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467

# *Annals of* **WYOMING**

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The Wyoming History Journal

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Winter 2004

Vol. 76, No. 1



## The Cover Art

### “Snowed Up in the Rocky Mountains”

Thomas Kennet-Were Collection, American Heritage Center,  
University of Wyoming

*Thomas Kennet-Were, an English gentleman and artist, traveled across the United States and part of Canada in 1868 and 1869. He documented his trip by writing an account of his travels, which he titled “Nine Months in the United States,” and by painting many scenes in watercolor. When he left Omaha, Nebraska, in March 1869, he traveled on the Union Pacific Railroad, still being constructed across Utah. West of Laramie the train was unable to break through the snow. According to Kennet-Were: “. . . when we got up in the morning we found that by the attempts of the driver to charge through the snow the coupling chains were broken. The engine and freight cars were about a quarter of a mile ahead, a few hundred yards before us was a passenger car, and we in the last were stuck in a snow-drift. Here we remained 26 hours, during which time we fully appreciated the comfort of a sleeping car in which we were able to keep warm and amuse ourselves by playing cards and conversing with fellow passengers, whose acquaintance by this time we had made. Our tinned meats here became very acceptable, though I have never eaten any thing so nasty as they were. . . . We attempted in the morning, after clearing the line of snow, to move the car, but the wind which in the first place caused the snow-drift continued so high that our efforts were of no avail. We appealed to the driver for help . . . he told us that on his last trip he had taken 22 days to do what we had done in 12 hours, and guessing that we had ‘better bide quiet’ he shut his door and went to sleep.” Kennet-Were’s experience was similar to many Union Pacific riders eighty years later who were caught in the blizzard in Nebraska and Wyoming in early January 1949. For more information about the Blizzard of 1949 see this issue’s “Wyoming Memories.”*

#### Information for Contributors:

The editor of *Annals of Wyoming* welcomes manuscripts and photographs on every aspect of the history of Wyoming and the West. Appropriate for submission are unpublished, research-based articles which provide new information or which offer new interpretations of historical events. First-person accounts based on personal experience or recollections of events will be considered for use in the “Wyoming Memories” section. Historic photo essays for possible publication in “Wyoming Memories” also are welcome. Articles are reviewed and referred by members of the journal’s Editorial Advisory Board and others. Decisions regarding publication are made by the editor. Manuscripts (along with suggestions for illustrations or photographs) should be submitted on computer diskettes in a format created by one of the widely-used word processing programs along with two printed copies. Submissions and queries should be addressed to: Editor, *Annals of Wyoming*, Dept. 3924, 1000 E. University Avenue, Laramie WY 82071, or to the editor by e-mail at the following address: [rewig@uwyo.edu](mailto:rewig@uwyo.edu)

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# Annals of WYOMING

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## **“The Worst Campaign I Ever Experienced”: Sergeant John Zimmerman’s Memoir of the Great Sioux War**

Edited by Paul L. Hedren..... 2

## **The 1902 Murder of Tom Gorman**

By John W. Davis..... 15

## **Wyoming Memories: Blizzard of 1949**

By Amy Lawrence, James L. Ehernberger,  
and Lucille Dumbrill.....31

## **Book Reviews**

Edited by Carl Hallberg..... 38

## **Recent Acquisitions in the Hebard Collection, UW Libraries**

Compiled by Tamsen L. Hert ..... 39

**Index**.....40

**Wyoming Picture** .....Inside back cover

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## **“The Worst Campaign I Ever Experienced”:**



### **Sergeant John Zimmerman's Memoir of the Great Sioux War**

**Edited by Paul L. Hedren**

*Fort Fetterman on the North Platte River functioned as a gateway funneling troops and materiel to Brigadier General George Crook's successive campaigns against Sioux and Northern Cheyenne tribesmen in 1876-77. This late-1876 scene post-dates Sergeant John Zimmerman's passing of the post, but the attendant bustle remained constant throughout the year. D.S.Mitchell photo, courtesy Larry Ness, Yankton, South Dakota.*

Zimmerman was among those ushered to the front as the United States Army reinforced itself in the wake of George Armstrong Custer's defeat in the Battle of the Little Big Horn River, Montana, on June 25-26, 1876.

Shelved among the collections of the Wyoming State Archives is an untitled, unheralded, thirty-page holograph by J. K. Zimmerman relating his experiences with Brigadier General George Crook in the 1876 summer campaign against the Sioux and Northern Cheyenne Indians. Zimmerman, then a corporal in Company I, Fourteenth U. S. Infantry, was among those ushered to the front as the United States Army reinforced itself in the wake of George Armstrong Custer's defeat in the Battle of the Little Big Horn River, Montana, on June 25-26, 1876. A sizeable command of infantry and cavalry commanded by Crook had already engaged many of those same Indians in the Battle of Rosebud Creek, just days before Custer's demise. Although claiming a victory, Crook retired to the security of a camp along Goose Creek, Wyoming, where Sheridan is today, to await reinforcements and resupply.

Zimmerman's company was then stationed at Camp Douglas, Utah, but the thirty-four-year-old soldier was not with his outfit when it was called to the front. Instead, the corporal was on detached service escorting a prisoner to New York, likely to the Bloomingdale Asylum in New York City. Upon learning from a newscrier of Custer's death, he hastened to return to his company. In Omaha he



was permitted to attach to some 250 recruits bound from the Cheyenne Depot to Crook's Big Horn and Yellowstone Expedition. Supplies and rations were also headed to the campaign, and the Cheyenne Depot commander, in turn, put Zimmerman in charge as freight traveled west to Medicine Bow and north to Fort Fetterman. He apparently rejoined his outfit at Fetterman, the forty men of Company I under command of First Lieutenant Frank Taylor having only recently arrived from Utah.

John K. Zimmerman's history before enlisting in the Regular Army is sketchy. He hailed from Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, in the southeast corner of the state near Philadelphia, and identified himself as a farmer when joining in Cincinnati on March 25, 1871. He was twenty-nine years old, which is quite a bit older on average than typical first-time enlistees. Perhaps Zimmerman was escaping the toil of the farm. There is no ready indication of service during the Civil War, though he was certainly of age and did mention a Civil War episode in his memoir. His enlisting officer, Captain Daniel Benham of the Seventh Infantry, noted Zimmerman's blue eyes, light hair, fair complexion, and five-foot six and one-quarter inch frame. He was soon assigned to Company I, Fourteenth Infantry, then stationed at Fort Laramie, Wyoming.

Zimmerman was discharged from this five-year enlistment on March 25, 1876, at Camp Douglas, upon the conventional expiration of service, but he reenlisted the very next day. Prompt, unhesitant reenlistments became Zimmerman's hallmark that he repeated several times again. Although his company was not among those ushered initially to the front as the army commenced its war against the Sioux, when the soldiers led by Crook and Brigadier General Alfred Terry faltered in mid-1876, their commander, Lieutenant General Philip Sheridan, detailed increasing numbers to the field, ultimately depleting the garrisons at distant posts like Fort Bridger and Camp Douglas. Men like Zimmerman were not particularly conscious of the reasons for waging this war against the northern tribesmen, but by then many of these latecomers thought it had much to do with avenging Custer.

Though we know very little about Zimmerman's

life before the army, he was motivated some ten years after his service in the Great Sioux War to pen this compelling memoir. In it we learn a bit more about the writer. Clearly Zimmerman was an erudite man. His long, continuous narrative is thoughtful, reflective, and insightful, his spellings precise, and his penmanship clear and exact. And Zimmerman was a trustworthy soldier. He was appointed corporal shortly after reenlisting in 1876 and exercised personal initiative when escorting the prisoner from Utah to New York. Foolish soldiers were not entrusted with independent cross-country adventures. Nor were they charged with shepherding field-bound supplies from a railroad depot to the war front.

Zimmerman's memoir is interestingly circumspect. He deliberately focused on the personal hardships he and fellow doughboys and troopers endured, and readers today intuitively feel the heat, wet, cold, and hunger engulfing the men on Crook's late summer march from the Yellowstone River in Montana, eastward across the Little Missouri badlands in Dakota, and then southward across interminable prairie en route to the Black Hills. He provided few names, mentioning Crook and Custer in passing, but not his commanding officer, first sergeant, any of his close comrades, or the occasional foil dotting his story, like the sentry frightened by the coyote and the courier who guided the men to camp one night during the horrendous starvation march. Mostly, Zimmerman wanted to report a personal tale of perseverance and survival, and of having participated in the great campaign against the Sioux and Northern Cheyenne in 1876. His was a commoner's perspective, to be sure, scored by intense personal privation, day-to-day toil on a monotonous trail, the joy of discovering and eating wild plums when rations were short, and the melancholy of burying fallen comrades killed in the fight at Slim Buttes, Dakota. This is unvarnished history, and a tale of valor well worth remembering.

John Zimmerman probably never imagined that his memoir would one day be published. We do not know his motive for writing this story, aside from a presumed self-interest, and this editor has discovered no prior outlet for it. With a fluid, almost stream-of-

consciousness quality, Zimmerman's manuscript evinces no effort at regularizing punctuation or correcting infrequent misspellings. Zimmerman did separate thoughts into paragraphs but frequently ran sentences together, separated only by commas. Any editor in his day would have corrected these matters of convention. This editor elected to exercise a light hand, regularizing Zimmerman's punctuation and capitalization and correcting his misspellings, but otherwise retaining the other hallmarks of this extraordinary composition, as he wrote it.

No one who has always had their wants supplied, such as the necessaries of life, do not know the misery that is passed through in being without food a few days. It was sixteen years ago in September last since I was eating apple dumplings at Grand Pas. I have not had any since that time, only what I have made myself. On several times I have been off on duty alone or in small parties, then if chance afforded an opportunity I usually had a good old time with apple dumplings, if not with real green apples with Aldens evaporated apples, something that is furnished by Uncle Sam, somewhat the same as dried apples. No one who has never experienced the pangs of hunger, have an idea what a delightful sensation it is to dream or even think of eating some delicacy. The imagination seems to relieve the knowings of the stomach. I will give a little experience of my own ten years ago.

I was on detached service in 1876 (which is being away from the company alone or in small parties) being sent east with a prisoner. Starting back, I left New York on the fifth of July, the same night I arrived at Washington, D.C., purposing to stop over a few days. As soon as I landed at the Depot I heard the Newsboy cry "Gen Custer and his command killed by Indians under Sitting Bull." This was enough. Soon as I heard it I knew that our company would be there as soon as they could, having been ordered to be in readiness for sometime.

I immediately proceeded west on the Baltimore and Ohio railroad. Arriving at Omaha I reported for duty, wishing to be sent to the Big Horn Mountains to join the command but was told it was impossible,

as the country was full of Indians on the warpath, and no communications with the front. I found out that a body of two hundred and fifty recruits would start in a few days to fill up all the companies on the trail. I requested to be sent with them, which was granted. Everything was being got in readiness at Cheyenne Depot, Wyoming Territory.

Four car loads of horses, mules, wagons and rations were started on the U.P. railroad for Medicine Bow, ten hours run from Cheyenne. I was placed in charge of all this Government property and rations on the train, proceeded immediately, with the understanding that the Soldiers (recruits) would follow on the next train and reach Medicine Bow as soon as I would, but detentions of various kinds delayed the train with recruits for two days and nights. As the train on which I was ran into the station, the people refused to think that they were going to be reinforced as the country was full of Indians and the citizens were standing guard at night.

When they found out that the troops would not arrive until night, they were much afraid of a massacre. For two days and nights they were still in suspense, waiting, watching, and wishing for the delayed train. Every night until the recruits came they were under arms. As the train hove in sight for a certainty it brought relief to many a family who oftentimes before had seen Indians on the hill tops about town, ready to pounce down upon them at any moment.

After unloading the cars then came a trying time for the recruit horseman, the trying time for the poor rider, many of them never having rode a horse before, the horses many of them having no person on their backs before. It was a pitiable sight to see the many mishaps that befell them. You could see guns, hats, caps, and blankets strewn along the road. Even the men themselves were often thrown off and the horse went scampering over the prairie, some of the old hands would have to catch him again. The first night's camp was a new era in many of their lives. Each man was issued his days rations which was to last till the next night. Many of them could eat it up in one meal, if very hungry, and thought it very queer that they could not get as much as they wanted, many of them being used to going to the cupboard at home at any

time for a lunch. After eating their supper, then to bed sleeping under one blanket or a double up with two or three of them, no roof overhead except the sky, probably before morning would be raining hard. No matter what weather, all must be up early enough to be marching by daylight, feeding their horses before their own breakfast.

Five days marching brought us to Fort Fetterman, Wyo. Territory. Then came a trying time for all of us, in crossing the North Platte River. It was very high for the season, occasioned by so much rain, which was rather unusual so late in the spring. Each man must ride his own over, no matter how deep, and in absence of ferry boats, all the wagons must cross in the water. Often the horses would drift down stream a mile or more, the wagons would sometimes turn over, baggage and all going down stream losing a portion of it.

This crossing of the river was mostly after dark. Once safely over all had to prepare to move by daylight (about 3.30) hardly any one getting any sleep.

From this forward all the new hands were drilled tolerably well in the misfortunes of camp life. Things began to look more cheerful. Our way from this on, had to be felt by day and night by an advance guard of Cavalry, looking for Indian signs. Every night camp was about on the same footing, little sleep, bad water (alkali, saltish) being distasteful to any one even those who were used to it.

We spent several days marching through a country, black from the grass being burned by the Indians on purpose to starve our animals, but as long as we had wagons with us we had a supply of oats and corn. We arrived at our intended camp one night, and found it already occupied by whom we did not know. To make sure everything was put in order for safety or fight as the case might be, a bugler was ordered to the front to blow officers call, and if answered by them we would know they were friends not foe. It was answered immediately and we knew we were in safety. It was General Merritt's command of the Fifth U.S. Cavalry, en route to join Gen. Crook's command



*North-central Wyoming's placid Powder River country witnessed a flurry of campaign action in 1876 as troops commanded by General Crook traversed these rolling plains on three separate occasions, and supply and hospital wagons traversed it many times more. Photo courtesy the author.*

in the Big Horn Mountains, the same as our destination. We were with a large command now, and we did not hope to catch up with them, as we expected them far in advance, but they had a brush with the redskins, and were delayed a day or two in consequence.

Three more days marching brought us to the large waiting command of Gen. Crook, at the foot of the Big Horn Mountains, and the combined forces now numbering over two thousand men, about half each, cavalry and infantry. We were now close to the mountains, the water was clear and pure soft as spring water. We lay over one day getting ready to take the trail after the Indians that had massacred Gen. Custer and command. It was now five weeks since the terrible battle was fought, and no white man had been to the battle ground since to bury the slain. For this reason no time was to be lost in getting ready for the start. On the fourth of August 1876 we started on our memorable journey with rations for fifteen days, taking with us for each man, one blanket, one overcoat. All wagons, spare bedding, extra horses and mules were sent back toward Fort Fetterman. Cavalrymen kept their horses, Infantry on foot. All mules taken with us, were used to carry rations and our blankets and overcoats, carrying them during the day and giving them to us at night to sleep under.

Each man was issued his days rations separately every night as follows, three tablespoonful of ground coffee, three tablespoonsful sugar, three of Beans or rice, twelve crackers (four inches square), twelve ounces of bacon. This was a full days ration for one man, and is the field or campaign ration. The man may eat it up all at one meal or make two or three fit, as it suits him best, many could eat it up at once, and more too. Each man had one quart cup, no other cooking utensil. He toasted his bacon or ate it raw, boiled his coffee in the cup and drank it from the same, making it strong or weak as far as the coffee would go. The first days march after leaving our spare bedding and supplies we had to cross the Tongue River, as many as sixteen or seventeen times. The river winds through the mountains like a snake, very deep in the spring, but low in summer, only three or four feet deep at that time and about one hundred yards wide. The river runs through great cuts in the

mountains, steep and high, impossible to climb, beside this was the Indian trail for the north country and the only passable route.

The cavalry rode through the water good enough, but the Infantry had to march and wade right through, sometimes breast high other times knee deep. Our first crossing was thought to be our only one, as we had not been told of the others yet; all took off their shoes and stockings, after crossing put them on again and continue the march to the next fording place. At the third crossing, our feet began to get sore from the sharp rocks and sand. We were then told that there were more than a dozen such crossings before us yet for this day, and it would be useless to try to march without keeping our shoes on so after this we marched into the river removing nothing, and not delaying the march, never thinking of changing any more.

After the last crossing (16 or 17) we went into camp and it was quite a relief to think that it was the last crossing of the Tongue River for a time at least. But such looking shoes and boots as most of the men had on was a sight, almost all of them turned down at the heels and run over and had to be straightened and dried that night that they could march in them next day. But while all this is going on I must not forget to mention that with the command were about two hundred friendly Indians who acted as scouts, and were always in advance to give us any information as to Indian signs, as they were all well versed in the lay of the country, the habits and haunts of the other Indians, who were on the warpath, also the crossing of mountains, streams, and trails generally, as to the best routes traveled. That day we lay in camp almost all day enshrouded in almost darkness, smoke from the burning prairies and forests together with a fog with no wind to move it from the valley between the mountains, or drive it away. At any moment we were liable to be drawn into ambush by the Indians as they were not far away. In the afternoon the weather cleared up and we marched until the middle of the night, which brought us up to a few straggling Indians, were left behind the main body as decoys and spies for the main body in advance, but we knew they must be some distance ahead from appearance of the valley and the trail they left behind them, beating and pounding the grass with the many pony tracks.

Thousands of ponies and buffalo as they always drive the buffalo before them.

From this on we could see some of the effects of the fight with Custer, as the battle ground was just across the mountain to our left where the cavalry went next day and buried the slain, which was over two hundred and fifty officers and men. The Indians left many graves by the wayside. When they buried a brave they roll him up in a blanket and place him in a tree top and tie his pony at the foot of the tree until he starves. His war implements are placed in the blanket with him, the pony is for his use in the happy hunting grounds, as well as his war implements, and show the great spirit what a warrior he was; he cuts notches in his bow or gun stock one for every one he has slain of his enemies.

Next night we came to the great Indian Camp, where they had the great scalp and war dance after the massacre of Custer and his command, and one of the greatest scalp dances the Sioux ever had as they considered this battle one of their greatest achievements in warfare, and thought the great spirit was on their side. A long pole at least twenty feet high was planted in the ground and lariats (pony ropes of raw hide) were tied at the top, and the braves would run the ends of these ropes through their breasts; by cutting loose part of the flesh with a knife, then run and jump round the pole, until exhausted or the flesh breaks away. He was then considered a warrior.

Terrible barbarous—but mostly done in scalp and war dances, other braves would then take their places at the same feat - other braves would keep up an irregular dance and howl, the medicine men would beat on the Tom Tom, a sort of rawhide drum, the squaws keeping up large fires: this sort of performance going on till the break of day. From this on the Indians seemed to be in haste to get away. We saw tepee poles thrown away and such other articles as would be an encumbrance in a long march. An Indian and his family carry everything they have on poles each side of a pony, the two ends dragging the ground thus the pack is put on the poles behind the pony, tied with rawhide both to the poles and the poles to the pony, two ends dragging the ground. The poles are for their tepee (tent) when in camp. Their papooses (babies)

are carried on the same pack unless the squaws carry them on their backs like a knapsack, they are then strapped to a board and the board is carried by the squaw on her back. When they stop the board is stood up by a tree stump or rock, baby's head upward.

Following them a few days further we came to a halt one day, seeing the hills full of Indians on our front, and seemed as if they were in line of battle. The scouts soon reported them Indians but could not say if friendly, but it soon turned out that they were the advance guard of Gen. Terry's, who was coming from the North to meet us and hoped to catch the Indians in this valley, the Rosebud (thickly studded with wild rose bushes). He came down from the Yellowstone River, at which place he had landed from Government boats. The Indians were a little too sharp for us and slipped away. The wily old chief Sitting Bull or tin hat as we called him, was smart enough to break up his party in small bands, and struck out toward Canada and parts of Montana and Dakota, making a new trip for all hands by following them in their wanderings. As we were just out of rations a division was made of Gen. Terry's supplies, and the two commands started in different directions hoping to catch a few of the redskins by driving them back to their reservations, or by destroying their food and supplies. But as it will appear hereafter we were nearly driven to the wall ourselves by starvation and excessive marching and would have been unfit for any engagement during the last few days of our campaign.

At this time we were on the Yellowstone River near the mouth of the Powder River and it was raining hard all the time. The marching was miserable on account of mud. One night on the Yellowstone I will never forget as it was a continual pour all night, and not the least shelter for any one. The picket line had to be kept up and I was on picket with a squad of four men about five hundred yards from camp. All of us except one would sit together on some brush or rocks while the other would be out further to the front on watch, the rain wetting us through and through. About midnight a coyote (small wolf) gave one awful screech, which always sounds like a hundred of them together but they are harmless, but a terror to any one who is not used to them. Suddenly a sentry (a

recruit) came bounding in upon us almost frightened to death with the cry that the Indians were there, but all the others knew what was the matter and had a good laugh at his expense. We could not get him to venture to the front again, alone, that night, and he will never forget it.

Breaking camp at this place we had to cross the Powder River, and it was very swift and deep from so much rain. It was up to our breast and had to be waded, some of them losing their guns, and ammunition, by falling or slipping, on the smooth rocks. Every one had to carry one hundred rounds of ammunition, and it was no small weight, with our other traps; and was very cumbersome in struggling in the water. For about ten days after this we had the best time on the whole trip as the weather was good and we had a moderate supply of provisions, no Indians molested us. During part of the time we passed through what is called the petrified country as all the wood, shells, bones, and many other things turned to stone; there were no trees to be seen standing or alive but the ground was strewn with petrified wood, even a few logs were turned to stone, which must have lain on the ground for hundreds of years. A little further on we came to quite a forest of wild plum trees, and all being loaded with fruit, many of them ripe, and good to eat, and we had a great feast of them. Shortly after this came the commencement of our hard times, as we were notified that our rations were running short, and must expect to live on half rations and probably less in a few days. A few days of short rations soon whets up the appetite and even the miserable quid of tobacco was quite a solace to many a soldier on the march as money was more plentiful than tobacco or food. It was a common thing for one soldier to offer another twenty dollars for a small piece of tobacco, yet this would not buy it, much less any bread or crackers.

While marching one day after this we were suddenly surprised to see a horseman at full speed coming in the distance. Our conjectures were soon silenced by the news that a large Indian village had been run into by a small body of our cavalry who had been sent on ahead to hurry up and forward rations to us.

The courier was sent to ask for reinforcements as

soon as possible as the village must be charged, there being a good supply of wild meats, which would help our command a few days further on. We hastened forward as fast as possible and in three hours we saw the small party of cavalry all surrounded by Indians, as they had already run the Indians out of camp and were holding them at bay with considerable loss to both sides.

As our whole command came in sight the Indians fell back to the hills (except a few who were in a ravine surrounded) waiting and watching our movements, and kept up a continuous fire all the time. This made no difference. We were in their camp in a hurry, and among their tents and tepees, bullets flying all around, but no one was paying any attention to this until we had something to eat. Afterward the Indians were taken care of in this manner, their bullets had caused considerable damage among the Soldiers, especially from those who were found in the small ravine, so a bold charge was made on their place of concealment by a thousand rifles brought to bear on their hiding place.

Soon the havoc was complete. The few remaining Indians alive surrendered to us with several squaws and papooses. They held up a white flag and sent an old squaw to parley with us and this stopped the fire for awhile. Then the bucks tried to slip away from us. This exasperated the scouts so much that they jumped right in among them, commencing to scalp them, flinging the scalp high in the air, hooting and howling. This was the only time I ever saw any scalping done by any one. Indian upon Indian was the real boisterous style. They were soon forced to surrender and come out of their concealment giving up their guns, many of them wounded that had to be carried out and laid in their camp by the fire.

All who could walk were taken with us next day, those who could not were left in the old camp, with robes and blankets, with provisions and shelter, with a few squaws to take care of them. Nothing pleases the Indian so much as to scalp his enemy. He draws the long knife, give a long whoop, with one stroke the thing is done. That night we feasted on Indian dried meats, such as dried venison, Buffalo, bear and elk, also some dried wild berries and plums cured by the Indians in their way.

All such things as would be of any use to them, we destroyed or took with us, so that they would be hindered much in following us.

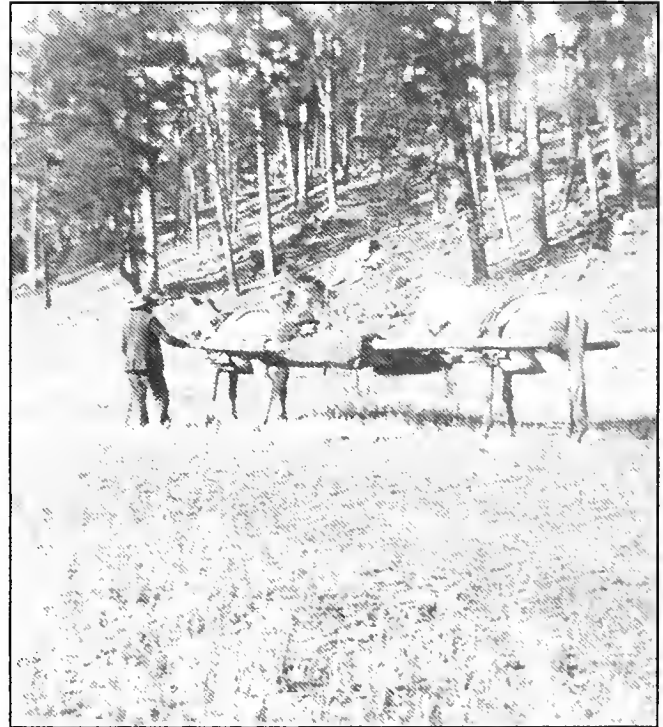
All the ponies we captured we took with us. Many of the Indians got out of camp in such a hurry that they had no pony or blanket, so we either kept them or destroyed them (keeping ponies, destroying blankets). They must then walk.

At two o'clock next morning we were aroused out of a sound sleep to go on the picket line, as we expected the Indians to return to us strong handed at daylight by being reinforced from other villages up and down the valley and we must be prepared for emergencies which we were sure would come. All of the men except a few to take care of the sick and wounded and a few to guard the pack animals and horses went out from camp about five hundred yards forming a circle around camp, lay down upon our arms, waited for the savages and the peep of day. We almost felt that the Indians were there in force, but could not hear or see them. We were as still as mice, and walked stealthily so as not to move a rock or break a twig, and marched and waited for the first streak of dawn. According to expectations, the moment we could see a few rods in the advance, the familiar crack of the rifle broke the stillness of the morning, telling us plainly that the Indians were there seeing us at a much greater distance than we could see them. Finding us well prepared they made one desperate charge expecting to drive us out of their village, but in this they were foiled. We were too strong for them, compelling them to fall back to the hills again, where they waited for reinforcements from other tribes in the valley, and try some other move on us. Now we must be up and going as we could not stay long under the fire of the Indians, as at any time, more of these villages might come to their aid. We would be out of food and our sick and wounded must be taken to a place of rest and attention.

We could not think of leaving any of our command behind only the dead, and they had to be buried secretly and securely in this way. A large hole was dug in the ground right in the main trail, all of them laid in it, covered with their blankets, then with canvas filling up the hole as nearly as possible. A fire was then built on top of this, the ashes afterward

scattered out about the place, all the command, horses and men, then marched over the spot, obliterating all signs of breaking the earth. Everything was made ready to move. After the Indians fell back to the hills and one side of our circle was opened out as follows the troops marching at a distance each side of the train. We had no time to loiter, our food was going to run short soon again, we had at least ten days march to communications.

The sick and wounded were taken care of in this manner...the only conveyance was the horses and pack mules. On those they rode or were carried, since we had no rations, they were used for the sick. A packsaddle was made somewhat like a sawbuck, thus by laying a blanket or two on top one could ride sort of comfortable. It was good for the purpose intended, but only a makeshift for a riding saddle, but "any port in a storm" it was much better than walking for a sick man. The wounded were carried in this way, two mules for one man, one in front, one behind the



*Soldiers wounded in the fight at Slim Buttes, September 9-10, 1876, were transported to hospitals in mule-drawn litters like this. Photographer Stanley Morrow captured this scene in the southern Black Hills as Crook's command threaded its way to Camp Robinson, Nebraska, and Fort Laramie. Photo courtesy Larry Ness, Yankton, South Dakota.*



patient; two poles were tied, one on either side of the mules thus made fast to the mules at both ends, making them on a level. A blanket was then stretched across the center between the mules and left sag down a little. On this the wounded were conveyed as gently as possible, as we were in a very hilly country, sometimes straight up, sometimes down, over ditches, gullies, creeks, mud and slush, sometimes miring down the mules. It was any thing but pleasant for a wounded man.

After the circle was opened out we marched in the same fashion all day, the sick train on the center between two lines of men. The rear was brought up by the cavalry who played a trick on the redskins after we left camp thus - the Indians finding that we were moving out came down from the hills pellmell to get whatever left behind, and to capture a straggler or two which they saw, as a few men only, were left in sight of them. It made them feel quite brave making a bold dash to take them in, but in this they were foiled to their regret, as a large body of cavalry had concealed themselves in a small ravine, and just as the Indians came up to it they poured a murderous fire into them, which completely routed them sending them back to the hills again. They remained there until every one was out of sight after this. They never molested us any more or even came in sight and they might have done us a lot of mischief had they known our condition. Traveling all day we came to what we took to be in the distance, a pretty lake of water, but when we went into camp we found its waters Alkali, the worst kind.

This was now the commencement of the bad lands of Montana, bad water, no wood for fuel, but little grass, if we made a fire it must be of wet grass, scarce at that.

Everything was black, bleak, and barren, all full of little hillocks, as if loads of hay had been dumped about. Next day we came to the mountain of bones and shells bordering on the bad lands, which looked as if a mountain had been made almost of bones, all bleached and another of shells. From the top of these we could see the point of our destination, "Bald Mountain" of the Black Hills. "So near and yet so far," looked like a days march to the mountain (which was 100 miles) and yet we had to go twenty-five miles

further. One hundred and twenty five miles to Crook City, edge of the Black Hills.

We were not growing fat by any means. Our meat was all gone except a few strips of dried buffalo, no bread, no crackers, no coffee, no sugar, bacon long since disappeared, nothing but the water of the prairie, as we had any amount of rain. Bread. Bread - any thing would be paid for bread. Occasionally we would get a few wild berries, but these only whetted up the appetite, being very sour.

All this time the mules and horses were falling by the wayside, as they had nothing to eat except a few blades of grass picked here and there, and but little time to pick it.

The cavalry had long since ceased to ride, the horses could not hold themselves up much less a rider. We came nearer and nearer to old "Baldy," getting weaker and weaker. We were now within one day's march of it, and even more, as we were told in the morning that this would be a thirty mile march, and most of us so weak that we were hardly able to march at all. Up early, no breakfast, up at peep of day and start right on the march, no bother about cooking, traveling steady all day long, no rest, the ground was wet, better to keep moving or standing, all was water and mud. In the morning an old Indian said he could lead us in a direct route to our destination, as the day was cloudy any one had to go by instinct more than anything else, but he done it exactly as he said he would, telling us it was a long march for any one, but alone those worn out. We found out that he was right, it took us until after 12 o'clock at night.

The night was so dark you could see but little distance ahead, raining hard, mud under foot. This was more trying to the horses and mules than the men, as they would mire down and could not get out. The saddle was taken off and both left to their fate. The road or trail was full of horses, mules, and saddles, which had to be gathered up and brought in during the next few days. Probably a week before all got into camp. Men were fagged out long before night, and began to drop behind, others trying to give encouragement by saying camp might soon be at hand, but on and on we marched, still no signs until about half past eleven. A fire appeared in our front as a beacon to guide us onward. When we got to this fire a





*As Crook's summer campaign drew to a close, his troops subsisted on horse and mule flesh. Here in a posed reenactment for Yankton photographer Stanley Morrow in mid-September 1876, an infantryman dispatches an emaciated cavalry horse. Photo courtesy the W. H. Over Museum, Vermillion, South Dakota.*

courier was stationed at it to say to us that camp was a short distance ahead. This gave renewed encouragement and all hands sent up a shout, that was carried back for miles and many a man afterward said that this shout brought them into camp that night as they seemed to have renewed energy. Out of a company of forty men, about ten only would come into camp and stack arms, which was after midnight.

The others were all along the road for ten or fifteen miles back. Our camp this night was only a lay down on the bare ground, many being too weak to look for blankets and unable to carry them if they found them. But as good luck will have it, the rain ceased and we had a night that was moderately cool.

During the whole night we heard stragglers coming into camp, trying to find their companions. Our First Sergeant (who is now dead and buried at Washington, D.C., died while on furlough) when about five miles from camp, fell down and could go no farther. He told me that if we got to camp safe, to come back after him in the morning and bring him in dead or alive, but when we sent up the shout at the bacon fire, it was carried back so far, that he with some others made a final start, and struggled into camp before morning. But hundreds of them did not arrive until late next day, many had to be brought in on packmules.

We had five miles more to travel to get to a good camp that the teams might reach us without crossing the river, as they were loaded down with our supplies. The river between us and the proposed camp was the



*Photographer Stanley Morrow documented the quartering of a cavalry mount, reminiscent of Crook's infantry and cavalry troops butchering dozens of horses and mules during the grueling days of their Starvation March. Photo courtesy the author.*

Belle Fourche and as usual with other streams, high from incessant rains, breast deep, very swift, and many of us too weak to stand against the current. A small stream was first crossed and it was comical to see the weak men trying to climb up and down the steep banks. After crossing the small stream, a hundred or more cattle were driven in sight toward our camp, a mile ahead of us. This sent forth new cheers from all hands, as we knew that a good feed awaited us as the cattle were sent out on purpose to give us some encouragement, as we were told so often about rations being close at hand. When we came to the Belle Fourche, all the cavalry men were waiting there with their horses for us to ride over the river as they had been to the new camp, and the horses had a good feed of oats and they looked much more able to cross a river than before. Each cavalryman rode one horse and led another over and back in the water and the spare horse was always rode by the Infantryman. So

we all crossed over dry, and I doubt if all of us could have waded the river safely.

Once over we went into a beautiful camp about fifteen miles from Crook City, Wyoming Territory, edge of the Black Hills, and a more famished lot of men I never saw before - save once when the Andersonville Georgia Prisoners were exchanged for Yankee prisoners in 1864 during the war of the rebellion.

As this Indian campaign was an extreme case to many, being without rations so long, they did not eat with judgment, and many of them were the worse for it afterward.

This ended the worst campaign I ever experienced, and the sequel to this will make as much of a history I have already written. Such campaigns do not show their effects until years afterward, and today out of forty men to a company, I can only find three that were in that long and arduous march after Sitting Bull or what many of them vowed there they



*Zimmerman may be visible in this infantry camp along the Belle Fourche River, north of Deadwood. Photographer Morrow was among the early visitors to Crook's command, the soldiers having just emerged from the dreadful Starvation March and still showing the tatters of the campaign trail. Photo courtesy the W. H. Over Museum, Vermillion, South Dakota.*

would never be caught in another campaign.

John Zimmerman's absorbing tale of soldiering with General Crook, the Indian fight at Slim Buttes, and the Starvation March, clearly one of the defining episodes of this enduring saga, did not complete his service during the Great Sioux War. But it is telling of his psyche that he limited his memoir to that time between his hearing of Custer's demise in early July 1876, and the closure of the Starvation March in mid-September. In a very real way, hearing the news of Custer's death across America may have had the same shock value and memory impact as did the announcement of the Pearl Harbor attack or assassination of President Kennedy among current generations of Americans. So it was for Zimmerman. Custer was a very visible citizen, and his death in Montana a cataclysmic moment. Similarly, the Starvation March had a distinctive, harrowing, wartime quality for those two thousand soldiers who endured



*Zimmerman may also be posed in this camp of infantrymen seen just east of Custer City in the southern Black Hills in early October 1876. Photographer Morrow followed Crook's men as they idled their way through the Black Hills, recuperating after the debilitating Starvation March. Tentage and other camp amenities had not yet been returned to the soldiers. Photo courtesy the author.*

it, parallel with, if different in scale, the experiences of those combatants in the Gettysburg battle or Normandy landings. Despite the greater enveloping stories—the Civil War, World War II—singular moments are what most respective survivors chose to remember of it all.

Zimmerman and the men of the Big Horn and Yellowstone Expedition spent nearly a month recuperating on a deliberately slow trek through the Black Hills en route to Camp Robinson, Nebraska, where they arrived in mid-October. The expedition disbanded there, but Zimmerman's company remained at Robinson on detached service through December, tending affairs at the bustling station and nearby Red Cloud Agency. In turn, in December, rather than departing for their permanent home in Utah, Company I was next detailed to a six-month stint at the Army's single-company outpost in the southwestern Black Hills, Camp Mouth of Red Canyon, where it guarded a treacherous stretch of the Cheyenne-Black Hills Road. Regrettably, Zimmerman did not report on these episodes, which to some modern historians are every bit as interesting—and even more unheralded—than Crook's summer campaign.

Zimmerman's featured experiences may have amounted to the "worst campaign [he] ever experienced," or, for that matter, the only genuine Indian campaign endured during his long service, but it did not sour his devotion to the United States Army nor the army's warm embrace of him. At age thirty-nine and a sergeant in 1881, he was discharged from Company I, Fourteenth Infantry, at Camp Douglas, upon expiration of term of service, character "excellent." As before, he promptly reenlisted for another five-year term. Zimmerman was discharged at Vancouver Barracks, Washington, in 1886, still a sergeant, and this time with a character reference noting "An Excellent Man." Again he reenlisted, now at age forty-four. During this enlistment he transferred to Company H, Fourteenth Infantry, and his company changed stations from Washington to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

At age forty-nine, Zimmerman reenlisted one final time in 1891. Early in this enlistment, however, he exercised a unique provision available to veteran

soldiers when he sought and obtained an early discharge from the service. On July 26, 1890, the War Department had promulgated General Order No. 81, allowing enlisted men who had served ten years or more to be discharged by way of a favor, "The purpose being to extend all possible indulgence to meritorious men, especially in cases where a discharge would obviously be for the material benefit of the soldier." Zimmerman applied for such a discharge on September 22, 1891, declaring that he had "served continuously for over 20 years. My discharge," he wrote, "would be for the material benefit of myself, as my brother died recently, and I now have the opportunity of greatly improving my condition by going into business."

Zimmerman's commanding officer, Captain Samuel McConihe, Company H, Fourteenth Infantry, approved and forwarded his petition, noting, "This soldier is not indebted to the U.S. Sergeant Zimmerman has been continuously in the service since March 25th, 1871. He has been a Sergeant since Nov. 1st, 1878. I have known him nearly the whole time of his long service. He has always been a most faithful, conscientious, prudent, sober, and deserving man. From my personal knowledge of his excellent character, and his good service which has extended through a period of over 20 years, I recommend that a discharge be given him at this time, as a favor, upon his own application, and for the reasons he has stated within."

Zimmerman's final discharge was effected at Fort Leavenworth on October 7, 1891. He was given retained pay of \$6.43, his undrawn clothing allowance amounting to \$56.16, and accrued savings of \$2,000. He was unmarried at the time of discharge. He applied for neither a Civil War nor Indian Wars pension, received neither Civil War nor Indian Wars campaign medals, and seems to have slipped into history, leaving only his valuable reminiscence of service during the Great Sioux War.

Zimmerman's outline of service is drawn from Registers of Enlistments in the United States Army, Microcopy 233; Fourteenth U. S. Infantry Muster Rolls, Record Group 94, Entry 53; and letters and

orders in the Principal Record Division, Adjutant General's Office, Record Group 94, Entry 25, all in the National Archives, Washington, D.C.

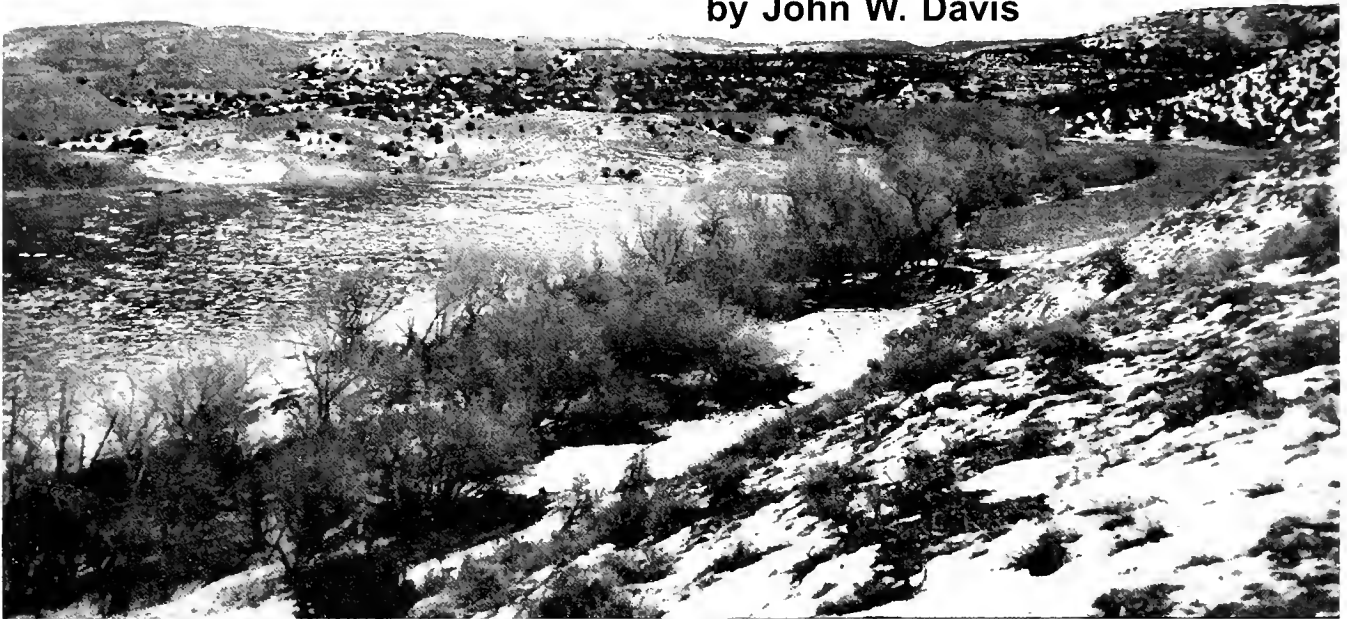
Contextually, the story of the Great Sioux War is best developed by Charles Robinson III in *A Good Year to Die: The Story of the Great Sioux War* (New York: Random House, 1995). Efforts to resupply and reinforce Crook's Big Horn and Yellowstone Expedition are discussed by Paul L. Hedren in *Fort Laramie in 1876, Chronicle of a Frontier Post at War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), chapter 5. The movement of Crook's troops in August and September 1876, including the fight at Slim Buttes on September 9-10 and the Starvation March, is well told by Jerome A. Greene in *Slim Buttes, 1876: An Episode of the Great Sioux War* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982). A homage to Zimmerman and other Regular Army enlisted combatants engaged in the 1876-1877 war is provided by Paul L. Hedren in *We Trailed the Sioux: Enlisted Men Speak on Custer, Crook, and the Great Sioux War* (Mechanicsburg, Penn.: Stackpole Books, 2003). **AW**

### Paul L. Hedren

is the National Park Service's superintendent of Niobrara National Scenic River and Missouri National Recreational River, headquartered in O'Neill, Nebraska. He is the author or editor of seven books focused on the Old Army and Great Sioux War and a regular contributor to Western history journals, including *Annals of Wyoming*.

# The 1902 Murder of Tom Gorman

by John W. Davis



*The Dry Fork of Brokenback Creek, looking east, as it issues from the Big Horn Mountains. Courtesy the author.*

The Gormans' tiny outpost lay at the base of this large mountain range, along the eastern rim of the Big Horn Basin of northern Wyoming.

In the spring of 1902, Tom Gorman and his wife, Maggie, lived on the Dry Fork of Brokenback Creek, a small stream issuing out of the Big Horn Mountains just a few miles north of Ten Sleep, Wyoming. The Gormans' tiny outpost lay at the base of this large mountain range, along the eastern rim of the Big Horn Basin of northern Wyoming. Tom Gorman and Maggie McClellan had been married in Buffalo, on September 19, 1898, when Maggie was barely eighteen; Tom had been considerably older, twenty-eight.<sup>1</sup>

What was the Gorman house was leased from a man named Ed Miller. Miller had moved upon the land in April 1899 and built a small log house as part of proving up his homestead claim.<sup>2</sup> This house, only about 430 square feet, still stands where it did originally, about thirty or forty feet from the stream (which

<sup>1</sup> This article is drawn from a manuscript titled *Goodbye, Judge Lynch, How Law and Order Came to Wyoming's Big Horn Basin*. The University of Oklahoma Press has accepted the manuscript for publication. Records of the Johnson County, Wyoming Clerk, Marriage License and Certificate of Marriage between Mr. Thomas C. Gorman and Miss Maggie M. McClellan; September 3, 1898 (License) and September 19, 1898 (Filing of Certificate); Book A of Marriage, page 418. The 1900 Census, Big Horn County, Wyoming, shows Maggie to have been born in August, 1880.

<sup>2</sup> National Archives and Records Administration, Homestead Proof – Testimony of Claimant by Henry E. Miller, Record Group 40 (records of the Bureau of Land Management), Homestead file #1288 for Henry E. Miller, Land Office at Buffalo, Wyoming, July 6, 1905.



true to its name, usually does not flow water).<sup>3</sup> The house is on the floor of a small canyon so tightly tucked into the mountains that from the house only the interior of the canyon can be seen. The high peaks of the Big Horn Mountains, when viewed from a far distance, look like huge rock formations sitting atop a forested plateau, what John McPhee referred to as "crowns on tables."<sup>4</sup> But from within the Dry Fork canyon, all that is lost in a reduced horizon. The floor of the canyon is very narrow, about two hundred feet wide, and it is filled with box elder, cottonwood, and sagebrush. When the sun lowers, the canyon becomes dark quickly. The house has always been off the beaten path, so that a visitor must divert from a county road and only after traveling for a mile or more into the mountain does the house come into view.

In 1900, Tom Gorman asked his younger brother, Jim, to come out to Wyoming from Pennsylvania.<sup>5</sup> This was probably a happy event; Tom had last seen his brother when Jim was only seventeen or eighteen. But this is an age when young men change quickly and perhaps Tom was surprised by the twenty year-old man who arrived in Wyoming.<sup>6</sup> The great complication here was that Maggie Gorman, by almost all accounts, was remarkably attractive. Whatever there is about a woman men find appealing, Maggie had it. She had that elusive, ephemeral feminine quality that launches ships, that billions are spent to achieve, that most desired of human qualities, to be desirable. Many years after her brief and tragic time of infamy, people in the Ten Sleep country still talked about the aura of Maggie Gorman.<sup>7</sup>

Jim Gorman resided with Tom and Maggie when they lived south of Ten Sleep on the George McClellan ranch and when they moved to the Ed Miller place north of Ten Sleep, but there were frequent disagreements between the brothers. In the fall of 1901, Tom objected to the attention his younger brother showed his wife, and drove Jim away at rifle point.<sup>8</sup> It was not long, though, just the following spring, when Jim came back into the picture. Something drew him back to his brother's home, and it was probably Maggie, whether because of things she did, or simply because she was a "fine looking woman."<sup>9</sup>

Jim returned to his brother's home, but he and Tom continued squabbling.<sup>10</sup> There were later sharply conflicting accounts as to why and how it happened, but there is no question that on April 20, 1902, Jim killed his brother, burying a hatchet in Tom's head.

That spring, Tom had been freighting to and from Casper with his partner, Fred Bader.<sup>11</sup> In April, they

<sup>3</sup> Gloria Cutt, interview by the author, February 5, 2000. Mrs. Cutt is a present owner of the land, who reports that the original structure, about which she and her husband Fred are building, measures 18 feet by 24 feet. In his homestead entry papers, Mr. Miller stated that the house was 18 by 20 feet.

<sup>4</sup> John McPhee, *Rising from the Plains* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1986), p. 63.

<sup>5</sup> "Big Horn County's Terrible Tragedy," *Cheyenne Daily Leader*, November 10, 1902.

<sup>6</sup> "Big Horn County's Terrible Tragedy," *Cheyenne Daily Leader*, November 10, 1902; see also the 1900 Census, Big Horn County, Wyoming, and the marriage license referred to in footnote 1 above.

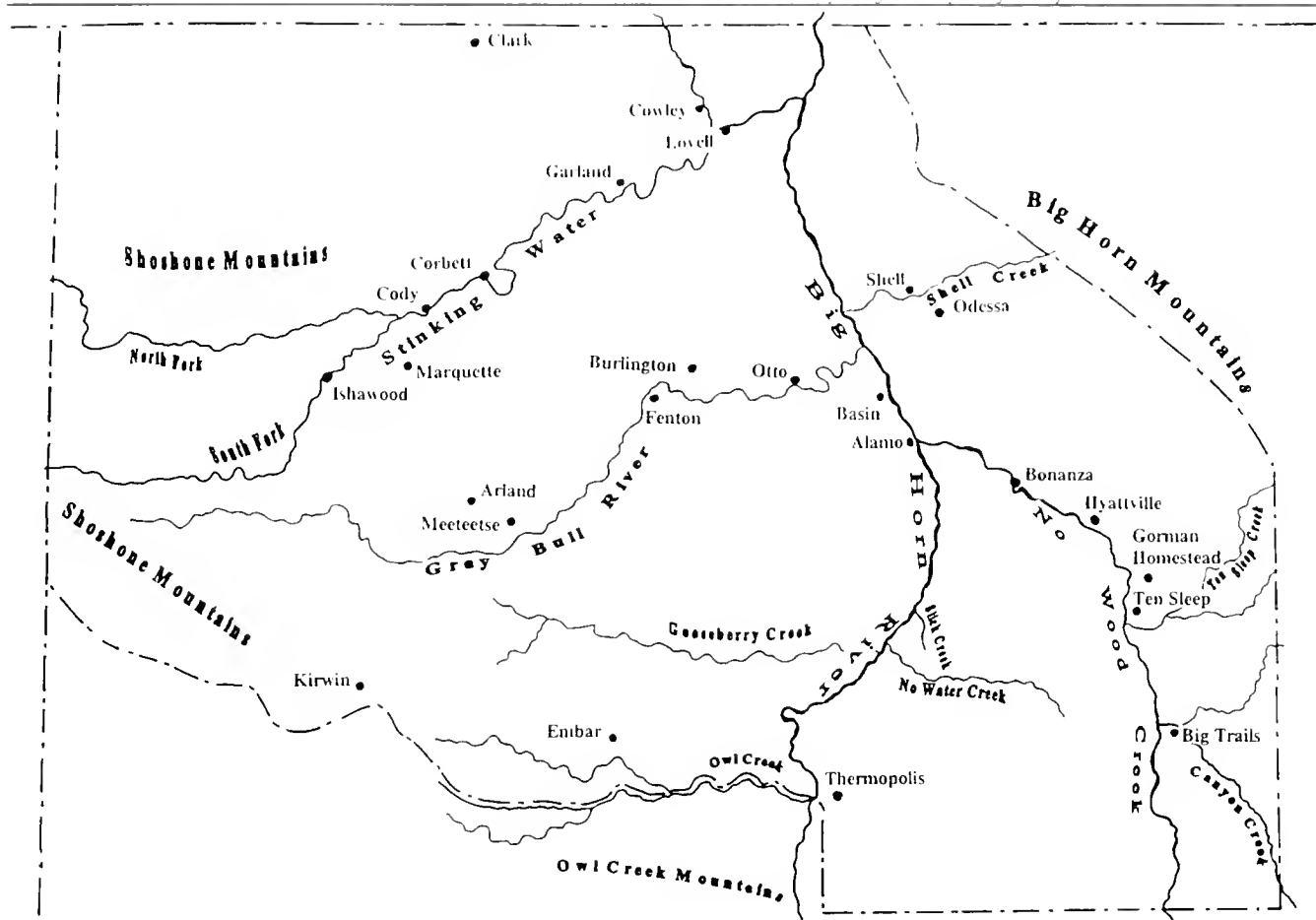
<sup>7</sup> Bob Swander, interview by the author, June 10, 2003. Mr. Swander now lives in Cody, Wyoming, and is "pushing 70." He grew up and ranched near Ten Sleep, and recalled a discussion, which probably took place in the 1970s, with Jim and Topsy Bull, then an elderly couple who had known the Gormans. He was talking to the Bulls and the subject of the Gorman murder came up. Topsy, a lively lady, stated to her husband, "Everybody thought that Maggie Gorman was good-looking; you didn't think so, did you?" Bob thought the scene was cute, as Jim Bull recognized his predicament, and just stopped saying anything. Bob thought that Jim probably did think Maggie Gorman was quite good-looking, but certainly was not going to declare this to his wife.

<sup>8</sup> "A Foul Murder Unearthed," *The Wyoming Dispatch* (Cody), June 13, 1902; "Murder Near Hyattville," *Sheridan Enterprise*, June 21, 1902; "Big Horn County's Terrible Tragedy," *Cheyenne Daily Leader*, November 10, 1902.

<sup>9</sup> Lylas Skovgard, *Basin City* (Basin: Timbertrails, 1988), p. 56, quoting a man who watched Maggie Gorman testify.

<sup>10</sup> See "Big Horn County's Terrible Tragedy," *Cheyenne Daily Leader*, November 10, 1902. The accounts of local newspapers, such as those in Basin or Meeteetse, are, in general, not available. Fortunately, however, the *Cheyenne Daily Leader* printed a detailed story apparently taken from the *Big Horn Rustler*, and this is the most complete, and, probably the most reliable of the newspaper stories that appeared in 1902 regarding the first Gorman trial. In the reporting on the 1909 case of *State v. Brink*, the first case arising out of the Spring Creek Raid, the accounts in the *Rustler* were seemingly the most thorough and most accurate of all the many newspapers closely covering that event.

<sup>11</sup> Paul Frison, *Under the Ten Sleep Rim* (Worland (Wyoming), Worland Press, 1972), p. 45; interview notes taken by Frison which are in the author's possession; Verona Bowes, "Vigilante Vengeance, Western Justice Rides a Death Trail," *Daring Detective*, December 1938, p. 28. This last reference is to a magazine article which is in large part a fictionalized version of the event, sensationalized to stress salacious details, but at least the article started life honestly, beginning with interviews of some of the participants, including Fred Bader. The "photograph" of Maggie Gorman in that article is clearly a construction.



Big Horn County, Wyoming 1903

*Big Horn County as it appeared in 1903. Map courtesy the author.*

finished a trip and Tom wanted to do some work on his wagons and the horses needed a rest, so Bader and Gorman decided not to start out again for a couple of weeks.<sup>12</sup> There was a time, therefore, in which the people in the area were not particularly concerned at not seeing Tom. But then the neighbors started inquiring about him and were given unsatisfactory and inconsistent answers as to where he had gone – there were ambiguous references to Canada.<sup>13</sup>

Things came to a head when Bader went to the Gorman home in June to ask about Tom. The Gormans had a little girl, probably born in late 1900.<sup>14</sup> Bader described this child, saying she was “a pretty little golden haired girl – they named her Rose.”<sup>15</sup> Almost one hundred years later one of Bader’s children recounted conversations with his father about

<sup>12</sup> Notes of Paul Frison in the possession of the author.

<sup>13</sup> This was addressed in many of the contemporaneous newspaper reports and later writings, not always in the same manner, but consistently enough to show that nosy neighbors thought something was not right at the Gorman house and they were not satisfied with what they were told. See Frison, *Under the Ten Sleep Rim*, p.46; “Murder Near Basin,” *Wyoming Derrick*, June 19, 1902; “Murder Near Hyattville,” *Sheridan Enterprise*, June 21, 1902; and “Jim Gorman Convicted,” *Big Horn County News and Courier*, November 1, 1902. The problem with the text here is that there is a lot of general recollection, but not nearly enough contemporaneous documents, so the conclusions presented had to be made from a review of all materials available, determining what is the most plausible, considering internal consistency and known facts.

<sup>14</sup> 1900 Census, Big Horn County, Wyoming, Ten Sleep Precinct. On June 10, 1900, when the 1900 census interviews were undertaken, Tom and Maggie Gorman reported no children, but by May 1902 a child is being described as “a little girl,” not as a baby, and she is speaking.

<sup>15</sup> Interview of Fred Bader by Paul Frison. Papers of Paul Frison in the possession of the author.

this visit to the Gorman home, and the one thing he remembered most distinctly was his father's memory of how strange the little girl was acting.<sup>16</sup> Fred asked her where her father was and little Rose said something about "under the wagon."<sup>17</sup>

Of course, all of this led to great suspicion. Bader and other neighbors contacted the authorities, asking Sheriff Dudley Hale to come out and investigate. In the meantime, Jim and Maggie took a wagon and a buggy, filled them with provisions and bedding, and headed north towards Montana.<sup>18</sup>

Hale did come to the Dry Fork of Brokenback Creek, found "suspicious conditions," and traced Tom's body to a small washout, where it was buried about one hundred yards from the house, underneath "a thin covering of dirt, sagebrush and stones."<sup>19</sup> There had been an attempt to burn the body.<sup>20</sup> Dr. Dana Carter and the Assistant County Attorney, C. A. Zaring, were called to the scene; an inquest was quickly held, with the conclusion that Tom met his death by murder.<sup>21</sup> All of these events apparently happened in a hurry, because during this time it was learned that Jim and Maggie had been seen "traveling north."<sup>22</sup> Deputy Frank James pursued the two Gormans, finding them in a camp on Dry Creek near Germania (now Emblem).<sup>23</sup>

Maggie and Jim were brought back to Basin City; Jim was placed in the county jail and Maggie was kept in a private house, under guard.<sup>24</sup> On June 14, 1902, both of them appeared before F. T. Brigham, justice of the peace, on a charge of first degree murder, and both pled "not guilty." On June 16, both appeared before the justice of the peace again and they waived preliminary hearing.

The first newspaper stories about Tom's killing were hardly balanced. For instance, the *Cheyenne Daily Leader* carried a "special from Cody" in which it was stated that "a horrible murder was committed near Basin, a short time since, and only became public yesterday. Tom Gorman, on Broken Back creek, about forty miles from here, discovered an intrigue between his wife and his younger brother, James Gorman. The victim endeavored to drive his brother away, when the pair turned upon him and killed him with clubs."<sup>25</sup>

The first article that appeared in the *Sheridan*

*Enterprise* began with unabashed editorializing: "It's pretty difficulty (sic) to have the mind realize that a wife, bound by sacred ties, and a natural brother would be the parties to the murdering of a husband and brother, but unless all the circumstances surrounding the taking off of Tom Gorman are at fault, such is the case in the latest and most cruel murder in Big Horn county."<sup>26</sup>

The article further declared that "it would appear that the deceased became convinced that unlawful relations were maintained between the guilty pair and

<sup>16</sup> Paris Bader, interview by author, February, 2000.

<sup>17</sup> Paul Frison notes in author's possession.

<sup>18</sup> "Murder Near Hyattville," *Sheridan Enterprise*, June 21, 1902. The chronology here is a puzzle. It is not at all clear from contemporary reports, but it appears that it was several days later when Jim and Maggie Gorman were arrested. The warrant for their arrest was sworn out on June 7 and returned on June 13. The natural expectation is that they would have gone directly to Montana, and it did not normally take several days to reach Montana from the location of the Gorman house. One possible reason for delay is the possibility that Maggie talked Jim into leaving Rose at her parents, the McClellans, who lived a few miles south of Brokenback Creek.

<sup>19</sup> "Big Horn County's Terrible Tragedy," *Cheyenne Daily Leader*, November 10, 1902; "Murder Near Hyattville," *Sheridan Enterprise*, June 21, 1902.

<sup>20</sup> "Murder Near Hyattville," *Sheridan Enterprise*, June 21, 1902; "Murder Near Basin," *Wyoming Derrick*, June 19, 1902. This was reported consistently enough that it must be credited, but the evidence at the trial seemed to indicate that the fire was confined to an attempt to conceal the burial spot.

<sup>21</sup> Autobiography of Dr. Dana Carter, Wyoming State Archives; In *State v. James Gorman*, Big Horn County Case No. 109 (files of the Clerk of the District Court of Big Horn County, Wyoming), all the witnesses were endorsed on the Information. They were Clarence Day, Jake Shandy, Dick Shandy, Mike Bader, Hugh Collins, Charles McDonald, Mrs. Charles McDonald, G. W. Walker, Roy Grant, Kenneth McClellan, Ed Mills, Jake Johnson, Arthur Ilg, and George Bull. Oddly, Dr. Carter is not listed, but in light of the statements in his autobiography, there can be no doubt he was at the Gorman place and helped in the search. Apparently, though, Dr. Walker later conducted examinations of the body of Tom Gorman. In Skovgard, *Basin City*, pp. 51-52, the author incorrectly states that C. A. Zaring was the county attorney. Though Zaring was later involved with the case, in 1902, the Big Horn County attorney was W. S. Collins, who swore out the complaint against the defendants. See Volume 1 of the District Court Journal, 440, files of the Clerk of the District Court of Big Horn County.

<sup>22</sup> Skovgard, *Basin City*, p. 52.; "Black Page in Basin History," *Basin Republican Rustler*, March 19, 1936.

<sup>23</sup> "A Foul Murder Unearthed," *Wyoming Dispatch*, June 13, 1902; "Murder Near Hyattville," *Sheridan Enterprise*, June 21, 1902.

<sup>24</sup> Skovgard, *Basin City*, p. 53.

<sup>25</sup> "Kills Brother," *Cheyenne Daily Leader*, June 13, 1902.

<sup>26</sup> "Murder Near Hyattville," *Sheridan Enterprise*, June 21, 1902.



frequent quarrels resulted. Mrs. Gorman and James finally decided to commit the foul deed that ended in taking the life of husband and brother, and fleeing together to distant parts."<sup>27</sup> It closed with a startling pronouncement: "In addition to the above information has been received that the little daughter of the murdered man is also missing. When the man and woman hurriedly left the scene of their crime the little girl was taken with them but when arrested she was not to be found. The fear is entertained that she was pushed from the wagon and drowned in the Big Horn River."<sup>28</sup> Other newspapers picked up this theme. The *Natrona County Tribune* went so far as to report that Maggie and Jim were lynched when a committee asked them where the child was. Supposedly, Maggie told this group of people that it was none of their business and she went on and abused the men in the group. Whereupon, "without further ceremony the couple were taken out and hanged."<sup>29</sup> To the credit of the *Wyoming Dispatch*, a Cody newspaper, it took the *Natrona County Tribune* to task, saying: "There has been no lynching, nor will there be. The child above referred to is with its mother, and has been all the while. It is strange how so many erroneous reports similar to the above, originate in our country. It must be that some newspaper correspondent is seeking notoriety."<sup>30</sup>

It is not clear where little Rose Gorman was at the time of the arrests. Perhaps she was with her mother "all the while," as the *Wyoming Dispatch* indicated, but none of the newspaper accounts mention the little girl when telling of her mother's arrest. Another possibility is that she had been left at the home of her grandparents, the McClellans. Wherever she was, she certainly had not been drowned, and later newspaper stories quietly mentioned the little girl being with her mother.<sup>31</sup>

Whether it was from the newspaper reports or general reputation, though, most of the people of the Big Horn Basin believed from the beginning that Maggie was just as guilty as Jim.<sup>32</sup> They assumed that the two were lovers and that Maggie had a hand in her husband's death in some form.<sup>33</sup> Tom was well-liked, his brother was not, and Maggie was seen as highly attractive. Bader seemed to express the attitude of the citizens of Big Horn County when he said that Tom was "homely, but a good hard working fellow

and honest. Jim was good looking lazy and dishonest;" he further declared that Maggie was fickle and emotional.<sup>34</sup> Such loaded perceptions certainly affect the analysis of an event and these shared observations could well have unfairly colored the judgment of Maggie's peers. Unfortunately, the historical chronicle is fragmented and ambiguous, making it impossible to know with reasonable certainty (to use an anomalous legal phrase) whether the community judgment of Maggie was based upon accurate perceptions or distorting stereotypes.

Regardless of whether the people of Big Horn County had fairly judged Jim and Maggie, the county attorney, Winfield Scott Collins, had to address the very concrete problem of prosecuting a murder. A trial date would not be set until October 1902, but much time and effort must go into preparation before such an event. We know that Collins was working on the case before September 1902, as he presented requests for reimbursement to the Big Horn County Commissioners in September, asking to be paid for "Livery Hire" and "Horse feed & Meals" in the Gorman case.<sup>35</sup> Collins would have obtained a good idea of Jim's defense from a number of possible sources, most probably statements made by Jim at

<sup>27</sup> "Murder Near Hyattville," *Sheridan Enterprise*, June 21, 1902.

<sup>28</sup> "Murder Near Hyattville," *Sheridan Enterprise*, June 21, 1902.

<sup>29</sup> "Lynched at Basin," *The Wyoming Dispatch*, July 4, 1902.

<sup>30</sup> "Lynched at Basin," *The Wyoming Dispatch*, July 4, 1902.

<sup>31</sup> "State Happenings," *Sheridan Enterprise*, November 15, 1902.

<sup>32</sup> See Skovgard, *Basin City*, p. 56

<sup>33</sup> Frison, *Under the Ten Sleep Rim*, p. 45; Tacetta Walker, *Big Horn Basin: Stories of Early Days in Wyoming* (Casper, 1936), pp. 230-33.

<sup>34</sup> Interview of Maureen Holcroft and Paris Bader by the author, June 11, 2003. Mrs. Holcroft, of Buffalo, Wyoming, is another of Fred Bader's children, and stated that, "Our dad said she was a good looking woman" (referring to Maggie Gorman). The quotes come from Paul Frison notes of a Fred Bader interview in the possession of the author. Records from the Wyoming Attorney General (Big Horn County Sheriff Prison Register, p. 6) indicate that Jim Gorman weighed 150 pounds, was "slender" and was 5'8" tall, and had red hair. The Verona Bowes article (see footnote 11 above) contains a photograph of subjects identified as Jim and Tom Gorman, but this identification is probably wrong. The same photograph found in the Washakie Museum states that the two men were two brothers from Losr Cabin and the two men shown look very similar; certainly one could not be described as "homely" while the other is described as "good looking."

<sup>35</sup> Commissioner's Journal, Big Horn County, Volume #1, p. 346.

the time of arrest and during incarceration. By the time trial drew near, Collins surely knew that Jim was going to claim self-defense, asserting that his brother attacked him and was killed when Jim defended himself. Such a defense can be very hard to overcome when the only witness describing an event is the accused person.

An interesting thing happened before the trial, however: Two attorneys, M. L. Blake of Sheridan and John Arnott of Basin City, were retained on behalf of Maggie.<sup>36</sup> There is some indication that Arnott had been hired back in June when arrests were first made.<sup>37</sup> On the other hand, not until a week before the trial date of October 27 did the district court appoint an attorney for Jim, when he announced that "he has no funds with which to employ counsel."<sup>38</sup> The obvious implication was that Maggie was unwilling to present a joint defense with Jim.

Based on her later testimony, it is clear what Maggie must have told her lawyers. She told them she had nothing to do with the killing of her husband, that Jim was responsible, and that he forced her to go along after the killing occurred. This information was surely passed on to the county attorney by Maggie's lawyers, probably with a proposal to turn state's evidence.<sup>39</sup>

Such a proposal would have caused some very heavy thinking by Collins. It was clear very early that Maggie was not involved in the killing, but there were serious questions as to whether she helped plan it, or assisted Jim after it happened. On the other hand, if Maggie was a strong witness, her testimony might defeat any claim of self-defense by Jim. But a decision to allow a defendant to turn state's evidence, and provide a lenient deal in return, has to be made very cautiously. The worst thing a prosecutor can do is to provide leniency to the person who proves to be the worse actor. Thus, the worse actor escapes punishment, and the remaining defendant will probably be acquitted because less culpable.

If Collins did his homework, he would have interviewed Maggie at length. There is nothing in the historical record to indicate that he did interview her, but he most probably did, and, if so, this is what she would have told him: Jim had lived with Tom and Maggie at different intervals between 1900 and 1902.

The brothers had quarreled several times, had each time made peace, but during the year before her husband's death, Maggie felt very frightened and intimidated by Jim. One day she noticed her husband's absence and shortly thereafter saw a fire near the house. Then she had a conversation with Jim and he said he had killed Tom and buried his body nearby. He told Maggie that he stepped from behind a wagon as Tom came by and hit him with a hatchet and that Tom dropped without a sound. After Tom fell, Jim hit him again to make sure he was dead. She had not revealed what she knew because Jim had threatened to kill her and her child.<sup>40</sup>

Obviously, if a jury believed the testimony of Maggie, a self-defense claim by Jim would be out of the question, but it all hinged on her believability. The calculus of determining whether a jury will believe a witness is a very complicated one. Of course, the internal consistency of Maggie's story and its plausible relationship to other facts was highly important, but probably as important was the personality of the witness. Would this beautiful young woman charm an all-male jury, or offend them? Did she project integrity? Did she have the fortitude and intelligence to fight off the inevitable hard cross-examination?

The county attorney apparently found Maggie's story persuasive, because the decision Collins made was to enter into an agreement with Maggie, whereby the charges against her would be dismissed if she

<sup>36</sup> Journal of the District Court, Vol. 1, Records of the Big Horn County Clerk of the District Court, p. 423.

<sup>37</sup> The Justice Docket, printed at page 52 of *Basin City*, and which covers events between June 7, 1902, and June 16, 1902, lists John P. Arnott as employed by defendant; see also "All the World's a Stage," *Basin Republican Rustler*, March 14, 1940.

<sup>38</sup> Journal of the Big Horn County District Court, Vol. 1, p. 423.

<sup>39</sup> It was the job of Maggie's attorneys to represent her, and in criminal prosecutions, one of the most common - and effective - defenses is to paint one's client as "the good guy" and one or more of the co-defendants as "the bad guy," and offer to provide evidence supporting these positions, in return for lenient treatment by the prosecution.

<sup>40</sup> This account directly follows the detailed description of Maggie Gorman's testimony in the November 10, 1902, *Cheyenne Daily Leader* ("Big Horn County's Terrible Tragedy"). As well, it incorporates the recollection of Zinny McCreery as set out by Ray Pendergraft. Ray Pendergraft, *Washakie: A Wyoming County History* (Worland, Saddlebag Books, 1985), pp. 41-42.

would testify against Jim. The wisdom of that risky decision was soon tested.

The cases against Jim and Maggie were set for the 1902 October term of court, which meant that proceedings would begin the week of Monday, October 20, 1902.<sup>41</sup> For months, all the people involved in the case had been preparing for, worrying about, and dreading the time of trial, but now that time had arrived and lawyers, witnesses, jurors, and court personnel congregated in Basin City. One of those "court personnel" was the presiding district judge, Joseph L. Stotts.<sup>42</sup> Stotts was a man from Sheridan who had practiced law there before coming to the bench. He had served as district judge since 1897 and his court was very active.<sup>43</sup> Stotts had to travel from Sheridan to Basin, of course; in 1902, his trip began from a railroad in Sheridan, to Billings, Montana, and then south, continuing by rail. The Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad had crept into the northern part of the Big Horn Basin, arriving in Cody from Toluca, Montana, in November 1901.<sup>44</sup> The nearest railhead to Basin, though, was still a good fifty miles to the north, in Garland, and required a long day in a wagon or on horseback.<sup>45</sup> In every county in Wyoming, cases were set for two different dates,

during a spring term and a fall term, an arrangement that accommodated the arduousness of travel.<sup>46</sup> When Stotts arrived in Basin in October, he stayed there and worked through all the pending cases before returning to Sheridan. In present day Wyoming, terms are viewed as archaic relics, having little significance because communication and transportation are highly efficient, but in another day they served a very practical purpose.

<sup>41</sup> Journal of the Big Horn County District Court, Vol. 1, p. 415.

<sup>42</sup> At that time, Big Horn County was part of the Fourth Judicial District, which also included Sheridan County. See Wyo. R. S. 1899, § 3299.

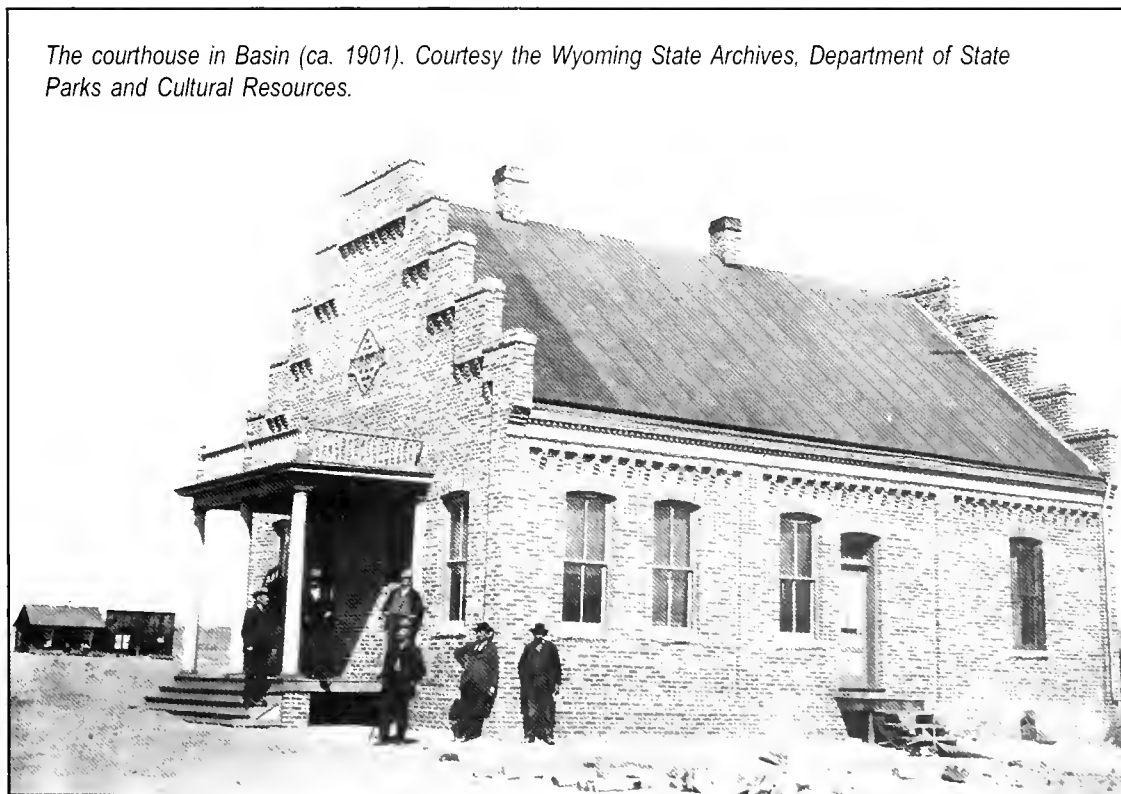
<sup>43</sup> Joseph L. Stotts was appointed to the district court in 1897 and served until January 1905. See *State ex rel. Burdick v. Schmitzer*, 17 Wyo. 65, 76, 96 P. 238 (1908). Between 1898 and 1906, more than sixty cases from Judge Stotts' court were appealed to the Wyoming Supreme Court.

