legends Bass Reeves and James Franklin “Bud” Ledbetter. This exhibit will have further enhancement during 2022 and in future years. Visitors can

now learn more about law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty in the Muskogee area by using a new digital interactive program that incorporates their stories. The museum holds the Bass Reeves Western History Conference annually, giving more detailed information about law enforcement in the region. The Three Rivers region was the location of the biggest Osage trading region, then as more settlers arrived, the railroad was built to fill the need for easy travel. The museum makes its home in the Midland Valley passenger rail depot that once brought thousands of passengers in and out of the area.

3RiversMuseum.com

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Three Rivers Museum,
Muskogee, OK

Courtesy Oklahoma Tourism

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HISTORIC ADAMS HOUSE
THE BROTHEL DEADWOOD

FIREARM MUSEUMS

J.M. Davis Arms and Historical Museum
(Claremore, OK): TheGunMuseum.com

Museum of the Fur Trade
(Chadron, NE): FurTrade.org

Hastings Museum of Natural and Cultural History (Hastings, NE): HastingsMuseum.org

Woolaroc Museum
(Bartlesville, OK): Woolaroc.org

Nelson Museum of Western Art
(Cheyenne, WY): NelsonMuseum.com

NRA National Sporting Arms Museum
(Springfield, MO): BassPro.com

Cody Firearms Museum (Cody, WY):
CenterOfTheWest.org

The Autry National Center
(Los Angeles, CA): TheAutry.org

The John Browning Museum
(Ogden, UT): OgdenCity.com

The Charleston Museum
(Charleston, SC): CharlestonMuseum.org



Cody Firearms Museum, Buffalo Bill Center of the West, Cody, WY

Courtesy BBCW



6. JOHN WAYNE BIRTHPLACE & MUSEUM (WINTERSSET, IA)

The shutdowns museums across the country experienced during Covid became an opportunity to focus on exhibits and new offerings, and the John Wayne Birthplace & Museum, which is developing a new addition to its facility, took Covid closure as a time to develop a series of videos that allow virtual visitors the chance to learn

John Wayne Birthplace & Museum,
Winterset, IA

Courtesy John Wayne Birthplace & Museum

more about the museum and of course the Duke himself. This year's John Wayne Birthday celebration included the music of Carin Marie, a talented young performer from Colorado, a showing of *McLintock!* and Barry Corbin. It really doesn't get much better than that.

JohnWayneBirthplace.museum



William Kalwick, "New Home" 20x16, Oil (detail)

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www.benjohnsoncowboymuseum.com

National Ranching Heritage Center
Lubbock, TX
Courtesy Lubbock CVB



7. NATIONAL RANCHING HERITAGE CENTER (LUBBOCK, TX)

Hank the Cowdog, the literary creation of John Erickson, has been delighting readers for decades with his tales of ranch life where he is the head of security. Now the National Ranching Heritage Center has partnered with Erickson to create a permanent indoor/outdoor experience: the Ranch Life Learning Center. It is a unique learning immersion featuring natural resource stewardship, animal husbandry, wildlife habitat, ranch ecology, animal nutrition, ranching and the working cowboy using Hank the Cowdog to guide visitors. Exhibits are designed for children's interaction and comprehension, yet people of all ages will come away with a holistic answer to the question "What is a Ranch?"

Society is increasingly isolated from ranching as jobs and upbringings shift to urban environments. The effect is that fewer and fewer people have a place that they can learn about the earth and how to steward it. Having a place to explore natural resource stewardship, animal husbandry, wildlife habitat, range ecology, animal nutrition and business management from the ranching perspective is elemental to generating sustainable societal solutions. The Ranch Life

Learning Center is designed to give an accurate, adult-level ranch life educational experience in a format that enriches children of all ages. Featured in more than nine million copies worldwide, "Hank the Cowdog" is a book character and theme licensed exclusively to the National Ranching Heritage Center for this exhibit. RanchingHeritage.org

8. AUTRY MUSEUM (LOS ANGELES, CA)

Among the new exhibitions at the Autry Museum is "The Silent West," which features American West-themed posters from the Silent film era, a remarkable period of commercial lithography. The exhibit shows that women and people of color had important roles in developing the silent movies from acting as script writers to directors and stunt performers. Among the ongoing exhibits at the Autry are "Four Centures of Pueblo Pottery," with more than 100 pieces of rare ceramics, and "Human Nature" highlighting four key California stories—Salmon, Fire, Desert and Plants. Using American Indian objects and contemporary artwork, photography and multimedia displays, the exhibit shows how culture and ecology merge in the landscape of California. TheAutry.org



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Autry Museum, Los Angeles, CA

Courtesy Autry Museum



Museum of the Mountain Man,
Pinedale, WY

Courtesy Museum of the Mountain Man

COWBOYS, INDIANS, LAWMEN, MOUNTAIN MEN AND OUTLAWS

Jesse James Farm & Museum (Kearney, MO):
The stories of the James family, their farm,
and their outlaw escapades are a focus at this
museum and the farm where Jesse once lived.
JesseJames.org

Ben Johnson Cowboy Museum (Pawhuska, OK):
Visit here to learn about one of the great
rodeo and Western film cowboys.
BenJohnsonCowboyMuseum.com

Billy the Kid Museum (Hico, TX): There's
always a new story about Billy, and you're
sure to find something intriguing in these
collections. BillyTheKidMuseum.org

Southern Ute Cultural Center and Museum
(Ignacio, CO): American Indian artwork is on
display as part of museum program to foster
the arts among American Indians.
SouthernUteMuseum.org

Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum
(Waco, TX): Texas Ranger talks resumed at the
museum this summer. TexasRanger.org

Museum of the Mountain Man (Pinedale, WY):
Mountain men, Hugh Glass and a replica of
the American Horse tipi are just three of the
good reasons to visit this museum.
MuseumoftheMountainMan.org

Texas Cowboy Hall of Fame (Fort Worth, TX):
You'll see the chaps, spurs and gear of Texas
cowboys at the hall of fame located in
Cowtown. TCHOF.com

Kwahadi Museum of the American Indian
(Amarillo, TX): See Kwahadi artifacts or enjoy
a dance by tribal youth. Kwahadi.com

Gunfighter Hall of Fame Museum (Tombstone,
AZ): Guns and gunfights are the core of this
museum experience. Gunfighter-Fame.Keep.io

**Dalton Defender and Coffeyville History
Museum** (Coffeyville, KS): The Daltons rode
into town and faced a town unwilling to let
them ride out unscathed. Coffeyville.com

Chiricahua Desert Museum/Apache Museum
(Rodeo, NM): The material items of the
Mimbres, Apache and Casas Grande tribes
include pottery, tools, sandals and more.
ChiricahuaDesertMuseum.com

