Saddlebag Newsletter
March 2026

HAPPY ST. PATRICK'S DAY

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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.

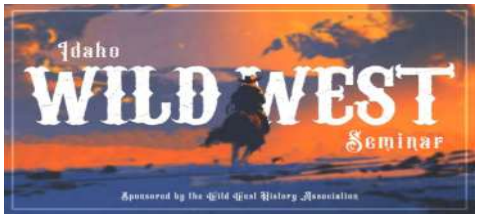
Welcome to our new members:

Ken & Julie Warren, San Diego, CA Gunfighters
They were announced last month but we now know they are Gunfighters.

George Bailey, Albuquerque, NM
James Drennan, West Columbia, SC
Jeffery Laskie, Jemez Springs, NM

THE PROGRAM, VENDOR APPLICATION AND REGISTRATION FORM ARE ALL ON THE WEBSITE FOR OUR 2026 ROUNDUP IN ALBUQUERQUE.

If you have items for the auction at the Roundup, please send me photos so we can let people know about some of the items on which they might want to bid. We have some exciting treasures.



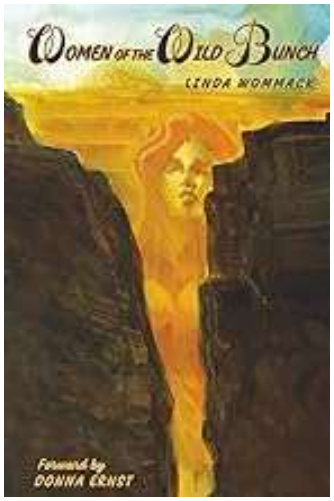
Idaho Wild West will present its annual seminar on Saturday March 14th, 2026, at the Owyhee County Museum in Murphy ID, from 9am to 3:30 pm. The seminar is free. You may reserve a lunch meal (there are no restaurants in Murphy) by contacting the Museum at 208-495-2319. We hope you can join us for an 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
1:00-1:10	Cowboy Poetry- Doc Shores
1:10-1:40	Colonel Dewey and Wife- Clyne's
1:40-2:40	Wyatt Earp in Idaho-Mike Youngman
2:40-3:15	Confederate Sympathizers arrive in Idaho Doc Shores
3:15- 3:30	Museum Update- Ericks Garsvo

RIP Robert Duvall

"It's been quite a party ain't it?"
Gus is gone, died for real this time. Robert Duvall, the iconic "Gus" from Lonesome Dove, passed peacefully on February 16, 2026 at the age of 95. He had a long career in Hollywood but most of us affectionately remember him as the witty, charismatic, former Texas Ranger from Lonesome Dove, the TV series based on the Larry McMurtry novel of the same name. Duvall expertly portrayed loyalty and bravery, mixed with laid back charm. Those of us with a passion for anything Western, will also remember him from another Western favorite, Open Range.

News from author, Linda Wommack



Step beyond the legends of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid into the untold lives of the bold, complex women who stood beside them. In Women of the Wild Bunch, award-winning historian Linda Wommack reveals the real stories of wives like Rose Morgan Warner and Maud Davis Lay, paramours like Fannie Porter, and enigmatic figures like Etta Place—women who rode the Outlaw Trail, survived betrayal and heartbreak, and shaped the legacy of America's most infamous gang.

