Saddlebag Newsletter
February 2026

Happy Valentines Day

Pam Potter, Editor
Spiritwind2@hotmail.com

A supplement to the WWHA *Journal*
Available On-Line via www.wildwesthistory.org

Welcome to the Saddlebag Newsletter. Here is the latest information from WWHA. Previously posted Saddlebag newsletters will be found by date further down this section in the list of available newsletters. All earlier information will be retained for reference.

Welcome to our newest members

Ken & Julie Warren, San Diego, CA

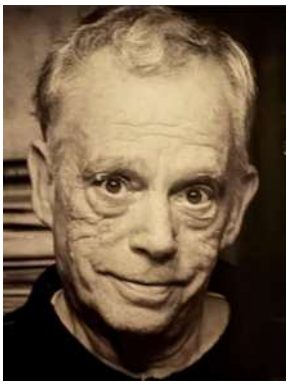
Pedro Soto, Lynwood, CA

Elizabeth Beckett, Liberty, MO

Janice Botkin, Nogal, NM

Bob Reece, Firestone, CO

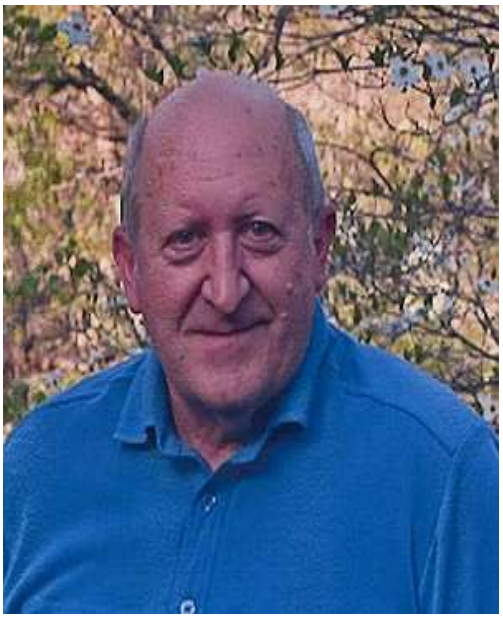
Mike Enger, Arlington, TX is a new member and **Gunfighter.**



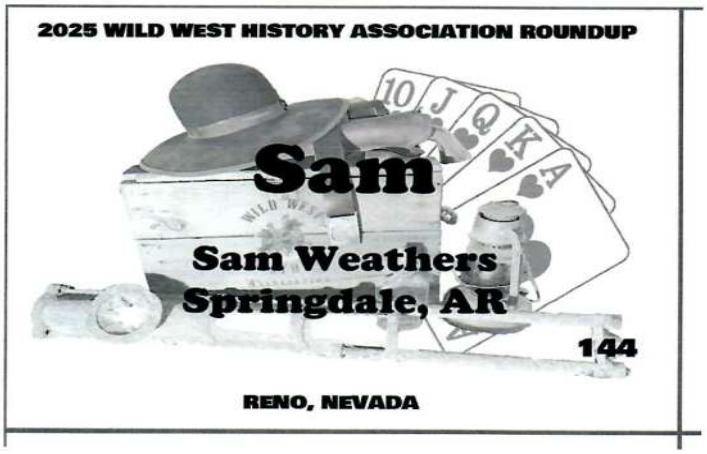
We have lost two members of WWHA.

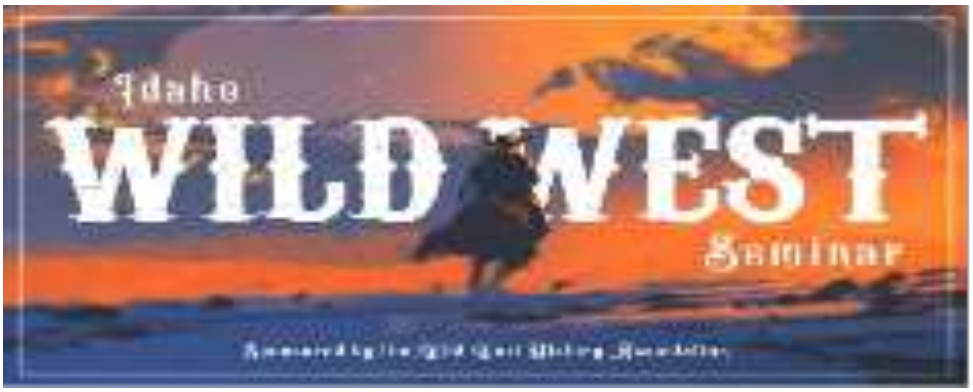
Robert "Norvelle" Wathen, 82, passed away on December 9, 2025, in Louisville, KY. He was a published author and known for an extensive collection of books on Western history. His last Roundup was in Rapid City South Dakota.