PPHM

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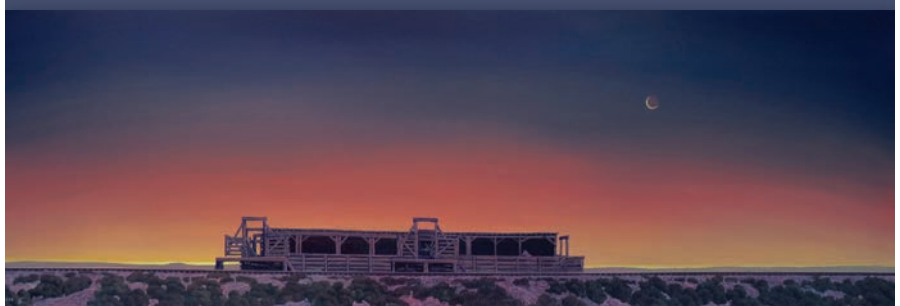
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FAVORITE WESTERN REGIONAL MUSEUMS

Patee House Museum and Jesse James Home (St. Joseph, MO): Ride the carousel and learn about the Pony Express in the Patee House Museum, then step outside and around the corner to the Jesse James Home, where the famous outlaw was gunned down by Jack McCall. PonyExpressJesseJames.com

Atoka Museum & Civil War Cemetery (Atoka, OK): Diorama vignettes of life in the region of Atoka, Oklahoma, cover the Civil War, military service and even champion bull rider Lane Frost. AtokaMuseum.org

Robidoux Row Museum (St. Joseph, MO): The Robidoux family was prominent in the early fur trade era of the West, and you can learn about them and experience the lives they led in this unique museum. RobidouxRowMuseum.org

Museum of the Great Plains (Lawton, OK): The 1901 train depot and a rebuilt agriculture exhibit with pieces used throughout the plains from the late 1800s to the mid 1900s opened this year, and the museum is replacing non-native plants and trees with native trees and plants to better display what the prairie would have looked like without European influence. DiscoverMGP.org

Little Snake River Museum (Savery, WY): Historically, Carbon County was one of the largest sheep-producing counties in the nation. And the newly opened MacPherson Sheep Center celebrates and preserves the history of the sheep industry in the American West. The museum is restoring The Divide Sheep Camp in the nearby national forest so visitors can experience a herder's traditional "home on wheels." LittleSnakeRiverMuseum.com

Cowboy Art and Gear Museum,
Elko, Nevada
Courtesy TravelNevada

Campbell County Rockpile Museum (Gillette, WY): A homestead shack and blacksmith shop are part of the attraction at the Rockpile. CampbellCountyWY.gov

Cheyenne Frontier Days Old West Museum (Cheyenne, WY): It may appear this museum is all about rodeo (and it is), but there is more, including Western art, buggies and wagons, and artifacts including a gun that once belonged to Tom Horn. OldWestMuseum.org

Northeastern Nevada Museum (Elko, NV): The art of Will James and wildlife dioramas are part of the eclectic collection at the Northeastern Nevada Museum. MuseumElko.org

SEE WHERE THE LEGEND BEGAN



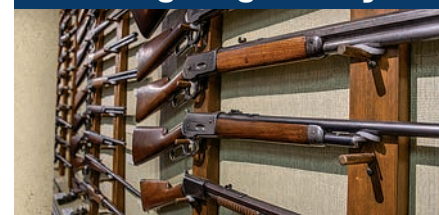
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JesseJamesMuseum.org



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RockpileMuseum.com

Superstition Mountain Museum (Apache Junction, AZ): The Lost Dutchman Mine is legend in Arizona, and this museum delves into the history of the mine and Jacob Waltz. SuperstitionMountainMuseum.org

Finney County Historic Museum (Garden City, KS): The True Crime Exhibit features actual evidence from the tragic 1959 Clutter family murder case, which led author Truman Capote to write his groundbreaking book, *In Cold Blood*, and the 1920s crime spree of the infamous Fleage Gang, bank robbers and murders in Southwest Kansas. FinneyCounty.org

Kern Valley Museum & Historical Society (Kernville, CA): Geology and fossils are key exhibits here, along with displays of ranching artifacts. KernValleyMuseum.org

Cowboy Arts & Gear Museum (Elko, NV): Beautiful bits (some sold during the annual Bit Auction), and other gear of the buckaroos are on display. CowboyArtsAndGearmuseum.org

World Museum of Mining (Butte, MT): Mining equipment, a Chinese laundry and the facilities of the Orphan Girl Mine Yard take you back to Butte's mining heritage. MiningMuseum.org

Arizona History Museum (Tucson, AZ): "Los Desconocidos: The Migrant Quilt Project" shows the importance of quilts through the centuries. ArizonaHistoricalSociety.org

Churchill County Museum Association (Fallon, NV): A new exhibit, "The 1860s: The Decade that Made Nevada," opened this summer. CCMuseum.org



Museum of Big Bend, Alpine, TX

Courtesy Museum of Big Bend

9. MUSEUM OF THE BIG BEND (ALPINE, TX)

Rare maps, retablos and arrowheads from the Davis Mountains are reason enough to visit, but watch this museum as the walls are going up for its major expansion project that will

include a new permanent gallery plus additional temporary galleries. Among the highlights of the new space will be an area dedicated to the art of Tom Lea, one of the premiere horse and cattle artists of the Southwest. MuseumOfTheBigBend.com



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 480-983-4888 • SuperstitionMountainMuseum.org
 Photo: Jack Olson



Blackhawk Museum: "The Spirit of the Old West," Danville, CA

Courtesy Blackhawk Museum

10. BLACKHAWK MUSEUM (DANVILLE, CA)

Founded to highlight a classic car collection, the Blackhawk Museum has evolved and features "The Spirit of the Old West" with rare artifacts and interesting stories interpreted to educate and entertain visitors. The "World of Nature" gallery has information about more than 650 unique animals, birds, insects and fish in life-like

habitats brought to life by an immersive audio program "Wild Scapes" that takes real animal sounds from habitats around the world to transport visitors to the Arctic, rain forests and the jungles of South America, plus an African Savannah. BlackhawkMuseum.org



Candy Moulton recently retired from her position as executive director of Western Writers of America, which means she now has even more time to visit the great museums of the American West.