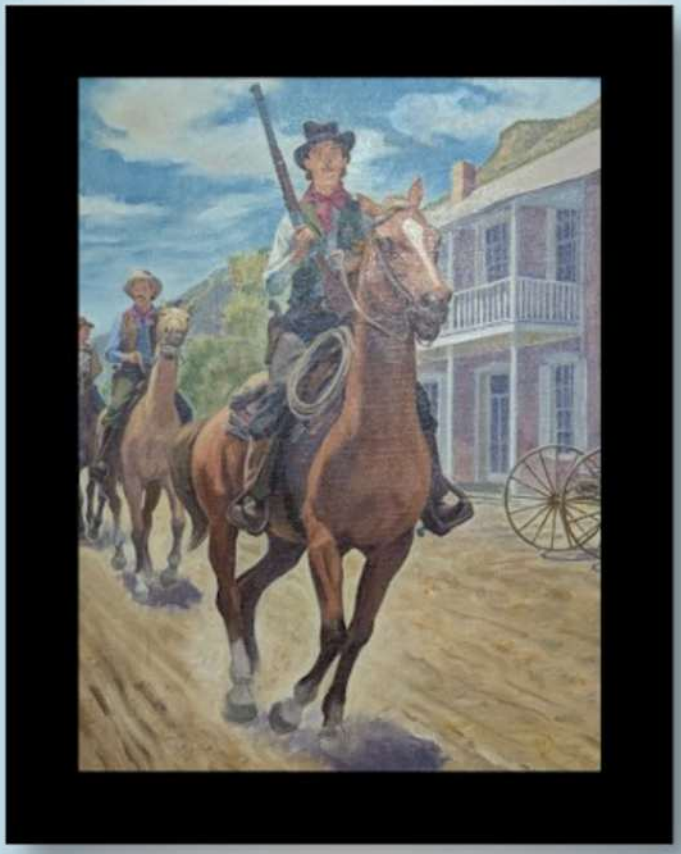
Drawing on decades of original research, family records, newspaper archives, and firsthand accounts, Wommack separates fact from myth to deliver a gripping narrative grounded in historical truth.
From the remote hideouts of Hole-in-the-Wall and Robbers Roost to bordellos in San Antonio and exile in Argentina, these women navigated love, loss, and survival in a lawless era.
This isn't just another outlaw tale—it's a tribute to the resilience, courage, and quiet strength of the women history almost forgot.

Forward by Donna Ernst

WILD WEST HISTORY ASSOCIATION

ALBUQUERQUE ROUNDUP

THE LAND OF ENCHANTMENT



CROWNE PLAZA HOTEL,
ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

JULY 15-18, 2026

Artwork by K Gunner Petersen

Brazos Banditos at Mission Sin Caja, 2026
Photo by Paul Marquez

WWHA members,

Your board of Directors had a successful Winter Board Meeting on Valentine's Day.
Many topics were covered and action items were accomplished; new tasks were assigned all while enjoying the south Texas sunset. We met at Mission Sin Caja for the third time in 11 years, this beautiful ranch is nestled just east of 3 Rivers, TX, a small town 75 miles south of San Antonio. Our gracious host Kurt House brought out his best for us again, Thank you Kurt. The meeting addressed last year's roundup in Reno and prepared for our up-and-coming roundup in Albuquerque. We tackled areas in need of immediate attention and focused on where we need help from our members, areas i.e., merchandise sales online and during the roundup, and a new email blast coordinator. Please contact your board of directors and sign up for any one of these essential categories to help us keep WWHA in good shape for the future.

Thank you
Paul Marquez
President

More photos from the board meeting.

Your WWHA board and a couple of essential personnel, taking time out at the winter board meeting. Photo by Madison Harrell

Congratulations to WWHA Board Member, Michael Wallis.

Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame's 56th Anniversary celebration to honor 12 journalists, authors, pioneers during induction ceremony at UCO

Journalists, a nationally known author and television news pioneers are among those who will be honored at the 56th annual induction ceremony of the Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame. The induction ceremony will begin at 11:30 a.m. Thursday, May 14, in the grand ballroom of the Nigh University Center at the University of Central Oklahoma. A reception toasting the honorees will occur immediately after the ceremony in the University Center's Heritage Room.
The hall of fame will induct two Lifetime Achievement honorees and 10 journalists this year.

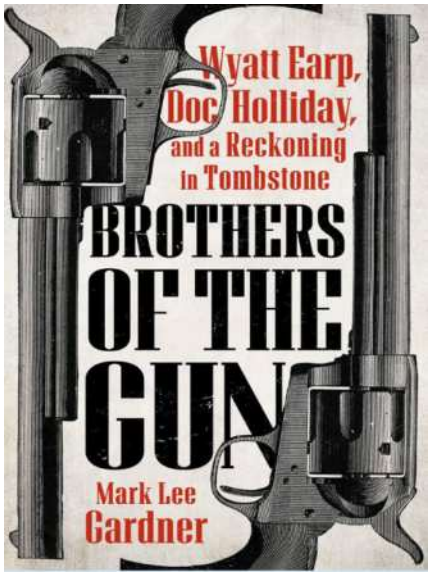
This year's Lifetime Achievement honorees are the late **Gene Allen,** an Oklahoma television pioneer and author; and **Michael Wallis**, a nationally known nonfiction author and journalist who has become famous for his Route 66 work.