Sam Weathers, husband of long time Board Member, Elizabeth Weathers, passed away on January 16, 2026, in Springdale, Arkansas, they had been married 65 years. Sam was a lifetime resident of Springdale, having been born there in 1941.



Sam was a quiet, steady presence at the Roundups, always willing to help and supporting Elizabeth and the board. His passing will leave a hole in the WWHA family. Sam will be remembered for the quiet, calm way he approached every situation. He carried himself with a steady presence that put others at ease, offering reliability and consistency without ever seeking recognition. Always willing to step up when asked, Sam exemplified service through action rather than words. His unassuming nature and gentle strength left a lasting impression on everyone who knew him. Memorials may be made to The Wild West History Association, 993 E. Jennings Street, Safford, Arizona,





Idaho Wild West will present its annual seminar on Saturday March 14th, 2026, at the Owyhee County Museum in Murphy ID, from 9am to 3pm. You may reserve a lunch meal (there are no restaurants in Murphy) by contacting the Museum at 208-495-2319. We hope you can join us for an entertaining program.

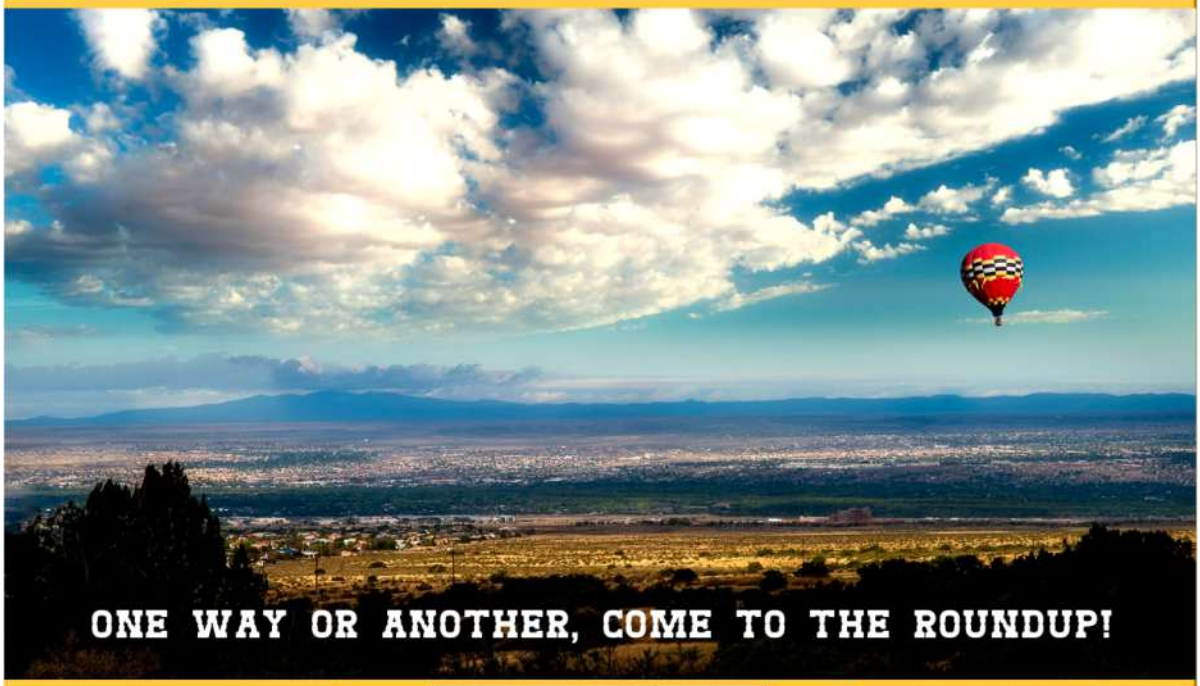
9:00 –9:15	Welcome and Announcements
9:15-10:00	Gun Histories – Joe Hickey
10:00-10:30	Cassidy Gang Weapons-Bill Betensen
10:30-10:45	Break
10:45-11:15	Women Missionaries - Marie Clyne
11:15-12:00	Idaho Vigilantes-Jeff Wade
12:00- 1:00	Lunch
1:00-1:15	Cowboy Poetry - Doc Shores
1:15-1:45	Wyatt Earp in Idaho-Mike Youngman
1:45-2:15	Colonel Dewey and Wife – Clyne
2:15-3:00	Confederate Sympathizers arrive in Idaho – Doc Shores