EDITOR'S PICK 18 MUSEUMS NOT TO MISS

- Front Street Cowboy Museum** (Ogallala, NE): OgallalaFrontStreet.com
- Frontier Auto Museum** (Gillette, WY): FrontierAutoMuseum.com
- Clay County Museum and Historical Society** (Liberty, MO): ClayCountyMuseum.org
- Meeteetse Museums** (Meeteetse, WY): MeeteetseMuseums.org
- Ancient Ozarks Natural History Museum** (Ridgedale, MO): BigCedar.com
- Hutchinson County Museum** (Borger, TX): HutchinsonCountyMuseum.org
- Jim Gatchell Museum** (Buffalo, WY): JimGatchell.com
- West of the Pecos Museum** (Pecos, TX): West-of-the-Pecos.edan.io
- Santa Ynez Valley Historical Museum & Parks-Janeway Carriage House** (Santa Ynez, CA): SantaYnezMuseum.org
- Heard Museum** (Phoenix, AZ): Heard.org
- Days of 76 Museum** (Deadwood, SD): DeadwoodHistory.com
- DuPont Historical Museum** (DuPont, WA): DupontMuseum.com
- Nevada Northern Railway Museum** (Ely, NV): NNRY.com
- Laws Railroad Museum and Historic Site** (Bishop, CA): LawsMuseum.org
- Navajo County History Museum** (Holbrook, AZ): HolbrookAzMuseum.org
- Buffalo Bill Center of the West** (Cody, WY): CenterOfTheWest.com
- Sharlot Hall** (Prescott, AZ): SharlotHallMuseum.org



"To the Rodeo, Pardner!"
 Sharlot Hall Museum,
 Prescott, AZ

Photo by Stuart Rosebrook



O.K. Corral
Historic Complex,
Tombstone, AZ

Courtesy Cochise County Tourism

LIVING HISTORY MUSEUMS

Wyoming Territorial Prison State Historic Site
(Laramie, WY): WyoParks.Wyo.gov

Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer
(Grand Island, NE): StuhrMuseum.org

Museum of the Old West dba Old Trail Town
(Cody, WY): OldTrailTown.org

Ouray County Museum (Ouray, CO):
OurayCountyHistoricalSociety.org

Grand Encampment Museum
(Encampment, WY): GEMuseum.com

Pony Express Museum (St. Joseph, MO):
PonyExpress.org

Museum of the Mountain West (Montrose, CO):
MuseumoftheMountainWest.org

Buffalo Bill Museum & Grave (Golden, CO):
BuffaloBill.org

Mahaffie Stagecoach Stop & Farm Historic Site
(Olathe, KS): Mahaffie.org

Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument
(Crow Agency, MT): NPS.org

California Trail Interpretive Center (Elko, NV):
CaliforniaTrailCenter.org

Old Cowtown Museum (Abilene, KS):
OldCowtown.org

**The New Mexico History Museum and the Palace
of the Governors National Historic Landmark**,
(Santa Fe, NM): NMHistoryMuseum.org

OK Corral Historic Complex (Tombstone, AZ):
OK-Corral.com

Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park
(Coloma, CA): Parks.CA.gov

Headwaters Heritage Museum
(Three Forks, MT): TFHistory.org

**Stewart Indian School Cultural
Center & Museum** (Carson City, NV):
StewartIndianSchool.com

New Mexico Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum
(Las Cruces, NM): NMFarmAndRanchMuseum.org

**Kaw Mission State Historic Site and Last
Chance Store Museums on the Santa Fe Trail**
(Council Grove, KS): NPS.gov

Gold Rush Museum (Auburn, CA):
VisitPlacer.com

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WESTERN ART MUSEUMS

DISCOVER THE BEST OF THE WEST AT THESE WESTERN SHOWPLACES OF AMERICAN ARTISTS.

BY JOHNNY D. BOGGS AND THE EDITORS OF TRUE WEST

2021-2022 was another time period many people would like to forget, but Western art museums sure made life better and helped take our minds off pandemics, politics and wars. Charles M. Russell and Maynard Dixon still can cure what ails us, and today's multitalented painters and sculptors—not to mention curators and docents—still touch us, move us, and make us think and wonder.

Here are the year's best:

1. C.M. RUSSELL MUSEUM (GREAT FALLS, MT)

The museum that houses Charles M. Russell's home and studio has always been true to Russell's vision. Russell would have been moved by *The Sundance Series*, Gary Schildt's 42 paintings of the Blackfeet Medicine Lodge Ceremony that ran from November 12, 2021, to May 22, 2022. But if you just want Russell, *Modest Yet Masterful: Small*



C.M. Russell Museum
Great Falls, MT

Courtesy C.M. Russell Museum



DESERT CABALLEROS
WESTERN MUSEUM
WESTERNMUSEUM.ORG

Western art, history and culture in the heart of Wickenburg, Arizona.



Joe Beeler's "Thanks for the Rain" in front of the Cultural Crossroads Learning Center on the DCWM campus.


Town of Wickenburg



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OF THE YEAR



Scale Masterworks by Charles M. Russell, which runs through September, reveals that Russell didn't need a large canvas to touch viewers. Besides, the permanent exhibits are among the best you'll find anywhere. CMRussell.org



Modern West Gallery,
Booth Art Museum
Cartersville, GA



Open Range by Maynard Dixon
Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, NE

Courtesy Joslyn Art Museum, P13_Figure 1.17

2. JOSLYN ART MUSEUM (OMAHA, NE)

The museum that opened November 29, 1931, celebrated 90 years with *Ninety Years of Joslyn Art Museum* and highlighted one of its best collections with *Faces from the Interior: The North American Portraits of Karl Bodmer*, both of which closed May 1. We hope you got to see those, because on May 2, the Joslyn closed for construction and renovation. We can't wait till 2024, when the museum debuts its new look, including the 42,000-square-foot Rhonda and Howard Hawks Pavilion. Joslyn.org

3. BOOTH WESTERN ART MUSEUM (CARTERSVILLE, GA)

Always thinking outside the box, the Booth presents *Through the Years: Kenny Rogers' Photographs of America*, proving that the late crooner of "Lucille" and "The Gambler" could handle a camera as well as he could a Mel Tillis song. That exhibit closes September 10. Meanwhile, *Western Vistas*, which runs through September 18, showcases the art of Arturo Chavez and Grant Redden, and the annual *Kids Cowboy Up!* event (November 14-January 1) is always a hit. BoothMuseum.org

HUTCHINSON COUNTY HISTORICAL MUSEUM



Sbarp's "Big 50", the buffalo hunters' preferred weapon

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Sketch of the Battle of 1874 by Texas artist H.D. Bugbee

The Indians didn't give up without a fight! Hutchinson County was the site of the decisive battle that brought about the Red River war which ended the Indians' dominion of the Plains. Hutchinson County Historical Museum features exhibits of both battles at Adobe Walls and other events of this transformative period in American history.

HCHM also displays artifacts and tells the stories of early ranching and farming in the County, as well as the story of the Borger Oil Boom in 1926 that changed the economy and the future of the Texas Panhandle.