MICHAEL WALLIS {1945-) is a best-selling author and award-winning reporter who has gained international notoriety as a speaker and voice talent. In 2006, his distinctive voice was heard in "CARS," an animated feature film from Pixar Studios. Wallis is co-founder of the Route 66 Alliance, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the promotion and enhancement of the Mother Road. In 2023, President Joe Biden appointed him to the Congressional Route 66 Centennial Commission. A storyteller who likes nothing better than transporting audiences across time and space, Wallis has published 20 books, including "Route 66: The Mother Road." His work has appeared in hundreds of national and international magazines and newspapers, including *Time, Life, People, Smithsonian, The New Yorker,* and *The New York Times.* Michael has been nominated three times for the Pulitzer Prize and was also a nominee for the National Book Award. In 2016, he received an Emmy Award for his work in the documentary film, *Boomtown.*

Check out Mark Lee Gardners lectures in March and April on his latest book.

https://www.umw.edu/greatlives/lecture/wyatt-earp-and-doc-holliday/

https://www.mymcpl.org/events/116637/mark-lee-gardner-researching-and-writing-west



Mathew “Old Paint” Caldwell

Madison Harrell

Mathew Caldwell was born in Kentucky in 1898 and lived several years in Missouri. According to Texas land records, he moved to Green DeWitt’s Colony as a married man with a family. In 1831 he made his home in Gonzales, Texas, which was, at that time, the farthest west Anglo settlement in what was then the Mexican state of Coahuila y Texas. He was known to friends as “Old Paint” because of the white spots in his hair and beard.

He was known as the “Paul Revere of the Texas Revolution” for riding to Bastrop to mobilize volunteers to fight the Mexican Army at the Battle of Gonzales. He was in several battles with the Mexican Army as well as the Comanche Indians, including the Council House Fight and the Battle of Plum Creek.

From left to right in the photo above are Madison Harrell and his son, Louis Harrell, standing next to the gravestone for Madison’s four-great-grandfather, Mathew Caldwell, next is Roy Young standing next to the gravestone of his four-great-grandfather, John Sowell, one of the “Old 18” men who stayed in Gonzales to fight the Mexican Army in the Battle of Gonzales.

John Sowell – The Blacksmith of Gonzales

Roy B. Young

John Sowell, the noted "Blacksmith of Gonzales," was one of the "Old 18" of the Texas Revolution. It was in his blacksmith shop that the "Come and Take It" Canon was restored and the shot made that was fired as the first warning signs to the Mexican forces that threatened the peace and livelihood of the Green DeWitt Colony. John Sowell is sometimes credited with designing the first Bowie knife, which he did not, but he did make one or repair one for Jim Bowie as he was in Gonzales prior to going to the Alamo where he met his death.

Three of Sowell's sons were, at various and sundry time, soldiers and Rangers under the leadership of Matthew "Old Paint" Caldwell: Andrew Jackson "Andy" Sowell, Asa J. L. Sowell, and John Newton Sowell.

Andy or A.J. Sowell was one of the couriers from the Alamo, shortly before its fall, being sent with Byrd Lockhart, for reinforcements and supplies. He is often confused in history with his nephew Andrew Jackson "Jack" Sowell, the famous Texas author. Asa J. L. Sowell served as Mayor of Seguin and, for a time, as Sheriff of Guadalupe County. John Newton Sowell, was the first blacksmith of Seguin.

Whether mere coincidence or a special serendipity, three WWHA members, Madison Harrell, Louis Harrell and Roy B. Young, learned of the relationship of their ancestors, Matthew Caldwell and John Sowell, who are buried next to one another in the old Gonzales, Texas, cemetery. Without WWHA and some genealogical studies, the Harrell's, father and son, and Roy would never have known that in addition to their association in WWHA, their 4th great grandfathers were friends and associates, now memorialized with Texas Ranger crosses honoring their services to the Republic of Texas.