<sup>44</sup> Lawrence M. Woods, *Wyoming's Big Horn Basin to 1901, A Late Frontier* (Arthur H. Clark Company, Spokane, 1997), p. 204.

<sup>45</sup> John W. Davis, *Sadie and Charlie* (Worland, Washakie Publishing, 1989), p. 14.

<sup>46</sup> The modern statute setting out terms of court is § 5-3-101, Wyo. Stat. Ann. (LexisNexis 2003). The applicable statute in 1902 was § 3299, Revised Statutes of Wyoming 1899. For an interesting case in which E. E. Enterline challenged the validity of the term statute (asserting that his client was improperly convicted, because the legislature had not passed any statute allowing courts to proceed), see *Younger v. Helm*, 12 Wyo. 289, 75 P. 443 (1904).

*The courthouse in Basin (ca. 1901). Courtesy the Wyoming State Archives, Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources.*



On October 20, 1902, Maggie was arraigned upon an information filed by Collins charging murder. She was present in court with her attorneys, Blake and Arnott, and she pled "not guilty."<sup>47</sup> Gorman was also arraigned on charges of murder, and at this time two Sheridan attorneys were appointed for him, E. E. Enterline and, oddly, M. L. Blake.<sup>48</sup> Blake was never a strong presence in the legal community in Wyoming, but Enterline was a major figure for more than half a century. In 1892, as a young attorney in Rock Springs, he filed suit against the biggest corporation in the state, the Union Pacific Railroad, and took the case to the Wyoming Supreme Court.<sup>49</sup> He lost that case, but persisted as an active and assertive attorney. During a span of more than fifty-five years, the name of E. E. Enterline is listed more than one hundred times as counsel for one of the parties in a case before the Wyoming Supreme Court.<sup>50</sup> In 1898, he moved to Sheridan.<sup>51</sup> He had no way of knowing it in 1902, but by 1910 he would form a partnership with Joseph Stotts in Sheridan; Stotts was already associated with another lawyer, a young man named Fred Blume.<sup>52</sup> Enterline moved to Casper in the late 1920s and practiced law there until at least 1943.<sup>53</sup>

Jim's attorneys made a motion for a separate trial, probably because they were aware Maggie was going to be assisting the state against her brother-in-law.<sup>54</sup> The first order of business in *State v. James Gorman* was the selection of a jury. In any criminal case, the make-up of a jury is highly important, the first step in a process intended to secure a conviction. When the charge is murder (mandating a death sentence under Wyoming law in 1902), this beginning proceeding is crucial. By state statute, the chairman of the county commissioners, the county treasurer, and the county clerk were charged to meet on the second Monday of January of each year and make a list of persons to serve as trial jurors (placed in a series of four jury boxes); they were to select from the last assessment roll of the county and were to omit those persons "known by them to be incompetent or not qualified to serve as trial jurors."<sup>55</sup>

This arrangement is obviously different from the one used in the beginning of the twenty-first century, even more than may at first appear. The modern procedure is designed to produce a jury that is broadly

reflective of the general make-up of the society. In Wyoming, in 2003, assessment rolls are not used at all; the jury list is prepared from voter rolls, which are further expanded by the use of driver's license lists.<sup>56</sup>

The applicable statute a century ago directed that people were to be listed on the assessment roles who owned land, buildings, or personal property such as livestock, "carriages and vehicles," "clocks, watches, jewelry, gold and silver plate," furniture, musical instruments, farming utensils, and corporate stock.<sup>57</sup> A review of the actual rolls shows that the great

<sup>47</sup> Journal of the Big Horn County District Court, Vol. 1, p. 423.

<sup>48</sup> Journal of the Big Horn County District Court, Vol. 1, p. 423.

<sup>49</sup> *Redman v. Union Pacific Railway Co.*, 3 Wyo. 678, 29 P.88 (1892).

<sup>50</sup> When the name E. E. Enterline was entered in the author's LexisNexis computer research program, one hundred "hits" appeared, which was evidently still not the total number of times he appeared in a case before the Wyoming Supreme Court. Almost any case that is taken all the way to the Wyoming Supreme Court is considered a case of importance.

<sup>51</sup> *Worland Grit*, November 2, 1909, page 2.

<sup>52</sup> See *Bryant v. Cadle*, 18 Wyo. 64, 104 P. 23 (1909). Any Wyoming lawyer will immediately recognize the name of Fred Blume. He was to have a storied career as a justice of the Wyoming Supreme Court, generally considered the finest jurist the State of Wyoming has ever produced. At a time when there was very little precedent from Wyoming cases, Judge Blume handed down many fifty and sixty page opinions in which he traced a legal concept from Roman law to current times, and thus provided the state of Wyoming with ample authority in the areas upon which he focused. Graduates of the University of Wyoming College of Law, especially in earlier years, studied one Blume case after another. Probably the only jurist more frequently encountered was Benjamin Cardozo. For an excellent biography of Fred Blume see Michael Golden, "The Life and Times of Fred H. Blume, Justice of the Wyoming Supreme Court," *Land and Water Law Review* 27 (1995): 95.

<sup>53</sup> Between 1931 and 1933 he served as the President of the Wyoming Bar Association. See the 2003 Wyoming State Bar Directory, p. 8. Enterline is apparently the only person to serve as president of the Wyoming State Bar for two years. The case of *McKinney v. McKinney*, 59 Wyo. 204, 135 P.2d 940 (1943) is apparently the last case in which Enterline appeared before the Wyoming Supreme Court; he presented oral argument to the court. During the time Enterline was in Casper, he was married to Madge Enterline, who was also his legal partner.

<sup>54</sup> Journal of the Big Horn County District Court, Vol. I, p. 424.

<sup>55</sup> Revised Statutes of Wyoming 1899, §§ 3345, 3346. See *Gunnell and Elder v. State*, 21 Wyo. 125, 128 P. 512 (1912) at 129, wherein there is a reference to Chapter 80, Comp. Stat. 1910 (Section 1010). "Incompetent" here refers to legal incompetence, meaning that a person is a minor or mentally impaired, but, as noted later in the text, it may have been applied more liberally.

<sup>56</sup> § 1-11-106, Wyo. Stat. Ann. (LexisNexis 2001); SuZanne Whitlock, Clerk of the District Court for Washakie County, Wyoming, interview by the author, June 10, 2002.

<sup>57</sup> See Revised Statutes of Wyoming 1899, § 1779.

majority of people listed owned land and buildings, as well as a good amount of personal property.<sup>58</sup> Oddly, at least for Wyoming, women did not serve on juries. At first, when women were granted suffrage in territorial Wyoming, they did serve on juries, but this practice had died out.<sup>59</sup>

The panel that was to hear the case against Jim had been selected just a few days prior to the beginning of the trial.<sup>60</sup> At first, twenty-four names were drawn. All were not available so that more names had to be drawn, which finally resulted in a panel consisting of twenty-five jurors, from residences that seemed to be evenly distributed around the Big Horn Basin: C. C. Smith of Shell, T. T. Nelson of Hyattville, G. W. Bryant of Burlington, E. M. Ilg of Hyattville, W. L. Shafer of Jordan, Leonard Short of Embar, C. C. Ellis of Basin, Robert Frame of Bonanza, Olan Crandall of Cloverly, W. J. Chapman of Cody, W. B. Curtis of Jordan, William Peper of Germania, C. H. Watson of Sunshine, B. J. Neiber of Thermopolis, C. F. Manning of Meeteetse, Cornelius Workman of Lovell, W. E. Beck of Fenton, F. A. Whitney of Meeteetse, S. A. Watkins of Cody, A. J. Martin of Marquette, Milo Burke of Ten Sleep, A. J. Erickson of Burlington, John B. Gleaver of Meeteetse, Dave Jimmerfield of Fenton, and W. W. Leavitt of Shell.<sup>61</sup>

We can place these men in an accurate social context, because the 1900 census had just been completed, eighteen of them appear in the census, and there is information available for another one.<sup>62</sup> A clear, and not surprising, model appears: Of these nineteen men, nine were married, with children, and they owned their own farms (ranches) and homes free and clear. Another three exactly meet this model, except that the couples had no children. Further, Neiber probably matched the model and Burke certainly did, except that he owed money against his land.<sup>63</sup> C. C. Ellis fit, except, as a painter, he did not own a farm. The remaining four men were single, but were substantial property owners.<sup>64</sup>

This twenty-five man panel did not look like most of the rest of the people in the county. It could fairly be called a collection of patriarchs, successful men who were leaders in the society. While almost three-quarters of the panel members were married, within

Big Horn County less than half that percentage of men were married.<sup>65</sup> And while fewer than half of the men in the census owned real property, only two of the nineteen panel members did not. Further, the census forms show that among the two occupations listed most frequently ("farmers" and "farm laborers" - more than 90 percent in many precincts), around twice as many men are listed as farm laborers than are listed as farmers, and yet only one in our nineteen lists his occupation as "farm laborer."<sup>66</sup> Not one juror is an example of the most common kind of man found in the Big Horn Basin, the lone cowboy who eked out a living while working as a hand for different ranching outfits. That is the clear consequence of the Wyoming law in 1902, which provided for jurors to be selected from a list prepared by the county assessor. The Wyoming Supreme Court did not shrink from this consequence, but declared that "it is a necessary qualification of a juryman that he must have been

<sup>58</sup> Big Horn County, Wyoming, 1903 Assessment Tax Role, found in the office of the Big Horn County Treasurer, Big Horn County Courthouse, Basin, Wyoming.

<sup>59</sup> T. A. Larson, *History of Wyoming* (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 1965), pp. 84-85. One can speculate at length why this would be so, ranging from stated preferences by women called to jury duty because of domestic responsibilities to simple sexual prejudice.

<sup>60</sup> Journal of the Big Horn County District Court, Vol. 1, p. 414.

<sup>61</sup> Journal of the Big Horn County District Court, Vol. 1, pp. 432-437.

<sup>62</sup> The men not appearing on the Big Horn County 1900 census are G. W. Bryant, E. M. Ilg, B. J. Neiber, Robert Frame, W. J. Chapman, Olan Crandall, and Cornelius Workman. There is information available about B. J. Neiber, who was the pioneer ancestor of an old Worland family. See John W. Davis, *Worland Before Worland* (Northern Wyoming Daily News, Worland, 1987), p. 4. There is also information available regarding Cornelius Workman, whose grandson Preston is retired and living in Lovell, but Workman has not been considered in this group of nineteen.

<sup>63</sup> Since census information is not available for Neiber, it is not known whether he owned his land free and clear. Too, he and his wife, Mary, had two children when he died in 1906, but it is not clear whether either had been born by 1902. See Davis, *Worland Before Worland*.

<sup>64</sup> W. E. Beck was the son of a prosperous man from Fenton, William Beck, and apparently owned livestock. Manning owned his own home and Watson owned his own home and farm. W. W. Leavitt owned his own farm and home free and clear. It is not clear whether Cornelius Workman's holdings extended to real property in 1902, but they certainly did later. 1900 Census, Big Horn County, Wyoming.

<sup>65</sup> According to the 1900 Census, of the approximately 3100 men in the Big Horn Basin, about 1100 were married, or about 35%.

<sup>66</sup> 1900 Census, Big Horn County, Wyoming, Meeteetse Precinct. C. F. Manning is listed as a "farm laborer."

assessed upon the last assessment role of the county, and no authority is conferred upon the jury commissioners to make a jury list except from the assessment roll.”<sup>67</sup>

Though the use of assessment rolls as the base for selecting a jury assured that any jury would be atypical, the selected jurors so closely follow a model, that one suspects the overseeing officials exercised a further role, informally excluding those who might not have been viewed as sufficiently responsible. If this was the case, it would not be a shock, because in 1902 a great many of the citizens of the Big Horn Basin were very concerned about suppressing lawbreakers and would welcome a jury of stern patriachs. And if such a process did take place, it would not have been done because of a Machiavellian impulse to manipulate justice, but as an expression of an unspoken ethic that was widely shared by the great majority of the population, and probably not even perceived as unusual. Indeed, when the defense started exercising challenges to the panel, they showed that their primary concern was not the apparent austere make-up of the jury, but more mundane considerations.

The first step taken was the drawing of twelve names, followed by examination of the prospective jurors by the attorneys to see if there were demonstrable grounds for disqualification, referred to as “cause.”<sup>68</sup> A man from Bonanza was challenged for cause and excused, though the record does not reveal the basis for the cause.<sup>69</sup> Bonanza is only about fifteen miles down the Nowood River from Broken Back Creek, and so perhaps this man had some personal involvement in the case. Other prospective jurors were challenged for cause, though again, there is nothing in the record to indicate why.<sup>70</sup> The Big Horn Basin, with a population of about five thousand, was a small community and, frequently, people associated with the prosecution or defense would have a great deal of first-hand knowledge of the jurors. It was a social society; people did not huddle in their homes watching television. On Sunday afternoons, the favorite pastime was to go to other people’s homes and visit, and more often than not, talk about other people they knew. Social events, such as dances, were central events in their lives. All the

local newspapers from that time are filled with short notes about all the visits everyone was making with everyone else. A prosecutor would have the advantage of a network of informants, county employees, sheriffs and deputies and their families, who would report back about jurors, telling what kind of men they were, what kind of associations they had and, frequently, what comments they may have made about a case. The defense would also have its sources from employees, friends, and relatives of the attorneys. Both sets of attorneys took ready advantage of this kind of information.

After the challenges for cause were completed, peremptory challenges began, challenges not requiring the announcement of any reason for disqualification. The state had ten challenges and the defendant twelve.<sup>71</sup> The state, however, used none of its challenges. Not so the defense, which used all but three of its challenges.<sup>72</sup> Peremptory challenges flow from a

<sup>67</sup> *State v. Bolln*, 10 Wyo. 439, 470, 70 P. 7 (1902).

<sup>68</sup> They were C. C. Smith, C. F. Manning, Robert Frame, B. J. Neiber, G. W. Bryant, C. C. Ellis, W. B. Curtis, John B. Gleaver, Cornelius Workman, W. L. Shafer, William Peper, and A. J. Martin. See the Big Horn County District Court Journal, Vol. I, p. 440.

<sup>69</sup> W. L. Shaffer, who was replaced by Leonard Short; D. Ct. Journal, p. 440.

<sup>70</sup> These include Milo Burke and E. M. Ilg, D. Ct. Journal, p. 441. C. H. Watson replaced Burk and W. E. Beck replaced Ilg. Ilg was apparently related to one of the listed witnesses on behalf of the state against Jim Gorman, Arthur Ilg. Information Verified by Witnesses, Big Horn County, Wyoming District Court Case No. 109.

<sup>71</sup> D. Ct. Journal, p. 443.

<sup>72</sup> The District Court Journal, Vol. I, shows the following, pp. 441-442: after the state waived its first challenge, the defense peremptorily challenged W. B. Curtis of Alamo. Curtis was replaced by F. A. Whitney. The prosecution kept waiving its peremptory challenges and the defense kept using its challenges. C. F. Manning, from Meeteetse, was challenged, and the defense thereby took from the jury the one man who identified himself as a laborer. A. J. Erickson was selected to replace Manning. Robert Frame of Bonanza was challenged by the defendant. S. A. Watkins of Cody replaced him. Leonard Short, from Embar, was then peremptorily challenged and was replaced by E. M. Ilg of Hyattville. As noted earlier, Ilg was challenged for cause; he was replaced by W. E. Beck. The state waived its third peremptory challenge and the defense challenged C. C. Ellis, the Basin painter. T. T. Nelson was called, but found “not qualified.” Daniel Jimmerfield of Fenton was then selected. A. J. Erickson from Lovell was peremptorily challenged and Olan Crandall from Cloverly was selected, but was soon peremptorily challenged by the defense. The defense peremptorily challenged B. J. Neiber and W. W. Leavitt of Shell was then selected. After Crandall was ousted, W. J. Chapman from Cody was selected. G. W. Bryant from Burlington was peremptorily challenged.

hundred sources, some very accurately directed at a hidden prejudice and some just whimsical. In an individual case, perhaps the glint in the eye of a prospective juror offended Enterline or he had heard a juror was a stern man, but it is impossible to know why any specific challenge was made. As will be seen, though, some general patterns did emerge.

The state kept waiving its challenges, taking the consistent position that it was quite happy with the jury exactly as it stood at any given time. With four challenges remaining, the jury boxes were exhausted. Whereupon, Stotts issued an "open venire" to the sheriff (without apparent objection by the attorneys) so that Hale could obtain more jurors.<sup>73</sup> It sounds very much like the sheriff was just directed to go out and find six men, from wherever he could. This procedure sounds questionable, but "open venire" is addressed in several Wyoming cases, including *Grinnell v. State*, 21 Wyo. 125, at 129, in which the Wyoming Supreme Court accepts the practice, if not enthusiastically. As late as 1979, in *Peterson v. State*, 594 P.2d 978 (Wyo. 1979), an open venire was undertaken when a justice of the peace jury was short two jurors; the Wyoming Supreme Court once again accepted the practice. The sheriff summoned William Gibson, John Larson, George Crosby, R. R. Small, William O'Toole, and Richard Mullen and they were added to the jury box. Crosby was drawn and he became the last juror.

So, the jury members were C. C. Smith (Shell), John B. Gleaver (Meeteetse), Cornelius Workman (Lovell), A. J. Martin (Marquette), C. H. Watson (Sunshine), F. A. Whitney (Meeteetse), S. A. Watkins (Cody), W. E. Beck (Fenton), Dan Jimmerfield (Fenton), W. W. Leavitt (Shell), W. J. Chapman (Cody), and George Crosby (Lovell).<sup>74</sup> Since the defense was the only party exercising peremptory challenges, the final look of the jury was very much the product of defense intentions. A map of the Big Horn Basin platting the residences of the jurors is instructive. Such a map shows a distinctive pattern, as if someone were standing at Broken Back Creek and firing a shotgun to the west: There are lots of little points in an arc a considerable distance away. It was obvious that the most important concern for the defense was to keep people off the jury who had known the

Gormans. It seems very likely that the defense assumed that such people had liked Tom, disliked Jim, or liked Maggie. There is nothing to indicate that the defense was otherwise offended by this final collection of patriarchs. They look very much like the initial panel: five out of the nine about whom we know exactly fit the model of a married man with children, owning his own home and ranch free and clear.<sup>75</sup> One of these five, Whitney, became the foreman of the jury.

It did not take a long time to seat the trial jury; the procedure was begun the morning of October 27 and completed within enough time that opening statements (including one four hours long) were made and testimony begun the same day.<sup>76</sup> Clarence A. Zaring, a Basin attorney who had been added to the prosecution team when Collins complained that "he is alone in this case and the defendant has two attorneys," gave the opening statement for the prosecution.<sup>77</sup> (Zaring was a young man from Indiana, who was then part of the law firm Collins and Zaring.<sup>78</sup>) Enterline spoke for four hours on behalf of Jim.<sup>79</sup>

Many newspapers carried stories about the Gorman trial, but almost every report was cursory, at least with respect to the evidence presented during the trial. This is particularly unfortunate because no transcript of the trial is available nor are issues of the *Big Horn County Rustler*, the newspaper published in Basin and the one most likely to carry detailed information.<sup>80</sup> Luckily, there is one contemporaneous newspaper article that reported the trial in excellent detail. The November 10, 1902, edition of the *Cheyenne Daily Leader* contained a story headed, "BIG HORN COUNTY'S TERRIBLE TRAGEDY," and it occupied two long columns setting out the events of the three-day trial. It had every sign of having been written by a reporter who attended the trial and took

<sup>73</sup> The District Court Journal, pp. 441-442.

<sup>74</sup> In addition to the District Court Journal, see the 1903 Assessment Tax Role, p. 13.

<sup>75</sup> Smith, Gleaver, Martin, Whitney and Jimmerfield. 1900 Census, Big Horn County, Wyoming.

<sup>76</sup> D. Ct. Journal, p. 443; "Jim Gorman Convicted," *The Big Horn County News and Courier* (Meeteetse), November 1, 1902.

<sup>77</sup> D. Ct. Journal, p. 440.

<sup>78</sup> Skovgard, *Basin City*, p. 39.

<sup>79</sup> "Jim Gorman Convicted," *The Big Horn County News and Courier* (Meeteetse), November 1, 1902.

<sup>80</sup> The *Basin Republican* did not begin publication until 1905.



careful notes. Indeed, there is a good chance the reporter, though not identified, was someone from one of the local newspapers specially hired for this story.<sup>81</sup>

The first witness called was Sheriff Hale.<sup>82</sup> He began his testimony on Monday, October 27, but it is not clear whether his testimony was concluded on Monday; a great deal of time could not have been spent hearing testimony that day. What is surprising is that all the remaining testimony in the trial was heard the following day, and testimony was concluded on that day.

The purpose of Hale's testimony was to set the scene, to provide what lawyers refer to as the *corpus delicti*, proof of the fundamental fact that a crime had been committed. Hale used a diagram of the crime scene and told jurors about that spring day when he came to the Gorman home, learned of "certain suspicious conditions," and "traced the body of the deceased to its resting place . . ." The *Cheyenne Daily Leader* reported that Hale's testimony "was listened to by all in the court room with breathless attention."<sup>83</sup>

The second witness was even more closely heeded, though, as he provided sensational testimony. Hugh Collins testified that he had seen several quarrels between the Gorman brothers in which Maggie "interfered to prevent a tragic ending." Then he stated that on one occasion, apparently when he and Jim were walking to Basin, Gorman made some startling admissions. Tom had just taken a .30-30 Winchester rifle and chased Jim away from his home. Collins testified that Jim told him that "he had enjoyed illicit relations with Mrs. Maggie Gorman for about two years," that this was the reason Tom had got after him, and that Jim intended to return with a six-shooter and kill his brother.<sup>84</sup>

The *Cheyenne Daily Leader* reported that after Collin's direct testimony, "Mr. Enterline took him in hand for cross examination," that each of Miller's damaging statements was "rigidly dissected," but with little effect, and that, "the prosecution felt that an important point had been secured in establishing a motive for the crime."<sup>85</sup> What should be made of this testimony? The prosecution had just forwarded evidence that on its face represented a damning

indictment of Maggie, the most important witness for the prosecution, showing she had been engaged in adultery. The prosecution had to know, also, that Maggie would deny any such "illicit relations," so the testimony of Collins appeared to show her a liar. Yet the prosecution painted Collins' testimony as a great coup, emphasizing that it established a motive.

These thoughts surely came to the jurors' minds when the prosecution presented Maggie as their next witness. Until the prosecution called her as a witness, it was not known by members of the public that she was turning state's evidence. The announcement that Maggie would testify for the prosecution "caused a sensation in court, as she was charged jointly with the defendant with the crime, for which he was on trial."<sup>86</sup>

From the moment she stepped into the courtroom, there was no question that Maggie was not about to accede to the judgment of most of Big Horn County that she was a scarlet woman, complicit in the murder of her husband. At 11:30, the morning of October 28, 1902, Maggie appeared, "entirely clad in black, and heavily veiled." There was a brief skirmish in which Enterline protested the acceptance of evidence from her, but to no avail, and Maggie took the stand and began her testimony. The *Cheyenne Daily Leader* reported "she was apparently as cool and self possessed as any person in the courtroom. She took off her heavy cloak, raised her black veil, and looked at the jury with an air of composure."<sup>87</sup>

Maggie first told how Jim had arrived in 1900, and stated that there had been several quarrels

<sup>81</sup> On other occasions, the *Daily Leader* also printed thorough accounts, indicating they were a "special to Daily Leader," which is consistent with the Cheyenne paper engaging the services of a local reporter. See, for example, the July 20, 1903, issue. It is not stated as such, but it is also possible that this story is a re-print of what was also published in the *Big Horn County Rustler*.

<sup>82</sup> "Big Horn County's Terrible Tragedy," *Cheyenne Daily Leader*, November 10, 1902.

<sup>83</sup> "Big Horn County's Terrible Tragedy," *Cheyenne Daily Leader*, November 10, 1902.

<sup>84</sup> "Big Horn County's Terrible Tragedy," *Cheyenne Daily Leader*, November 10, 1902.

<sup>85</sup> "Big Horn County's Terrible Tragedy," *Cheyenne Daily Leader*, November 10, 1902.

<sup>86</sup> "Big Horn County's Terrible Tragedy," *Cheyenne Daily Leader*, November 10, 1902.

<sup>87</sup> "Big Horn County's Terrible Tragedy," *Cheyenne Independent Leader*, November 10, 1902.



between the brothers, but they had made peace.<sup>88</sup> She said she first noticed her husband's absence on April 20, 1902. The next day, when she had gone looking for horses in the adjacent hills, she saw some smoke. Shortly afterwards she had a conversation with Jim in which he told her he had killed her husband and buried him in a washout.

The *Cheyenne Daily Leader* reported the dramatic climax of her testimony:

She related the story of the murder as it had been told to her with a tearful modulation of her voice. "He told me," said she, "that Tom was coming from the corral, and that, as he came past the wagon, I (Jim) stepped from behind it and hit him a biff with a hatchet, and that he fell like a beef without a kick or a groan. He said that he hit him a second time to make sure that he was dead. He did not tell me what he had done with the body," she continued in answer to questions, "except to say that he had decided not to burn it because it would cause too much smoke and smell, and so had buried it."

Maggie continued and told the jury she had not revealed what she had learned because Jim had threatened to kill her and her child "if she said a word to anyone about the crime." In early June, she started to Montana with Gorman "under his threat to kill her if she did not." The hatchet used to commit the murder was shown to Maggie and she identified it.<sup>89</sup>

Here the *Daily Leader's* presentation of Maggie's testimony stops. Unfortunately, neither the *Daily Leader*, nor any other newspaper reported Enterline's following cross-examination. Perhaps he chose to ask no questions at all, which seems highly unlikely, but if so, that striking moment surely would have been reported. The *Daily Leader's* article is very dainty regarding any references to sexual relations between Jim and Maggie. Besides the Collins' direct testimony, they report nothing regarding cross-examination on this subject (Enterline surely addressed it, at least indirectly, in his cross-examination of Collins). Nor does the article say anything about the prosecution's positions as to whether their chief witness against Jim was a liar and an adulteress.

Despite the lack of assistance from the historical record, it is clear what the position of the prosecution

had to be. They had to state that Collins had told the truth when he said Jim had declared he had "illicit relations" with Maggie, but that did not mean it was true. A lot of young men strut around and exaggerate their sexual conquests, especially as to an exceptionally attractive woman such as Maggie. The only thing that shows for sure is that Jim strongly desired Maggie, which certainly provides motive to kill her husband, who had driven him away under humiliating circumstances.

Shortly after Maggie's testimony, the prosecution completed its case in chief and rested. Jim immediately took the stand in his own defense. His story, in the most important elements, was sharply different from Maggie's.

Jim testified that he was born in Allegheny, Pennsylvania; he came to the Big Horn country in 1900 "at the solicitation of his brother," who promised him a partnership in his business interests.<sup>90</sup> He lived with his brother and his wife at intervals up to the time of the killing. He stated that he and his brother quarreled frequently. The first quarrel was over the colors of the British flag, Tom saying it was only red and white and Jim maintaining it was red, white,

<sup>88</sup> All of the discussion of Maggie Gorman's testimony here comes from the November 10, 1902, *Cheyenne Daily Leader* article. The author considers it the most reliable source. There are other recitals of Maggie Gorman's testimony found in the historical record, such as that found in Walker, *Stories of Early Days in Wyoming*, pp. 230-33; M. B. Rhodes, *The Road of Yesteryear*, *Annals of Wyoming* 34 (July, 1952): 89; and Frison, *Under the Ten Sleep Rim*, pp. 45-48, but all are obviously reconstructions from second-hand information and distant memory, are replete with inaccuracies and, in the author's judgment, are simply not trustworthy, at least in their specifics. Another of these recitals, found in Gustafson, Carl Stanley, "History of Vigilante and Mob Activity in Wyoming," Master's thesis, University of Wyoming, May 24, 1961, p. 49, the source of which is the L. L. Newton Collection at the American Heritage Center in Laramie, has a great deal of detail, some of which may be accurate. There is so much of it that is clearly wrong, however, that it is hard to know what part is reliable. For instance, unlike what was stated in this version, Jim and Maggie did not pull out for Montana shortly after the killing. See Pendergraft, *Washakie: A Wyoming County History*, p. 42.

<sup>89</sup> "Big Horn County's Terrible Tragedy," *Cheyenne Daily Leader*, November 10, 1902.

<sup>90</sup> "Big Horn County's Terrible Tragedy," *Cheyenne Daily Leader*, November 10, 1902. The entire discussion of Jim Gorman's testimony comes from this article.

and blue. This disagreement escalated to the point that Tom ordered Jim off the place at rifle point. Jim testified that he later returned at his brother's request.

Jim stated the next quarrel was caused by Maggie and his brother had threatened his life with a .30-30 Winchester. He said Tom followed him out the door, throwing a beer bottle at him as he left, and then made him put down a saddle "upon peril of his life." Jim admitted he came to Basin on foot with Collins, but denied that he said anything regarding improper relations with Maggie or that he threatened his brother's life. He stayed two weeks in Basin, but then spent the following six weeks with Kenneth McClellan. Jim testified about his movements the day of the killing and said he returned to his brother's to get a horse. The *Cheyenne Daily Leader* reported that, "his testimony was given with a frankness that was impressive."

Enterline then tossed Jim a slow and easy pitch: "Tell us what happened on April 20, 1902. Tell the story of that day to the jury." The *Cheyenne Daily Leader* reported his response in careful detail:

"In company with my brother Tom, we began building a wool rack," said the witness. "We worked together on it for some time and he left me and went into the house and stayed a long time. About 2 o'clock in the afternoon Tom came out where I was working, and asked me if I was going home. Why don't you stay and marry Anna McClellan, he said, applying an obscene name to her. I told him that I did not want to marry anyone, and that he had no business to talk about Maggie's sister as he did, as he had sisters at home in Pennsylvania. Tom got very mad and left me and went back to the house. I went on with my work. Shortly after our talk about Anna McClellan he came back, and grabbed a broken singletree and said to me, 'Now get down on your knees and say your prayers, you s\_\_ of a b\_\_\_\_,' and he struck me a blow on the side of the head which glanced over my left shoulder. I picked up a shovel and threw it at him. He kept on coming at me, hitting me all over the body with the singletree. In my excitement I grabbed a hatchet and struck him, I don't know how many times. He fell and I dropped the hatchet and went to the corral, intending to go away. Shortly after that I came back to where Tom lay and found he was dead. Went to the house and saw Mrs. Gorman; told her I had had a fight with

Tom and killed him, and that I was going to give myself up. 'Don't do it,' she said, 'they'll hang us both.' She advised me to bury the body, which I did. I dragged it to the washout, laid it in, and caved the sides down for dirt to cover it with. Next morning, I discovered a fire on the grave, but I did not build it. Mrs. Gorman said that a fire would destroy all signs of fresh dug earth."<sup>91</sup>

The cross-examination of Jim is not reported, but the response of Maggie certainly is. The trial went into an evening session, and at 7:30 that night, Maggie was recalled for rebuttal. The *Cheyenne Daily Leader* reported that, "she denied point blank several statements made by the defense." The exact statements are not identified, but can be easily inferred by the inconsistencies in the two versions. Maggie most likely denied Jim had reported a fight requiring self-defense, that she had told him not to give himself up, advised him to bury the body, or suggested a fire.

The case resumed the next morning at 8 o'clock, but no further evidence was presented.<sup>92</sup> In Wyoming, after the evidence is closed, the jury is first instructed and then arguments are given. In a first degree murder case, the most important instruction is a general verdict form which includes lesser offenses. The jury is told to first determine whether a defendant is guilty of murder in the first degree, but if they find the defendant not guilty of murder in the first degree, then to consider the lesser offense of murder in the second degree.<sup>93</sup> Then if they find the defendant not guilty of second degree murder, they are to consider the lesser charge of manslaughter. This instruction was no doubt given in the Gorman case and is given today.<sup>94</sup> There is also little doubt that each of the attorneys spent a long time arguing from this instruction, although the contemporaneous newspaper articles do not provide the details of the

<sup>91</sup> "Big Horn County's Terrible Tragedy," *Cheyenne Daily Leader*, November 10, 1902.

<sup>92</sup> "Big Horn County's Terrible Tragedy," *Cheyenne Daily Leader*, November 10, 1902.

<sup>93</sup> 4.03A, Wyoming's Criminal Pattern Jury Instructions, Revised as of April, 1996. This instruction is referred to as a "lesser included offense instruction." See Comment, "The Lesser Included Offense Instruction, Problems With Its Use," 3 Land & Water L. Rev. 587 (1967), by John W. Davis.

arguments. Zaring began for the state “with a short address, in which he reviewed the facts and deduced conclusions from them.”<sup>95</sup> Enterline then gave the principal argument on behalf of Jim, and he spoke for two and one-half hours. He was followed by Blake, who, in return, was followed by the prosecuting attorney, Collins.<sup>96</sup> Although we do not have a report of the content of the arguments, again, they can be inferred.

The prosecution no doubt argued strongly for a first degree murder conviction, saying that the evidence showed Jim killed his brother purposely and with premeditated malice, as required by the first degree murder statute.<sup>97</sup> Jim’s statements to Collins, the prosecution would have argued, strongly show he had been planning to kill his brother for months, and the testimony of Maggie shows Jim just ambushed his brother and, rather than acting in self-defense, hit him a second time to finish him off. The defense, on the other hand, no doubt argued that neither Collins nor Maggie was credible, but that Jim’s account was believable, and that he was justified in using deadly force, as he reasonably believed his brother Tom intended to take his life or inflict great bodily harm upon him.<sup>98</sup>

After the arguments, the jury was put in charge of the bailiff, and retired to their room for deliberation. All the other participants just waited. Time moves very slowly for those waiting for the return of a jury. In *State v. James Gorman*, though, the wait was not extensive; the jury was not out long, at least not for a murder case. The jurors returned to the courtroom at 8 p. m., having deliberated for four and one-half hours.

The announcement of a verdict is a formal event; the defendant must be present and the official participants in the trial, the judge, attorneys, bailiff, and clerk of court, also appear. Jim was brought into the courtroom and when all the players were gathered, the verdict was read:

“We the jury duly empanelled and sworn in the above entitled cause do find the defendant guilty of manslaughter.

--F. A. Whitney Foreman.”<sup>99</sup>

Just a few days after his conviction of manslaughter, Jim asked the district court for a new trial. The prosecution consented to the request and a new trial granted. At that time, the highest appellate courts in eleven states had ruled that when such a request was made, the prosecution could not again try a defendant for first or second degree murder, because of double jeopardy considerations. Eleven other states, however, had ruled that the request for a new trial represented a waiver of double jeopardy protection. When a new judge, Charles Carpenter of Laramie, was presented with the question in April 1903, he agreed with the latter group of states, and ruled the prosecution could proceed with a charge of first degree murder. Upon re-trial, Gorman was convicted of first degree murder, which then carried an automatic death penalty.

An appeal followed, but many of the men in the area objected to the delays. There was talk of a lynching, both of Gorman and Joseph P. Walters, who was also in the Big Horn County jail pending an appeal of a murder conviction. The talk was strong enough that in July the sheriff took the men out of their cells to a place north of Basin. Gorman then escaped, although he was re-captured three days later. His escape very much excited the men who believed a

<sup>94</sup> The Gorman file cannot be found and the instructions given to the jury are, therefore, not available, but subsequent events show that it must have been given; i. e., the legal battle over the consequences of such an instruction. Such instructions were given to juries even in territorial times. See, for example, *Territory v. William Booth*, Johnson County District Court Case No. 77, found in the records of the Johnson County Clerk of the District Court and *Territory v. Elias R. Smith*, Johnson County D. Ct. case No. 114.

<sup>95</sup> *Cheyenne Daily Leader*, November 10, 1902.

<sup>96</sup> *Cheyenne Daily Leader*, November 10, 1902. The newspaper article does not recite Collins name, but simply refers to “the prosecuting attorney,” who was Winfield Scott Collins. One would expect the county attorney to save for himself an important role in the final argument.

<sup>97</sup> Revised Statutes of Wyoming 1899, § 4950.

<sup>98</sup> This formulation directly follows *Ross v. State*, 8 Wyo. 351, 383, 57 P. 924 (1899), in which the Wyoming Supreme Court laid out clear rules as to when deadly force is permitted in self defense.

<sup>99</sup> D. Ct. Journal, p. 450.

lynching was needed, and on July 19, 1903, a mob of some thirty men entered the jail. They shot to death Gorman, Walters, and a deputy sheriff. Shortly thereafter, Maggie received a note saying if she did not leave the country, the same thing would happen to her. Of course, she left. The Big Horn County authorities attempted to prosecute members of the lynch mob, and even obtained indictments against

eight men. The first case to be tried, however, was conducted in an atmosphere of intimidation and the prosecution's case fell apart. All charges were dismissed against the defendants. **M**

### **John W. Davis**

grew up in Worland, Wyoming, and has practiced law there since 1973. He is the author of *A Vast Amount of Trouble: A History of the Spring Creek Raid*, published by the University Press of Colorado in 1993. Mr. Davis is married and he and his wife, Celia, have two sons. Their home is known as The Worland House. It was built originally in 1917 for Charlie and Sadie Worland and is on the National Register of Historic Places.

# BLIZZARD OF 1949

It has been fifty-five years since what some have called "The Great Blizzard of 1949" hit parts of Wyoming and the West. At the 2003 annual meeting of the Wyoming State Historical Society, James L. Ehernberger presented an interesting and educational program about the blizzard. Several WSHS members also shared their experiences with the large crowd. Following are the reminiscences of Amy Lawrence, James Ehernberger, and Lucille Dumball, all long-time WSHS members, about what they and their families experienced during that blizzard in early 1949.

## Amy Lawrence

On January 2, 1949, my mother noted in her diary, "Big storm starting at noon—40 mi. wind and snow." That was not unusual for that time of year in the Little Laramie Valley. But it kept snowing and the wind came up and blew and blew and by daylight the situation began to look serious. It was serious, for this was the beginning of the infamous blizzard that devastated much of the West, leaving in its wake ranges littered with dead livestock; roads blocked by abandoned vehicles; trains buried in snowdrifts; a human toll of deaths and injuries from frostbite and exhaustion and broken dreams. Cattle actually died standing up as the wind blew the snow under their hair where it melted, then froze, encasing them in an icy death.

This was not just one blizzard, but a series of storms, one right after the other that swept the Plains states and kept the people reeling from one

catastrophe to another. It was well into spring before things began to get back to normal and the cost counted. There are countless stories of hardship and suffering and courage during this rough time.

My parents, Bill and Rena Lawrence, had a ranch on the Little Laramie River about twenty miles northwest of Laramie. This is their story—and mine. I was working in Laramie at that time. I managed to get to work at a garage on 2nd Street that Monday morning after the storm began, but it was three days before I could get back to my apartment on 18<sup>th</sup> Street. Every street and intersection was clogged with stalled cars and snow drifts, so I bunked with friends who lived nearby. All I could do to help my folks at that point was to worry.

Meanwhile, mom and dad, who were both in their sixties, were trying to cope with the possibility of losing our entire herd of cattle. The cattle had to be fed and waterholes cut for them. This was long before



*Lawrence Ranch on the Little Laramie River. Courtesy Amy Lawrence.*

the massive tractors with front end loaders, or four-wheel drive vehicles were available to the general public, and the efficient winter clothing we have now was not even imagined. Instead, dad had to resort to layers of "long johns," wool shirts, jeans, and overalls, and topped it all off with a heavy sheepskin lined coat. At this point he resembled a huge, lumbering bear, and would probably have sold our outfit for some of today's insulated clothing. The hardest part was keeping his feet from freezing. There were wool socks, sheepskin liners, and over that some massive four-buckle overshoes. Dad was nearly six feet tall—with feet to match. He had to get all of that, and himself, on a horse, because that was the only viable transportation. As an experienced Wyoming cowboy, he had a set of extra-wide stirrups for this kind of weather.

This already had been a hard winter. A big snow storm on December 21 had clogged the roads, curtailing Christmas shopping and celebrations. The pasture we had rented was more than four miles across country, and our cattle had to be fed. So on December 18 dad had saddled up his biggest, toughest saddle horse, and, leading an extra horse, headed for that pasture, establishing a pattern that continued for several weeks. Some fences and roads were buried, but dad, with a cowboy's memory of his landscape, managed to find the gates, river crossings, and bridges necessary to get him to the pasture in late afternoon, with just enough light to feed the cattle. This pasture had an extra bonus, small springs located in heavy stands of willows, which offered shelter and water for our cattle, and may have helped save our herd.

Mother, of course, was left to try to cope with struggling out to get her chickens fed and out to the barn to feed a couple of young bulls we had there. Although dad had dug out paths, the constantly blowing snow usually filled them in quickly. The Rural Electrification Association did not reach us until the following summer, so we did not yet have electricity or running water and mother was constantly tormented by her worry about dad. Since the telephone was usually out, he could not even call to tell her if he had arrived safely at Uncle Jack's.

I remember times during lesser blizzards in later years when dad would head out to the meadow in his

big truck to feed the cattle. If he wasn't back by close to noon, all we could do was worry and pace the floor. There was no way we could have found him if he was in trouble. There were many dangers out there. The truck could get stuck, he could fall and break a leg, or he could slip and fall into the waterhole on the river. Wet feet meant frozen feet. These waterholes had to be chopped out daily and sometimes when the water was dammed up downstream, it would come up through the waterhole, creating an especially treacherous, slick surface. Or the snow had drifted in and had to be shoveled out. As the water dropped, and the ice and snow built up, sometimes dad would have to chop steps down to the water and shovel gravel out of the bottom to cover the ice and make it less treacherous for the stock.

So there was plenty to worry about that winter of '49. We had our heifers in our meadow, and luckily, on January 5 there was a break in the storm so dad was able to find them just as they were beginning to pile up against a fence, and get them to shelter and feed.

Several things saved the Little Laramie community from an even worse disaster. Only three of the storms actually hit our valley, another skirted north of us. The Rawlins area and the northern part of Albany County were in far worse shape than we were. National Guard trucks and planes struggled to get feed to stranded cattle, but the losses were terrible in some areas. Other factors that helped us out were our old party telephone line--a "party line" radio program that relayed messages; and a rotary snow plow that had recently been purchased by the California Oil Company at the then active Quealy Dome oil field.

We could not ring the phone operator, but she opened the line at specified times of the day to take and relay messages. She also coordinated with the Quealy field and told her listeners when the snow plow was coming through. Those who had to get to town could follow the plow and follow it back the next day. On one occasion, a neighbor had a badly frozen face, and with the help of the operator and the big plow they were able to get him to town for the necessary medical attention.

Since the plowed road was close to our house



Amy Lawrence on Lawrence Road near the family ranch, January 1949. Courtesy Amy Lawrence.

and I was able to talk to the folks on the party line when there was a break in the storms, I would load up on groceries and whatever else the folks needed, and bring them out. I would park on the road and dad would bring my old "Flyer" sled and we would load it with boxes and slide it down to the house. However, the grocery situation was never critical because mother, trained by years of Wyoming winters, always had a full pantry. I still do, and have probably enough food on hand to survive several blizzards.

On February 18, mother wrote that it was "Thawing and Pleasant." The "Blizzard of '49" was over. Although our family and most of our cattle survived the blizzard, dad never fully recovered his health from those terrible rides across country. Some of our neighbors suffered several cattle losses, many had frostbite, one was coping with the unexpected birth of a child who arrived a month early. But, like most of the other ranchers on the Laramie Plains, we all dug out, rebuilt, and waited for green grass.

My mother, Rena Palmer Lawrence, kept a diary beginning with her high school days in 1916. Similar ranch diaries are an invaluable historical source. In them, ranch wives noted the weather, shipping and calving dates, haying, and other ranch activities. These diaries have even been used as evidence in legal disputes such as taxes owed. Following are excerpts during the time of the 1949 blizzard.

**Note:** Dad, William H. "Bill" Lawrence, had leased pasture from Johnny McGill and took our cows there November 20. This field adjoined the Jack Sanderson ranch on what is now Forbes Lane. Jack was my great uncle. Mother's parents, Axel and Amanda Palmer, lived on what is now the Brown's Creek Angus Ranch, a mile from where we lived at that time and where I still live.<sup>1</sup>

-- Amy Lawrence

*Dec. 21, 1948—Tuesday—Beginning of big snow in eve.*

*Dec. 22—To town to shop for Holidays—Dad followed me—because of snow—School program in eve at Millbrook School.*

*Dec. 23—Started feeding at McGills*

<sup>1</sup> Amy Lawrence has the diary in her possessions. The entries are printed as written in the diary.

Dec. 24—Billy gets folks—Jack and Amy here for Christmas Eve dinner—open packages. Lots of snow.  
 Dec. 25—Bill and Amy get stuck in ditch at McGills while feeding—late dinner. Jack couldn't come—Folks both have bad colds—A [Amy] to town in eve.—Ground blizzard—cold  
 Dec. 26—Sun—Billy late from Jack's  
 Dec. 27—Tried to get to Mom's—stuck on hill—Mom has flu—snow-cold-windy. Lute Fisk dinner for Coykendalls.  
 Dec. 28—Mom some better—practically snowed in—Billy rides to Jack's  
 Dec. 30—Finally got to Folks. Walked in from road. Mom better. Billy rode  
 Dec. 30—Friday—Billy rode. Took dinner and shared it with folks.—Fair  
 Jan. 1, 1949—Went to [Holly] Hunt's for annual party—played poker—visited—fun.  
 Jan. 2—Sunday—Big storm starting at noon—40 mi. wind and snow—very cold—all nite—B barely makes it home with truck [1929 Model A] from Jack's—phone out  
 Jan. 3—Terrible blizzard all day and all nite—zero—sifts in everywhere—B couldn't feed even here—puts bulls, horses in barn.  
 Jan. 4—Tues.—No let up—Blizzard all day and nite again—zero—cleared up a bit in p.m., B finds calves scattered—open stack—chickens in bad way—grain room filled [with sifting snow]—8 ft. drifts sheds and fence—across road  
 Jan. 5—Wed—calm at last—very cold—B finds strayed calves—nearly gone—B rides to Jack's—almost impossible—thru fields—Calif. [California Oil field at Quealy Dome] snow plow rotary open road around hill—took lunch to boys—they took 24 hours to Baths [about four miles].  
 Jan. 6—Thurs—Billy rides to Jack's—digs out grain room, garage and chicken house—Kirk [Frank Coykendall, a neighbor] rides up—his cattle at airport—he goes horseback—alone [ten to twelve miles]. Very cold—very cold.  
 Jan. 8—Sat—Fair—cold—wind towards evening—B rides to Jack's—still tough—Phone out.  
 Jan. 9—Sun—Blizzard again—from East. Not quite so severe as last. Very cold. Tough on Billy. Earl [Bath] freezes face.  
 Jan. 10—Mon. Storm let up—turned warmer about noon.  
 Jan. 11—Tues.—Folks here—first time since Christmas—nice visit—fair—cold  
 Jan. 12—Bun hare stops by—fair  
 Jan. 13—Thurs. Doris takes Earl to doctor—face frozen—bad  
 Jan. 14—to town—stuck in snow at Bamforts Hill—Bob Knadler and Dad help me out—hurried shopping—Roads drifting bad in valley.—Fair—wind  
 Jan. 15—Sat—New storm—snow, wind, zero—A couldn't come—roads drifted—Tough ride for B.  
 Jan. 16—Eddie Fritzen [with California Co. and plow]—brings groceries—some wind, cold, fair  
 Jan. 17—River overflowing—freezing—getting bad—cloudy—very cold  
 Jan. 18—C.O.C. [California Oil Co.] opens road—big storm goes around us—some snow—cold  
 Jan. 22—Sat.—Amy out in p.m.—stayed for supper—cold and fair—  
 Jan. 24—Amy out for nite—very cold—fair  
 Jan. 27—Folks engine out [this was the Kohler system that supplied electricity]  
 Jan. 28—Friday—35 below—listened to game—Colo Aggies—Wyo—wow!!<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The University of Wyoming Cowboy basketball team defeated the Colorado Aggies that night 56-39 at Fort Collins. The two teams played again the following night again at Fort Collins with the same result. Cowboy 53, Aggies 41.



Feb. 2—Wed.—Kirk helped B bring cows home from McGills—cold—clear.

Feb. 3—Folks got engine started at last [water and lights restored].

[Blowing and drifting snow and cold each day.]

Feb. 6—Sun.—Blew and drifted terribly all day.

Feb. 7—Clear—Blowing and drifting. All roads closed. Trains stalled.

Feb. 8—Still blowing and drifting badly. B couldn't feed till p.m.

[Cold, drifting snow until Feb. 11.]

Feb. 12—Saturday—Neighbors here waiting for snow plow. Large convoy following it.—B stalls truck in Mandel lane—bringing out grain. B & I work 2 hrs. to get it out. Clear, snow in eve.—very cold.

Feb. 13—A starts to town—has to turn back. Cal. Opens Mandel Lane—Harry and Doris [Bath] to Dr.—frozen feet.—Fair, very cold and windy.

Feb. 14—Mon—A goes in with convoy and Judy. LeVasser [water commissioner] here for lunch and dynamite water holes.—Jim May brings week's mail. Wyo. Beats U. State 44-36. Bitter cold wind.

Feb. 16—Wednesday—B & I to town at last—about six weeks—warmer—thawed a bit. Too windy to feed in a.m.

Feb. 18—Friday—Yeoman<sup>3</sup> here to clear stacks and yard—here for lunch. Thawing—pleasant.

<sup>3</sup> Yeoman had a heavy equipment business and cleared out the drifts for several ranches with a "Cat."

## James L. Ehernberger

For those of us who lived through and witnessed the Great Blizzard of 1949, vivid memories will remain with us throughout our lifetime. It was an event in our lives we could never forget any more than the Great Depression, Pearl Harbor, John F. Kennedy's assassination, and, of course, now Nine-Eleven. One thing about it, this storm played no favorites as everyone and everything was SNOWBOUND.

My family lived in Bushnell, Nebraska, just ten miles east of Pine Bluffs. We were more "Wyoming" than Nebraska because Pine Bluffs is where we attended the movie theatre, visited the doctor and dentist, did much of our grocery shopping, and last but not least, attended the Laramie County Fair. We moved to Cheyenne in 1950.

My father operated a blacksmith shop and a hardware store. It was on Sunday, January 2, 1949, that I remember assisting my father with the annual inventory in our hardware store. This was a good job for a twelve-year-old because I could easily climb up and down the large racks that contained various types

of bolts (carriage and machine) and pipe fittings (black and galvanized). It was during this inventory when one of the local ranchers came in for hardware to hang storm windows. His ranch consisted of sheep and he told us that a big storm was coming in. His prediction came true about four o'clock that afternoon. The storm blew in very rapidly, even though the day was already windy and cloudy, but once the snow started to fall there was no doubt that it was a genuine blizzard.

The blizzard continued into the night and did not let up on the following day, nor did it subside at any time during January 4. However, on Wednesday, the morning dawned with clear skies and less wind. The sights were unbelievable, snow had drifted all over town. These weren't soft drifts. This snow was packed like cement! Drifts all the way up to the eaves of the roofs were common sights. Automobiles were completely buried. No trains were running. The highways were closed. NOTHING WAS MOVING! EVERYONE WAS SNOWBOUND!

Having been more or less snowbound since Sunday, I did venture to our local railroad depot about

a block away. I had an interest in the railroad even at that young age. Our small depot was divided into three sections. One was the lobby, the center portion was the agent's office, and the other section was the freight room. This was one of the few times I could recall the old coal stove was fired up in the lobby area. The cars froze to the track and could not get out of Hillsdale, Wyoming, so all other trains were held. The Streamliner, *City of Portland*, was held at Egbert, Wyoming, and the *City of Los Angeles* was held at Pine Bluffs.

The agent and section foreman had discussed another Streamliner, *City of San Francisco*, which was at nearby Kimball, Nebraska, while the morning mail train was held at Dix, Nebraska. All of the streamlined trains were diesel powered, but the cold weather caused problems and eventually the cars on the trains started freezing. The train held at Kimball required all passengers to be evacuated, filling up the Wheat Growers Hotel, and many local residents allowed passengers into their homes as well.

Trains were detoured over another Union Pacific line via Sterling, Colorado, then to Cheyenne where they went to their destination. Eastward trains had to use the same route until the entire railroad could be dug out by huge steam-powered rotary snowplows, and each of the cars pulled out of the drifts one-by-one.

Our three-day storm was nothing in comparison to other parts of the country. President Harry Truman authorized disaster relief and ordered the military to assist. It was this assistance that allowed the use of heavy equipment in the attempts to keep roads open as much as possible. Airlifts prevented many livestock losses. With the military's assistance the human loss was kept to a minimum.

Subsequent storms presented additional problems because the wind kept blowing in country roads that had been plowed. However, other parts of northern Colorado, Nebraska, South Dakota, and Wyoming suffered much more than we did. The Union Pacific location section foreman and some of his men were stoking the fire. The foreman was listening on the train dispatcher's telephone mounted on the wall, and on several occasions he conversed with the agent about plans to open the railroad. As it turned out,

the section of railroad between Cheyenne and Sidney, Nebraska, had several passenger trains stalled in various communities, and it was at least a week after the storm that train operations got back to somewhat of a normal schedule.

Due to the poor visibility during the blizzard, the trains could not view the wayside signals. It was necessary to "station block" the trains. In other words, before a train could move to the next station, it would have to have reached the second station beyond. There was a fleet of passenger trains on the morning of January 3, the first being the *Los Angeles Limited* that was pulled by a steam locomotive. This train experienced a two-week tie-up (the longest in history) in the area west of Rock River to the continental divide during February.

Looking back on this great blizzard, while it was severe, our family did not suffer any big losses. The farmers and ranchers suffered the most because of livestock loss. Train travelers were delayed, but were always fed. All highways were closed. The railroads were strapped with many expenses keeping their lines open and operating special snowplow trains. In the Dakotas it was not until late March before some people could get out.

Luckily, my father had purchased a truckload of Hanna coal that fall, and we had a fairly full coal bin when the storm struck. We had plenty of home canned foods too. My mother had plenty of baking supplies and provided bread and rolls. The little grocery store across the street (requiring us to tunnel through the drift) ran out of milk and many other provisions, but we all managed somehow. Our electricity never failed.

Since no other storm of this magnitude struck in this region prior to the end of 1999, I am able to say I had witnessed THE STORM OF THE CENTURY.

## Lucille Dumbrill

I was a senior at the University of Wyoming and my home was in Laramie. I was what the students at UW called a "Laramie Girl." I was engaged to marry a young man from Upton, Wyoming, Richard Dumbrill, who was also a student and a returning veteran.



*One of the trains overwhelmed by the snow during the 1949 blizzard. This train was stuck outside of Rawlins, Wyoming. Courtesy UW American Heritage Center.*

Dick had gone home to Upton for the Christmas vacation, but came back early in order to spend time with me and my family before school started. We had spent some time together on New Years Day and he had returned to his abode, which was a Butler hut on the university campus. That night it began to snow and since he had been raised on a ranch and was attuned to weather signs, he anticipated that there might be quite a storm.

Early on the morning of January 2, he called and asked if he could come to my house. I looked out the window and asked if he thought he could make it. He said yes, and a few minutes later arrived after driving through the snow and drifts on the streets. He parked his car on the street by the house and there it stayed for three or four days until the city helped us plow it out.

Inside our house it was cozy and warm and our family settled in to play games and sleep until the storm was over. Little did we realize it would last for days instead of the usual hours. We couldn't even see the houses across the street. It was as if we were in a world of our own. Dick slept on the sofa in the living room and seemed really happy to be there instead of his Butler hut.

My mother, who was usually prepared for all emergencies, cooked wonderful biscuits, bean soup, and other foods she had on hand. The second day she started to run short of some things as she was

unable to order from or go to the grocery store. She decided that someone should go to the little store around the corner from the house for milk and some other things the store still might have. We decided it wouldn't be safe for one or two people to go alone because of the terribly high winds that would blow a person right over into a drift. The house was right in the middle of downtown. All of the young people (I believe there were five of us) in the house joined hands and snaked our way through the garage and around the corner to the store where they did have most of the supplies we needed. It took quite a while to make the trip and we were all exhausted, cold, and wet by the time we returned. The store was less than half a block away.

As I think back fifty-four years I remember this experience with pleasure. It was a time that strong bonds were formed in the family. We certainly gained a real appreciation for mother's creative cooking, and found that we could entertain ourselves and each other and have a great time. We were, however, aware of the trials and tragedies that others were facing as we had a radio and listened faithfully. School was delayed and when the storm abated a bit, all of us pitched in to help clean the sidewalks, driveways, and to free Dick's car from the drifts. The rest of the winter was hard and travel outside of Laramie almost impossible, but for the most part our school and other activities continued as usual. **W**

# BOOK REVIEWS



Edited by **Carl Hallberg**

## Significant Recent Books on Western and Wyoming History

**Warm Sands: Uranium Tailings Policy in the Atomic West.** By Eric W. Mogren. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002. 241 pp. *Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index.* Hardcover, \$34.95.

**Reviewed by Kenton G. Jaehnig, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming**

The West's uranium mill tailing controversy was an unfortunate episode in American environmental history. Western states benefited economically from federal subsidized uranium milling and the federal government obtained uranium for its atomic energy programs. After the demand for uranium dried up, both parties were stuck with a costly long-term environmental problem: the disposal of radioactive uranium mill tailings.

In his first book, *Warm Sands: Uranium Mill Tailings Policy in the Atomic West*, Eric W. Mogren explores the development of federal policy regarding uranium mill tailings. He argues the federal government was ultimately responsible for creating and correcting the uranium tailings problem and acknowledged this by implementing the Uranium Mill Tailings Remedial Action (UMTRA) Project. He demonstrates UMTRA was the result of considerable wrangling between non-elected federal and state officials.

The federal government revived a moribund western uranium industry during World War II, when it ordered vanadium millers to save their uranium by-product for the Manhattan Project. Federal support of the industry began in earnest when Congress created the Atomic Energy Commission in 1946. A non-elected federal monopoly charged with regulating atomic energy, the AEC sought national uranium self-sufficiency for Cold War defense purposes and peaceful applications. To accomplish this, it contracted with western uranium millers to buy all of their processed uranium.

Fueled by federal support, uranium milling boomed in the West between the late 1940s and late 1960s. Communities such as Grand Junction, Colorado and Grants, New Mexico grew up around the uranium mills. As the industry grew, so did the uranium tailings piles generated by the mills. When

millers ceased operations and left town, the tailings remained.

The problem of radioactive tailings first attracted public attention in the 1950s when state public health officials discovered high amounts of low-level radiation from tailings in the rivers of the Colorado Basin. During the 1960s, such radiation was also detected in the air and soil at tailings sites in Colorado, Utah, and other western states. Cases of particular interest included the Animas River in Colorado and New Mexico, air pollution at Durango, Colorado, and contaminated soil in buildings at Grand Junction, Colorado. In each case, state officials declared that radioactive tailings posed a serious long-term public health hazard and demanded that the federal government assume responsibility for these sites.

The federal government's response to each case followed a remarkably similar pattern. The AEC argued that tailings were not a significant public health hazard, only to be presented with evidence to the contrary. It also claimed that it did not have jurisdiction over the tailings, which was hotly disputed by state, local, and even elected federal officials. Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, litigation ensued and ended up with the federal government assisting in stabilizing and cleaning up the tailings sites and assuming most of the financial cost of these efforts.

Due to these episodes and public opposition to nuclear energy during the 1960s and 1970s, the federal government belatedly accepted responsibility for the uranium mill tailings problem. In 1978, Congress passed the Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Act, under which the UMTRA project was initiated. Although plagued by government foot dragging, the UMTRA project was completed in 1998, having disposed of forty million cubic yards of uranium tailings in eleven states and four Indian reservations.

*Warm Sands* is an impressive scholarly work on this controversial subject. Although sketchy on the details of UMTRA project operations, it is well researched, carefully written, and intelligently argued. With the work, Mogren gives every indication he will be a very productive scholar in the future. **M**

# Recent Acquisitions in the Hebard Collection, UW Libraries

Compiled by Tamsen L. Hert,  
University of Wyoming Libraries

The Grace Raymond Hebard Collection is the Wyoming research library for the University of Wyoming Libraries. Housed in the Owen Wister Western Writers Reading Room in the American Heritage Center, the Hebard Collection is considered to be the most comprehensive collection about Wyoming in the state. The core of this collection is Miss Hebard's personal library, which was donated to the University Libraries. Further donations have been significant in the development of this collection. While it is easy to identify materials about Wyoming published by nationally known publishers, it can be difficult to locate pertinent publications printed in Wyoming.

If you have any questions about these materials or the Hebard Collection, you can contact Tamsen Hert by phone at 307-766-6245; by email, [thert@uwyo.edu](mailto:thert@uwyo.edu) or you can access the Hebard Home Page at: <http://www-lib.uwyo.edu/uwlibs/hebard.htm>.

Amundson, Michael A. *Yellowcake Towns: Uranium Mining Communities in the American West*. Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2002.

A comparison of four uranium mining towns in the West—Uran, Colorado; Moab, Utah; Grants, New Mexico; and Jeffrey City, Wyoming. Extensively documented and illustrated. A great addition to the history of the atomic age in the West.

Bagley, Jerry. *Daniel Trevor Potts, Rocky Mountain Explorer, Chronicler of the Fur Trade and ... The First Known Man in Yellowstone Park*. Rigby, ID: Old Faithful Eye-Witness Publishing, 2000.

Potts was a member of the Ashley-Henry expedition and provided reports of the travels up the Missouri, Big Horn, and Wind rivers. He provided the earliest accounts of the area of Yellowstone but was unidentified for nearly a century. The author located the original letters and was able to at last identify the author of these early accounts.

Bagne, Mark. *Yellowstone Country: The Photographs of Jack Richard*. Lanham, MD: Roberts Rinehart Publishers in cooperation with the Buffalo Bill Historical Center, 2002.

Jack Richards photographed areas in the northwestern corner of Wyoming from the 1940s to the 1980s. This work includes 140 photos culled from the 160,000 plus images in the collection of the McCracken Research Library at the BBHC. Includes Heart Mountain as well as Yellowstone.

Brown, Cleo. *The Life & Tales of a Wyoming Cowboy*. Greybull, WY: Dan and Sue Brown, 2002.

Born on a ranch near Meeteetsee, Wyoming, Cleo Brown leaves home at the age of 13 and begins the life of a cowboy. This is his story.

Borton, Warren. *Wyoming Bottles: Historical Bottles of Wyoming, 1868-1910*. Midvale, UT: W. Borton 1999.

Historical guide to the age and rarity of Wyoming bottles.

Brown, Larry. *Coyotes and Canaries: Characters Who Made the West Wonderful*. Glendo, WY: Glendo Press, 2002.

A compilation of articles on various Wyoming residents and visitors, some well-known, others less so.

Burton, Jeffery D. Gary Farrell, Florence B. Lord, and Richard W. Lord. *Cowboys, War, and Ethnicity: An Overview of World War II Japanese American Relocation Sites*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002.

A detailed study of the various facilities which confined persons of Japanese ancestry during WWII. Chapter 6 covers the Heart Mountain internment camp.

Carter, Robert A. *Bill Cody: The Man Behind the Legend*. NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2000.

The first "full-scale biography" of this western icon in more than thirty years. **W**

# Index

- Arnott, John 20  
 Bader, Fred 16-19  
 Basin, Wyoming 18, 21, 26  
 Bath, Earl 34  
 Beck, W.E. 23, 25  
 Belle Fourche River 12  
 Benham, Daniel 3  
 Big Horn Basin, Wyoming 15-30  
 Big Horn County, Wyoming 15-30  
*Big Horn County Rustler* 25  
 Big Horn Mountains 4, 6, 16  
 Big Horn River 19  
 Big Horn and Yellowstone Expedition 2-14  
 Blake, M.L. 20, 22, 29  
 Blizzard of 1949 31-37  
 Blume, Fred 22  
 Bonanza, Wyoming 24  
 Brigham, F.T. 18  
 Bryant, G.W. 23  
 Buffalo, Wyoming 15  
 Burke, Milo 23  
 Bushnell, Nebraska 35  
 California Oil Company 32, 34  
 Camp Douglas, Utah 2-3, 13  
 Camp Robinson, Nebraska 13  
 Carpenter, Charles 29  
 Carter, Dana 18  
 Chapman, W.J. 23, 25  
*Cheyenne Daily Leader* 18, 25-28  
 Cheyenne Depot 3-4  
 Cheyenne, Wyoming 36  
 Collins, Hugh 26-28  
 Collins, Winfield Scott 19-20, 22, 29  
 Coykendall, Frank 34  
 Crandall, Olan 23  
 Crook, George 2-3, 5-6, 9, 11, 13  
 Crook City, Wyoming 12  
 Crosby, George 25  
 Curtis, W.B. 23  
 Custer, George Armstrong 2-4, 6-7, 13  
 Davis, John W., "The 1902 Murder of Tom Gorman" 15-30  
 Dix, Nebraska 36  
 Dry Fork of Brokenback Creek 15, 18  
 Dumbrill, Lucille 36-37  
 Dumbrill, Richard 36-37  
 Egbert, Wyoming 36  
 Ehernberger, James L. 35-36  
 Ellis, C.C. 23  
 Enterline, E.E. 22, 25-26, 28-29  
 Erickson, A.J. 23  
 Fort Bridger 3  
 Fort Fetterman 3, 5-6  
 Fort Laramie 3  
 Frame, Robert 23  
 Fritzen, Eddie 34  
 Garland, Wyoming 21  
 Gleaver, John B. 23, 25  
 Goose Creek, Wyoming 2  
 Gorman, Jim 15-30  
 Gorman, Maggie (McClellan) 15-30  
 Gorman, Rose 17-19  
 Gorman, Tom 15-30  
 Hale, Dudley 18, 25-26  
 Hedren, Paul L., ed., "The Worst Campaign I Ever Experienced: Sergeant Zimmerman's Memoir of the Great Sioux War" 2-14  
 Hillsdale, Wyoming 36  
 Ilg, E.M. 23  
 Jaehnig, Kenton G., book reviewer 38  
 James, Frank 18  
 Jimmerfield, Dave 23, 25  
 Kimball, Nebraska 36  
 Knadler, Bob 34  
 Laramie, Wyoming 31, 36-37  
 Lawrence, Amy 31-35  
 Lawrence, Rena 31-35  
 Lawrence, William H. (Bill) 31-35  
 Leavitt, W.W. 23, 25  
 Manning, C.F. 23  
 Martin, A.J. 23, 25  
 McClellan, George 16, 19  
 McClellan, Kenneth 28  
 McConihe, Samuel 14  
 McPhee, John 16  
 Medicine Bow, Wyoming 3-4  
 Miller, Ed 15-16, 26  
 Mogren, Eric W., book reviewed 38  
 Morrow, Stanley 9, 11-13  
*Natrona County Tribune* 19  
 Neiber, B.J. 23  
 Nelson, T.T. 23  
 New York City 2, 4  
 "The 1902 Murder of Tom Gorman," by John W. Davis 15-30  
 Northern Cheyenne Indians 2-14  
 Omaha, Nebraska 2, 4  
 Peper, William 23  
 Pine Bluffs, Wyoming 35-36  
 Powder River 7-8  
 Quealy Dome oil field 32, 34  
 Rawlins, Wyoming 32, 37  
 Rock River, Wyoming 36  
 Shafer, W.L. 23  
*Sheridan Enterprise* 18  
 Sheridan, Philip 3  
 Sheridan, Wyoming 20-22  
 Short, Leonard 23  
 Sioux Indians 2-14  
 Slim Buttes, Dakota 3, 9, 13  
 Smith, C.C. 23, 25  
 Sterling, Colorado 36  
 Stotts, Joseph L. 21-22, 25  
 Taylor, Frank 3  
 Ten Sleep, Wyoming 15  
 Terry, Alfred 3, 7  
 Toluca, Montana 21  
 Tongue River 6  
 Union Pacific Railroad 4, 22, 35-36  
 Upton, Wyoming 36-37  
 Walters, Joseph P. 29-30  
*Warm Sands: Uranium Tailings Policy in the Atomic West*, reviewed 38  
 Watkins, S.A. 23, 25  
 Watson, C.H. 23, 25  
 Wheat Growers Hotel, Kimball, Nebraska 36  
 Whitney, F.A. 23, 25, 29  
 Workman, Cornelius 23, 25  
 "The Worst Campaign I Ever Experienced: Sergeant John Zimmerman's Memoir of the Great Sioux War," ed. by Paul L. Hedren 2-14  
*Wyoming Dispatch* 19  
 Wyoming Supreme Court 22-23, 25  
 Yellowstone River 7  
 Zaring, C.A. 18, 25, 29  
 Zimmerman, John 2-14



# Wyoming Picture



*These three young women trained to be stewardesses in Cheyenne during the 1930s. Some of the typical stewardess duties during that early age of air transportation included lock and unlock the main cabin door; dust the windowsills; carry luggage and tag the luggage; carry buckets of fuel to plane when necessary; push planes into hangar; prepare telegrams for passengers; swat flies; offer slippers, clean shoes before returning them to passengers; punch tickets, give refunds when necessary; and weigh luggage and passengers. Photo courtesy Wyoming State Archives, Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources.*

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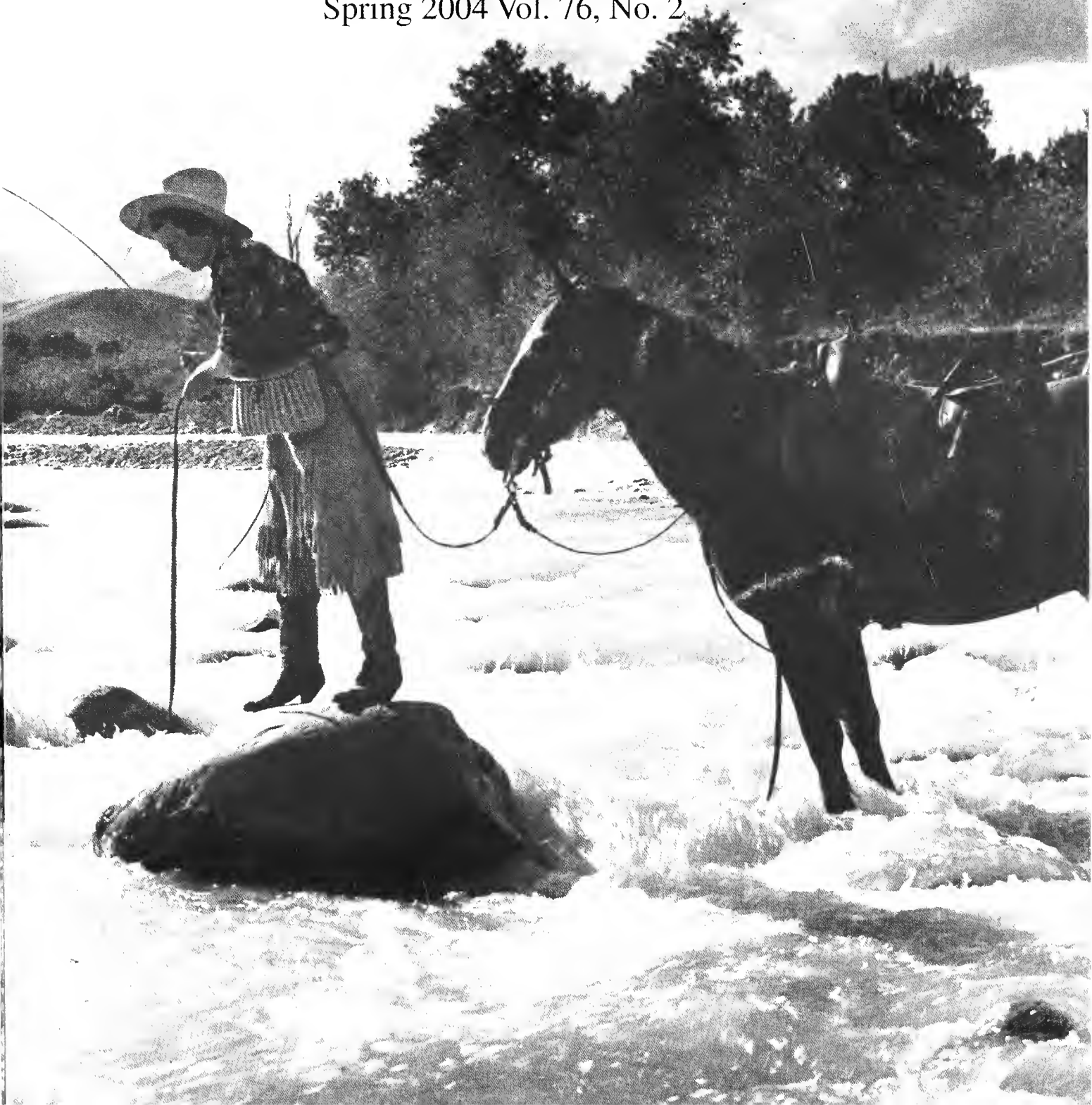


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# Annals of **WYOMING**

The Wyoming History Journal

Spring 2004 Vol. 76, No. 2



## The Cover Art

**Charles Belden Collection, American Heritage Center,  
University of Wyoming**

*Charles Belden photographed his daughter, Annice Williston Belden, fishing in the Greybull River on the Pitchfork Ranch. Belden, born in California in 1887, followed his college friend, Eugene Phelps, to the Pitchfork Ranch, owned by the Phelps family. Starting as a ranch hand in 1910, Belden two years later married Eugene's sister, Frances, and then helped manage the ranch. For two decades he photographed the everyday life on the ranch.*

## The Back Cover Art

### “Mackinaw”

**Stephen N. Leek Collection, American Heritage Center,  
University of Wyoming**

*The biggest trout is the Lake Trout, also known as the Mackinaw. Most of the photographs in this issue were taken by Stephen Leek, one of the earliest settlers in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. Besides being a wildlife photographer, Leek also was a hunter, trapper, dude rancher, and guide.*

### Information for Contributors:

The editor of *Annals of Wyoming* welcomes manuscripts and photographs on every aspect of the history of Wyoming and the West. Appropriate for submission are unpublished, research-based articles which provide new information or which offer new interpretations of historical events. First-person accounts based on personal experience or recollections of events will be considered for use in the “Wyoming Memories” section. Historic photo essays for possible publication in “Wyoming Memories” also are welcome. Articles are reviewed and referred by members of the journal’s Editorial Advisory Board and others. Decisions regarding publication are made by the editor.

Manuscripts (along with suggestions for illustrations or photographs) should be submitted on computer diskettes in a format created by one of the widely-used word processing programs along with two printed copies.