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The Museum is open Tues. - Fri. 9-5 & Sat. 11-4:30
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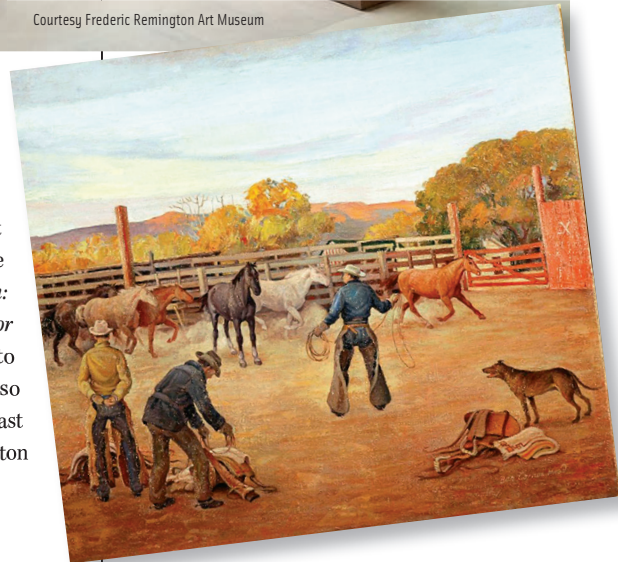
Frederic Remington
Art Museum
Ogdensburg, NY

Courtesy Frederic Remington Art Museum

4. FREDERIC REMINGTON ART MUSEUM (OGDENSBURG, NY)

The museum that celebrates one of its favorite sons now pays homage to another sculptor (who sought out Frederic Remington for advice): The permanent exhibit *Beauty & Strength: The Life and Work of American Sculptor Sally James Farnham* pays tribute to Farnham (1869-1943). Farnham also oversaw the casting of Remington's last two sculptures. But, of course, Remington remains the main draw here.

FredericRemington.org



LX Horse Corral by Ben Carlton Mead,
Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum,
Canyon, TX

Courtesy PPHM, 6-09, C Series 002

5. DESERT CABALLEROS WESTERN MUSEUM (WICKENBURG, AZ)

This iconic institution is more than just caballeros. The annual *Cowboy Up!*, which runs through September 4, has honored female artists since 2006. And *Apache Stories*, which closes October 2, curated by Janet Cantley and Eduardo Pagan, tells "the true history of the Apaches along with a presentation on the challenges they still face today," according to executive director Dan Finley. WesternMuseum.org



Thanks for the Rain by Joe Beeler
Desert Caballeros Western Museum,
Wickenburg, AZ

Courtesy Carol M. Highsmith Archives, Library of Congress

6. PANHANDLE-PLAINS HISTORICAL MUSEUM (CANYON, TX)

The museum that gave us the Roaring Twenties (*The Panhandle Prohibition Exhibition*) and a shotgun owned by Theodore Roosevelt now pays tribute to *Quinceañera Traditions* (through February 2023) and religious art and furniture (*Traditions of Heritage & Home*, through July 2023). But the museum's permanent collection of 8,000 works matches its exhibits on archaeology, paleontology, American Indian and Old West history. PanhandlePlains.org

7. OLAF WIEGHORST MUSEUM & HERITAGE CENTER (EL CAJON, CA)

After visiting the transplanted Denmark artist's home from 1947-'58, David Kohanyi wrote in the *San Diego Reader* (January 26) that he "felt in touch with the lost Old West." Yep. The house is just part of the museum that features the art of Wieghorst (1899-1988), whose paintings were used in the opening credits of John Wayne's *El Dorado* (1966). Wieghorst also played the Swedish gunsmith in the film. WieghorstMuseum.org

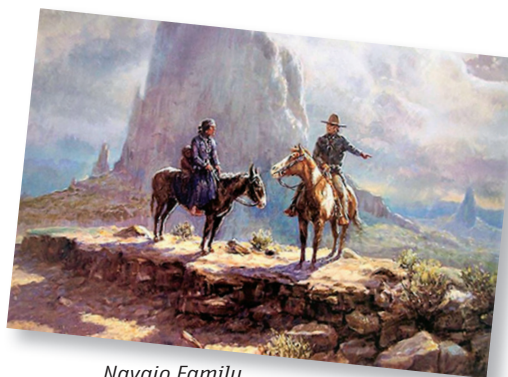
8. A.R. MITCHELL MUSEUM (TRINIDAD, CO)

This downtown Trinidad institution isn't just an homage to the Golden Era of Pulp Western illustrations. *Western Divide: The Art of Cody Kuehl and A.R. Mitchell*, which closed in February, featured the stylized Western art of Denver-based Cody Kuehl, who is more Bob Boze Bell than *Ranch Romances*. Cyrus Walker, another contemporary artist with an appreciation of the past, gets his due in September and October. ARMitchellMuseum.com



A.R. Mitchell's Art Studio
A.R. Mitchell Museum, Trinidad, CO

Courtesy A.R. Mitchell Museum



Navajo Family
by Olaf Wieghorst
Olaf Wieghorst Museum and Heritage
Center, El Cajon, CA

Courtesy Olaf Wieghorst Museum



This is a painting of lichíílikaashaashe, an Apsáalooke term for the Yellowstone River.

By Grafton Tyler Brown.
A Canyon River with Pines and Figures (Yellowstone), circa 1886. Oil on canvas, 35 3/4 x 56 in. (90.8 x 142.2 cm). Tacoma Art Museum. Museum purchase with funds from the Art Acquisition Fund and the Tacoma Pierce County Black Collective.



ON NATIVE LAND

LANDSCAPES FROM THE HAUB FAMILY COLLECTION

An exhibition of landscapes paired with land acknowledgments to recognize the Native American communities whose homelands are pictured in the paintings.



TACOMAARTMUSEUM.ORG

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GEMuseum.com



The Museum of Western Art, Kerrville, TX

Courtesy The Museum of Western Art

9. THE MUSEUM OF WESTERN ART (KERRVILLE, TX)

The great Western skies got their due in *The Heavens Declare! Celebrating the Glory of the Skies*, which closed in July. And the former Cowboy Artists of America Museum continues to celebrate those who live and live the dream of the American West. MuseumOfWesternArt.com

10. TAOS ART MUSEUM AT FECHIN HOUSE (TAOS, NM)

Oscar E. Berninghaus, Ernest Blumenschein, E. Irving Couse, William H. Dunton. Bert Phillips and Joseph Henry Sharp founded the Taos Society of Artists in 1915. Their names still resonate, and so does their art and the art of other Taos masters, all in the stunning adobe house of Russian-American artist Nicolai Fechin. TaosArtMuseum.org

FAVORITE WESTERN REGIONAL ART MUSEUMS

Fort Smith Regional Art Museum, Fort Smith, AR: We tip our hat to *Chuck Davis: The Wheel*, which closed in June and honored Indian Territory with contemporary photos taken mostly with antique cameras. FSRAM.org

Denver Art Museum, Denver, CO: It is hard to find a regional art museum with a stronger collection of Western art: Taos masters...Charles Deas's 1844 oil-on-canvas *Long Jakes*, "The Rocky Mountain Man" ...Frederic Remington's bronze *The Cheyenne*... DenverArtMuseum.org