WANTED

2027 WILD WEST HISTORY CALENDAR
CALL FOR MEMBER PHOTOS

YOUR PHOTO COULD BE FEATURED!
Help us create a stunning **full-color 2027 calendar** celebrating the places and stories of the American West.

WE'RE SEEKING IMAGES OF:
Historic towns • Trails • Battlefields • Gravesites •
Group images of lawmen and outlaws • Frontier buildings • Western landscapes

PHOTO GUIDELINES:
Minimum size: 3300 x 2550 pixels
HORIZONTAL (Landscape only) 16:9
Bright, clear, high-quality images
No heavy filters, AI, or artificial effects
Photographer must own all rights. You will get credit

SUBMIT YOUR PHOTOS:
Photographer's name
Location
Short description
Send to:
pjbghost6@gmail.com
Deadline:
March 20, 2026

PRESERVE THE LEGACY OF THE WEST
One month. One image. One story.

Wild West History Association

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

Wild West History Association

YouTube SHORTS

(Less Than 3 Minutes)

Learn More About *the* Wild West History

March 2026

Released Every Tuesday After 3:00PM EST

PLEASE! LIKE, COMMENT AND SUBSCRIBE
(This Channel Helps to Fund the WWHA)

March 3rd

Dead Man's Hole #1. A Dumping Place for the Bodies of Union Sympathizers During the Civil War.

https://www.youtube.com/shorts/dO1p4Yk2TU4

March 10th

Doc Holliday's Final Journey

https://www.youtube.com/shorts/Nr4BwtJ8cxw

March 17th

NOTORIOUS LUKE SHORT GUNFIGHTER
Tombstone-Dodge City

https://www.youtube.com/shorts/D2UeHoXoiFI

March 24th

Colt 45 Peacemaker. The Gun That Won the West and Hollywood

https://www.youtube.com/shorts/vO1Bjq-5BW4

March 31

Three-Hundred-Year-Old Lost French Cannons, Buried by the Spanish in 1689, Discovered in Texas

https://www.youtube.com/shorts/yD9A1OZ_r5U

Wild West History Association
YouTube
Learn More About Wild West History

March 2026
Released Every Friday After 3:00PM EST

PLEASE! LIKE, COMMENT AND SUBSCRIBE
(This Channel Helps to Fund the WWHA)

March 6th
The West That Was vs. The West We Remember
A Wild West Story
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1M6yS729rRE

March 13th
Wyatt Earp's Lost Dream. Stage Line or Shootout?
How One Choice Changed Tombstone's Fate Forever.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8FrQI9tGxt4

March 20th
Big Nose Kate: Doc Holliday's Companion —
Her Life Then and Now
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ZJf-FPCc9o

March 27th
Warren Earp and the Man Who Shot Him into History. Fear of Earp Retaliation, Killer Fled to Texas
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kSjBPaeG_OI

Hill Country city setting aside land for a Texas history center

Fredericksburg is giving 12 acres to the state for the project. The property was previously the site of a failed Texas Rangers heritage facility.

Ricardo Delgado, *San Antonio Express News,* Feb 20, 2026

Renderings from the Texas Historical Commission show what a proposed history center in Fredericksburg could look like when completed.

Texas Historical Commission

After evicting a nonprofit from city-owned land, Fredericksburg officials have decided to allow a state agency to develop a Texas history museum on the site.

The Fredericksburg City Council this week approved the transfer of the 12-acre property to the Texas Historical Commission for the development of an “interactive heritage center” aimed at teaching children about history.

The city had previously set aside the property to be used for a museum complex dedicated to the history of the Texas Rangers law enforcement division. However, city officials terminated their economic agreement with the Former Texas Rangers Foundation and evicted the nonprofit from the property, saying it failed to meet the terms of the agreement.

The proposed Texas Historical Commission project on the site would be an extension of the neighboring Fort Martin Scott, which is considered the first Army outpost in Texas, according to the city. The state agency took over operations of the fort in May 2024.