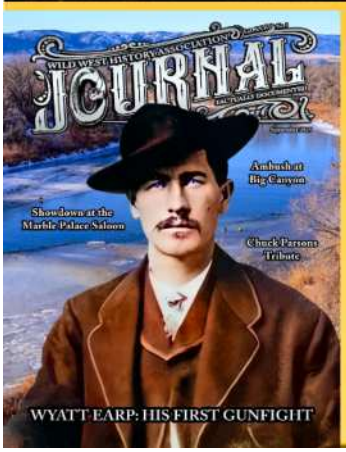
If you don't have time to volunteer for WWHA, give a gift certificate to WWHA. For only $60 you can give a one year Digital membership that includes our outstanding Journal. Go to our website https://wildwesthistory.org/join/
Or, you can give any one of our other membership options for the hard copy issues.

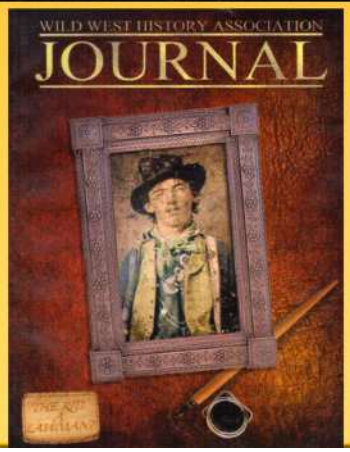
JOIN US IN THE LAND OF ENCHANTMENT
FOR THE WILD WEST HISTORY 2026 ROUNDUP
DURING THE ROUTE 66 CENTENNIAL IN

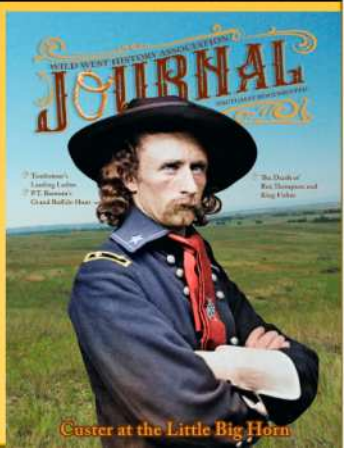
ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

JULY 15–18 AT THE CROWNE PLAZA HOTEL
FOR HOTEL INFORMATION, CLICK THE LINK:
WILD WEST HISTORY ASSOCIATION









Here is a link to a video about Old Town Albuquerque.
https://www.albuquerqueoldtown.com
While you are in Albuquerque for the Roundup consider visiting:

The Indian Pueblo Cultural Center is the Gateway to the 19 Pueblos of New Mexico.