Columbia Gorge Discovery Center & Museum, The Dalles, OR: *Reimagining America: The Maps of Lewis and Clark Exhibition*, which closed in April, was phenomenal, while the permanent displays of leatherworks and American Indian baskets are fabulous. GorgeDiscovery.org

Brinton Museum, Big Horn, WY: In one of the most beautiful locations for any art museum, the Brinton has a collection that includes Remington, Russell and Frank Tenney Johnson as well as historical American Indian artifacts. TheBrintonMuseum.org

The Rockwell Museum, Corning, NY: Think you can't find Western art in New York outside of Ogdensburg? This museum houses William Robinson Leigh's iconic 1947 oil-on-canvas *The Buffalo Hunt* and a cast of James Earle Fraser's classic *The End of the Trail*. RockwellMuseum.org

Briscoe Western Art Museum, San Antonio, TX: *The Sons of Charlie Russell*, which also highlights Cowboy Artists of America, closes September 5. But *Thomas D. Mangelsen—A Life in the Wild* opens September 29, revealing an outstanding nature photographer's portfolio. BriscoeMuseum.org

High Desert Museum, Bend, OR: Easily one of the best places to learn about the wildlife and people, this museum boasts a collection of roughly 29,000 pieces from a region that includes parts of Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Nevada and California. HighDesertMuseum.org

Sid Richardson Museum, Fort Worth, TX: Always a destination for Western art purists, this Cowtown institution brought in a new perspective on Russell and Remington with *Picturing the American West*, which closes September 18. SidRichardsonMuseum.org

Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, CA: The original home of a judge (renovated by architect Seth Babson in 1872) is a priceless piece of art itself. And the 125,000-square-foot Teel Family Pavilion, which opened in 2010, helped turn this into the mecca for lovers of California art. CrockerArt.org

Phippen Museum, Prescott, AZ: The temporary exhibits are always outstanding (case in point: *If Horses Could Talk*, the retrospective of cowboy artist Bill Nebeker's contemporary and historical depictions). But the permanent collection remains this mecca's cornerstone. PhippenArtMuseum.org



Taos Art Museum at Fechin House
Taos, NM

Courtesy Taos Art Museum



Santa Fe, New Mexico-based **Johnny D. Boggs** writes about Western American art, artists and architecture for several national magazines.

Tacoma Art Museum, Tacoma, WA: The Haub Family Collection of Western American Art covers 1790 to today, while Contemporary Native Voices reveals how fluid American Indian art remains. TacomaArtMuseum.org

Tucson Museum of Art, Tucson, AZ: The Art of the American West collection ranges from today's masters to those of 200 years ago. And one can never see too much Oreland Joe or Maynard Dixon. TucsonMuseumOfArt.org

Palm Springs Art Museum, Palm Springs, CA: You'll find 12,000-plus mostly modern/contemporary pieces, but the Art of the West in the Americas collection showcases 19th century, Pre-Columbian and today's Western art. PSMuseum.org

Yellowstone Art Museum, Billings, MT: Any modern art museum gets points for showcasing sheep rancher Bill Stockton and the great Montana Modernist Isabelle Johnson, but the highlight here might be its 3,500-piece "Visible Vault." ArtMuseum.org

Clymer Museum & Gallery, Ellensburg, WA: The hometown of noted Western artist John Ford Clymer (1907-1989) showcases the artist's masterpieces. We're partial to his *The Meeting 1878*, depicting Quanah Parker meeting Charles Goodnight. ClymerMuseum.org

William S. Hart Museum, Newhall, CA: The mansion of the silent Western film star (Must see: *Hell's Hinges and Tumbleweeds*) is filled with artwork Hart collected, including works by Charlie Russell and Russell protégé Joe De Yong. HartMuseum.org

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BY PETER CORBETT

Spirit of the West

THE FOUNDING CURATOR FILLED THE BLANK CANVAS OF SCOTTSDALE'S MUSEUM OF THE WEST.

Western Spirit: Scottsdale's Museum of the West is making its mark among museums celebrating the American West.

The museum's exhibit "Light and Legacy: The Art and Technique of Edward S. Curtis" is an example of its prowess in staging important shows developed since its opening seven years ago.

Curtis was a late 19th-century and early 20th-century photographer and ethnographer who captured images of indigenous tribes to document their cultures at a time when he feared they were a vanishing race.

Western Spirit has the largest Curtis exhibit ever, said Tricia Loscher, assistant museum director of collections, exhibitions and research.

In a museum tour, Loscher explained the challenges Curtis faced to connect with tribal leaders.

"There had to be something about him to allow his acceptance into the cultures the way he was accepted," the curator said. "To come in and photograph these portraits, he couldn't have just waltzed in and started clicking, clicking."

The Curtis exhibit, which runs through April 30, shows how far the museum has come since 2015 under the leadership of Loscher, Executive Director Mike Fox and Board Chairman Jim Bruner.

Bruner is now chairman emeritus after stepping down earlier this year, and Fox has taken on a new role as advancement advisor. William Ridenour is the new board chairman, and James Burns is executive director.



As Western Spirit's assistant director of exhibitions, collections and research, Dr. Tricia Loscher has curated the museum's exhibitions from 2014 to the present, including the Peterson Family Collection's "Courage & Crossroads: A Visual Journey through the American West."

Courtesy Loren Anderson Photography

"As a new kid on the block, we've come pretty far in a very short time," said Loscher, who has been a guiding force since before the museum opened.

Bruner praised Loscher for her contributions to the museum's success. "She's done a fabulous job, is highly respected, and I trust her judgment completely."

The museum's early affiliation with the Smithsonian has added credibility and helped with art donations for various shows. Unlike

leading Western museums with collections accumulated over decades, Western Spirit has been creative in acquiring and borrowing collections.

The museum was just an empty shell with concrete floors when Loscher started at Western Spirit in 2014.

Museum Director Fox was working with a mystery man known as "Mr. C" for exhibit donations. Abe Hayes' "Spirit of the West" collection had to be unboxed. Spurs, saddles, badges, revolvers, chaps and other cowboy gear was spread out on tables as an exhibit was designed with computer mockups of a gallery.

"It was an exciting time," Loscher said of the museum opening in January 2015.

The museum launch was the culmination of more than 35 years of effort, going back to longtime Scottsdale Mayor Herb Drinkwater, Bruner and other civic leaders.

Loscher landed at the Western Spirit Museum after interning and working on staff at the Heard Museum. She also served as curator at Heard Museum North. Those were dream jobs for her. After a visit to the Heard at age seven, Loscher told her parents she wanted to be a curator and work at the Heard.

She got there by earning degrees in art history at Arizona State University and her doctorate from the University of Arizona.

Loscher's passion for Western history and art goes back to her childhood in Prescott. Her father stopped at every historic marker on family vacations. Loscher said she was intrigued by the historic stories—"it spoke to me." Her sister hated stopping at the markers.