In a presentation led by Chris Elliot, the Texas Historical Commission's chief historic sites officer, the agency said the project could be called “Texas Untamed” and “A Frontier Experience at Fort Martin Scott.”

Elliot said the new facility would be an indoor-outdoor center with interactive exhibits, including animals like longhorns and camels “trained to interact with the students.”

The site could also include a year-round greenhouse, along with exhibits highlighting the history of indigenous peoples and the Texas Rangers. Gillespie County residents will get free admission to the center.

The agreement with the city calls for the agency to present plans for the center within three years, start construction within seven years and achieve “substantial completion” within 10 years. The contract also requires semi-annual reports to the city council.

Violation of the agreement could force the commission to return the land to Fredericksburg.

Fredericksburg City Council Member Emily Kirchner spoke in favor of the project, saying residents often lament the lack of activities for children in town.

“I think this is a great opportunity; we can utilize the land of the people and give something to them,” she said.

Nonprofit evicted by city

Fredericksburg had agreed in 2011 to lease the property to the Former Texas Rangers Foundation for $1 a year. In exchange, the nonprofit was required to build and open a 28,500-square-foot museum celebrating the history of the Texas Rangers, which was projected to bring in 40,000 visitors per year, according to city documents. The project was called the Texas Ranger Heritage Center.

The foundation is the fundraising arm of the Former Texas Rangers Association, a nonprofit aiming to preserve and promote the history of the Texas Rangers law enforcement division. Neither nonprofit is officially affiliated with the Texas Department of Public Safety.
In 2018, the city granted the foundation a seven-year extension to give it more time to finish the project.
The foundation built a 50-foot-tall bell tower, a Ranger ring of honor, an 8,000-square-foot outdoor pavilion and an amphitheater on the site but never started work on the museum.

CALL FOR PAPERS

East Texas Historical Association

I hope that you are well and that you braved the cold Arctic blast of the past week as best as possible. To help you recover from that shock, it is time to begin to think about our upcoming 2026 Meeting, which will be held on October 8-10 in Nacogdoches at the Fredonia Hotel. In this email, you will find the Call for Papers we have issued, as well as some key dates to keep in mind.

Session proposal and papers deadline: June 1

Meeting Registration and Fredonia Hotel reservations will become accessible on May 15

Session acceptance notification, July 1

Last Day for Fredonia Hotel reservations, September 20

Last Day to pre-register for Meeting, October 1

The **East Texas Historical Association** invites proposals for papers and sessions for its 2026 annual **fall meeting** to be held in **Nacogdoches, TX at the Fredonia Hotel** from **October 8-10, 2026.**

Topics that cover all aspects of East Texas' regional heritage and history receive some preference, but any proposal that deals with Texas history is welcome. The Association prefers the submission of complete sessions (presider and three presenters or presider/commentator and two presenters), but individual submissions are also encouraged. We particularly encourage graduate and undergraduate students to organize and propose sessions. The Association annually awards the Portia Gordon Best Student Session Award. Each member of the session awarded the prize will receive $100. Please visit our website at easttexashistorical.org for full details.

All session and individual proposals **must** utilize the submission form at our website, **easttexashistorical.org** The Association welcomes innovative formats for sessions, including discussion panels, poster presentations, or forums, as well as traditional paper sessions.

The East Texas Historical Association, headquartered on the campus of Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, TX is committed to the preservation and enhancement of East Texas' great historical heritage. For more information visit our website at **easttexashistorical.org** or phone at **936-468-2407**

Deadline for Submission: May 15, 2026. Presenters will be notified of acceptance by June 15, 2026. Please make all submissions electronically using the proposal form located on the Association website, easttexashistorical.org

Send proposals to: Program Chair and First Vice-president Dr. Keith Volanto at kvolanto@collin.edu

Don't miss WWHA Roundup, Albuquerque, New Mexico, July 15-18 2026

Presentations, cowboys, outlaws, panel, Western art, auction, awards and more.
Check website for schedule, vendor information, registration and hotel reservations.