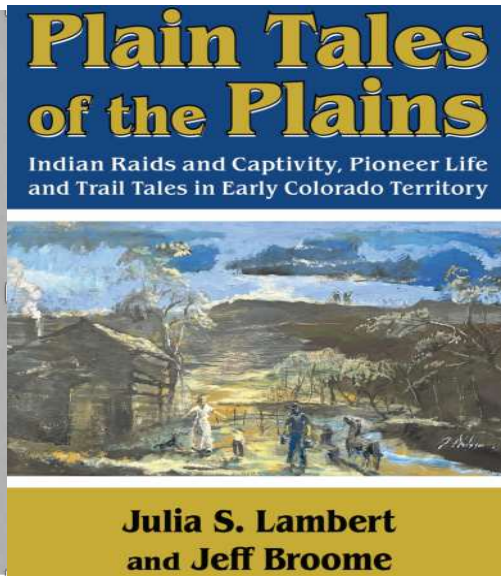
Learn about Pueblo culture from ancient times to the present in our museum and exhibition galleries. Tour our collection of murals by Pueblo artists for an inspiring and personal experience.

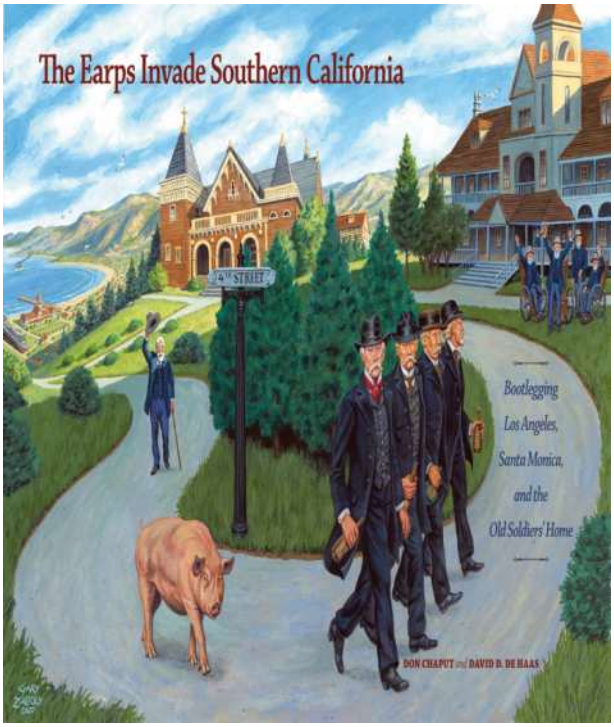
Dine at the Indian Pueblo Kitchen, an innovative teaching kitchen and restaurant centered around Indigenous foodways, education and exploration.

Shop at the Indian Pueblo Store for traditional and contemporary jewelry, pottery, rugs, and more from award-winning, internationally renowned artists as well as emerging talents. Visitors can also shop for authentic Native American art directly from many talented artists in the IPCC courtyard.

Several member authors have asked us to remind members of their books. Here are a few.

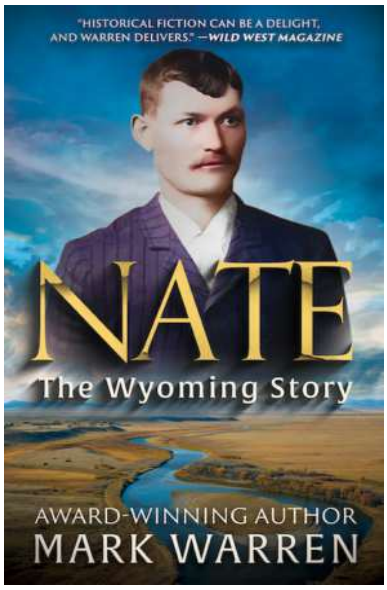
Jeff Broome's marvelously told story centering on a courageous pioneer woman named Julia Lambert. Julia vividly describes life on the trail, highlighting the difficulty and danger of travel across a vast land. Her recollections of encounters with horse thieves, Indians, Mexican freighters and bandits are riveting. The descriptions of the beauty of the land, the magnificent western nights, and the happiness of the people as they traveled, transport the reader back to a time far removed from our modern life. Julia's account of arriving in Denver illustrates the harsh reality of violence in that period. The heartbreaking stories of Laura Roper and Lucy Eubank underline the perils of Indian captivity. Jeff's extensive footnotes add great detail and insight to the memoir. This book is an essential read for anyone interested in the history of the American West. — Joe Creaden, independent historian