Western Spirit: Scottsdale's Museum of the West's groundbreaking "Light and Legacy: The Art and Technique of Edward S. Curtis" is the largest exhibition of the photographer and ethnographic historian's life's work on the American Indian ever assembled and displayed. The exhibit will be on display until April 30, 2023.



The Christine and Ted Mollring Sculpture Courtyard is a popular public venue that is a showcase for both the museum's architecture and its collection of Western sculptures by John Coleman, Bruce R. Greene, Bob Haozous, Allan Houser, Doug Hyde, Herb Mignery and Melanie Yazzie.

All photos courtesy FrontRowSociety.net, Andreas Conrad unless otherwise noted

Loscher said she relished finding pottery shards at the base of Thumb Butte in Prescott, visiting ghost towns and digging for old glass bottles in the desert.

Now she gets to meld all those experiences with her art history expertise to collect and exhibit the art of the Old and New West.

Loscher said a current focus for the museum's collection includes the works of women artists of Arizona and the Southwest, both historic and contemporary.

"The women artists should and need to receive much greater recognition," she said.

Looking ahead, future exhibits include:

— "Navajo brothers Jeremy and Jerrell Singer": Jeremy paints abstract landscapes of Northern Arizona. Jerrell designs skateboard decks with traditional Navajo motifs. Set to open in November 2022.

— "The Call of Beauty: Masterworks by Nampeyo of Hano": The Allan and Judith Cooke Collection of Hopi Pottery includes 60 ceramic pieces by this acclaimed Hopi ceramicist. Set to open in early 2023.

— "Carl Roters' Paintings of the Rocky Mountain Rendezvous": The annual gatherings of trappers, traders and Native Americans started in 1825. No date set.

— "Western Pop: Andy Warhol and Bill Schenck." No date set.



Peter Corbett moved west to Flagstaff in 1974 and earned a degree at Northern Arizona University in English, with an American Studies minor. He's been exploring the West since then and had a long career in Arizona journalism.

The award-winning, sustainable architecture of Western Spirit: Scottsdale's Museum of the West, at the corner of Marshall Way and East First Street, reflects the museum's ideas of how art and environment interact and coexist in the Sonoran Desert.

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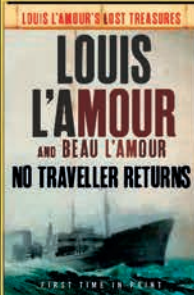
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WESTERN ROUNDUP

FOR SEPTEMBER 2022

DEFEAT OF JESSE JAMES DAYS

Northfield, MN, September 8-11: Celebrate the town heroes who stopped the Jesse James Gang during their famous 1876 bank raid.
800-658-2548 • DJJD.org

HERITAGE FESTIVALS

BANDERA ROUND-UP

Bandera, TX, September 3-4: Bandera comes alive with music, gunfights, an intertribal powwow, a Wild West show and a mutton-busting rodeo.
830-796-3045 • BanderaCowboyCapital.com

SHOWDOWN IN TOMBSTONE

Tombstone, AZ, September 3-4: This 10th annual Labor Day weekend event offers fun for the whole family with continuous entertainment both days, reenactors, costume competition, raffle and much more.
888-457-3929 • TombstoneWeb.com

NATIONAL COWBOY SYMPOSIUM & CELEBRATION

Lubbock, TX, September 9-11: Celebrate cowboy culture at one of the West's biggest chuck wagon cook-offs, plus enjoy cowboy music and poetry.
806-798-7825 • Cowboy.org

HARVEST FESTIVAL

Gering, NE, September 17-18: Nebraska's agricultural history is honored with parades and demonstrations at Legacy of the Plains Museum.
308-436-1989 • LegacyOfThePlains.org

COWBOY WAY JUBILEE AT FORT CONCHO

San Angelo, TX, September 29-October 2: A cowboy comic-con features Western stars, authors, workshops and demos, with cowboy music all day, every day.
580.768.5559 • CowboyWayJubilee.com

33RD ANNUAL FIESTA DE SEPTIEMBRE

Wickenburg, AZ, September 17: Celebrate Wickenburg's Hispanic pioneer heritage at activities that include Latin band and mariachi music and *folklorico* dancers. An outdoor mercado, food and beverage booths and Kids Zone are also on site.
928-684-5479 • WickenburgChamber.com

ART SHOWS

14TH ANNUAL GRAND CANYON CELEBRATION OF ART

Grand Canyon, AZ, September 2-January 16, 2023: Celebration of Art is a wonderful tradition at Grand Canyon National Park that provides a vibrant Western art experience for visitors and artists.
(928) 638-2481 • GrandCanyon.org

JACKSON HOLE FALL ARTS FESTIVAL

Jackson, WY, September 7-18: This art festival features visual, contemporary, culinary, Western, landscape, wildlife and American Indian arts.
307-733-3316 • JacksonHoleChamber.com



Courtesy Defeat of Jesse James Days

HAPPY CANYON INDIAN PAGEANT & WILD WEST SHOW

Pendleton, OR, September 14-17: The outdoor "Pageant of the West" show honors American Indian heritage and the settling of the West.
800-457-6336 • HappyCanyon.com

36TH ANNUAL TRAPPINGS OF TEXAS

Alpine, TX, September 15-17: This event features an exhibit and the sale of contemporary Western art and custom cowboy gear.
432-837-8143 • MuseumOfTheBigBend.com

39TH ANNUAL ROUND-UP ART EXHIBITION & SALE

Kerrville, TX, September 22-October 29: The opening gala weekend is September 22-24. The invitational exhibition features over 100 works by leading artists in the Western genre.
800-658-2548 • MuseumOfWesternArt.com

STOCK SHOWS, RODEOS & FAIRS

WEST TEXAS FAIR & RODEO

Abilene, TX, September 8-17: West Texas cowboys and cowgirls head to this PRCA rodeo that also features a tractor pull and a carnival.
325-677-4376 • TaylorCountyExpoCenter.com

HELLS CANYON MULE DAYS

Enterprise, OR, September 9-11: This mule show and sale features an Old-World oxen living history camp, plus cowboy music, poetry and art.
541-426-3271 • HellsCanyonMuleDays.com

MEEKER CLASSIC SHEEPDOG CHAMPIONSHIP TRIALS

Meeker, CO, September 7-11: Held since 1987, this sheepdog competition refines the skills required of a dog and rancher to manage a sheep ranch.
970-878-0111 • MeekerSheepdog.com

ELKO COUNTY FAIR

Elko, NV, August 26-September 5: The Elko County Fair has entertainment and events for everybody in the family. An addition to this year's festivities is the *Country Showdown*, America's oldest and biggest talent search for hot new country musicians.
800-248-ELKO • ElkoCountyFair.com

TRI-COUNTY FAIR & STAMPEDE

Winnemucca, NV, September 1-4: The 101st Annual Rodeo promises a lot more than eight seconds of excitement. Don't miss the Western Art Roundup, featuring artists, poets, crafts people and inductees into the Buckaroo Hall of Fame.
800-962-2638 • Winnemucca.com