Black Sheep: The Early, Lawless Days of Cliff Ellison

By Steve Rossignol

Cliff Ellison, who became one of Houston's most memorable law officers, was one of a long list of notable civil servants and elected public officials from Caldwell County, Texas. He was born on December 13, 1861, in the county seat of Lockhart, the son of the aging former County Judge William Ellison and William's second wife, Martha Mattie Tucker Ellis. The illustrious and prolific Ellison family of Caldwell had arrived in Texas about 1847; five of the sons of James Lewis Ellison and Margaret Mary Powers of Laurens County, South Carolina, had journeyed through the South by covered wagon caravan that Ellison family lore says included Thomas Nealy Baines, a great-uncle of Blanco County's own President Lyndon Baines Johnson.[i]

By 1860, Ellison sons Augustus Holloway, Jonathan, William, Nathaniel Powers, and Thomas had settled in Caldwell County and sired numerous progenies of their own. Holloway had fourteen children with Martha Ann Roberts; Jonathan and Celia Roberts would parent thirteen kids; and William had eighteen children with Mary Rebecca Powers. Ellison's ranching operations in Blanco County may have provided the opportunity for his young cousin Cliff Ellison to relocate there in 1883.

Before Clifton Tucker Ellison was a successful peace officer in Houston, he followed the pattern of many a Nineteenth Century western lawman by emerging from the outlaw element of the frontier. Cliff's beginning as the black sheep of the Ellison clan was established in late March 1878 when he was only sixteen; he was arrested and indicted for assault in a case that was initially heard in Judge Lyttleton W. Moore's 33rd District court, whose judicial district also included Blanco County. The case was transferred to county court where Cliff pleaded not guilty to the charge on April 16, but he was found guilty by a jury and fined $100. He was ordered by the court "that he remain in the custody of the Sheriff of this County until said fine and cash are paid."[ii] The fine was unusually high given his young age, his first offense, and the fact that he was well-connected by family in Caldwell County.

In late October, 1879, an eighteen-year-old Clifton Ellison was the victim of a robbery by Kuno Roentgen and Alice Clifton in Austin; the pair lifted $99 from a prosperous Cliff; on October 31, they were arrested for the theft and placed in the Travis County jail.[iii] The following week, perhaps seeking some sort of self-defense or retribution, Ellison himself was arrested in Austin for carrying a pistol and fined $5 plus court costs in the city's municipal court.[iv]

Less than eight months later, on June 11, 1880, Ellison was involved in a more serious altercation. At a party and dance near Rogers Spring north of the town of Luling in

Caldwell County, he shot his cousin Robert Dickerson during a fight.[v] The affray stemmed from an earlier incident where Cliff had apparently insulted or embarrassed Dickerson in some manner.

Following the party, Dickerson had declared to Cliff, “You used me up bad last night; you treated me like a dog. What are you going to do about it?”

Words flared, and the two youths dismounted from their horses and began brawling with fisticuffs. As bystanders attempted to separate the two men, Cliff, sporting a pistol, shot Dickerson four times, the close range of the first shot setting Dickerson’s shirt on fire and the next three while Dickerson was already on the ground. Dickerson died quickly.[vi]

Cliff Ellison was arrested at his parents’ home later that evening by Caldwell County sheriff A. Y. Larremore. Local Justice of Peace A. W. Wright in Lockhart refused to grant the youth bail;[vii] his bond was eventually set at $7000 by District Judge Moore following a writ of *habeas corpus.* The case attracted statewide and national attention as far away as New York City; “He is a mere boy,” declared the *Galveston Daily News*.[viii] Despite the “untiring” efforts of his father and brothers to secure the bail money, Clifton Ellison was unable to post the $7000 bond;[ix] the 1880 U.S. Census for Caldwell County listed him as an inmate in the county jail at Lockhart. While he was incarcerated, his mother Martha Ellison died on July 11. He remained in jail until early July 1881 when his bond was finally secured.[x]

Ellison went to trial in Lockhart on October 6, 1881. After a series of legal arguments, his motion for a change in venue based on this perceived local notoriety was denied. Cliff was convicted on October 12: “We the jury find the defendant Clifton Ellison guilty of murder in the 2nd degree and assess his punishment for twenty years in the State Penitentiary,” declared jury foreman W. J. Meins.[xi]