Submissions and queries should be addressed to: Editor, *Annals of Wyoming*, Dept. 3924, 1000 E. University Avenue, Laramie WY 82071, or to the editor by e-mail at the following address: [rewig@uwyo.edu](mailto:rewig@uwyo.edu)



## Introduction: Bourdieu on the Bighorn? Or, Towards a Cultural History of Fly-Fishing in Wyoming and the Rocky Mountain West<sup>1</sup>

guest editor,  
Adrian A. Bantjes



Fly-fishing, most likely for native Cutthroat trout in the Jackson's Hole area. Stephen N. Leek Collection, American Heritage Center.

Yet, despite the fact that nearly one-third of the Wyoming population engages in fishing, thus placing the state in third place in the nation in terms of per capita participation, Wyoming's angling history remains to be written.<sup>2</sup> The sport has a profound impact on regional economies through an extensive network of sporting goods stores, fly-shops, guiding and outfitting operations, lodges, etc. The state and the federal government spend millions of dollars every year to sustain and develop Wyoming fisheries through activities such as the stocking of game fish, conservation

<sup>1</sup> This special issue stems indirectly from a 2002 American Studies and History seminar on the history of fly-fishing in Europe and America, developed at the University of Wyoming with generous grants from the American Studies Program and, later, the American Heritage Center. I am profoundly grateful to the students in that class for their insights and contributions. I am particularly indebted to Laramie fly-fisherman par excellence Nick Boyd, and to America's leading fly-fishing historian, Paul Schullery, for generously sharing their knowledge and encouragement. In addition, I benefited immensely from the insights and aid of Elizabeth Storer, Phil Roberts, Jack Dennis, Sam Mavrakis, Jeff Nichols, Tucker Galloway, Eric Nye, Herb Dieterich, Ed Schmidtman, Bob Righter, Ken Owens, and Scott Carlson. Anne Marie Lane, Carol Bowers, and Leslie Shores of the American Heritage Center, as well as Tami Hert of the Hebard Collection of the University of Wyoming Libraries, went out of their way to unearth and reproduce fascinating material. Without *Annals* editor Rick Ewig this issue would never have materialized. Also, thanks to the helpful staff of the American Museum of Fly-Fishing and to Bob Wiltshire, director of the International Fly-Fishing Center.

<sup>2</sup> *The Casper Star Tribune*, July 5, 2002. The articles in this issue largely focus on fly-fishing, a small sub-culture within angling. This choice admittedly reflects rather arbitrary cultural preferences that are worthy of analysis themselves.

and restoration projects, and infrastructural works.

So why this historiographical lacuna? From an academic perspective, the history of sports and leisure is a rich and well-developed field of inquiry, which has attracted the attention, not just of antiquarians and aficionados, but also of prominent historians, sociologists, and anthropologists. Dutch cultural historian Johan Huizinga argued that the human *ludic* impulse is more ancient than culture itself (culture *sub specie ludi*), while French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu considered sports an important aspect of class *habitus*. (Not surprisingly, celebrities from Queen Elizabeth to Dick Cheney surface in this issue). In a seminal article published in 1978, Bourdieu argued that “one of the tasks of the social history of sport might be to lay the real foundations of the legitimacy of a social science of sport as a *distinct scientific object*...”<sup>3</sup> Since then, a vast and theoretically sophisticated literature on sports history and leisure has emerged, influenced by the new social history, anthropology, and, most recently, cultural studies. Thus, the theoretical and analytical tools needed to approach the topic, whether from the perspective of class, religion, gender, race, identity, or capitalism, are readily available.<sup>4</sup> Yet, even though an extensive and theoretically sophisticated historiography exists for sports such as baseball and football, angling history remains rather neglected.<sup>5</sup>

Arguably, the significance of Western angling goes well beyond sports or sustenance. In the West, angling, and fly-fishing in particular, has become an *invented tradition*, in the sense used by Eric Hobsbawm,<sup>6</sup> associated with notions of an authentic Western identity. This trend’s clearest expression is undoubtedly Robert Redford’s 1992 Hollywood movie, *A River Runs Through It*, a distinctive interpretation of Norman Maclean’s classic story, which links Western masculinity and identity with the elegant activity of fly-fishing. Though, as Jackson fly-fisherman, Jack Dennis, argues in this issue, the movie did not *cause* the nineties fly-fishing craze and the simultaneous boom in rural real estate around Jackson Hole, Cody, and other areas of Wyoming and Montana, it cannot be denied that fly-fishing has become a significant and double-edged aspect of the appeal of the New West.<sup>7</sup> This can lead to bizarre usages of fly-fishing as a signifier of Western life, for example the recent spectacle of bikini-clad supermodel

Bridget Hall fly-fishing the North Fork of the Shoshone on the UXU Ranch during a shoot for the 2004 *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issue.<sup>8</sup>

The Western neglect of its angling heritage stands in contrast to the way Easterners have cherished and preserved the rich local angling traditions of their classic trout streams, such as the Battenkill and the Beaverkill. Besides producing an extensive literary corpus, they have also established musea of national significance, such as the American Museum of Fly Fishing (AMFF) in Manchester, Vermont, and the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum, which not only hold wonderful collections of angling artifacts, archives, books, and art, but serve as important community centers as well. Prominent eastern universities, such as Princeton and Yale, are proud of their angling collections, which include works dating back to the Middle Ages.

Gradually, such interest is emerging in the Rocky Mountain West as well.<sup>9</sup> Livingston, Montana, now

<sup>3</sup> Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: Proeve eener bepaling van het spel-element der cultuur* (Haarlem: Tjeenk Willink, 1938), pp. 1, 7; Pierre Bourdieu, “Sport and Social Class,” in Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson, eds., *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p. 358.

<sup>4</sup> For an encyclopedic overview of the recent literature on sports, see Donald L. Deardorff II, *Sports: A Reference Guide and Critical Commentary, 1980-1999* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000), and for novel social and cultural approaches to American sports history, especially those emphasizing gender, race, ethnicity, and class, S. W. Pope, ed., *The New American Sport History: Recent Approaches and Perspectives* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), especially Pope’s “Introduction: American Sport History – Toward a New Paradigm,” pp. 1-30.

<sup>5</sup> For a serious historical analysis of fly-fishing, see Paul D. Schullery, *American Fly Fishing: A History* (New York: The Lyons Press, 1999 [1<sup>st</sup> edition, 1987]). For a rare and controversial post-modern approach, see William Washabaugh and Catherine Washabaugh, *Deep Trout: Angling in Popular Culture* (New York: Berg, 2001). Hunting has received more serious academic attention. See, for example, Matt Cartmill, *A View to a Death in the Morning: Hunting and Nature through History* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1993), which is quite relevant to our topic.

<sup>6</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, Terence Ranger, and Lyndal Roper, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

<sup>7</sup> For more on this topic, see *The Denver Post*, September 25, 2002, and Paul Schullery’s unpublished paper, “The Hero with a Thousand Vices: A River Runs Through It as Folklore and History.”

<sup>8</sup> *The Casper Star Tribune*, February 13, 2004.

<sup>9</sup> Paul Schullery, “Frontier Fly-Fishing in the New West,” *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 52: 2 (Summer 2002): 2-9.

boasts the Federation of Fly Fisher's International Fly Fishing Center, an impressive educational facility and museum. When, several years ago, the Museum of the Rockies at Montana State University hosted an AMFF traveling show on the history of angling, it added a fascinating exhibit on the history of Montana fly-fishing. The first Montana stream histories have been published, and recently the journal *Montana* dedicated an entire issue to the history of Western fly-fishing.<sup>10</sup> In Colorado, a number of angling historians are beginning to piece together aspects of that rich tradition.<sup>11</sup> Yet Wyoming, which arguably possesses one of the most important fisheries in the United States, lacks, with the obvious exception of the well-studied Yellowstone Park,<sup>12</sup> any angling histories. Each time one of the state's old-time sporting goods stores closes, as has happened recently in Sheridan and Casper, another bit of history is lost forever. There are, however, several bright spots: for example, the University of Wyoming's American Heritage Center, in its Toppan Rare Books Library, boasts one of the most important antiquarian angling libraries in the West, namely the Toppan/LaFontaine collection, which includes everything from medieval treatises to recent publications on Western fly-fishing.<sup>13</sup>

How can we rescue this sporting history from oblivion? The first step is to develop an oral history program, as this issue attempts to do in a limited way, by publishing interviews with legendary Wyoming fly-fishermen Sam Mavrakis of Sheridan and Jack Dennis of Jackson. Even though oral histories, at least as repositories of Rankean factual history, are always a bit suspect—anglers being a tad prone to exaggeration anyway—, they do allow us to reconstruct what one might call the *little traditions* of the sport, offer invaluable information that cannot be found in the archives, and add *couleur locale* in a way that no other source can. In addition, we urgently need to salvage the papers, photographs, and videos of sporting stores, guiding operations, and dude ranches before they disappear entirely. The next step is the writing of local or regional histories, taking advantage of the rich archival materials available in the state archives, the American Heritage Center, and local repositories around the state and beyond.

At the same time, historians need to ask bigger

questions about the cultural meaning of Western fly-fishing, and about its social, environmental, and economic impact. The articles in this issue, far from being antiquarian or eulogistic pieces, as is so often the case with sports writing, all use case studies to ask these broader, often tough, questions. In his contribution, Paul Schullery examines how ancient sporting *discourses* and practices determined the way early travelers to Yellowstone Park interpreted the natural environment they encountered. Jeff Nichols relates the amazing life and legacy of Wind River Range outdoorsman Finis Mitchell, but also problematizes the widespread practice of stocking "barren" waters, a massive attempt to create European-style trout fisheries in the West. As Schullery puts it elsewhere, "we have lowered a kind of ecological eggbeater into some glorious native ecosystems, resulting in changes that, though they may have been wonderful for fishermen, were disastrous for those beautiful little worlds that had been cranking along just fine without our help since the last ice age."<sup>14</sup> In my own contribution, I use the lenses of culture, nature, and class to conclude that fly-fishing, even in the Western wilderness, is as "artificial" a cultural practice as fishing on the most manicured of English chalk streams, and remains bound up in ancient, often class-based, codes and discourses.

The toughest question of all is: will fly-fishing continue to be a central part of Western life for the foreseeable future? Two major problems loom ahead. While the fly-fishing community has contributed immensely to the American conservation movement through organizations such as Trout Unlimited, there is potential for future conflict, as Dennis suggests in his interview. Angling is often hardly a *natural* activity, and the new emphasis on the restoration of native species

<sup>10</sup> *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 52 (Summer 2002).

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, John H. Monnett, *Cutthroat and Campfire Tales: The Fly-Fishing Heritage of the West* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2001); Gordon M. Wickstrom, *Notes from an Old Fly Book* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2001), and, by the same author, *Late in an Angler's Life: Essays on the Sport* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004).

<sup>12</sup> Paul Schullery and John D. Varley, *Yellowstone Fishes: Ecology, History and Angling in the Park* (Stackpole Books: Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, 1998).

<sup>13</sup> See *The Casper Star Tribune*, March 4, 2004.

<sup>14</sup> *Royal Coachman: The Lore and Legends of Fly-Fishing* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999), p. 189.



and habitats must inevitably clash with efforts to maintain and develop sport fishing for generally alien species, such as brook or brown trout, and in unnatural settings, such as tailwaters.<sup>15</sup> The second problem is related to the morality of the sport. While Izaak Walton portrayed angling as a gentle art, practiced by “quiet men and followers of peace,” Lord Byron was less complimentary, and called “the art of angling, the cruelest, the coldest, the stupidest of pretended sports.”<sup>16</sup> Recent successful efforts to abolish blood sports, such as the campaign against foxhunting in England, may well spill over into the realm of fishing.<sup>17</sup> Contemporary ethical and scientific debates have raised the question whether fish are physically capable of feeling pain, and, thus, whether angling is a morally acceptable practice or nothing more than the gratuitous torture, exacerbated by the much-touted catch-and-release approach, of innocent animals.<sup>18</sup> Some scientific research, including path breaking work at the University of Wyoming, aims at debunking “the human tendency to interpret the behavior of nonhumans anthropomorphically, as if animals had humanlike experiences and feelings.”<sup>19</sup> This controversial work, at times reminiscent of Cartesian mechanistic approaches to the animal kingdom, is warmly supported by sectors of the fly-fishing community, which ridicule “Walt Disney’s use of bourgeois anthropomorphic values to imbue animals with cosmic humanistic emotions and rationality,” taking us “into the world of pop-Zen, where pseudo-science shakes hands with Taoism...”<sup>20</sup> Others are not that sure.<sup>21</sup> How such debates will affect sporting practices in the future is still unclear, but one cannot assume that angling will always be an integral part of Western life.

Still, it cannot be denied that the sport has a rich history and tradition, reflected in graceful practices and a vibrant literature. As Sparse Grey Hackle, the New York angling writer, put it, “Some of the best fishing is done not in water but in print.”<sup>22</sup> We hope that this issue will be of interest to the general reader, whether a brother or sister of the angler or not. To conclude, with the words of Izaak Walton, “I shall stay [the Reader] no longer than to wish him a rainy evening to read this following Discourse; and that, if he be an honest Angler, the east wind may never blow when he goes a-fishing.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> See Paul Schullery’s thoughtful defense of the reintroduction of native fishes: “Because They Belong There: A Non-Native Angler’s Reflections on Native Species,” in *Fly Rod and Reel* 22 (January/February 2001): 42-45, 71.

<sup>16</sup> *The Compleat Angler or the Contemplative Man’s Recreation* (New York: The Modern Library, 1998), p. xxxviii. [First edition, 1653], p. 8; Byron quoted in Nick Lyons, ed., *The Quotable Fisherman* (New York: The Lyons Press, 1998), p. 148.

<sup>17</sup> On the historical origins of the British anti-hunting campaign, see Donna Landry, *The Invention of the Countryside: Hunting, Walking and Ecology in English Literature, 1671-1831* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, United Kingdom, and New York: Palgrave, 2001).

<sup>18</sup> On the research of Dr. James D. Rose of the University of Wyoming, see *The New York Times*, May 13, 2003. His findings were published under the title “The Neurobehavioral Nature of Fishes and the Question of Awareness and Pain,” in *Reviews in Fisheries Science* 10 (2002): 1-38. Also see Sean C. Chambers, “An Inquiry into the Ethics of Fly Fishing: Fish and Pain.” (Unpublished paper, University of Wyoming, 2002).

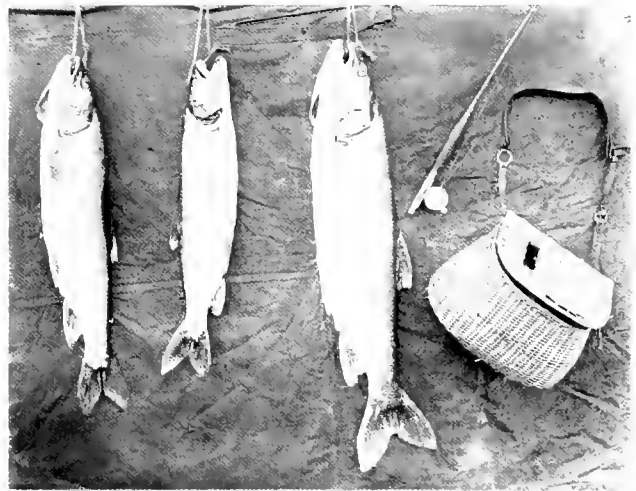
<sup>19</sup> James D. Rose, “Do Fish Feel Pain,” *Fly Fisherman* 34 (September 2003): 19. For historical background, see Cartmill, *A View*, chapter 6.

<sup>20</sup> John Randolph, “Fish Don’t Feel Pain,” *Fly Fisherman*, 34 (September 2003): 5.

<sup>21</sup> For a more balanced view, see Paul Schullery, “How Can You Do That?” *Fly Fisherman* 34 (September 2003): 80, 79, 69.

<sup>22</sup> Quoted in Lyons, ed., *The Quotable Fisherman*, p. xiv.

<sup>23</sup> *The Compleat Angler*, p. xxxviii.



Classic fly-fishing outfit and lake trout. Stephen N. Leek Collection, American Heritage Center.

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## Their Numbers are Perfectly Fabulous: Sport, Science, and Subsistence in Yellowstone Fishing, 1870



by Paul Schullery

On August 23, 1871, the Washburn Party stopped at the Bottler Ranch, near present Emigrant, Montana. The ranch is shown here the following year in a photograph by famed photographer William Henry Jackson. The Bottlers were successful commercial hide-hunters: note the shed full of hides (and possibly whole carcasses of elk). Fred Bottler often guided sportsmen, furthering the mixture of subsistence and sport among the wild fish and game in the Yellowstone Valley. Photo courtesy the National Park Service, Yellowstone Photograph Archives.

**E**arly in *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York, Mariner, Written by himself* (1719), Daniel Defoe's shipwrecked hero makes the following diary entry: "May 4. I went a fishing, but caught not one fish that I durst eat of, till I was weary of my sport; when, just going to leave off, I caught a young dolphin."<sup>1</sup>

Here was a man for whom fishing was an urgent matter of survival, yet it was also a "sport."

With this one comment, the durable Mr. Crusoe inadvertently suggested the complications we face when we attempt to categorize fishing as a human endeavor. Here was a man for whom fishing was an urgent matter of survival, yet it was also a "sport." To the modern untrained ear, a "sport" is a pastime—something done at best to relax and invigorate, at worst just to kill time.

<sup>1</sup> Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (New York: Dodd Mead and Company, 1940), p. 79.

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To the ear of Daniel Defoe, sport was apparently something far more complicated than that.

As it still should be. There is a good deal of messiness in the terminology of sport, though it is nothing compared to the casual, offhanded manner in which many writers, including academics whom one would expect to be more careful, reduce such ancient human pursuits as hunting and fishing to superficial trivialities. Sport fishing and sport hunting, at the hands of such writers, are “mere” sport, which is to say they exist only to generate “fun.” Outdoor sport is merely “recreation”—another belittling descriptor for an activity that has declined in the popular mind from an earlier status, in which something was literally and importantly *re-created*, to its current popular definition, as a substitute for doing something meaningful. People are thought to participate in outdoor sports as a “leisure time” activity, while not engaged in socially significant pursuits.

The rhetorical blurring of the two terms “sports” and “games” is likewise far advanced, and will probably become more confused as American society becomes progressively less comfortable with outdoor sports—the traditional “blood sports” (as if ice hockey is not a blood sport). I cannot correct this problem, but only point it out to suggest further the imprecision of the language. When most modern Americans say they are discussing “sports,” they usually mean “games.”

Though not all sports are games, neither are all games sports. Hunting elk is hardly anyone’s idea of a game; Monopoly is no one’s idea of a sport. And yet, the historian John McDonald was right when he aptly said that “a sport or game may be thought of as the set of rules that describes it.”<sup>2</sup> The two categories may have more in common than they have in distinction.

The imprecision and carelessness of our terminology in sport is in fact only a reflection of the amazing capacity of sport for both durability and flexibility. Part of sport’s fascination for us as an institution worthy of study should be the way it is transformed during its long societal career, even to the extent that it can outlive its apparent original cause for existence. For those who believe that sports have tended to arise in good part from utilitarian practice—as rodeo, for example, tests and celebrates skills needed on a working ranch—it might seem counterintuitive that a sport would hang

on after people no longer had any use for its skills. But sports can and do transcend at least some of the reasons for their creation. We might even say that over the course of a few generations, one person’s sport can eventually become another person’s game.

To illustrate the evolution, or at least transformation, of a sport from the realm of immediately practical to something more esoteric, classics scholar David Sansone used the example of javelin throwing, which is still a vital athletic event despite several centuries having passed since there was a going military need for javelin throwers. We now throw javelins for reasons other than keeping a vital battlefield skill in shape.<sup>3</sup>

In a generally literate society, in which records are easily kept and invoked, sport is an intergenerational enterprise. Today’s javelin thrower has relevance in part because he or she competes with the records of every previous javelin thrower, just as today’s fisherman casts in the shadow of countless earlier angling theorists, philosophers, and other temporally remote companions. And, as any determined sports nostalgist will tell you, once a sport has accumulated enough generations of precise statistics, wispy remembrance, and glowing legend, there will invariably be a group of enthusiasts—both fans and actual practitioners—wanting to prop it all up with continued performance of like kind.

In the cases of hunting and fishing, this urge to perpetuate a sport provides us with a delicious irony. While historians long neglected the study of these important human activities, the activities themselves thrived and defined themselves in good part through a passionate devotion to their own long traditions. These people may not have written very good history of themselves, but they received little help from

<sup>2</sup> John McDonald, *The Origins of Angling* (New York: Lyons & Burford, 1997), p.3. My thanks especially to Richard Hoffmann, York University, Toronto, for conversations on definitions and the intellectual history of sport.

<sup>3</sup> David Sansone, *Greek Athletics and the Genesis of Sport* (Berkeley: University of California press, 1988), p. 31. Sansone, incidentally, also serves as a type specimen of a scholar who can switch from a serious discussion of the history of competitive games to poorly thought-out moralizing and ignorant theorizing about the blood sports; see pp. 31-32 of his book for a classic example of trivializing hunting and fishing in order to dismiss them.

professional historians, so who is at fault if the history they now hold dear is (even more than most history) so inclined to ancestor worship and yarnspinning?<sup>4</sup>

Consideration of Robinson Crusoe and javelin throwers may seem a roundabout way to approach the variety of influences and impulses behind fishing in the frontier West. But the parallels between the javelin and the fly rod are perhaps deeper and more numerous than they might appear. The American West provides some striking examples of the several ways in which a sport may simultaneously be valued in a given social setting.

### A Distinguished Set of Anglers

The experiences of the famous Washburn-Langford-Doane expedition (which I will call the Washburn Party), who visited the Yellowstone Plateau in the late summer of 1870, serve as a splendid illustration of the complexity of a traditional sport, in this case fishing. The Washburn Party has been worth study merely for the distinction of its members. Their elected commander was Henry Dana Washburn, a former Civil War general and Indiana Congressman, then surveyor general of Montana Territory. The party of nineteen included, among others, Helena Judge Cornelius Hedges, Montana Territorial Assistant Assessor of Internal Revenue Walter Trumbull (son of Illinois U.S. Senator Lyman Trumbull), banker-businessman Samuel Hauser, and former Montana Territory Collector of Internal Revenue Nathaniel Langford (who, in one of those complex maneuverings so belovedly characteristic of territorial politics, had recently come as close as possible to being appointed Montana territorial governor without actually occupying the office). Their small military escort was under the command of Lieutenant Gustavus Doane, who would write the most authoritative account of the trip.<sup>5</sup>

What may have most distinguished this already distinguished group as explorers, however, was their extraordinary literary output following the expedition. They had a finely tuned and quite accurate sense of the historical significance of what they were doing, and they left historians a wonderful treasury of first-hand accounts and impressions, many of which were published in newspapers and magazines in the months following the trip. This wealth of material has been employed by historians and others to better understand

the 1870s--public view of wild nature, the rise of the national park idea, Native American activities in and effects on the Yellowstone region, historic wildlife populations and distribution, and other elements of the Yellowstone setting in 1870. The literary legacy of the Washburn Party has only grown in value over the years.

And it continues to reveal new information, and new stimulation to modern historians. A careful review of the Washburn Party's experiences with fish reveals a rich documentary record that may help illuminate a complex and little-appreciated aspect of Euroamerican interactions with wild nature in the frontier West: the interplay of sport, science, and subsistence in fisheries use. Johan Huizinga, in *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Human Culture* (1950), said that "it is ancient wisdom, but it is also a little cheap, to call all human activity 'play.'" For Huizinga, "play is to be understood here not as a biological phenomenon but as a cultural phenomenon."<sup>6</sup> The Washburn Party's trout-fishing experiences illustrate the depth and variety of that cultural phenomenon. By taking their trout-fishing tools, practices, and values into a wilderness setting, the Washburn Party offer us a rewarding glimpse

<sup>4</sup> I do not mean to suggest that there has been no good history written about fishing and hunting, only that it is, proportionately, extraordinarily rare compared to history written of many other sports, especially the team sports. For an important statement of the problems caused by this imbalance in attention, see Thomas L. Alther and John F. Reiger, "Academic Historians and Hunting: A Call for More and Better Scholarship," *Environmental History Review*, 19 (Fall 1995): 39-56. For a consideration of some of the mythic elements in fly-fishing history as it has been written by the fly fishers, see Paul Schullery, *American Fly Fishing: A History* (New York: Nick Lyons Books, 1987), pp. 13-17, 111-121; Andrew Herd, "Frederic M. Halford: The Myth and the Man," *The American Fly Fisher*, 28 (Winter, 2002): 12-17; and Ken Cameron, "Rigor without Mortis," *The American Fly Fisher*, 28 (Winter 2002): 18-25.

<sup>5</sup> The most useful works on the Washburn Party's background include Nathaniel Langford, *The Discovery of Yellowstone Park* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972), especially Aubrey Haines' "Foreword," pp. vii-xxi; Aubrey Haines, *Yellowstone National Park, Its Exploration and Establishment* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1974), p. 54-99, 137-152; and Richard Bartlett, *Nature's Yellowstone* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1974), pp. 164-207. For more on Langford particularly, see Paul Schullery and Lee H. Whittlesey, *Myth and History in the Creation of Yellowstone National Park* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1955), p. i. The book was apparently first published in English translation in 1950, though the passages I quote were dated 1938.

of how complicated a thing it is for a person to toss a hook and line into a river.

### Sportsmen on the Trail

The area that was to become Yellowstone National Park in 1872 was by no means unexplored in 1870. Not only had Native Americans been intimately familiar with this landscape for thousands of years, but also whites had been visiting it frequently for more than six decades. The Washburn Party saw signs of a number of previous white visitors on their trip, and twice while in the present park area they encountered other whites.

But the many accounts of the wonders of Yellowstone provided by trappers, prospectors, and other early white visitors had not constituted a respected or widely accepted body of knowledge. So, in a vividly real social sense, the Washburn Party, like a few other early exploration parties, actually was engaging in a kind of formal discovery.<sup>7</sup>

Washburn Party members, having traveled from

Helena to Bozeman between August 17 and August 20, were joined by Lieutenant Doane and his small detachment of five soldiers at Fort Ellis, just east of Bozeman. The group set out on August 22, and straggled across the landscape of the upper Yellowstone region for several weeks before returning home by way of the Madison Valley.

Many of them were sportsmen, and hunting and fishing were obvious attractions of this trip. Trumbull no doubt expressed the anticipation that several of them felt when he wrote that “we intended to hunt for all sorts of large game, Indians only excepted. No one desired to find any of them.”<sup>8</sup> (I will leave Trumbull’s eyebrow-raising equating of Native American humans with “large game” for another time, or another historian;

<sup>7</sup> General background on the Washburn Party members, as provided in this essay, is from the publications of Langford, Haines, and Bartlett, as cited above.

<sup>8</sup> Walter Trumbull, “The Washburn Yellowstone Expedition,” *The Overland Monthly*, 6 (May 1871): 431.



The Washburn Party spent much of their time in early September near the shores of Yellowstone Lake. They wrote the first reasonably detailed and accurate written accounts of the lake’s native trout. They enjoyed fishing the lake, but eventually Yellowstone Lake cutthroat trout also became a critically important source of food for the expedition. William Henry Jackson 1871 photograph courtesy the National Park Service, Yellowstone Photograph Archives.

as I said, this material continues to surprise and challenge us).

That first night on the trail, camped along Trail Creek, Hedges wrote in his diary, perhaps with a little competitive triumph, that he “caught the first trout.”<sup>9</sup> Trumbull added, in somewhat grumpy detail, that “some of the party fished with very limited success, catching only about half a dozen fish by their united and untiring efforts.”<sup>10</sup>

The group’s various members fished frequently from then on, until they left the region that would soon become Yellowstone National Park. Fishing-minded readers would enjoy reading all their many mentions of the trout, but here we will confine ourselves to especially telling episodes.

On August 23, they were in what is now known as Paradise Valley, the famously picturesque stretch of the Yellowstone River south of Livingston, Montana. They stopped at the Bottler Ranch, near present Emigrant, Montana, and camped nearby this pioneer holding that was known as the last outpost of civilization north of the Yellowstone Plateau. Hedges said, “I went down to fish after camping. Had no bate but meat which they wouldn’t touch.”<sup>11</sup>

Here Hedges introduces us to a key element in the society of angling: the social and theoretical rivalries among anglers. Bait fishing was, even then, seen as the least cosmopolitan form of fishing. According to the loftiest dictates of refined sporting society, gentlemen (or snobs, depending upon your perspective) preferred sophisticated tackle employing artificial lures or flies. Washburn Party members revealed various opinions of the preference of Yellowstone trout for bait or artificial lures, but when it came to what method caught the most fish, most party members sided with the bait fishermen. In this case, though, Hedges’ implication is a bit unclear. He could have meant that he needed more sophisticated tackle, such as fly-fishing gear, or he could just have been pointing up the inferiority of meat (presumably beef, elk, or other game) to grasshoppers, which were the most acclaimed and successful bait of the entire trip. Judging from his later experiences, the latter was the more likely case.

On August 24, Hedges said, “just before camping we crossed a good sized creek with big boulders & recent signs of bear among the cherry bushes. Our advance

had a jack rabbit & sage hen but no fish. Couldn’t catch any grasshoppers. Couldn’t get any pole but caught some fish with [Benjamin] Stickney’s pole.”<sup>12</sup> These remarks reveal what may well have been a common practice among the fishermen, at least among those not using store-bought tackle. As already noted, Hedges previously fished on August 22, so he must have had a “pole” that day. Because poles were so readily had at streamside, fishermen might not have bothered to carry one with them, or on the pack animals. At the end of a day’s fishing, they could just discard the pole, wind their line around something convenient (like a very short stick) and stow it away until needed again. The risk of this approach, as Hedges appears to have been noting on August 24, is in not finding a suitable pole the next time.

Also on August 24, Langford said that “during the forenoon some of the escort were very successful fishing for trout.”<sup>13</sup> This is our first indication that the soldiers under Lieutenant Doane were also fishing, and they were often quite successful. Doane echoed Langford’s sentiment, saying that, “Our mess-table was here supplied with antelope, hare, ducks, and grouse killed during the day, with fish caught *ad libitum* in the afternoon.”<sup>14</sup> Fish were already assuming a primary nutritional role for the party—a role that would increase in significance as the trip continued.

## Sportsmen-Naturalists

Near Yankee Jim Canyon, Trumbull made the first fish-related natural history observations. He said,

<sup>9</sup> Cornelius Hedges, “Excerpts from the Diary of Cornelius Hedges (July 6, 1870 to January 29, 1871), transcribed from the original diary in the Montana State Historical Society Library by Aubrey Haines, November 5, 1962, Yellowstone National Park Research Library manuscript file, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> Walter Trumbull, “Yellowstone Papers, No. One,” *Rocky Mountain Daily Gazette*, October 18, 1870, p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> Hedges, “Diary,” p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> Hedges, “Diary,” p. 3. Modern anglers make a distinction between a “pole,” which is usually just a stick with a line tied to the end, and a “rod,” which typically is a professionally produced item complete with handle, reel, and small metal “guides” spaced evenly along its length and through which the line is cast or retrieved.

<sup>13</sup> Langford, *Discovery*, p. 12.

<sup>14</sup> Lieutenant Gustavus C. Doane, “The report of Lieutenant Gustavus C. Doane upon the so-called Yellowstone Expedition of 1870,” U.S. Senate, 41st Congress, 3rd Session, Ex. Doc. 51, 1871, p. 4.

“During the day plenty of small game was killed, and the fishing was found to be excellent. Trout and whitefish were abundant—and such trout! They can only be found in the neighborhood of the Rocky Mountains, and on the Pacific Slope. Few of them weighed less than two pounds, and many were over three. They had not been educated up to the fly; but when their attention was respectfully solicited to a transfixed grasshopper, they seldom failed to respond.”<sup>15</sup>

Here again, sporting values intrude on the narrative we are reconstructing. Trumbull was operating in an established literary mood with his remark about the trout not being educated “up to the fly.” The suggestion that North American trout lacked the polish to respond to high-quality tackle was an occasional item of angling humor, and at times seemed even to imply a certain pride, that our trout were not snobs. Again, bait was preferred, but now we know that flies were tried by at least one party member.

Of equal interest is Trumbull’s mention of whitefish. Whitefish were native to the Yellowstone River through its entire length as far as upstream Knowles Falls, in present northern Yellowstone National Park. They were also native to the Madison River drainage, by which route the party left the park area and returned to Bozeman. Presumably they were sometimes part of the party’s catch, but this is the only mention any party member would make of them. As the “poor sisters” of trout in the prevailing sport fisher’s view (then as now), whitefish were rarely worth bragging about.

Also in his August 24 entry, Doane (writing in a report that was no doubt polished and revised after the trip), first discussed the long-term availability and dependability of fish as a supplemental food source for the party when he said that “several of the party were very successful during the morning in fishing for trout, of which we afterward had an abundant and continued supply.”<sup>16</sup> Doane here also made his first contribution to the natural history of the fish: “The Yellowstone trout are peculiar, being the largest of the genus caught in waters flowing east. Their numbers are perfectly fabulous, but their appetites extremely dainty. One may fish with the finest tackle of eastern sportsmen, when the water appears to be alive with them, all day long without a bite. Grasshoppers are their peculiar

weakness, and using them for a bait the most awkward angler can fill a champagne-basket in an hour or two. They do not bite with the spiteful greediness of eastern brook trout, but amount to much more in the way of subsistence when caught. Their flesh is of a bright yellow color on the inside of the body, and of a flavor unsurpassed.”<sup>17</sup>

Doane, in his remark about the Yellowstone cutthroat trout being “the largest of the genus caught in waters flowing east,” seems to have been comparing the Yellowstone Cutthroat with trout in the Missouri (or its source rivers, the Gallatin, Madison, and Jefferson), or any of the many other rivers that join the Missouri and host trout populations. Either he personally had, or he had learned from someone with personal acquaintance with the various trout populations east of the Continental Divide. It is an interesting observation, but not one that seems supported by the historical record; early records of Missouri River trout, dating back as far as Lewis and Clark’s travels up and down the river in 1805-1806, suggest that Missouri River trout were sizeable.

Doane’s comments on the behavior of the eastern brook trout were possibly based on second-hand information, perhaps from another member of the party; Doane himself spent very little time in the East in his life.<sup>18</sup> It would be interesting to know if his later experiences with Yellowstone cutthroats on this trip changed his mind. Small cutthroat trout in upland freestone streams seem to many modern anglers to feed at least as hastily and vigorously as do eastern brook trout (which have, regrettably, displaced them from

<sup>15</sup> Trumbull, “The Washburn Yellowstone Expedition,” p. 432. Throughout this paper, comments on fish natural history, history, management, and related topics are based primarily on John D. Varlev and Paul Schullery, *Yellowstone Fishes: Ecology, History, and Angling in the Park* (Harrisburg: Stackpole Books, 1998). Additional information provided here on western native fishes, see Roger J. Behnke, *Native Trout of Western North America* (Bethesda: American Fisheries Society, 1992). Context on fishing history is provided primarily by Schullery, *American Fly Fishing: A History*.

<sup>16</sup> Doane, “Report,” p. 3

<sup>17</sup> Doane, “Report,” p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> Haines, *Yellowstone National Park*, pp. 137-139. I am also indebted to Kim Allen Scott, Special Collections Librarian, Montana State University, Bozeman, Montana, for a reading of his in-press manuscript biography of Doane.



many of their native waters in the West).

On August 25, the party continued on an apparent Indian trail through Yankee Jim Canyon, now just a few miles north of what would become Yellowstone National Park. At some point during the day, party member Warren Gillette “tried my luck at fishing in Y.S.—caught nothing. Others of the party caught some fine fish—had for supper last night & breakfast this A.M. Antelope, Rabbit, Grouse, duck & fish.”<sup>19</sup> As we will see, Gillette was one of the party who carried fly-fishing gear. Perhaps his lack of success was the inspiration for Doane’s remark about “the finest tackle of eastern sportsmen” not serving well.

The party followed the Yellowstone River drainage upstream, finding plenty of fish and other game. On August 28, Gillette, now in the area that would become Yellowstone National Park, and fishing the Yellowstone River near the mouth of Tower Creek, “Caught 7 fine trout that would weigh from 2 to 2-1/2 pounds each. These fish are not gamy like the trout in the east. They make but little resistance in being taken from the water & do not run with the hook after taking the bait.”<sup>20</sup> Gillette was a native of New York, where he lived until attending Oberlin College in Ohio. His background and his comments this day further lead to the conclusion that he, at least, was using “eastern” tackle and was familiar with the native eastern brook trout.

It is part of the Yellowstone Cutthroat’s mixed reputation among modern fly fishers that it is, indeed, not as “gamy” as some other species of trout. The prevailing opinion is that, of the common trout species, Yellowstone Cutthroats are the least strong fighters when hooked. For example, unlike their near cousins the rainbows, Yellowstone Cutthroats rarely jump when hooked.<sup>21</sup> But many of today’s trout fishermen, more than a century further along in the sport’s ethical development, do not place quite as high a premium on the “fight” as did earlier generations of anglers. Especially those anglers who practice catch-and-release seek to land the fish as quickly as possible, because the fish’s struggle to escape—once such a prized part of the fishing experience—can exhaust it beyond recovery.

### Sportsmen-Survivalists

September arrived as the party enjoyed the scenery, fishing, and hunting around the Grand Canyon of the

Yellowstone River. Langford worried about the lateness of the season and the prospects for provisions: “However, the perceptible decline in our larder, and the uncertainty of the time to be occupied in further exploration, forbid more than two days’ stay at the falls and cañon.”<sup>22</sup> The party would display a growing sense of urgency to keep moving, despite all their enthusiasm for discovery and wonder.

There was another risk. There were many elk and other large animals in Yellowstone, in appropriate habitats. But those habitats were not uniformly distributed across the landscape, nor was the wildlife necessarily handy when hunters wanted food. And if the animals should begin to migrate to winter ranges in lower country, that source of meat would disappear. Only birds and trout would remain.

At Yellowstone Lake that first week of September, Washburn joined the chorus of angling theorists who seemed to believe, or at least joked, that wild trout have to be taught to take flies: “The fishing, which had been good all the way up the river, proved remarkably so in the lake. Trout from 2 to 4 pounds were to be had for the taking. Flies proved useless, as the fish had not been educated up to that point.”<sup>23</sup> He did not specify who, precisely, was fishing with flies, but this is probably the earliest known reference to the use of flies in what would become Yellowstone National Park.

Like anglers of all generations, the Washburn Party enlisted a satisfying array of excuses, including lousy tackle, bad weather, poor bait, ignorant fish, and heavy streamside brush, to explain their days of failure in this

<sup>19</sup> Warren Gillette, “The Quest of Warren Gillette,” Brian Cockhill, ed., *Montana The Magazine of Western History* 32 (Summer 1972): 18.

<sup>20</sup> Gillette, “Quest,” p. 19.

<sup>21</sup> For an expert angler opinion and commentary on the Yellowstone Cutthroat as a sportfish, and its contrast to the Snake River Cutthroat, which is famous for its fighting qualities, see Ernest Schwiebert, *Trout* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1978), Vol. I, pp. 287-290, in which Schwiebert recounts conversations about cutthroat trout with famous Jackson Hole guide Bob Carmichael.

<sup>22</sup> Langford, *Discovery*, p. 38.

<sup>23</sup> Henry D. Washburn, “The Yellowstone Expedition, explorations in a new and wonderful country—description of the Great Falls of the Yellowstone—volcanic eruptions, spouting geysers, etc.,” *Helena Daily Herald*, September 27 and 28, 1871, quoted from reprint in Louis C. Cramton, *Early History of Yellowstone National Park and Its Relation to National Park Policies* (Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1932), p.94.

fisherman's paradise (blaming the fish is always an especially entertaining rationalization). Unlike most modern anglers, however, party members also listed the threat of physical violence as an interfering factor. At least once, the imagined or real approach of Indians caused anglers to return to camp.<sup>24</sup>

In his September 4 report entry, Doane offered the most extended observation on the characteristics of trout of Yellowstone Lake made by the party:

Its waters abound with trout to such an extent that the fish at this season are in poor condition, for want of food. No other fish are seen; no minnows, and no small trout. There are also no clams, crabs, or turtles—nothing but full-grown trout. These could be caught in mule-loads by wading out a few feet in the open waters at any point with a grasshopper bait. Two men could catch them faster than half a dozen could clean and get them ready for the frying pan. Caught in the open lake, their flesh was yellow; but in bays, where the water was strongly impregnated with chemicals, it was blood-red. Many of them were full of long white worms, woven across the interior of the body, and through to the skin on either side. These did not appear to materially affect the condition of the fish, which were apparently as active as the others.<sup>25</sup>

The ambitious Doane, whose orders were limited to accompanying the party, made good use of the opportunity to distinguish himself as an official explorer, producing the party's most competent and fully documented report, including such formalities as daily temperatures, barometric readings, and elevations. His report was a model of the type, and when it appeared in June 1871, it enjoyed a brief reign as the foremost published scientific source on the wonders of Yellowstone. But even as it appeared, Ferdinand Hayden of the U.S. Geological Survey and Captain John Barlow, an engineer with the U.S. Army's Division of Missouri, were preparing much more professional survey parties (including sportsmen-explorers of their own) that within a year would simply flood the world with scientific information about Yellowstone.

Still, Doane's report remains a literary and informational classic from this early period, and his accounts of the life history of Yellowstone trout were a

legitimate contribution to knowledge at the time. Though some of his natural history was suspect (such as the fish lacking food; how had the trout population persisted for thousands of years if there was so little food?—and such as the explanation of the color of the flesh of the trout, which is primarily the result of diet), other parts were astute. Immature Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout are, indeed, rarely seen; they tend to live in deeper water, out of reach of sport anglers. And the observation of the worms was to be echoed by countless later writers who encountered this visually disturbing but relatively benign (at least to humans) parasite. Doane did not formally identify this creature, but his accurate account of it and its effect on trout preceded by two years Dr. Joseph Leidy's formal description of the tapeworm *Diphyllobothrium*.<sup>26</sup>

Langford, whose reputation as a regional booster is well known by historians, said, in an article in *Scribner's Monthly*, that the lake "is filled with trout, some of gigantic size and peculiar delicacy."<sup>27</sup> There is no evidence in the historical, archaeological, or biological record that the trout of Yellowstone Lake ever achieved "gigantic" size. A 24-inch specimen would be extraordinary, but in the lexicon of anglers of that day even a fish that large would hardly be considered gigantic. It is possible that Langford's own experiences to that time had involved only smaller trout, but it is also possible that describing the trout this way was for Langford just another means of further enhancing his description of the region's glories.

Hedges, in a newspaper article he later wrote about Yellowstone Lake, gave us the party's best single reminiscence of what Yellowstone Lake angling was like for a true enthusiast. This account stands as by far the most extended and meaningful personal sportfishing narrative to that point in the Yellowstone area's literary history.

<sup>24</sup> Langford, "Wonders," p. 119.

<sup>25</sup> Doane, "Report," p. 19.

<sup>26</sup> James Pritchard, *Preserving Yellowstone's Natural Conditions* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), p. 80.

<sup>27</sup> Langford, "The Wonders of the Yellowstone," *Scribner's Monthly*, May 1871, p. 114.



By mid-September, when the Washburn Party reached the now-famous geyser basins of the Firehole River, pictured here as photographed by William Henry Jackson in 1871, they were anxious to reach home. They had little time to fish the Firehole River, now world-famous among fly fishers, but it was barren of fish life for almost its entire length anyway. The Firehole was later stocked with a variety of non-native sport fish by early park administrators. Photograph courtesy the National Park Service, Yellowstone Photograph Archives.

My individual taste led me to fishing, and I venture that none of the party dare complain that they did not have all the fine trout that their several appetites and capacities could provide storage for. Indeed, I feel in gratitude bound to bear testimony that for fine fish, and solid, satisfying fun, there is no body of water under the sun more attractive to the ambitious fisherman than the Yellowstone Lake. While upon the subject of fishing, allow me to relate one or two instances of personal experience. One day, after the loss of our comrade [this would be later in September-P.S.], and when rations were getting short, I was deputed to lay in a stock of fish to eke our scanty larder on our homeward journey. Proud of this tribute to my piscatory skill, I endeavored under some difficulties, to justify the expectations of my companions, and in about two hours, while the waves were comparatively quiet, I strewed the beach with about 50 beauties, not one of which would weigh less than 2 pounds, while the average weight was about 3 pounds. Another incident, illustrative of the proximity of hot springs rather than

of troutling: Near the southwest corner of the lake is a large basin of exceedingly hot springs. These springs cover a large field. Some are in the very margin of the lake, while others rise under the lake and indicate their locality by steam and ebullition upon the lake's surface when the waves are not too uneasy. One spring of large size, unfathomable depth, sending out a continuous stream of at least 50 inches of scalding water, is still separated from the cool water of the lake by a rocky partition, not more than a foot thick in places. I returned along the narrow rim of this partition, and catching sight of some expectant trout lying in easy reach, I solicited their attention to a transfixed grasshopper, and meeting an early and energetic response, I attempted to land my prize beyond the spring, but unfortunately for the fish, he escaped the hook to plunge into this boiling spring. As soon as possible I relieved the agonized creature by throwing him out with my pole, and though his contortions were not fully ended, his skin came off and he had all the appearance of being boiled through. The incident,

though excusable as an incident, was too shocking to repeat.

We noted it as a singular fact that we saw no other fish than trout in the lake, and no small fish of any sort. There was a wide contrast in the color of the meat of these trout. While most of them were as richly red as salmon, others were quite white; and as a frank confession is good for the soul, we will relieve our own by confessing that some at our very last camp on the lake were found to be wormy.<sup>28</sup>

Despite Hedges's obvious horror at causing such agony to the fish that was accidentally boiled, it was not true that it was "too shocking to repeat." In fact he was anticipating a long popular (if ghastly) practice among Yellowstone vacationers. Purposely cooking live fish just that way became a popular visitor attraction in Yellowstone for many years after the park was established. The cruel practice was not made illegal until 1929.

As the party traveled the forested country around Yellowstone Lake, Langford's concerns about food were realized. The easy hunting was past, and their other provisions ran low. On September 6, Hedges said "had nothing but salt meat today. Poorest camp we have had in tangled woods."<sup>29</sup> But on September 7, now near the southern end of the southeast arm of Yellowstone Lake, Hedges said "I went out and had much fun catching trout. got about a doz & had a good supper."<sup>30</sup>

On September 9, disaster struck. As the party thrashed through the heavy downfall of timber south of the lake, fifty-four year-old Truman Everts became separated from the group, and despite the heroic efforts of party members who searched for him even after the first snows began to fall, he wandered lost for thirty-seven days, finally being rescued by two local mountaineers in the northern part of the present park. Some of his most exasperating experiences in trying to feed himself in the wild involved his attempts to catch fish.<sup>31</sup>

Meanwhile, for the main party, trout were getting more important as food. On September 10, in camp on Flat Mountain Arm on the southwest shore of Yellowstone Lake, Doane reported that "in the evening large numbers of fish were caught, Private

Williamson catching fifty-two large trout, all that two men could carry, in less than an hour."<sup>32</sup> On September 11, Hedges said "though it was Sun we wanted fish so much that I went down & caught about a dozen. . . . I am to stay & lay in store of fish."<sup>33</sup> On September 12, Langford said "during the absence of Washburn and myself Mr. Hedges has spent the day in fishing, catching forty of the fine trout with which the lake abounds. Mr. [Benjamin] Stickney has today made an inventory of our larder, and we find that our luxuries, such as coffee, sugar and flour, are nearly used up, and that we have barely enough of necessary provisions—salt, pepper, etc., to last us ten days longer with economy in their use. We will remain at the lake probably three or four days longer with the hope of finding some trace of Everts, when it will be necessary to turn our faces homewards to avoid general disaster, and in the meantime we will dry a few hundred pounds of trout, and carry them with us as a precautionary measure against starvation."<sup>34</sup>

On September 16, Doane reported the party's preparations to leave the lake. "We spent the evening

<sup>28</sup> Hedges, "Yellowstone Lake," *Helena Daily Herald*, November 9, quoted from reprint in Louis C. Cramton, *Early History of Yellowstone National Park and Its Relation to National Park Policies* (Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1932), pp. 108–109. For variations on these stories, see also Hedges' letter to his sister, which includes the following passage: "The Lake itself is 25 miles long—we reached it first Sept. 3—I left it on the 17th having gone entirely around it—I caught hundreds of trout in its waters, the smallest one would weigh more than two pounds. . . . there are many hot springs around the lake & in some places in the very bottom of the lake—so close & so hot are some of these springs that one day I caught a large trout & in pulling him out he fell off my hook over a hot spring & before I could toss him out with my pole he was cooked thru. . . ." Cornelius Hedges, letter to "Dear Sister," October 11, 1870, Montana Historical Society Collection, SC #1874, p. 3. For another account of Hedges's experience with the trout that fell into the hot spring, see Trumbull, "The Washburn Yellowstone Expedition," p. 492.

<sup>29</sup> Hedges, "Diary," p. 9.

<sup>30</sup> Hedges, "Diary," p. 9.

<sup>31</sup> Lee Whittlesey, *Lost in the Yellowstone: Truman Everts's "Thirty-Seven Days of Peril"* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1995) is the most thorough account of Everts' experience, including a complete version of Everts' own published story.

<sup>32</sup> Doane, "Report," p. 23.

<sup>33</sup> Hedges, "Diary," p. 10.

<sup>34</sup> Langford, *Discovery*, pp. 83–84.

in collecting specimens from the different springs and laying in a supply of fish for future use.”<sup>35</sup> Hedges added that “I spent most of the time in fishing. Caught about 20. Didn’t have a good pole and didn’t want to wade in. Enjoyed the day very much in spite of wet feet and head ache.”<sup>36</sup> As on several other occasions, we find here a report that subsistence fishing was also sport fishing; he still had fun.

On September 17, the main party moved out, heading west to the headwaters of the Madison River, which they would follow downstream. On September 18 they emerged from the forest into the Upper Geyser Basin, where they spent a hectic day seeing what they could in this extraordinary area. Then they hurried down the Firehole River, which at that time was barren of fish life almost its entire length. On September 19, Hedges said “no fish in river. Grub getting very thin.”<sup>37</sup> That same day, the day before they left the present park area, Langford said, “we are now on short rations, but the fish we dried while camped on Yellowstone lake are doing good service.”<sup>38</sup>

### Yellowstone’s First Fly Fisher?

Warren Gillette and his soldier companions, who had stayed behind at Yellowstone Lake, had no luck finding Everts.<sup>39</sup> They followed the rest of the party, and on their way out they gave us our first specific reference to a known individual fly fishing in what would become Yellowstone National Park, one of the world’s great fly-fishing destinations. On September 24, Gillette, now on the lower Firehole or upper Madison River, perhaps near the junction of the Firehole and Gibbon rivers, said, “Tried fishing. My only fly was taken off and could get no bites from meat bait.”<sup>40</sup>

For historians of western fly fishing, this is a tantalizing but frustrating statement. Had Gillette just lost his *last* fly?—meaning he had lost the others while fishing earlier in the trip? Or had just left his fly book behind in camp, and just lost the “only fly” he had with him? Had he lost the fly in a fish, an underwater snag, a bush? What kind of “meat bait” did he try? Had the advancing season eliminated the option of using grasshoppers? We can only guess, but again, it seems most probable, if not certain, that Gillette was the person who kept trying the “eastern tackle” mentioned

by the others, and that despite their sarcasms he found flies more effective or at least more satisfying to use than meat bait. More than that we cannot support without additional evidence.

### Conclusions

We might divide the historical interest of the Washburn Party’s fish-related exploits into two areas. The first is in the field of sport history. Here they left us a vivid account of fishing what hyperbolic outdoor writers would call “virgin waters.” Though untold generations of native people and any number of earlier white visitors had caught trout in Yellowstone, the Washburn Party left us the first reasonably detailed account of it, thus serving as pioneer sporting journalists in this now world-famous fishing destination. They used a variety of tackle, from the most basic to the most sophisticated, but they left us all too little information on such matters as tackle and line specifications, fly patterns, and other details of interest to angling antiquarians.

They displayed an awareness of competing sporting styles and codes of their time by their somewhat negative comments about the “finest tackle of eastern sportsmen,” comments which, it seems likely, also implied a certain pride in their frontier competence at not needing such effete fripperies. Their values were otherwise not surprising, except perhaps in Hedge’s sympathetic portrayal of the agony of a fish he accidentally dunked in a hot spring. They were typical of their time in killing very large numbers of fish, but deserve pardon from the critical judgments of later generations for these apparent excesses, because they evidently consumed most or all of the fish they caught. Even Private

<sup>35</sup> Doane, “Report,” p. 27.

<sup>36</sup> Hedges, “Diary,” p. 11.

<sup>37</sup> Hedges, “Diary,” p. 12.

<sup>38</sup> Langford, *Discovery*, p. 116.

<sup>39</sup> Gillette, “Quest,” p. 27, on September 18, said “Williamson left Moore & myself to make a shelter (which we did with poles & blankets) while he went out to hunt. In about an hour we heard him halou in the mountains. Heard his shots first. Moore took the mule & went to where we heard the shots & returned with a fine fat 2 year old heifer Elk. We ate the liver for supper. I must not forget that I killed another chicken today with my pistol, of which I feel quite proud.”

<sup>40</sup> Gillette, “Quest,” p. 29.

Williamson's huge catch of fifty-two trout on September 10 must be kept in perspective by calculating how little time such a haul would last when confronted by the appetites of nineteen hungry travelers.

Perhaps the most important part of their sport fishing literary legacy was simply in showing the modern angler what is at stake in managing wild trout fisheries. The first literate sportsmen into a new region provide us with a kind of baseline of fish and game conditions against which we can measure all later attempts to sustain and protect these resources.

The second area of interest is a hodgepodge of impressions that the Washburn Party provides other historical specialists. To the historian of western natural history, they provided some modest but meaningful first-hand observations on the region's trout—nothing on the scale of their lengthy accounts of the geography and geothermal wonders, but still pathbreaking information new to biologists. To the historian of western exploration, trout should, but do not, loom large in this chapter of the "discovery" of the West; it

seems clear that without trout in those critical mid-September days the Washburn Party would have been in serious trouble for want of food. To historians of the development and eventual solidification of the national park idea as embodied in the Yellowstone Park Act of March 1, 1872, the men's comments of the quality of the fishing are an indication of yet another of the many reasons that could be enlisted in marketing the park to tourists.

The trout was one of the most important animals in the history of the Washburn Party. Cumulatively, party members wrote substantially more words about the Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout than they wrote about any other wild animal species.<sup>41</sup> Fishing was, for this or that subset of the party, a means of acquiring food,

<sup>41</sup> For the most thorough compilation of wildlife observations by the Washburn Party, see Paul Schullery and Lee Whittlesey, "The Documentary Record of Wolves and Related Wildlife Species in the Yellowstone National Park Area Prior to 1882," in J.D. Varley and W.G. Brewster, eds., *Wolves for Yellowstone? A Report to the United States Congress, Volume IV, Research and Analysis* (Yellowstone National Park: National Park Service, 1992), pp. 1.51-1.58



An 1860s-era picture of the Yellowstone River just north of Yankee Jim Canyon appeared in Alfred E. Mathews, *Pencil Sketches of Montana* (the author, New York, 1868). The Washburn Party would have seen the same country in 1870, passing this way as they followed the river through the canyon. Note the pronghorn in the right foreground; Mathews spoke at some length about the abundance of game in the area. Courtesy the Yellowstone Park Research Library.

of testing one's angling skill, of engaging in friendly competition with other sportsmen, and of studying the natural world. Trout were appreciated as food, as sporting quarry, as affirmation of sporting codes, as scientific objects, and even as potential promotional devices.

This is not to imply that trout were that important to everybody, all the time, in the West. It would be unfair to liken the intensity of interest that the Washburn Party displayed in trout to any similar interest shown by other white residents of Montana Territory in their day-to-day lives. Only some people fish, and among them, the average angler in the Northern Rocky Mountains in 1870 would have routinely combined sport and subsistence as the only reasons for fishing.

On the other hand, that same average person would

have little day-to-day use for all the rich, diverse elements and values of literature, fine arts, music, or any other central human pursuit. The point of this paper is not to elevate trout fishing to a primary focus among historians of the West, but to alert those historians to the opportunities that trout fishing, in its own quiet and unique way, provides us for improving our understanding of all the subtle and unspoken things that our ancestors were up to when they traveled through trout country. **W**

### *Paul Schullery*

first worked in Yellowstone as a ranger-naturalist in 1972. He is the author, co-author, or editor of more than thirty books, including *Searching for Yellowstone*, *The Bears of Yellowstone*, and *Mountain Time*. A former director of The American Museum of Fly Fishing, in Manchester, Vermont, Paul is also author of *American Fly Fishing: A History*.



# The Past and Present of Fly-Fishing in Jackson Hole, Wyoming: An Interview with Jack Dennis<sup>1</sup>



by Adrian A. Bantjes

Fly-fishing on Jackson Lake below the peaks of the Tetons. Trolling would become the technique of choice on the lake. Stephen N. Leek Collection, American Heritage Center.

**J**ack Dennis, Wyoming's best-known fly-fisherman, fly-tier, and angling outfitter, is the author of *The Western Trout Fly Tying Manual* (1974) and owner of Jack Dennis Sports in Jackson, Wyoming. Dennis appears regularly on television sporting shows, has produced numerous fly-fishing videos, and serves as a fly-fishing consultant to foreign governments and other organizations. He has fished with celebrities and politicians such as Tom Selleck, Don Johnson, Dick Cheney, James Baker, and Eduard Shevardnaze. On April 12, 2002, he spoke with a group of University of Wyoming students about his role in the fly-fishing history of Jackson Hole, the fly-fishing industry, conservation policies, and, of course, the impact of the movie *A River Runs Through It*.

JD: I was born in Jackson and I spent my childhood, every summer of my life except for one, in Jackson. My grandfather would come all the way from the Philippine Islands to Jackson every summer...He was the banker for Chase Manhattan Bank and he traveled the Orient doing what you call correspondent banking. He had a first cousin that had a ranch where the Park Service headquarters

<sup>1</sup> Interview recorded, edited, and annotated by Adrian Bantjes.

is [today] and he would come and stay with her. In the [late twenties,] [John D.] Rockefeller [, Jr.] decided to start buying up land to give it to the [Grand Teton National] Park and they bought up...my aunt's ranch and made it one of the first acquisitions. We were immediately tagged as one of the traitors in Jackson to have sold the land...Rockefeller was Standard Oil...So he was a bad guy; they blamed him a lot for the Depression...Now, you might say, [how] does that even relate to fishing, but that gave us one of the greatest fishing parks in the world, along with Yellowstone.<sup>2</sup>

A man by the name of Bob Carmichael...literally built the very first Western fly-shop. It didn't happen in West Yellowstone; it happened in Jackson Hole. He actually bought an existing fly-shop there in Moose, Wyoming,...and he opened his in the [late thirties].<sup>3</sup> He was...the official guide of Teton Park. They actually had guides hired by the park to take people out. Remember, this is the thirties and it was still pretty wild country. So most people didn't just go wandering out fishing; they had guides. Guides were cheap...Guys...learned...from Carmichael, then went back...and built the famous shops of West Yellowstone, which actually started in a guy's garage, a guy by the name of [Don] Martinez, who tied flies for Bob Carmichael...It eventually became the first shop there and then a variety [of other shops], [Bud] Lilly's, [for example], came...I grew up...around [Carmichael's] shop...My grandfather was lucky enough to have enough money to afford guided fishing trips and so I got a chance to go on a guided fishing trip...up until I was about fifteen at least a couple of times a week if the fishing was good. My grandfather was not a great fly-fisherman but he loved doing it. So I got exposed to the history...at a pretty young age in the fifties...So that's my kinda background: guiding when I was eleven years old at Carmichael's. They'd have me take a guy up and show em the beaver ponds...There were fabulous big fish and people just wanted to see them – they couldn't catch them-...and you'd get twenty bucks for doing it. It was a pretty good deal. So that's how I started guiding. My experience came from that shop and eventually I got into the business from there.

Q: How did Carmichael end up in Jackson Hole?

JD: He was from Pennsylvania. That, of course, if you study the history of fly-fishing, is a very intricate part [of fly-fishing history]. The Catskills, Pennsylvania, the famous chalk streams, which very much mimic the streams of England...Bob Carmichael was the product of that area. [Writing about Wyoming,] in the book *Flies*,...Bob says, "Imagine an area where you could fish from April first to October thirty-first -which is the fishing season-, and fish dry flies the whole entire time, *and never fish the same water twice.*"<sup>4</sup> That is the way it was there in 1949. Why did that guy move from Pennsylvania? Because, in Pennsylvania, you know when their trout fishing ends? In July. Why? Because the water gets so hot that the only time you can catch trout at that time is at night. Actually, it ends earlier. So,...those people started looking at the West...Carmichael came out here and he brought all that Eastern tradition with him, a little bit of catch-and-release. Bob had a rule: you could only take one fish per person because that was all one person could eat...The limit in those days was 36 fish a day. When I started fishing, the limit was down to 24 fish a day. When I started guiding, it was 12 fish per day...He saw what happened to the East and he knew that it would happen [in Wyoming]...He started educating the people in Jackson...that you could do it a different way. He was a great teacher and what he did more than anything was he inspired guides...He got young men and...molded them and gave them those ideals and then they ran the ball from there. A lot of them...started their own shops....

<sup>2</sup> For background, see Robert W. Righter, *Crucible for Conservation: The Struggle for Grand Teton National Park* (Colorado Associated University Press, 1982). Also see Horace M. Albright, *The Birth of the National Park Service: The Founding Years, 1913-1933* (Salt Lake City: Howe Bros., 1985).

<sup>3</sup> The Moose Tackle Shop, now the Moose General Store.

<sup>4</sup> Here Dennis refers to a letter from Bob Carmichael to J. Edson Leonard, dated April 6, 1949, published in Leonard's *Flies: Their Origin, Natural History, Tying, Hooks, Patterns, and Selections of Dry and Wet Flies, Nymphs, Streamers, Salmon Flies for Fresh and Salt Water in North America and the British Isles, including a Dictionary of 2200 Patterns* (South Brunswick, New York: A.S. Barnes and Co.; London: Thomas Yoseloff, Ltd., 1950), pp. 301-304. Carmichael states that, "I do not claim to have 'discovered' Jackson's Hole dry fly fishing but will say that those who preceded me in the area with their dries were very quiet about it." (p. 302).

**Q:** Did Bob Carmichael bring the East coast, dry-fly tradition to the Rockies and how did that [impact] local wet fly traditions?

**JD:** Well, the local people really didn't know much. A lot of [local fly-fishing] was based on Jackson Lake... You got to understand that most of the fishing in the West [was] in the lakes because that's where the fish were... Most of the people started fishing lakes first and then gravitated to the streams. So when Bob came out there, most of it was in the Glen L. Evans<sup>5</sup> school of fly-fishing, which was snelled flies, very unsophisticated, mostly wet fly-fishing. But Bob did something that changed [local practices]. He brought [the] Eastern dry fly [with him] but then he met these people from California that had discovered Jackson. California had a very sophisticated culture... tying flies for steelhead... They had developed nymph-fishing before, which was really an English deal... because they had very little dry-fly fishing, because you didn't catch... anadromous<sup>6</sup> fish... on dry flies. So... you took those steelhead tactics and used them on regular trout... Those people came and met Bob and introduced him to those Western flies. One of the fly tiers that he picked up was a guy by the name of Roy [M.] Donnelly, who was a very well-known steelhead tier. He started interacting with him on tying dry flies and he became a very big dry fly tier even though he had never tied dry flies before... Then he met a guy by the name of Wayne ["Buz"] Buszek,<sup>7</sup> who was a more contemporary tier, so Bob had almost all his flies tied from California. Don Martinez... did the "Irresistible" and... a nymph called the "Martinez Black"... So Bob learned from California, took his Eastern techniques and kinda modeled his own Western way of fishing, as did a lot of other people besides Bob throughout the West. They took a little of this and a little of that, stirred it up in a pot, and ended up with a particular method of fishing... He always leaned more towards dry flies on the river. Bob's collection of flies, I remember [it] just like if we were standing there today... Most of the wet flies were designed for the lake fishing. Now... three-quarters [of his guiding] was done on the lakes. He fly-fished all the lakes, and they trolled flies, they cast flies. Yellowstone, Lewis, Jenny, Bradley, Taggart... [Bob] died in '59, his son [ran] the shop until '67... using a

lot of those converted steelhead patterns, and we did a lot of lake fishing... We learned to get better fish in the rivers, and the Green [River] came on, and the South Fork... and the Bighorn... Remember, the Bighorn is a phenomenon, [but] it happened in the sixties. I fished the Bighorn for pike when I went to college up there. If someone had told me this was going to be a great trout fishery, I'd have laughed. I went out there with one of my Indian friends who was on the baseball team... We were catching northern pike like mad out there. But that new... Yellowtail dam... change[d] all that... The history of fishing is a relatively contemporary thing... Can you imagine... there'd be 12,000 fish per mile... down there? There isn't a natural stream in this country except for Alaska that might have 12,000 fish per mile.

**Q:** How do you fit personally in this tradition? Which influences molded your approach to fly-fishing?

**JD:** When I was four years old, my mother had to be put in the hospital. My father was a pilot and I ended up with grandparents... We'd move every year, so the only stability I had in my life was fishing in Jackson. My father eventually decided to go to Lowry [Air Force Base, in Denver] and fly in the reserves and work for Gart Brothers running their hunting department. So I ended up in Colorado... where you'd get a great [fishing] influence... because Hank Roberts had a big [fly-tying] operation, and... a lot of people fish[ed] the [South] Platte... [That] was not a tailwater fishery then, just the Platte River Canyon. So all of a sudden I found myself having fishing not only in the summer, but partially in the winter, and [experienced] the influence of fly-tying. When I was nine years old, my grandfather gave me this fly-tying kit, and I struggled with it... I used to go down to the library in Denver. If you lived in Thornton where I lived you weren't allowed to check out a book... so I'd have to draw pictures. I looked at the books and there ... was nothing out there to teach anything. I'll never forget going to a sport show in

<sup>5</sup> Glen L. Evans, Inc., was a well-known fly manufacturer based in Caldwell, Idaho.

<sup>6</sup> Sea-run fish.

<sup>7</sup> Buszek established his fly shop in Visalia, California, in 1947.



Fly-fishing for Lake Trout on Jackson Lake. Stephen N. Leek Collection, American Heritage Center.

Denver. A gal was tying this “Irresistible” –she was a Japanese lady- and I was trying to look at it and every time I looked at it she would hold her hand over it. I said, “Why are you even tying here?” “Well, Mr. Roberts allowed me to tie, but I’m not allowed to show this fly.” And that influenced me so much, that you would keep information away from people, for proprietary reasons...I learned to tie flies, had a few people show me, but mostly I learned it on my own...There [weren’t] many books, what books we could grab on to influenced us...

I got into Jackson right behind Carmichael. There was nobody there to take his place... I kinda stepped into that, went out and made a reputation. I was very lucky that Curt Gowdy<sup>8</sup> put me on a TV show, *The American Sportsman*, in ‘68. That kinda gave me the confidence. I started the shop when I was nineteen, and I kinda just learned my way through it...If I had stayed in [college], I probably would have lost that opportunity. Somebody else would have taken it. It’s just fate. I feel that I’ve had an influence on fly-fishing...There’s a guy by the name of Lefty Kreh, 76 years old, he’s the most recognized name in fly-fishing. He had a day job until he was sixty; he wrote the sports column for the *Baltimore Sun*...and he wrote for all the magazines...Finally, in his sixties, he reached a

pinnacle in the sport, and his income at that point would have equaled what a first year lineman, not even...[on] a pro team, [might make]. So there’s no money in this...None of the people in this sport got in it for money, they got in it because they loved it, and they had a day job...Look at Gary Borger<sup>9</sup>, he was a college professor until last year...Dave Whitlock<sup>10</sup> was a commercial artist...Gary LaFontaine<sup>11</sup> was a clinical psychologist for the Montana prison system...Mike Lawson<sup>12</sup> was a school teacher before he opened his shop. He taught...industrial arts...Most of these guys are terrific teachers because that’s what they did. So this kinda evolved as...a boutique type business. If there

<sup>8</sup> Famous Wyoming-born sports broadcaster.

<sup>9</sup> Gary Borger is professor-emeritus at the University of Wisconsin, Wausau, and a well-known fly-fishing author, teacher, video producer, and tackle designer.

<sup>10</sup> Dave Whitlock gave up his position as a research chemist to become a fly-fishing artist, writer, tier, and teacher. He owns the Whitlock Fly-Fishing School in the Arkansas Ozarks.

<sup>11</sup> Gary LaFontaine, a pioneering fly-fishing author, taught behavioral psychology at the University of Montana until his death in 2002. A fly-fishing book collection was established at the American Heritage Center of the University of Wyoming to honor his achievements.

<sup>12</sup> Mike Lawson, a well-known Idaho fly-fisherman, tier, and author, owns the Henry’s Fork Angler’s Shop in Last Chance, Idaho.

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[are] any true professionals, I'd have to call them guides. Now we've got about five kids that work for us that guide in the summer here, in the winter in Argentina, in the off-seasons in Costa Rica. That would be a professional....They're making their whole entire living on fishing. And you know what, they last about six years, doing that, because it's such a hard deal they just can't handle it. They start getting really serious burnout.

## Dennis on Conservation and the Fly-Fishing Industry

**JD:** There's a movement among...a lot of the young biologists [of the Fish and Wildlife Service] that we should go back to the native species. Unfortunately, we've built up a sport fishing industry, which has been perpetuated since our founding fathers wanted to change fishing in Pennsylvania...[Michael] Finley<sup>13</sup> and I, the former superintendent of Yellowstone [National Park], had some big talks about that, because we funded a Yellowstone introduction program through the One Fly Foundation.<sup>14</sup>...[Many local guides] felt that [the Park was planning to go] in and tak[e] all the browns and rainbows out of the Madison and Firehole River. Of course, I went immediately to Finley and I said, "Finley,...don't take away a fishery."...What's happening within the Fish and Wildlife Service is you have the younger ones coming up with a little bit different views. So there is a very big conflict...and we're feeling a little bit threatened.

In Denver, for years and years, they had the fly tackle dealers' association meeting, then it went to Salt Lake, now it's back in Denver...It kinda brought the competition level up and also changed the magazines...There is no sport on earth that has more books. Consequently, there is no sport on earth that has more magazines...[There are] probably two dozen fly-fishing-oriented magazines....It's funny, because the readership is very small...Out of five million fly-fishermen, they have about 180,000 people that read fly-fishing magazines...Yet 75% of [the fly-fishing tackle companies'] advertising budget is going to be for those magazines...They spend way too much money on magazine advertising...Yet those magazines are still out there. We all feel, among the professionals, [that] there need to be about a third of those magazines, and

that the manufacturers should be putting more money into...education,... but, you know, people in the magazines feel differently. They have three magazines on saltwater fly-fishing. It would be nice to have one, but three?

Business has got to grow. Now rod manufacturers [have] made [fly-fishing] into an industry...It is a small business. I guess there are people that want to make a living out of it and there's a desire for us to have nice rods, nice lines and stuff. Any business that doesn't grow is not healthy...The kind of people that really make the business go are the kind of people that make any business go. Unfortunately, those kind of people don't want to get caught in a business they don't make very much money in. Consequently, you don't get but very few people who know how to really run a business. [The rod company] Sage is a prime example of a good-run one. I remember sitting there with some friends of mine and one of them happens to be the leading lawyer in Hollywood. I watched him go from just being a lawyer with Disney to being the top guy. He loves fly-fishing...He has a lot of power in the motion picture industry...He's Harrison Ford's lawyer, he gets 10% of everything Harrison Ford makes, 15%....And another guy was a big leading New York investor....They're all worth a fortune, have big beautiful homes in Jackson, their own little streams. Another guy was one of the presidents of Deloitte and Touche, and then *me*. And they're saying, "You know, Jack, you really made a mistake here. You should have a place in Beverly Hills. Think about the amount of money you could make in California." I said, "Look, you guys,...I think you're nuts because here I am in Jackson. Yeah, I don't make anywhere near what you guys make,...but you know, I had for 25 years all that that you guys have had to pay millions to come and enjoy and you only get to do it on

<sup>13</sup> Yellowstone National Park Superintendent from 1994-2001.

<sup>14</sup> The One-Fly Foundation manages funds earmarked for conservation projects and raised during the annual Jackson Hole One Fly angling competition. The competition, which started in 1986, involves fly-fishing teams that fish with only one fly per person. Participants include fly-fishing professionals as well as celebrities and politicians such as Dick Cheney, Al Simpson, and Curt Gowdy.

weekends" ... And they go, "Never thought of it that way." "In one week you do [more] contracts in the motion picture business, more than what in ten years the fly-fishing industry brings in." At that time, he just got through handling the sale to SONY of Columbia Pictures... I think it's hard for them to think small.

Q: Some people say that the movie *A River Runs Through It*<sup>15</sup> led to the fly-fishing boom of the nineties. Do you think that's true?

JD: I think it was *evolving* that way... After the war people had a lot more recreation time, ... the spinning reel came in, and there was a real move to go out and fish. Because spin fishing was so easy..., the emphasis was not on quality, it was on just taking fish. [There] was a lot of... consumerism. It mirrors the consumerism in the United States, two cars in every garage and all that... But what... changed fly-fishing is the changing of the lines... When you went out in the thirties, forties, fifties, you had to grease your fly line. It was a long process. And you had to soak your leaders. Two things happened: the invention of good nylon, which... provided leaders that you didn't have to soak for an hour, and the inventing of the plastic coated fly line. Then the fiberglass rod came along, which made fly rods portable. Before that, it was too expensive. A cane fly rod would have been [in] today's dollars about two thousand dollars... The cost of a fly rod has gone way down... There were very [few] books... But all of a sudden in the seventies there was this great interest in doing books on fly-tying, books on getting better, and [a] few people [saw an] opportunity... to teach... That's when it started gaining momentum. And then the guiding phenomenon started. People had enough money and they figured that they didn't have any time to learn; they just hired a guide... So the guiding operations gradually grew. That takes off about sixties, seventies... Another thing happened, it's quality water: taking the Madison, making it catch-and-release, identifying in the early eighties waters that needed protection. The change in the attitude of people... [The catch-and-release ethic] appealed to a new generation of Americans... It started [in the eighties] with the guides. The guides realized that you couldn't bonk the fish over the head and keep coming back there and

catching them... The guides kinda perpetuated on the rivers the catch-and-release ethic mainly out of self-protection.