POWOWS

UNITED TRIBES TECHNICAL COLLEGE INTERNATIONAL POW WOV

Bismarck, ND, September 9-11: One of the largest in the nation, this powwow features drummers and dancers from tribes around the world.
701-255-3285 • UnitedTribesPowWow.com

RODEOS

PENDLETON ROUND-UP

Pendleton, OR, September 10-17: The PRCA rodeo includes cowboy concerts, Indian relay races, the Happy Canyon festival and a rodeo parade.
800-457-6336 • PendletonRoundUp.com

RE-ENACTMENTS

MOUNTAIN MAN RENDEZVOUS

Fort Bridger State Historic Site, WY, September 2-5: Celebrate the fur trade Rendezvous era with archery, American Indian dances and mountain men competitions, including cooking, shoots, knife and hawk throws.
801-635-4038 • FortBridgerRendezvous.net

DALTON DEFENDER DAYS

Coffeyville, KS, September 30-October 1: This weekend of fun celebrates that fateful day of October 5, 1892, when the Dalton Gang was defeated in Coffeyville. Enjoy the Dalton Raid re-enactment, craft and food vendors, kids' games and more.
620-251-2550 • VisitCoffeyville.com

TWMag.com:

View Western events on our website.





Marshall Trimble is Arizona's official historian and vice president of the Wild West History Association. His latest book is *Arizona Oddities: Land of Anomalies and Tamales*; History Press, 2018. If you have a question, write: Ask the Marshall, P.O. Box 8008, Cave Creek, AZ 85327 or e-mail him at marshall.trimble@scottsdalecc.edu. Please always include your name, city and state.

Virgil Earp, Tombstone and a Shot of Whiskey

Do any photos exist of Virgil Earp's damaged arm after being shot in Tombstone in December 1881?

*Bill Haines
Nashville, Tennessee*

I'm not aware of any photos taken of the injured limb. He took three shotgun blasts, maiming his left arm. Dr. George Goodfellow, Tombstone's "Gunshot Physician," performed surgery, managing to save the arm, but he had to remove almost six inches of bone above the joint. Virgil lost complete use of the arm.



Virgil Earp never had an undressed close-up of his mangled arm photographed, but the image above shows his damaged left arm hanging down at his side.

True West Archives



The famous walk-down in *Tombstone* (1993) is one of the most iconic scenes in the ever-popular Western. L.-r.: Val Kilmer as Doc Holliday, Sam Elliott as Virgil Earp, Kurt Russell as Wyatt Earp and Bill Paxton as Morgan Earp.

Courtesy Buena Vista Pictures

Is *Tombstone* the greatest Western of all time?

*Ronnie Bishop
Tulsa, OK*

There are many great Westerns, including *Shane*, *The Searchers*, *Fort Apache*, *True Grit*, new and old, and *High Noon*. Like a beauty contest, it's in the eyes (and taste) of the beholder. When you factor in television films like *Lonesome Dove* and *1883*, it's even more difficult. What makes *Tombstone* so good is the authentic costuming, firearms, saddles, etc. The cast was also great. The movie dropped the ball several times in getting the facts right. Maybe if they had stuck with Kevin Jarre's original script it would have been an epic. As it was, Kurt Russell did a great job keeping it all together.

Could you offer any insight into how tribal cultures viewed mental illness?

*Shawn Cote
Fort Fairfield, Maine*

By and large, the hundreds of different cultures and customs of the Amerinds viewed a person with mental illness with respect and kindness. Several believed the

mentally ill had been touched by the Great Spirit and thus were very special people—something far better than beliefs among the White cultures who emigrated from the UK and Europe. Among the Apache and Navajo people, mental disease is identified as the consequence of breaking taboos. Thus, when individuals do not respect restrictions and expectations, problems may surface. In general, it is understood that illness will occur when the clockwise rotating wind within an individual ("wind soul") is out of harmony with other spiritual forces in the universe.

I read that John Wayne was a pallbearer at Wyatt Earp's funeral. Is that true?

*Jason Clark
Boston, Massachusetts*

John Wayne was not a pallbearer at Wyatt Earp's funeral. The Duke hadn't even starred in a film when Wyatt died. It has been said the two met in 1928 and became friends, but that story has no provenance. It's also said that Wayne learned about Earp from John Ford. That's doubtful. Regardless, Wayne was a great admirer of Wyatt.

How many Slavic/East European Indian fighters were there?

Ales Simakou
Gomel, Belarus

I don't know if such data exists, but the Frontier Army was full of immigrants, especially Irish, German and northern Europeans. The large immigration of Eastern European and Slavic immigrants came later in the 19th century, when the Indian Wars were on the decline.

Arizona had a large number of Slavic miners, especially Serbs who were working in the copper mines beginning in the 1890s.



Cowboys in Tascosa, Texas, enjoy whiskey in shots and beer in glasses in this famous and rare interior photo of cowpunchers drinking at a bar.

True West Archives

Did the term, a "shot of whiskey" originate in Tombstone and refer to miners using an actual bullet to pay for their drinks?

Mark Manning
Mesa, Arizona

It's a tall tale. Those claims that in the Old West one could belly up to the bar and trade a bullet for a glass of whiskey aren't true. A saloon wouldn't remain in business very long if it traded bullets for shots of whiskey. A .45 bullet would cost about 2 cents a round, but a saloon couldn't pay a distributor or even a bootlegger in bullets. A glass of beer might cost you one bit, 12½ cents, or two bits, or a quarter for a shot of whiskey.

Shot glasses have been around for some 200 years, and far as I know, they've always been an ounce. There are also many versions of the origin of "shot." I believe the most believable was that it gave the imbiber a jolt or a shot.



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What HISTORY HAS TAUGHT ME

My hometown during my formative years was El Paso. My love affair with the city began when I first saw the purple-hued Franklin Mountain, unlike the flat shelf of the Texas Panhandle where I had been born. That and the occasional piñata my father bought for me at the Juárez City Market.

My mom and dad escaped to El Paso because of its Wild West character. It was either there or Tucson because my dad loved Westerns. In El Paso, colorful characters on the lam saw business and social opportunities. Living in El Paso was exhilarating.

A first-grade teacher assigned me to draw bison on a large mural of Palo Duro Canyon. I became infatuated with the Texas story until she whipped my hand with a wooden ruler. Later my UTEP professors John O. West and Charles L. Sonnichsen cemented my love of history, especially when entwined with Texas and Southwest folklore.

Summertime was spent waterskiing at Elephant Butte Lake in New Mexico or fishing in Colorado and Arizona. We never traveled east. I had no idea that trees grew naturally in Texas until I moved near Austin.

Going to Juárez. I probably spent too much time in a red Naugahyde booth inside the Kentucky Club, crossing back over the Santa Fe Bridge and scrambling for two pennies to pay the turnstile!