Cliff’s motion for a new trial was denied by Judge Moore and the case was appealed. In early July 1882, the Texas Court of Appeals ruled that “if cause for a change of venue existed at the term when the trial and conviction were had, an application based on such cause should have been then made.”[xii] Cliff’s conviction was reversed and a new trial was ordered for September 20, 1883, in the Hays County seat of San Marcos. After deliberating for thirty-six hours, the new jury found Cliff Ellison not guilty.[xiii]

While his appeal was pending, Clifton Tucker Ellison wed Minnie Lee Galbreath of Caldwell County on December 22, 1881, in Hays County. Minnie Lee was the daughter of James P. Galbreath, who had served as Chief Deputy under Caldwell County Sheriff A. A. Ellison, Cliff’s cousin. Galbreath descendants would go on to become distinguished members of the law enforcement community in central and south Texas.

Cliff and Minnie purchased 160 acres in central Blanco County on July 13, 1883; they were joined in Blanco by her parents and other family members. Five months later the couple sold the property at a modest profit and moved to Pearsall in Frio County; there Cliff joined another Ellison cousin, Jacob Jonathan Ellison, the second son of cattleman James Franklin Ellison, and operated a livery stable for a short while in partnership with Minnie's older brother Henry Galbreath. A daughter, Itasca Tassie, was born in Blanco County on July 24, 1885, and named after Clifton's older sister, who had died in 1869.

Two months before his daughter was born, on May 29, 1885, Cliff Ellison was indicted by a Blanco County Grand Jury for "theft of personal property of the value of one-hundred and fifty-five dollars" involving the larceny of gold cuff links, a rifle, and other items of jewelry belonging to Neill Munn Gay of Round Rock, who filed the complaint in Blanco County. The indictment alleged that in Blanco County on the previous March 23, Ellison "did then and there fraudulently steal, take, and carry away from out of the possession of N. M. Gay" the listed items.[xiv] A warrant had been issued in Blanco for his arrest by Justice of the Peace Lewellen Robison on April 15 following the filing of the complaint.

Cliff was also indicted in Edwards County about this time for arson and horse theft; the accusation of arson stemmed from the torching of the Gay household in the Nueces Canyon of Edwards County following the jewelry theft.[xv]

Ellison Pasture

Edwards County had long been a known hide-out for the outlaw element. The rugged Nueces Canyon area served as a refuge for many a renegade band, including Butch Cassidy's Hole-in-the-Wall gang and Texas desperado John Wesley Hardin. It was estimated that over 500 outlaws and rustlers passed through the hills and ravines of the area in the 1880s. Edwards County's first sheriff, Ira Wheat, had stated that horse-stealing in the county was an organized network which covered many southwestern and central Texas counties as stolen remudas passed from one county to the next.[xvi]

Whether Cliff Ellison was involved in this rustling network is undocumented, but it would provide a circumstantial reason for his otherwise unrelated presence at the N. M. Gay property and his own horse-theft charges in Edwards County. Many Edwards County District Court records were destroyed by a suspicious fire on July 10, 1888, and further ravaged by another courthouse fire in 1897 and an F5 tornado on April 12, 1927, so the legal timeline for Cliff Ellison's activities is a little fuzzy, but following his arrest warrant in Blanco County, it appeared that Cliff fled first to Caldwell County, where he was involved

in and wanted for “a murderous assault on his brother, who was left for dead.”[xvii] (the brother mentioned was probably his younger sibling Albinus William “Bine” Ellison). Cliff Ellison then escaped westward, where he was arrested in Uvalde County on April 24 with the stolen goods in his possession.[xviii]

Newspaper accounts specified the horse theft and arson charges but did not mention the theft charge.[xix]