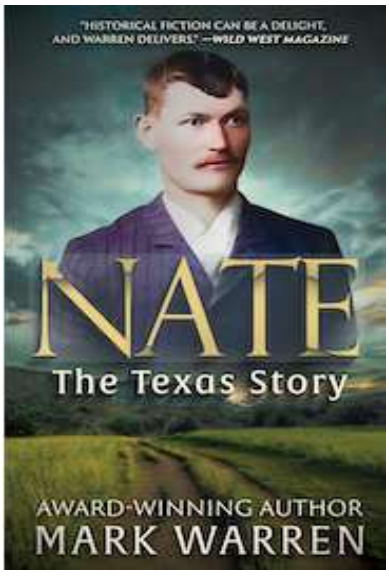


Author David de Haas has asked us to remember his books. Here is one on the Earps.

Another author who has been a good friend to WWHA writes both fiction and non-fiction.



Mark Warren knows as much if not more than many non-fiction writers about his subjects. Here is the link to our YouTube video of Mark speaking in Cartersville last year, about Nate. If you watch the video (link below) you will understand the depth of Mark's research.



.https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JM6JsCRaOU4 We have had many views on this video so you know it must be good. Watch the video and like and subscribe.

The William I. Koch Collection: "Visions of the West"

I live in New York City, a metropolis with many art museums and galleries scattered throughout; but today, visiting a concentrated exhibit of paintings and sculptures by the likes of Frederic Remington, Charlie Russell and other artists of the West was a special treat.

Roping Lobo

The paintings (and sculptures) by Remington, Russell, O. C. Seltzer, W. Herbert Dunton, William R. Leigh, Albert Bierstadt and Frank Tenney Johnson all came from the collection of William I. Koch, a board member of WWHA. The whole of the exhibit from Koch's collection was titled "Visions of the West; The William I. Koch Collection." Christie's, a major auction house in New York City, put it together in preparation for an auction on Friday, January 23rd.

The exhibit was as fine and sophisticated as any museum. The difference, however, being that a museum sets up such an exhibit to be viewed over a few months. Christie's set up this exhibit to be viewed over five or six days. The wall space of six (or seven) rooms was laden with paintings with sculptures placed on pedestals in the interior space.

The painting *Coming to the Call* is considered among the greatest of Remington's works. Unlike so many of Remington's action-filled subjects, it depicts a hunter seated in his canoe, rifle at his

shoulder with a moose in the background. The serenity of the still water illustrates the hunter's patience and the glowing sky beyond renders the scene in silhouette. Perhaps his most iconic is a sculpture titled *The Broncho Buster*, a copy of which has lived in the Oval Office since the time of President Jimmy Carter. *Comin' Through the Rye* is another iconic sculpture of four cowboys galloping with their guns raised in celebration and quirts flying. In the same room was a massive canvas, a night time scene. A mounted cowboy is firing his six-shooter and from the doorways in the distance, evidence of others' guns, firing back. The painting is called *Argument with the Town Marshall*.

My attention was drawn to a smaller painting mounted by itself. Not only the painting, but the frame was unique. The painting, *Spooked at His Shadow* by Olaf C. Seltzer, depicts a cowboy on a rearing horse, a pose not unlike Remington's *Broncho Buster*. The frame consists of weathered wood, leather (with metal conchos at the corners) and barbed wire.

In another room featuring paintings from an earlier era was one that brought a wave of nostalgia. Alfred Jacob Miller's *The Buffalo Hunt* was painted in the 1850s. But for me it brought back memories of issues of *American Heritage* that I grew up with, as Miller's painting was on the cover of an early issue. And the sculpture by C. M. Russell, also called *The Buffalo Hunt*, depicts a similar pose of an Indian racing on a pony, bare back, leaning in toward a charging buffalo, bow extended to the full about to deliver the fatal shot.

Nearby was Russell's large canvass, *The Sun Worshipers*. It is sunrise, and three Cheyenne on horseback are gazing toward the sunlight. One is holding out his arms in an attitude of worship. Below them, in shadow, is a small creek with the decaying bones of a buffalo in the foreground. Russell, like Remington and the others, was a master of the subtleties of both color and composition.