Everything kinda all came together at once in the movie, it just all started... gaining in popularity, and the movie just kinda kick-started it to the general public... I think what happened is it just all came together at the same time. The books got better... [They first] attempted to [make the movie] in '81, '82. It would not have had the impact [at that time]... What *A River runs Through It* [reflected was the longing for] a simpler way of life... That's when we saw the movement out to Jackson. You can't blame the movie [for] that. People were looking to get back to a simpler way of life out West... I think it was just a time waiting to come. Fly-fishing kinda hit it... In 1980, William Hurt tried to get it, the actor. He was good friends with Glenn Close, who lives in Big Piney. He got to tying flies with my book... and then met Glenn through a Broadway play. He came out to [Glenn's father,] Bill [Dr. William T.] Close,<sup>16</sup> [who] is about as pure a fly fisher as a guy can find. Here's a guy who's fished all through England, who [was] a missionary doctor in Africa, discovered the Ebola virus, he's a superstar in his own line... He taught Bill a lot about fly-fishing and [its] history... He read *A River Runs Through It*, and it just blew him away. It was always Bill's favorite book, and I think he tried to get it... [But] Bill just wasn't the personality and the old Norman was kinda his own man. The movie portrays him as this gentle guy and his brother [as] the wild guy. But Norman didn't have a lot of friends. He was pretty ornery... He was a typical writer... So I think Bill just didn't hit all the right buttons with him. I remember about '86, '87, [Robert] Redford took an interest in it, and he did like four, five years of research... Before he died, [Maclean]

<sup>15</sup> The 1992 movie, directed by Robert Redford, was based on Norman Maclean's *A River Runs Through It* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976). Maclean was a University of Chicago Professor of English. He died in 1990. His son John vehemently denies that Maclean is in any way responsible for the fly-fishing boom of the nineties. See Gerry Merriam, "Norman Maclean," [www.missoulain.com/specials/100montanans/list/018.html](http://www.missoulain.com/specials/100montanans/list/018.html).

<sup>16</sup> William T. Close was a missionary physician in the Congo for sixteen years (1960-1976). His team helped contain the first Ebola virus outbreak of 1976.

sold the rights to Redford...I worked a lot with Redford's people. They wanted me to be the advisor on it, and I told them I didn't have the time or the ability to do it...I did think it needed to be [shot] in Montana and it needed to have somebody who lived [there]...I recommended John Bailey<sup>17</sup> and that's who they eventually hired. The reason [the movie] turned out the way it is, is because of John Bailey...Actually, Jerry Siem did most of the casting... He's the guide and rod designer...He worked...as a guide and then he went up and worked for Winston before he went to Sage...John had Redford's ear. He said, "This is the way it's gotta be written and you can't Hollywoodize this. It's gotta be the way the book is. This book is like a Bible to a lot of people."

I remember getting the book from Norman...He gave me this book, [and] he says, "Well, it's not much of a book, it's just kinda a story of my family...All my life I've tried to make sense of what happened to my

brother, and my father always [told me I] got to write about this. I'm just old enough now and I'm done with being a college professor."...He just kinda minimized it. He says, "I think my best story is the one on the forest service. [The story *A River Runs Through It* is] too personal...I had to change some things just to make it work." Actually, the way his brother died [in the story] is not the way he really died. I think he just was an alcoholic....So, if *A River Runs Through It* wouldn't have got made, somebody [else] would have tried to...get [fly-fishing] going. It would have happened...They've been trying to get *A River Why* made. [The author, David James] Duncan says every time he turns around he's got somebody going to do it.

**AW**

<sup>17</sup> Owner of Dan Bailey's Fly Shop in Livingston, Montana. Son of legendary fly-fisherman Dan Bailey.

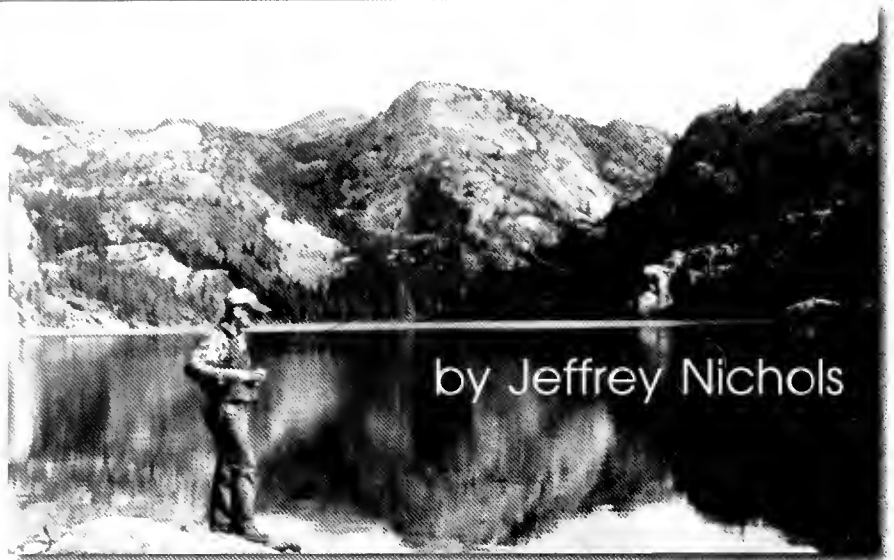


After an 1890 planting in Shoshone and Lewis lakes in Yellowstone in 1890, lake trout or mackinaw proliferated and soon colonized Jackson and Jenny lakes, often negatively affecting the native cutthroat population. The lake trout, a voracious predator that has been known to reach a weight of more than 100 pounds, today threatens the native population of Yellowstone cutthroat in Yellowstone Lake. Courtesy American Heritage Center.



# "These Waters Were All Virgin": Finis Mitchell and Wind River

By his reckoning, Finis stocked two and a half million trout fingerlings in 314 lakes during the 1930s. He went on to hike, climb, photograph, fish, and guide others through the region for half a century.



"Fishing Gorge Lake is a great reward for the effort required to get to it. It has rainbow trout which migrated downstream from both Seneca and Hobbs Lakes. Then they also followed downstream into Suicide Lake which can only be reached from Gorge, unless one wants to commit suicide. That's why I named it Suicide Lake." Finis Mitchell quote. Courtesy American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

In 1931, six horses plodded up a rough trail, each loaded with two milk cans full of water. In each can, a thousand inch-long trout sloshed beneath a layer of burlap. When the pack train reached the shore of a small alpine lake, Finis Mitchell unloaded the cans and tipped them into the cold mountain waters, and the tiny fish scattered into the depths.

Those fish were entering a new world. Almost none of the hundreds of lakes that dot Wyoming's Wind River range had indigenous populations of trout. In Mitchell's words, "these waters were all virgin."<sup>1</sup> By his reckoning, Finis stocked two and a half million trout fingerlings in 314 lakes during the 1930s. He went on to hike, climb, photograph, fish, and guide others through the region for half a century. Finis set out to make himself the range's acknowledged expert, perhaps even a legend, and he succeeded.<sup>2</sup> For many hikers and fisherman, Finis is an inspiration, a kind of Johnny Appleseed in overalls who could still be found walking his beloved range decades after

<sup>1</sup> Finis Mitchell, *Wind River Trails: A hiking and fishing guide to the many trails and lakes of the Wind River Range in Wyoming* (Salt Lake City: Wasatch Publishers, 1975), p. 8. "Finis" is pronounced with a long initial "i," it rhymes with "highness."

<sup>2</sup> Mitchell repeated "314" many times; e.g. *Pinedale Roundup*, March 3, 1949; Mitchell, *Wind River Trails*, pp. 8-9; and personal interview with Finis Mitchell by Mark Junge, July 3, 1989, Oral History 2010, Wyoming State Archives, Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources [hereafter cited as OH 2010]. During the early 1970s, Finis created a list of the lakes he stocked for David Dufek, a WGF D fisheries biologist in Green River; the list names about ninety-five lakes (there is some ambiguity) and is labeled "Finis Mitchell records," n.p., ca. 1972, copy in author's possession [hereafter cited as "Finis Mitchell records"]; David Dufek personal communications with author, April 12, August 7, and August 9, 2002. The discrepancy may be the result of inadequate record keeping or the long time gap. Irv Lozier, a longtime friend of Mitchell's, claims that "Finis was almost determined to be a legend in his own time"; personal interview with Irv Lozier, Cora, Wyoming, July 17, 2002. Rebecca Woods, author of *Walking the Winds: A Hiking and Fishing Guide to Wyoming's Wind River Range*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Jackson, Wyoming: White Willow, 1998), believes that Mitchell knew the range "better than almost anyone, myself included"; Rebecca Woods, personal communication with author, August 2, 2002.

his good deed.<sup>3</sup> By the 1970s, some called him the “Man of the Mountains” or even “Lord of the Winds.” His trout stocking was one of the things of which he was most proud.<sup>4</sup>

Some environmentalists and fisheries biologists, however, believe introduced fish have compromised the natural or wild quantities of fishless lakes throughout the West, and fisheries managers confront a variety of dilemmas caused by the exotics. In Mitchell’s case, however, most people seem to have chosen to believe that the descendants of his fish are both natural and wild. However he is viewed, Mitchell helped to shape a wilderness as he built his legend.

The Wind River range in west-central Wyoming contains twenty-three peaks above thirteen thousand feet and is part of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. On the Pacific side of the Continental Divide, the federally designated Bridger Wilderness contains most of the lakes Mitchell stocked. Nearly all of the waters of the Bridger are part of the Green River drainage, the largest tributary of the Colorado. The steep, rocky outlets of mountain lakes often formed waterfalls which blocked native fishes from migrating upstream into those waters.<sup>5</sup>

The range has a long human history as a commons, perhaps as much as fourteen thousand years worth. Archaic Indian peoples hunted and gathered edible plants there, and Shoshone bands hunted, carved tools, and walked its passes.<sup>6</sup> Trappers found the region rich in beaver, and several of the famous 1830s rendezvous were held on the upper Green River.<sup>7</sup> By the 1870s, a few people had settled north from the railroad line, and soon ranchers were grazing cattle and sheep in the openings, parks, and meadows of the range.<sup>8</sup> Its vast watersheds received federal protection when President Theodore Roosevelt added much of the range to the Yellowstone Park Timber Land Reserve. The Winds thus became one of the early pieces of the permanent public domain.<sup>9</sup>

Mitchell’s family joined the small influx of immigrants in 1906. Finis’ father Henry traded his forty acre Missouri farm for 160 acres in Wyoming, sight unseen. Henry, his wife Fay, seven-year-old Mary, five-year-old Finis, and toddler Dennis confronted their patch of “sagebrush and sand and junk,” and Fay begged to go back home.<sup>10</sup> Finis wrote years later that the

Winds were already exerting a strong pull on him: “I prayed that father would win this argument. So I would

<sup>3</sup> I borrowed the “Johnny Appleseed” comparison from the artist Mark Vinsel; it appears at <http://www.vinsel.com/082599.HTM>, accessed January 25, 2002; Mark Vinsel, personal communication with author, July 24, 2002.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, James R. Udall, “Finis Mitchell, Lord of the Winds,” *Audubon* (July 1986): 72-88; Finis Mitchell slideshow at Casper Rotary Club, October 16, 1989, Oral History 1443, Wyoming State Archives [hereafter cited as OH 1443]. For “Man O’ the Mountains,” see Mitchell, *Wind River Trails*, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Joe Kelsey, *Wyoming’s Wind River Range* (Helena, Montana: American and World Geographic Publishing, 1988), pp. 7-12, 32-35; D.B. Shimkin, “Wind River Shoshone Ethnogeography,” *Anthropological Records* 5 no. 4 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1947), pp. 262-64; Ron Remmick, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, “Managing the BWA Fisheries,” n.p., 1994, copy in author’s possession; and Roland A. Knapp, Paul Stephen Corn, and Daniel E. Schindler, “The Introduction of Nonnative Fish into Wilderness Lakes: Good Intentions, Conflicting Mandates, and Unintended Consequences,” *Ecosystems* 4 (2001): 275. The Sweetwater River drains a small portion of the Winds to the North Platte River.

<sup>6</sup> James R. Schoen, “Archeological Investigations in the High Country: Survey Results from the Bridger, Gros Ventre and Teton Wilderness Areas, Bridger-Teton National Forest,” April 1998, copy in author’s possession, p. 2; Shimkin, “Wind River Shoshone Ethnogeography,” pp. 245-84; Ake Hultkrantz, “The Shoshones in the Rocky Mountain Area,” *Annals of Wyoming* 33 (April 1961): 33-35; and David Vlcek, Bureau of Land Management archaeologist, personal communication with author, July 3, 2002.

<sup>7</sup> William H. Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire: The Explorer and the Scientist in the Winning of the American West* (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1978), pp. 116, 196-197, 242-43; William H. Goetzmann, *Army Exploration in the American West, 1803-1863* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1991), pp. 52, 81-82; and Warren A. Beck and Ynez D. Haase, *Historical Atlas of the American West* (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989), map 26.

<sup>8</sup> Robert G. Rosenberg, *Wyoming’s Last Frontier: Sublette County. Wyoming: A Settlement History* (Glendo, Wyoming: High Plains Press, 1990), pp. 17-41, 85-86; David Vlcek, “The New Fork Wagon Road: A Nineteenth Century Southwestern Wyoming Lifeline to the Union Pacific Railspur,” paper delivered at Russ Tanner Symposium on Southwest Wyoming, Society for Historical Archaeology meetings, Salt Lake City, 1999, copy in author’s possession, pp. 2-4.

<sup>9</sup> Harold K. Steen, “The Origins and Significance of the National Forest System,” in *Origins of the National Forests: A Centennial Symposium*, ed. Harold K. Steen (Durham: Forest History Society, 1992), p. 7; Dan Flores, *The Natural West: Environmental History in the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), pp. 119-22.

<sup>10</sup> Quote from OH 2010. The Boulder Canal Company promised “Irrigable Land – Best on Earth”; *Pinedale Roundup*, August 30, 1905. The canal company failed, and many homesteads only received adequate water years later; *Pinedale Roundup*, July 15, 1926. See also Finis Mitchell, “My Life,” a fragmentary manuscript translated by Sandra Snow, email to author of July 16, 2002 [hereafter cited as Mitchell, “My Life”]; and patent no. 568, Sublette County, “Deeds Transcribed Book 4,” p. 296, no. 31942, recorded August 20, 1912.

get into those massive mountains.”<sup>11</sup>

The Mitchells scratched a precarious living from the soil, which was too high, cold, and dry for most farming. On an elk hunt in 1909, Finis climbed his first mountain and gained a memorable look at ranks of snow-capped peaks. Nearly all of the alpine lakes he could see were barren of fish, but the lower waters already contained a mix of exotic and native species, including the only indigenous trout, the Colorado River Cutthroat. A neighbor taught Finis to fish, and two lifelong obsessions—climbing and fishing—were born.<sup>12</sup>

Wyoming’s officials had decided decades earlier to maximize the production of territorial waters, and the public eagerly joined in a consensus that lasted the better part of a century. The legislature created a Board of Fish Commissioners, which eventually became the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD). The board reported in 1883 that “a majority of our streams are sterile of good fish, whilst a remainder in many places are nearly exhausted of a once bountiful supply.” They concluded that managed fishing could boost Wyoming’s immigration and its infant tourist economy.<sup>13</sup> The board decided to “plant” exotic species, including “sunfish, wall-eyed pike and trout, carp, brook trout and bass, . . .” Fish were a crop like corn or wheat to be nurtured in the “soil” of Wyoming’s waters. The territory imported rainbow, brook, and lake trout, all native to North America, along with browns from Europe, and planted them in waters throughout the territory.<sup>14</sup>

The first known stocking in what became the Bridger Wilderness occurred in 1907, when cutthroat trout were planted in North Fork Lake.<sup>15</sup> When the state fish commissioner surveyed the Wind River mountain lakes in 1914, he reported five hundred fishless lakes, although several of the larger lakes along the front had “natural” (i.e. naturally reproducing) populations of cutthroat, brook, and rainbow trout.<sup>16</sup>

Trout fry<sup>17</sup> were brought to Rock Springs by railroad and transferred to private automobile or trucks. Local ranchers and sportsmen drove them north, accompanied by National Forest Service rangers, who supervised the planting.<sup>18</sup> The region got its own branch hatchery at Daniel in 1917. Local papers issued blanket appeals to anyone willing to retrieve fry and

plant them in area waters.<sup>19</sup> One editor grumbled about the Winds’ unused fishing potential: “Her mountain lakes are well-nigh numberless. Today many . . . streams are without trout, and the number of lakes without them is appalling [sic]. . . . Fish are as

<sup>11</sup> Mitchell, “My Life.”

<sup>12</sup> On indigenous fish, see Patrick C. Trotter, *Cutthroat: Native Trout of the West* (Boulder: Colorado Associated University Press, 1987), pp. 10, 151-62; Patrick C. Trotter, “Cutthroat Trout,” in *Trout*, ed. Judith Stolz and Judith Schnell (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Stackpole Books, 1991); Shimkin, “Wind River Shoshone Ethnogeography,” p. 268; and “Native Fish Species of Wyoming,” Wyoming Game and Fish Department Website, <http://gf.state.wy.us/HTML/fish/native.htm>, accessed August 1, 2002. On Finis’ climbing and fishing, see OH 1443; Mitchell, *Wind River Trails*, p. 6; OH 2010; Mitchell, “My Life”; and Finis Mitchell, Letter to the Editor, *Pinedale Roundup*, October 9, 1980.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Neal Blair, *The History of Wildlife Management in Wyoming* (Cheyenne: Wyoming Game and Fish Department, 1987), p. 22. See also Robert W. Wiley, “Wyoming Fish Management, 1869-1993,” administrative report for Wyoming Game and Fish Department Fish Division, July 1993, copy in author’s possession, pp. 1-2, Appendix 1, p. 22.

<sup>14</sup> Blair, *Wildlife Management*, pp. 24, 30; John Byorth, “Trout Shangri-La: Remaking the Fishing in Yellowstone National Park, *Montana The Magazine of Western History* 52 (Summer 2002): 38-47; Robert Henry Smith, “Rainbow trout,” in *Trout*, pp. 304-23; William A. Flick, “Brook trout,” in *Trout*, pp. 196-207; Charles Harold Olver, “Lake trout,” in *Trout*, pp. 286-99; and Robert A. Bachman, “Brown trout,” in *Trout*, pp. 208-29.

<sup>15</sup> Ralph Hudelson, Galen Boyer, and Jack McMillan, “High Mountain Lake and Stream Survey of the Bridger Wilderness Area: 1969-1975,” Completion Report: D.J. Report F-1-R-8; F-1-R-9; F-1-R-10; F-1-R-11; F-1-R-12 (Cheyenne: Wyoming Game and Fish Department Fish Division, 1980) [hereafter cited as Hudelson, Boyer, and McMillan, “High Mountain Survey”]. Finis Mitchell was among those who contributed written reports for this survey; k.

<sup>16</sup> Wiley, “Wyoming Fish Management,” p. 5.

<sup>17</sup> “Fry” refers to a larval trout after it has absorbed its yolk sac; “fingerling” can mean a trout up to one year old. Older sources sometimes use the terms interchangeably. See Theodore C. Bjornn, “Spawning and development,” in *Trout*, pp. 60-64; and *Trout*, s.v. “fingerling,” p. 368.

<sup>18</sup> For examples of planting, see *Pinedale Roundup*, March 16, June 8, and June 22, 1911, September 25, 1913, July 2, August 6, and October 8, 1914, and October 7, 1915. See also Hudelson, Boyer, and McMillan, “High Mountain Survey,” 11.8, 12.12, 12.13, 12.15, and 12.22.

<sup>19</sup> On the hatchery, see Barbara Pape, “Daniel Fish Hatchery,” in *Daniel, Wyoming: The First Hundred Years, 1900-2000*, ed. Hayden H. Huston (Daniel: Daniel Community Center, 2001), pp. 130-31; *Pinedale Roundup*, February 8, 1917; and Blair, *Wildlife Management*, p. 53. For appeals, see *Pinedale Roundup*, April 25, 1924, June 25, 1925, September 30, 1926, August 18, 1927, and August 9, 1928. State officials often thanked those who assisted; see, for instance, Carl Lund, “Fish Hatcheries Department Report,” in Bruce Nowlin, “Biennial Report of the State Game and Fish Commissioners of the State of Wyoming, 1927-1928,” p. 35.

necessary as scenic attractions to lure the tourist."<sup>20</sup>

The Mitchell family benefited from this early stocking, but by 1915, Henry had abandoned his troubled farm and brought the family to Rock Springs. When Henry became ill, Finis had to leave school after the eighth grade to find work.<sup>21</sup> The Union Pacific Railroad hired him in 1923, and two years later he married Emma Nelson. When the Depression hit, Finis was laid off in 1930. He fell back on his wilderness skills he had learned as a boy. A family friend suggested that he open a fish camp, so Finis, Emma, and Henry Mitchell obtained a Forest Service lease to establish a camp at Mud Lake in Big Sandy Openings, just inside the boundaries of Bridger National Forest.<sup>22</sup> Finis quickly found, however, that only five nearby lakes had native trout, so he and his father attempted a cumbersome stocking process. They caught seventeen grown cutthroats in Big Sandy Lake and packed them to nearby fishless lakes. Two years later, Finis caught one of those emigrant trout: "He looked like you had blowed him up with a pump he was so fat."<sup>23</sup> Soon after that first stocking attempt, Walter Brewer, superintendent of the Daniel hatchery, came by the camp. Brewer offered to bring fry to the Mitchells if they would plant them. Finis was thus in a well-established tradition of voluntary stocking of state-hatched fish by private citizens into lakes on the public domain.<sup>24</sup>

By Finis' oft-told count, during the next seven years he and his helpers planted 314 alpine lakes, mostly in the Big Sandy, East Fork, and Boulder Creek drainages about nine thousand feet. Many other local residents stocked area waters, including Finis' brother,

<sup>20</sup> *Pinedale Roundup*, January 18, 1923.

<sup>21</sup> Warranty Deed no. 40287, Sublette County, "Deeds Transcribed Book 4," p. 379. Finis took correspondence courses in unknown subjects and taught himself to type; *Pinedale Roundup*, August 3, 1922; personal interview with William Mitchell, Pinedale, July 16, 2002.

<sup>22</sup> Mitchell, *Wind River Trails*, p. 7; *Rock Springs Daily Rocket-Miner*, December 2, 1987; and OH 2010. Henry and Fay Mitchell divorced at some point before this; personal interview with Anna Dew, July 30, 2002, by telephone from Glendive, Montana. Anna Dew is the daughter of Finis and Emma.

<sup>23</sup> Mitchell, *Wind River Trails*, p. 11; Udall, "Finis Mitchell," p. 79.

<sup>24</sup> Although Mitchell never names Walter Brewer outright in the sources found, he does refer to "the state hatchery," "the superintendent," and planting fish with "Walt." The Daniel hatchery was the nearest and most convenient, and Brewer is known to have planted many waters on the Wind River front. OH 2010; *Pinedale Roundup*, September 25, 1930, December 31, 1931; Pape, "Daniel Fish Hatchery," pp. 130-31; and Ralph Faler, personal communication with author, July 5, 2002.

<sup>25</sup> The exactness of Finis' figures suggests that he kept careful records. He kept extensive diaries and log books, but access to those was not available; Anna Dew, personal communication with author, July 5, 2002. For others, I relied on the following sources: Jim Washam, personal communication with author, July 31, 2002; Alta Faler, personal communication with author, July 8, 2002; Ralph Faler, personal communication with author, July 5, 2002; Cliff Brewer, personal communication with author, August 2, 2002; Irv Lozier interview; Anna Dew interview; Mitchell, *Wind River Trails*, p. 81; and OH 2010.



"The president of the Westinghouse Electric Supply Company fishes Pole Creek as it enters 1000-Island Lake. Pole Creek is the main stream which crosses under U.S. 187 one mile east of the Pinedale Airport. At that point it is carrying, as near as I can count up in my mind, the waters from 136 mountain lakes." Finis Mitchell quote. Courtesy American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

Dennis.<sup>25</sup> Finis wrote that the hatchery might bring him “rainbow, cutthroat, California golden, brook, or German brown” trout.<sup>26</sup> His favorite, and the favorite of many fishermen for its beauty, rarity, and excellent taste, was the California golden, native only to the Kern River watershed.<sup>27</sup>

For six decades, Finis insisted that he had planted fish (“FREE for all people”) for the benefit of future fishermen.<sup>28</sup> An interviewer provoked an indignant denial when he suggested that the stocking was a business decision, but Finis and Emma later agreed that it was indeed part of their effort to earn a living.<sup>29</sup> The full answer must include a little of both altruism and self-interest. While the success of the camp depended on thriving populations of trout, the payoff from stocking fingerlings was years away and uncertain at best. The Mitchells were thinking both of short-term gains and generations of fishing to come. And, as Finis’ legend grew, he probably took a longer view of what he had done.

When the war brought better economic times in 1940, the railroad rehired Finis and the family moved back to Rock Springs, where he and Emma lived for nearly the rest of their lives.<sup>30</sup> With a steady paycheck, the mountains ceased to be the means by which Finis made a living, and became again a source of beauty, spiritual solace, and recreation. As soon as the snows melted, Finis headed north on virtually every weekend and vacation.<sup>31</sup> He meant to do more than just enjoy the scenery, however. In 1949, he wrote that “it has been my sole ambition since I retired from the fishing business in 1937, to master this rugged and massive of all Rocky Mountain ranges.” “Master” meant hiking every trail, climbing every mountain, and exploring every watershed, until his knowledge of the place was encyclopedic.<sup>32</sup>

Finis’ standing as a backcountry expert grew over the decades, thanks in large part to his vigorous promotion of his favorite region (and by extension himself). By the early 1940s, he was presenting slideshows and giving talks to local groups. Invitations came from people he had met at the fish camp or on the trail. As his reputation spread, he addressed audiences across the country.<sup>33</sup> Trout stocking was an important element in his story. In the same 1949 letter in which he laid out his goals, Finis was already rehearsing the

legend that he would repeat countless times: “Everyone knows I operated the first fishing camp to be established on the Pacific slope of our Wind River Range. . . . They also know that . . . we packed out on pack horses 2 million trout with which we stocked 314 individual lakes, and from these through connecting streams, another 700 became stocked.”<sup>34</sup> Finis also reported running totals of his Wind River experience. In 1987, he estimated that he had hiked fifteen thousand miles, climbed 276 peaks, and worn out twelve cameras taking 120,000 photographs.<sup>35</sup>

Finis became especially well known after 1975, when he published *Wind River Trails*, the first general guidebook to the region, which included a short autobiography.<sup>36</sup> The 1970s and 1980s brought magazine and newspaper profiles, an honorary Doctorate of Law degree from the University of Wyoming, and awards from the Environmental Protection Agency, the Izaak Walton League, the National Forest Service, and the state legislatures of

<sup>26</sup> Mitchell, *Wind River Trails*, p. 8.

<sup>27</sup> “Finis Mitchell records”; OH 2010. On goldens, see Phil Pister, “Golden trout,” in *Trout*, pp. 280-85.

<sup>28</sup> For instance, in a slideshow videotaped in 1987; “Finis Mitchell videorecording no. 3,” Hay Library, Western Wyoming College. “FREE . . .” appears on “Mitchell Peak,” postcard no. 110114, distributed by Great Outdoor Publishing, Pinedale.

<sup>29</sup> OH 2010. His children both told the author that Finis’ original motivation was indeed economic; William Mitchell interview; Anna Dew interview.

<sup>30</sup> Anna Dew interview; OH 2010; and Joe and Lynn Thomas, personal communication with author, July 8, 2002. Joe Thomas remembered that his father purchased Finis Mitchell’s Mud Lake lease and equipment in 1940 and operated the Big Sandy Lodge there. Finis spent his last several years in a senior home in nearby Green River; John R. Waggener, personal communication with author, October 14, 2002.

<sup>31</sup> OH 2010; William Mitchell interview; and Anna Dew interview.

<sup>32</sup> *Pinedale Roundup*, March 3, 1949. See also “Finis Mitchell videorecording no. 1,” Hay Library, Western Wyoming College; Woods, *Walking the Winds*, “First Ascents,” appendix, pp. 225-26; Irv Lozier interview; and William Mitchell interview.

<sup>33</sup> William Mitchell interview; Anna Dew interview. For examples of slideshows across the nation, see *Superior [Wisconsin] Evening Telegram*, September 28, 1979; “Itinerary-Finis Mitchell-Georgia Visit-November 1980,” n.p., OH 2010 file, Wyoming State Archives.

<sup>34</sup> *Pinedale Roundup*, March 3, 1949.

<sup>35</sup> *Rock Springs Daily Rocket-Miner*, December 2, 1987. William Mitchell reports that the photograph total is closer to a quarter million; William Mitchell interview.

<sup>36</sup> Melvin Davis, personal communication with author, October 8, 2002; Jeff Grathwohl, director of University of Utah Press, personal communication with author, August 2, 2002. The latter press purchased *Wind River Trails* from Wasatch Publishing in 1999.

Wyoming and California.<sup>37</sup> Perhaps his proudest honor was the designation of “Mitchell Peak,” a Wind Rivers mountain Finis climbed many times.<sup>38</sup> During the 1980s, age finally began to catch up with him, and by the early 1990s, he was too frail for further hiking. Mitchell died on November 13, 1995, one day before his ninety-fourth birthday.<sup>39</sup>

Finis lived to see many changes in the management of Wyoming’s fisheries. He was aware from an early date of the possible failures of stocking. His son remembers catching two hundred fish in a single evening in 1945 from Middle Fork Lake, which Finis had stocked with brook trout. “They were starving to death. . . . These high lakes don’t produce food fast enough to support a big population.”<sup>40</sup> Finis vowed “to lure enough anglers . . . to at least partially save the millions of accumulated trout which has [sic] resulted from my stockings. . . .”<sup>41</sup>

Fish biologists had already determined that high altitude stocking should be more carefully regulated. In 1935, James Simon called for “discretion” where food was scarce, and suggested taking the various species’ native habitat elevations into account; cutthroat and golden trout in the highest lakes; brook or cutthroat in the middle zone; and rainbow, cutthroat, or brook in the lower waters.<sup>42</sup> In 1940, Simon, then the state fisheries chief, declared that his agency would no longer allow private individuals like Mitchell to plant fish: “Great losses have been suffered through improper planting. Both the Federal agencies and the Fish Department have allowed such losses through distributing fish to individuals who did not give them the proper care.”<sup>43</sup> The Game and Fish Department began to hire trained fisheries biologists concerned with appropriate habitats for indigenous species instead of working solely for the largest possible catch. The long tradition of volunteer planting of exotic species by private individuals no longer seemed the wisest course.<sup>44</sup>

The higher degree of federal protection afforded Wind River lakes strengthened the emphasis upon indigenous species. On February 9, 1931 (just months before Mitchell planted his first hatchery fish), the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture established the Bridger Primitive Area, which meant an emphasis upon nonmechanized transport and limited permanent

structures. As a practical fact, the service’s management changed little, since the region received so little human traffic.<sup>45</sup>

As the wilderness ideal gained currency, some considered the Winds ideal candidates for a higher level of protection. In 1957, the regional forester proposed that the area be administratively reclassified as “wilderness.” Among the “outstanding features” the forester highlighted was its fine trout fishing. The Secretary of Agriculture accepted the recommendation in 1960 and designated the Bridger Wilderness. When Congress passed the landmark Wilderness Act four years

<sup>37</sup> For an example of profiles, see *Wall Street Journal*, September 20, 1979; for the honorary Doctor of Laws degree, see *Casper Star-Tribune*, August 1, 1977; for the EPA award, see *Pinedale Roundup*, November 23, 1995, for the Izaak Walton League’s Joseph W. Penfield Award, see *Rock Springs Daily Rocket-Miner*, December 2, 1987; for the Forest Services’ 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Award, see *Pinedale Roundup*, October 2, 1980; for the Wyoming Senate honorarium, see *Wyoming Eagle*, February 25, 1989; and for the California honor, see California Senate Rules Resolution No. 176, October 8, 1969. In 1997, Western Wyoming College dedicated “Mirchell’s Dining Room” on its Rock Springs campus. The room contains a portrait of Finis and Emma, originals of many of Finis’ honors listed here, framed articles, some of his own writings, and other memorabilia.

<sup>38</sup> The USGS set aside its long-standing rule against naming landforms for living persons; *Rock Springs Daily Rocket-Miner*, August 13, 1975.

<sup>39</sup> OH 2010; William Mitchell interview; Udall, “Finis Mitchell”; and *Pinedale Roundup*, November 23, 1995.

<sup>40</sup> William Mirchell interview. See also “Finis Mitchell records”; OH 2010.

<sup>41</sup> *Pinedale Roundup*, March 3, 1949.

<sup>42</sup> James R. Simon, “A Survey of the Waters of the Wyoming National Forest,” Department of Commerce, Bureau of Fisheries, April 1935, copy in author’s possession, pp. 11, 13; Hudelson, Boyer, and McMillan, “High Mountain Survey,” c-d.

<sup>43</sup> James R. Simon, “Report of the Fish Division,” in Robert Grieve, “Biennial Report of the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission, 1939-1940,” p. 32.

<sup>44</sup> Blair, *Wildlife Management*, pp. 77, 138; Wiley, “Wyoming Fish Management,” pp. 7-10; personal interview with Fred Eiserman, July 29, 2002, by telephone from Casper; and personal interview with Tom Bell, July 29, 2002, by telephone from Lander; and personal communication with Mike Stone, July 31, 2002. Eiserman was fisheries biologist for the district that included the western Winds in the 1950s and later state fisheries resource manager. Bell was a WGFD fisheries biologist in the late 1940s. Stone is currently Wyoming’s Chief of Fisheries.

<sup>45</sup> Albert Wm. Collotzi, Don Bartschi, Glen Dunning, Ralph Hudelson, “Bridger Wilderness Fish Management Plan,” July 1978 (revised), pp. 1-2 [hereafter cited as Collotzi et al., “Bridger Wilderness Fish Management Plan”].



later, the Bridger was one of the "instant" areas created because of its existing administrative status.<sup>46</sup>

In one important way, the Winds do not seem to fit the famous definition of "wilderness" written into the Wilderness Act, which reads in part: ". . . [A]n area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, . . . which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which . . . generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; . . ."<sup>47</sup> The meanings of "natural" and "nature" are various, but the Wilderness Act clearly refers to non-human processes or aspects of the material world. The research ecologist Peter B. Landres and his collaborators have proposed a useful distinction between "wild," which they equate with "untrammelled" (defined as "unimpeded, unhampered, uncontrolled, self-willed and free") and "natural" (for which they suggest the synonyms "native, aboriginal, indigenous, and endemic"). The Wilderness Act assumes that wildernesses are both "wild" and "natural." Mitchell's stocking helped expose some of the ironies inherent in that assumption.<sup>48</sup>

Like virtually every other landscape, the Bridger Wilderness contains evidence of thousands of years of human use, such as Indian lithic sites, the remnants of small dams, and trappers' cabins. And several hundred lakes contain the imprints of the work of Mitchell and others. The descendants of those planted trout can hardly be considered to "trammel" the entire wilderness, but some environmentalists and biologists believe they have hindered the free action of the community of life within individual lakes.<sup>49</sup>

Trout are large, voracious, and opportunistic predators that can alter the ecology of a mountain lake. Finis wrote that the lakes he stocked were "just full of water lice, leaches (sic), fresh water shrimp, and that kind of stuff . . ." As he later discovered, however, some lakes lack sufficient food for an exploding trout population.<sup>50</sup> Simon wrote that "a lake with no fish present may appear to have good food until fish are introduced, then in a short time, this food supply diminishes, leaving the fish in a semi-starved condition."<sup>51</sup> Fish introductions can have consequences upon existing vertebrate and invertebrate communities. For instance, trout originally planted during the 1930s

in Idaho and Washington have significantly lowered the densities of amphibians.<sup>52</sup> Although trout-prey relationships in Wind River lakes have not been intensively studied, specialists, including WGFD biologists, believe that larger-bodied individuals within each prey species have almost certainly declined.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Collotzi et al., "Bridger Wilderness Fish Management Plan," pp. 1-2. The Bridger Wilderness was expanded by some 36,000 acres in 1984; see "Laws and Administration for the Bridger Wilderness," in National Wilderness Preservation System Website, [http://www.wilderness.net/nwps/publaw\\_view.cfm?wname=Bridger](http://www.wilderness.net/nwps/publaw_view.cfm?wname=Bridger), accessed September 11, 2002.

<sup>47</sup> Wilderness Act, *Statutes at Large*, 78, section 2 (c), p. 891.

<sup>48</sup> Peter B. Landres et al., "Natural and Wilderness: The Dilemma and Irony of Managing Wilderness," *USDA Forest Service Proceedings* RMRS-P-15-VOL-5, 2000, pp. 377-81. See also William Cronon, "Introduction: In Search of Nature," in William Cronon, ed., *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1996), pp. 25-37; Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," in Cronon, *Uncommon Ground*, pp. 69, 79-89; and David N. Cole, "Management Dilemmas That Will Shape Wilderness in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," *Journal of Forestry* (January 2001); 4-8.

<sup>49</sup> Knapp, Corn, and Schindler, "The Introduction of Nonnative Fish into Wilderness Lakes," p. 275; and David S. Wilcove, *The Condor's Shadow: The Loss and Recovery of Wildlife in America* (New York: W.H. Freeman and Company, 1999), pp. 120-21. Good general discussions of stocking can be found in Delano R. Graff, "Why stock?" in *Trout*, pp. 341-45; Robb F. Leary, "Why Not Stock?" in *Trout*, pp. 346-50.

<sup>50</sup> Mitchell, *Wind River Trails*, p. 8. One investigator in the 1940s found more than 90 percent of trout stomach contents to be *diptera*, a large genus including many flies; one contained the remnants of a four-inch rodent. See O.H. Robertson, "An Ecological Study of Two High Mountain Trout Lakes in the Wind River Range, Wyoming," *Ecology* 28 (April 1947): 97-98. For a long list of potential trout foods, see Hudelson, Boyer, and McMillan, "High Mountain Survey," Appendix A, 1.

<sup>51</sup> Simon, "Survey of the Waters of the Wyoming National Forest," pp. 7, 12.

<sup>52</sup> David S. Pilliod and Charles R. Peterson, "Local and Landscape Effects of Introduced Trout on Amphibians in Historically Fishless Watersheds," *Ecosystems* 4 (2001): 322-33; William J. Liss and Gary L. Larson, "Complex Interactions of Introduced Trout and Native Biora in High-Elevation Lakes," <http://biology.usgs.gov/s+t/SNT/noframe/pn170.htm>, accessed November 1, 2001; and Paul Stephen Corn and Roland A. Knapp, "Fish Stocking in Protected Areas: Summary of a Workshop," *USDA Forest Service Proceedings*, RMRS-P-15-VOL-5, 2000, pp. 302-03.

<sup>53</sup> Personal interview with Kurt Nelson, WGFD Fisheries Biologist, Bridger-Teton National Forest, Pinedale region, July 17, 2002; personal interview with Ron Remmick, WGFD Fisheries Supervisor, Green River and Pinedale region, July 2, 2002; and Debra Patla, "Amphibians of the Bridger-Teton National Forest," Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem Amphibian Project, n.p., Herpetology Laboratory, Idaho State University, February 22, 2000, copy in author's possession.





"Here I photograph a Union Pacific Railroad photographer as he shoots over Upper Cooks Lake with (left to right) Monta Lester, Wall Mountain, Fremont, Harrower, and Knife Point. I seldom go to the Wind River Range to fish any more. My aim is to climb all the peaks and take pictures to show people what is actually theirs." Finis Mitchell quote. Courtesy American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

The various trout subspecies do not necessarily coexist well. Differences in spawning season or feeding habits can result in the dominance of one and the decline or complete elimination of another. Brook trout have especially thrived as they can spawn heavily in conditions where other subspecies do less well. More importantly, brook trout eggs and fry were more easily available than other species, and so more widely planted.<sup>54</sup> Simon found golden trout succeeding in Clear Lake in 1934.<sup>55</sup> Mitchell reportedly planted brooks in Clear Lake in 1931, and today, only brooks are found.<sup>56</sup> Golden were planted in the Cook lakes as early as 1929, but they have been fighting a losing battle against brooks since about 1943.<sup>57</sup> Where native cutthroats compete with other trout, the latter often prove hardier.<sup>58</sup> Finis admitted in 1985 that he had not understood the "disasters" that brook trout could cause, and advocated careful poisoning of the unwanted fish.<sup>59</sup>

Some subspecies get along *too* well, however. Golden can interbreed with rainbows, for example, producing hybrids with reduced fertility. The widely stocked Yellowstone Cutthroat can interbreed with native Colorado River cutthroats.<sup>60</sup> While none of the trout subspecies in Wind River lakes have been listed as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act, Wyoming classifies the increasingly rare Colorado River cutthroat subspecies as "sensitive."<sup>61</sup> The WGFD

worries that another Mitchell could endanger the desirable imported golden trout population. The department suggested in 1980 that "some misguided person . . . with a large dishpan" could catch brooks from the East Fork River and transplant them into nearby lakes, wiping out the golden trout.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Flick, "Brook trout," pp. 199-202; Simon, "Report of the Fish Division, 1939-1940," p. 39. The WGFD consistently reported planting more brook trout than any other subspecies; see, for example, Frank Cook, "Fish Hatcheries Department," in Robert A. Hocker, "Biennial Report of the State Game and Fish Commissioner of the State of Wyoming, 1933-34," p. 30. The Daniel hatchery superintendent planted more brooks than all others combined in 1939, but in 1940, more "natives" (i.e., cutthroats from all sources) than brooks were planted; Simon, "Report of the Fish Division, 1939-40," p. 40.

<sup>55</sup> Simon, "Survey of the Waters of the Wyoming National Forest," p. 10.

<sup>56</sup> "Finis Mitchell records"; Woods, *Walking the Winds*, p. 116.

<sup>57</sup> Hudelson, Boyer, and McMillan, "High Mountain Survey," 9, 12.

<sup>58</sup> Ray Ring, "The West's fisheries spin out of control," *High Country News*, September 18, 1995; Trotter, "Cutthroat trout," pp. 262-64.

<sup>59</sup> *Pinedale Roundup*, September 19, 1985.

<sup>60</sup> Leary, "Why not stock?" pp. 349-50; Trotter, "Cutthroat trout," pp. 248, 264.

<sup>61</sup> Wyoming Game and Fish Department, "Wyoming Game and Fish Department Comprehensive Management and Enhancement Plan for Colorado River Cutthroat Trout in Wyoming," 1987; "Conservation Agreement and Strategy for Colorado River Cutthroat Trout (*Oncorhynchus clarki pleuriticus*) in the State of Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming," March 1999.

<sup>62</sup> Hudelson, Boyer, and McMillan, "High Mountain Survey," 2, 10.

These problems and the consideration of the Wilderness Act brought about a major change in the management of Bridger waters. The comprehensive 1978 Bridger Wilderness Fish Management Plan established the “natural or wildfish concept” as a management goal. The WGFD defines “wild” as “a naturally reproducing fishery” without further stocking.<sup>63</sup> By the mid-1990s, WGFD stocked only nine lakes on the Bridger, all with either golden or Colorado River cutthroat, and the agency no longer stocks fishless lakes. The official Wyoming fishing regulations brochure provides a toll-free number for fishermen to report illegal fish planting (“costly to both you and the fisheries resource”).<sup>64</sup>

For a few people, however, the end of stocking is not enough. They believe that the presence of trout in Wind River lakes is unnatural, and that if it were politically possible to do so, those fish would be removed.<sup>65</sup> Such removal, however, would entail further human manipulation of the lakes through poisoning or other methods, compromising the wildness of the region and possibly injuring other plant and animal species.<sup>66</sup>

Those who regret the stocking of Wind River lakes are almost certainly in the minority. Most people familiar with Finis’ story take, at worst, a “what’s done is done” attitude. Mitchell’s actions, after all, were in a well-established tradition of developing fisheries in as many waters as possible, and he acted with the support of the WGFD, the National Forest Service, and public opinion long before the Wind Rivers were designated wilderness. To those who protest the ecological damage wrought on the indigenous flora and fauna, Wyoming officials note that more than half of the lakes on the Bridger Wilderness are still fishless, just as “in their pristine state.”<sup>67</sup> The plights of the fairy shrimp or the caddisfly have not yet received much attention.<sup>68</sup>

Other people are much more enthusiastic about Finis’ stocking. The Bridger Wilderness is popular with backpackers, probably half of whom carry a rod and reel. During the 1930s, stocking hundred of lakes for a handful of hikers seemed quixotic, and as a dedicated backpacker, Mitchell was unusual. Only 560 persons reportedly visited the Bridger Primitive Area in 1936, and less than one hundred of those

traveled on foot.<sup>69</sup> By the 1970s, Finis seemed virtually a prophet for the thousands who came to hike and fish the Bridger like he did. Today, about three hundred thousand people visit the Wilderness annually, and fishing for trout in the gorgeous alpine scenery is one of the main attractions.<sup>70</sup>

Many people seem to have reached an unspoken consensus that Wind River fish are both “natural” and “wild,” and thus in keeping with the Wilderness Act. By the time the area was designated “wilderness,” many generations of fish had spawned, grown, and died since Mitchell’s 1930s plantings, in many lakes without any further stocking. By the WGFD’s classification and Peter Landres’ definition, those descendants are indeed “natural,” i.e. native-born. And the department has declared those fish to be “wild” under their policy of no further stocking; that is, no more human manipulation other than fishing.<sup>71</sup> Finis himself drew a revealing distinction between Wind River lakes and the Flaming Gorge reservoir: “They keep dumping

<sup>63</sup> Collotzi et al, “Bridger Wilderness Fish Management Plan,” p. 3; Wyoming Game and Fish Department, “Why not visit a fish hatchery?” n.p., n.d. See also Hudelson, Boyer, and McMillan, “High Mountain Survey,” j; Blair, *Wildlife Management*, p. 236.

<sup>64</sup> Remmick, “Managing the BWA Fisheries,” p. 3; Wyoming Game and Fish Commission, “2002 through 2003 Wyoming Fishing Regulations,” p. 17.

<sup>65</sup> Remmick, “Managing the BWA Fisheries”; David Hohl, personal communication with author, July 3, 2002; personal interview with William Worf, by telephone from Missoula, June 24, 2002; and Kurt Nelson interview. Hohl is the former recreation supervisor for the Bridger National Forest, Pinedale. Worf is the board president of Wilderness Watch and former supervisor of the Bridger National Forest.

<sup>66</sup> Landres et al., “Naturalness and Wildness,” pp. 377-81.

<sup>67</sup> Remmick, “Managing the BWA Fisheries.”

<sup>68</sup> Kurt Nelson interview; William Worf interview; Tom Bell interview; and Fred Eiserman interview.

<sup>69</sup> *Pinedale Roundup*, December 3, 1936. On backpacking, see Roderick Frazier Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press), pp. 316-19; on Finis and other backpacking, Irv Lozier interview; William Mitchell interview.

<sup>70</sup> Untitled draft history of Bridger-Teton National Forest, personal communication with author from James R. Schoen, July 10, 2002.

<sup>71</sup> Landres et al., “Naturalness and Wildness,” p. 377; “Bridger Wilderness Action Plan and Implementation Schedule,” March 1995, pp. 23-25; and “Why not visit a fish hatchery?” See also Kenneth R. Olwig, “Reinventing Common Nature: Yosemite and Mounr Rushmore – A Meandering Tale of a Double Nature,” in *Uncommon Ground*, pp. 379-408, esp. 386.

in more and more fish all the time [into Flaming Gorge]. And that's sort of a man-made condition. While this up here is a natural condition."<sup>72</sup>

The consensus on Wind River trout has been a useful one: it helped Finis burnish credentials as a conservationist, it helped wilderness advocates garner support for statutory protection, and it served to promote Wyoming fishing and tourism. If we accept that humans are part of "nature," we can perhaps reconcile the apparent contradiction of the Wilderness Act's language. Mitchell's dedication to

his chosen place was extraordinary, and he deserves to be remembered as a friend of wilderness. He is also in a long tradition of humans using the Wind River mountains for food, drink, recreation, and communion with god or gods. The place we know today as the Bridger Wilderness, including its superb trout fishing, is their collective creation. **AW**

<sup>72</sup> Finis Mitchell testimony, May 31, 1973, tape recording, Pinedale Resource Area MFP, Bureau of Land Management.



Finis Mitchell displays the sign, "Our Sacred Rim," which he and 30 children and adults from three or four area churches placed in the Wind River Range. The rim is south of Fremont Gorge and placed where pictures can be taken with the sign in the foreground and Gannett Peak, 13,804 feet, can be seen on the horizon. Many lakes lie 2,000 feet below the rim. Fremont Peak, 13,745 feet, Suicide Lake and the white water of the streams leading into the lake can also be seen from the rim. Gannett Peak is the highest mountain in Wyoming and Fremont Peak is the second highest in the Wind River Range. Mitchell said a couple from London, England, joined their group when they reached the range and that the youngest member was a 1-month-old baby. Courtesy Wyoming State Archives.

### Jeffrey Nichols

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## The Fly-Fishing History of the Bighorn Mountains: An Interview with Sam Mavrakis, Sr.<sup>1</sup>

by Tucker W. Galloway<sup>2</sup>



pioneering fly-fisherman of the Bighorns and former owner of the Ritz Sporting Goods Store in Sheridan, Wyoming.<sup>3</sup> Besides operating one of Wyoming's legendary sporting shops, Mavrakis starred in numerous angling movies, fished with Joe DiMaggio and other celebrities, and rubbed elbows with Queen Elizabeth II.

TG: Did your father fly-fish?

SM: No, no, he was just an old Greek gambler, bootlegger, and racketeer. He started a gambling joint and a pool hall. In fact, when he came to the U.S. from Greece in 1909, he worked in a coal mine in Price, Utah, for a while and then he moved out here. There was a coal mine village out here called Monarch...And he got hurt in the mine there so [he was] given the company pool hall. That's when my brothers and I were six, seven years old. He bootlegged and bootlegged and bootlegged...My brothers and I, when we'd get out of school at night, we'd hurry

<sup>1</sup> Adrian Bantjes edited and annotated this interview. Sam Mavrakis clarified several points during a brief phone interview with Bantjes on March 16, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> For details, see Galloway's unpublished paper, titled "Fly-Fishing and Tourism History of the Big Horn Mountains," University of Wyoming, 2002.

<sup>3</sup> The Ritz Sporting Goods Store in Sheridan was a legendary gathering place for hunters and anglers until it closed in 1998. See Bob Krumm, "Downtown Sheridan will be a bit colder," in *The Billings Gazette*, December 10, 1998. Waldo "Irish" Leach (1914-2002) was one of Mavrakis's fly-tiers. See *The Casper Star Tribune*, July 30, 2002.

home to bottle more beer, so he'd have something to sell the next day. When he got caught bootlegging, I remember one time they put him in jail for a month. But they put him in only at night, they turned him loose in the daytime. So he'd come home and brew another batch of beer, and when he'd go to jail at night we'd go home and [bottle] 'em. Oh, it sure was a good life.

When my dad had a pool hall and a gambling joint in the Ritz and I had a football scholarship to BYU and I'd come home, he'd put me to work dealing cards... Then the chief of police would call once a month and he fines me. Even though it was illegal to gamble, we did anyway but we had to pay a fine every month. A hundred and four dollars and seventy cents fine. And always cash. So my dad would give me one hundred and four dollars and seventy cents, and I'd take it down to city hall. The chief would say, "Raise your right hand, son. Are you guilty?" And I'd say, "I don't know what the hell I'm guilty of but I guess I am." But... there was a stool pigeon, and I'll never forget the bastard, a guy by the name of Earl Moore, -he worked at the post office-, and he'd come down every day and take our names off the police blotter and take them up to the courthouse and record them. So my dad and I decided to go to Greece, oh, about 55 or 57 years ago, and I couldn't get a passport, because [I was] recorded at the courthouse as a gambler, bootlegger, and racketeer. So I had to send to Malcolm Wallop, United States Senator, and another Senator, to help me to get my passport.

TG: How did you start fly-fishing?

SM: I used to fly-fish a lot when we had the pool hall. In fact, I'd sit there and tie flies in my spare time,... and build rods, repair rods and reels... My dad built the pool hall there in 1915, I think, a gambling joint and a pool hall... [I] racked balls and gambled and stuff for my dad. Then finally they closed gambling and the warehouses and everything in town and then... they made a sporting goods store out of it. That was in about '47. That's when I got into the movie business... Years ago, George Grunkemeyer<sup>4</sup> [of Vacationland Studios<sup>5</sup>]... used to write a fishing story, and then he'd go back East and sell it... Grunkemeyer wrote the story, but I did the fishing. I was the expert in fishing... I was

a ham actor... Half-hour movies. Alaska, Canada, Montana, Wyoming, Florida, Mexico, we went all over the country making these movies. He was a hell of a good fly-fisherman. He taught me some... When he said we got to make a fly-fishing film... [in] Alaska or Canada, I'd check the history on the stream up there, read a bunch of books, and learn a hell of a lot, and tie a bunch of flies. I can sit there and tie a fly in thirty seconds.

TG: What kind of fly-fishing techniques did you use? How has fly-fishing equipment changed since you first started fly-fishing?

SM: Well, I did a lot of research and I found out that 99 percent of the streams coming off the Bighorn Mountains, those fast cascading streams, are wet-fly fishing. They're not dry fly... We taught that in the movies. So when we went fly-fishing, we'd go straight upstream,... with short, loose casts, and let it sink, and when the line stops, strike, and you'd got a fish... In the olden days we had those bamboos, real light and delicate bamboos. You didn't have tapered lines, you just had a level fly line, and with the soft action of the bamboos, you could cast quite a ways... But then they come up with glass rods and steel rods; they're stiffer so you got to use heavier lines, and now... they've come up with graphite rods... You used to use a lot of automatics [reels]. But automatics, if you're catching big fish like we did a lot of times, is not worth a damn. Because you get to the end of this spring, and it tightens, tightens, tightens, and it busts your line and leader off... So we got away from using automatic reels right off the bat. Just use hand cranks.

<sup>4</sup> George Grunkemeyer owned a photography studio and a movie studio, Vacationland Studios, in Sheridan. George's son, George William "Bill" Grunkemeyer (1942-2003) followed in his father's footsteps and in the mid 1980s formed Grunko Films, which produced fishing, hunting and wildlife videos. Gov. Dave Freudenthal proclaimed April 7, 2003, as "Bill Grunkemeyer Day" in Wyoming.

<sup>5</sup> Among other movies, Vacationland Studios made *Wyoming Adventure* (1956) for The Wyoming Travel Commission and the Ford Motor Company. Mavrakis made about eight or ten movies with George Grunkemeyer. Personal communication from Sam Mavrakis, March 16, 2004. According to Krumm, Mavrakis also starred in three Wright and McGill Co. promotional movies. See note 3.



Small stream fly-fishing in Wyoming. Stephen N. Leek Collection, American Heritage Center.

TG: What are your favorite flies? Have they changed?

SM: Years ago there's a guy by the name of [Franz B.] Pott,<sup>6</sup> he designed the Pott's fly, a hair fly. In fact, I tied a couple yesterday. He tied them with badger hair, and he put a colored stripe on the belly. That he called a "Sandy Mite." Then, in 1954, I designed these two flies. I call them my "Greek Brown" and my "Greek Grey" and that's all I've ever used for all those years, wet-fly fishing...You've got a lot of fancy flies since then, but, you see, when you're fishing--and this I emphasized in the movies a lot--when you're fishing...fast cascading water...you fish with wet flies...I tie them with a little different, heavier hook, and I tie them with a chenille body and they absorb water real easy, you see, and they sink. Then if they don't sink far enough, you take this leaded wire and tie a couple of strands on the body down there on the shank of the hook before you put your fly on it and it acts like a sinker and helps it sink, you see.

One thing also I've found...You know, they say,

"Guys, boy, I tried everything in the book, and I couldn't catch fish and finally I picked on a fly that was green and brown and stuff and I caught fish like crazy." That is a bunch of unadulterated baloney. The only reason he caught fish then is because the fish [saw] a silhouette he enjoyed... They can't see the color. All they see is the silhouette... My secret--and I've said this many times--you walk up to a body of water and eyeball it, and tell yourself, this is typical wet fly water, this is typical dry fly water, this is typical big fishing water, this is typical lure fishing water, and put on what you think you should use and catch fish, then you're a true angler. Like I say, in the last fifty-some years, in all the movies I made, all I take is that Greek Brown and Grey, and I put a few in an envelope in my shirt pocket and that's all the flies I use. Next time you catch a fish, you dress him up, and cut his belly

<sup>6</sup> In the 1920s, Pott, a Missoula, Montana, barber and wigmaker, was famous for his woven hair trout flies. The Montana fly-tying influence thus made its way as far south as Sheridan. See Paul Schullery, *American Fly Fishing: A History. The Full Story of Fly Fishing in America* (New York: The Lyons Press, 1999, 2nd. ed.), pp. 184-85.

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open, and you'll see green bugs, blue bugs, purple bugs, yellow bugs. Hell, he eats anything that comes along, you know. He's not particular about a certain color...That's a bunch of baloney. Putting it where the fish are at; that's it!

**TG:** What do you know about the earliest stocking efforts around here? Do you think the Game and Fish has done a good job?

**SM:** Well, I remember in the late twenties and thirties, there's a guy that worked for the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. He used to plant fish and stock them all over the state and pick me up and we'd go and stock em,...Laramie, Lovell, Cody, and all over, and that was in the thirties. [Now] the Game Department is...stocking all the streams, improving the habitat, I think [the fishing] is better now than it's ever been before. And all the reservoirs they've built, you know, they've introduced a lot of fish...A lot of big water running down below the reservoirs...They're the finest game department in the world. In fact, I made a couple of films for the game department too...They were sure fantastic people. I sure liked them. In fact, years ago, the Wyoming legislators were trying to pass a bill to take the Wyoming Game and Fish money, you know, from licenses and all that stuff, and put it in a general fund so they could use it for anything...So I got wind of it, and I had 10,000 cards printed. 10,000. "We're opposed to our legislators taking our Game Department funds." So I sent them to all the sporting goods stores all over the state. They signed them and sent them to Cheyenne...One day one of the legislators--I knew him real well, he was from here--he called me up and says, "For Christ's sake, you damn Greek, call off your dogs. We got the message." I became a hero of the Game Department.

**TG:** How do you think the privatization of land around Sheridan has affected fly-fishing?

**SM:** Well, it's hurt it. I think not the privatization so much because most of the people, the ranchers, are friendly enough that [if] you ask them, they'll let you go fishing. But I think that what's hurting them mostly is these outfitters and guides are coming out and leasing

a bunch of land and closing it for you.

**TG:** Did you ever do any guiding when you owned the Ritz?

**SM:** No, just in the movies. Oh, I think...the Prince of England, Lord Porchester,<sup>8</sup> Vice President Dan Quayle, George Bush [Sr.], Joe DiMaggio, Ben Johnson, the movie actor,<sup>9</sup> Pam Dauber, the movie actress,<sup>10</sup> I've taken a lot of those people out. I had a system: I put them in my jeep with a cooler of food and drinks, beer and so, and take em fishing, never asked them for a picture...Then, when I got 'em home and we had supper here at the table and got them half full of wine, the sky was the limit. I remember one time Joe DiMaggio was sitting there and having supper and he was pretty well loaded by then, and I said, "Joe, would you sign a baseball card?" And he says, "Hell, yes. How many do you got?" I says, "I got a dozen." He says, "Bring em all out."...Everybody else, Ben Johnson and [the] Vice President, and the Queen, tickled to death to...write up some picture. I had them all in the Ritz there...I had that museum...So, from [being] a gambler, racketeer and bootlegger, I meet the Queen, the King, the Vice-President, the President, Bobby Knight, Joe DiMaggio, and all of them, and took them all fishing. Oh, I had a good time, though, with all those guys. Nice fellows, and plain people.

**TG:** How do you think tourism has affected the Sheridan area for fly-fishing?

<sup>8</sup> Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, visited Canyon Ranch in Big Horn, Wyoming, in 1969. According to Tad Bartimus, Mavrakis "shared a drink with Prince Philip fifteen years ago at the Canyon Ranch." See "Queen Elizabeth Visits Wyoming: British Monarch Savors the Land and the People," in *American West* Vol. XXII: no. 2 (March/April 1985), pp. 29-35. During that visit, he presented the prince with flies. *The Laramie Daily Boomerang*, October 14, 1984.

<sup>9</sup> Sir Henry Herbert, Lord Porchester and the 7<sup>th</sup> Earl of Carnarvon (1924-2001), married Jean Wallop, sister of United States Senator for Wyoming, Malcolm Wallop. Lord Porchester was the Queen's racing manager. According to Mavrakis, he was nicknamed "Porchy." Personal communication, March 16, 2004.

<sup>10</sup> Johnson (1918-1996) starred in numerous Hollywood productions, including many Westerns.

<sup>11</sup> Best known for her role in the 1978 television series "Mork and Mindy."



SM: Oh, tourism helps a hell of a lot. Because 90 percent can't fish ... and all they're doing is coming and spending money, you know... Maybe one out of a hundred can fly-fish. In fact, the only one I took out that could fly-fish was Bobby Knight. He was fantastic... He was a beautiful caster... He was the only guy I took out that I didn't have to help. The rest, movie actors and princes and queens, I had to help them all. They used to come to the Ritz, and the first time they'd buy a fishing license, and then ask what kind of flies to use, and I'd mention two or three, and the first thing he'd buy a dozen. It doesn't matter. A dollar, seventy-five cents a piece. And he wouldn't cast ... and he'd snap em off. They were big business.

TG: Did you lose a lot of old pictures when the Ritz burned down?

SM: Yes, 90 percent of them lost. The Queen, when she came years ago,<sup>11</sup> she had her own photographer when she came in the Ritz and took hundreds of pictures and she had them developed and sent them to me. Then when the place burned down, she realized that some of those pictures might have burnt, so she sent me a complete new roster of them. All kinds of pictures... She was sure a nice gal. We got to be good friends... I used to take [Lord Porchester] pheasant hunting out here on [Malcolm] Wallop's place and actually he was the best shotgun shot I've ever seen in my life. Three pheasants would come on up and he'd go "Boom, boom, boom," and all... three would be in the air coming down at once, that's how fast he was. But when [the Queen] came, she told me this was the third time in her entire life that she was able to go into a store like mine and shop.<sup>12</sup> She was like a little kid: "I want this, I want that, I want this." ... We got to be real good friends... In the meantime, she got to the door, and she didn't go out yet. An obnoxious [journalist] come in with a big TV camera, completely ignored her, come up to me and says, "I'm from BBC broadcasting Britain. What did the Queen buy?" So cruel and rude, you know, and I looked at her, and she's standing in the doorway... and I looked at his camera real long, and I said, "Sir, it's none of your goddamn business." She says, "Thank,

you, Sam, you're my friend." Probably the first time she heard cursing like that in all her life.<sup>13</sup> **AW**

<sup>11</sup> Queen Elizabeth II visited Sheridan from October 12 to October 15, 1984, as a guest of Lady and Lord Porchester. For details see, "A Horsey Holiday for Her Majesty: Queen Elizabeth tours Kentucky farms and Wyoming ranches," in *Time* vol. 124, no. 17 (October 22, 1984), p. 47. The Queen stayed at Canyon Ranch in Big Horn, established in the 1880s by Oliver Wallop, the future Earl of Portsmouth. *Time* quotes local rancher William Schroeder as commenting, "What's the fuss?... There's been limeys infesting this valley for 100 years now. It's too late to get all worked up over another one." Ironically, Canyon Ranch is today operated by guide Paul Wallop as a fly-fishing and shooting resort.

<sup>12</sup> *The Sheridan Press* reported that when the Queen hosted a dinner part at the Maverick Supper Club it was "believed to be only the third time in her life she ordered from a restaurant menu." *The Sheridan Press*, October 15, 1984.

<sup>13</sup> *The Sheridan Press* described the Queen's visit to Sheridan as follows: "Shortly after 10 a.m. the queen stepped out of her limousine wearing a coral two-piece suit in front of the Ritz Sporting Goods Store. She was greeted by owner Sam Mavrakis, a world-renowned fly fisherman, who also met Prince Philip, the queen's husband, on his trip to Canyon Ranch in 1969. Mavrakis presented the queen with a handmade fly pole personally inscribed to the Duke of Edinburgh and a box of hand-tied flies [sic]. Referring to Prince Philip, the queen said, "He'll really appreciate this. He just loves to fish." She also stopped at King's Saddlery, the Big Horn Mercantile, and the Bradford Brinton Memorial." *The Sheridan Press*, October 15, 1984. For a photograph of Mavrakis offering the fly rod, see *The Sheridan Press* October 16, 1984. *The Laramie Daily Boomerang*, October 14, 1984, adds: "Mavrakis said he had been nervous about the queen's visit for weeks, but the moment she walked into the store and shook his hand all nervousness disappeared. "She's a wonderful person—a warm human being," he said. The queen ordered items for herself and several members of her family, but Mavrakis would not reveal what they were buying. "It's a private visit and it should be kept private." *The Denver Post*, October 14, 1984, was less discreet, and reported that Her Majesty had purchased "a down-filled khaki vest and matching pants, and down parkas for her husband and three sons."

## Tucker W. Galloway

is a Wyoming native. He has a Bachelor's of Science in Molecular Biology and a second in botany, both from the University of Wyoming. He plans to attend medical school in 2005. He advises all who read this article to enjoy flyfishing, respect the trout, and in the words of his grandfather, "stay sober 'til sundown."

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# Nature, Culture, and the Fly-Fishing History of Wyoming and the Rocky Mountain West

by Adrian A. Bantjes

## Introduction: Fly-Fishing Cultures and the Imagined West

In recent years, American popular culture has come to portray fly-fishing as an essential ingredient of Western culture and identity. By analyzing the creation of this particular representation we can learn much about the way Westerners and non-Westerners alike have invented, and continue to invent, an *imagined* West. In a recent article in the journal *Montana*, environmental historian Paul Schullery succinctly identifies the problem: "The question...is who, in fact, has defined the West as a fly-fishing kind of place? And the answer is that for the most part it was not us....[T]he West is a national fantasy, a place where bigger, stranger, more heroic things are possible."<sup>1</sup>

Is there any truth to this novel stereotype? Moreover, is there anything specifically *Western* about angling in Wyoming and the Rocky Mountain West? Stereotypes of Western angling often seem reminiscent of Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis. Here, in the sublime Rocky Mountain wilderness, rugged,

<sup>1</sup> Paul Schullery, "Frontier Fly-Fishing in the New West," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 52 (Summer 2002): 5, 7.

individualistic Western anglers battle monster trout on big brawling rivers like the Yellowstone, generally nymphing with heavy rods and weighted flies. As West Yellowstone guide Bud Lilly put it, "The scale of western fishing is grand....These are big rivers...Western trout have a larger-than-life reputation."<sup>2</sup> Fly-fishing in the West is a true encounter with nature. Charles Brooks, the biographer of the Madison River, described the middle section of the river as "a frustrating, maddening, sometimes haughty, sometimes frightening, but always seductive stream. It is too big, too rough and brawling, too mighty and majestic to become intimate with."<sup>3</sup> This is also a homegrown, democratic, or, as John Gierach puts it, *populist* tradition, played out, not on the "beats" of privately owned streams, but on millions of acres of pristine public wilderness.<sup>4</sup> As Tom McGuane amusingly tells us—and his joke is particularly apt for the West, "When a perennial and unsuccessful independent candidate for president from the Midwest explained the origin of the United States, he said that Europeans, tired of asking for permission to fish, looked for a place to live in which they could fish wherever they pleased."<sup>5</sup>

This is a far cry from the sport as practiced on the manicured chalkstreams of Kent or the freestone rivers of the Catskills. Eastern or British fly-fishing is often stereotypically portrayed as highly technical dry fly-fishing for finicky, "educated" trout on bucolic, dainty little streams. This is a sport of the privileged, whether members of the British aristocracy or Eastern plutocrats, who congregate in elite clubs on private trout waters such as the Houghton Fishing Club on the River Test, or the classic club waters of the upper Beaverkill in New York. This clubby ambiance still characterizes the Battenkill Valley near Manchester, Vermont, an old resort where America's nineteenth-century elite engaged in golf, fly-fishing, and other summer leisure activities while residing at their summer villas or at the Equinox Hotel. Today, this ambiance is enhanced by Land Rover's four-wheeling school, falconry and equestrian clinics, luxury outlet malls selling Burberry coats and Barbour shooting jackets, and the Orvis store, where the fishing department can be found hidden behind the upscale clothing and furniture departments.

The purpose of this essay is not to argue that there

is no such thing as a distinct Western fly-fishing heritage, but to point out what Western anglers actually have in common with their Eastern and European brethren. Far from being a homegrown tradition, Western fly-fishing is, of course, part of an arcane and highly globalized sporting tradition inspired by ancient, generally British, socio-cultural practices. This becomes clear when we examine fly-fishing's relationship to nature, society, and sporting praxis.

The Western angling environment, though undoubtedly more rugged than that found, say, in England, is not, strictly speaking, *natural*. It is essentially artificial, the result of an impressive effort to recreate European style fisheries in an alien environment by extensive tinkering with local native ecosystems, whether through the extensive stocking of non-native species, or the creation of tail waters and manmade spring creeks. This is not only true of the United States; the proliferation of fly-fishing reflects the globalization of sporting traditions. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, trout fisheries were established from India to Tanzania, and from Patagonia to Japan, all in an effort to recreate a British sporting landscape, culture, and praxis.

Though in the West access traditionally has been much better than in Europe or on the East Coast, where many quality waters are monopolized by select fishing clubs, the sport still has a long history of exclusivity. In the West, the development of fly-fishing during the nineteenth century was closely linked to the expansion of the railroads and the growth of a burgeoning tourist industry that catered to the urban middle and upper classes and wealthy Easterners. More recently, angling has assumed such a cachet that it has become part of the wider process of the resettling of the West by wealthy outsiders, many of whom are eager to establish exclusive "sporting estates" and "fishing lodges" on private waters.

<sup>2</sup> Bud Lilly and Paul Schullery, *Bud Lilly's Guide to Western Fly Fishing* (New York: Nick Lyons Books, 1987), pp. 5-6.

<sup>3</sup> Charles Brooks, *The Living River: A Fisherman's Intimate Profile of the Madison River Watershed—Its History, Ecology, Lore, and Angling Opportunities* (New Jersey, New York: Winchester Press, Nick Lyons Books, 1979), p. 133.

<sup>4</sup> John Gierach, *Another Lousy Day in Paradise* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), p. 204.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Lindsay and Thomas McGuane, *Upstream: Fly Fishing in the American West* (New York: Aperture Foundation, 2000), p. 24.

Though, as we shall see, private Catskill-style clubs are relatively rare, Western trout streams have become increasingly privatized, or are in the process of being locked up by guiding outfits that cater to wealthy sportsmen. Though the vast expanses of Western public lands militate against total monopolization, the democratic, populist tradition of local fly-fishing may one day become a distant memory.

The development of Western angling practices and techniques is another topic of cultural interest. Wyoming angling is the result of the interaction of what one might call, borrowing anthropologist Robert Redfield's concept, the *great tradition* of fly-fishing, essentially imported from Britain and the East, with local *little traditions* and environments, that ultimately resulted in a distinctly Western style of fly-fishing. This article examines the development of the sport of fly-fishing in Wyoming and neighboring Rocky Mountain states (Colorado, Montana) by focusing on the interaction between local players, such as anglers, guides, dude ranchers, developers, state game and fish employees, and external actors, e.g., railway companies, wealthy sportsmen, outside angling promoters, federal agencies, etc. The result of this interplay over a period of roughly 125 years is the creation of one of the best sports fisheries in the United States. Ironically, the West has made the transition from an angling frontier to a fly-fisherman's Mecca, in the process becoming a center that now disseminates angling practices to the rest of the country and the world.

### Western Nature and Fly-Fishing

Early travelers' accounts clearly indicate that Rocky Mountain waters offered excellent fishing for seemingly endless numbers of native cutthroat trout.<sup>6</sup> Yet many streams and lakes considered excellent fisheries today lacked "game fish," as narrowly defined by contemporary angling discourse, and were thus seen as "virgin" or "barren," just waiting for the finishing touch of man to create a sporting paradise. Fish were, of course, a valuable food source for soldiers, settlers, railroad workers, and miners, and exploited on a colossal scale. Market fishermen did a brisk business supplying booming Western towns and camps with a steady supply of fish.<sup>7</sup> The effects of overfishing and environmental degradation were devastating for the

native cutthroat. By 1937, the Greenback (*Oncorhynchus clarki stonias*) was considered extinct throughout its vast former range (though small pockets were rediscovered in 1969). The Colorado River cutthroat (*O. clarki pleuriticus*) only survives in the isolated mountain headwaters of a few streams, such as the Little Snake River in Wyoming. The Westslope cutthroat (*O. clarki lewisi*) now only inhabits 2.5 percent of its former range.<sup>8</sup>

The 1883 report of the Wyoming Territorial Fish Commission acknowledged that "it is an admitted fact that a majority of our streams are sterile of good food fish, whilst a remainder are nearly exhausted of a once bountiful supply."<sup>9</sup> The Laramie and North Platte river basins, for example, today known for their excellent, often blue ribbon, fishing, held no trout at all. This was true of other watersheds as well. According to the Wyoming Fish Commission, the Sweetwater and Powder rivers, Clear Creek in Johnson County, the headwaters of the Little Missouri River and Sand Creek, were barren of trout. This was also true of many of the state's thousands of high mountain lakes, for example in the Wind River and Snowy ranges. In southeastern Wyoming, trout fishing was limited to a handful of small tributaries of the South Platte, in particular Dale Creek, where the native greenback population was rapidly heading towards extinction.<sup>10</sup>

### Early Western Angling Tourism

Paradoxically, while western fisheries rapidly declined during the late nineteenth century, angling tourism became a significant factor, as was the case on many famed Eastern streams. The Wyoming Fish Commission understood that "wherever [tourists] can

<sup>6</sup> On native cutthroat, see Robert J. Behnke, *Trout and Salmon of North America* (New York: The Free Press, 2002), pp. 155-199; John H. Monnett, *Cutthroat and Campfire Tales: The Fly-Fishing Heritage of the West* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2001), pp. 16-31.

<sup>7</sup> Neal Blair, *The History of Wildlife Management in Wyoming* (Cheyenne: Wyoming Game and Fish Department, 1987), p. 15; Monnett, *Cutthroat*, pp. 6, 21-24.

<sup>8</sup> Behnke, *Trout*, pp. 160, 193, 195.

<sup>9</sup> Citation in Blair, *History*, p. 22.

<sup>10</sup> Chuck Ritter, "The Good Old Days," in *Wyoming Wildlife* XXI (January, 1957): 21, 25. In addition, Fish Creek, Trail Creek, and Sheep Creek. Baxter and Stone also mention Lonetree Creek in Albany and Laramie counties. See George T. Baxter and Michael D. Stone, *Fishes of Wyoming*, (Cheyenne: Wyoming Fish and Game Department, 1995), p. 178.