My favorite thing to do was ride my horse down a Rio Grande ditch and sing "A Horse with No Name." Now, I'm lucky if I can walk down our New Mexico mountain and back with enough breath to hum.

White Sands was the location for my senior trip after a previous class threw Fizzies into a pond inside Carlsbad Caverns. I love to stand on a high white dune and imagine the events below Victorio Peak to the west and within Dog Canyon to the east. There Victorio defended his embattled Apaches against Buffalo Soldiers.

An author who influenced my early love of Southwest history was Leon Metz. Later, Sonnichsen and, within a broader geographical context, Robert M. Utley.

Richard Guy and Rex Holt were the "Kings of Beauty Pageants," known for the Texas Aces, five Miss Texas who won Miss USA. They learned on *me*, the first Guyrex Girl, an actual trademark. My upcoming book, *The Pink Dress, Memoir of a Guyrex Girl*, describes this association.

When I was Miss El Paso 1971. the Miss Texas Pageant didn't consider El Paso a cultural part of the state. Guyrex changed that, and together we brought the West, highlighting El Paso's mosaic character, to the eastern movers and shakers.

Playing piano paid for two years of college after I won the talent award. Participating in the Miss America Scholarship program was more fruitful than burning my bra for the women's liberation movement occurring at the same time.

EDUCATOR AND HISTORIAN

Jane (Janie) Little Botkin, a Spur Award-winning biographer, seeks compelling stories of women, miners, lawmen and outlaws. Her most recent bio is *The Girl Who Dared to Defy* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2021) about activist Jane Street. The Texas State Legislature honored Janie, a retired educator, by formal resolution. More recently she was elected to the WWA Board of Directors. Janie and her husband reside in the White Mountain Wilderness above Nogal, New Mexico, where she is currently researching Molly Goodnight.



Photo Courtesy Jane Little Botkin

Teaching for 30 years taught me patience and process.

Writing, at first, was difficult. I thought my seniors wrote far better than I. And often they did!

Frank Little and the IWW was my first project. Frank's father, my great-great-grandfather, had been the Dalton family's Missouri neighbor and later the Doolin-Dalton gang's doctor. I always thought I would tell that history, but the story behind Frank's mysterious murder in Butte, Montana, prevailed.

Women and mining history topics seem to fall preternaturally into my lap. From my own Western family history and friends' family histories, stories whisper names...Molly Goodnight, Hank Boedeker, Albert Fountain.

What history has taught me is how precious free speech is. History reveals that Frank Little was murdered for his words, repugnant to some but revered by others, during a time of deep American division and censorship. The adage—if we don't learn from our history, we're doomed to repeat our mistakes—should be taken seriously.



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True West magazine has inspired travelers to take the road less traveled and explore the historic sites and towns of the American West. The Third Edition of the *True West* Ultimate Historic Travel Guide has been carefully updated with recommendations on the essential museums of the Old West. Anyone who wants to discover a region from the ground up—and immerse in its local history—will be inspired to visit a Western museum and experience the dynamic, enthralling history of the American West.

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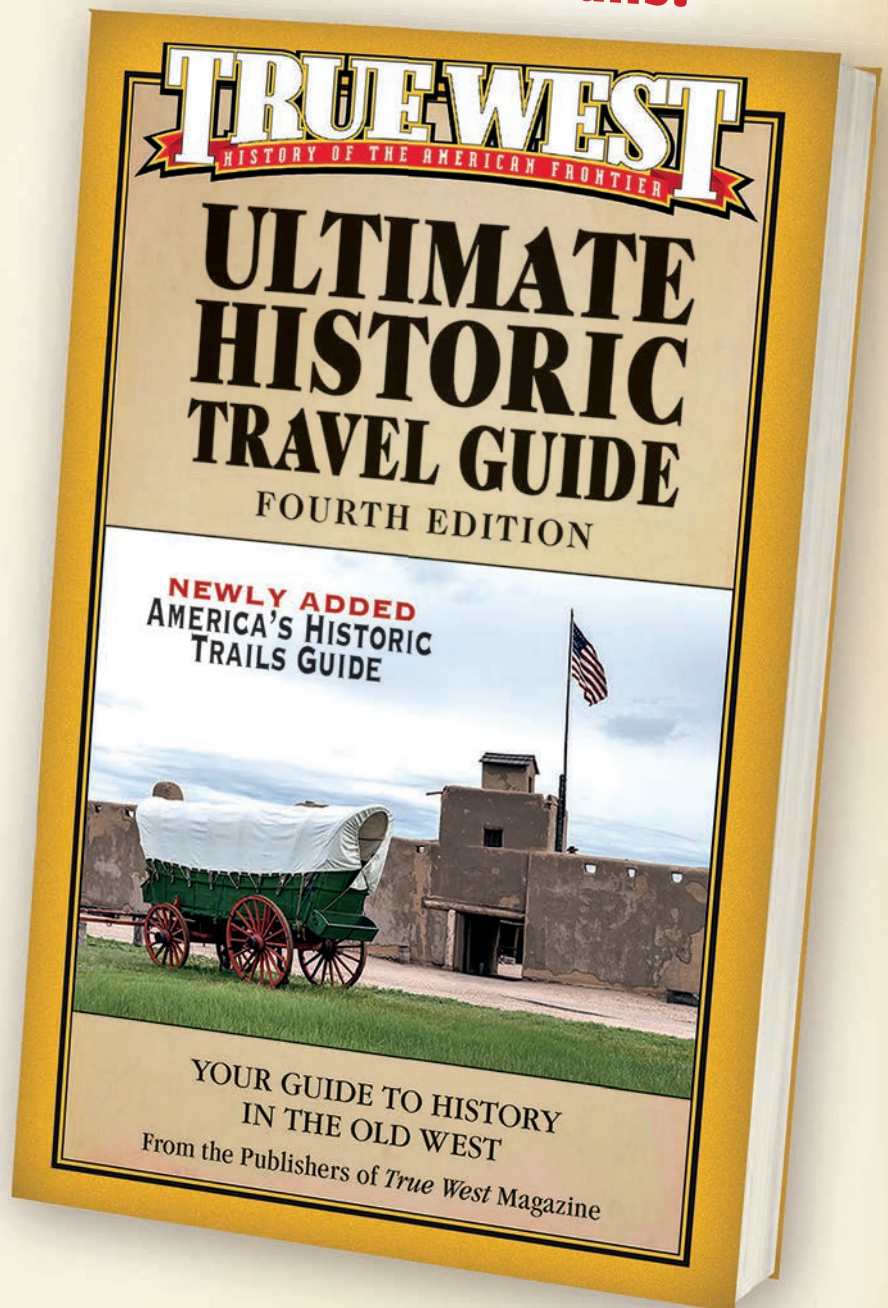
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