I was delighted to see a couple of paintings by the great illustrator, N. C. Wyeth, especially *Wild Bill Hickock at the Cards*. Hickock has his Colt in his hand and the shock of the three other gamblers at the table is palpable. Not only the gun, but the blond head of Wild Bill dominates the painting.

A surprising feature of the exhibit was an immersive video featuring four paintings from

Buffalo Hunt

the exhibit: *Wild Bill Hickock at the Cards*, *Argument with the Town Marshal*, *Coming to the Call* and *Mountain Lake* by Albert Bierstadt. The video played on three sides of the viewer – at times with a unified image, at other times each side featuring a different painting. The shocking part of this video was the audacious use of AI to animate the paintings. Wild Bill reaches into his shoulder holster and draws out his Colt. The cowboy on horseback draws his six-gun and fires. The hunter in his canoe lays down his gun and paddles away. Deer amble by the side of the lake shore. Animating paintings is clever, but the real message of the video is the animating force of these and other depictions of the old West in cinema and in popular culture. Time and again, the tableaus and images handed on by these great artists have been reproduced in the movies. They have sparked the imaginations of authors of Western fiction. And books and movies were copied and amplified through television. And folks like me were inspired to seek the *real* history, having seen and questioned what we saw on television.

Bill Koch is known as an industrialist, scientist, and winner of the America's Cup. He is also a man with a passionate love of the West. He says that these treasures are among his favorites. It was a delight for me to spend an afternoon wandering among many paintings whose images I have only seen in a book or on a screen. Soon they will be dispersed into the keeping of various museums and homes of collectors.

— Paul Johnson

An Art of the West article on Frederic Remington will be in the March 2026 Journal, featuring more Remington artwork from the William I. Koch collection, photographed by Paul Johnson.

John Boessenecker and several other members of WWHA attended the Antique Arms Show in Las Vegas, Nevada. Mark Hall Patton of Pawn Stars stopped by to chat.

Wild West History Association

YouTube

Learn About Wild West History

February 2026

Released Every Friday After 3:00PM EST

February 6th

Billy the Kid, 19...or 21? Census records and court testimony say yes. But new evidence—based on people who knew him as a boy—suggests he may have been only 19. In this new video, we examine the records, the witnesses, and the legend itself.

🎥 Watch and decide for yourself.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HeDk6cDNtPg

February 13th

First Death in the Donner Party: “Go the Old Route or Perish” | Travel the Trail & Visit the Museum

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IkOBEDHSyfY

February 20th

Indian Wars Fort Found. U.S. Army & Confederate Fort and Camp – Old Maps & Drone Reveal What Remains. Indian Wars Defense Post.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w8gbVRr28cU

February 27th

While re-painting a Great Western Trail (GWT) marker, in Alice, Texas, a very grateful rancher and granddaughter of a Texas "Trail Driver" drove up…

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q1dCcRZQdzg

Wild West History Association

YouTube SHORTS

(Less Than 3 Minutes)

Learn About *the* Wild West History

February 2026

Released Every Tuesday After 3:00PM EST

February 3rd

Tonkawa Indians Eat Comanche Flesh

https://www.youtube.com/shorts/nYoe3D8tpzU

February 10th

King Fisher Grave. Wild West Gunfighter. Uvalde, Texas. The Short Life and Elusive Legend

https://www.youtube.com/shorts/BsIKTXU104M

February 17th

Scott Cooley: Texas Ranger Turned Outlaw, Scalped Indians and His Enemies. Johnny Ringold Involved

https://www.youtube.com/shorts/ZZwGu3UdurQ

February 24th

"DEAD MAN'S HOLE" Underwater Graves. A Bottomless Pit in Miller's Creek, TEXAS. Aerial Drone Videos.