Fishing for native Snake River cutthroat trout near Jackson Hole. Unlike other cutthroat subspecies, the Snake River cutthroat miraculously survived the introduction of non-native species and is still the predominant fish in the Snake River, a famed western fishery. Stephen N. Leek Collection, American Heritage Center.

find game fish and fish they will certainly go....Thousands of dollars will be left here annually by encouraging legislation.”<sup>11</sup> The conclusion they reached was that Western waters were to be stocked with non-native game species. However, even before the stocking of Wyoming waters started in the 1880s, the first tourists traveling through Wyoming and other Rocky Mountain regions found excellent fishing, often in streams today not featured in the guides. In his 1873 *The Fishing Tourist Angler's Guide and Reference Book*, angling writer Charles Hallock eulogized the fabulous fishing opportunities of the Rockies, especially around Sherman in the Laramie Range:

The Rocky Mountains are traversed everywhere by trout streams; and the overland tourist who is inclined to spend the months of July and August among their peaks and defiles and magnificent upland parks, can hardly cast his line amiss in any of them. In the vicinity of Sherman, on the line of the Union Pacific Railway...the trout fishing is equal to any on the road. Dale Creek, a tributary of the Cache-à-la-Poudre River, and other streams in the immediate neighborhood, abound in trout of the finest quality, and weighing from a quarter of a pound to two pounds each; their flesh is

hard and white as that of the mountain-trout of Vermont. Even the tiniest rivulets swarm with them. Fifteen miles beyond Sherman, at Virginia Dale, the Dale Creek traverses a canon whose walls are 600 feet high, and the adjacent scenery is wonderfully diversified by grottoes, gorges, dells, canons, precipices, towering-peaks, and rugged recesses. Antelope, elk, black-tailed deer, bears, sage-hen, and grouse, abound in the hills and on the plateaus. There is excellent hotel accommodation for the sportsman.<sup>12</sup>

Hallock also recommended Lake Como and the Medicine Bow River, the Bear River and Bear Lake on the Wyoming-Utah line, and the Fort Bridger area, where excellent rooms and guide service could be found at Judge Carter's Hotel.<sup>13</sup>

In neighboring Colorado territory, tourism developed early as well. Denver lawyer, judge, and

<sup>11</sup> Citation in Blair, *History*, p. 24.

<sup>12</sup> Charles Hallock, *The Fishing Tourist Angler's Guide and Reference Book* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1873), pp. 217-18.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*



Third Annual Fish Fry, Saratoga, Wyoming, September 21, 1910. While the North Platte River drainage held no trout prior to the stocking efforts of the early 1880s, it soon produced prodigious numbers of fish. Three thousand nine hundred twenty trout were consumed that day. Despite such waste, and thanks to special regulations, the North Platte is today a blue ribbon fishery. Courtesy American Heritage Center.

sporting writer, Lewis Browne France (1833-1907),<sup>14</sup> who often published under the *nom de plume* 'Bourgeois,' described his angling adventures in a series of delightful books and articles. During the mid-1860s, anglers like France would travel thirty-five miles from Denver to Bear Creek to camp and fish for trout. By the early 1870s, angling tourism began to focus on the "Grand" (Colorado River) and Williams' Fork in the Middle Park near Hot Sulpher Springs. France describes the arduous trip, first to "Idaho" by train, and from there fifty miles overland via Empire and over Berthoud Pass to camps along the Colorado. Here tourists fished for plentiful seventeen-inch trout and soaked in the still undeveloped hot springs.<sup>15</sup> In 1875 France embarked

on a summer vacation with his wife and "the governor" (his son) in the still relatively pristine Estes Park region. From Denver, France took the Colorado Central to Longmont, and then made his way by horse team fifteen rough miles up the Saint Vrain canyon along an often barely visible trail. There he set up his base camp at Ferguson's cabin below Prospect Mountain and spent six weeks fishing the Thompson and Falls

<sup>14</sup> For a brief biography, see John H. Monnett, "Foreword" to L.B. France, *With Rod and Line in Colorado Waters* (Boulder: Pruett Publishing Co., 1996), pp. vii-xi.

<sup>15</sup> L.B. France, *With Rod and Line in Colorado Waters* (Denver: Chain, Hardy & Co., 1884), pp. 6, 9-13, 18, 22-23, 29, 31.



"One hundred and fifty fish in five hours." Successful fishing expedition to Jack Creek, near Saratoga, in 1910. Courtesy American Heritage Center.

rivers, and smaller streams in Horse Shoe and Willow parks.<sup>16</sup> Even at that early date, tourists were regularly making their way up into the range, but the streams were still not fished out: “The trout struck and I landed them so fast that the sport began to be monotonous...” “[C]ombining business and sport,” France filled a sixteen-pound lard can with trout.<sup>17</sup>

Just as Wyoming old timers today laugh at the fancy city slickers who, clad in elegant designer apparel and armed with the most expensive tackle, overrun our streams every summer, France ridiculed the dandy “tenderfeet” who increasingly disturbed the peace at Estes Park:

There was one young gentleman...He was dressed in light drab pants, cheviot shirt, and a broad-brimmed felt hat, the band of which was stuck full of flies of all sizes and a multitude of colors. He had a fifty-dollar rod and a fifteen-dollar reel of wonderful combination; his eyes, emphatic with disgust, glaring through his glasses, he avowed there were no fish in the Park. He held up a crimson fly that would have driven crazy any fish except a sucker...I told him that the trout was a queer fish, and that perhaps he had better try a blue flannel rag, and offered to give him a piece of my shirt, but he got mad, tore around, and threatened, in popular parlance, to take off the top of my head.<sup>18</sup>

By the early eighties the author was nostalgically lamenting the loss of his idyllic mountain getaway at Estes Park, which was now “easy of access..., the trail having given way to the wagon road,”<sup>19</sup> and decrying the “desecration” of places like Grand Lake, where shanties and shacks were sprouting up everywhere and even chic French tourists appeared, including, he noted with horror, a mademoiselle with a monkey.<sup>20</sup>

Just as the railroads had opened up to mass tourism the Catskills, the Adirondacks, Michigan, and other angling destinations, the development of railroads had an enormous impact on sport fishing in the Rocky Mountains.<sup>21</sup> In 1869, the transcontinental railroad was completed. From the 1870s on, a rapidly expanding network of Western railways, for example the Colorado and Southern (the “Fisherman’s Special” up the South

Platte Canyon<sup>22</sup>), the Denver and Rio Grande, and the Midlands, transported angling tourists, including many Denverites, to new fishing resorts and ranches located on distant mountain streams and lakes. By the early twentieth century, a widespread network of angling resorts catered to the needs of Colorado anglers. Close to Denver was the famed Canyon of the South Platte, where tourists lodged in cabins at Deckers Springs Fishing Resort in Deckers or took rooms at the Hotel Glenisle. The Gunnison River, reached by the Denver and Rio Grande, boasted numerous fishing inns, including the popular inn at the Cebolla depot, right on the river, the Rainbow Hotel in Sapinero, and the Iola Hotel and Fishing Resort. North of Grand Lake John G. Holzwarth built the Holzwarth Trout Lodge shortly after 1917, followed by his Never Summer Ranch in 1923. Here trout catches were “limited” to twenty pounds per person. The Keystone Hotel, in Home, Larimer County, welcomed anglers fishing the Cache la Poudre.<sup>23</sup> Trapper’s Lake near Meeker featured a famous fishing lodge, established in 1917, which, sadly, burned to the ground during the Big Fish Fire of 2002.<sup>24</sup>

In Wyoming, railroads played a similar role. The 1886 *Angler’s Guide Book and Tourists’ Gazeteer* [sic]

<sup>16</sup> “Bourgeois” [L.B. France], “The Lure,” in Charles F. Orvis and A. Nelson Cheney, eds., *Fishing with the Fly. The Orvis-Cheney Collection* (Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1883), pp.145-55.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

<sup>18</sup> France, *With Rod and Line*, pp. 33-34, 41.

<sup>19</sup> “Bourgeois,” “The Lure,” p. 145.

<sup>20</sup> France, *With Rod and Line*, pp. 96-98.

<sup>21</sup> Paul Schullery, *American Fly Fishing: A History. The Full Story of Fly Fishing in America* (New York: The Lyons Press, 1999), pp. 43-49, 130-31

<sup>22</sup> Nolie Mumey, *Wigwam: The Oldest Fishing Club in the State of Colorado, with some History of Douglas and Jefferson Counties* (Boulder: Johnson Publishing Company, 1969), p. 35; William C. Harris, ed., *The Angler’s Guide Book and Tourist’s Gazeteer of the Fishing Waters of the United States and Canada, 1886* (New York: The Angler’s Publishing Company; Chicago: The Western Angler’s Publishing Co., 1887), pp. 39-43.

<sup>23</sup> See for references the Denver Public Library’s Western History/Genealogy Department’s photographic collection; Harvey H. Kaiser, *Landmarks in the Landscape: Historical Architecture in the National Parks of the West* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1997 ), p. 173.

<sup>24</sup> Monnett, *Cuttthroat*, pp. 96-99; Nanci and Kirk Reynolds, *Western Fly-Fishing Vacations* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1988), pp. 89-90.



followed the Union Pacific lines and the stagecoach routes. In southwestern Wyoming, travelers stopping at Aspen, Carter, Cokeville, Piedmont, Hilliard, Twin Creek, and Evanston, could try their luck for "mountain trout," whitefish and grayling in the area's mountain lakes or on the "grand fishing section[s]" of the Bear River, the Blacks Fork of the Green, the Smiths Fork of the Green, the Henrys Fork of the Green, the Hams Fork, (Big) Muddy Creek, Spring Creek, and the superb Beaver Creek. Fort Bridger was recommended for accommodations, while Cokeville had a Union Pacific "eating house." Hotels cost two or three dollars a day, the "section house" at Hilliard fifty cents a day, a guide and team of horses five dollars. Adventurous souls could take the stagecoach 150 miles north to Fort Washakie, where splendid fly-fishing could be had on the forks of the Little and Big Wind rivers. Those getting off at Rawlins or Fort Steele would have to rough it. To fish for trout and 'mullet' on Savery Creek, the (Little) Snake River, or at Battle Lake, anglers would travel fifty miles and camp out. Near Laramie, Tie Siding, and Sherman, "very fine trouting" for "brook" or "mountain trout" [sic] was to be had on Dale Creek, Fish Creek (the best), Texas Creek, Sheep Creek, Trail Creek, and the Cache la Poudre River in neighboring Colorado.<sup>25</sup> Tourists traveled to Yellowstone from the north via the Northern Pacific Railroad, and, from 1909 on, also entered via West Yellowstone. The first cars were allowed to enter the park in 1915, opening up the park to the mass tourism of "Sagebrushers."<sup>26</sup> As late as the 1940s, Cheyenne and Casper anglers hopped on trains and were let off near choice fishing holes on the North Platte. When Jack Hemingway visited his father and stepmother in Casper in 1946, a railway engineer called Blackie took him out to the excellent water below the Black Canyon, now long submerged by Seminoe Reservoir, where they hooked into five-pound rainbow.<sup>27</sup>

While in Colorado fishing resorts were common, in Wyoming and Montana other forms of lodging seem to have prevailed. After the turn of the century, Easterners eager to settle in the West established the first dude ranches, such as the Eaton Ranch in Wolf, Wyoming. The Dude Ranchers' Association worked closely with the Northern Pacific Railroad to attract well-heeled Eastern dudes to the West. By the 1930s,

some dudes arrived in Wyoming on the new direct flights to Cheyenne from New York and Chicago.<sup>28</sup> Angling was an important component of the dude's vacation activities. The Eaton Ranch advertised fishing on Wolf Creek, "a fine trout stream," as one of its highlights. A 1911 pamphlet featured pictures of the stream and a woman fly-fishing, and advised the use of flies such as the Montreal, Silver Doctor, Beaver Kill, and Dusty Miller, tied on a no. 12 hook. The "quiet stream through the ranch yard will afford well repaying sport, with the dinner gong within easy earshot." However, better fishing for larger trout could be had up the canyon or at the famed Dome Lake, "the fisherman's Mecca."<sup>29</sup> A few of these dude ranches ultimately became elegant fly-fishing lodges, most notably the Crescent H Ranch near Wilson, Wyoming, with its superb private waters on Fish Creek and the Snake River, which became an Orvis-endorsed fly-fishing lodge.<sup>30</sup> Less pecunious locals relied on rustic cabin lodging for their fishing trips, for example, the Woods Landing Resort on the Big Laramie, still in operation today, or the now abandoned Rainbow Camp on the North Laramie.

### Managing Delicate Fisheries

An English chalk stream, carefully tended by a river keeper and his staff, who cut weeds in the streambed, lay out hellgrammite boards, mow the river banks, and often heavily stock the waters, seems the antithesis of the rugged Western style of angling for wild trout in remote streams and lakes. Yet the excellent fishing opportunities Wyoming and the Rocky Mountain West have to offer today are, to a very significant degree, the result of a massive and extremely costly effort spanning

<sup>25</sup> Harris, *The Angler's Guide Book*, pp. 207-08.

<sup>26</sup> Monnett, *Cutthroat*, pp. 38-39; Joel H. Bernstein, *Families that Take in Friends: An Informal History of Dude Ranching* (Stevensville, Montana: Stoneydale Press, 1983), p. 44.

<sup>27</sup> Personal communication, Gerald K. Henning; Jack Hemingway, *Misadventures of a Fly Fisherman: My Life with and without Papa* (Dallas: Taylor Publishing Company, 1986), p. 225.

<sup>28</sup> Bernstein, *Families*, pp. 39-64, 99.

<sup>29</sup> Eaton Ranch Pamphlet, 1911. I am grateful to Tucker Gallo-way for providing me with a copy.

<sup>30</sup> For glossy pictures and details, see Ralph Kylloe, *Fishing Camps* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, Publisher, 1996), pp. 74-75; Reynolds and Reynolds, *Western Fly-Fishing Vacations*, pp. 192-93.



Angling on the Big Laramie River near Laramie, 1910. After stocking in the late nineteenth century, the river soon produced rainbows up to seven pounds. However, the diversion of water to Colorado and heavy irrigation negatively affected the stream. Courtesy American Heritage Center.

more than a century to stock and scientifically manage game fish in thousands of Western lakes and streams. Angling is only to a limited extent a “natural” practice. Instead, in many areas of the West, nature has been manipulated and modified to accommodate ancient cultural practices rooted in the European past.

As elsewhere in the United States, the West was not immune to the disastrous effects of over-fishing, pollution, and environmental degradation related to logging, mining, industrialization, and urban development. The wanton destruction of fisheries by “fish hogs” mirrored the near extinction of the buffalo. To counter this precipitous decline and address the lack of game fish in many parts of Wyoming, the state legislature passed legislation to protect a rapidly dwindling resource, while massive stocking campaigns were undertaken, starting in the 1880s. Neal Blair has chronicled the administrative process in great detail. The Wyoming Territorial Legislature passed an act for the protection of game and fish as early as 1869, and appointed a fish commissioner in 1880. That same year, fifty thousand rainbow and brook trout were shipped to Wyoming by rail from Wisconsin and planted in tributaries of the North Platte River. Streams and lakes throughout Albany, Laramie, and Carbon counties were once again stocked heavily with trout the next year.

Other species soon followed, though many initial plantings failed: carp (1883), landlocked salmon (1890), brown trout (1890), crappie (1885), mackinaw (1890), whitefish (1890), sand pike or walleye (1882), and grayling (1900).<sup>31</sup> Starting in 1882, the Wyoming Legislature enacted legislation providing for the propagation and distribution of game fish. At Soldier’s Spring (Fort Sanders) near Laramie, the state’s first fish hatchery was established in 1884. The hatchery soon produced millions of non-native brook trout, lake trout, and rainbow trout for planting throughout Wyoming.<sup>32</sup> Fingerlings were transported in cream cans by rail, and sometimes by wagon, a risky endeavor, especially during the hot Wyoming summers. New hatcheries soon followed in Sheridan and Sundance. The fish commission successfully introduced brook and rainbow trout to the North Platte, the Big Laramie, the Sweetwater, the Powder River, and Sand Creek. The results were often phenomenal. The Big Laramie River, for example, was soon rendering rainbows up to seven pounds and brook trout of up to three and a half pounds.<sup>33</sup> Even the remote Yellowstone Park streams,

<sup>31</sup> James R. Simon, *Wyoming Fishes* (Cheyenne: Wyoming Game and Fish Department, 1946), p. 12.

<sup>32</sup> Blair, *History*, pp. 17-24.

<sup>33</sup> Ritter, “Good Old Days,” pp. 20-25, 29.

such as the Firehole and Gibbon rivers, were repeatedly stocked with brook, brown, rainbow, grayling, and even black bass. A hatchery operated on Yellowstone Lake from about 1905 to 1955, when the park finally discontinued fish plantings. The Firehole River, once devoid of trout, is now considered one of the nation's classic trout streams, immortalized by angling writers such as Ernest Schwiebert.<sup>34</sup> Starting in the 1930s, enterprising outdoorsmen like Finis Mitchell began stocking the Wind River Range, using pack trains to carry the fish into isolated alpine lakes.<sup>35</sup> By 1923, state hatcheries had been established at Laramie, Dubois, Hyattville, Cody, Story, Cokeville, and Daniel, and the state added new hatcheries in Tensleep in 1928, at Como Bluff and Auburn during the 1940s, and at Casper and Tillett Springs in the 1950s. Fish production grew astronomically, from nearly 6 million in 1923 to 29 million by 1931-32.<sup>36</sup> Starting in 1960, the Game and Fish Commission began to deploy aircraft for planting purposes, a far cry from the old milk can approach.<sup>37</sup>

The post-war years witnessed the rapid growth of recreational fishing. Wyoming was becoming a fishing destination for tens of thousands of non-resident anglers: "Fishing in itself has become one of the main recreational factors affecting the economy of many of our local communities, and the state as a whole." Not surprisingly, the responsibilities of the fish division expanded dramatically to include conservation, stream rehabilitation, pollution monitoring, access and infrastructure, scientific studies, etc.<sup>38</sup>

Ironically, one factor that gave an enormous boost to Western angling was the construction of numerous dams during the twentieth century. Many of today's hotspots (or, "hog holes," as Gierach calls them<sup>39</sup>), such as the Green at Flaming Gorge, the Miracle Mile and Grey Reef on the North Platte, the Bighorn below Boysen Reservoir and below Yellowtail Dam at Fort Smith, Montana, the Shoshone below Buffalo Bill Dam, the South Platte below Cheeseman and Spinney mountain reservoirs, the San Juan below Navajo Dam, etc., are recently created tail waters. The famed Green River fishery below Flaming Gorge Dam at Dutch John, Utah, for example, came into existence in 1964 after a massive campaign to exterminate non-game species and stock millions of game fish.<sup>40</sup> Some of the

region's best fisheries are thus very recent and entirely artificial creations, fly-fishing Disneylands, as some anglers call them.

The classic Western spring creeks, which tend to hold trout of enormous size and pose the expert angler with the ultimate fly-fishing challenge are also, in a sense, artificial environments. Many, for example the famed spring creeks in Paradise Valley near Livingston, Montana, are extremely vulnerable to spring floods and other environmental factors and require constant maintenance. Numerous Montana spring creeks, such as the McCoy Cattle Company creeks near Dillon, are essentially manmade environments, the result of extensive landscaping, dredging, and rechanneling with heavy equipment.<sup>41</sup>

### Class and Fly-Fishing: Elite Angling Clubs of the West

In Great Britain, fly-fishing has been associated with an "aristocratic" sporting ethos. Though the United States has seen the emergence of both elite and democratic angling traditions, the New York bourgeoisie certainly sought to emulate the British angling ambiance at numerous private clubs established on prized Catskill streams.<sup>42</sup> Does the West have a distinct, more democratic, or populist tradition? Certainly, the availability of prime trout waters throughout the Rocky Mountain region enhanced the opportunities for broad segments of the population to engage in fishing.

<sup>34</sup> Baxter and Stone, *Fishes of Wyoming*, p. 167; Brooks, *The Living River*, pp. 56-59; For details, see John Byorth, "Trout Shangri-La: Remaking the Fishing in Yellowstone National Park," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 52 (Summer 2002): 38-47.

<sup>35</sup> Finis Mitchell, *Wind River Trails* (Salt Lake City: Wasatch Publishers, 1975). See Jeffrey Nichols' contribution to this issue.

<sup>36</sup> Blair, *History*, pp. 59, 72, 88, 105, 158. The Laramie hatchery closed in 1942, the Cokeville operation in 1946.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 159, 169-70.

<sup>39</sup> John Gierach, *Even Brook Trout get the Blues* (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1992), ch. 7.

<sup>40</sup> See Ed Engle, *Fly Fishing the Tailwaters* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Stackpole Books, 1991); Blair, *History*, pp. 175-76, 195; On dams, see [www.usbr.gov/dataweb/dams](http://www.usbr.gov/dataweb/dams).

<sup>41</sup> William G. Tapply, "Creeks on the Rise," *American Angler* 27 (March 2004): 66-74.

<sup>42</sup> On angling clubs, see Schullery, *American Fly Fishing*, ch. 12; William Washabaugh with Catherine Washabaugh, *Deep Trout: Angling in Popular Culture* (New York: Berg, 2000), ch. 5.

However, the West is not immune to angling elitism, and we find a few examples of angling clubs in Colorado and Wyoming. In 1894, inspired by the dream of Edward Gillette, surveyor and chief engineer for the Burlington and Missouri River Railroad, a group of influential Nebraska and Wyoming businessmen established a fishing lodge on 1,040 acres surrounding Dome Lake, a renowned fishing hole located in the Bighorn Mountains near Sheridan. By the time it became a private club in 1901, Dome Lake boasted an impressive lodge, comfortable cabins, electricity, a chef and servants, and three stocked lakes. Early members included Nebraska businessmen, bankers, and lawyers, such as C.N. Dietz, George W. Holdrege, and Capt. Henry E. Palmer, as well as members of the Sheridan elite, such as cattleman and future Wyoming governor and senator, John B. Kendrick, the Moncrieffe brothers, Oliver H. Wallop, and Bradford Brinton. Between 1894 and 1897, the resort's waters were stocked with nearly 190,000 brook, rainbow, and cutthroat trout. Interestingly, the club has lasted until this day, with membership still in the hands of the descendents of the original members.<sup>43</sup>

In Colorado, the most exclusive angling club catered to the needs of the Denver social elite. Located on a prime stretch of trout water on the South Platte, the Wigwam Club was established in 1921 when *Denver Post* owner F. G. Bonfils and his associates purchased the old Gill Resort and constructed a lodge and cabins on the club's 240 acres. Membership included the crème de la crème of Denver society, and the club was often referred to as the "Millionaires' Club," which may be a slight exaggeration.<sup>44</sup> The club was very protective of its exclusive fishing rights, and hired a heavyweight wrestler to discourage poaching by riffraff from neighboring resorts.

Much later, in 1964, George Butler Storer, an Ohio broadcasting entrepreneur who had fallen in love with the West, spent an initial \$2.5 million on the development of the Old Baldy Club, an exclusive golf and angling resort located on the North Platte River near Saratoga, Wyoming. According to *The Denver Post*, the club, created for "persons of means who love to hunt and fish and golf and who respect the rules of sportsmanship," boasted an eighteen-hole golf course,

twelve miles of trout stream (fly-fishing only), a clubhouse and chalets, and a pro shop. Resident initiation fees ran one thousand dollars, annual dues five hundred dollars.<sup>45</sup> Today, this "sportsman's paradise," now enhanced by a pool, tennis courts, a skeet and trap range, and a stocked private lake, has 250 members.<sup>46</sup> Fishing is still excellent on Old Baldy's waters, especially the famed Trout Run, thanks to the stewardship of the club's stream manager and fishing guides.<sup>47</sup>

Such clubs are no anomaly, and elite interest in the Western fly-fishing scene has increased dramatically in recent years. The popularity of fly-fishing is undoubtedly linked to the Western real estate boom of the 1990s. Wealthy outsiders have streamed into the Greater Yellowstone area and, for that matter, just about any scenic region of the Rocky Mountains, in search of solitude, hunting, and fishing, in the process dramatically transforming many Western rural communities. Wyoming's Teton County is today the nation's most affluent county,<sup>48</sup> boasting, for example, the offices of Christies Great Estates. The historic Crescent H Ranch, with its 1927 lodge and a core of 233 acres, until recently an Orvis-endorsed fly-fishing lodge, recently went on the market for nearly \$17 million. Surrounding tracts and homes, with access to the ranch's seven miles of private Blue Ribbon fishing on Fish Creek, the Snake River, and other spring creeks and ponds, are selling briskly. Many properties are marketed as "private fishing estates," where 27-inch rainbows and 31-inch cutbows can be caught.<sup>49</sup> Some Jackson realtors specialize in "the protection of privately-owned wildlife and trout habitat," and offer for sale

<sup>43</sup> Kevin E. Rucker, *Where Time Stands Still: A History of the Dome Lake Club* (private edition, n.d. [2001]), pp. 7-22, 34. Also see Michael A. Amundson, *Wyoming Time and Again* (Boulder: Pruett Publishing Co., 1991), pp. 31-42.

<sup>44</sup> Mumey, *Wigwam*, pp. 119, 152, 178.

<sup>45</sup> Larry Birleffi, "A Place for Eagles," *Empire Magazine (The Denver Post)*, December 6, 1964.

<sup>46</sup> Old Baldy Club promotional pamphlet (2000). I am grateful to Ander Schumann for providing me with detailed information.

<sup>47</sup> Ander F. Schumann, "Old Baldy Club, Saratoga, Wyoming: An Oral History and Analysis of the Old Baldy Club," Unpublished paper, University of Wyoming, 2002.

<sup>48</sup> *The Casper Star Tribune*, April 18, 2004.

<sup>49</sup> Real Estate of Jackson Hole Pamphlets, circa 2002, 2003.

fly-fishing properties in Wyoming, “the most wealth-friendly state,” Idaho, Montana, and other Western states. Wyoming fly-fishing ranches on the Green, Bighorn, Wind, Salt, and Hoback rivers typically run in the \$2-3 million range.<sup>50</sup> Exclusive new developments in Wyoming, Montana, and Colorado, are now planned *around* spring creeks and along trout streams. Near Bozeman, Bud Lilly designed a stretch of Baker Creek for a new fly-fishing residential community.<sup>51</sup> *Sic transit gloria mundi*, some might say, while others, including prominent fly-fishermen, maintain that upscale fly-fishing “tourism saved our country” and actually benefits the conservation of threatened Western trout habitat.<sup>52</sup>

### Western Fly-Fishing Techniques

Western angling traditions developed gradually as the result of the interaction of external influences, i.e., Eastern and British traditions brought in by outsiders, and local experimentation. Early practices were often primitive, due to the distances separating settlers from the fine tackle shops of the East or West coasts. One Montana angler describes his first experimentation with “flies” during an arduous march from Corinne, Utah, to Missoula, Montana, in 1877. For want of the real thing, he cast a red piece of flannel on a hook to rising trout and promptly hooked an eight-inch fish.<sup>53</sup> Colorado angler Lewis France initially fished with plum bush pole, linen line, and simple wet flies, borrowed from a friend, “saved over from more civilized times.”<sup>54</sup> Our Missoula “fly-fisher” used an “eighteen foot tamarack” with a no. 3 Frankfort, Kentucky, reel, which a friend described as a “nail keg,” before making his own fly rod, and finally sending East for “a very fine split bamboo rod.”<sup>55</sup> France suggested carrying the following tackle: “in your fly books a *little* of everything, but of grey and brown hackles,....coachmen and professors, an abundance...[If nothing else worked, there were always hoppers]. For a rod...Ash butt and second joint, with lancewood tip, Greenheart or Bethabara...Then, when you feel that you can handle a rod with the same deftness a mother her firstborn, save up your money and buy a first class split bamboo.”<sup>56</sup> After the turn of the century, many Western hardware stores and some hotels carried fly-fishing tackle, creels, and flies.<sup>57</sup> On the opening day of the

1904 trout season, June 1, the George Tritch Hardware store on Arapahoe Street in Denver, which claimed to carry the best stock of tackle in the state, offered a complete fly-fishing outfit, consisting of a two-tip bamboo rod, twenty-five yards of silk line, a click reel, two dozen snelled hooks, three leaders, and three dozen flies, for the princely sum of two dollars. They also carried wading pants, khaki wading boots, fishing coats, landing nets, fishing hats, and “refrigerator lunch baskets.”<sup>58</sup>

In her 1892 classic, *Favorite Flies and their Histories*, Mary Orvis Marbury published the opinions of a number of Western anglers on the effectiveness of flies. The results indicate that Western fly-fishermen were rather conservative and stuck to a very limited range of traditional flies, especially varieties of the Coachman, the Brown Hackle, the Professor, and the Black Gnat.<sup>59</sup> Charles P. Hill of Rawlins, Wyoming, preferred the Scarlet Ibis when fishing the distant waters of the Sierra Madre, such as the (Little) Snake River and Slater and Savory creeks. C. S. Farren, of Cokeville, used a wide variety of flies, but the Coachmen were his “standard flies.”<sup>60</sup> Clearly, late nineteenth-century Western anglers tended to depend on a limited number of standard flies and tackle procured from New York or San Francisco.<sup>61</sup> Innovations were met with derision by anglers such as William H. DeWitt, of Helena, Montana: “I...emphatically condemn the flies, recently placed upon the market, made in the verisimilitude of flies and insects. They are a thing of beauty upon the dealer’s card, and attractive to an amateur buyer; but three or four casts make hotchpotch of them, and excite the

<sup>50</sup> See [www.flyfishingproperties.com](http://www.flyfishingproperties.com).

<sup>51</sup> Tapply, “Creeks...,” p. 70.

<sup>52</sup> Jack Dennis, “Fishing in the Shadow of the Tetons,” presentation at the University Flycasters’ Anglers’ Symposium, Laramie, Wyoming, April 22-23, 2004.

<sup>53</sup> Mary Orvis Marbury, *Favorite Flies and their Histories* (London: Phoenix House Ltd., 1955 [reprint of 1982 edition]), p. 448.

<sup>54</sup> France, *With Rod and Line*, p. 6.

<sup>55</sup> Orvis Marbury, *Favorite Flies*, pp. 451-52.

<sup>56</sup> France, *With Rod and Line*, p. 33.

<sup>57</sup> See the Denver Public Library’s Western History/Genealogy Department’s photographic collection for numerous examples.

<sup>58</sup> *The Denver Post*, May 29, 1904. I am grateful to Tamsen Hert for this reference.

<sup>59</sup> Orvis Marbury, *Favorite Flies*, pp. 432-40, 446-55, 461-67.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 437-39.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 450-51.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 662.

ridicule of a crafty, four-year-old trout who has been snapping up grasshoppers for three seasons.”<sup>62</sup>

Denver ultimately became an important regional center for the angling industry. The Goodwin Granger Co., established after World War I, and the Phillipson Rod Co. (1946), crafted fine cane rods. From the 1920s on, the Wright and McGill Company produced fly-fishing tackle. Hank Roberts' company supplied premier flies.<sup>63</sup> By the 1920s, Missoula and Butte were producing legendary homegrown fly tiers such as Franz B. Pott, who pioneered woven hair flies, Jack Boehme, Norman Means, and, later, George Grant. A decade later, West Yellowstone and Livingston, close to the park waters, Yellowstone River, and the spring creeks of Paradise Valley, became innovative angling foci, featuring a mix of local and newly arrived fly-fishing experts, such as Bud Lilly and Dan Bailey. In the Jackson area, pioneers like Bob Carmichael and “Boots” Allen developed a new style of Western fly-fishing.<sup>64</sup>

Despite such developments, the West seemed remarkably resistant to change. Before World War II, Western fly-fishing was essentially wet fly-fishing. Western anglers ignored the dry fly revolution, first championed by Frederic Halford in England during the 1880s and well established among Eastern anglers such as George LaBranche. During the 1930s, newcomers like Dan Bailey, of Livingston, and California tier Don Martinez, of West Yellowstone, introduced dry fly fishing in Montana.<sup>65</sup> But it was not until the 1940s that dry flies were well established in Montana and Colorado. As late as 1949, Bob Carmichael could still describe this technique as innovative: “I do not claim to have ‘discovered’ Jackson’s Hole dry fly fishing but will say that those who preceded me in the area with their dries were very quiet about it. Fishing these waters first in the early thirties, 1931-1936, I found fishing too good to be very interesting. Local natives wanting a change of diet would catch a bull head, cut a willow and horse out enough trout to satisfy their immediate needs.”<sup>66</sup>

In many areas of Wyoming, such as the Bighorns, fly-fishermen refused to adopt new techniques and continued to tie wet flies. The now archaic Pott flies, such as the Sandy Mite, a stonefly imitation, were common throughout Wyoming until quite recently. It is startling that even today, more than eighty years

after their introduction, fly-fishermen such as Sam Mavrakis of Sheridan and Mike Kaul of Pinedale still tie and use Pott flies.<sup>67</sup> As Bud Lilly of West Yellowstone recalls, even “[t]he early 1950s were still a time of pioneering in fly fishing around our part of the country,” though gradually the efforts of locals and imports, such as Bailey in Livingston, Lilly,



Extensive photographic evidence leaves no doubt that many Western women enthusiastically embraced the sport of fly-fishing. Stephen N. Leek Collection, American Heritage Center.

<sup>63</sup> See for details Dick Spurr and Michael Sinclair, *Colorado Classic Cane: A History of the Colorado Bamboo Rod Makers* (Grand Junction: Centennial Publications, 1991), and Monnett, *Cutthroat*, pp. 80-82. Also see Jack Dennis' interview in this issue.

<sup>64</sup> Schullery, *American Fly Fishing*, pp. 184-85; Pat Mindow, “‘A millionaire couldn't buy a piece of water as good’: George Grant and the Conservation of the Bighole River Watershed,” *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 52 (Summer 2002): 21-37; Ken Owens, “Fishing the Hatch: New West Romanticism and Fly-Fishing in the High Country,” *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 52 (Summer 2002): 10-19; George F. Grant, *Grant's Riffle: ...A collection of thoughts, ideas, and memories* (Butte, Montana: Bighole River Foundation, 1997). Also see the interview with Jack Dennis in this issue.

<sup>65</sup> See the interview with Jack Dennis in this issue. Also see Schullery, *American Fly Fishing*, pp. 185-88; Owens, “Fishing the Hatch...”

<sup>66</sup> Quoted in J. Edson Leonard, *Flies* (New York: A.S. Barnes and Company, 1950), p. 302.

<sup>67</sup> See the interview with Sam Mavrakis in this issue. Mike Kaul, “The Green and New Fork Rivers,” presentation at the University Flycasters' Anglers' Symposium, Laramie, Wyoming, April 22-23, 2004.

<sup>68</sup> Bud Lilly and Paul Schullery, *A Trout's Best Friend: The Angling Autobiography of Bud Lilly* (Boulder: Pruett Publishing Company, 1988), p. 36.

Martinez, and Vint Johnson in West Yellowstone, and Carmichael and Allen in the Jackson area, would begin to pay off.<sup>68</sup> As Schullery has noted, in recent decades a process of cultural homogenization has come to affect local, relatively isolated, Western angling traditions. Yet this same development has allowed today's Western anglers, such as Jack Dennis, Gary LaFontaine (R.I.P.), Mike Lawson, Bud Lilly, etc., to assume national prominence and disseminate a new, hybrid style of Western fly-fishing around the globe.<sup>69</sup>



Weighing the catch near Jackson Hole. Stephen N. Leek Collection, American Heritage Center.

## Conclusion

Despite its claim for uniqueness, Western fly-fishing is a cultural practice with deep roots in Eastern and European sporting traditions. It evolved through the interaction of local and imported discourses, techniques, and practices. In the process, Westerners dramatically altered the Western environment to maintain fisheries of often exotic game species, destroying existing natural ecosystems. Yet, as Schullery convincingly argues, despite the continuities and similarities one can find between Western fly-fishing traditions and those of other parts of the United States and the world, “authenticity has endured. There *is* such a thing as western angling, and it has a long, distinctive, and flavorful history.”<sup>70</sup> What that Western element exactly is is hard to explain. Maybe the mystique of Western angling is best captured in the lyrical prose of Tom McGuane, when he describes a caddis hatch on the Madison, or the gaze of a doe across a wild mountain stream, or in Russell Chatham’s luminous paintings of summer evenings on the Yellowstone River.<sup>71</sup> Unfortunately, lyricism alone is not enough. Whether we like it or not, and for better or worse, fly-fishing has become an integral part of Western life and culture. Only by understanding its origins and development as a cultural practice can we contemplate its present impact and future. **AW**

<sup>69</sup> Schullery, *Frontier Fly-Fishing...*, p. 8.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>71</sup> Lindsay and Thomas McGuane, *Upstream*.



**BOOK  
REVIEWS**

Edited by **Carl Hallberg**

# Significant Recent Books on Western and Wyoming History

*Breaking Clean.* By Judy Blunt. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002. xxii + 303 pp. *Illustrations, map. Hardcover, \$24.00.* Reviewed by Elizabeth M. Esterchild, University of North Texas

Judy Blunt's narrative describes the reality of ranch life in the contemporary American West. Her tale is about commitment and loss, about hard work and heartbreak, about pure contentment and searing anger. It is a true story told plainly, and thereby is both timeless and timely.

Alone among western writers, even women writers, Blunt reveals one of the best kept secrets about ranch country: how the dark shadow of patriarchy lingers past its time. Patriarchy – male dominance – does not touch all aspects of ranch life, but where it does it is rooted in de facto male ownership of most of the ranch property. Growing up in Montana, Blunt first noticed male privilege in the asymmetrical division of labor by gender. She learned to do outdoor work – the many skills connected with riding, working cattle, driving tractors, putting up hay, building fences – and performed them just as well as her brother. But she had the added burden of working inside the house long after the outdoor work was done. And she learned even earlier to do what ranch women know, to hold their tongues when men are talking.

Only toward the end of the book does Blunt reveal what she learned earlier in life. As a youngster, she watched in amazement as her grandfather's ranch property was divided between his two sons, leaving nothing for his daughters. Not long afterwards, her father announced his plans to repeat his father's action. Even though she had wholeheartedly given her soul to this land, she would never own one square inch of it.

After marrying a neighbor who was twelve years her senior, Blunt learned she could neither own prop-

erty nor direct the course of her own labor. Her father-in-law's wife showed up every day, telling her repeatedly what groceries she could buy and how she should do her work, which, among many other things, included cooking for the haying crew. She then began writing about the pain in her life. Perhaps the sharpest hurt developed the day her father-in-law strode in from the noon meal and found it not quite ready. With a roar of displeasure, he took her typewriter out to the shop and pounded it to death with a sledgehammer.

Blunt refuses to be the bitter person one would expect from the broad outlines of her life just given. Throughout the book, she pauses often to tell about the wonders and the joys of ranch life, many of them connected with animals, both pets and livestock. Among these pleasures was the absolute contentment she experienced in the barn on cold nights watching and remaining ready to help a young heifer give birth to her first calf. In those wondrous times, even as she knew she would be breaking clean of the shadow of patriarchy, she could still reflect on all the beautiful aspects of being a ranch woman.

Few ranchers today acknowledge the existence of patriarchy or understand its profound impact on their lives. But it does exist and it continues in dozens of ways. Perhaps Blunt's forthright telling of her story will encourage others to speak freely about all aspects of the lives of ranch women and men.

*The Important Things of Life: Women, Work, and Family in Sweetwater County, Wyoming, 1880-1929.* By Dee Garceau. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997. x + 215 pp. *Maps, notes, annotated bibliography, index. Hardcover, \$50.00.* Reviewed by Elizabeth M. Esterchild, University of North Texas

A fascinating account of women's lives, this book opens our eyes to the centrality of women's work in building early day mining and ranch-

ing communities. Garceau used the decennial censuses of 1880-1920 to identify demographic characteristics, work lives, education, family, and household structure of town and rural women. Other sources included oral histories, written memoirs, local newspapers, folklore, and one hundred interviews she conducted with older women and men.

Garceau studied the largest ethnic groups in the coal mining industry: first the English, Irish, and Scottish; then Swedish, Finnish, German, and Slavic women in later times. Often born abroad, these town women - townspeople were 85 per cent of the population - contrasted sharply with ranch women who were mostly native born and largely from the Midwest. Ranchers had often migrated in clusters of related families, bringing with them an agrarian, middle class tradition of owning property and being self employed. In town, people had come more often as individuals seeking a livelihood. Their attempts to maintain ethnic traditions were somewhat thwarted because several distinct nationalities mingled in the work in the coal mines and there was little, if any, ethnic segregation in residence patterns.

In addition to cooking, cleaning, and laundry, ranch women did gardening, dairying, sewing clothing, and raising chickens. The latter could be used to directly sustain the family or, by selling the products, to support indirectly the ranch. This productive labor, which was a source of immense pride to ranch women, coupled with frequent male absence and having fewer children than their mothers, all helped create more control for women and to erode some of the patriarchal authority exercised by men. But women continued to interpret their work as supporting the family, rather than as a means for achieving autonomy. Ranch daughters gradually became involved in more outside, or men's work; they, too, rarely used this labor as a stepping stone toward independence. Rural women "held to traditional notions of womanhood even as their behavior departed from it" (p. 10).

In the coal towns, single women worked as servants in middle class families, and in hotels and boardinghouses. Married immigrant women kept boarders, raised gardens, milked a cow or two, and took in laundry. Later, daughters took up white collar work as the range of businesses expanded after 1900. The town

women used these jobs as stepping stones to a richer life in which they were less dependent on their husbands, though they did not stray far away from traditional values.

Garceau explored myths surrounding single women homesteaders, finding fewer than might be supposed. Most women homesteaders were simply getting additional land for their parents or husbands. Only a few used their work to gain independence from conventional family life.

Ranch daughters had more variety in their work than their mothers, which Garceau implies was a life cycle change rather than something that would carry through to future generations. Women would marry young and produce children which took them away from the outdoor work. Garceau might also have noted the distinction between private and public spheres, so that girls could "cowboy" in the privacy of the family more often than in the large gatherings of men in round ups and harvest times. Generally, women were excluded from men's work (except in emergencies), which was both more glamorous, dangerous, and conscientiously profit oriented than women's work. Finally, inheritance patterns in the West favored sons much more than daughters, so that women rarely acquired enough property or livestock to live independently of men.

Women came closer to achieving parity among the working classes in town. Neither women nor men acquired much property, and men's work was perceived as mundane, albeit dangerous. Single women and widows could come closer to earning wages equivalent to men's, and this, too, eroded male control more rapidly than on the ranches.

Overall, there was probably much more similarity between town women and ranch women than this review implies. Clearly, Garceau used conventional materials, but drew unconventional insights regarding women's lives. In so doing, she has set a very high standard in using the contrast between the two to illuminate the lives of both.

**AV**

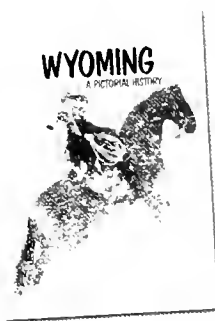
# Index

- American Heritage Center 4  
 American Museum of Fly Fishing 3-4  
 The American Sportsmen 22  
 Bailey, John 25  
 Bantjes, Adrian A. (author) 2-5, 19-25, 41-53; bio 5  
 Battenkill Valley, Vermont 42  
 Big Horn Mountains 37  
 Blair, Neal 48  
 Bonfils, F.G. 50  
 Borger, Gary 22  
 Bourdieu, Pierre 3  
 Bozeman, Montana 9, 11  
 Brewer, Walter 29  
 Bridger National Forest 29  
 Bridger Primitive Area 31, 34  
 Bridger Wilderness 27-28, 32, 34  
 Bridger Wilderness Fish Management Plan 34  
 Brooks, George 42  
 Bush, George 39  
 Buszek, Wayne "Buz" 21  
 Carmichael, Bob 20-22, 52  
 Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum 3  
 Chatham, Russell 53  
 Close, Glenn 24  
 Close, William T. 24  
 Crescent H Ranch 50  
 Crusoe, Robinson 6, 8  
 Dafoe, Daniel 6-7  
 Dale Creek 43-44, 47  
 Daniel, Wyoming 28-29  
 Dennis, Jack 3-4, 19-25, 52  
 DeWitt, William H. 51  
 DiMaggio, Joe 39  
 Doane, Gustavus 8-13, 15-16  
 Dome Lake 50  
 Donnelly, Roy M. 21  
 Dude Ranchers' Association 47  
 Eaton Ranch 47  
 Estes Park, Colorado 46  
 Evans, Glen L. 21  
 Farren, C.S. 51  
 Finley, Michael 23  
 Fish hatcheries 48-49  
 Flaming Gorge reservoir 34-35  
 Fly Fisher's International Fly Fishing Center 4  
 Fly fishing 2-53  
 France, Lewis Browne 45-46, 51  
 Galloway, Tucker W. 36-40  
 George Tritch Hardward Store 51  
 Gierach, John 42, 49  
 Gillette, Edward 50  
 Gillette, Warren 12, 16  
 Gowdy, Curt 22  
 Grand Teton National Park 20  
 Green River 27, 47, 49  
 Grunkemeyer, George 37  
 Hackle, Sparse Greg 5  
 Hauser, Samuel 8  
 Hedges, Cornelius 8, 10, 13, 15-16  
 Hemingway, Jack 47  
 Hill Charles P. 51  
 Hobsbawm, Eric 3  
 Houghton Fishing Club 42  
 Huizinga, Johan 3, 8  
 Hurt, William 24  
 Jackson Lake 21  
 Jackson, Wyoming 19-24  
 Kaul, Mike 52  
 Knight, Bobby 39-40  
 Kreh, Lefty 22  
 La Fontaine, Gary 22, 52  
 Landres, Peter B. 32  
 Langford, Nathaniel 8, 10, 12-13, 15  
 Lawson, Mike 22, 52  
 Lilly, Bud 20, 42, 51-52  
 Lord Byron 5  
 Martinez, Don 20  
 Maclean, Norman 3, 24-25  
 Marbury, Mary Orvis 51  
 Mavrakis, Sam 4, 36-40, 52  
 McDonald, John 7  
 McGuane, Tom 42, 53  
 Mitchell, Dennis 27, 29  
 Mitchell (Nelson), Emma 29-30  
 Mitchell, Fay 27-28  
 Mitchell, Finis 4, 26-35, 49  
 Mitchell, Henry 27-29  
 Mitchell Peak 31  
 Moose, Wyoming 20  
 National Forest Service 28-29, 34  
 Nichols, Jeffrey 4, (author) 26-35; bio 35  
 Old Baldy Club 50  
 Paradise Valley 10, 49  
 Pott, Franz B. 38, 52  
 Quayle, Dan 39  
 Queen Elizabeth 39-40  
 Redfield, Robert 43  
 Redford, Robert 3, 24-25  
 "A River Runs Through It" 3, 24-25  
 Roberts, Hank 21-22, 52  
 Rockefeller, John D. 20  
 Rock Springs, Wyoming 28, 30  
 Sansone, David 7  
 Schullery, Paul 4, (author) 6-18, 41; bio 18  
 Sherman, Wyoming 44  
 Simon, James 31, 33  
 Snowy Range, 43  
 Storer, George Butler 50  
 Teton County, Wyoming 50  
 Trumbull, Walter 8-11  
 Turner, Frederick Jackson 41  
 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 23  
 Wallop, Malcolm 37, 40  
 Walton, Izaak 5  
 Washburn, Henry Dana 8-12  
 Washburn - Langford - Doane Expedition 8-18  
 Whitlock, Dave 22  
 Wigwam Club 50  
 Wilderness Act 31-32, 34-35  
 Wind River Mountains 26-35, 43, 49  
 Wyoming Game and Fish Department 28, 31-34, 39, 49  
 Wyoming Territorial Fish Commission 28, 43  
 Wyoming Territorial Legislature 48  
 Yankee Jim Canyon 10, 12  
 Yellowstone Lake 12-13, 15-16  
 Yellowstone National Park 8-12, 15-17, 19-20, 23  
 Yellowstone River 10-11

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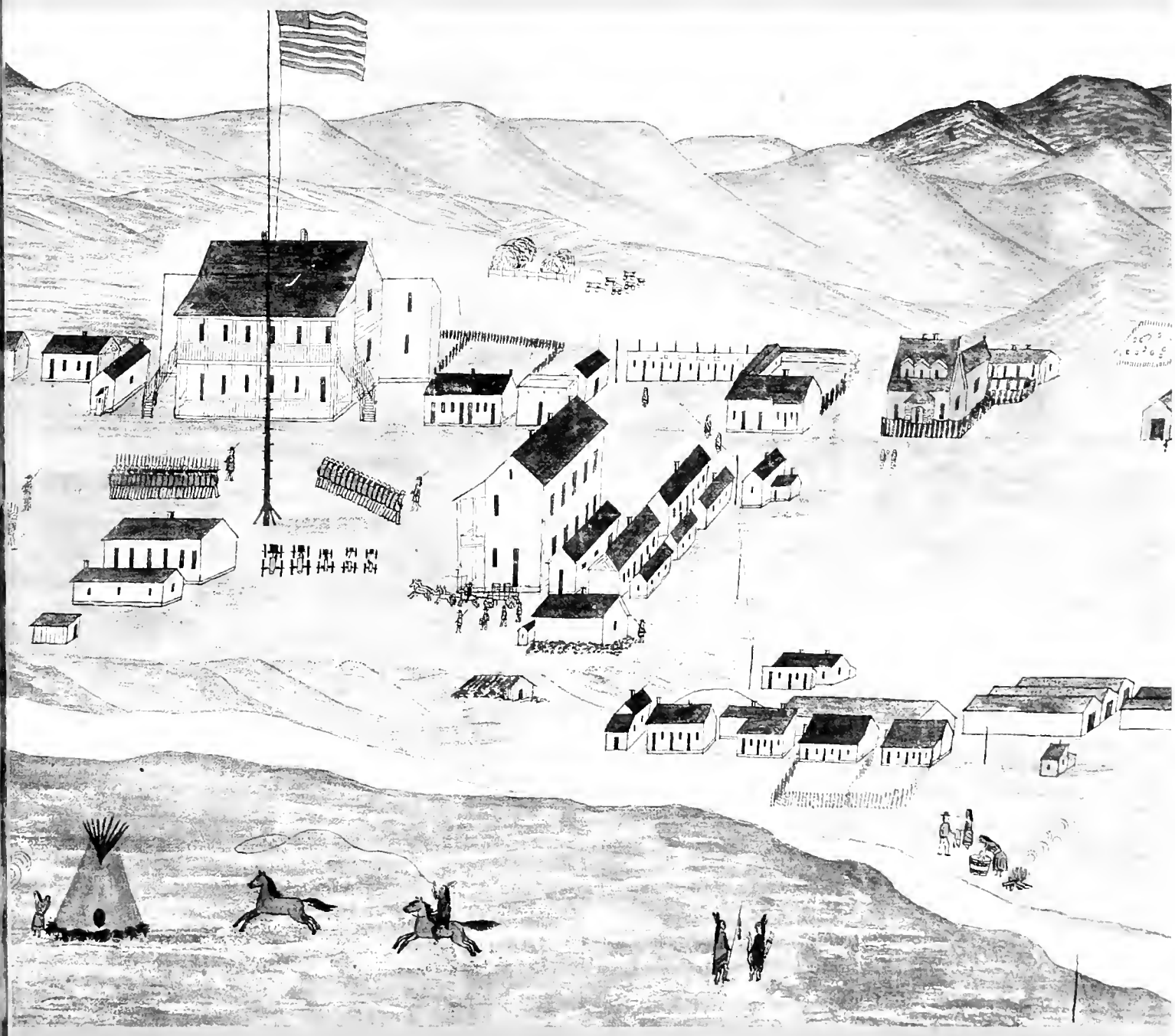
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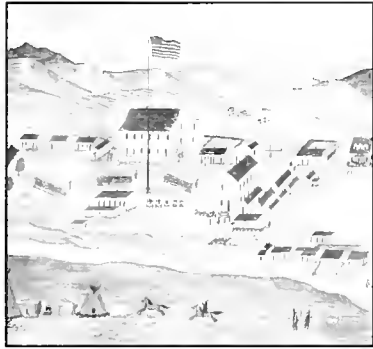
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# Cover Art



## “Fort Laramie”

Drawing by C. Moellman

Moellman Collection, American Heritage Center,  
University of Wyoming

C. Moellman, a bugler with Company G, 11th Ohio Volunteer Cavalry, created the drawing of Fort Laramie on the cover during the 1860s. Moellman also painted other Wyoming sites, including Sweetwater Station and Three Crossings. Another image by him of Fort Laramie was featured on the cover of the Autumn 2001 issue of *Annals of Wyoming*.

### Information for Contributors:

The editor of *Annals of Wyoming* welcomes manuscripts and photographs on every aspect of the history of Wyoming and the West. Appropriate for submission are unpublished, research-based articles which provide new information or which offer new interpretations of historical events. First-person accounts based on personal experience or recollections of events will be considered for use in the “Wyoming Memories” section. Historic photo essays for possible publication in “Wyoming Memories” also are welcome. Articles are reviewed and referred by members of the journal’s Editorial Advisory Board and others. Decisions regarding publication are made by the editor.

Manuscripts (along with suggestions for illustrations or photographs) should be submitted on computer diskettes in a format created by one of the widely-used word processing programs along with two printed copies.

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- 2 Native American Sagas from the Diaries of John Hunton  
John Hunton and L. G. (Pat) Flannery  
Edited by Mike Griske



- 14 Pat Flannery  
Sally Vanderpoel



- 24 J. D. Conley's Cabinet of Curiosities and Other Early Wyoming Museums  
Beth Southwell



- 33 Recent Acquisitions in the Hebard Collection, UW Libraries  
Tamsen L. Hert



- 36 Book Reviews

- Contributors 41 Contributors' Biographies

- 42 Index



Wyoming Picture  
Inside back cover

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# Native American Sagas from The Diaries of John Hunton

by  
John Hunton and L. G. (Pat) Flannery  
Edited by Michael Griske<sup>1</sup>

## Preface

I suspect that most readers of *Annals of Wyoming* have heard of John Hunton, who was a Wyoming pioneer and prominent businessman in the Fort Laramie area when the post was headquarters for military operations against the Sioux and other Native American nations, as well as being one of the major crossroads of the Old West. Some of you might also remember L. G. (Pat) Flannery, my grandfather and Mr. Hunton's good friend, despite a fifty-five-year difference in their ages, who was a Wyoming historian, newspaper publisher, statesman, cattle rancher, and veteran of both world wars. A colorful character in his own right, Pat dedicated the last years of his life to historical research and to a very special labor of love, the publication of the diaries kept by Mr. Hunton in which his entries span more than half a century.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Griske is the grandson of L.G. (Pat) Flannery. The John Hunton Diaries are located in the John Hunton Papers held by the American Heritage Center.



John and Blanche Hunton.  
Courtesy John Hunton  
Papers, American Heritage  
Center, University of  
Wyoming.

My grandfather published the diary entries between 1873 and 1882 in four volumes of fifteen hundred copies each, and two more volumes with entries between 1883 and 1888 were published after his death in 1964. In addition to these daily diary entries, Pat also included narratives by Hunton and others in these books, and his own painstakingly-researched editorials, to clarify and expand upon events of that period. As a result, the publications vividly preserved day-to-day life on the frontier and presented profiles as well as true exploits not only of people living in that era who have been all but forgotten, but also of such well-known Western folk characters as Wild Bill Hickok, Calamity Jane Canary, Buffalo Bill Cody, Generals George Armstrong Custer and George Crook, Red Cloud, Spotted Tail, and many others, most of whom Hunton knew personally.

As previously mentioned, Pat initially had only a relatively small number of these books printed. His plan, as I recall, was to pursue republication in larger numbers after the first printings, but he passed away before having a chance to make this dream a reality.



L. G. (Pat) Flannery, Mr. Hunton's close friend to whom he bequeathed his diaries. Courtesy L. G. Flannery papers, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

His only child was my mother, Billie Griske, who renewed the copyrights for Pat's works in the 1980s and, in response to numerous requests for the original volumes, republished a few excerpts in small booklets.

After Billie's passing, I decided that I would also like to share this fascinating and historical material with others. To that end, I'm now pursuing the publication of an abridged and reformatted version of my grandfather's monumental works so that this material can once again be accessible to Western history enthusiasts.

In the meantime, I thought that subscribers to the *Annals* would enjoy reading the following profile of John Hunton and sagas of Native Americans from the original volumes. Note that Hunton's diary entries are indented and italicized, and narratives other than those authored by my grandfather are in quotes and indented, so that they can be differentiated at a glance from Pat's writings. My editorial comments and insertions are bracketed for the same reason.

### A Profile of John Hunton

John Hunton was born at Madison C. H. [the C. H. being for court house or county seat], Virginia, on January 18, 1839, of Alexander B. and Mary Elizabeth (Carpenter) Hunton. Little is known of his childhood. He joined the army at [age] 18 and saw his first military service at Harper's Ferry in 1859.

Madison was in that borderland between the North and South where the cleavage of loyalties split families, set brother against brother, and father against son. Hunton chose the South. He was with Pickett at the charge of Gettysburg and served with the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia until Lee surrendered at Appomattox.

With his homeland overrun and devastated, John Hunton turned his eyes westward and in the spring of 1876 traveled, via St. Louis and Glasgow, to Nebraska City. From there he whacked bulls on to Fort Laramie, bastion of the plains and headquarters of military operations against the Indian tribes. There he worked for several years as a clerk in the Sutler's store at the old fort, which was to be "home" for the young Virginian for most of the rest of his life.

That first winter, 1867, he shared a room with the famous scout, Jim Bridger, who had been employed by the government to guide our troops. They occupied the northeast corner room of the Sutler's building which was being used as a small hay mow when Mr. Hunton pointed it out to the writer about 1919. At that time the north end of this historic building, made of adobe bricks and understood to be the first permanent structure in what is now the state of Wyoming, was a horse barn. It has since been restored and preserved by the National Park Service. But in 1919 the main room of the old store still had its counters along the walls, there were still some articles of ancient merchandise on its dusty shelves, bundles of undelivered letters in its abandoned post office and a stack of buffalo hides, rotted with age until they tore apart like tissue paper, were piled in one corner of the room from floor to ceiling.

In 1870 Hunton took a contract to supply Fort Laramie with firewood, and his government contracts expanded steadily during the next ten years into big business for that period. In addition to wood he supplied hay, beef, charcoal, lime and other commodities to Fort Fetterman and Camp McKinney as well as to Fort Laramie, and hauled freight with oxen from Medicine Bow Station to Fetterman, Ft. Steele, Ft. Phil Kearny, Ft. Reno, Ft. Smith and other early military installations.

In 1871 he became half owner, in partnership with W. G. Bullock, of the SO cattle, understood to be the first herd in this area, aside from work oxen. This herd, according to Hunton, was started in 1868 by a man named Mills who brought the stock from northern Kansas.

Hunton was the last post trader at old Fort Laramie; he was one of the first and also one of the last commissioners of Laramie County when it embraced the present counties of Goshen and Platte. Most of the early settlers in that area proved up on their homesteads before him when he was United States Commissioner from 1892 to 1907. As a civil engineer, largely self-taught, he participated in the original survey of north central and western Wyoming when it was mostly an uncharted wilderness area, and he planned and surveyed many of the earli-

est private reservoirs and irrigation systems in southeastern Wyoming.

On one of our rides together<sup>2</sup> . . . , [Hunton] expressed himself to the writer as considering the white man primarily responsible for the Indian wars. He said the tribesmen were originally a dignified, trusting people who kept their word and agreements and were inclined, for the most part, to be friendly until after they had been lied to, cheated and treated with contempt by their white brothers, or at least by some of them. But he also pointed out that once their confidence had been destroyed, the Indians not only learned and embraced the civilized arts of treachery and deceit — they added to them certain distinctive techniques of savage cruelty and cunning which made warfare on the plains a fearsome thing.

### The Grattan Massacre<sup>3</sup>

The Laramie River flows into the North Platte about two miles below (east) of Fort Laramie. Starting some distance below this point, their lodges stretching for miles along the Platte, was an encampment of several thousand Indians, various bands and tribes of the Sioux Nation. The year was 1854. It was the month of August.

They had gathered for their annual handout of goods and supplies, due them from the United States

<sup>2</sup> Hunton and my grandfather used to "ride the range" together in a buckboard on business or just for relaxation. During these outings, Hunton would occasionally speak of his life, times, and views, including the perspective sympathetic to Native Americans that echoes reasons discussed in this article's narratives for their adoption of savage ways.

<sup>3</sup> My grandfather described the following events in his books even though they took place a few years before Hunton came to Fort Laramie. However, this narrative sets the stage for Pat's other passages about the quarter-century of hostilities on the plains that the massacre precipitated and their significant impact on Hunton's life, all of which started with the seemingly trivial killing of a "lame and half-starved old cow" abandoned by its emigrant owner. The major report on the Grattan Massacre appears in House Executive Document 63 (Serial 788), 33 Cong., 2nd Session, pp. 1-27. For more information about the "Grattan Massacre" see George E. Hyde, *Spotted Tail's Folk: A History of the Brule Sioux* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1974), pp. 31-32, 50-58; Robert W. Larson, *Red Cloud; Warrior-Statesman of the Lakota Sioux* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), pp. 67-68, 71, 75; and Robert M. Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue: The United States Army and the Indian, 1848-1865* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981), pp. 113-15.

government under treaty. The date set for distribution was long past. They had been waiting for weeks. Their goods were stored several miles upstream in a warehouse at what was known as the Gratiot Houses, a trading post also called Fort John, a short distance east of Fort Laramie — but the Indian Agent, Major J. W. Whitfield, had not arrived to issue them. Each day the Indians had to drive their ponies a greater distance for grass. Each day their hunters had to range in ever-widening circles in search of game for the cooking pots. They were understandably restless and provoked.

Also running near the Platte, almost within sight of these Indians, was the emigrant route generally known as the Oregon Trail, over which an almost constant stream of covered wagons plodded their weary way westward. This trail was known among the Indians as “The Holy Road” because of the terms of a treaty between the Sioux and the white men made on Horse Creek, near Fort Laramie, in 1851. This treaty provided that the red men would not attack or molest the white man’s wagon trains traveling this trail; that if Indians should steal from the emigrants, the chiefs would see that full restitution was made; that if the whites stole from the Indians, the government would recompense them for their loss. In return for this safe passage, the United States promised to issue the Sioux tribes \$50,000 worth of goods each year — delivery to be made near Fort Laramie. It was a touchy situation, an uneasy truce, marred by some incidents on both sides — but it worked pretty well, the wagon trains had gotten safely through, until this lame and half-starved old cow came staggering along the afternoon of August 18, 1854.

She belonged to a . . . wagon train, which left her behind when she could no longer keep up. A young Miniconjou brave named High Forehead, on his way to visit the camp of the Brules nearby, discovered the cow, down, helpless and apparently abandoned. He promptly slaughtered her, summoned some of his Brule friends, and they had a feast. The wagon train proceeded to Fort Laramie, [where] the owner of the cow reported her stolen by Indians and demanded compensation.

Conquering Bear, chief of the Brules, also heard of the incident and realizing it might be considered a

violation of the treaty, immediately went to Fort Laramie and offered a pony as restitution for the cow. Old records indicate that a good horse was worth at least two good cows along the trail.

Unfortunately, most of the officers and men on duty at Fort Laramie were absent, leaving only a skeleton garrison in the post and Lt. Hugh B. Fleming in temporary command. Lt. Fleming, a young officer, was apparently reluctant to make a decision in the matter and Conquering Bear, unable to get an answer to his offer, returned to his camp and held a night conference with other head men. Early next morning, Man Afraid of His Horses — although some translations say it should be Man Afraid of His Woman — a sort of over-chief among the Sioux, returned with a small delegation to the Fort and renewed the offer. Again they could get no decision from Lt. Fleming, who left them cooling their heels all morning and into the early afternoon.

Now comes the most amazing and difficult to understand part of the whole proceedings. Although refusing to accept full restitution for the cow as the treaty provided, Lt. Fleming instead authorized Lt. John L. Grattan to take a detail to arrest High Forehead, which he had not authority to do, and then washed his hands of the whole affair. Grattan, a green and hot-headed 24-year-old, just graduated from West Point, started celebrating his first command with a bottle while assembling his expedition — a wagon, two 12-lb. cannon, a sergeant, 25 privates, and 2 band musicians. When Chief Man Afraid and his delegation saw this column cross the Laramie and head toward the Indian encampment about 2 p.m., with Lt. Grattan and Lucian Auguste, a half-breed interpreter much hated by the Indians, at its head, they were disturbed and decided to trail along. What they observed was not reassuring. The interpreter was obviously drunk, and at least some of the soldiers were nipping from a bottle of their own.

The first stop was at the Gratiot Houses store-room, where Lt. Grattan told the clerks and [a] few soldiers on guard about his mission, while interpreter Auguste galloped his horse among the Indians outside, shouting insults and brandishing his pistol. As they came to each band of Indians, Grattan issued orders for them to stay in camp, which Auguste passed

on, embellished with more threats and insults.

The next stop was at the Bordeaux Trading Post, . . . , where Grattan told James Bordeaux to send for Conquering Bear. While they awaited his arrival, Auguste continued his campaign of insults and threats among the Indians in the area. Bordeaux, who of course understood the Sioux language as well as English, was greatly alarmed and told Grattan the man [Auguste] had to be stopped or trouble was sure to follow. He also told the lieutenant if he would put Auguste inside the post away from the Indians that he, Bordeaux, could settle the whole thing in 30 minutes. Grattan took no action.

When Conquering Bear arrived, Grattan demanded that he surrender High Forehead. The Bear told him High Forehead was not a member of his tribe, merely a visitor at his camp, and he had no authority over him or to surrender him. The Brule chief also increased his offer of indemnity to several ponies, and Bordeaux and other white men present all urged Grattan to delay further action until the Indian Agent arrived.

Lt. Grattan's answer was to march his men right into the Brule camp, point his cannon at Conquering Bear's lodge, line his men up on both sides, order them to cap their rifles and be ready to fire. He then stepped forward and told the Brule chief he intended to personally search the camp and arrest his man. Bear said that would be a bad thing to do, and offered a mule, worth at least two horses, in addition to the ponies — many times the value of any cow. The pow-wow continued. Auguste's interpreting became more inaccurate and insulting to both sides. Then suddenly High Forehead stepped from one of the lodges, shouted to Grattan he would not surrender but was not afraid to die, and [was] ready to fight [Grattan] to the death.

Meanwhile, from the roof of his trading post, Bordeaux and several other white men could see that braves from the other tribes had quietly surrounded Grattan on both flanks and the rear. They persuaded Bordeaux to go and replace Auguste as interpreter to prevent a fight. Bordeaux jumped on his horse and started, but he was too late.

Several scattering shots were fired and one Indian fell. The Bear shouted at his Brules to hold their

fire, that maybe the white men would go away. Instead, Grattan stepped back into line, grabbed the lanyard of one cannon, and signaled his men to fire. The cannon were pointed a little too high and their balls whistled harmlessly over the tepees, but at the first volley Conquering Bear, who had tried so hard to prevent a clash, fell mortally wounded. The Brules, gathered about their fallen chieftain, responded with a flight of arrows. Lt. Grattan was one of the first to go down — his body carried 24 arrows when recovered. The interpreter and a soldier holding Grattan's horse galloped off toward the Holy Road at the first shot and were next to be killed. Several men piled into the wagon and the driver whipped his horses back over the trail. Indians covering the rear took care of them. The remaining 15 or 20 soldiers retreated over rough ground to the base of a brush-covered hill and, for a time, their fire held most of the warriors beyond arrow range. But when they made a dash from their cover across a flat stretch toward the Holy Road, hundreds of mounted warriors charged and hacked them down. Within a few hours after those thirty men had left Fort Laramie, full of high spirits in more ways than one, all were dead.

The now thoroughly-enraged warriors spared Bordeaux and his family because he was a brother-in-law of the tribe and long-time friend, and [the Brules] failed to find the several white men hidden on his roof. But they rampaged through the night, swearing death to all whites. Next morning they rode up-river to the warehouse where their goods were stored — and from which the few soldiers and clerks had discreetly retired — helped themselves to what they wanted and scattered most of the goods — flour, sugar, bacon, etc. — from the shelves in a fury of destruction. Then on they went to Fort Laramie, where some say they made a token attack, others that they contented themselves with circling the Fort on their ponies and driving off all loose stock. On the third day, they struck their great camp on the Platte and returned to their various hunting grounds.

So it was not until the fourth day that a civilian and military burial party was able to reach the scene of the massacre. What they found was not pretty. The slain had been mutilated beyond recognition.

Hot August sunshine had done the rest. Only the body of Lt. Grattan was returned to the post for burial. It was identified by a watch he was carrying. The rest were quickly covered in one common, shallow grave. The incident triggered a quarter-century of intermittent savage warfare on the plains . . .

About 1920, . . . John Hunton showed the writer this common grave. It was a depression about 15 feet in diameter and perhaps 3 feet deep in the center. The surrounding land was still brush-covered river bottom. He told us it had been a mound when he first came to the country in 1867. The winds of more than half a century had hollowed it out. Mr. Hunton stepped into the depression and scratched around with his cane. He unearthed a tarnished brass button, a uniform collar insignia, and what appeared to be a piece of arm bone and a human tooth. We reburied these evidences of an ancient tragedy in the dusty earth and went away from there.

### An Ill-fated Trek to Washington

*Tues., Mar 23 [1875] -- Expedition under Capt. Mix started to bring miners out of Black Hills... Considerable excitement about Blk. Hills...*

The above long-past and forgotten minor military movement was a prelude to major war with the Sioux, which was to follow discovery of gold in the Black Hills [of South Dakota] and the rush of thousands of miners into that area, which the Indians considered a violation of their territory and of their peace treaties with the white man.

It is difficult to imagine the . . . [magnitude of this mass migration] from all over the nation — men lured by the magic word “gold,” with their dreams of quick and easy wealth, and the women who always follow the path of such adventurers. Newspaper stories and other records of the day show that [before the rush was over], large organized groups from the states of Maine, Connecticut, Wisconsin, Missouri, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Illinois, Tennessee, Louisiana, and New York — to mention a few — flooded into Cheyenne . . . , all clawing their way toward that Promised Land. Hunton’s [entries in his diaries for that “feverish period” indicate that] . . . 4-

horse and 6-horse coaches [were] passing through Bordeaux at all hours of the day and night . . .

[At first, the Sioux used peaceful means in trying to persuade the white man to honor the treaties and stem the flow of gold-crazed miners, as discussed below.]

*Fri, May 7 [1875] — Louis Loab passed, said Indians were on way to Washington . . .*

*Sat, May 8 — Making fence. Indians passed going to Washington . . .*

The above laconic entries were the prelude to considerable history. We are indebted to [the late] Hon. Joseph C. O’Mahoney, chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs . . . , the Library of Congress, [the Annual Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the years 1874 - 1877, and the *Washington Star*] for much of the following information concerning that delegation of Indian chiefs who passed through Hunton’s Road Ranch at Bordeaux that May day . . . on their way to see the Great White Father in Washington. They were headed by Chief Red Cloud.<sup>4</sup>



<sup>4</sup> For more information about Red Cloud see Robert M. Utley, *The Lance and the Shield: The Life and Times of Sitting Bull* (New York: Henry Holt, 1993); and Larson, *Red Cloud*.



Others in Red Cloud's delegation, according to Washington records, were: American Horse, Little Wound, Shoulder, Conquering Bear [not to be confused with the chief Conquering Bear who was killed during the Grattan fiasco described above], Face Sitting Bull, Trail Lance, East Thunder, Black Bear, Iron Horse, Pawnee Killer, and Mr. and Mrs. Bad Wound. In all there were three delegations from the Sioux Nations which converged on Washington that spring, the other two being led by Lone Horn, chief of the Minneconjous, and Chief Spotted Tail.

Three Indian Agents, Maj. H. W. Bingham, J. J. Saville, and E. A. Howard accompanied the delegations, and William Garnett and Louis Bordeaux went along as interpreters. They arrived in Washington on the 16th and 17th of May and were quartered at the Tremont House.

Chief Red Cloud and the delegations first met President Grant at the White House on May 19th, but after greeting them, the President said he was too busy to discuss their problems that day and shunted them along to talk with the Commissioner of Indian Affairs and the Secretary of the Interior — a real case of "passing the Buck" if there ever was one.

This brush-off seemed to annoy the big chiefs. Lone Horn is reported to have "informed the President that he and his forefathers had owned all of this country at one time, and that he was claiming entire ownership, as of that day, for the Indians," and they were "fully prepared to fight for their rights." Next Spotted Tail and Red Cloud chimed in and said, "with angry gestures that unless he appointed a day very soon to meet with them, he, the President, would be sorry." But . . . Grant, it seems, just wasn't in any mood for pow-wowing and "with this the entire delegation marched out."

At a subsequent meeting with the Indian Commissioner, "Red Cloud spoke first, maintaining that the white man had told him many lies, and he had come to Washington to find the truth from 'The Great White Father'." He received a promise they could see the President some other day.

On May 21st, "the delegation and their interpreters appeared at the Commissioner's office to demand a change of quarters from the Tremont House to the Washington House, maintaining that their

rooms were too small." The Commissioner's long reply to this complaint added up to "no soap," and the Indians went away mad again. At one conference, Lone Horn complained "they did not have enough food on their reservation nor weapons with which to obtain food." The Commissioner's comeback was that Lone Horn's band was short of food because they "entertained and supported other Indians" — and the request for guns was turned down because "Bad Indians" might get them. It is not surprising that the boys began to feel they were getting no place fast. On one of these occasions, the Commissioner asked Spotted Tail how he felt about the situation, and the chief replied, "I don't brag about the Black Hills country when I am talking to white men, but I love it and don't want to leave."

Finally, on May 26th, they got their interview with President Grant, and the old general lost no time in laying down the law of might makes right. He is quoted in part as saying: "They must see that the white people outnumber the Indians two hundred to one in the territories of the United States. This number is increasing rapidly and before many years, it will be impossible to fix the limits where the Indians can prevent the white people from going. It will soon become necessary for white people to go to countries, whether occupied by Indians or not, the same as they go from one state to another."

And so Red Cloud and his red Brothers got the truth from their "Great White Father." The President then proceeded to ". . . point out to them the advantages both to themselves and [their] children if they enter into an agreement I shall propose to them. There is a territory south of where they now live, where game and grass is better, and where whites can be sent among them to teach them the arts of civilization. This year there has been great difficulty in keeping the white people from the Black Hills in search of gold . . . Each recurring year this same difficulty will be encountered unless the right to go to that country is granted by the Indians. In the end, this purpose to get into that country may lead to hostilities between the whites and the Indians without any special faults on either side." President Grant then ended the interview by saying, "I want the Indians to think of what I have said to them. I don't

want them to talk today, but to speak freely with the Secretary of the Interior and the Commissioner of Indian Affairs.”

They met with Secretary of the Interior Delano and Commissioner Smith on May 27th and were given some more blunt advice. After telling them how good it was for the Indians to be at peace with the whites and pointing out that the government was spending \$1,200,000 annually on supplies for the Sioux, the Secretary threatened discontinuance of further aid unless they accepted the government's offer, being quoted as saying, “Now if you don't do what is right, Congress will refuse to give you any more aid.” (. . . That still seems to have a familiar echo in some of today's official statements concerning our foreign economic policy).

And what was the government's offer for the Black Hills and other concessions? “Commissioner Smith then stated that Congress would give them \$25,000 for their land and send them into Indian Territory to settle.” No, friend, we didn't leave off any ciphers. \$25,000 . . . was the government's offer.

Spotted Tail's reply to Secretary Delano's proposition was something of an oration, its logic worthy, in our opinion, of preservation and was as follows:

*My father, I have considered all the Great Father told me, and have come here to give you an answer. . . . When I was here before, the President gave me my country, and I put my stake down in a good place, and there I want to stay. . . . I respect the Treaty (doubtless referring to the Treaty of 1868) but the white men who come in our country do not. You speak of another country, but it is not my country; it does not concern me, and I want nothing to do with it. I was not born there. . . . If it is such a good country, you ought to send the white men now in our country there and let us alone. . . .*

Wrangling continued on a number of minor points, including interpretation of the terms of the Treaty of 1868, but the Indians refused to sign any new treaty or agreement until they had returned home to consult with their people. . . . [They] left Washington empty-handed on June 4th.

Had a successful solution been found, the great Indian wars of 1876 might not have been fought,

and there would have been no Custer Massacre. For a time, our government did try, unsuccessfully, to stop the tide, according to most historians — but the magic word “Gold” was too powerful a drug, then as now. In vain did Washington issue its proclamations. In vain did our troops try to block the trails . . . [but in retrospect], perhaps no human power could have stemmed that ant-like, gold-crazed horde.

So the Indians fought and thousands died . . . But [their] cause was hopeless. The strength of the Sioux was broken. President Grant “spoke with a straight tongue” — the odds were too great.

### The Saga of Fallen Leaf <sup>5</sup>

The legend of Ah-ho-appa (Fallen Leaf) and of her father Shan-tag-alisk (Chief Spotted Tail of the Brule Sioux) has been often told in song and story, and in many ways. At least part of it is true. It is a strange tale of intermingled fact and fancy about a girl who wanted to live and love in a world of which she was not a part — and of her father, a remarkable leader of men.

In the summer of 1928, a few months before his death, John Hunton was interviewed at Old Fort Laramie by Joseph G. Masters. He showed Mr. Masters where Ah-ho-appa had been buried on a scaffold and told him what he knew of the circumstances. Mr. Masters then wrote a newspaper feature story about her. In 1960, Russell Thorp of Cheyenne sent [my grandfather] a clipping of that story and . . . photographs of the scaffolding which held her remains for many years. . . and of her father.

Ah-ho-appa must have been a lonely girl, not in physical or spiritual harmony with her own people, or so the legend goes. Since she did not feel and

<sup>5</sup> The military and emigrants' lust for land, gold, and adventure were not the only forces that threatened the Sioux' way of life during this bygone era. For instance, some of them were lured from their tribes by a fascination for the “white man” and his culture. In his works, my grandfather presented the following case in point, the sad story of an obsessed maiden, Fallen Leaf, and her father, Spotted Tail, whose “ill-fated” journey to Washington in 1875 with other chieftains and their delegations was previously described in this article. For more information about Ah-ho-appa see Wilson O. Clough, “Minutaku, Daughter of Spotted Tail,” *Annals of Wyoming* 2 (Oct. 1967): 187-216; and Hyde, *Spotted Tail's Folk*, pp. 108-110.

think as they did, she could not be one with them. And from the whites, whom she admired and apparently wished to emulate, she was set apart by the chasms of heredity, skin color, and prejudice.

Thus it was that during a long visit at Fort Laramie about 1864, she would sit, day after day, alone and apart, on a bench at the Sutler's store, observing all that went on — thinking who knows what thoughts and experiencing who knows what futile longings. Some stories say she was secretly in love with one of the dashing young officers. As to that, this writer has no evidence.

It is said the daily ceremony of guard mount always held her enthralled, and that the soldiers took pride in putting it on with special dash — just for her. To them she was "The Princess," set apart by her grave reserve and dignity.

And then one day, Spotted Tail led his people north, back to the Powder River country, and took his daughter with him — away from Fort Laramie, which she never saw again in life. After her departure, at a gathering of officers at the old fort, one of them claimed to have known Ah-ho-appa in earlier years and said that even as a small girl, she had sworn never to marry an Indian, and she never did, although legend has it that some of the rich young braves of the tribe offered Shan-tag-alisk as many as 200 ponies for her hand. Another story is that on one occasion, a Blackfoot warrior attempted to carry her off by force and she cut him up with her knife to the point of death. Spotted Tail took such pride in this exploit that he never attempted to force her into marriage.

General Harney is said to have once presented her with a little red book which, although she could not read or even speak English, became one of her most treasured possessions. She dressed herself as a young man, liked to carry a gun like her father, and performed none of the squaws' menial tasks.

Two years after her departure from Fort Laramie found Ah-ho-appa dying in a lonely tepee on the Powder. Some said it was consumption — others a broken heart. Shan-tag-alisk, in desperate grief, promised to take her back to Fort Laramie in the spring (1866), but Indian tradition, handed down from generation to generation, has it that she told her father

how much she would love to go, but that it was too late.

And so she languished and died — but not until after a promise from Spotted Tail, that he would bury her on a hillside near Fort Laramie, where her spirit could look down upon the old parade ground and watch again the guard mount she loved so well . . .

They wrapped the frail body in smoked deerskin and placed it upon two white ponies, lashed closely together, for the week-long journey through deep winter snows. A runner was sent ahead by Spotted Tail, asking officers to grant his daughter's dying request for burial overlooking Fort Laramie.

The funeral cavalcade, while still some fifteen miles from the Fort, was met by a military escort sent by Post Commander Major George O'Brien. It consisted of an ambulance, a company of cavalry in dress uniform, and two 12-pound mountain howitzers. Ah-ho-appa's mortal remains were placed in the ambulance, her two white horses tied behind.



Chief Spotted Tail, father of Ah-ho-appa. Courtesy of the Grace Raymond Hebard Papers, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

The entire garrison, headed by Col. Maynadier of the First U. S. Volunteers, turned out to meet the funeral cortege at the Platte River, about two miles from Fort Laramie. Next day the burial scaffold was erected on a gentle slope, half a mile or so north of the Fort hospital. It was made of stout poles, laced together at the top with thongs to hold the coffin. (About 1920, John Hunton took this writer to the site of that scaffold, some of which was still standing, with a few rotting boards from the coffin lying on the ground below.)

The two white ponies were sacrificed, their heads and tails nailed to the poles, so that Ah-ho-appa would not be afoot in the spirit world. The body, still in its deerskin shroud and further wrapped in a red blanket, was then placed in the elaborately-decorated coffin resting on a caisson and slowly hauled to the scaffold, escorted by the garrison in dress array.

Post Chaplain Wright conducted a formal white man's burial service. When he had finished, Spotted Tail indicated he wanted his daughter buried in the Indian way. He wanted to find her in the red man's happy hunting ground and be reunited with her there. He did not want her lost to him forever in the white man's heaven. His every wish was followed. When the ceremonies were over, Shan-tag-alisk cut what he doubtless hoped was the last thread binding his daughter to the white man's hereafter by returning to Chaplain Wright the parfleche sack containing [the little army Episcopal prayer book given to her by General Harney many years before] . . .

The soldiers were deployed in a large square about the scaffold. Within that square, the Indians stood in a circle around the coffin. Major O'Brien placed a pair of white kid cavalry gloves in the coffin to keep Fallen Leaf's hands warm on her lonely journey to the other world, and also a new dollar bill with which to buy food along the way. Then the Indian women came up, one by one, and talked to her in long, earnest whispers — doubtless messages for her to carry on to their own departed loved ones. And each put something she might need beside her body — a bit of mirror, a string of beads, some little token.

The lid was then fastened down, [and] the squaws lifted their princess to the top of the scaffold and

lashed a buffalo skin over all, as the men stood by, mute and motionless. The soldiers, facing outward in their large square, fired a final salute of three volleys. Red men and white men then marched back together to the post as darkness fell and it began to sleet and snow — that is, all marched back except the howitzer detail, which remained at the burial site, built a large fire, and discharged their cannon every half hour until daybreak. Sioux warriors apparently kept a watchful eye on the grave for [quite some time after that] . . .

Many years later, so the story goes, a young and impetuous military doctor came to Fort Laramie. He had the impudence and appalling lack of respect to remove the bones of Ah-ho-appa and make a skeleton of them for his office. One day, scouts brought word to the post that Shan-tag-alisk, with a party of warriors, was approaching to take away the remains of his child. Post authorities, in near panic, gave the great, friendly chief and his party a ceremonious welcome and persuaded him to rest overnight at the Fort before going to claim his daughter. This gave them a chance to replace Fallen Leaf's bones in her casket before morning and remove evidence that her grave had been violated. Had they failed, old [Spotted Tail] might have felt relieved of [a promise he made to his daughter to] . . . never again . . . make war on the whites — and who could have blamed him? She was finally buried under a suitable monument at the Rosebud Agency in South Dakota.

Eugene Ware, an officer who was present and wrote an account of [Fallen Leaf's] burial at Fort Laramie, added this thought to his record:

*Her story is the story of the persistent melancholy of the human race; of kings born in hovels and dying there; of geniuses born where genius is a crime; of heroes born before their age and dying unsung; of beauty born where its gift was fatal; of mercy born among wolves; of statesmen born to find society not yet ripe for their labors to begin, and bidding the world adieu from the scaffold. The daughter of Shan-tag-alisk was one of those individuals found in all lands, at all places, and among all people; she was misplaced.*<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> See Eugene F. Ware, *The Indian War of 1864* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), pp. 407-418.

The record also indicates that her father was of unusual intellect . . . with deep and abiding understanding of human rights and dignity, who realized the futility of war as an instrument of justice. If his reasoning and attitudes were those of an “ignorant savage,” perhaps more of the same would be beneficial in high places — even today.

## A Brother Lost

*Fri, May 5 [1876] — Got back to Milk Ranch about sunset. Heard of horses being stolen on Chug & Jim [one of John Hunton's brothers] missing. Went to Post [Fetterman].*

*Sat. May 6 — Staid at Post last night. 8 A.M. got telegram announcing that Jim had been killed by Indians. Started to [Bordeaux].*

*Sun, May 7 — Got to Ranch 2 P.M. Started to Cheyenne with Jim's remains at 5 o'clock P.M. . . .*

*Mon, May 8 — Staid at Kellys last night . . . Got to Cheyenne at 5 P.M. Arrangements [for Jim's funeral] made by Mr. Fogelson and Frank Hunter . . .*

*Tues, May 9 — In town [Cheyenne] all day. BURIED JIM.*

The several [newspaper and other] stories of how Jim Hunton was killed vary considerably in detail.

Many years later, John Hunton's own account of Jim's killing was written by him for the *Fort Laramie Scout* and published therein [as follows] . . .

*. . . May 4, 1876, James Hunton, my brother, left . . . my home on the afternoon of that day to go to the ranch of Charles Coffee, on Boxelder creek . . . to get a horse he had traded for. While going down through 'the notch' in Goshen Hole, about half way between the two places, he was waylaid, shot and killed by five Indian boys, who were out on a horse stealing expedition. The Indians then went to my ranch . . . after night and rounded up, stole and drove off every head of horses and mules (38) I owned except my saddle horse, which I had with me . . . The horse my brother was riding ran and the Indians could not catch him and the next morning was seen on top of the bluff east of the ranch. Blood on the saddle told the tale and a searching party found the body that afternoon.*

There is reason to believe John Hunton learned

some of the details of his brother's death directly from the very Indians, or at least one of them, who com-



Jim Hunton, the brother of John Hunton, was killed in May 1876. Courtesy John Hunton Papers, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

mitted the act. One sultry summer day in the early [1920s], jogging to the “Station” from Fort Laramie with Mr. Hunton in his old buckboard . . . he told the writer substantially this story.

Some time after his brother's death, when there was again an uneasy peace between the red men and the white, Hunton was present at an Indian “feast” — we do not know the date or place. He told how on occasions the Indians would gorge themselves with unbelievable quantities of meat, often to the point where they would fall over unconscious, as though drunk, and sleep the clock around where they lay. He also recalled that these same Indians . . . could travel for days without food and apparently suffer no serious discomfort or loss of strength.

And at such feasts following the end of hostilities, it was considered proper and commendable for

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warriors who had distinguished themselves to make speeches bragging of their exploits and telling how they had killed their late enemies. On this night a young Indian arose and told in gory detail how he and others had killed Jim Hunton.

John Hunton said simply, "When I heard it, I suddenly saw red" and he reached for his gun with but one thought, to kill that Indian. Squatted beside him in that dim circle by the flickering fire was a young cavalry officer who saw Hunton's move and grabbed his gun arm by the wrist before he could draw. Without moving from their places, and apparently unobserved, the two men struggled silently for a few seconds until Hunton regained his senses,

and sat stoically dead-panned during the remainder of the evening, as demanded by protocol. The old gentleman observed thoughtfully that had he fired on his brother's killer, the twenty or thirty white men present would undoubtedly have been killed in a matter of seconds by the hundreds of Indians who surrounded them.

So that unknown, quick-witted young officer with a strong grip possibly robbed history of another massacre. We would probably all be surprised if we knew how many momentous events actually hinge on small incidents which seldom find their way into the books.

**AW**



# Pat Flannery

by  
Sally Vanderpoel



Pat Flannery Papers  
courtesy American  
Heritage Center  
University of Wyoming

We take the  
Linton treasure  
for granted with-  
out remembering  
or even knowing  
the guardian of  
that treasure, Pat  
Flannery

Those of us steeped in Wyoming history seem to forget that the whole wide world thinks it knows everything there is to know about our short history from western movies and romance novels. The other impression of Wyoming history was said, partly in jest, the other day by Rae Whitney, the widow of a former priest who sometimes served our All Saints' Episcopal church when we were without a full time rector. Rae was born and educated in England where history can go back endless numbers of years. She said, "I wonder about you Wyomingites and your passion for history, it seems to me you have very little of history." I replied, "That explains why we make so much of what we have." The actual eyewitness accounts of the frontier and its people are rare. One of the most valuable collections of personal



experiences in the early days of the development of Wyoming is the John Hunton collection. We take the Hunton treasure for granted without remembering or even knowing the guardian of that treasury, Pat Flannery. Without his chance acquaintance with Hunton, which developed into a life long friendship, the Hunton diaries, if they still existed, might be in some nice air controlled archive revered but forgotten. To tell the truth that *is* where they are, safely preserved at the American Heritage Center at the University of Wyoming in Laramie. They are not forgotten. Nearly every history of Wyoming I have read has referenced Hunton's diaries as a source, made possible by the dedication of Hunton's friend and heir to the diaries, Pat Flannery.

Other sources for those of us who want to learn about our early days are the few diaries preserved in our state facilities, the archives in Cheyenne and the Heritage Center. In some fortunate circumstances there were letters such as the beautifully illustrated examples of the artistic talent of Charlie Russell. There are the careful records of Lewis and Clark, but as far as I can find out, little was written by Jim Bridger; nothing by Jacques La Ramie. Some are photocopied and preserved in the archives. In fact an account of my family's ancestor's adventures on the trail to the gold fields in California is among those.

Not many of the early residents of Wyoming were able or even interested in recording their day to day activities on the beaver trap line, or hunting for a meal. Those conditions were not conducive to immediate recording of events or experiences. Their times were so different from our own that we forget they lived in a world where paper and pencil were not easily replaced; not every pioneer could read and write. Our lives seem unremarkable, too, but future generations may marvel at how primitive we were. John Hunton was unique, he was educated and he recorded many of his experiences in letters home and the diaries. From one of John Hunton's letters comes the motto for the village of Fort Laramie, emblazoned on the roadside as the traveler approaches. He was asked about conditions in the West and he replied to the correspondent that Fort Laramie was a town of 250 good souls and six old grouches. Fort Laramie has proudly displayed that sign for many

years. Hunton had arrived in Wyoming, at Fort Laramie, in 1867 where he shared a room with Jim Bridger. A Virginian and veteran of the Civil War, he had "whacked mules" along the trails from Nebraska City, a staging point for the West, as far as Fort Laramie. Much later in his life Hunton became a friend of Pat Flannery.

Flannery was a contemporary of my parents and his daughter, Billie, was my Torrington school friend. We were junior members of the American Legion Auxiliary too. When we were older her children played with my children when we all lived in Torrington or Cheyenne. Pat was a fixture in our community, as the publisher and editor of the local newspaper he inserted little tidbits of information about the quirky habits of our populace or other funny events. He was an ardent patriot and one of the strong supporters of the American Legion, having served as he did in World War I. He arrived in Goshen County in 1922 with many veterans of that war under the auspices of a government program which provided homesteads in a lottery opportunity. When Pat came to Wyoming with his bride, Laura Alice Moomah, and their baby daughter, Billie, he homesteaded near Fort Laramie.

Leon Grayson "Pat" Flannery was born in St. Louis, Missouri, on March 14, 1894. He started school in St. Louis and in Chicago before his parents moved to Colorado when he was twelve. After high school in Denver he attended the Colorado State College of Agriculture at Fort Collins before his military service. His interests at the university included the school newspaper.

By the time the Flannerys arrived at their homestead, the former centerpiece of travel on the several trails leading to the gold mines in California or to Oregon, the old fort was a decaying shell. Flannery became a friend of an elderly neighbor, an "old timer," John Hunton. He learned of the diaries Hunton had carefully filled through fifty years.

Much like other WWI veteran homesteaders, Pat did not last long as a farmer. Many of the idealistic new farmers were not farmers or even had rural backgrounds. Some of those reading this story may know that farming is an art, usually handed down from father to son with hands-on practice. It was not easy

to learn how to farm in the three year "proving up" residency period required to gain legal title to the plots of land. At the time of this project by the federal government the acreage of each farm was eighty acres. A few earlier efforts at peopling the West had granted one hundred sixty acres largely in Colorado. The additional complication of irrigated farming proved daunting for the easterners who had lived in areas with sufficient natural moisture to grow crops. Many just used the property as a leg up to continue, or return to, former vocations or to establish another profession, usually in the area from which they had come by selling their homesteads. The population of Goshen County during and immediately after the early 1920s swelled to some eighteen thousand souls. And it diminished to its present number of about twelve thousand by the mid to late 1930s. The diversity of these new Wyoming residents was one of the unique aspects of the population. They were all veterans and that was the only requirement with a small filing fee for the lottery drawing. The homesteaders came from nearly every one of the forty-eight states; every religion was represented, every ethnic background. Like Pat and my parents, some stayed on the homestead even after the three year residency requirement. In some cases the length of time in military service allowed for that 'overtime' to reduce the residency needed. My mother insisted that they only had to live on the homestead seven months a year for a year and a half because of my father's lengthy service before WWI and in France during the war.

The Flannery heritage and education was publishing so it was almost pre-ordained that Pat and Alice Flannery would found *The Fort Laramie Scout*, a weekly newspaper. It had a limited circulation, was delivered by mail and the annual subscription rate was two dollars. Its readership quickly increased because of Pat's quick way with a phrase, and a mocking kind of humor for the foibles of those people who were the subjects of his news. As he roamed the area, his outgoing personality found items of local interest to add to state and national news. His association with Hunton had increased to a trusting friendship. Pat proposed publishing excerpts from the Hunton diaries in each edition of the paper. Hunton

demanded the assurance that Pat would not alter any information or phrasing or spelling in the diaries to make them sound better than they were. The short item in each newspaper ended with "to be continued." It was the first public recognition of Hunton's history.

Very soon the newspaper expanded with a new name of *The Goshen County News and Fort Laramie Scout*. Its editorial office was in Lingle some ten miles east of Fort Laramie and the Flannery homestead. The expanded readership resulted in a very good, lucrative newspaper. Pat sold the Lingle paper to Floy and Leo Tonkin and moved his operation to the county seat at Torrington another ten miles east on the railroad line. The Tonkins were as creative and ambitious as the Flannerys and their paper continues publication to this day.

The *Goshen County News* frankly supplied a Democrat political party view for its readership. Pat's advocacy was strong for the Democrats just as the *Torrington Telegram* offered the opposing view. It was not unusual for the strongest Republican to subscribe to Pat's paper because it was entertaining. He presented the news with humor and respect. The content was something like the publication much earlier in England of the works by Dickens. In addition to the Hunton column, it featured a serialized novel which filled more space in the paper than Hunton's excerpts, cartoons, and a nod to national and international news. An example of its attraction appeared on January 26, 1927:

Our learned county superintendent of schools, C. C. Smith, believes that an agile body and firm muscles are worthy and necessary compliments to an active brain and strong mind. While illustrating his theory with a few simple feats of physical prowess before several of our able and charming school marms at his home the other evening he is said to have performed a split that was all wool and a yard long, illuminating and revealing, uncovering the entire proposition so to speak.

It is understood that Mr. Smith did not, at first intend to go into the matter at such great length but...a rug upon which he was demonstrating slipped, causing him to hastily revise his plans and execute this

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split - one of the most complete on record....the News regrets that it cannot proceed with further details...after accomplishing his feat he is reported too have backed modestly to the wall and slid as inconspicuously as possible onto a sofa where he remained demurely seated - thus keeping the details fairly well hidden.

In the early 1920s when Flannery and Hunton met, he was well and still served as president of the Wyoming Old Timers who met at the state fair in Douglas once a year. The Huntons had moved to Torrington a more comfortable access for the two friends. In the discussion of the final disposition of the diaries, it was clear that Hunton expected they would be published. The agreement was the same as the the one regarding the excerpts in Pat's newspapers. It was not a formal document, there was to be no fooling around with Hunton's own words or any effort to make them more interesting than they were. In the case of these two friends it would be honored, unlike Yogi Berra's saying: "An oral agreement isn't worth the paper its written on." When Pat edited the diaries he used Hunton's words even when he added explanations of some details.

Pat bought the Hunton farm just outside Fort Laramie when it was available. Its dwelling was exactly like most of the primitive houses of the original residents. It was a shack about twelve feet by twenty. The conversations between Hunton and Flannery are forgotten, but when Hunton died in 1928, Pat Flannery received the fifty diaries, one for each year through 1927, with the exception of the later months of 1888 and the first few months of 1889.

There was never any question in Flannery's mind that he had inherited a priceless treasure. He consulted the respected historian Grace Raymond Hebard about the appropriate way to use them. They agreed that a passage of time, perhaps twenty-five years, would give a perspective to the life and work of Hunton and allow for more careful presentation of the diaries.

Pat continued to publish his newspaper which crusaded for many needed improvements in the county: a new bridge over the Platte River; he supported the establishment of an orphanage at Torrington by the Roman Catholic Church, and as-

sisted in acquiring the land for it; he lauded the winners in high school athletics and other activities; he reported on honors at the county and state fairs. In the matter of the bridge, which was considered modern, made of concrete as it was and fairly new, he pointed out that it presented a serious hazard since it had no pedestrian lane. Flannery explained that the new Holly Sugar factory had caused a basic change by the users of the bridge. Workers in the factory south of the town of Torrington had to compete with traffic to walk to work.

He wrote of the tragedies in the community...an example was the death of "little Mae Hackleman. There is sorrow in the home of her parents and a happy presence has also departed from Jim Johnson's school bus...she was taken sick a few weeks ago and her death came Friday after an unsuccessful mastoid operation in Cheyenne." His story continued to name bus mates who would miss their "pet" and her "kindly, cheerful little spirit."

On another occasion he described in detail the death of a young woman killed in the nearby town of Henry in what must have been a case of mistaken identity since the local police officer, Jim Nolan, was driving her home to Morrill. He explained there was a report of a stolen car and officers approached a car on the side of the road, shots were fired by C.L. Landry of the DeLue detective agency and Miss Sylvia Kelly was accidentally killed. That same paper told of the hunting accident death of Billy Heffron, the nephew of the large Heffron family. The Heffrons, unmarried brothers and sisters, lived in a spacious house on 15<sup>th</sup> street west. They had adopted Billie and his sister, Dolly, when their parents died. Billie's gun had discharged as he pulled it from the car to shoot a rabbit on the same street about a half mile west of his home. I have never seen anyone die, especially by gunshot, so I remember well the description by Keith Housen, Billie's friend who was there that day. Keith tried to assist Billie who was lying on the road, with spasms and heavy jerking. Keith said he had always thought that anyone shot just dropped dead and did not move as they do in the movies. Keith's conversations were not reported in the newspaper. As the reader can see it was a folksy newspaper, naming names and describing incidents in a manner not seen in today's

papers.

When the Goshen Chapter of the Wyoming State Historical Society was chartered in 1954, Pat, Alice, and my parents were charter members. In 1955, the society at its annual meeting honored Pat with its outstanding historian award. Pat received a document signed by the revered historian Lola M. Homsher.

Pat was among the sixty-six members of Post # 5 of the American Legion, veterans of World War I who formed a "Last Man's Club." To those of us whose fathers were members its purpose was ghoulish and repugnant. It was a club which was to meet once a year, the first weekend in June, to toast their comrades in arms, those lost in the war and those who died each year. The membership was limited to the sixty-six who attended the first meeting on June 3, 1940. The men in the prime of their lives a little over two decades after "the big war" scoffed at the idea of death. It was far away, but inevitable they knew. The three who survived the longest were to drink a bottle of wine held in trust by the "head man" from each banquet. Political views were not discussed at those annual meetings where they were bound together by the war and their common memory. No matter how politically oriented they were there was no subtle axe to be ground. Pat was an ardent Democrat; my father a passionate Republican. My father, Phil Rouse, and Pat must have mutually agreed that for our country to survive two strong political parties must be encouraged to provide balance and a fair exchange of ideas and positions. At least that was my father's often mentioned reason for voting, or for working for a candidate.

Pat was among the majority who made the effort to get to every reunion, to participate in the comraderie and listen to the stories often colorfully embroidered with the passage of time. In the annual photographs one can feel the friendship and the bonding, although the backgrounds, beliefs, and careers were as dissimilar as any collection of people could be. Nearly all had been homesteaders who had come to eastern Wyoming with high hopes of owning land and becoming wealthy. A goal reached by few. The Legion hall where they met had, of course, the obligatory bar, but the photographs do not show any large number of glasses for liquor. In the one dated 1953,

Pat is the only man with a cocktail glass in his hand, he is easily identified in the group by his bow tie. I have never heard that Pat imbibed to any degree. It is interesting to speculate how it happened that he looked like the only man who might be a drinker, when I know that nearly all would join in a drink at least once a year. One of my historian friends commented when I mentioned that I was researching information about Pat, "My mother always referred to him as a flannel mouth Irishman." I looked up that meaning, it seems it refers to a stereotype of a good talker.

It was my privilege and that of other daughters and our mothers to prepare and serve the meal. The mothers cooked it in the hall's kitchen and we "girls" were the servers. The menu never varied, fried chicken...potatoes and gravy, green beans, hot rolls, and pie. The organization and its customs started when we were in high school and continued through the time when some of us inherited the cooking job and our children were the servers. It was a memorable activity for me to share. It gave me respect for strong pull of love of country and comrades. Over the years the preparation and serving of the meal became less and less of a chore as the numbers of the Last Man's Club dwindled. The final three were Dr. Bryan Fuller, a veterinarian, Doc F.S. Brown, chiropractor, and Frank Zimmer, oil refinery and elevator owner. When the three actually opened the bottle of wine, it had turned to vinegar. Ceremonial glasses of the spoiled wine were suitably raised in a toast to the sixty-three who were gone. They were not alone. They had been invited to share their celebration with the annual meeting of the "Last Squad," the later generation of World War II veterans with the same purpose as the Last Man's, remembering. Pat and my father had long since been among the honorees as they had left this life.

The eldest among the remaining members hosted the reunion each year. When it was his turn to be 'last man' and host the dinner on June 7, 1954, my father led the memorial with a poem which I found as I researched Flannery's life and that of the Last Man's Club:

"My comrades:  
 Each year we meet  
 To toast the dead,  
 As some have said,  
 But a treasured moment  
 With meaning clear ...  
 That when we leave  
 This earth so dear,  
 You , Comrades,  
 Will gather here  
 And drink to us,  
 As we to them ...  
 These friends of ours,  
 Whose empty chairs  
 Denote their passage  
 From worldly cares.  
 If they had faults  
 We know them not,  
 Of them, our memories  
 Hold no slot.  
 These were men;  
 Friends so true,  
 That here tonight  
 We gather anew,  
 To toast our comrades  
 Of yesterday  
 Who from our club  
 Have gone away."

With the advent of the administration of Franklin Roosevelt, an increase in interest in the Democrat party was generated in Wyoming. Pat entered into political activities with his usual zeal. He was elected state chairman of the party and served "almost continuously from 1933 to 1938 when there was 100% Democratic control of the entire congressional delegation and the five major state offices," according to Alice, "when Democrats experienced the greatest victories" in the state. She did not mention the 100% Democratic legislature in 1869 which presented the Republican governor with a bill designed to embarrass him. It created the right for women to vote! Republican Governor John A. Campbell had the last laugh, he signed it.

The period of Flannery's guidance saw Governors Leslie A. Miller and Lester Hunt and Senator Joseph O'Mahoney among others become leaders in the state. Flannery himself represented Goshen

County in the state legislature. In 1948, he gave incumbent Republican Congressman Frank A. Barrett a run for his money when he lost the election by three thousand votes. Flannery was remarkably successful in other aspects of his life. According to Red Fenwick, noted columnist for *The Denver Post*, he was a complicated man, part of the worldly political

**L. G. "PAT"**  
**FLANNERY**  
*Democrat*



*For*  
**CONGRESS**

IT IS IMPORTANT . . .  
 THAT YOU VOTE  
 THE FLANNERY CLUB  
 P. O. Box 275  
 Lingle, Wyoming

Flannery's campaign brochure. Courtesy L. G. Flannery Papers, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

scene, and still content with the simple life of Hunton's old shack.

In an earlier column titled "A HAPPY MAN" Fenwick had written that at least in the opinion of one very happy gent named L.G. (Pat) Flannery,

the components of true happiness are relatively simple.....what makes all this seem so remarkable to me is that Flannery is a study in contrasts...at one time [he] was Wyoming's kingmaker. He could name a postmaster, appoint a judge, put a man in office or take him out. He could almost singlehandedly determine the fate of important legislation and without his blessing a man's political future wasn't worth a three cornered dime."

Another period of influence by the Democrats occurred long after Alice and Pat were gone. For twenty years, Wyoming had governors, Ed Herschler and Mike Sullivan, and a secretary of state, Kathy Karpan, who were Democrats. With his advocacy of the Democratic party, Pat would have been pleased to see such worthies carrying his standard.

As the Depression deepened, he was able through his connections to be named to positions in the state government: secretary of the State Board of Charities and Reform and later, director of the State Department of Commerce and Industry. He worked a year during the Depression in Washington D.C. before he was appointed by Harry Hopkins to the position of Wyoming administrator of the Works Progress Administration. That organization researched and produced an important volume filled with facts and figures about Wyoming. While it is no longer in print, it is often used to research Wyoming history: *WYOMING, A Guide to its History, Highways and People*. In that capacity he supervised the many efforts made to ease the Depression years with its high rate of unemployment.

In his obituary in *The Denver Post*, mention was made that Flannery resigned the WPA directorship with a salary of "\$5,000 a year to enlist in the army at \$21 per month." His obituary, written by Fenwick for the *Post*, described his political career and his triumphant FULL SLATE ELECTED in 1938.

As Fenwick wrote, Pat was ever the patriot and

he did enlist as a private in the army the day after the Pearl Harbor attack. In some of her writing Alice said that he gave up a high paying job for a noble ideal. Her remarks seem to indicate she did not quite share the patriotic zeal but we all knew she loved and respected her interesting, complex husband. To those who had survived the Depression years, as Flannery had, his enlistment spoke of a man of principle and selfless honor. It explains his popularity and respect in every job he held in every community he served. As the war ended he had attained the rank of master sergeant.

After the war he served in Washington as administrative assistant to Senator O'Mahoney for six years. As a sidebar tidbit: the senator's name was always an interesting topic of conversation. He insisted it was O'mahonee (ma as in Ma), but Republicans and other critics insisted on referring to the distinguished senator as O ma-hoe'-knee.

After his retirement, Flannery turned again to the diaries of Hunton. He left Alice and the children and moved, full time, to the shack at Fort Laramie and worked on the Hunton diaries with the same zeal he had brought to all other projects in his life. As that period of time allowed by Dr. Hebard's and his decision approached, he began his careful perusal and decided how to present them to posterity. Naturally he began at the beginning: Hunton's first diary.

Hunton arrived in Dakota Territory in 1866 and served as a clerk at the post store in Fort Laramie. Later he settled on a plot which he called Bordeaux, a time detailed in the diaries. He had put down roots and stayed the rest of his life in the area about forty miles wide and sixty miles long which in the present day is called Goshen County. He had an association with Fort Fetterman and the town of Douglas at one time. But most of his life was spent in Laramie County, later to be divided into Goshen and Platte counties. Three years after Hunton came to the region it became Wyoming Territory on April 3, 1869. He recorded in small books the routine and sometimes the exciting people and incidents of his life in primitive Wyoming. The originals are small leather bound volumes 3 x 5 inches. When time came for publication Flannery selected the same size and similar suede-like covers. Pat described the diaries as all

Thursday, FEBRUARY 4, 1875

Sent Hunt and to Wheatons  
to get Blacksmith, got  
back with blacksmith wife & kids  
H & J B. Slightly inebriated  
Mail passed to Cheyenne  
Wrote to Bullock enclosing \$1.35  
in checks on J. Shutz. Murrin  
Hatch, Hass, bid on mail sent  
Fixed Pump  
Blacksmith named Harry read

Fine day

Fryday ~~THURSDAY~~ 5

Shoing Wreles,  
Chopping wood cleaning stable  
Phillips and Jim Harris news  
here on way to Cheyenne.  
Sent for Kirk Hills'  
watch by Phillips

Nice day but little cloudy

Saturday, FEBRUARY 6, 1875

Mr. Bullock, arrived at bank  
wrote John Phillips who stayed  
all night. Al. Lighten stayed  
all night - going East.

John Boye & Leahy started  
for Laramie for hay

John Phillips went to Laramie

Nice day

Sunday ~~SATURDAY~~ 7

Shoing ponies

Nice day

Pages from Hunton's 1875 diary. Courtesy John Hunton Papers. American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

alike. He chose the 1875 diary to describe in detail: "solidly bound with a double leather cover. The outside has weathered to a deep brown, the inside one retains its natural light-tan freshness and has two leather pockets, front and back.. When the double flap of the outside cover is tucked into its slot the entire book is well protected against weather and rough treatment when carried in a man's pocket or saddle bag."

The pages are gold edged, unfaded, crisp and full of "life" and made of paper built to withstand the effects of water. In fact, the fly leaf proclaims the paper to be a 'Patent Erasable Surface, Patented October 24, 1865. Use a soft pencil and erase the moisture.' Hunton made his entries with both ink and pencil, apparently de-

pending on whether he was at home or camped on the trail.

"And not a leaf in the book is loose from its binding," with some awe Pat concluded his description.

As he worked on the books he was true to his promise to organize, edit, and add explanations and supplementary materials, only to make this earliest of Wyoming historians perfectly clear to the reader. The Hunton diaries compare for accuracy and depth to those of Samuel Pepys, the most remembered diarist of all. His diaries do not reveal the salacious intimate facts of life as Pepys' do. It seems clear that Hunton hoped his diaries would be preserved and read by future generations, unlike Pepys who it is believed did not intend to reveal his observations to



a passing parade but to himself.

There is universal agreement that the Hunton diaries would not be as useful, especially in their original volumes, without a word or two here and there to clarify the meaning, or the action taking place. Hunton casually mentions the names of his friends and acquaintances: John Clay, Francis Warren, the Kimballs and Wilkins, John Kendrick, Bryant Brooks, even Calamity Jane and Buffalo Bill Cody. He described the life of the frontier and its gradual emergence to more civilized society sometimes with a comment about the changes. He discusses irrigation, that vital source of growth. He mentions Indian problems, outlaws, jail breaks, social affairs—one chapter is devoted to the Cheyenne Club, a haven for the elite of the state.

Volumes five and six of the diaries were ready for publication at the time of Pat's death, February 4, 1964. Alice arranged for the publication of number five by the *Lingle Guide's* publisher, Edwin Lebsock, from the manuscripts Pat had prepared in 1964. For the sixth volume in 1970, she found a publisher in The Arthur H. Clark Company of Glendale, California.

Hunton kept the diaries through 1927. Flannery had prepared several manuscripts for publication before his death, which are unpublished and stored in the American Heritage Center at the University of Wyoming. They would have covered the "civilization" of the area and a new cast of characters almost as colorful as his earlier acquaintances. The published and edited volumes are long out of print, prized by collectors.

Pat's devotion to preserving and presenting this slice of Wyoming's short history was difficult for the family. No doubt that is true of any person dedicated to a mission. When he spent the years in the Hunton shack just outside the gates of Fort Laramie National Historic Site, changes were occurring there. It had been declared a national park in the mid-1930s and efforts were begun to restore it. Those improvements after the war had stabilized many historic buildings. It was described in a *Redbook Magazine* as the "jewel of the National Park Service." The acknowledgment of the importance of Fort Laramie to the West's civilization can be partially attributed to Flannery's in-

fluence and connections in Washington, D.C.

He was so absorbed in his mission that his granddaughter remembers him as a far away person, one she did not know very well. In these last days as I

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Brochure for Hunton diaries. Courtesy L. G. Flannery Papers, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

inquired about him, I found few people remaining in the community who actually knew him or remembered his name. Among those who had heard of him the mention of his name was greeted with respect.

Pat's research and prepared manuscripts included all diaries with the exception of the last few months of 1888 and all of 1889. It was during that period when Wyoming's cattlemen lost their product to the worst blizzard recorded until 1949. Hunton was bankrupt at that time, perhaps because of the weather or other circumstances, and returned to Fort Laramie to the position of post trader. The diaries resume in 1890 with no reference to the missing reports for a year and a half. Flannery thought they may have been lost, or destroyed for some reason by Hunton himself.

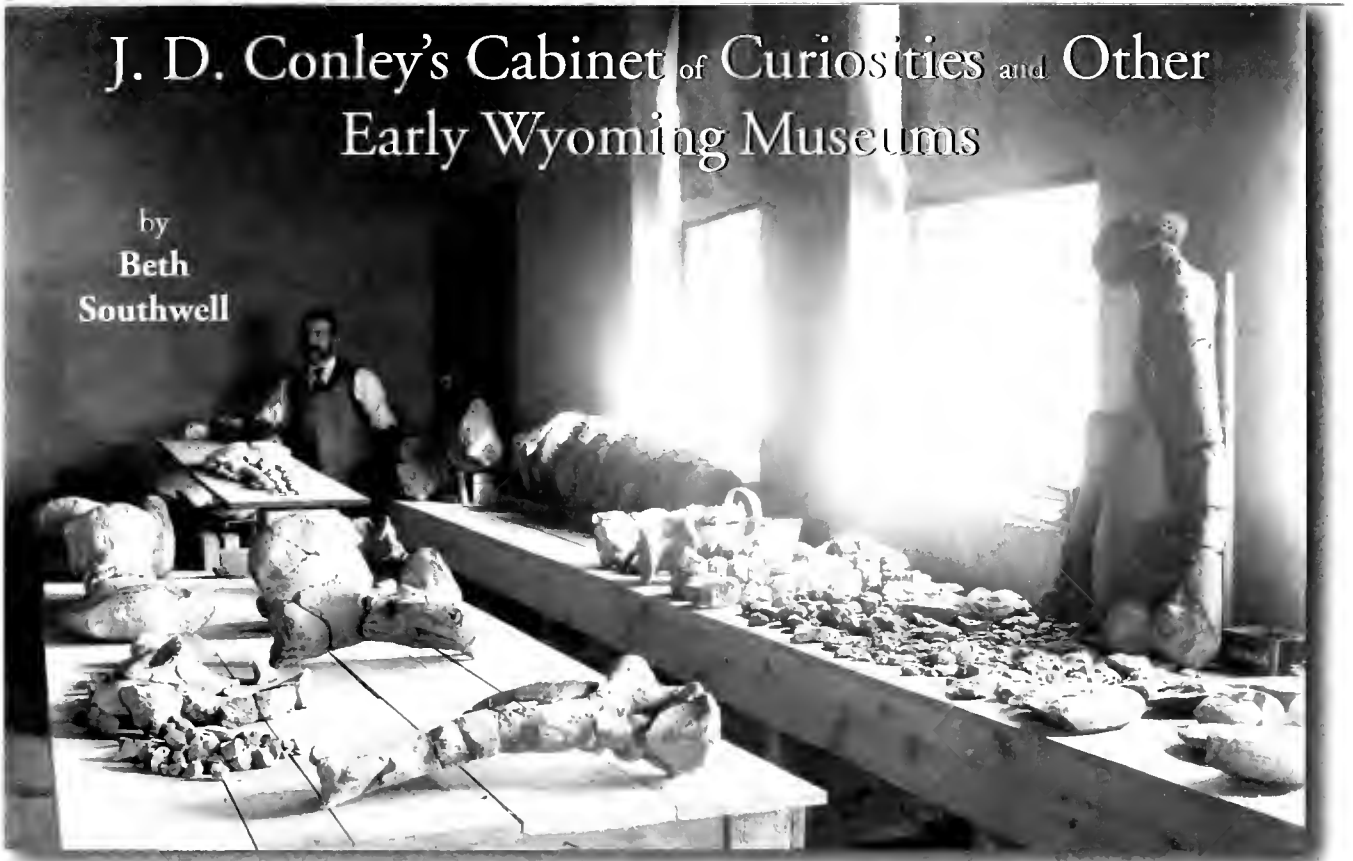
Flannery was diagnosed with cancer and hospitalized in Cheyenne on January 19, 1964. He was transferred to the veteran's hospital in Denver within a week and died there on February 4. He was sixty-nine years old. He was survived at that time by his wife, Alice, and his daughter, Billie, and two grandchildren, Patricia and Mike Griske. His daughter and grandchildren are his remaining survivors. It was appropriate that his funeral service was conducted in the Fort Laramie community church and he is buried in the historic Fort Laramie cemetery.

The Wyomingite passion for making the most of our history was confirmed by the selection of his memorial. Friends were invited to contribute to the Wyoming State Historical Society in lieu of flowers.

**AW**

# J. D. Conley's Cabinet of Curiosities and Other Early Wyoming Museums

by  
Beth  
Southwell



William H. Reed in the bone laboratory that was called the "Bone Room" at the University of Wyoming. The university hired Reed, who was a geologist, in 1896. In 1903 he became the curator of the university's museum, which exhibited many fossils found in Wyoming. Courtesy Samuel Knight Collection, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

## Introduction

Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, that innate human desire to collect and display unique and wondrous objects took hold of the American imagination. Popular "dime" museums flourished in eastern cities, as places to educate and delight the masses. Even non-English speaking immigrants and illiterate visitors could enjoy the visual exhibits.<sup>1</sup> Private individuals often maintained their own "cabinet" collections, with souvenirs of personal travels or of their scientific and cultural interests. Citizens of Wyoming Territory also established a number of popular curiosity museums as well as small, private collections or cabinets. Wyoming's first governors played pivotal roles in both encouraging legislation and personally developing public exhibitions designed to promote the economic potential of the territory. Some of these initial exhibits created the core collections of the present Wyoming State Museum.

In 1891, John D. Conley, a member of the first University of Wyoming faculty, created the first campus museum. This was the first serious public museum developed as a tool for education. It became a repository for Wyoming's natural and cultural treasures and was soon heralded as "the best working cabinet

<sup>1</sup> Steven Conn, *Museums and American Intellectual Life, 1876-1926* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 4.

in the West."<sup>2</sup> This small roomful of exhibit cabinets formed the foundation for most of the scientific and cultural institutions on campus today, including the Geological Museum, the Aven Nelson Herbarium, the Anthropology Museum, the American Heritage Center, the UW Art Museum, and the Entomology Exhibit.

### Early "Museums" and Cabinets in Wyoming

The first establishments in Wyoming calling themselves "museums" were places more for the purpose of amusement than for scholarship. James McDaniel, who billed himself as "the Barnum of the West," opened Wyoming's first public museum in Cheyenne during October 1867, one month before the Union Pacific Railroad tracks reached the town.<sup>3</sup> This "Museum of Living Wonders," on Eddy Street (now Pioneer) between sixteenth and seventeenth streets, also housed a saloon with two bars and a theater. Admission was free, as long as the patron was willing to purchase a cigar or a drink beforehand. The museum did maintain an entrance separate from the saloon's to encourage attendance by ladies and families.<sup>4</sup> "Professor" McDaniel had a flare for self-promotion and produced a series of extravagant newspaper advertisements, shrewdly positioned among the lines of news reporting in *The Cheyenne Leader*, to publicize his constantly changing attractions. He made a trip east to secure new museum stock in 1869 and returned with

specimens of animals of all parts of the world. American and Egyptian porcupines, the wonderful white parrots, anacondas and monkeys and apes, of the smallest, largest, and funniest kinds. The Museum is now filled with every description of curiosities, even to a life-like statue of the Feejee Mermaid. No other town in the west can boast of an exhibition equal to the McDaniel's Museum.<sup>5</sup>

The infamous "Feejee Mermaid" was one of the most extravagantly promoted attractions at Phineas T. Barnum's American Museum in New York in 1843. Barnum's elaborate marketing campaign of this rather obvious manufactured curiosity filled the New York newspapers for weeks before the display opened and

succeeded in netting him one thousand dollars income in a single week.<sup>6</sup> It is unknown if McDaniel purchased Barnum's creation or if his was a different specimen. If any of McDaniel's live animal specimens expired, they were merely stuffed and promoted anew.

**M'DANIELS'**  
**Cheyenne Museum**  
OF  
**LIVING WONDERS**  
AND  
**WORKS of ART**  
ALSO  
**BRILLIANTLY ILLUMINATED**  
**STEROSCOPIC**  
AND  
**Cosmoramic Views**

Together with a rare Collection of Native and Foreign Animals, Birds, Boa Constrictors, Anacondas, etc., etc., etc.

**The Ichneumons, or Grave Dogs**

OF CENTRAL AMERICA,

are attractions that will well repay a visit.

**Open Day and Evening.**

STREET BETWEEN 16TH AND 17TH.

**CHEYENNE, Wyoming Territory.**

Advertisement for McDaniel's museum found in the *Cheyenne Daily Leader*. Courtesy American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

<sup>2</sup> *University of Wyoming Circular of General Information, 1887-1888*, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Editions (Boomerang Publishing Company, 1887); and *Second Annual Report of the University of Wyoming* (1893), p. 85.

<sup>3</sup> *The Cheyenne Leader*, November 9, 1867.

<sup>4</sup> *The Cheyenne Leader*, October 29, 1867; and Milt Riske, "James McDaniel, Barnum of the West," *The Denver Post*, December 9, 1979.

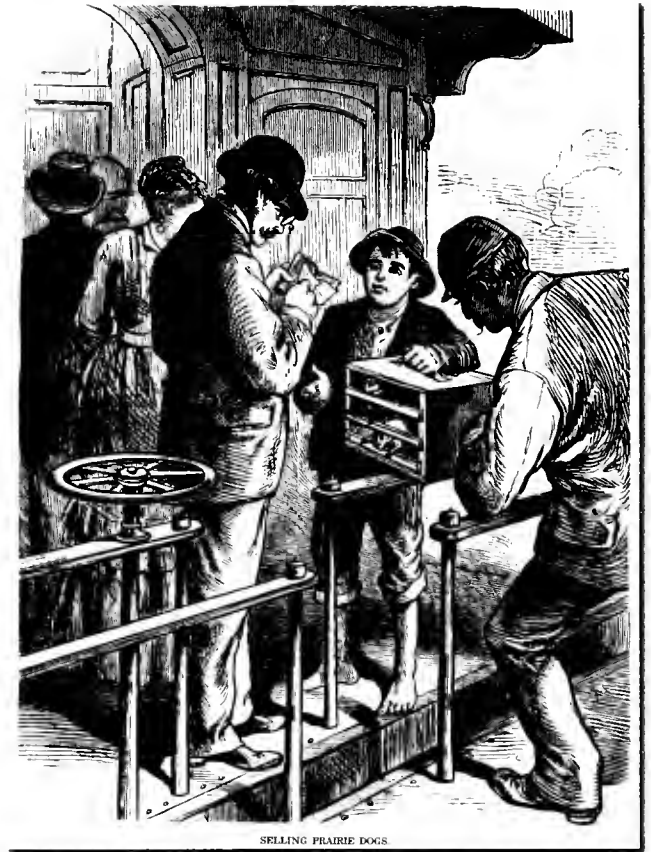
<sup>5</sup> *The Cheyenne Leader*, January 18, 1869.

<sup>6</sup> A.S. Dennett, *Weird and Wonderful, the Dime Museum in America* (New York University Press, 1997), pp. 27-28.

McDaniel's museum owned a stereopticon with fifteen hundred stereoscopic views available for display (of which 375 could be seen at any one time). Many scenes portrayed a military theme, and were actively promoted for the interest of soldiers from the nearby Fort D. A. Russell. The most popular attractions were a series of the live performers, such as "Miss Charlotte Temple, the great English Giantess," "a world renowned Circassian girl... a beauty of rarest description," and Professor A. C. Clark, a "well-known pedestrian" whose stunt of walking non-stop, without eating or drinking for more than fifty hours, was finally halted by a doctor's order.<sup>7</sup> The museum also boasted a gallery with "choice pictures of art"; "masterpieces of the most noted American and European artists" which McDaniel proclaimed that "everybody should visit... for it is a rare chance, indeed, of seeing such superb paintings in this weird region of earth."<sup>8</sup>

McDaniel's enterprise grew and evolved through the years, continually re-inventing its attractions and focus. His enthusiasm was undaunted when his various museum buildings twice burned to the ground and once suffered a roof collapse due to snow. He simply rebuilt in a newer and finer building. His establishment continued to grow and thrive through its eleven-year life in Cheyenne. The new "McDaniel Building" at 1615 Pioneer Avenue eventually housed the Sixth Legislative Assembly in 1879, although by that time McDaniel had sold the structure and moved on.<sup>9</sup>

Another early museum in southeastern Wyoming was the "Museum of Rocky Mountain Curiosities" located on the north side of the Union Pacific Railroad tracks in the town of Sherman. This museum building, actually a glorified curio shop, was located at the end of the row of hastily constructed wooden structures, including a saloon, store, restaurant, and boarding house. Sherman, the highest town on the U.P.R.R. transcontinental line, was a required stopping point for engines needing water and service. The businesses in this small town catered to railroad passengers looking for a way to pass the time during these maintenance procedures. Prairie dogs in wooden cages, as well as apples, trinkets, and rocks specimens were sold to tourists.<sup>10</sup>



SELLING PRAIRIE DOGS

Railroad passengers buying caged prairie dogs sold by the museum in Sherman, Wyoming. Image from *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, reprinted in *Out West on the Overland Train* by Richard Reinhart.

Laramie's irreverent humorist, Bill Nye, poked fun at the marvels on display in Sherman in several of his essays, but it is unknown how much of the detail in his yarns was actually based on reality. He joked about "two stuffed coyotes chained to the door, one on each side..." "Sometimes a tourist asks if these are prairie dogs."<sup>11</sup> In "Home-Made Indian Relics" he described some merchandise displayed in

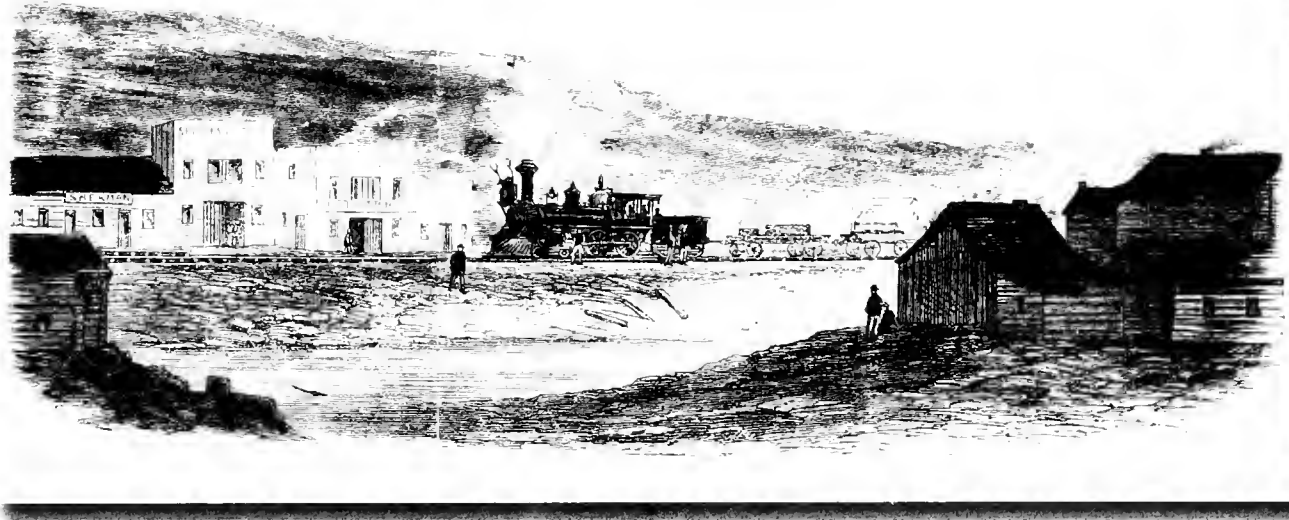
<sup>7</sup> Campton Bell, "The Early Theaters, Cheyenne, Wyoming," *Annals of Wyoming* 25 (January 1953): 3-21.

<sup>8</sup> *The Cheyenne Leader*, October 29 and 31, 1867.

<sup>9</sup> Marie H. Erwin, *Wyoming Historical Blue Book, A Legal and Political History of Wyoming 1868-1943* (Denver, Colorado: Bradford-Robinson Printing Co., 1946), p. 235; and Bell, "Early Theaters," p. 16.

<sup>10</sup> Clarice Whittenburg handwritten notes, Clarice Whittenburg Papers (Acc. #364), American Heritage Center.

<sup>11</sup> Edgar Wilson (Bill) Nye, "The Gentle Youth from Leadville" in *Bill Nye and Boomerang* (Chicago, Illinois: Homewood Publishing Company, Chicago, 1883), pp. 201-202.



Sherman, Wyoming, home to the "Museum of the Rocky Mountain Curiosities," one of Wyoming's first museums. Courtesy American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

the museum: a "bale of Indian arrows" that were so "remarkably well preserved. They are as good as new." Also for sale were "...some Western cactus as a curiosity for the tenderfoot who had never fooled with a cactus much."<sup>12</sup> This museum and the entire block of buildings, excluding the depot, burned to the ground "with all the ardor with which it was constructed" during a fire in September 1891.<sup>13</sup>

A similar exhibit of "Rocky Mountain Curiosities" was displayed near the Green River train station, in southwestern Wyoming. A pair of caged mountain lions thrilled the travelers outside, while indoors

we find the neatest and prettiest of rooms, in which fossils and petrifications jostle mixed drinks and brandy straight. There are whole logs of petrified wood, broken down the middle to show sparkling quartz crystals bedded in their hollows; slabs two feet long, with delicate dark tracery of fishes, ferns, or water plants; moss agates of every shade; milky-white, dark gray, and purple amethysts; and California diamonds – clear, sparkling crystals, colorless as water.<sup>14</sup>

The "California Diamonds" were actually large quartz crystals. The more tantalizing title was for the benefit of gullible, but hopefully affluent, tourists.

Nearby cliffs exposing the fifty million-year old Green River Formation were the source of the fossil fish and plants. Specimens of these types of fossils are still sold in rock shops today.

There were undoubtedly scores of Wyoming's earliest settlers who maintained small personal collections of the interesting rocks and fossils accumulated from their new surroundings but, unless they were later donated to a public institution, little record of them is left. Bill Nye was inspired to write about his own "Cabinet" of "wild western things" in his 1888 collection, *Baled Hay*.

Beginning with the skull of old Hi-lo-Jack-and game, a Sioux brave, the collection takes in my wonderful bird, known as the Walk-up-the-creek, and another *rara avis*, with carnivorous bill and web feet, which has astonished everyone except the taxidermist and myself.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Bill Nye, "Home-made Indian Relics" in *Bill Nye and Boomerang*, pp. 235-39.

<sup>13</sup> *The Cheyenne Leader*, September 17, 1891.

<sup>14</sup> Richard Reinhart, *Out West on the Overland Train: Across-the-Continent Excursion with Leslie's Magazine in 1877* (Palo Alto, California: American West Publishing Co., 1967), p. 83.

<sup>15</sup> Bill Nye, "My Cabinet," *Baled Hay* (Chicago, Illinois: Belford, Clarke & Co., 1888), pp. 72-74.

## The Earliest "Scientific" Promotional Exhibits

The Wyoming Territorial Legislature authorized an act in 1871 creating the first territorial library and charged its librarian with the creation of a minerals display case, in addition to his more typical library administrative duties. The legislative assembly also proposed a circular soliciting mineralogical items for display to be distributed to all citizens of the territory. Unfortunately, the legislature initially failed to provide necessary appropriations to fulfill all of their own requirements. John Slaughter, appointed by Governor John A. Campbell, served as territorial librarian from 1872 until 1890. The library, including cases for the mineral cabinet, was eventually housed on the third floor of the Cheyenne Opera House, after that building was completed in 1882, and then moved to the top floor of the new completed Capitol Building in 1888.<sup>16</sup>

Wyoming's fledgling mining industry also displayed mineral collections for public inspection. A notice in the February 5, 1875, *Cheyenne Leader* promoted a "neat little cabinet containing fine specimens from the Metcalf Mines" displayed at Houseman's hardware store in downtown Cheyenne.<sup>17</sup> The Metcalf, like many of Wyoming's early mining prospects, tried in vain to produce marketable quantities of copper, gold, silver, or galena and was continually looking for new investors to continue its work.

The late 1870s saw the convergence of the two most important forces stimulating the development of museums in Wyoming as promotional tools. The first was the appointment of John Wesley Hoyt as the territorial governor in 1878. In Hoyt, Wyoming gained a leader of remarkable physical and mental energy, wide-ranging vision, and uncanny foresight.<sup>18</sup> He was a "highly educated world traveler with the soul of a poet and the mind of a reformer and conservationist."<sup>19</sup> With his background knowledge of chemistry, medicine, and natural history and his keen interest in scholarship and all forms of higher education, Hoyt encouraged the instigation of several cabinets and museums devoted to the enrichment of the cultural and scientific atmosphere in the state. Secondly, at this time Wyoming was actively trying to encourage exploration and production in its mining

industry and to promote this mineral wealth to the rest of the world. Hoyt was instrumental in accomplishing this mission and was a great proponent of the use of exposition exhibits or traveling museum displays to aid in this endeavor.<sup>20</sup> In 1882, he and Professor Bailey collected and arranged materials for a Wyoming exhibit at the National Mining and Industrial Exposition, held in Denver. The *Denver Daily Tribune* commended their exhibit:

Not one presents a more diversified or interesting collection of products that will attract the attention of the manufacturer than Wyoming. Besides the mineral exhibits there are two cases filled with its rare fossil turtles and other choice petrifications, for which the Territory is famous, while photographs and specimens call to mind the 'enchanted land' of the Yellowstone Park.<sup>21</sup>

In 1881, Hoyt appointed Frederick J. Stanton as the state's first territorial geologist. One of the main duties of this new office was to promote Wyoming's mineral riches. Stanton accomplished this by developing several mineral resource exhibits, which traveled to Milwaukee, Chicago, Omaha, and the Illinois and Nebraska state fairs. The display at the Nebraska fair even won a prize for best mineral exhibit.<sup>22</sup> It is unknown if these traveling collections were ever returned to the state for display.

It was not until 1884 that the Wyoming Legislature provided funds to the third territorial geologist, Samuel Aughey, specifically for the creation of a permanent display of minerals and geologic specimens. Aughey was well aware of the fact that several large

<sup>16</sup> Jim Donahue, *Wyoming Blue Book: Guide to the State Government and Municipal Archives of Wyoming, Vol. V, Part II* (Cheyenne: Wyoming State Archives, 1991), p. 496; and personal communication with Dominique Schultes Wyoming State Museum, April 2003.

<sup>17</sup> The *Cheyenne Daily Leader*, February 5, 1875.

<sup>18</sup> Henry J. Peterson, "John Wesley Hoyt, Territorial Governor of Wyoming," *Annals of Wyoming* 22 (January 1950): 21.

<sup>19</sup> T.A. Larson, *History of Wyoming* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978), p. 134.

<sup>20</sup> Peterson, "John Wesley Hoyt," pp. 50, 51, and 60.

<sup>21</sup> *The Denver Daily Tribune*, August 27, 1882.

<sup>22</sup> William Bryans, *A History of the Geological Survey of Wyoming, Bulletin 65* (Cheyenne: The Geological Survey of Wyoming, 1986), p. 8.



East Coast institutions had been accumulating Wyoming's vertebrate fossils since 1868, while the state had no collection of "these educational treasures" of its own. He was determined to rectify this by financing, at his own expense, an expedition to dig dinosaur fossils at Como Bluff during the summer of 1885. He hired Wilbur C. Knight, who had been his student at the University of Nebraska during the previous year, as his assistant. They proceeded to Albany County to collect specimens for the state.<sup>23</sup> During this expedition and in the course of his economic geology field work throughout the year, they collected "several thousand specimens in mineralogy and paleontology."<sup>24</sup> Complaining that his office was too small for the public to utilize these collections properly, Aughey advocated the rental of an additional large room to serve as a museum. However, only a small display cabinet in the territorial geologist's office was ever built. The fourth and final territorial geologist, Samuel D. Ricketts, was also charged with obtaining display quality specimens. The Third Wyoming Legislature finally did pass a mandate to create space and funding for these displays in 1895, when it formed the Wyoming Historical Society, the forerunner of the Wyoming State Museum.<sup>25</sup>

### The Wyoming Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters

On November 15, 1881, a new organization was formed whose aim was

the encouragement of historical and scientific research, the promotion of the practical industries of Wyoming, the collection and preservation of authentic records of territorial history, the formation of historical, scientific and industrial museums, and the enlargement of the territorial library.<sup>26</sup>

The first meeting of this new Wyoming Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters, was held in Cheyenne's Baptist Church on January 17, 1882, under the direction of Hoyt, who ended his term as governor that spring. He had previously founded an Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters in Wisconsin so it was natural that he was elected as first president of Wyoming's academy. Hoyt served in that capacity

until 1890. The academy secretary described the group as having the "hearty cooperation of all friends of science in Wyoming."<sup>27</sup> Among its 108 members were names which appear repeatedly throughout this story of Wyoming's fledgling museum history: John W. Hoyt and Mrs. Hoyt, A. Judson Gray, Frederick Stanton, John Slaughter, Frank Bond, Francis E. Warren, Melville C. Brown, Stephen W. Downey, J. H. Finfrock, W. H. Holliday, Edward Ivins, Ethelbert Talbot, and J. D. Conley.<sup>28</sup>

The club's main function was the presentation of papers by the membership at regular meetings, but the development of a library and a museum for members' use were also goals set forth in the academy by-laws:

No books shall be taken from the Library or specimens from the Museum except by authority of the trustees but it shall be the duty of the Board to provide for the district to the higher institutes of learning in the territory of such duplicates of typical specimens in natural history as the Academy may be able to supply without detriment to its own collections."<sup>29</sup>

Frederick Stanton was elected as the museum's first curator and John Slaughter its first librarian. During the very first meeting of the club, the president reported that numerous contributions to the library and museum had already been received.<sup>30</sup> A public request for further donations to the museum was published in *The Cheyenne Sun* on April 26, 1884. By

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>24</sup> Samuel Aughey, *Annual Report of the Territorial Geologist to the Governor of Wyoming* (Laramie: Boomerang Printing House, 1886), p. 2.

<sup>25</sup> Personal communication with Dominique Schultes, Wyoming State Museum, April 2003.

<sup>26</sup> Peterson, "John Wesley Hoyt," pp. 58-59.

<sup>27</sup> A.J. Gray, "Letter to Edward Ivins, Dec. 24, 1883," *Record Book, Wyoming Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters* (Cheyenne: Wyoming State Archives), p. 6.

<sup>28</sup> *Certificate Book, Wyoming Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters* (Cheyenne: Wyoming State Archives, 1881-1886).

<sup>29</sup> *Transactions of the Wyoming Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters*, vol.1, 1882, p. 11.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15. Note that this reference to "higher institutes of learning" came five years before the University of Wyoming was founded.

1890, many of the academy officers were living in Laramie and were associated with the University of Wyoming. Academy letterhead that year listed J. D. Conley as the curator of the academy's museum. At this time he was also serving as curator of the university's museum. No record could be found of the ultimate disposition of the academy museum's collections, although correspondence by Hoyt indicated his desire to combine the two.<sup>31</sup>

### The Formation of the University of Wyoming Museum

It should be noted that many of the men involved in the founding of the University of Wyoming in 1886 were already members of the Wyoming Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters. Governor Francis E. Warren appointed J. H. Finfrock, M. C. Brown, W. H. Holliday, J. H. Hayford, Edward Ivinson, Hoyt (later replaced by J. Y. Cowhick) and Aughey (later replaced by L. D. Ricketts) as members of the university's first board of trustees.<sup>32</sup> These men were responsible for choosing the faculty, appointing the facilities, and formulating the curriculum. In May 1887, the university presidency was offered to Hoyt. Conley was the first faculty member hired, although

No record can be found of the election of either Professor Nelson or of Professor Conley. They have evidently reigned by right of antediluvian conquest or have claimed 'squatters' rights.<sup>33</sup>

John Dykeman Conley was born in Brockport, New York, and educated in state normal schools before entering Hamilton College, New York, in 1865. After obtaining his A.B. degree and taking an additional year's training in chemistry, he was hired as a professor of chemistry and the "kindred sciences" at Blackburn University, Carlinville, Illinois. During his eighteen years at Blackburn, Conley was instrumental in the design and appointments of a new science building on that campus, an effort which included the arrangement of a large, donated cabinet of minerals and fossils.<sup>34</sup>

Conley moved his family to Laramie during the summer of 1887 and was pleasantly surprised to find Laramie "far in advance of anything he expected to

find in this frontier and western country."<sup>35</sup> Conley was an instructor of

geology, physics, chemistry, mechanical drawing, book-keeping, commercial law, correspondence, penmanship, aesthetics, farm accounts, methods of instruction in physical science, art of technical drawing, as well as serving as vice president (of the University), meteorologist and curator of the museum.<sup>36</sup>

This list, prepared in 1936 by one of Conley's successors, Samuel H. Knight, omitted a few jobs: teaching commercial arithmetic, astronomy, an extension class in geology, "natural philosophy," and the "Art of Teaching Drawing," as well as serving as dean of the faculty, faculty secretary, and agricultural chemist of the experimental station.<sup>37</sup> Conley also served as acting university president for the first three months of 1891, after the board of trustees fired Hoyt, and before the new president, Albinus A. Johnson, assumed office. Conley also served as president of the Laramie Board of Trade.<sup>38</sup>

The university's very first *Circular of General Information* promised that "there will soon be formed a valuable geological and mineralogical museum" on campus.<sup>39</sup> The original *Bylaws for the Government of the Board of Trustees, the Faculty and Students of the University of Wyoming* required that a museum committee be appointed from the trustee members, that a curator of the museum be selected from the faculty,

<sup>31</sup> Letters, *Wyoming Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters*, February 22, 1890. Letterhead listed John W. Hoyt, President, Prof. J. D. Conley, Curator of Museum, Ethelbert Talbot, Hon. V. Pres. and L. D. Ricketts, Dept. Officer.

<sup>32</sup> Wilson O. Clough, *A History of the University of Wyoming, 1887-1937* (Laramie Printing Company, 1937), p. 19.

<sup>33</sup> *Chronicles of the Alumni of the University of Wyoming*, 1911.

<sup>34</sup> *Souvenir: First Annual Commencement of the University of Wyoming*, 1891, p. 9.

<sup>35</sup> Clough, *A History of the University of Wyoming*, p. 23.

<sup>36</sup> Samuel H. Knight, "History of the Department of Geology and the Geological and Paleontological Museum of the University of Wyoming" manuscript in the Wilson O. Clough Collection, Acc. #4000026, American Heritage Center, 1936, pp. 1-2.

<sup>37</sup> *Chronicles of the Alumni of the University of Wyoming*, 1911, p. 28.

<sup>38</sup> Clough, *A History of the University of Wyoming*, p. 46.

<sup>39</sup> *Wyoming Circular of General Information, 1887-1888*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, 1887, p. 7.

and that this curator “shall have charge of the cabinet, museum and all collections.”<sup>40</sup> Conley served as museum curator for the university from 1887 until 1893.

### Early University Museum Collections

When the interior finish work on the third floor of University Hall was completed in 1890, space was finally available to arrange a museum display.<sup>41</sup> A reporter from the *Laramie Boomerang* visited the campus in July 1891 to describe the shared space for the new museum and library:

The work of the fitting up the room in the north end of the third floor is in progress. The room will be simply beautiful in its arrangements. In the center of the south side a flight of iron steps with brass railings leads to the upper cases of books. Along in front of these is a beautiful balcony of antique oak.... There will be eight large glass cases arranged about the room and these Prof. Conley will fill with his large private collection of fossils, minerals and Indian and Mound Builder’s relics.<sup>42</sup>

Surprisingly, the notoriously penurious trustees allotted \$1,718.88 for improvements to the library and museum that year.<sup>43</sup>

The university had been receiving material donations since it opened. An early museum record book lists more than two hundred specimens contributed by Dr. J. H. Finfrock (president of the first board of trustees and first donor) between 1887 and 1891:

samples of copper and silver ore, specimens of galena, turquoise and calcareous tufa, a cluster of quartz crystals, vertebrae of a fossil reptile, the tooth of a whale, boxes of sea shells, a sea urchin, one centipede, a flint Indian scraper and arrows, a piece of worm-bored wood and a relic from the Chicago fire.<sup>44</sup>

Other prominent contributors were Hon. Stephen W. Downey, Judge Melville C. Brown, Hon. Homer Merrell, Dr. Grace R. Hebard, Mr. William H. Reed (the “specimen man”), Professors W. I. Smith and Dice McLaren and Constantine P. Arnold. Senator Joseph M. Carey was also instrumental in securing

several collections from the Smithsonian Institution, including seventy-seven specimens of ores and minerals, 140 species of fish, and more than one hundred plaster casts of Indian relics:

They consist of fine Adzes, Discoidal Stones, Digging Implements, Stone Swords, Gouges, Picks, Stone Hatchets, Pipes, Spear-heads, Sinkers and ceremonial objects, all carefully colored to represent the originals from which they were taken.<sup>45</sup>

Citizen donations included a strange assortment of curiosities of dubious scientific value, including an iron chest that had been used under a stage coach seat to carry the express mail, a pair of dwarf deer antlers, five trap-door spider nests, one Indian skull, a “perfectly spherical Hairball, taken from the stomach of a yearling,” two bottles of trout eggs, one pair of flying fish “wings,” and three stuffed ducks.<sup>46</sup> Selected citizen donations were grouped into one cabinet while Conley filled the other seven cases with his own personal collection, accumulated in more than twenty years of collecting.

Conley’s contributions were of a more practical nature, mostly minerals and fossils, which he used when teaching Historical Geology and Paleontology. Even some of his “cultural” artifacts were used to teach geological processes:

Prof. Conley has a horseshoe which is a great curiosity. When in Yellowstone Park he placed it in one of the hot springs and left it for three days. The lime

<sup>40</sup> *Second Annual Report of the University of Wyoming*, 1893.

<sup>41</sup> Deborah Hardy, *Wyoming University: The First 100 Years, 1886-1986* (Laramie: The University of Wyoming, 1986), p. 23.

<sup>42</sup> *The Laramie Boomerang*, July 18, 1891.

<sup>43</sup> *First Annual Report* (Laramie: University of Wyoming, 1892), p. 12.

<sup>44</sup> Brent H. Breithaupt, “Dinosaurs to Gold Ores: The 100 Year History of the University of Wyoming Geological Museum. *Wyoming Geological Association Guidebook, 50<sup>th</sup> Field Conference* (Casper: Wyoming Geological Association, 1993), pp. 19-38.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*; *Second Annual Report of the University of Wyoming* (1893), p. 9; and *The University of Wyoming Catalogue for the Year 1891-1892* (Laramie: The Republican Book and Job Print, 1892), pp. 85-86.

<sup>46</sup> *The University of Wyoming Catalogue for the Year 1891-1892*, p. 85.

deposit was so great that it covered the shoe entirely and it is now as white as though it had been painted."<sup>47</sup>

Although he displayed "almost everything in geological curiosities," it was those specimen types not found in Wyoming of which he was most proud.

While Wyoming is one of the richest regions in the world for mesozoic fossils, a region from which Professors Marsh, Cope and others have taken fragmentary remains of many gigantic saurians and other fossils, yet, in order to make the geological story comprehensive, including the ancient as well as the medieval and recent history, more than Wyoming fossils are necessary.<sup>48</sup>

In addition to his geological and archeological specimens, he also loaned an old flint lock rifle used in the Revolutionary War, a pair of silver spectacles, a watch chain from the War of 1812, and a powderhorn carried by Conley's great grandfather in the Battle of Saratoga.<sup>49</sup>

Each of the estimated twenty thousand specimens was neatly labeled and arranged on small wooden blocks. An article in the *Laramie Boomerang* announced the opening of the museum with an invitation for the public to "visit anytime." In fact it encouraged the public to visit many times.

One case should be thoroughly inspected at a time. Even in this way a dozen visits would reveal something new each time as the specimens are so numerous. The room is fitted up beautifully and altogether it is a delightful place.<sup>50</sup>

### The Future of the University Museum

Campus museum development remained an important topic of business throughout the 1890s. In the *Souvenir* volume produced in June 1891, for the first graduating class, Stephen W. Downey is credited with advocating the creation of a "fossil palace" on the campus:

Give us a fossil palace by all means. Consider the fact that the material which we now can procure in great abundance is being fast exhausted. Show the world that the people of Wyoming are pioneers in art as well as in other walks of life.<sup>51</sup>

Wilbur C. Knight was hired as a professor of geology, mining engineering, assaying, and metallurgy in 1893 and during the next year replaced Conley as curator of the museum. William H. Reed was hired in 1896 as an assistant geologist and he, in turn, replaced Knight as curator. Under the direction of these two men the university museum's geological and paleontological collections increased dramatically. By the end of that decade the museum claimed to have the second largest collection of American Jurassic period vertebrate fossils in the world.<sup>52</sup> Contrary to Downey's prediction, the supply of Wyoming's fossil treasures are still not exhausted and new materials are continually being collected and displayed.