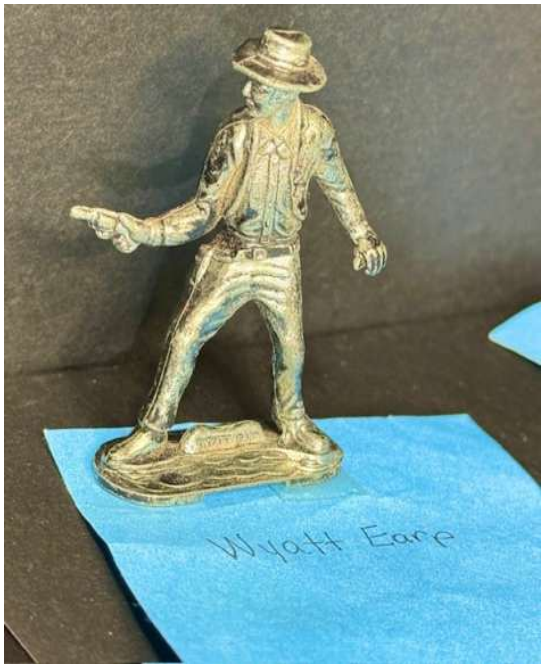
https://www.youtube.com/shorts/TyQ8toCvPvM

A Note from the President

The invention of AI (Artificial Intelligence) has nudged its way into Old West history photos, but rest assured, we'll do our best in keeping to the rules when identifying the subjects and contents. Too many times, we see unauthenticated photos of outlaws and lawmen on the Internet, social media, and various forms of publications, as a topnotch publisher of Old West stories, we are keen to those simulated pictures out there.

It's our collective knowledge that keeps us in front of these AI generated images, and I'm proud to be part of such a fine group who do their research first before making a claim.

An old Gold Panner once told me, "Gold don't float to the top, you have to dig for it".

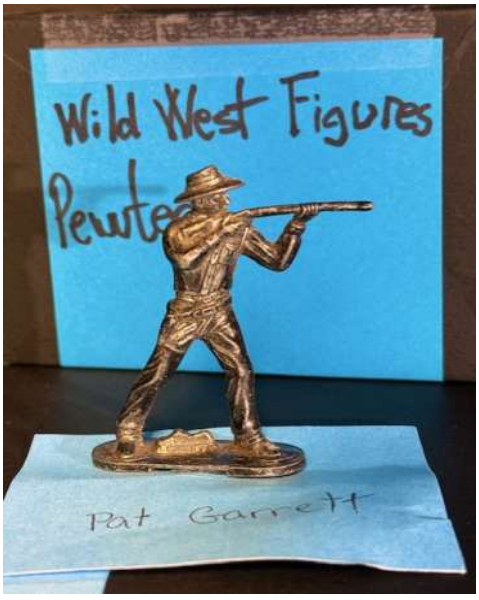


An old gold panner once told me, "Gold don't float to the top, you have to dig for it".

Thanks Everyone.

President Paul Marquez, WWHA

Look for these 2 items at the Roundup in Albuquerque,
donated by Paul Marquez for the silent auction.



WILD WEST HISTORY ASSOCIATION

COUNTRY STORE

Grey Fleece Vest XL, 2XL $40

Grey Blanket In Pouch 40 X 56 $30

Black Sweatshirt Hooded &Full zip S, M, XL, 2XL, 3XL $55

Short Sleeve Denim Shirt Faded Blue: S, M, XL Ink Blue: M, L, XL, 3XL $40

Bella Heather V-Neck M, L, XL, 2XL $25

Pocket Polo Red: XL, 2XL, 4XL Blue: XL, 2XL, 3XL $35

Ladies V-Neck Front or Side Logo Peach, Lavender, Fuschia Email for Sizes $25

Ladies Knit Black: S,M,L Blue: L, XL, 2XL $40

Beige Tote Bag $15

Round Neck Tee Front or Side Logo Grey, Red, Sand Email for Sizes $25

Key Chain $4

Rawhide Money Clip $20

Spatula $25

Camo Mesh Cap $25

Pink Camo Mesh Cap $25

Guide Hat Black or Khaki $25

Prices include free shipping & a WWHA Button

To place an order, email: crystalkate@gmail.com

or, mail your order to:
Jean E Smith WWHA Treasurer
993 E Jennings Street Safford, AZ 85546

WWHA Button Freebie

HELP BILLY REST IN PEACE

NOT BEHIND JAIL BARS

When Billy the Kid was killed in 1881, his grave was marked with a simple wooden cross. In 1931, the "PALS" headstone was added for Billy and his friends Charlie Bowdre and Tom Folliard. A footstone followed in 1940.