From these first tentative steps during the nineteenth century, to entertain, promote the territory's minerals, and educate, Wyoming's museum collections have grown to fill scores of facilities throughout the state. At the university Conley's original cabinet of curiosities has expanded into today's broad ranging campus institutions that draw thousands of visitors from all over the world.

**AW**

<sup>47</sup> *The Laramie Boomerang*, September 17, 1891.

<sup>48</sup> *The Laramie Boomerang*, September 17, 1891.

<sup>49</sup> *The Laramie Boomerang*, September 17, 1891.

<sup>50</sup> *The Laramie Boomerang*, September 17, 1891.

<sup>51</sup> *Souvenir: First Annual Commencement of the University of Wyoming* (1891), p. 9.

<sup>52</sup> Breithaupt, "Dinosaurs to Gold Ores," p. 21.

# Recent Acquisitions in the Hebard Library, UW Libraries

Compiled by  
**Tamsen L. Hert, University of Wyoming Libraries**

**T**he Grace Raymond Hebard Wyoming Collection is a branch of the University of Wyoming Libraries housed in the Owen Wister Western Writers Reading Room in the American Heritage Center. Primarily a research collection, the core of this collection is Miss Hebard's personal library which was donated to the university libraries. Further donations have been significant in the development of this collection. While it is easy to identify materials about Wyoming published by nationally known publishers, it can be difficult to locate pertinent publications printed in Wyoming. The Hebard Collection is considered to be the most comprehensive collection on Wyoming in the state.

If you have any questions about these materials or the Hebard Collection, you can contact me by phone at 307-766-6245; by email, [thert@uwyo.edu](mailto:thert@uwyo.edu), or you can access the Hebard HomePage at: <http://www.uwyo.edu/lib/heb.htm>.

## New Publications

**Call, Lee R.** *Reflections of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century in Star Valley Wyoming, 1900-2000.* Afton, WY: Printstar, 2000.

**Hebard & Coe F 767 .S73 C355 2000**

An examination of the history of Star Valley compiled from articles originally published for the local newspaper.

**Cassidy, James G.** *Ferdinand V. Hayden: Entrepreneur of Science.* Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2000.

**Hebard & Geology QE 22 .H3 C37 2000**

A history of the development of the Hayden Surveys and their relationship to the practice of science.

**Church, Clare.** *Arthur Ternau (1884-1907): 'the Cowboy in Wyoming.'* Lymington, Hampshire, England : C. Church, 2002.

**Hebard F 767 .A3 T4763 2002**

Pieced together from letters between Arthur and his parents, this is a biography of an early resident of Albany County, Wyoming.

**Fifer, Barbara.** *Wyoming's Historic Forts.* Helena, MT: Farcountry Press, 2002.

**Hebard & Coe F 761 .F544 2002**

A pictorial history of Wyoming's forts.

**Francis, Julie E. and Lawrence L. Loendorf.** *Ancient Visions: Petroglyphs and Pictographs of the Wind River and Bighorn Country, Wyoming and Montana.* Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 2002.

**Hebard & Coe E 78 .W95 F735 2002**

Provides a sampling of the wonderful rock art figures found in Wyoming's north central region.

**Hagan, Barry J.** *"Exactly in the Right Place": A History of Fort C.F. Smith, Montana Territory, 1866-1868.* El Segundo, CA: Upton & Sons, Publishers, 1999.

**Hebard & Coe F 739 .F48 H343 1999**

The third of the military posts along the Bozeman Trail, Fort C.F. Smith is primarily remembered for the Hayfield Fight, August 1, 1867. The author has thoroughly researched the military records to provide this account.

**Henry-Mead, Jean.** *Westerners: Candid and Historic Interviews.* Evansville, WY: Medallion Books, 2003.

**Hebard & Coe F 760 .H467 2003**

This work contains a sampling of the hundreds of

interviews conducted by the author. Many Wyomingites are included—Chris LeDoux, Conrad Schwiering, Dick Cheney, Thyra Thomson and more!

**Huston, Hayden H.** *Daniel, Wyoming: The First Hundred Years 1900-2000: A History of Daniel and Surrounding Areas.* 2 vols. Salt Lake City, UT: Agreka Books, 2000.

Hebard & Coe F 769 .D36 D36 2000 v.1-2

“This book is a remembrance of the pioneer settlers of the upper Green River valley.” Includes many photographs and maps.

**Janetski, Joel C.** *Indians in Yellowstone National Park.* Revised ed. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2002.

Hebard & Coe E 78 .W95 J36 2002

A popular history of the inhabitants of Yellowstone.

**Jewell, Loretta and Susan Chaires.** *Then to Now: A Collection of Favorite Recipes Spiced With Tidbits of History From Carpenter School and Community of Carpenter, Wyoming.* Carpenter, WY: Carpenter School & Community, 1996.

Hebard TX 715 .T495 1996

Includes numerous photographs which accompany the historical tidbits.

**Lindmier, Tom.** *Drybone: A History of Fort Fetterman, Wyoming.* Glendo: High Plains Press, 2002.

Hebard & Coe F 769 .F58 L46 2002

A detailed study of this fort on the Bozeman Trail. Includes short biographies of some of the residents and officers of the fort.

**Little, Billie.** *Sheridan County History: Going...Going...Gone?* Sheridan, WY: Sheridan County Historic Preservation Commission, 1999.

Hebard & Coe F 767 .S55 L588 1999

Results of a photo history contest in Sheridan County and the efforts of the commission to “raise community awareness about the disappearing remains.”

**Meeks, Harold A.** *On the Road to Yellowstone: The Yellowstone Trail and American Highways,*

*1900-1930.* Missoula, MT: Pictorial Histories Publishing Company, Inc., 2000.

Hebard & Coe HE 356 .Y4 M445 2000

A history of one of the overlooked early highways in the United States.

**Peterson, David William.** *Yellowstone: Like No Other Place On Earth.* Helena, MT: Farcountry Press, 2002.

Hebard & Coe F 722.55 .P484 2002

Primarily color photographs with excerpts from the 1870 Washburn-Doane Expedition.

**Petzoldt, Paul K.** *Teton Tales and Other Petzoldt Anecdotes.* Guilford, CT: Globe Pequot Press, 1995.

Hebard & Coe GV 199.92 .P48 P489 1995

A collection of reminiscences from this Wyoming climbing pioneer.

**Pitcher, Goldie Norah.** *McFadden: The Town They Called “Camp.”* Rawlins, WY: s.n., 200?

Hebard & Coe F 769 .M38 P583 2000z

A history of the short-lived town of McFadden, Wyoming. Located between Rock River and Arlington, McFadden was once home to approximately four hundred residents.

**Rutter, Michael.** *Wild Bunch Women.* Guilford, CT: TwoDot, 2003.

Hebard & Coe F 590.5 .R87 2003

From the back cover, “Explore the lives of the pistol-packing, hell-raising, high-spirited gals who traveled with Butch Cassidy’s notorious Wild Bunch gang.” Biographical information on nine of the women associated with the Wild Bunch.

**Scharff, Virginia.** *Twenty Thousand Roads: Women, Movement, and the West.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.

Hebard F 596 .S26 2003

An examination of women’s stories and their participation in the “West.” Includes chapters on Sacajawea and Grace Raymond Hebard.



# BOOK REVIEWS



Edited by  
Carl Hallberg

## Significant Recent Books on Western and Wyoming History

**Public Lands and Political Meaning: Ranchers, The Government, and the Property Between Them.** By Karen R. Merrill. Richmond: University of California Press, 2002. Illustrations, notes, bibliographic essay, index. 293 pages. Hardcover, \$50.00.

Private ranchers and federal officials have locked horns over livestock grazing issues ever since the post-Civil War settlement of the American West. In *Public Lands and Political Meaning*, Karen Merrill traces this complex relationship from the 1870s to 1950, a period that saw many changes in perspective. The evolution of grazing policy during this era set the stage for later conflicts with environmental groups that continue today.

According to Merrill's introduction, the vast public lands owe their existence to two factors: (1) the original thirteen states ceded claims to western lands in 1787 when the new federal government began, and (2) treaties and wars in the nineteenth century (p. 7). Six subsequent chapters and an epilogue flesh out how different ideas about property have affected grazing policies.

Chapter one discusses nineteenth century policy making when most lands were open for homesteading. The development of the Forest Service in the Department of Agriculture influenced early grazing policies, and ranchers organized into groups like the National Live Stock Association to better represent industry interests.

Chapter two investigates the role of the homesteader in the development of public land policy. As homesteading became less of a factor after World War I, federal lands were regarded more as property that should remain in public ownership.

Chapter three delves into the early consideration of states' rights, where public lands might be given to the western states. As these efforts weakened, the Forest Service undertook studies to counter the ad-

verse effects of overgrazing that had occurred in the past, and developed regulations. In addition, policy shifts in the Department of Interior from homesteading to grazing management signaled interagency competition with the Department of Agriculture for congressional funding.

By 1929, President Hoover appointed a committee to look into handing the public domain over to the states. Chapter four investigates the states' rights issue in detail, but the idea never fully achieved acceptance. Chapter five is a summary of the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934, which set forth grazing policies that affect the vast majority of rangelands in the western United States, both public and private.

Chapter six covers the period from 1935 to 1950, during which the Bureau of Land Management was established in the Department of Interior. Public lands have become property slated for sustainable management rather than earmarked for disposal through homesteading. Even so, the debate continues whether ranchers hold grazing rights or privileges on public domain.

Merrill's epilogue touches on the sagebrush rebellion of the 1980s, environmental groups influencing grazing policies, and the development of environmental impact statements. These issues are beyond the scope of her book, but each was affected in part by the historic events she has chronicled.

As long as the West is comprised of private land owned by ranchers, and public land leased by them, there will be a need for dialog. The more that ranchers and land managers communicate, the better will be their decisions. Merrill's book has shown this to be the case.

*Public Lands and Political Meaning* is an affordable book about a relevant topic. One of its greatest contributions is the illustration of conflicts between the Department of Agriculture and the Department



of Interior over public land issues and federal appropriations. Before you read another polemic about removing livestock from the range, read Merrill's work for a clearer picture of the history behind the scenes.

— **Mark E. Miller, Wyoming State Archaeologist**

**The Wagon Box Fight: An Episode of Red Cloud's War.** By Jerry Keenan. Conchohocken, Pennsylvania: Savas Publishing Company, 2000. 158 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. Paper, \$14.95.

*The Wagon Box Fight* is an updated, improved volume about a classic account about a classic engagement. On August 2, 1867, soldiers and civilian contractors engaged a numerically superior Lakota force bent on destroying them. The attack occurred on a wagon box corral serving as a woodcutters' outpost of Fort Phil Kearny. The army prevailed because, according to Jerry Keenan, "[t]he new Springfield breechloader was the predominant weapon on this day . . ." (p. 33). The breechloaders had given the soldiers the ability to deliver a "steady volume of fire" without the "usual pause in firing" associated with muzzleloaders (p. 39). If the defenders "had been armed with muzzleloaders instead of breech-loaders," opined the officer who led a relief column of the battle, "[the] party would have been massacred before my arrival" (p. 46).

Fort Kearny was a thorn in Red Cloud's side. Actually, the fort near present-day Sheridan, Wyoming, was one of three thorns in his side. The others were Fort Reno, to the south, and Fort C.F. Smith, farther north. The forts were on the Bozeman Trail to protect travelers heading to Montana and its mines. In 1866, Red Cloud had refused to treat with the commissioners at Fort Laramie who sought unmo-lested passage for travelers. Instead of pledges of peace, Red Cloud promised to harass intruders in his Powder River country. Undeterred, the army erected the forts, and true to his word, Red Cloud made the soldiers' lives miserable.

To Colonel Henry Carrington fell the responsibility of building the forts and neutralizing the Indian threat. He chose a beautiful location for Fort Kearny along Piney Creek just a stone's throw from

today's Story, Wyoming, a picturesque community where cabins nestle among the pine growths that were crucial to the building of the fort. The threat of Indian attack compelled Carrington to build a palisaded post. Lumber for construction stood four miles away. Civilian woodcutters spent their days falling timber and moving it to the fort, soldiers dutifully guarded them, and the Indians kept Red Cloud's promise.

In December 1866, a brash Captain William Fetterman led eighty men to their deaths by pursuing a small band of Indians who had been harassing the woodcutters. The band was a decoy that led Fetterman into a trap. Vastly outnumbered, his command perished to the last man. In early July of the following year, Fort Kearny received a shipment of Springfield breechloaders. In August, when Red Cloud's fighters hoped to replicate their victory of December, the soldiers armed with breechloaders instead "exacted a measure of retribution for the Fetterman disaster" (p. 17).

In *The Wagon Box Fight* Keenan updates the story about this fight that he first told thirty years ago. He has added much to the account, providing more background on the historical and geographical setting of the battle. More importantly, this volume benefits from a 1993-1994 archaeological study of the site "to identify where the Wagon Box corral might have been located" (p. 97). Veterans of the battle had identified two sites for the corral. Each site had its supporters in a controversy that lasted nearly ninety years. The archaeological study determined that a large rock monument erected in 1936 approximates the location of the corral. This conclusion must have given Keenan great satisfaction, because in his earlier editions he had come to the same conclusion. The archaeological report, including illustrations, is included as an appendix, as are contemporary official reports and personal accounts about the battle.

*The Wagon Box Fight* is an informative, easily read account about a tiny slice of Western history. Students of the West, military history, archaeology, and Indian-US relations will find this a valuable volume.

— Larry C. Skogen  
New Mexico Military Institute

**Petticoat Prisoners of Old Wyoming.** By Larry K. Brown. Glendo: High Plains Press, 2001. xix + 256 pp. Illustrations, source notes, index. Paper, \$14.95.

High Plains Press recently published *Petticoat Prisoners of Old Wyoming*, Larry K. Brown's third volume about crime and criminals in frontier Wyoming. In his latest work, Brown narrates the place, circumstances, and results of the activities of twenty-four women who were incarcerated in Wyoming's first "gray bar hotels"—the territorial prison at Laramie and, after its opening in 1901, the state prison at Rawlins. Beginning with the 1880 story about Nettie Stewart-Wright, who allegedly stole government property, and ending with Ella Smith's 1908 crime of branding two colts, *Petticoat Prisoners* documents almost thirty years of gender-based pathological behavior that reflects the dysfunctional side of Wyoming's multi-faceted late territorial and early statehood history. As Brown enumerates, the crimes these women stood accused of ranged from the more mundane acts of grand larceny, burglary, arson, robbery, felonious assault, selling liquor without a license, forgery and counterfeiting, misbranding livestock, felonious entry, and theft of government property to the more frightening and sometimes confused and controversial acts of manslaughter, assault to commit manslaughter, and kidnapping.

On the surface, *Petticoat Prisoners* is a simple chronological narrative about those moments in the lives of two dozen women when their actions ran counter to the established laws of Wyoming and the nation. Thematically, however, Brown's history is much more than a brief recounting of events. It is a study of gender as a factor in the legal processes that were taking form in an isolated, rugged, and often violent western frontier environment where the forces of order and lawlessness collided sharply.

Brown is a skillful biographer of individuals who could not avoid bringing trouble upon themselves and their associates. Throughout *Petticoat Prisoners*, he describes the mechanisms of a justice system in which little regard was shown for an accused person's sex, but much attention was given to the details of

evidence, deliberation, sentencing, confinement, and the appeals process. Of the twenty-four women in Brown's volume, for example, two obtained freedom from incarceration because of a lack of evidence, while seven others received early releases based upon appeals either to higher courts or to Wyoming's governor for commutation of their sentences.

Hallmark features include Brown's vivid narration, Wyoming Women's Center Warden Nola Blackburn's foreword, the author's preface and introduction, a bibliographic "sources cited" section at the end of each of the book's seventeen chapters and epilogue, twenty-five photographs (the majority are prison mug shots), an epilogue that brings closure to the narrative, a chronologically arranged appendix titled "Female Felons Imprisoned at the Wyoming Penitentiaries," and an index to conclude the work. Altogether, these features provide interest, insight, and authentication that add richness to Brown's endeavor.

In conclusion, *Petticoat Prisoners* is a well-documented examination about the experiences of a set of women whose stories reside within the darker realms of Wyoming's history. Brown has produced another volume in his growing repertoire of works that reflect with verve the histories William F. Bragg produced two decades ago. Equally noteworthy, Brown's book is a significant addition about women in Wyoming and the West. Overall, *Petticoat Prisoners* is a book that deserves its place among the varied histories that fill the shelves of private collections and public and academic libraries which offer the serious reader meaningful works on Wyoming and the West.

— Walter Jones  
J. Willard Marriott Library  
University of Utah

**America's Second Tongue: American Indian Education and the Ownership of English, 1860-1900.** By Ruth Spack. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002. 242 pp. Illustrations, bibliography, index. Hardcover, \$45.00.

Language possesses incalculable importance. It demarcates edges and boundaries, draws lines of distinction, and defines. It provides continuity between generations, passing along cultural traditions,

life ways, and history. Its nuances are communicated with subtle inflections and rhythms to shade meanings. It is a great unifier, bringing and bonding people together. Most importantly, perhaps, a living language can serve as a measure of a population's overall health and sustainability. Lamented, most recently by the politician and commentator Patrick Buchanan, as goes the vernacular, so goes society, at least society as known at any one place and time.

Although considered from a perspective very different from Buchanan's, this is an argument made by Ruth Spack, an associate professor of English and the director of English for Speakers of Other Languages Program at Bentley College. Her study analyzes the English-only policy that was implemented by the federal government in Indian schools in an attempt to strip Indian peoples of their cultures. The cornerstone of a process designed to facilitate Indian absorption into the mainstream of the dominant American society, English-only began in earnest with the Peace Policy of the Grant administration and reached its peak by the turn of the century. As the handiwork of missionaries and Bureau of Indian Affairs officials, it is positioned by Spack within a colonialist context. "Control over language served as an important instrument in political as well as cultural exploitation," she asserts, "for it could be used to represent indigenous peoples' lives in such a way as to weaken claims of Native sovereignty and strengthen the United States government's bureaucratic and territorial agendas" (p. 14).

Yet, the promise of English-only was never fully realized. According to Spack, this was primarily due to "government officials' own ignorance, indifference, and colonialist mentality" (p. 42). Additionally, "the Indian Office underestimated the life-sustaining strength of linguistic and tribal identity." Even in those instances when second language fluency was achieved, Spack's research reveals, it was often utilized in a contradictory manner to federal aims, as a form of subtle resistance by Native writers to American Indian policies, for example. In the end, then, the English-only program had dealt a crushing, but not a lethal, blow.

This book provides welcome insight into an important aspect of Indian history. It is immersed in the literature, well written, and replete with fresh

analysis. But a few cautionary words are in order. While *America's Second Tongue* is packaged as a comprehensive study with broad application, the data that informs it is primarily derived from the Yankton Sioux Agency and the two off-reservation boarding schools, Hampton and Carlisle, which recruited students from Dakota Territory. Against such a narrow backdrop, it is important to keep in mind the varied experience of assimilation and the problematic nature of generalizing on the success or failure of American Indian policies. While Spack's research is thorough with the context chosen, the Western United States and Alaska are all but ignored.

Moreover, other studies have determined that Indians who lived or attended boarding schools located in urban areas felt the sting of acculturation more pointedly than did the rural Indians who make up the predominant focus of this book. Many of those urban students achieved English fluency in day schools and reservation boarding schools before having attended an off-reservation boarding school. As has been documented extensively, many tribes (particularly those situated near population centers) suffered virtually the complete loss of their cultures, including their languages, which have become the focus of extensive recovery efforts. It should also be noted that the obligation of English-only was not confined to Indian education. It permeated all facets of the reservation environment as well. In brief, the impact – or success and failure – of the English-only program was probably more wide-ranging than the research presented here indicates, depending on location, conditions, and circumstances. While this book is well done, the inclusion of more comprehensive statistical data would have been helpful. It would have provided a fruitful basis for comparison, strengthened Spack's thesis, expanded the scope of the volume, and more thoroughly revealed tribal and regional distinctions.

— Cary C. Collins  
Maple Valley, Washington

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# Contributors

## **MICHAEL GRISKE**

*Native American Sagas from the Diaries of John Hunton*, page 2

Michael Griske was born and raised in Torrington and now resides in Hicksville, New York, with his wife, Catherine, and their son, Ryan. He recently completed a condensed version of his grandfather's manuscripts about John Hunton's life, loves, and times, and is seeking a book publisher for this enthralling and historical material. For more information, contact Mr. Griske at the following e-mail address: [mgriske@earthlink.net](mailto:mgriske@earthlink.net).

## **SALLY VANDERPOEL**

*Wyoming Memories: Pat Flannery*, page 14

Sally Vanderpoel came to Huntley in southeastern Wyoming in 1922 at the age of fourteen when her parents homesteaded there. She graduated from Torrington High School in 1938 and the University of Wyoming four years later, where she loved being a Kappa Kappa Gamma. She is a long-time member of the Wyoming State Historical Society and served as president of the society. She has written several books, including *Wrinklebelly*, about the World War I veterans in eastern Wyoming. Her latest book, published in 2003, is a biography of former Wyoming Governor Stan Hathaway.

## **BETH SOUTHWELL**

*J. D. Conley's Cabinet of Curiosities and Other Early Wyoming Museums*, page 24

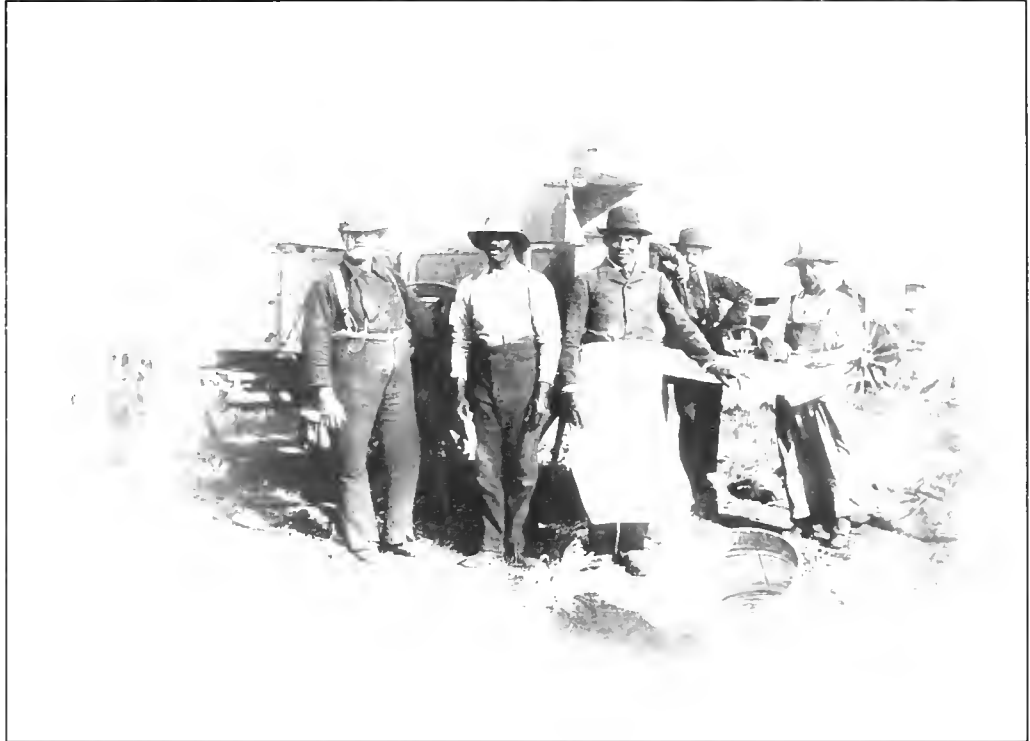
Beth Southwell was born in Connecticut but has lived in Laramie, Wyoming, since 1980. She received her B.S. in geology from the University of New Mexico and became fascinated with the history of Wyoming paleontology while pursuing graduate work at the University of Wyoming. An active volunteer at the U.W. Geological Museum, she enjoys digging for dinosaur bones in the Wyoming badlands during the summer and digging for clues to Wyoming's geologic past in the archives in the winter.

**AW**

# Index

- Ah-ho-appa 9-12  
 American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming 15, 22  
 American Horse 8  
*America's Second Tongue: American Indian Education and the Ownership of English, 1860-1900*, by Ruth Spack, reviewed, 37-38  
 Aughey, Samuel 28-30  
 Auguste, Lucian 5-6  
 Bad Wound 8  
 Barnum, Phineas T. 25  
 Barrett, Frank A. 19  
 Bingham, Maj. H.W. 8  
 Black Bear 8  
 Bridger, Jim 4  
 Bordeaux, James 6  
 Bordeaux, Louis 8  
 Brown, F.S. 18  
 Brown, Larry K., *Petticoat Prisoners of Old Wyoming*, reviewed, 37  
 Bullock, W.G. 4  
 Campbell, John A. 19, 28  
 Carey, Joseph M. 31  
*Cheyenne Daily Leader* 25, 28  
 Cheyenne, Wyoming 25-26, 28-29  
 Clark, A.C. 26  
 Collins, Cary C., reviewer of *America's Second Tongue: American Indian Education and the Ownership of English, 1860-1900*, 37-38  
 Como Bluff, Wyoming 29  
 Conley, J.D. 24-32  
 Conquering Bear 5-6  
*Denver Daily Tribune* 28  
*Denver Post* 19-20  
 Downey, Stephen W. 32  
 East Thunder 8  
 Fenwick, Red 19-20  
 Finfrock, J.H. 31  
 Flannery, Alice (Moomah) 15-16, 19-20  
 Flannery, L.G. "Pat" 2-13, 14-23  
 Fleming, Lt. Hugh B. 5  
 Fort Laramie 3-6, 9-12, 15, 22  
*Fort Laramie Scout* 16  
 Fort Laramie, Wyoming 15-16, 20, 23  
 Fuller, Bryan 18  
 Garnett, William 8  
*Goshen County News and Fort Laramie Scout* 16  
 Goshen County, Wyoming 15-16, 19-20  
 Grant, Pres. U.S. 8-9  
 Grattan, Lt. John L. 5-7  
 Grattan Massacre, 4-7  
 Green River, Wyoming 27  
 Griske, Billie 3, 15, 23  
 Griske, Michael, 23, editor 2-13, (bio 39)  
 Griske, Patricia 23  
 Hackleman, Mae 17  
 Harney, Gen. W.S. 10-11  
 Hebard, Grace Raymond 17, 20, 31  
 Heffron, Billy 17  
 Hert, Tami, ed. of "Recent Acquisitions in the Hebard Library, UW Libraries," 33-34  
 High Forehead 5-6  
 Homsher, Lola 18  
 Housen, Keith 17  
 Howard, E.A. 8  
 Hoyt, John Wesley 28-30  
 Hunt, Lester 19  
 Hunton, Alexander B. 3  
 Hunton, Blanche 2  
 Hunton, Jim 12-13  
 Hunton, John 2-13, 14-23  
 Hunton, Mary Elizabeth (Carpenter) 3  
 Iron Horse 8  
 "J.D. Conley's Cabinet of Curiosities and Other Early Wyoming Museums," by Beth Southwell 24-32  
 Johnson, Albinus A. 30  
 Jones, Walter, reviewer of *Petticoat Prisoners of Old Wyoming*, 37  
 Keenan, Jerry, *The Wagon Box Fight: An Episode of Red Cloud's War*, reviewed, 37  
 Kelly, Sylvia 17  
 Knight, Samuel H. 30  
 Knight, Wilbur C. 29, 32  
 Landry, C.L. 17  
*Laramie Boomerang* 31-32  
 Laramie, Wyoming 30  
 Last Man's Club 18  
 Lebsock, Edward 22  
 Little Wound 8  
 Lone Horn 8  
 McDaniel, James 25  
 Man Afraid of His Horse 5  
 Masters, Joseph G. 9  
 Maynadier, Col. Henry E. 11  
 Merrill, Karen R., *Public Lands and Political Meaning: Ranchers, The Government, and the Property Between Them*, reviewed, 35  
 Miller, Leslie A. 19  
 Miller, Mark E., reviewer of *Public Lands and Political Meaning: Ranchers, The Government, and the Property Between Them*, 35-36  
 Museum of Living Wonders 25-26  
 Museum of Rocky Mountain Curiosities 26-27  
 Museums, Wyoming 24-32  
 National Mining and Industrial Exposition 28  
 "Native American Sagas from the Diaries of John Hunton," ed. by Michael Griske 2-13  
 Nolan, Jim 17  
 Nye, Bill 26-27  
 O'Brien, Maj. George 10  
 O'Mahoney, Joseph C. 7, 19-20  
 "Pat Flannery" by Sally Vanderpoel 14-23  
 Pawnee Killer 8  
 Pepys, Samuel 21  
*Petticoat Prisoners of Old Wyoming*, by Larry K. Brown, reviewed, 37  
 Phineas T. Barnum's American Museum 25  
*Public Lands and Political Meaning: Ranchers, The Government, and the Property Between Them*, by Karen R. Merrill, reviewed 35-36  
 Red Cloud 7-8  
 Reed, William H. 32  
 Ricketts, Samuel D. 29  
 Rouse, Phil 18  
 Saville, J.J. 8  
 Sherman, Wyoming 26-27  
 Sioux Indians 2-13  
 Skogen, Larry C., reviewer of *The Wagon Box Fight: An Episode of Red Cloud's War*, 36  
 Slaughter, John 28-29  
 Smith, C.C. 16-17  
 Southwell, Beth, author 24-32 (bio 39)  
 Spack, Ruth, *America's Second Tongue: American Indian Education and the Ownership of English, 1860-1900*, reviewed, 37-38  
 Spotted Tail 8-12  
 Stanton, Frederick J. 28-29  
 Temple, Charlotte 26  
 Thorp, Russell 9  
*Torrington Telegraph* 16  
 Torrington, Wyoming 17  
 Trail Lance 8  
 Trail, Oregon 5-6  
 University of Wyoming 24, 30-32  
 Vanderpoel, Sally, author "Pat Flannery" 14-23, (bio 39)  
*The Wagon Box Fight: An Episode of Red Cloud's War*, by Jerry Keenan, reviewed, 36  
 Ware, Eugene 11  
 Whitfield, Maj. J.W. 5  
 Whitney, Rae 14  
 Wyoming Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters 29-30  
 Wyoming Old Timers Club 17  
 Wyoming Territorial Legislature 28  
 Zimmer, Frank 18

# Wyoming Picture



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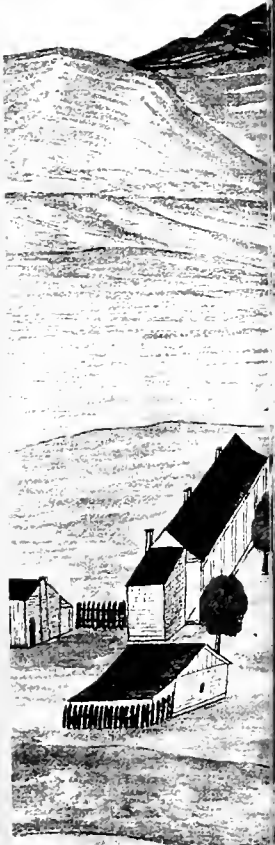
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56  
67

# *Annals of* **WYOMING**

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The Wyoming History Journal

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Autumn 2004

Vol. 76, No. 4



# Cover Art



## “Feeding a Wild Bear, Yellowstone Park”

J. E. Haynes postcard,  
Arthur Demaray Papers,  
American Heritage Center,  
University of Wyoming

“Guests of the park derive great enjoyment from watching the antics of the bears. The American brown bears which occur in two color phases—black and brown—are more numerous in the park than grizzlies.” Text is from the Haynes postcard, which is not dated.

### Information for Contributors:

The editor of *Annals of Wyoming* welcomes manuscripts and photographs on every aspect of the history of Wyoming and the West. Appropriate for submission are unpublished, research-based articles which provide new information or which offer new interpretations of historical events. First-person accounts based on personal experience or recollections of events will be considered for use in the “Wyoming Memories” section. Historic photo essays for possible publication in “Wyoming Memories” also are welcome. Articles are reviewed and referred by members of the journal’s Editorial Advisory Board and others. Decisions regarding publication are made by the editor.

Manuscripts (along with suggestions for illustrations or photographs) should be submitted on computer diskettes in a format created by one of the widely-used word processing programs along with two printed copies.

Submissions and queries should be addressed to: Editor, *Annals of Wyoming*, Dept. 3924, 1000 E. University Avenue, Laramie WY 82071, or to the editor by e-mail at the following address: [rewig@uwyo.edu](mailto:rewig@uwyo.edu)

# Annals of WYOMING

The Wyoming History Journal

Autumn 2004 Vol. 76, No. 4

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David Roberts, Cheyenne



## 2 The Promotion of Yellowstone National Park by the Union Pacific Railroad

Thornton Waite



## 13 Bronco Nell, A Woman Horse Thief

Felix Alston  
Edited by Felix Scott Alston



## 18 Escape from Heart Mountain

Betty Y. Taira



## BOOK REVIEWS

## 25 Book Reviews

Edited by Carl Hallberg

## Contributors

## 33 Contributors' Biographies

## 34 Index

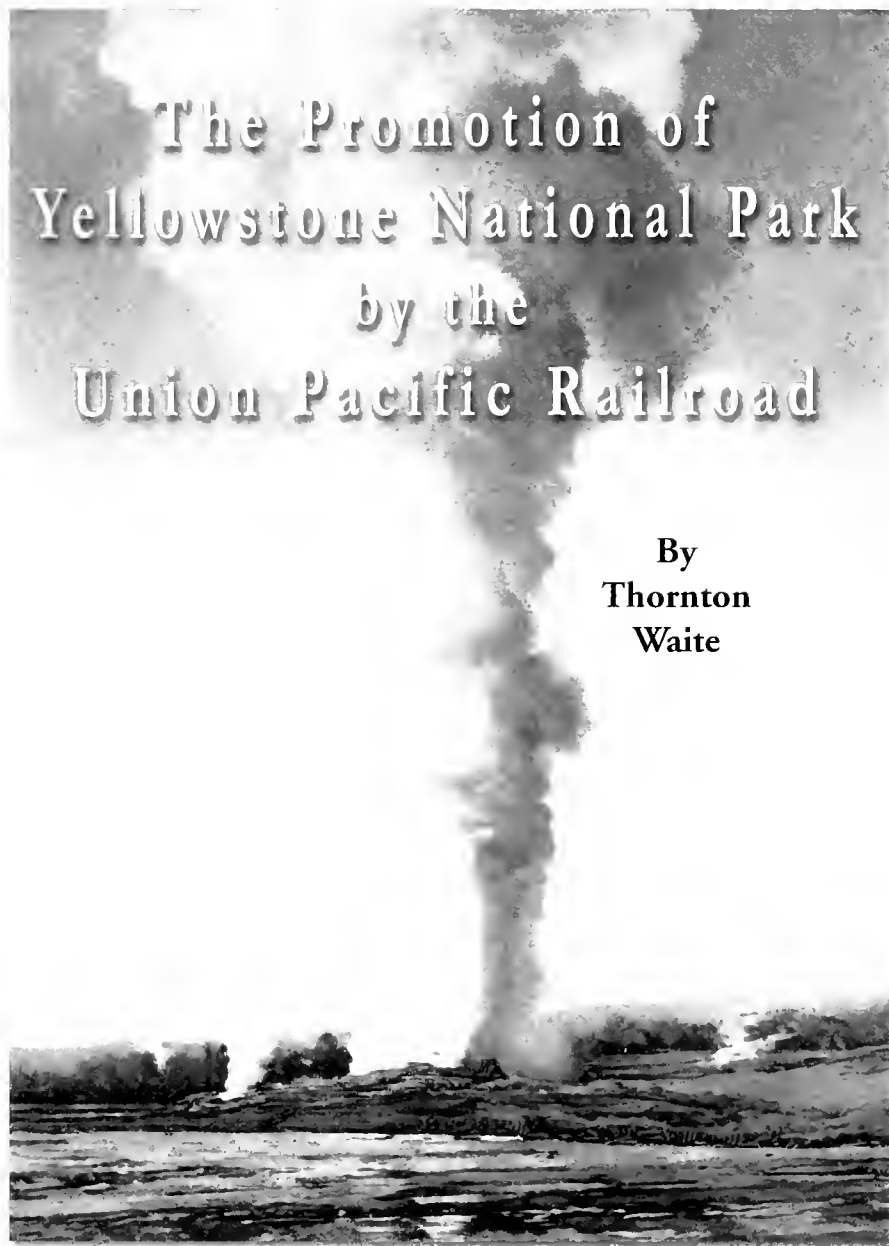


## Wyoming Picture Inside back cover

*Annals of Wyoming: The Wyoming History Journal* is published quarterly by the Wyoming State Historical Society in association with the Wyoming Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources, the American Heritage Center and the Department of History, University of Wyoming. The journal was previously published as the *Quarterly Bulletin* (1923-1925), *Annals of Wyoming* (1925-1993), *Wyoming Annals* (1993-1995) and *Wyoming History Journal* (1995-1996). The *Annals* has been the official publication of the Wyoming State Historical Society since 1953 and is distributed as a benefit of membership to all society members. Membership dues are: single, \$20; joint, \$30; student (under 21), \$15; institutional, \$40; contributing, \$100-249; sustaining, \$250-499; patron, \$500-999; donor, \$1,000+. To join, contact your local chapter or write to the address below. Articles in *Annals of Wyoming* are abstracted in *Historical Abstracts and America: History and Life*.

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Old Faithful as shown in Union Pacific booklet "Western Wonderlands" advertising Yellowstone National Park and other "interesting vacation lands of the West." (not dated)  
Courtesy American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

The Northern Pacific Railway has generally been credited with promoting the establishment of Yellowstone National Park in 1872, but the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) quickly saw the potential for a profitable business associated with transporting tourists to the park.

The railroad surveyed various potential routes from the Utah & Northern main line running between Pocatello, Idaho, and Butte, Montana, to the western edge of the park. However, during the 1870s and 1880s, the Union Pacific experienced severe financial difficulties and could do little besides advertise what services they had for travel to the park.

The line to what is now West Yellowstone was not built until 1907, after the Union Pacific emerged from bankruptcy just before the turn of the century. The Union Pacific Railway Company, which had been created following the merger of the Union Pacific Railroad Company with the Kansas Pacific Railway in 1880,<sup>1</sup> went into bankruptcy in 1893, and it was not until July 1, 1897, that the company was reorganized as the UPRR, with the Oregon Short Line a subsidiary of the new company.<sup>2</sup>

E. H. Harriman, who took over control of the UPRR when it was reorganized in 1897, undertook a massive improvement of the entire railroad, rebuilding the main lines and building branch lines throughout the western states reached by the railroad. Among the branch lines, and constructed during this time period, was the line built by the Yellowstone Park Railroad Company. This company, which was organized and controlled by the UPRR, built a line from St. Anthony, Idaho, to the western edge of Yellowstone National Park at what is now West Yellowstone, Montana.<sup>3</sup> The Yellowstone Park Railroad was transferred to the Oregon Short Line by a deed of sale on October 31, 1910.<sup>4</sup>

Following the end of World War I, the Oregon Short Line built new facilities at West Yellowstone, including a baggage building, a large dining lodge, and an employee dormitory. The convenience of traveling over the Union Pacific to reach the park resulted in half of all rail travelers to Yellowstone taking the railroad to West Yellowstone for their visit between the two world wars. The north entrance, reached at Gardiner by the Northern Pacific Railway, was a close second, while the eastern entrance through Cody and the south entrance were not used by a significant number of tourists.<sup>5</sup>

With the increased popularity of the automobile during the 1920s and the negative impacts of the Depression and World War II, rail passenger travel to Yellowstone decreased. There was a slight increase immediately following World War II, but the number of rail passengers quickly decreased to the point it was no longer profitable to run trains to West Yellowstone. The railroads gradually discontinued train service to Yellowstone. The UPRR discontinued the last trains to the park boundary in 1960.

Following that, bus connections were required, and that, too, was cut back during the next years. By the time Amtrak, a federal agency, took over the nation's rail passenger trains in 1971, rail travel to Yellowstone was virtually non-existent.<sup>6</sup>

A closer look at the promotion of the park by the UPRR between the years 1923 and 1960 shows how the railroad attempted to entice tourists to travel to the park at a time when the railroad was promoting rail passenger service. There were advertisements in national magazines and local newspapers throughout the country as well as brochures and booklets describing travel to the park. Even the publication for UPRR employees, *The Union Pacific Magazine*, was used to promote visits to the park, with numerous articles describing the park and its attractions.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Robert Athearn, *Union Pacific Country* (Lincoln, Nebraska: Bison Books, 1976), p. 227.

<sup>2</sup> Donald Robertson, *Encyclopedia of Western Railroad History, Volume II, The Mountain States* (Dallas, Texas: Taylor Publishing Company, 1991), p. 233.

<sup>3</sup> The *Articles of Incorporation of the Yellowstone Park Railroad Company* stated that the new railroad would construct a line from "the town of St. Anthony, connecting with the St. Anthony Railroad, . . . to a point near the western boundary of the Yellowstone National Park. . . ." The new company was authorized to issue 1,250 shares of capital stock at \$100.00 each. W.H. Bancroft, who was superintendent of the Oregon Short Line, held 1,241 of these shares as trustee. Bancroft and other officials of the Oregon Short Line each held one share as stockholder. Author's collection.

<sup>4</sup> *Corporate History of the Oregon Short Line Railroad Company* as of June 30, 1916, p. 63.

<sup>5</sup> Based on figures in the "Annual Report of Yellowstone National Park" released by the superintendent each year. The Union Pacific reached the west entrance to the park and the Northern Pacific reached the north entrance. The Chicago, Burlington & Quincy accessed the east entrance, and the Chicago & North Western provided service to the south entrance. The Chicago, Milwaukee, St Paul & Pacific also provided service through the west entrance.

<sup>6</sup> Based on a review of Union Pacific timetables. The last scheduled passenger train service to West Yellowstone was listed in their timetables for the summer of 1960. The following year the Union Pacific advertised service to Ashton, with connecting bus service to West Yellowstone. Later timetables showed this service was then cut back to connecting bus service from Idaho Falls.

<sup>7</sup> Typical of these articles were ones titled "The Golden Anniversary of Yellowstone National Park," published in the March 1922 issue of *The Union Pacific Magazine* and "Trip Through Yellowstone National Park," published in the August 1922 issue.

One of the most interesting promotional campaigns was the one using cartoon bears, as exemplified by fliers which were published from 1923 until 1960. Today, the railroad advertisements for Yellowstone are sought by collectors of both railroadiana and Yellowstone National Park memorabilia.

The promotion of Yellowstone by the UPRR can be divided into two segments: from 1880 through 1907 (when the Yellowstone Park Railroad Company reached West Yellowstone) and from 1908 through 1960. For perspective, the advertising promotions must be studied with relation to the time and what was happening in both the park and the country.

### THE FIRST UNION PACIFIC ADVERTISEMENTS

The Utah & Northern Railway, a subsidiary of the UPRR, reached the Idaho-Montana state line on March 9, 1880, as it was being constructed from Ogden, Utah, to Butte and Garrison, Montana. Seeing the potential for a profitable passenger trade, the railroad immediately began advertising travel to the park over their line. During the winter of 1879-1880, the railroad published a folder which boldly stated, "New Rail Route to MONTANA Via Union Pacific and Utah & Northern Railroads. Save Time, Money and 1,000 miles of Distance to Montana and Yellowstone Park." The folder went on to describe, in detail, the disadvantages of traveling to Montana on the Missouri River through Fort Benton.<sup>8</sup> Apparently the railroad had considered building a line to the park while the route to Montana was being constructed. Jake Blickensderfer, who had surveyed the original route of the Union Pacific across the Midwest, recommended a route from their Utah & Northern line at Eagle Rock (present-day Idaho Falls) to the western border of the park.<sup>9</sup> In 1879, the Yellowstone National Park superintendent's report showed a proposed line from the Utah & Northern line at Virginia City, Montana, up the Madison River to the geyser basins.<sup>10</sup> Not only was this line never built, but the Utah & Northern bypassed Virginia City. A map from Strahorn's *To the Rockies and Beyond*, published in 1880, shows the railroad planned to construct a line to the west side of Yellowstone leaving the Ogden-Butte line at Beaver Canyon, south

of the Idaho-Montana state line, proceeding east to the park.<sup>11</sup> This indicated the UPRR was aware of the value of a line going directly to the park even while the line was being constructed.

Due to the financial problems of the railroad at the time, no construction to the park was done by the UPRR, despite those promising business prospects. Meanwhile, the Northern Pacific reached Livingston, Montana, in 1883, on its way to the West Coast, and immediately built a line south to Cinnabar, a short distance from the north entrance at Gardiner,<sup>12</sup> and quickly realized a profitable summer tourist business. Despite encouragement from the Northern Pacific, the UPRR was not able to participate,<sup>13</sup> although it did begin offering stage service from Beaver Canyon, and later Monida, east to the park. This stage service was advertised in special brochures which had color covers and enticing maps and itineraries for travel to and through the park. The fact the park was one and one-half to two days stage ride from Monida was understandably mentioned only briefly, while the tour through the park was emphasized.<sup>14</sup>

Travelers, however, knew that the Northern Pacific, whose terminus was only a few miles from the park, was the easiest way to reach the park, and this fact was promoted by the Northern Pacific's *Wonderland* series. Published from 1883 to 1906,<sup>15</sup> the brochures noted how easy it was to reach the park if one traveled the Northern Pacific. Because the Northern Pacific route through the north entrance was so con-

<sup>8</sup> *Colorado Rail Annual No. 15* (Golden, Colorado: Colorado Railroad Museum, 1981), p. 60.

<sup>9</sup> Maury Klein, *Union Pacific, The Birth of a Railroad* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1987), p. 523.

<sup>10</sup> Aubrey Haines, *The Yellowstone Story, Volume I* (Niwot, Colorado: University of Colorado Press/ The Yellowstone Association for Natural Science, History & Education, Inc., 1996), p. 255.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>12</sup> Craig Reese, "The Gardiner Gateway to Yellowstone," *The Mainstreeter* 15 (Spring 1996): 5

<sup>13</sup> Klein, *Union Pacific*, p. 523.

<sup>14</sup> *Where Gush the Geysers* (Oregon Short Line brochure), 1899, Yellowstone National Park Research Library.

<sup>15</sup> Personal communication from Lee Whittlesey, archivist and historian, Yellowstone National Park Research Library.

venient, the Union Pacific could not effectively compete for travel to the park, and it could not do anything to make travel to the park any easier.

However, in an effort to promote travel over the rail line to the park, the Oregon Short Line published brochures titled *Where Gush the Geysers*. The first edition, published in 1899, not only had a painting on the cover, but also included hand-colored photographs on the inside showing some of the destinations in the park, along with the rates for the tour packages. Tour routes available included one leaving from Monida to the park, and exiting through Cinnabar. The brochure was the convenient size of a railroad timetable, approximately four inches by nine inches.<sup>16</sup>

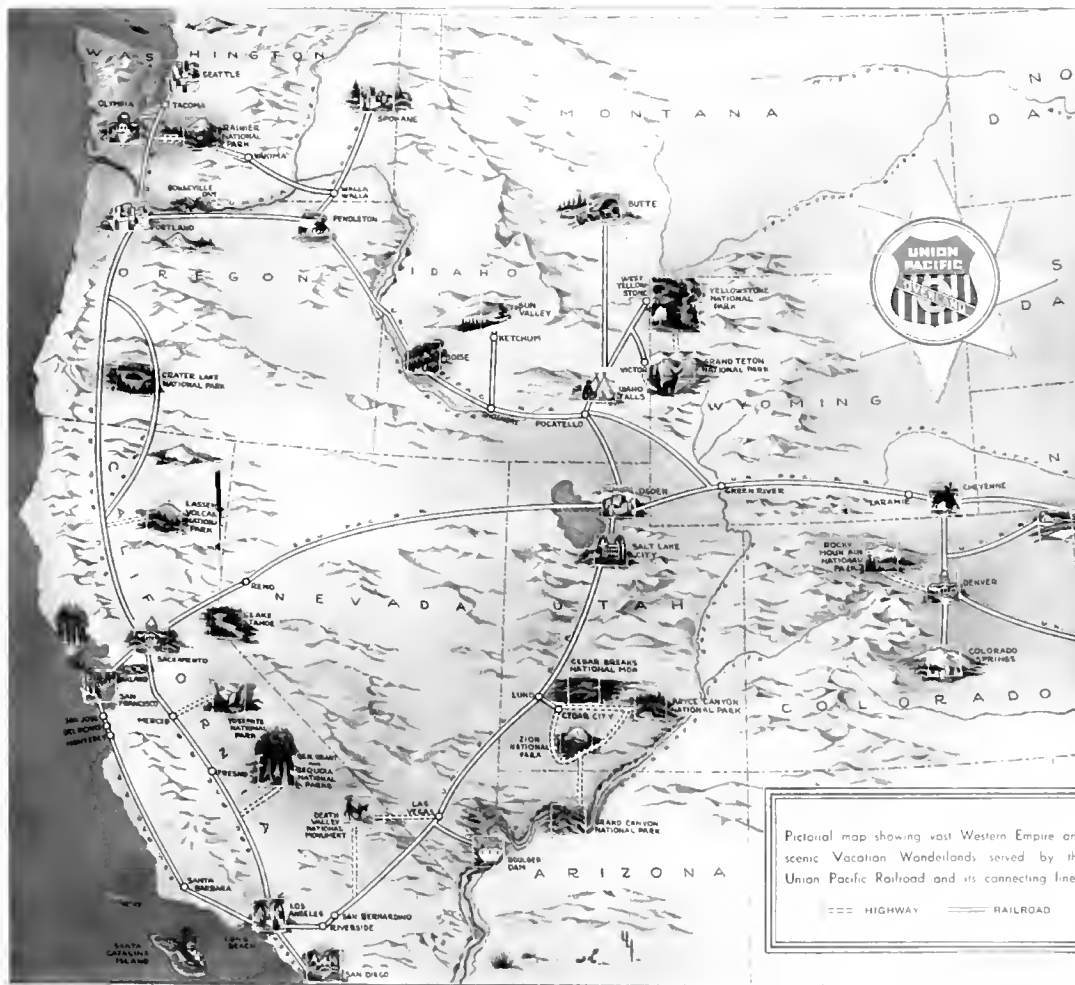
After the UPRR entered bankruptcy in 1893, it took several years for it to reorganize. After it did,

Harriman became president of the newly reorganized railroad. He immediately started a program to rebuild the rail lines.<sup>17</sup> He also began construction of branch feeder lines to provide added traffic and business for the UPRR. At the turn of the century, the St. Anthony Railroad was built from Idaho Falls, Idaho, north and east to St. Anthony to reach the Upper Snake River Valley.<sup>18</sup> The thirty-seven mile line was successful, but remained fifty miles short of the west side of the park. Travel to Yellowstone from Monida was still the UPRR's preferred route, and the Oregon Short Line even proposed improving the stage road

<sup>16</sup> *Where Gush the Geysers* brochure.

<sup>17</sup> Maury Klein, *The Life and Legend of E.H. Harriman* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: the University of North Carolina Press, 2000), p. 130.

<sup>18</sup> *The Corporate History of the Oregon Short Line*, p. 53.



Map of Union Pacific Railroad's western routes from "Western Wonderlands" brochure, ca. 1940. Courtesy American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.



from Monida to the park at the turn of the century,<sup>19</sup> although the railroad did not take action on that proposal.

### COMPLETION OF THE LINE TO WEST YELLOWSTONE

The UPRR incorporated the Yellowstone Park Railroad Company on September 12, 1905, to build a line from St. Anthony to the west side of the park. Construction began on October 3, 1905.<sup>20</sup> Connecting stage service was provided by Fred Haynes' Monida-Yellowstone Company from Marysville and the end of the line to the park while the new line was being constructed. Completed on November 12, 1907,<sup>21</sup> the line was almost immediately closed by winter snows, but the next spring the railroad began advertising and promoting travel to the park in its timetables. The success of this advertising was readily apparent, judging by the increase in the numbers of railroad tourists to the western edge of Yellowstone.<sup>22</sup>

Travel to the park was interrupted by World War I when the hotels closed, although the camping areas remained open.<sup>23</sup> Immediately after the war, the railroads all began a vigorous competition for tourist travel to the park. Although it was a seasonal business, extending from mid-June through early September, transportation of passengers was profitable. Special fares were offered and the trip was promoted as a side trip on a transcontinental train ride, especially during years when there were fairs or expositions on the West Coast.<sup>24</sup> In 1939, for example, the UPRR promoted a side trip to Yellowstone for those going either to the New York World's Fair or the San Francisco World's Fair in a four page flier promoting Yellowstone.

During the early 1920s, the UPRR saw its business increasing every year, and the facilities at West Yellowstone were accordingly expanded.<sup>25</sup> The original baggage room in the depot was found to be too small and a separate baggage building was constructed. The dining facilities were also inadequate to meet the needs of the hundreds of passengers who arrived on some days, so the railroad built a new, large dining lodge designed by the famous architect Gilbert Stanley Underwood. In addition, a dormi-

tory for summer employees was built to replace the makeshift bunk cars used by the employees. By 1923, more than fifty percent of rail passengers to the park traveled through West Yellowstone, a fact duly publicized by the railroad, although automobile traffic was even then rapidly outpacing rail travel to the park.<sup>26</sup>

### THE PROMOTION OF YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK

The advertisements printed by the Oregon Short Line highlighted not only the ease of reaching the park over its rail line, but also the various tour routes and options available in the park itself. These advertisements were not particularly elaborate or original, but rather were informative black and white brochures with some color added. They included numerous black and white photos showing the various sights in the park.

The UPRR also promoted Yellowstone in all forms of the media. In 1922, the railroad had a live radio broadcast on Bullock's Broadcasting Station (KNN) in downtown Los Angeles by a representative of the railroad to promote travel to the park.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>19</sup> "Report of the Acting Superintendent of the Yellowstone National Park," October 14, 1902, p. 4.

<sup>20</sup> *The Corporate History of the Oregon Short Line*, p. 63.

<sup>21</sup> The railroad printed a special pocket-sized brochure commemorating this event titled "Union Pacific and Oregon Short Line Railroads, November 12, 1907, Yellowstone Park, 1909." It described the tour routes available through the park for the 1909 season.

<sup>22</sup> In the 1908 "Report of the Superintendent of Yellowstone National Park," it was noted that "the branch line of the Oregon Short Line Railroad from Idaho Falls to the western boundary of the park was completed and ready for passenger traffic at the opening of the park season of 1908, and the records show an increase of visitors to the park through the western entrance of about 3,000 over 1907." According to this report, 7,172 visitors to the park entered through the west entrance that year.

<sup>23</sup> The "Annual Report of the Superintendent for the year 1918," stated that the hotels were closed, but that the camping areas remained open, p. 4.

<sup>24</sup> "Western Vacations at Bargain Prices," in *The Union Pacific Magazine*, April 1932, p. 12. This article noted some of the special passenger stopover privileges which were available during the summer of 1932.

<sup>25</sup> Annual reports of the Union Pacific Railroad for the years ending December 31, 1921, 1925, 1926, and 1927.

<sup>26</sup> "Annual Report of the Superintendent," 1923.

<sup>27</sup> "Radio Broadcasts Yellowstone Park Attractions," *The Union Pacific Magazine*, September 1922, p. 40.

The railroad published numerous special advertisements and notices through the years to reach various markets. It had advertisements in national magazines such as *National Geographic* and newspapers in large cities and mailed out brochures with tour routes and schedules for visits through the park, trying to reach the maximum number of potential travelers.

In 1909, only a year after the tracks reached West Yellowstone, the Oregon Short Line even included a large notice in *The Official Guide of the Railways*, something not typically seen in the *Guide*. Located

**YELLOWSTONE**  
**NATIONAL PARK**  
*Personally Escorted*  
**& EXCURSIONS**

*via*  
**UNION PACIFIC**  
*All Expenses Included*  
**SUMMER-1928**

Cover of Union Pacific Railroad brochure advertising its 1928 excursions to Yellowstone National Park. Courtesy Hebard Collection, University of Wyoming Libraries.

on the same page as the listing showing the train schedule to Yellowstone, the advertisement proclaimed: "The NEW LINE to Yellowstone Park Direct to the Park Boundary." An additional note stated: "Side trips for the Park at low rate, allowed on all tickets to the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition." The railroad's employee magazine, *The Union Pacific Magazine*, published during the 1920s and 1930s, also had numerous articles promoting travel to the park, such as the ones titled "Yellowstone, America's Animal Refuge"<sup>28</sup> and "The Winter Job of a Yellowstone Park Forest Ranger,"<sup>29</sup> complete with photographs. The cover of the June 1922 issue of the magazine was a Haynes photograph of Castle Cone and Beehive Geyser.

The UPRR published a series of brochures during the 1920s, approximately thirty-two pages long, describing various attractions on the Union Pacific lines. One of them, published in 1923, was titled "Yellowstone National Park," and it had a color cover with an artistic rendering of Old Faithful, one of the most famous attractions in the park.<sup>30</sup> There was also a series of brochures the size of a timetable titled "Western Wonderland" and "Along the Union Pacific System," describing the sights along the railroad and always including Yellowstone. Even when the United States Railway Administration operated the nation's railroad during World War I, the UPRR published a folder promoting travel to Yellowstone for 1919, the year following the end of the war.<sup>31</sup>

The UPRR had its own travel department and library, with booklet titles including *Zion-Bryce Canyon-Grand Canyon National Parks; California; Colorado Playgrounds*; and *Dude Ranches*. Following the establishment of the Grand Teton National Park in 1929 south of Yellowstone, the UPRR also promoted travel to that park, either through Yellowstone or through Victor, Idaho, with tour packages for both

<sup>28</sup> *The Union Pacific Magazine*, August 1925, p. 10.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, February 1931, p. 13.

<sup>30</sup> *Yellowstone National Park* (Union Pacific Railroad, 1923), 32 pp. Author's collection.

<sup>31</sup> *Yellowstone National Park—Wyoming—Montana—Idaho* (United States Railway Administration, National Park Series, Season 1919), Yellowstone National Park Research Library.

parks available.<sup>32</sup> The Department of Tours and various representatives of the railroad throughout the country provided information about these tours.<sup>33</sup>

Following World War II, when rail tourist traffic to the park was in decline, the railroad produced more modern brochures. Printed with a color photograph on the cover, they were smaller, but contained much of the same information. Separate advertisements for Yellowstone were not as common, and the travel itineraries were merged into other possible sights to visit along the Union Pacific lines. A 1959 booklet titled *Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks*, printed by the UPRR, was approximately five inches by seven inches, with a color photograph on the cover. By 1960, when passenger service to West Yellowstone ended the advertising budget had been cut to the bone. One of the advertisements for 1960 showed a bus, obviously cut out and pasted onto a scene showing Old Faithful in the background.<sup>34</sup> After that, only the informational fliers to travel agents were sent out, giving the appropriate tour information as connections were cut back, from West Yellowstone to Ashton and then to Idaho Falls.<sup>35</sup> However, even at this time the railroad's ticket envelopes retained a picture of Old Faithful and a description of how to reach the park using the Union Pacific lines.<sup>36</sup>

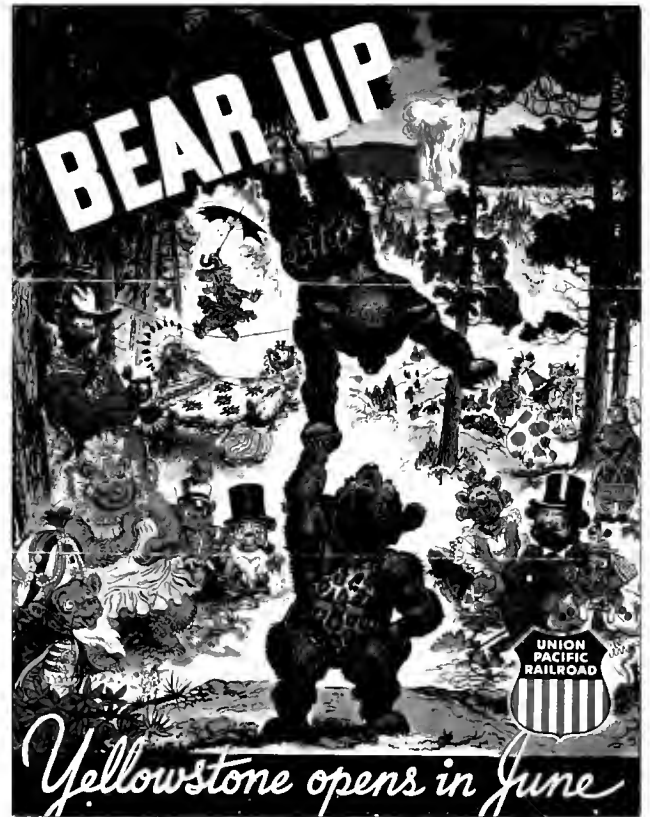
During the 1950s, the UPRR also prepared a series of large photographs of scenes along its lines, including Yellowstone and Grand Teton national parks. These large color photographs included the words "Union Pacific Railroad" in the bottom corner, and were meant to be framed and mounted in depots and at travel agencies.<sup>37</sup>

### THE BEAR ADVERTISEMENTS

To encourage its expanding business, the UPRR began printing a series of cartoon bear advertisements promoting Yellowstone in 1923. Feeding the bears was considered a novelty and an attraction for park visitors, and the railroad wanted to emphasize the ease of seeing wildlife up close. The fliers were apparently mailed to travel agents and ticket agents all over the country to inform them of various train schedules and sights to see in the park.

The bear cartoon advertisements were interest-

ing and noteworthy for a variety of reasons. They were, and still are, enjoyable and fun to view. Busy with many activities, the bears were shown in comical situations. The railroad released up to six differ-



One of the bear advertisements used by the Union Pacific Railroad to promote its service to Yellowstone National Park. Courtesy Hebard Collection, University of Wyoming Libraries.

<sup>32</sup> "Reached via Union Pacific" (Union Pacific Railroad, 1929). This is a four-page flier advertising tours to the new Grand Teton National Park, one of several printed by the Union Pacific through the years.

<sup>33</sup> "Yellowstone Opens June 20" (Union Pacific Railroad, 1929). This information was on the back page of a four-page flier advertising travel to Yellowstone National Park, and was often found on many of their advertisements.

<sup>34</sup> *The Union Pacific Bulletin*, March 1960. This was a publication of the railroad for their ticket agents to inform them of the passenger and tour services available on the railroad.

<sup>35</sup> "Additional Information for Agents Regarding Yellowstone National Park Tours, Hotels, Facilities, etc, Summer of 1961," published by the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad, the Union Pacific Railroad, and the Northern Pacific Railway Company. Author's collection.

<sup>36</sup> Ticket envelope. Author's collection.

<sup>37</sup> Author's collection.

ent bear ads each year, each of them containing different messages and information. They might contain train schedules, destinations, and sights to see, or just include pictures of views in the park. The fliers were centered around various themes, ranging from sports to fairs to the latest technology (such as "Tell-A-Vision") to references to national elections. Designed to attract casual viewers, the advertisements always included the UP shield on the front and would include scenes such as Old Faithful or the Old Faithful Inn in the background. The bears would be busy doing a number of activities.<sup>38</sup>

There are more than ninety known bear advertisements. They were printed on 11 x 17 inch paper folded to make a four-page flier. Only a few thousand copies of each flier were printed and distributed by the railroad. The UPRR released several each year in the 1920s and 1930s, and none are known to have been printed during World War II since passenger service to West Yellowstone was discontinued during the war following the 1942 season. Following the war, only one or two advertisements were printed each year, but the bear cartoon theme was continued until 1960. The bears were shown on the cover page. The back page and inside flyer would list train schedules, sights to see in the park or at other locations along the UP's lines, as well as special events. The advertisements after the war were more colorful and busier than the previous ones.

The same bear cartoons were also used by the railroad for other purposes. Some of the advertising booklets published during the 1950s, for example, included photographs with the cartoon bears added onto the same page.<sup>39</sup> The children's menu on the dining car also had the same bears on the menu, and there was even a coloring book with the bears, with rhymes promoting Yellowstone.<sup>40</sup>

It is not known who prepared most of the bear cartoons, but it is known that the UP would show them to the Yellowstone Park Association to receive its concurrence before releasing them. The railroad typically used commercial artists hired specifically for that purpose. Walter Oerhle was a Chicago artist who prepared some of the advertisements for the railroad. He also prepared some of the murals in the Old Faith-

ful Inn, which were included in the remodeling of the bar at the end of Prohibition in 1933, at the request of architect Robert C. Reamer.<sup>41</sup> Some of these murals are still on the walls in the Inn's cafeteria, while others have been reproduced on glass etchings in the bar. The theme of playful bears was maintained on those murals, using the same style of bears. Another artist known to have made some of the advertisements was William Willmarth<sup>42</sup> from Omaha. He drew numerous other advertisements for the railroad through the years, until the UP replaced his drawings with photographs.

The railroad also used live bears in some of its advertising. There are photographs showing the bears with a group of young women on the back of an observation car. If one looks carefully at the image, however, one can see that the bear is being held tightly with a chain by a handler.<sup>43</sup> Apparently the advertising department determined that bear cartoons were a lot easier to prepare than working with live bears. For several years during the twenties, the company magazine included the outline of a bear at the header of the section covering the news from the Montana Division, which included the line to West Yellowstone.

Although the UP is most closely associated with the bears at Yellowstone, the Northern Pacific also

<sup>38</sup> The originals of most of the cartoon bear advertisements are at the Union Pacific Museum in Omaha, Nebraska. Copies are also at the Yellowstone National Park Research Library.

<sup>39</sup> In the advertising brochure "Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks," published by the Union Pacific Railroad in 1959, the same bear cartoons were used on pages describing stopovers and train service. Copy in author's collection.

<sup>40</sup> An original copy is available at the Union Pacific Museum in Omaha, Nebraska, and copies at the Yellowstone National Park Research Library. The *National Geographic* magazine had advertisements promoting Yellowstone which included cartoon bears. The November 1911 issue had an advertisement by the Union Pacific listing advantages of visiting the park, and there were two cartoon bears included in the half-page advertisement. The May 1933 issue had a quarter-page advertisement by the Northern Pacific showing a similar cartoon bear, also promoting travel to Yellowstone National Park.

<sup>41</sup> Letter from Robert C. Reamer to Wm. B. Nichols, president of the Yellowstone Park Hotel Company, October 18, 1934, Yellowstone National Park archives, box YPC-34.

<sup>42</sup> Michael Zega, "Travel by Train," *Vintage Rails*, Winter 1997.

<sup>43</sup> Union Pacific Museum photo #4176.

used cartoon bears in its advertising. Its advertisements, however, were not as exclusive, nor were they used as long as those of the UP.<sup>44</sup> The remnants of these bear cartoons can be seen at Mammoth Hot Springs, where they are on signs advertising food services.

**SUCCESS OF THE PROMOTION**

It is difficult to judge the overall success of the UP's promotion efforts for travel to Yellowstone National Park because the automobile ultimately displaced the train as the primary means of visiting the park. In addition, much of the advertising was intended to make potential travelers aware of the park and how to reach it, rather than being intended for a specific trip. However, based on the numbers of rail travelers through the various entrances, it is apparent that its advertising campaign was successful, with more than fifty percent of all rail travelers entering the park through the west entrance over the UP lines, based on the annual reports by the superintendent of the park.

There were four gateways used by the five rail-

roads to reach Yellowstone, the west, north, east, and south entrances. The UP reached the west entrance, and the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad reached the Gallatin gateway in 1927, with the passenger traveling by bus to West Yellowstone. Prior to this time, travelers on the Milwaukee Road had to travel by bus from Three Forks, Montana, to reach the park. The Northern Pacific Railway reached the north entrance at Gardiner, and the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad reached Cody, Wyoming, and tourists rode buses to the east entrance. A few travelers went over the Chicago and North Western Railway to Lander, and had a one and a half day bus ride to the south entrance. The following data is taken from the annual report of Yellowstone, published by the superintendent. The number of rail visitors was reported separately from the number of visitors by car. This listing shows the number of cars, not visitors, who passed through the entrances to the park.

<sup>44</sup> "Yellowstone National Park—1916—Yellowstone Western Stage Company," advertising brochure. Yellowstone National Park Research Library.

Year	West Entrance	North Entrance	East Entrance	South Entrance
1920				
Rail	14,268	9,717	4,075	—
1926				
Rail	18,981	14,127	7,611	271
Cars	14,862	9,288	15,827	4,344
1929				
Rail	19,213	12,243	7,233	290
Cars	76,897	39,198	73,732	24,758
1933				
Rail	2,847	2,955	966	19
Cars	14,244	11,110	16,723	4,857

1936

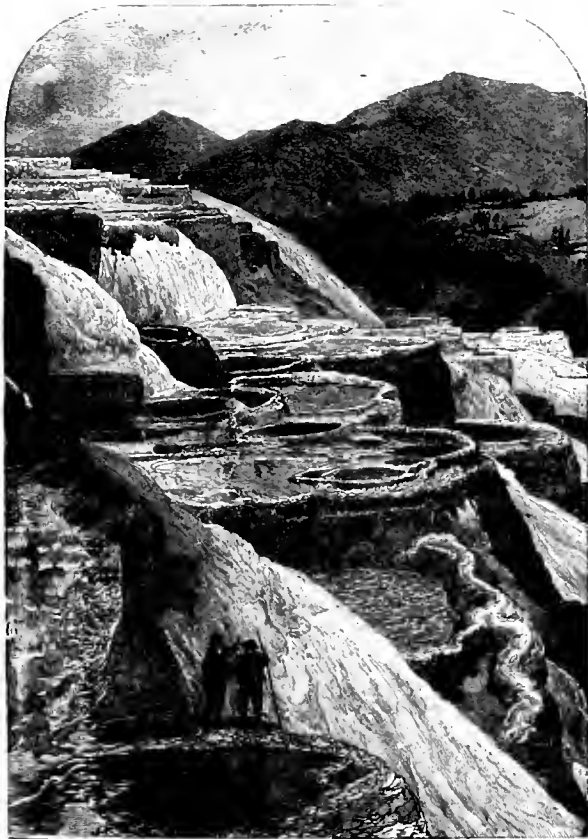
Visits were not reported for each entrance, but there was a total of 412,608 visitors to the park, of whom 19,472 arrived by rail.

Rail travelers were not reported following World War II since the number was insignificant compared to those arriving by automobiles.

As can be seen by looking at the data, the west entrance was, for most years, the most heavily used by rail travelers. After dropping during the Depression, the number of rail travelers slowly rose, but the automobile was obviously the primary means of visiting the park.

## CONCLUSION

The UP's promotion of Yellowstone National Park not only encouraged travel to the park, but it also created a legacy of artwork that is memorable. Although it is no longer possible to travel directly to the park by train, special railroad tours still exist, such as the American Orient Express rail tours, which include a bus trip through the parks.



GARDINER RIVER HOT SPRINGS, YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK.—Reached via the Union Pacific System.

Image from the Union Pacific booklet *The Evolution of the Locomotive from 1813 to 1891*. Courtesy American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

## PARK TOURS

The Oregon Short Line and the Union Pacific offered a wide variety of tours through Yellowstone National Park from 1908, when the railroad first reached West Yellowstone and even after 1960, when passenger service was discontinued to West Yellowstone. With the cooperation of the competing railroads, a tourist could enter through West Yellowstone and leave through another entrance. The railroad would transport the tourist's baggage for them to the station from which they would then depart. The tours could also be custom made and lengthened for a nominal fee, but there were set "package" tours which were described in the flyer and brochures.

In 1899 the Oregon Short Line listed the following schedule for one of these tours in its brochure "Where Gush the Geysers."

Day 1: Leave Monida and arrive at Grayling Inn

Day 2: Arrive Fountain Hotel

Day 3: Visit Upper Basin, stay at Fountain Hotel

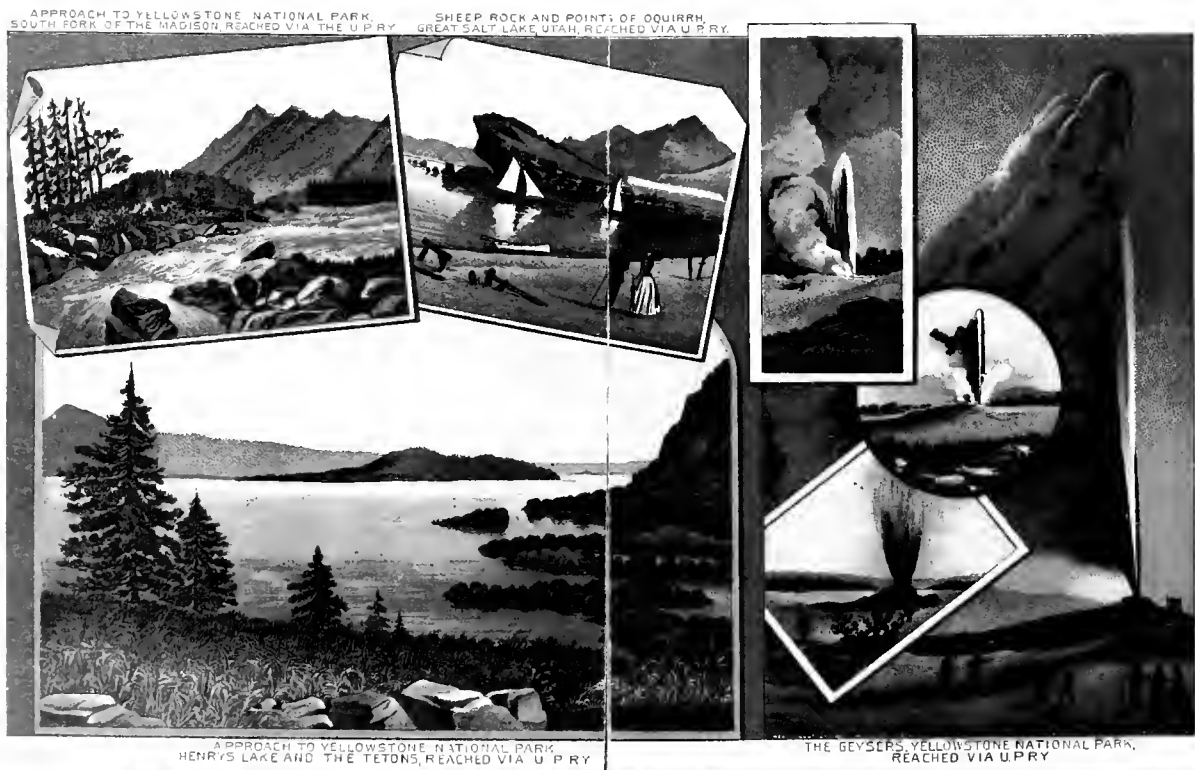
Day 4: Arrive Lake Hotel

Day 5: Arrive Canyon Hotel

Day 6: Arrive Mammoth Hot Springs  
 Day 7: Arrive Grayling Inn  
 Day 8: Arrive Monida

Visitors traveled on four horse Concord coaches of the Monida & Yellowstone Stage Company. In 1916, the Yellowstone-Western Stage Company suggested four possible tours through the park. They included a two-day tour from the western entrance (shown as "Yellowstone" on their map) to the geysers; a four-day tour to the main points of interest in the park; a five-day complete tour of the park; and a four-day tour of the park entering through Yellowstone and leaving through Gardiner.

In 1917, the coaches were replaced by eleven passenger buses operated by the Yellowstone Park Transportation Company. After 1929, following the establishment of Grand Teton National Park, tours through both parks were available, and a tourist soon could enter through either West Yellowstone or Victor for the trip through both parks. By 1959, the tours by rail were apparently more flexible, and escorted tours were still available. No specific tour schedules were listed in the booklet titled *Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks*, although the park buses operated on a schedule.



Page advertising Yellowstone National Park from *View Album of Resorts on the Union Pacific Railroad*, not dated. Courtesy Hebard Collection, University of Wyoming Libraries.



# BRONCO NELL, A WOMAN HORSE THIEF

As told by Felix Alston

Edited and with an introduction by Scott Alston



Felix Alston in Basin during the 1909 Spring Creek Raid trial. Courtesy the grandchildren of Felix Alston, Felix Scott Alston and Virginia Taylor Muller.

**His love affair with Wyoming only ended with his death in 1956 at the age of eighty-six.**

## INTRODUCTION

Texas Trail cowboy; Bald Mountain City (City of Broken Hearts) gold miner and election judge; Basin City livery and feed store employee and owner, and water and ice man; Lovell and Irma Flat storekeeper and postmaster; Marquette and Irma Flat farmer; Yellowstone National Park guide; contractor for the National Park road along the North Fork of the Shoshone to the national forest reserve; hunter and fisherman; Big Horn County Justice of the Peace, clerk, tax collector, deputy sheriff, under-sheriff, county sheriff; warden of the Wyoming State Penitentiary

In some ways, the succinct foregoing paragraph better illuminates the colorful Wyoming years of the diminutive (five foot six inch) Texan Felix Alston than a more labored distractive narrative. Alston's finest hours are to be found in the undertakings, activities, and time frame delineated by the above few words. His love affair with Wyoming only ended with his death in 1956 at the age of eighty-six. He left Wyoming for California in 1919 or 1920 and never returned. If he had ever learned to drive a car he might have traveled again to Wyoming, but though once a cowboy and master of the reins he was not of the wheel. In contrast, his wife Mamie was one of the first women automobile drivers in Wyoming. Moving to their California orange grove in 1912, she and the four Basin, Wyoming, born Alston children traveled to Rawlins every summer in her Studebaker touring car. She was always

at the helm during this remarkable feat, and remained the Alston family chauffeur until her death.

Alston kept many of his Wyoming contacts until he outlived them all. There were annual Wyoming state picnics to be attended in the Los Angeles area and friendships to be nurtured with those he had left behind and those Wyomingites coming through California, as well as with those settling in the state. Curiously, he seemed to have, and highly value, as many ex-cons as friends as law-abiding citizens. Maybe it was because he knew too well how tenuously thin the line could become between law-abiding and unlawful. How civilization had replaced Wyoming's frontier shortly after statehood and how so many grasped that fact too late or maybe never realized it at all. How circumstances and events with new perspectives by the people can carry a man across that line and criminalize him. One only has to read the numerous letters Warden Alston wrote to the various governors of Wyoming, concerning prisoners' parole potential, to understand how he judged his fellow man. He rarely mentioned the crimes, but rather spoke of the man's character, trustworthiness, and potential place in society.

In the spring and summer of 1952, Alston dictated numerous recollections of his Wyoming years while his third daughter, Helen Jastrow, sat at the Underwood, typing

a verbatim rendering of his spoken words. This was accomplished in the cool shaded yard of his Reseda, California, Spanish style home. He was painfully deaf in these years and it is likely that his daughter's shouts for clarity or repetition permeated the neighborhood. In looking back on this, decades later, his daughter was somewhat embarrassed and sincerely hoped that their neighbors were entertained. "At least, they did not complain about Dad and I ranting at one another in the yard that summer." The story of Bronco Nell was dictated at this period.

A man and his wife arrived in Meeteetse, Wyoming, in the spring of 1900. They had a string of six or eight work horses, two freight wagons and what was known as a kooster (a cart covered over like a covered wagon containing a cook stove and bed that was always trailed behind the freight wagons). They also had a small bunch of range horses. The man, for some reason that I never knew, put on his hat and walked off, leaving the woman to manage the best she could with what property he had left, for herself and small baby.

She took the name of Nell Smith, acquired a small place in the edge of this little town where she had barns, a corral along with a small bunk house. In order for her to make an adequate living for herself and child it was necessary for her to engage in some occupation whereby she would have sufficient income. She then went on the road with her freight outfit hauling wool from any of the interior points to the railroad at Casper, Wyoming, or Billings, Montana. On her return trips, she would load her outfit with groceries or any other supplies needed by the merchants or the ranchers. While on these trips she would break her best horses to work in the team; for this she was always referred to as Bronco Nell. She was not a big woman—never weighing more than one hundred and thirty pounds, but was very efficient handling broncos as well as a string team of freight horses. As she acquired more teams than she really needed she would dispose of the surplus horses, which added very materially to her income.

She acquired a small coal mine about three or four miles from Meeteetse, employing one or two broken-down coal miners to mine this coal. They were the only help she had in conducting this mine

or her freight outfit. Nell even hauled her own coal from the mine to deliver to her various customers in the town.

On account of her manipulating this freight outfit she naturally attracted the attention of all horse lovers as well as horse thieves. She was known far and wide by all the horse thieves; and any of them were willing to increase her herd of horses instead of stealing them from her. Consequently, they gained her confidence and she certainly responded by protecting them. She would always feed and find a place for any of them to sleep in her bunkhouse. It was impossible to get any information from her concerning the actions or whereabouts of any of her acquaintances who might be violators of the law.

One of her loyalty acts to the profession of crooks was to harbor an escapee from the county jail by the name of Bob Stratten. He had escaped, made it on foot through the Bad Lands for a distance of sixty miles to her place. She had a number of colts on hand that she was weaning and in order to take care of Stratten she turned a basket hay rack upside down in the center of the corral, hauled straw by the tons entirely covering and burying the hay rack, where he lived the balance of the winter, which was a perfect place to hibernate. Due to Nell's loyalty Bob was not discovered by the law, and when spring came he disappeared.

Nell was not satisfied weaning her own colts but proceeded to wean colts that were the property of others. Some people knew that she was doing it, but it was difficult to prove after the colts had been separated so long from their mothers that neither would recognize the other. During this time Nell's herd of horses increased with amazing rapidity. By this time she got to be an awful eyesore and nuisance to all the horsemen in the country but they considered it would be almost an utter impossibility to secure a jury who would convict a woman of horse stealing. For that reason some of them were dilatory as to prosecuting her.

Several of these horse owners came to me for advice as to what action to take since I was sheriff of Big Horn County. They seemed to think that the loyalty of the average Western man to women would

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prevent a conviction in court. I differed with them and contended that if we could get convincing testimony of her guilt we would not have any difficulty in securing a verdict of guilty. At my suggestion one of these horsemen left two of his colts the mothers had weaned with the herd of range horses. He had marked these colts with a hair brand under their manes and had the witnesses note any outstanding marks or peculiarities they had. Within the next two weeks Nell picked up these colts and put them in her corral with some of her own.

The owner, with his hired man, went to Meeteetse's Justice Court, had a writ of replevin issued and delivered to my deputy sheriff, which he served by seizing the colts and returning them to their owner.

The deputy sheriff called me from Meeteetse and informed me that he had seized the two colts that Nell had stolen and returned them to the owner and supposed that was all there was to it. I told him to make special notation of the entire transaction in his mind, as we would probably want him to appear in court in case Nell was prosecuted. He said: "What in the hell is the use to prosecute her unless you convict her? This country never has, in its history, convicted a woman for crime."

I told him that I believed in loyalty to the opposite sex as much as anyone, but I thought the time had come when it was necessary to put such women as Nell out of business. The fact that she was a woman did not constitute a valid excuse for her to appropriate other people's property. I never knew or heard of a woman convicted for stealing horses but we would make an exception in this case, as she had become a nuisance. I considered it would not be difficult to get a verdict of guilty.

I went to C.A. Zaring who was county attorney, conferred with and gave him all the developments in the case as to Nell's horse stealing. He looked at me and said: "God almighty, do you think we could convict a woman for horse stealing? If you think we can I am with you one hundred percent. I have heard considerable complaints as to Nell's activities and she must be a dinger of a horsewoman. Within thirty days before district court sets we will file a complaint

direct under the 'Live Stock Statute' which makes it a penitentiary offense to steal live stock of any value."

I told him we had positive evidence in that the owner of the colts, along with his hired man, could positively identify both of them. That the deputy sheriff had reclaimed them from Nell and had delivered them back to the owner. Nell had claimed ownership of the colts, but after the officer took possession of them she claimed then that she might be mistaken in the identity, which was an impossibility as she did not have one animal of any description in that particular range.

Mr. Zaring filed a criminal indictment, which meant that it would be necessary for Nell to furnish a bail bond to appear at the next regular term of district court.

I did not arrest Nell and take her into custody but instructed her to post a bond immediately or else be remanded to jail.

On the first day session of the court Nell appeared in person with her lawyers which consisted of the leading law firm of the county, Ridgley and West. That forenoon session of the court was devoted entirely to reading of the criminal docket and setting all criminal cases for trial. Nell's case was the last one to be heard. During the noon recess the judge noticed the case on the docket "State of Wyoming vs. Nell Smith" which really meant a criminal indictment. Never having had a woman criminal in his court the judge was curious to know what charge was against Nell. He asked the county attorney and I "what was the charge?" to which Mr. Zaring replied: "Horse stealing."

The judge smiled and asked Mr. Zaring "Do you really believe it is possible to convict a woman of horse stealing?"

Mr. Zaring replied by saying: "The sheriff says he has the most convincing testimony which places her beyond any doubt of guilt."

At the completion of Nell's trial the case was placed in the hands of jury about four o'clock. The bailiff took the jury to dinner after which they retired to the jury room for deliberation. The judge left instructions that if the jury brought in a verdict before eleven o'clock that night to call him and he would

hear it, otherwise to turn in a sealed verdict to the clerk of the court. About ten o'clock they informed the bailiff that they had arrived at a verdict. All interested in the case congregated in the courtroom to hear a verdict of "guilty as charged" without any recommendations.

Of course, it was necessary to place Nell in jail. She and I took her little girl, Ruth, over to my residence and left her with my wife where she remained until the county commissioners made arrangements with a Mrs. Gebhardt in Meeteetse to keep her until her mother was released from prison.

Nell was transferred with others who had been convicted at this term of court to the state prison at Rawlins, Wyoming, where she served her full two-year term as sentenced by the court.

At the conclusion of her trial she had given her lawyers full power of attorney to dispose of any and all of her property, which they did for a very nominal sum, and forgot to remit any part of it to Nell.

Upon one of my various trips to the prison while taking prisoners there the warden informed me that Nell wanted to see me. She had been in prison about

a year by this time.

I said: "All right, send her in."

When she came into the warden's office I said to her: "Nell, you hate me worse than the Devil hates Holy Water – why do you want to see me, and what about?"

To which she replied: "At one time I hated and despised you most of all people I ever knew, but now I have made up my mind that you are the most decent one of the whole damn bunch. Those lawyers have sold all of my property and my time will expire here before a great while and I haven't enough money to pay my fare home, and don't consider there is any chance to steal a horse to ride home. I am wondering how I will get there."

I told her to write her lawyers to send her sufficient funds to get home "or else."

In due time she arrived back in Big Horn County flat broke and said she understood her lawyers had sold all of her property for two thousand dollars when the freight outfit alone was well worth that amount. She asked me: "What can I do to get even a portion of the sales?"



The Wyoming State Penitentiary in Rawlins, ca. 1912. Alston served as the warden of the penitentiary from 1911 to 1919. Courtesy the grandchildren of Felix Alston.

I laughingly advised her to tell her lawyers that if they did not divvy up some coin from the sale of her property that she would horse whip them in the street.

I don't know what action Nell took but the next morning I saw her at the stage station on her way to Meeteetse and asked her what success she had financially. Nell grinned and said: "I am not broke."

She went to Meeteetse where she got her daughter and they went to Cody. I have not seen either of them since.

It would not be fair to end this story without paying the highest compliments to that little girl, Ruth.

A man I know well who has been a life-long resident of Cody told me the following concerning Ruth and Nell's life in Cody. I will tell it in his own words to the best of my ability,

"When Nell and Ruth came to Cody Nell put Ruth in schools. She would work at any kind of honorable work that she could get to do to keep Ruth in school and in nice clothes. She was well rewarded for her efforts to educate Ruth and give her the best opportunities that she could possibly afford as Ruth was one of the outstanding students in high school, nice looking with the appearance of important intelligence and refinement. In fact, she was all that any parent could expect of their offspring. She graduated from high school with the highest of honors and in some kind of a musical contest she won a prize which was a fine piano."

Ruth's father, who had walked out on them when she was a baby, and returned to Texas, but never tried to contact either Nell or Ruth by communication or otherwise, had acquired some land holdings on his return to Texas on which oil had been discovered. During this time he had undoubtedly kept tabs on them as he appeared in Cody shortly after Ruth graduated from High School. He wanted Nell and Ruth to forget all the past and go with him. Nell very promptly informed him that he could do as much and whatever he pleased for Ruth but as far as she was personally concerned she had made her own way for fifteen years without him or his aid and she certainly would continue to do so.

He put Ruth in a college of music in New York

state where I understand she went to the top.

With all of Nell's career as a horse thief and protecting others in the same profession, she certainly deserves a great deal of credit for the manner in which she has conducted herself after her release from prison, and, if living, is eighty-three years old.

June 22, 1952

**Post script:** Mrs. Ella Smith, a.k.a. Bronco Nell, was charged and tried in Big Horn County in the spring of 1908. She was found guilty of the charges on May 2, 1908. Sheriff Alston took her into custody at that time and transported her to the Wyoming State Prison on June 3, 1908.

**AW**



The Alston children (left to right) Virginia, Helen, Felix, and Unis in 1910. Nell's daughter Ruth was about the same age as Unis, born in 1901. Courtesy the grandchildren of Felix Alston.



# Escape from Heart Mountain

by Betty Y. Taira



Sketch of Heart Mountain Relocation Center by Jack Yamasaki which Henry Taira presented to Charles Dechert "to thank him for helping his family escape the drab confines of Heart Mountain to the wide-open spaces of the Dechert Farm." Courtesy the author.

In 1941, my family was among the thousands of Japanese and Japanese Americans living on the West Coast. My parents, Shizu (1898-1955) and Henry Kakukichi Taira (1901-1967), were born in Okinawa, Japan, and immigrated to California around 1917-1919. My sister, Amy Yemiko (1928-1983), my younger brother, Calvin, and I were all born in California. We were a typical Japanese American family of that period: My father was a landscape gardener in Beverly Hills, and my mother ran a small hotel and rooming house at Third and Omar streets in Los Angeles, not far from Little Tokyo.

My father worked for a number of families in Beverly Hills and Hollywood. It was always a special day when he would take me with him. He took me most often to the Foster's; only much later did I learn of our close connection with them. One day I noticed that my name on my birth certificate is "Yeiko Taira." When I asked my parents why "Betty" was missing from it, they told me that Mrs. Foster asked my father to name me "Elizabeth" after a baby daughter they lost. My mother refused because she could not pronounce Elizabeth. Mrs. Foster reminded my father that they called her "Betty." So, from the time I was a toddler, my family called me Betty, and my legal name is Betty Yeiko Taira.

Following the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, hysteria gripped the country, especially residents of the West Coast. There were immediate calls for the removal of people of Japanese ancestry from the Pacific Coast states. Initially it was not clear what was to happen to us. On February 19, 1942, President Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which allowed the army to form military zones and exclude any people from those zones who were deemed a potential threat to national security. This policy came to fall exclusively on people of Japanese ancestry.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Roger Daniels, *Prisoners Without Trial: Japanese Americans in World War II* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), pp. 46-48.



Above, Calvin Taira in front of the barracks at the Heart Mountain Relocation Center during February 1943. Courtesy the author.

Left, Amy Taira on barrack steps at the Heart Mountain Relocation Center during February 1943. Courtesy the author.

It was decided that people of Japanese ancestry, most of whom were American citizens, be removed from their homes and placed, temporarily, in so-called “assembly centers.” Later they would be moved to permanent camps farther inland. When it was proposed that one of the permanent camps be located in Wyoming, that state’s governor, Nels Smith, stated: “If you bring Japanese into my state, I promise they will be hanging from every tree.”<sup>2</sup> Some Wyoming residents said that we Japanese might be used as laborers for local farmers. But W. J. Gorst of Worland, president of the Montana-Wyoming Beet Growers Association, said that his organization was opposed to bringing Japanese people into the state as farm

laborers or anything else. Fortunately for our family, that was not the feeling of the majority of Wyoming’s residents.<sup>3</sup>

Our family was evacuated to the Santa Anita Assembly Center in May 1942, and then moved to Heart Mountain, Wyoming, in the fall of that year. We carried our entire family’s belongings in three suitcases.

After our arrival at Heart Mountain, my father worked as a carpenter helping to build the camp infirmary. After that work was completed, my father and several of his friends went sugar-beet topping at Helena, Montana. When that work was finished, the men returned to Heart Mountain, but they soon left again, this time to work in the beet fields near Billings, Montana. My father described their living quarters as a shack with bunk beds—but even these meager conditions provided a more positive environment than at Heart Mountain because there were neither armed military guards, nor barbed wire fences con-

<sup>2</sup> Daniels, *Prisoners Without Trial*, p. 57.

<sup>3</sup> Mike Mackey, *Heart Mountain: Life in Wyoming’s Concentration Camp* (Powell, Wyoming: Western History Publications, 2000), pp. 10-12.



fining them. He said the only fences he saw were to keep the farm animals confined.

When he returned to Heart Mountain, my father sought opportunities through which our whole family could leave the camp. Many single men and some women were afforded the opportunity to leave the camp on an individual basis. It was less of a problem to sponsor or hire an individual adult as opposed to taking on the responsibility of sponsoring a family with children. The relocation program consisted of three different types of leave. Short-term leave permitted camp residents to travel outside Heart Mountain to check relocation possibilities and job prospects. Indefinite leave allowed the internees to live and work outside of the camp. And seasonal leave gave residents the opportunity to work on agricultural projects, and then return to camp when the work was completed.<sup>4</sup> My father had already been to Helena and Billings on seasonal leave, but what he wanted was to get our entire family out of camp on indefinite leave. So I accompanied my father to an office in camp to fill out forms to seek a sponsor. He was interested in working on a farm growing vegetables, work he learned when he came to America as a teenager. I remember the clerk telling my father not to get his hopes up about getting our whole family out of Heart Mountain. But one day, my father received good news; a man named Charles Dechert agreed to sponsor our whole family. Even though the government required that reams of paperwork be filled out and approved before we would be allowed to leave Heart Mountain, the agreement between my father and Mr. Dechert was sealed with a handshake.

In March 1943, Mr. Dechert came to pick us up and drove our family to his farm outside Riverton, Wyoming, located on the south side of Ocean Lake. Finally, we were free of armed guards, five people living in one room, eating in mess halls, and taking turns using the shower stalls and toilets, which were some distance from our barracks. It was during the time that we lived on the Decherts' farm that my father presented an original drawing by Jack Yamasaki<sup>5</sup> to Mr. Dechert to thank him for helping his family escape the drab confines of Heart Mountain to the wide-open spaces of the Dechert farm. The drawing was the only thing of value he could give the

Decherts.

My parents were especially thankful for the trust the Decherts had in them, that they risked taking in a Japanese family in the midst of war and affording us the opportunity to escape the confines of camp. My father often reminded us of how much we owed the Decherts for providing us with a place to live as a nuclear family once again, as we had in California. One of the things about camp life that had truly concerned my mother was that we no longer did things as a family. Within the first months of our arrival at Heart Mountain, my father had already left camp twice to work. In the dining hall, we children began to sit with our friends. The men sat in one area and the women in another.

The evening we arrived at Mr. Dechert's farm on the shore of Ocean Lake, we were greeted warmly by Mrs. Dechert. Their children, Dubby (Donald), Tad (Dale), and Chop (Lloyd) were already asleep. It was late and we were taken to some fishing cabins owned by the Hoffman family where we stayed for the first few days while Mr. Dechert put a concrete floor in the tie building where we would live. The Decherts prepared some food for us and left us eggs and bread for breakfast the next morning. They showed us how to heat the cabin using the pot-bellied stove, but by morning, the eggs were frozen. We were so surprised that there were no toilets in the cabin, although indoor plumbing was rare then. My greatest fear was having to go to the outhouse before we went to bed.

I don't remember exactly when the rest of us met our neighbors, the Reeses, but Mr. Dechert took my

<sup>4</sup> W. Joe Carroll, *Relocation Division Final Report*, Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement Papers, M1.60, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

<sup>5</sup> Jack Yamasaki, an artist, was a friend of my parents when we were incarcerated at Heart Mountain. He did pencil drawings because the pencil was almost the only art supply available to him during our early days in camp, and perhaps, that was his favorite medium. In any case, the artworks I have seen by Mr. Yamasaki were pencil drawings. The sketch has a date on it of March 5, 1943; we left Heart Mountain on March 7, 1943. My parents gave the drawing to the Decherts sometime between springs 1943-1945 when we lived in Riverton, in appreciation for their part in our escape from the Heart Mountain Relocation Center.

dad to the farms close by to introduce him. To city folks like us, the neighbors seemed to live far away. As time went on, the neighboring farmers came to visit to see what Mr. Dechert was going to do on his farm. We also met other neighbors through our schoolmates. I don't think any of us had much time to play. Everyone had chores to do after school.

Not too long after we were arrived, Mr. Dechert invited "Sam" Seikyu and Helen (Miyagi) Nakahara, our very close family friends, to join us. We lived together as one family. The Nakaharas were with us until December 1943 at which time they moved to New York City.

Among my memories are my mother's delicious Okinawan donuts (*andagi*) which we took to neighbors who gave us fresh eggs. We later raised our own chickens and had our own eggs, but she continued to share Japanese foods with the neighbors. There was no shortage of meat because we raised pigs and chickens, and Mr. Dechert went hunting. We had venison and pheasant for the first time. The neighbors would also share lamb with us.

Outside of camp, our life approached normalcy thanks to the local residents. We attended the Pavillion School (although we lived closer to Riverton, we were in the Pavillion School District). Mr. Dechert

and my father took us to register as soon as we arrived. They also had to arrange for the school bus to pick us up. I don't remember the distance from our home to Pavillion, but it took a long time to get there on a good day. On days after the thaw, it took two hours because the bus kept getting stuck in the mud. On some occasions, when we finally reached the school, it was time for lunch.

The high school was a huge frame building, and the elementary school was a two-story brick building. Amy, my sister, was in the ninth/tenth grade, I was in the fourth/fifth grade, and my brother Calvin was in the first/second grade.

We attended Sunday school with our school bus driver, Mr. Lund, and his wife, who was our music teacher. They picked us up and brought us home although the church was quite some distance from their home.

That first Halloween, we learned how farm kids played pranks on their neighbors. Some of our neighbors came by in the evening to pick us up on horseback, and as we got to a neighbor's house, the older kids would topple the outhouse. I was scared, first, of snakes, which I learned were nocturnal animals, and, then, about the trouble we would be in for knocking over the outhouses. After the mischief, we went to



Amy Taira's classmates at Pavillion School in 1945. Courtesy the author.

the Fosters' home to bob for apples. We had never done that before.

Mrs. Dechert taught us so many things. We learned to make butter by churning the cream she saved from the milk; how cottage cheese is made; and even drank a bit of real buttermilk. What fun we had learning to pull taffy! I was too young to help with the canning, but my mother and sister learned. This came in handy when the Decherts moved in 1944 to their new home, a farm approximately fifteen miles away. My sister and mother were able to do their own canning. Mrs. Dechert also taught my sister how to make her great chocolate cake made with mashed potatoes.

In winter, our neighbors taught us how to ice-fish. Ocean Lake was close by, and the water would freeze more than a foot. The men had to cut a hole in the ice and drop a string line to catch ling. Each night, we would walk in the freezing weather to check the lines. During the spring and summer months, we fished there daily by boat for our dinner. We had so much fun. It took very little time to catch a bushel of crappies to feed our family and the hired hands.

Our wells provided us with plenty of water. But we learned very quickly that the water was not suitable for drinking. We were able to get water for drinking and cooking from a neighbor.

During the harvest season, the farmers would get

together and help one another thresh the grain. At other times of the year, they would help castrate (I didn't know that this term could be used in a vulgar manner until I left the farm) sheep and cattle.

To help with the potato harvest our first year there, Mr. Dechert hired Indians from the Wind River Reservation. After some begging from me, Mr. Dechert and my father allowed me to go with them to pickup the workers. At the reservation, I saw a number of tepees where the Shoshone Indians lived. There were also some wooden frame houses. Among the things they loaded on the truck was a large kettle in which they cooked their lunch out in the fields for the two women, four men, and two boys who came to work. One of the children asked me if I were Indian. When I told him that I was Japanese, he let it go at that.

In terms of interaction, we were the only Japanese family in the area until our friends the Yamashiros joined us from a camp in Arkansas. Mr. Dechert invited them to his farm in 1944. They later went to work for the Chambers family closer to Pavillion.

It is my recollection that there was mutual respect with our neighbors. I cannot remember a time when we were treated in a negative way, nor did I hear my parents discuss it. My thought is that we were the recipients of their kindness due to the rapport the



Betty Taira's Pavillion School classmates on Sadie Hawkins Day. Courtesy the author.

Decherts had already established with the neighbors.

In March 1945, our family moved to Denver to join Mr. and Mrs. Takashi Higas' family. There my parents worked on a celery ranch where they harvested the celery, washed the celery for packing, and crated it for shipping. Although we lived on the outskirts of Denver, we were surprised that the home we moved into had no electricity. We had running water but no indoor bathroom or toilet. Our friends had built a large Japanese-style bathhouse, so this aspect of living was more comfortable for us. Every evening after work, our friends came over to take a bath in the *ofuro* (bathhouse). It was the one time of day they could take it easy after a hard day's work.

There was an orphanage down the street from us, and the children living there went to school with us. When I saw how they lived in crowded rooms, I was thankful that we had a large, two-story house with lots of room.

Amy, my older sister, moved to Washington, DC, after school closed in June; therefore, it became my job to learn some cooking, do the laundry on Saturdays, and haul wood to heat the bath water. I loved stoking the fire for the bath each day, but doing the laundry was a chore. My mother worked in the field-and-packing house from morning to night, so there was little time for her to do the household chores. Sunday was supposed to be a day of rest, but I don't think they had many of those days.

There were two momentous days in 1945, the first was when President Roosevelt died in April, and the second was when the war ended in August. V-J Day was traumatic for me because of messages that some Jehovah's Witness members left with me each time they visited. They told me that the world was coming to an end and that I would know it by all the sights and sounds that would occur. One day in August (V-J Day), the trains that came by our house blasted their loud horns incessantly—not just at the crossings. The Gates Rubber Company's whistles were blasting, and people were jumping on top of their cars and trucks. I knew it was the end of the world.

My parents, of course, were in the fields. My mother had cautioned me that I was to keep my eyes on my brother when they were not at home. He was playing with his best friend Bobby Higa (now The

Honorable Judge Robert Higa in California) several blocks away. I ran all the way to the Higas' hysterically. When I got there, Bobby's cousin calmed me down and told me that everyone was celebrating the end of the war. What a relief that was to me, the world was not coming to an end after all.

Our family moved again and settled for good in Washington, DC. My sister, brother, and I attended and graduated from the DC public schools during the segregation era. Amy finished cosmetology school after she was married and had her first child. I graduated from college and earned a Bachelor of Science in Education and later earned a Master's in Education. My brother Calvin became a dentist.

After spending thirty-five years as an educator, I retired from working overseas and moved back to Washington, DC. I had worked in Washington, DC, Honolulu, and with the Department of Defense Dependent Schools in Japan, Korea, and Spain. From the classroom, I moved on to become a counselor and then assistant principal, principal, and regional coordinator. When I retired, I was the assistant to the district superintendent in Spain. I am semi-retired now, working at the League of Women Voters of the United States just three days a week.

Calvin and I are the only ones left of our immediate family. It was important for one of us to meet with Mr. Dechert and personally express our gratitude to him, but we had lost contact with him. Still, things happen in mysterious ways. During school year 1984-85, when I was assigned to the District Superintendent's Office in Korea, I was invited to be on an augment team for our school evaluations. The head of the team from the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA) was Mr. Jack King, former Superintendent of Schools in Lander, Wyoming. In my letter of introduction to Mr. King, I mentioned that our family had lived in Riverton, Wyoming, and told him about Mr. Dechert. Not only did Mr. King visit the Pavillion School to seek some of our former schoolmates, but he also contacted Mr. Dechert. It was Jack King who reunited us with Charles Dechert.

It was through this connection that I visited Mr. Dechert during the summer of 1985. By then, he had retired from farming. We had a wonderful three-

day visit talking about what made him decide to sponsor our family. He said that soon after the war began, he had wanted to do something to help in the war effort. He decided that growing vegetables would be one way to help other farmers in his area since they were mainly crop farmers. At about the same time, he heard that some Japanese folks at Heart Mountain were looking for opportunities to leave camp, so



Amy Taira's 1943 science class at the Heart Mountain Relocation Center. Courtesy the author.

he thought that he might hire three or four men. When he contacted the authorities at Heart Mountain, he learned that one person with a family (my father) had signed up to help with vegetable farming.

Mr. Dechert also said he was concerned about his ability to start this farming before the spring thaw because he needed to make some plans before going ahead with this undertaking. But before going any further, he discussed with his wife, Lena Schwabb Dechert, the possibility of sponsoring a whole family as opposed to the three or four men they had discussed. We thank both Mr. and Mrs. Dechert for their decision to sponsor us. A short time after Mr. Dechert's first visit, we were on our way to Riverton.

I know from my visit with Mr. Dechert in 1985 that he, and his wife too, experienced some hardships. He said that our family left Wyoming at the right time for us and for him. His uncle and aunt, George and Emma Dechert, had lost a son in the Pacific and were not happy that he was sponsoring

a Japanese family. Had I not asked, I do not think Mr. Dechert would have mentioned this difficult time.

When I visited with him, Mr. Dechert said he had a great desire to get some young Japanese farmers from Hokkaido, where much of his cattle feed was sent, to teach them about farming methods practiced by him and his sons. He told me not to be surprised if he decided to visit Japan. I was waiting to hear from him later that year, but in October 1985, I received word that he had passed away. Now we are in touch with his son Lloyd Dechert and granddaughter Dr. Renee Dechert. It is my hope that one day before too much time passes, we will have a reunion. Although I have visited Wyoming, I would like to have my brother and sister's family members see where their grandparents and parents lived. If there are any buildings left, I'd like them to see our old home.

We owe our good fortune to our parents who sacrificed so much to give us what we have today. It's too late to tell them that we understand how much they did for us. Coming to a new country with nothing but dreams, they understood the importance of education and family. Whatever they did—work or play—they did it with us in mind. We honor their generation and those who had an impact on our lives, like the Decherts, during a very difficult time in history.

**W**



Henry Taira's panel truck in which the family moved from Riverton to Denver and then to Washington, D.C. Courtesy the author.

## BOOK REVIEWS



Edited by  
Carl Hallberg

# Significant Recent Books on Western and Wyoming History

### **Morning Star Dawn: The Powder River Expedition and the Northern Cheyennes, 1876.**

By Jerome A. Greene. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003. 289 pages. Illustrations, map, index. Hardcover, \$34.95.

From the close of the Civil War to 1876, the northern plains endured eleven years of intermittent warfare between the allied Lakota and Northern Cheyenne tribes and U.S. military forces. The year 1876 was not a good one for the U.S. Army. Colonel Reynolds' lackluster performance during his assault on a Northern Cheyenne village on the Powder River in March accomplished nothing militarily except his own court martial. General George Crook narrowly escaped disaster in a stand-up fight on Rosebud Creek in mid-June. Less than two weeks later, George Armstrong Custer and his command were crushed on the Little Big Horn River. However, by September, the army's fortunes began to improve in a small but successful engagement at Slim Buttes. The last struggle of the year, commonly referred to as the "Dull Knife Fight," took place on the Red Fork of the Powder River in the Big Horn Mountains of Wyoming and is the basis of Jerome Greene's latest book.

In this second volume of the "Campaigns and Commanders" series, Greene, a noted authority and prolific writer on the Plains Indian wars, examines the wintry battle in mid-November in which George Crook's cavalry, led by Colonel Ranald Mackenzie, made a surprise attack on a band of Northern Cheyenne under Morning Star, known to the Sioux as "Dull Knife," at the Indian's winter camp. This single campaign and battle was not an isolated, solitary event. In order to place it in a proper historical perspective, Greene writes an excellent and valuable account about the long string of broken treaties, raids, and fights on the high plains from the close of the Civil War to the commencement of Crook's winter

campaign in mid-November 1876.

This is a very readable and thorough account about the campaign from the perspective of both the cavalry and the Indians. Greene describes in sufficient, but not excessive, detail Crook's logistical problems of equipping and feeding a column of soldiers and animals stretching more than five miles in length. Greene also brings in some of the personalities of the participants, such as reports by officers expressing their personal feelings and frustrations about Crook's leadership and decisions. The Indians are not ignored as Greene also describes the background and personality of the Northern Cheyenne chief Morning Star, who was then in his late sixties and a veteran of numerous, well-known earlier fights such as the Fetterman and Rosebud engagements.

What is significant about this book, in comparison with many earlier accounts about the Indian Wars, is Greene's detailed, unbiased descriptions about the rigors and hardships suffered by both the Cheyenne people and the American military in the winter campaign. The army's strategy during the Indian Wars on the high plains centered on surprise attacks on Indian villages, usually during the wintertime, such as Custer's assault against the Cheyenne on the Washita in 1868. In contrast, the battles on the Rosebud and Little Big Horn were stand-up fights, where the mettle of the Sioux and Cheyenne tested and bested the American army. Surprise attacks were therefore usually more successful from a military point of view. The disturbing aspect of this strategy was that the attacks were willfully directed not only against the warriors, but against the non-combatant women, children, and elderly as well. The destruction of Morning Star's village and his people's winter food supply, clothing, and shelter in the deep snow of the Big Horns was utterly devastating. Greene expressly declines to judge or discuss the morality of such a

strategy. Instead, he gives plenty of facts from both the Indian and military points of view from which the reader can make a judgment.

I wondered why Greene felt that a book covering only one campaign and one battle was needed. After all, the numbers of the participants involved did not approach those engaged on the Rosebud and Little Big Horn nor did the campaign directly affect the more numerous Sioux. Greene's answer is that the destruction of the village and dispersal of its inhabitants effectively ended the Northern Cheyenne alliance with the Sioux, thus effectively ending the "Great Sioux War."

**V. Rodney Hallberg**  
**Cheyenne, Wyoming**

**Interpreters with Lewis and Clark: The Story of Sacagawea and Toussaint Charbonneau.** By W. Dale Nelson. Denton, TX: University of North Texas, 2004. 184 pages. Maps, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Hardcover, \$24.95.

It is a good time to be an aficionado of Lewis and Clark. The bicentennial of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark's 1803-1806 expedition to the American West is taking place in the context of a growing body of literature on, and public interest in, the members of the "Corps of Discovery." Of course, there is Stephen Ambrose's popular study of Lewis, *Undaunted Courage* (1996). Landon Jones' *William Clark and the Shaping of the West* (2004) looks at Clark, and Robert B. Betts' *In Search of York* (2001) discusses Clark's African American slave.

A recent addition to this body of work is journalist W. Dale Nelson's *Interpreters with Lewis and Clark: The Story of Sacagawea and Toussaint Charbonneau*. The author begins with French-Canadian fur trader Charbonneau and his Shoshoni wife, Sacagawea, joining the Corps of Discovery in 1804. Roughly the first half of the book surveys the couple's activities as members of the expedition, in particular their role as interpreters and negotiators. For example, the presence of Sacagawea, a woman, helped convince Nez Perces that the explorers' intentions were not hostile.

The book's second half examines the post-expedition years. Nelson pays particular attention to Charbonneau's work as a fur trader and as an inter-

preter for the United States. Also discussed is Jean Baptiste, born to Sacagawea and her husband while they served with Lewis and Clark. Baptiste was a fur trader, traveled to Europe and North Africa, guided the "Mormon Battalion" during the Mexican-American War, and participated in the California Gold Rush.

Nelson's chronological and highly readable narrative incorporates many interesting details and quotations from primary and secondary sources. There are several maps and illustrations, but relatively little analysis. Nevertheless, the author's judgments do sometimes come through. Charbonneau comes across as a flawed, but significant figure who has not received the attention he deserves. (How many things have been named after Charbonneau compared to better-known members of the corps?) The author argues that Sacagawea died at Fort Manuel in 1812, rejecting historian Grace Raymond Hebard's thesis that the Shoshoni interpreter lived until 1884 and died on the Wind River Reservation.

Still, some readers might long for more analysis. Nelson mentions at least one incident in which Charbonneau hit Sacagawea, but writes that such behavior was not atypical for early nineteenth century American men. Yet, the author also points out that Clark chastised the French-Canadian for striking his wife, suggesting that there were social norms at that time that did not sanction the physical abuse of women. It is all well and good to evaluate Charbonneau by the standards of his time, but which of those early nineteenth century standards should we use?

In addition, one might raise questions about Nelson's discussion of certain issues, such as the smallpox epidemic of the late 1830s. The author rightly notes the devastating impact on the tribes, especially the Mandans, and the efforts by the United States to inoculate Indians. However, scholars like Russell Thornton have shown that some whites had deliberately tried to infect Native Americans with smallpox at various times and that some settlers were pleased at the massive Indian deaths caused by epidemics. Acknowledging such facts would give the book more balance on this issue.

Such concerns aside, Nelson has written a useful



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book. It is readable and offers valuable detail about the lives of some members of the Corps of Discovery that have not always enjoyed the spotlight. Those interested in the Lewis and Clark expedition and the history of the 19<sup>th</sup> century American West will likely find *Interpreters* worth a look.

**Christopher K. Riggs**  
**Lewis-Clark State College**

**African American Women Confront the West, 1600-2000.** Edited by Quintard Taylor and Shirley Ann Wilson Moore. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003. 390 pages. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Hardcover, \$34.95.

*African American Women Confront the West* is an important contribution to western historiography, which, in focusing upon a group often marginalized in scholarship, reflects the inclusive nature of the new Western history. Editors Quintard Taylor and Shirley Ann Wilson Moore have selected seventeen essays which demonstrate the state of the field. In addition, the volume includes thirteen vignettes or primary documents, giving voice to the African American women discussed in the essays.

This volume does not emphasize the victimization of African American women in the West. Rather the stories chronicled are about the social agency of these women through family, church, civic clubs, and reform movements. Taylor and Moore conclude that black, western women “turned to their work of building communities, caring for families, founding and maintaining institutions, and attaining social and economic justice with a profound conviction in their own abilities to move beyond the limitations racism and sexism had placed upon them” (p. 17).

The essays are arranged in a chronological fashion. Debra S. McDonald argues that Afrohispanas used the legal system, the church, and even witchcraft to negotiate a place on the Spanish Southwestern frontier. Nineteenth century California is the subject of three articles. Lynn M. Hudson presents the story of May Ellen Pleasant, who used the mask of “mammy” to accumulate property. Barbara Y. Welke describes African American women in San Francisco fighting for equal access to public spaces. Susan Bragg

chronicles the efforts of Sacramento black parents to attain educational opportunities for their children. But the volume is hardly limited to California. Peggy Riley tells the story about how women in the Bethel African American Methodist Episcopal Church of Great Falls, Montana, shaped their church and community. Ronald Coleman focuses upon the life of Jane Elizabeth Manning James, an African American woman who struggled to find a place for her family within the racial hierarchy of the Mormon faith.

Most articles selected by Taylor and Moore focus upon the twentieth century West. Susan Armitage provides readers with an oral history of Dr. Ruth Flowers in Boulder, Colorado. The first African American woman to graduate from the University of Colorado, Flowers makes it clear that the Mountain West was hardly free from racial prejudice. Moya Hansen, in her study of jobs in Denver during the first seven decades of the twentieth century, provides quantitative support for the anecdotal evidence of Flowers. Hollywood stereotyping of black women is analyzed by Alicia Rodriguez-Estrada’s account about Fredi Washington and Dorothy Dandridge. Quintard Taylor contributes an essay on campaigns for social justice in the Pacific Northwest led by Beatrice Morrow Cannady working with the NAACP and Susie Revels Cayton, a Communist Party organizer.

Although racial prejudice still characterized America during the Second World War, new opportunities were present for African Americans in the West and the nation. The role of African American women in fostering a sense of community among migrants moving to the East San Francisco Bay area is the subject of a fine essay by Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo. Claytee D. White observes that African Americans were initially drawn to Las Vegas by employment as maids in the hotel industry, but by the 1970s many had moved into the gaming industry.

The history of African American women in the civil rights movement is the topic of essays by Merline Pitre, Cheryl Brown Henderson, Linda Williams Reese, and Jane Rhodes. Of special interest is the argument made by Rhodes that women played a pivotal role in the Black Panther Party, its macho image notwithstanding. Rhodes asserts, “Women were at the heart of the Black Panther Party, and their enduring

presence forced members and nonmembers alike to rethink their attitudes about gender" (p. 360).

In her survey of literature on African American women in the West, Glenda Riley concludes that much work has been conducted in the field since the 1990s, but much scholarship remains to be done. This volume by Taylor and Moore highlights the analysis of Riley and should inspire general readers and scholars alike to explore the contributions of African women in forging communities in the West.

**Ron Briley**  
**Sandia Preparatory School**  
**Albuquerque, New Mexico**

**Dreamers and Schemers: Profiles From Carbon County, Wyoming's Past.** By Lori Van Pelt Walck. Glendo: High Plains Press, 1999. 256 pp. Illustrations, bibliography, index. Paper, \$14.95.

Those interested in making lists and identifying "the best" in a given category as the turn of the century seems to have inspired, may take a lesson from this author and her book on Carbon County, Wyoming. Organized as one of the territory's original five counties, Carbon County has had a storied past. The author attempts to capture that past with vignettes on thirty-three individuals who "had some stake in forming the County" (p. x). These brief biographical entries, approximately two thousand to thirty-five thousand words in length, highlight the entrant's career and comment on their connection with the county. The longest entry is reserved for Governor Fenimore Chatterton, who followed a checkered path from New York, through law school at the University of Michigan, on his way to being the state's chief executive at the turn of the century. Among Chatterton's notable accomplishments was his refusal to commute the capital murder conviction of range detective Tom Horn to life imprisonment.

Chatterton narrowly edged legendary mountain man Jim Bridger and notorious cattle rustler Ella (Cattle Kate) Watson for the most space in the book. The shortest entries are reserved for husband-wife team Richard and Margaret Savage and land/mining partners Ed Haggarty and George Ferris. Each gets

about twelve hundred words. Four vignettes are about women and one is reserved for African American Isom (Ned) Dart. In addition to Bridger, other national notables include outlaw Butch Cassidy and transportation magnet Ben Holladay.

Individuals less well known, but still important to Wyoming and Carbon County, include French army officer Philippe Regis de Torbriand. Arriving in America to participate in this nation's Civil War, Torbriand distinguished himself in battle and was brevetted to major general before the war was over. He remained in the U.S. Army following the war, and his last years as a soldier were spent as commander of Fort Fred Steele. Another subject, Thomas Tipton Thornburgh, was also connected to Fort Steele, serving as "one of the youngest military officers to earn the rank of Major" (p. 47).

Most professions present in Carbon County are also represented in this book. Mining, ranching, land speculating, and law enforcement dominate the occupations represented. However, most individuals were engaged in multiple activities (hence the title) and seldom stayed with one job for long. The most common "cross-over" career came from outlaws who settled down to become lawmen.

Individuals recounted in this volume came or passed through all regions of Carbon County. However, those whose activities occurred at or near one of three places – Fort Fred Steele, Encampment, and Saratoga – get mentioned most often. Fort Steele, founded by Colonel Richard I. Dodge, provided military protection for the transcontinental railroad and extended its mission to monitor Indian activities after the railroad was completed. The town of Encampment evolved from a fur trapper rendezvous site, and Saratoga, known for its spring water, began as a stage stop and was named for an earlier settlement in New York.

This book makes interesting reading. But it is difficult for the general reader to understand the rationale for how the characters were selected. The author, a native of Nebraska and trained as a journalist, has done a good job in gleaning data from personal memoirs, popular histories, newspapers, and other miscellaneous publications. However, the narrative does not focus on serious scholarship and is more in

the category of story telling. Even so, it is a delight to read and even serious scholars will find tidbits of information to satisfy their intellectual curiosity.

**C. Fred Williams**  
**University of Arkansas at Little Rock**

**The Church Universal and Triumphant: Elizabeth Clare Prophet's Apocalyptic Movement.** By Bradley C. Whitsel. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2003. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. 237 pages. Cloth, \$39.95; paper, \$19.95.

Alternative forms of spirituality dealing with the occult have been an integral part, albeit an overlooked one, of American religious history. For this book, Bradley Whitsel, an assistant professor of administration of justice and political science at Pennsylvania State University in Fayette, has compiled a history of Church Universal and Triumphant, which was well known in the early 1990s when its members took refuge in Park County, Montana, to wait out an imminent nuclear attack on the United States. Whitsel's objective is to understand the politics of change and adaptation within the church.

The Church Universal and Triumphant (CUT) was organized in 1958. What made it so enticing, according to Whitsel, was the complicated mix of metaphysical thought, millenarian social movement, and ultra-patriotism promulgated under the charismatic leadership of Mark Prophet (1918-1973) and his wife and successor, Elizabeth Clare Prophet (1942-). Central to CUT's theology was a belief "in the existence of divine spirit beings (Ascended Masters) who governed the course of life on earth" (p. 7) and that America was assigned a leadership role in the age to come. To those ends, CUT sought to bring the knowledge of the Ascended Masters to the world and to prepare believers for the coming catastrophe which would usher in the golden age of Aquarius. Only the continuing threats of numerous spiritual and terrestrial evils, including the federal government, communism, extraterrestrials, and in general outsiders who were wary of cults or did not know the theology of CUT, prevented this seemingly glorious revelation from occurring.

For nearly fifty years, CUT credibility and mem-

bership fluctuated due to differences among the church members about its internal operation, investigations by federal agencies, and the failure of the prophesized nuclear attack. But through it all, there remained a faithful body of followers. For their part, church leaders kept CUT theology meaningful by replacing seemingly irrelevant doctrines with new ones as the circumstances required. The fall of the Soviet Union, the advent of New Age, the violent acts of other apocalyptic groups, the emergence of AIDS, international terrorism, the death of Mark Prophet, and the rising star and declining health of Elizabeth Clare Prophet further contributed to the CUT's continuing attempts to remain true to its spiritual foundations. The successes and trials of the church are also reflected in changing location, governing structure, and architecture of the church headquarters, first in Washington DC, then Malibu, Colorado Springs, and Park County, Montana. CUT managed to survive it all. How it did so is what Whitsel documents very thoroughly using a variety of sources and interviews.

Whitsel shows that within a larger context CUT was not truly novel or unique. He provides concise and informative history about the origins and development of the metaphysical movement in the United States and shows how many spiritual and administrative ideas and processes used by CUT are endemic to the milieu of alternative religions.

This book is not an easy read. Also, unless readers are familiar with them, references to social theorists and twentieth century patriotic millennium American movements may seem vague and obscure. However, if readers persevere, they will find Whitsel's book very interesting.

**Carl Hallberg**  
**Wyoming State Archives**

**Ethnic Oasis: The Chinese in the Black Hills.** By Liping Zhu and Rose Estep Fosha. Pierre: South Dakota Historical Society Press, 2004. 108 pages. Illustrations, footnotes, index. Paper, \$15.95.

The HBO series, *Deadwood*, has had quite an impact on American television audiences, heretofore unaware that the vocabulary of pioneer

westerners had so much in common with *The Sopranos*. Historians and archaeologists, while less prone, perhaps, to outbursts of rough-and-tumble mining camp profanity, have had much to get excited about concerning Deadwood as well. During several recent summers, the city of Deadwood and its Historic Preservation Office have sponsored excavations and investigations of the city's "Chinatown" section by the South Dakota State Historical Society's Archaeological Research Center. The artifacts thus far uncovered have shed considerable light on Deadwood's multiethnic past and the four essays in this brief volume offer readers an updated assessment about the Chinese experience in the Black Hills and similar western communities.

Historian Liping Zhu opens the collection with a background essay on Chinese immigrants in the frontier-era Black Hills, noting the presence of small numbers of Chinese pioneers as early as the winter of 1875-1876. Never exceeding about 250 individuals in Lawrence County, the Chinese population in the Deadwood area dwindled to just a few dozen by 1910. While some engaged in mining, most took part in the creation of a distinctive social and economic niche as servants, cooks, laundrymen, and restaurant owners. What is most interesting about Zhu's piece is his finding that, following an initial period rife with anti-Chinese hostility, the white majority in Deadwood came to accept the Chinese as an integral part of the community. Chinese funerals and New Year's celebrations became popular among white spectators, and Chinese residents regularly participated in Fourth of July festivities, including parades and fire hose races.

The second essay is a preliminary report on the excavations written by archaeologist Rose Estep Fosha. Research conducted thus far by professional and amateur archaeologists, students, and volunteers supports the "ethnic oasis" thesis. Deadwood's "Chinatown" was a predominately male and largely insulated community within a community that nonetheless interacted in significant ways with the dominant society. Artifacts recovered included ceramic and glass bottles and jars, gaming pieces, opium smoking paraphernalia, clothing items, and porcelain dishware. Further analysis of botanical and faunal remains from privy sites will likely reveal more detailed informa-

tion about daily diet and food preparation, while prospective excavations of a temple, a laundry, and a barn will provide additional data concerning the Chinese residents' social, religious, and economic practices.

Two short essays (presented by their authors at a May 2003 symposium in Deadwood) are included to offer comparative contexts for the emerging scholarship on the Chinese in the Black Hills. Donald L. Hardesty of the University of Nevada, Reno discusses archaeological research on Chinese populations in frontier Nevada and suggests several promising "research pathways" (p. 74), such as the exploration of Chinese immigrant foodways or cultural landscapes. A. Dudley Gardner of Western Wyoming College in Rock Springs explores the differences between Chinese in core communities such as Evanston and Rock Springs and communities in peripheral locales, primarily railroad and mining camps. Archaeological research in these places has revealed qualitative and quantitative contrasts in terms of diet and material culture.

In the early twenty-first century, the city of Deadwood continues to trade prosperously on the nasty reputation of its short-lived "Wild West" days. Hopefully, many visitors will take some time to investigate the heretofore hidden history of the Chinese now being more clearly exposed via the always fruitful merging of history and archaeology. *Ethnic Oasis* is a worthy contribution to our deeper understanding about these diverse frontier communities.

**Frank Van Nuys**  
**South Dakota School of Mine and Technology**  
**Rapid City**

**Wayne Aspinall and the Shaping of the American West.** By Steven C. Schulte. Niwot: University of Colorado, 2002. Illustrate, notes, bibliography, index. 249 pages. Hardcover, \$29.95

**W**ayne Aspinall (D-CO) recognized that the West has limited natural resources. He understood that they needed to be harnessed in order for the region's people merely to survive. He spent most of his public career fighting for reclamation projects and other ventures that helped his Colorado

district and the entire American West develop economically. This campaign made him both a hero and a villain.

Steven Schulte astutely explains how Aspinall, a self-proclaimed conservationist, became one of the biggest enemies of the environmental movement. Schulte portrays Aspinall as a multi-use conservationist in the tradition of Gifford Pinchot and Teddy Roosevelt, believing that natural resources should provide the greatest good to the greatest number of people. This philosophy motivated the congressman to work tirelessly for the economic development of the West's limited resources. However, the new environmental movement of the 1960s and 1970s emphasized preservation and nature's aesthetic value over development. Throughout the 1960s, Aspinall used his considerable influences as chair of the House Interior Committee to thwart, delay, and reconfigure environmental legislation to reflect more closely his utilitarian-conservationist philosophy. This made him one of the biggest foes of the environmental movement and a hero to industries and workers dependent on utilizing the country's natural resources. By the 1970s, the environmental movement was part of mainstream Democratic politics and Aspinall found himself out of step with the voters. This caused his defeat in the 1972 Democratic primary. Even in his retirement, Aspinall continued to advocate for multi-use conservation and became active in the Sagebrush Rebellion.

Aspinall's intellectual continuity, contrasted with America's shift on environmental issues, creates an engaging story. Schulte tells this tale very well. He does not vilify Aspinall or his foes, but presents a balanced and fair account of both sides. Schulte sees Aspinall as neither villain nor saint. Aspinall is characterized as a man who saw himself as a conservationist doing what he believed was in the best interest of his district and the West. This convincing portrayal not only provides insights into Aspinall as a man and congressman, but also into the monumental change in America's views on the environment. Through Aspinall, Schulte demonstrates that not all conservationists embraced the environmental movement. Aspinall is depicted as a reasonable and principled man who believed in utilizing natural resources

for the benefit of all humanity and not as a lackey for extractive industries. This highlights the complexity and integrity of those who opposed the environmental movement and its initiatives.

Schulte concentrates his study on Aspinall's political savvy. It was his legislative acumen that allowed Aspinall to put his imprint on environmental policy and ultimately, the shape of the West. While Schulte's emphasis on the political maneuverings is important to the story, it sometimes overwhelms the reader. At times too much detail is provided on the legislative process and the reader loses the context in which the political battles were taking place. Greater emphasis on the shift in the country's beliefs on environmental issues and Aspinall's reaction to this change would have benefited the study. Despite this, Schulte presents a well-balanced and intriguing story.

**Darryl Webb**  
**Marquette University**

**The Johnson County War.** By Bill O'Neal. Austin, Texas: Eakin Press, 2004. 298 pp. Photos, bibliography, index. Paper, \$27.95.

In early April of 1892 fifty-seven Wyoming ranchmen and their employees got off a train in Casper, Wyoming, and set out by horseback and wagon toward Buffalo. Their stated purpose was to rid Johnson County of rustlers who they claimed had been preying on their cattle herds to such an extent that they could no longer make a profit. On their way to the town the group stopped at an isolated ranch and killed two men after a prolonged gun battle. The delay caused by this incident gave the residents of Johnson County time to organize. Townsfolk and small ranchers besieged the "invaders" in their turn at another ranch. In the course of this battle, two more men killed themselves accidentally with their own guns. The "rustlers" and "invaders" exchanged gunfire for two days, until the United States Cavalry from Fort McKinney intervened. The troops arrested the besieged and escorted them back out of the county. This affair has since been known to history as the Johnson County War.

In spite of the relatively low mortality rate and

the farcical aspects of the business, the Johnson County War has inspired numerous writers. Charles Penrose, in *The Rustler Business*, and Jack Flagg, in *A Review of the Cattle Business in Johnson County*, published participants' views from opposite sides. Owen Wister, in *The Virginian*, and Jack Schaefer, in *Shane*, both incorporated elements of the story in their fiction. Helena Huntington Smith, in *War on Powder River*, wrote the standard history in 1966. Margaret Brock Hanson, in *Powder River Country*, edited an impressive collection of primary documents relating to the subject in 1981. Altogether, the Johnson County War may be one of the most thoroughly documented western shooting affairs ever.

Bill O'Neal's *The Johnson County War* draws from all these sources in an attempt to reconstruct the events from as many points of view as possible. O'Neal has been remarkably thorough. The bibliography lists court documents, newspapers, histories and novels, films, scholarly and popular articles, and a wide range of archival sources. To supplement the manuscripts, letters, and oral histories found in Wyoming, O'Neal (a Texan) has added some previously untapped sources from Texas and Oklahoma. The Wyoming ranchmen who invaded Johnson County imported twenty-two "hired guns" from Texas (and one from Idaho). These men have previously been little more than names in the story. Using an autobiographical manuscript written by one, George R. Tucker, O'Neal gives the Texas men a voice and refutes the idea that they were merely hired killers. Many had previous experience in law enforcement and had been employed as deputy sheriffs and marshals.

O'Neal also tries to put the events in context by including chapters on the Wyoming Stock Growers Association, the settlement of Johnson County, the lynching of Ella Watson and Jim Averell, and the background of American vigilantism. Vigilante actions in Montana in the 1860s, according to O'Neal, instructed the Johnson County invaders. However, the justifications of vigilante apologists like Nathaniel Langford and Granville Stuart are taken at face value. Modern historians are re-examining these events and finding that they were controversial and many-sided. O'Neal reports the vigilantes' side as though there was no other.

In the case of his main text, however, he is more balanced. To a large extent, his purpose seems to be to present evidence without passing judgment. He is not always consistent in this neutrality. In his chapter on Ella Watson, which draws heavily on George Hufsmith's *The Wyoming Lynching of Cattle Kate*, his sympathies are clearly with Ella. But, for the most part, O'Neal reports without interpreting and leaves it up to the reader to draw conclusions. No attempt is made to evaluate the various sources for reliability or to critically compare one to another. This lack of analysis means that *The Johnson County War* will appeal more to the general reader than to a scholarly audience. In the final chapter O'Neal discusses fictional depictions of the invasion, but even here he does not suggest reasons for the story's popularity; nor does he attempt to analyze the various interpretations. Some such summary would have added interest to the text.

*The Johnson County War* suffers most from amateurish publication standards. Too many photographs appear to be reproductions of photocopies. The text presses so close to the margins that it seems, at times, about to escape the paper. These points do not affect the narrative, but they reduce the pleasure of reading.

Overall, *The Johnson County War* is a commendable compilation of all the available documentation for an event that continues to capture the imagination of students and general readers alike. The book tells the story thoroughly from the beginnings of big cattle ranching in the Powder River Basin to the drawn out legal proceedings against the invaders, which bankrupted Johnson County. O'Neal certainly knows his topic. Readers who wonder how the ranchmen could have miscalculated so badly the support they would receive locally and scholars interested in the reasons why the tale continues to fascinate will have to supply those answers themselves.

**D. Claudia Thompson**  
American Heritage Center



# Contributors

## **Thornton Waite**

*The Promotion of Yellowstone National Park by the Union Pacific Railroad*, page 2

Thornton Waite is a project manager at the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory and lives in Idaho Falls, Idaho, with his wife Susan. They have two daughters who are attending college. He is interested in railroad history and has researched and written four books on the history of Idaho railroads. He has also published a portfolio and history of the Union Pacific bear advertisements for Yellowstone National Park and written numerous articles on railroad history and contemporary railroads for railroad-oriented magazines. Researching the history of railroads and taking photographs of trains are among his favorite pastimes.

## **Felix Scott Alston**

*Bronco Nell, A Horse Woman Thief*, page 13

Felix Scott Alston is the grandson of Sheriff Alston. He has been researching the Wyoming public life (1894 to 1919) of Alston for fifteen years. Numerous trips to Wyoming have been made to the Wyoming State Archives, the American Heritage Center, and the libraries and historical societies of Park, Big Horn, Washakie, Johnson, Sheridan, and Laramie counties. Manuscripts of other oral histories of Felix Alston have surfaced, including Alston's perspective on the 1909 Spring Creek Raid.

## **Betty Y. Taira**

*Escape from Heart Mountain*, page 18

Betty Y. Taira earned bachelors and masters degrees in education. She spent thirty-five years as an educator and worked in U.S. Department of Defense schools in Japan, Korea, and Spain. Upon her retirement, she returned to Washington, D.C. where she lives today, and works part-time for the League of Women Voters.



# Index

- African American Women Confront the West, 1600-2000*, edited by Quintard Taylor and Shirley Ann Wilson, reviewed 27-28
- Alston, Felix 13-17 (photo 13)
- Alston, Felix Scott, editor (bio 33)
- Alston, Mamie 13
- Amtrak 3
- Basin, Wyoming 13
- Beverly Hills, California 18
- Big Horn County, Wyoming 14, 16
- Blickensderfer, Jake 4
- "Bronco Nell, A Woman Horse Thief," by Felix Alston, edited by Felix Scott Alston 13-17
- Briley, Ron, reviewer of *African American Women Confront the West, 1600-2000* 27-28
- Bronco Nell (Nell Smith) 13-17
- Butte, Montana 4
- Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad 10
- Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad 10
- Chicago and Northwestern Railway 10
- The Church Universal and Triumphant: Elizabeth Prophet's Apocalyptic Movement*, by Bradley C. Whitsel, reviewed 29
- Cinnabar, Montana 4
- Cody, Wyoming 10, 17
- Dechert, Charles 20, 22-24
- Dechert, Emma 24
- Dechert, George 24
- Dechert, Lena 20, 22-24
- Dechert, Lloyd 24
- Dechert, Renee 24
- Denver, Colorado 23-24
- Dreamers and Schemers: Profiles from Carbon County, Wyoming's Past*, by Lori Van Pelt, reviewed 28-29
- "Escape from Heart Mountain," by Betty Y. Taira 18-24
- Ethnic Oasis: The Chinese in the Black Hills*, by Liping Zhu and Rose Estep Fosha, reviewed 29-30
- Executive Order 9066 18
- Fosha, Rose Estep and Liping Zhu, *Ethnic Oasis: The Chinese in the Black Hills*, reviewed 29-30
- Gallatin, Montana 10
- Gardiner, Montana 3
- Garrison, Montana 4
- Grand Teton National Park 7, 12
- Greene, Jerome A., *Morning Star Dawn: The Powder River Expedition and the Northern Cheyennes, 1876*, reviewed 25-26
- Hallberg, Carl, reviewer of *The Church Universal and Triumphant: Elizabeth Prophet's Apocalyptic Movement* 29
- Hallberg, V. Rodney, reviewer of *Morning Star Dawn: The Powder River Expedition and the Northern Cheyennes, 1876* 25-26
- Harriman, E.H. 3, 5
- Heart Mountain Relocation Center 18-20, 24 (sketch 18; photos 19, 22, 24)
- Higa, Robert 23
- Higas, Takashi and family 23
- Jastrow, Helen 13
- Idaho Falls, Idaho 4-5, 8
- Interpreters with Lewis and Clark: The Story of Sacagawea and Toussaint Charbonneau*, by W. Dale Nelson, reviewed 26-27
- The Johnson County War*, by Bill O'Neal, reviewed 31-32
- Kansas Pacific Railway 3
- King, Jack 23
- Lander, Wyoming 10, 23
- Livingston, Montana 4
- Mammoth Hot Springs 10, 12
- Meeteetse, Wyoming 14-15, 17
- Monida, Idaho 4-6, 11-12
- Monida and Yellowstone Stage Company 6, 12
- Morning Star Dawn: The Powder River Expedition and the Northern Cheyennes, 1876*, by Jerome A. Greene, reviewed 25-26
- Nakahara, Helen (Miyagi) 21
- Nelson, W. Dale, *Interpreters with Lewis and Clark: The Story of Sacagawea and Toussaint Charbonneau*, reviewed 26-27
- Northern Pacific Railway 2-4, 9-10
- Oerhle, Walter 9
- Ogden, Utah 4
- Old Faithful 7-9
- O'Neal, Bill, *The Johnson County War*, reviewed 31-32
- Oregon Short Line 3, 5, 7, 11
- Pavillion, Wyoming 21
- "The Promotion of Yellowstone National Park by the Union Pacific Railroad," by Thornton Waite 2-12
- Rawlins, Wyoming 16
- Reamer, Robert C. 9
- Riggs, Christopher K. reviewer of *Interpreters with Lewis and Clark: The Story of Sacagawea and Toussaint Charbonneau* 26-27
- Riverton, Wyoming 20
- Roosevelt, Franklin Delano 18
- Santa Anita Assembly Center 19
- Schulte, Steven C., *Wayne Aspinall and the Shaping of the American West*, reviewed 30-31
- Seikyu, "Sam" 21
- Smith, Nell 13-17
- Smith, Nels 19
- Smith, Ruth 17
- St. Anthony Railroad 5
- Stratten, Bob 14
- Taira, Amy (Yemiko) 18-24 (photo 19)
- Taira, Betty Yeiko., author 18-24 (bio 33)
- Taira, Calvin 18-24 (photo 19)
- Taira, Henry Kakukichi 18-24
- Taira, Shizu 18-24
- Taylor, Quintard and Shirley Ann Wilson, editors, *African American Women Confront the West, 1600-2000*, reviewed 27-28
- Thompson, D. Claudia, reviewer of *The Johnson County War* 31-32
- Three Forks, Montana 10
- Underwood, Gilbert Stanley 6
- The Union Pacific Magazine* 3, 7
- Union Pacific Railroad 2-12
- United States Railway Administration 7
- Utah & Northern Railway 2, 4
- Van Nuys, Frank, reviewer of *Ethnic Oasis: The Chinese in the Black Hills*, 29-30
- Van Pelt, Lori, *Dreamers and Schemers: Profiles from Carbon County, Wyoming's Past*, reviewed 28-29
- Victor, Idaho 7
- Virginia City, Montana 4
- Waite, Thornton, author 2-12 (bio 33)
- Washington, D.C. 23-24
- Wayne Aspinall and the Shaping of the American West*, by Steven C. Schulte, reviewed 30-31
- Webb, Darryl, reviewer of *Wayne Aspinall and the Shaping of the American West* 30-31
- West Yellowstone 3, 6, 8-11
- Whitsel, Bradley C., *The Church Universal and Triumphant: Elizabeth Prophet's Apocalyptic Movement*, reviewed 29
- William, C. Fred, reviewer of *Dreamers and Schemers: Profiles from Carbon County, Wyoming's Past* 28-29
- Willmarth, William 9
- Wilson, Shirley Ann and Quintard Taylor, editors, *African American Women Confront the West, 1600-2000*, reviewed 27-28
- Wind River Reservation 22
- Wyoming State Penitentiary 16 (photo 16)
- Yamasaki, Jack 20
- Yellowstone National Park 2-12
- Yellowstone Park Association 9
- Yellowstone Park Railroad Company 3-4, 6
- Yellowstone Park Transportation Company 12
- Yellowstone-Western Stage Company 12
- Zaring, C.A. 15
- Zhu, Liping and Rose Estep Fosha, *Oasis: The Chinese in the Black Hills*, reviewed 29-30

# A Wyoming Moment



*Cheyenne Autumn* movie premiere in Cheyenne, Wyoming, October 1964.



Carroll Baker on the newly constructed wooden bridge the stars of *Cheyenne Autumn* used to enter the Lincoln Theater. On the left is Cheyenne Mayor Bill Natron and on the right is Larry Birleffi. Courtesy Carroll Baker Papers, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming

1878, the ragged remnants: 300 men, women and children, slipped away in the darkness in a desperate attempt to reach their Yellowstone homeland, nearly 1500 miles away. They did not wish to cause bloodshed but fight they would, if necessary. This amazing flight, during which the Indians were pursued by as many as 10,000 U.S. troops, forms the bulk of *Cheyenne Autumn*.”

Warner Brothers selected Cheyenne as the site of the premiere because the city was named for the Cheyenne Indians. On Friday, October 2, the Hollywood group boarded a bus and traveled to Fort Laramie, where they spent the entire day. The Casper Troopers provided entertainment and the Cheyenne Indians adopted Stewart and Baker into their tribe. The next day the actors participated in a parade from the Union Pacific Depot to the Capitol, where Stewart presented Cheyenne Chief John Wooden Legs a special model of the Winchester rifle commemorating Wyoming’s seventy-fifty year of statehood. That evening eleven hundred people attended the premiere at the Lincoln Theater. A party at the Mayflower restaurant followed.

John Ford’s epic motion picture, *Cheyenne Autumn*, premiered in Cheyenne, Wyoming, on October 3, 1964. The festivities lasted several days and brought national publicity to Wyoming’s capital city. An entourage including many of the film’s stars, Carroll Baker, Karl Malden, Ricardo Montalban, Patrick Wayne, Delores Del Rio, Gilbert Roland, and Mike Mazurski (Jimmy Stewart would join the group the next day), arrived on a special Union Pacific train Thursday evening October 1. Two thousand people greeted them at the station.

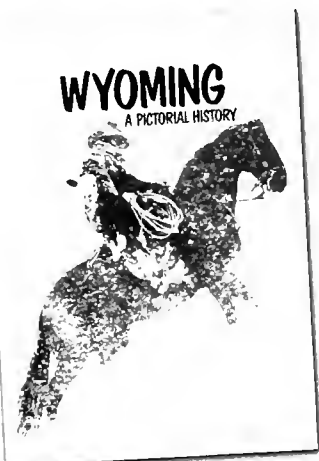
The movie was based on Mari Sandoz’ book of the same title. Production notes for the film state it “is an undiluted account of the shabby treatment given a band of 960 northern Cheyennes after they had surrendered to General Miles in 1877 and were sent to live on barren reservation land in which is now the State of Oklahoma. . . . On the night of September 9,



Carroll Baker as she rode towards the Capitol. Courtesy Carroll Baker Papers, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

# Wyoming

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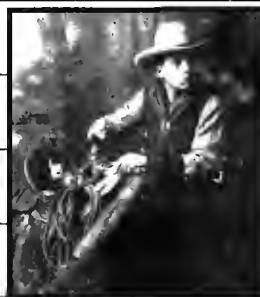
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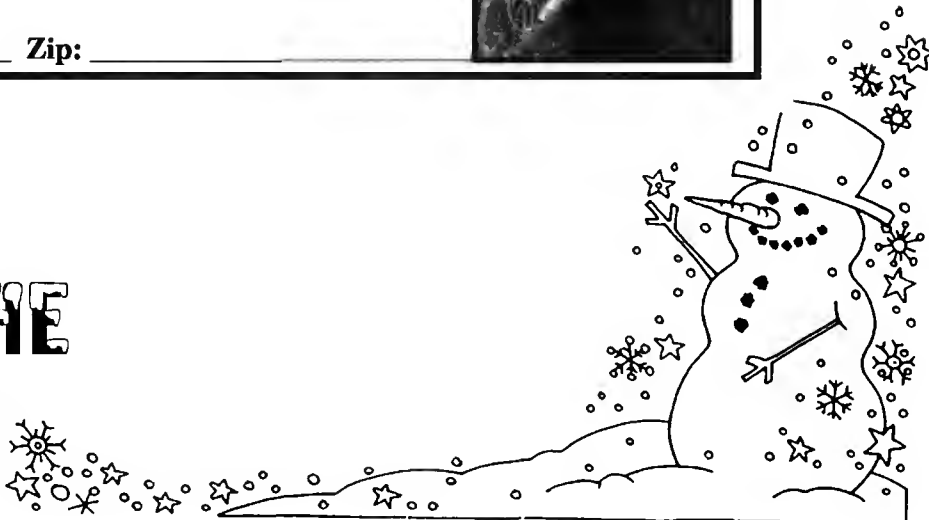
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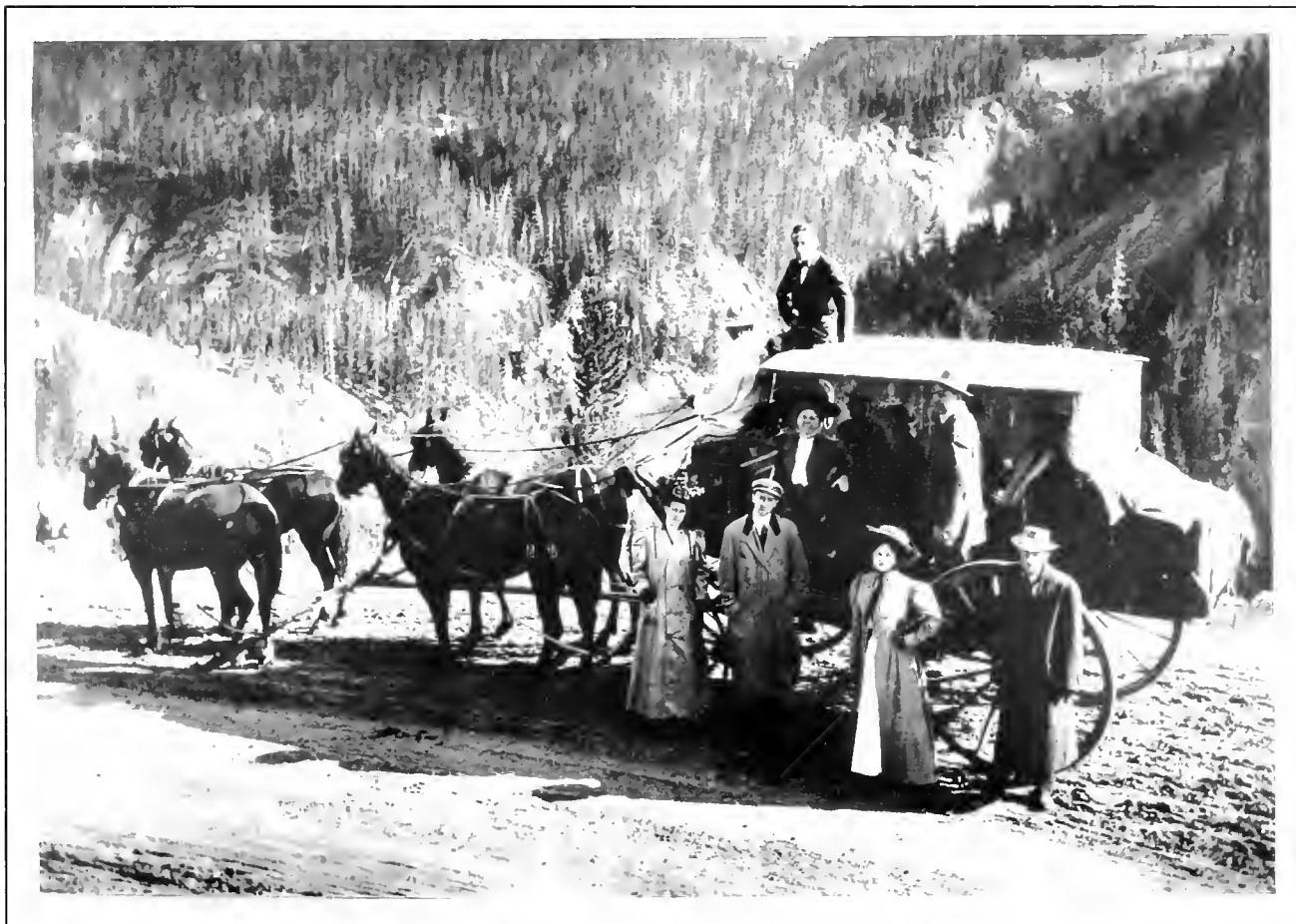
State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_



# A GIFT FOR THE HOLIDAYS!



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