Over time, vandals and souvenir hunters damaged the site, even stealing the footstone multiple times. A protective cage was eventually built around the graves. While it serves its purpose of protecting the gravesite, to many, it evokes the image of a jail. Billy famously broke out of several jails during his short life and it's unfortunate that he should be spending eternity in one.

Since our founding in Fort Sumner in 1987, the Billy the Kid Outlaw Gang has been dedicated to protecting, preserving, and promoting the true history of Billy the Kid. Now, we hope to transform the cage into a more welcoming memorial—one that better reflects Billy's story.

As shown in this sketch, we plan to add a peaked roof and a few decorative touches to transform the cage into something more visually appealing.

We think Billy deserves better than to spend forever behind bars but we can't do this work alone. The cost quoted for these changes will be $4332 and we hope to have the project completed in time for the opening of the new museum next door. With your help, we can turn the cage into something that truly honors this Old West icon.

Every donation, big or small, brings us closer to making it happen. Help us give Billy a better resting place.

Scan the QR code or visit billythekidoutlawgang.com to donate today. Checks can also be sent to our mailing address: BTKOG ◆ PO Box 1281 ◆ Mesilla, NM 88046

As a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, all contributions are fully tax-deductible. If we are fortunate enough to exceed our fundraising goal, any additional donations will still go directly towards our mission—supporting other preservation projects and helping print educational materials for Billy the Kid events. Every gift, large or small, helps us protect this important piece of history with the public.

Rifle Ports: Frontier Defense in Mid-19th Century Texas

As Anglo-American settlement pushed deeper into the Texas frontier during the mid-1800s, isolation and uncertainty were constant realities. Organized military protection was often distant or unavailable, and settlers learned quickly that survival depended on cooperation, preparation, and practical defensive design. One of the most important—and often overlooked—features of these early defenses was the rifle port.

Rifle ports were narrow openings built into the walls of forts and "home-forts," allowing defenders to fire weapons from inside while remaining largely protected. Unlike larger windows or embrasures, rifle ports were deliberately small, minimizing exposure while still providing a field of fire. In Texas, these ports were most commonly constructed in thick stone walls, though some log structures also incorporated them.

Home-forts were a distinctive feature of the Texas frontier. Built by families or small communities, they served as everyday dwellings during times of peace and as refuges when Indian raids threatened nearby settlements. Neighbors could gather within the fortified structure, bringing families, weapons, and supplies, turning a single home into a temporary stronghold.

The placement of rifle ports reflected careful thought and experience. Ports were typically positioned to cover likely avenues of approach, such as trails, creek crossings, or open ground leading to the structure. Their height allowed defenders to fire from a standing or slightly crouched position, while the thickness of the stone walls provided substantial protection from incoming fire.

An especially noteworthy feature discovered at one Texas home-fort is a built-in stone shelf located immediately beside a rifle port. This shelf appears to have been intentionally designed to hold ammunition, percussion caps, or other essentials, allowing defenders to reload quickly without leaving their position. Such a detail speaks volumes about the practical knowledge of frontier builders, who understood that speed and efficiency could mean the difference between life and death during an attack. In many cases, rifle ports were operated by two men using two rifles. One man fired while the second

reloaded. The loaded rifle was then passed back to the shooter, allowing for a steady and continuous rate of fire. Rifle ports and their associated features remind us that frontier defenses were not crude or haphazard. They were carefully planned responses to real and ongoing threats. Today, surviving ports and stonework provide valuable insight into how Texans adapted Old World building techniques to New World dangers, creating structures that were both homes and fortresses.

Eddie Lanham

Speaking of AI, this is what you get when you ask for a rugged cowboy, a horse and some hearts. This would be great for a Hallmark show.