Cliff was remanded to the Blanco County jail pending his trial. The sarcasm in a local newspaper report was unconcealed: “Mr. Cliff. Ellison, who is temporarily sojourning here, has not furnished the necessary requisites to entitle him to a departure, and in consequence his stay with us will be indefinite.”[xx] A June 2 court date was continued until the Court’s fall term; there Clifton Ellison pleaded guilty to the theft charge and was convicted on September 9. He was sentenced on the 12th to a two-year sentence at hard labor in the Texas state penitentiary at Huntsville.[xxi] His incoming convict ledger entry listed him as a “laborer” residing in Kendall County and mentioned a “mark on arm above the wrist shot through the arm” from an undisclosed incident.[xxii]

Clifton Ellison’s days in Huntsville were spent at the penitentiary rock quarry and on the Missouri-Pacific rail lines. He received his own pardon from Governor Lawrence Sullivan “Sul” Ross on March 11, 1887, upon a petition from his wife Minnie.[xxiii]

Meanwhile, the arson and horse theft charge in Edwards County had been continued through August 2, 1888; on that court date Cliff appeared to post a $500 bond for the horse theft charge and a $1000 bail for the arson accusation. A trial date of November 12 was set.

Cliff had tried his hand at farming in Castroville, in Medina County, following his release from prison, but had trouble staying on the straight and narrow path. He had apparently again stolen a horse in Hays County, perhaps to broker the stolen steed in Edwards in conjunction with his court date on August 2; he was so indicted in Hays for that charge. No sooner had Cliff completed his court appearance in Edwards than he was arrested by Hays County Deputy Edward Kyle and returned to Hays County.[xxiv]

Cliff remained in the Hays County jail pending his trial and missed his court date in Edwards on November 12. On May 11, 1889, Judge Winchester Kelso in Leakey noted that “Defendant C. Ellison [had] failed to appear and answer in this behalf…but wholly made default” at his scheduled time the previous November; Kelso then ruled that the bonds of Cliff and his bondsmen were to be forfeited. Nephew Ellis and T. M. Shely found themselves on the hook for $1500 each of bail money. Not aware that Cliff was in custody in Hays County, the cases were continued and an arrest warrant was issued for Cliff.[xxv]

On November 5, 1889, Cliff’s criminal cases in Edwards County were “placed upon the drop docket” of the district court; on the 8th the bond forfeiture judgment against his sureties was “set aside.”[xxvi] In Hays County, Cliff pleaded not guilty but was convicted of the horse theft charge on April 27, 1889, and sentenced to five years in the state

hoosegow. He arrived in Huntsville on May 20, and his prison record was marked by "impudence" and "fighting."[xxvii]
Minnie had had enough; while Cliff was in prison, she was granted a divorce by the District Court in Blanco on February 7, 1890; "Defendant came not, but wholly made default" the Court declared, and Minnie was granted full custody of the couple's daughter Itasca.[xxviii]

Released from prison on September 6, 1893, Cliff migrated to Houston. It was there that his violent life became even wilder.

For the rest of the Cliff Ellison story, read "Houston Hellraiser" in the March 2025 *WWHA Journal!*

---Steve Rossignol is a member of the Blanco County Historical Commission.

(Very special thanks to researcher extraordinaire Peggy White Engledow of the Caldwell County Genealogical and Historical Society).

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[ii] Case Number 151, State of Texas vs. Clifton Ellison, April 16, 1878, Book A, Caldwell County Court Minutes, pp. 215-216.
[iii] *Austin American-Statesman*, (Austin, Texas), November 1, 1879, p. 4.
[iv] "Mayor's Court Yesterday," *Austin American-Statesman*, (Austin, Texas), November 7, 1879, p. 4.
[v] Victoria Dunnahoo Daywood and Peggy White Engledow, *The Bad Boys of Caldwell County, Texas, Book One: Murders in the 1800s*, revised first edition, © (2015), privately published, p. 53.
[vi] *Luling Signal,* (Luling, Texas), June 24, 1880, cited in Daywood and Engledow, *The Bad Boys of Caldwell County, Texas, Book One,* p. 39.
[vii] "Refused Bail---Maj. Penn's Meeting," *Galveston Daily News*, June 25, 1880, p. 1; "State News," *Daily Banner*, (Brenham, Texas), July 3, 1880, p. 1.
[viii] "Luling: Refused Bail," *Galveston Daily News*, (Galveston, Texas), June 25, 1880, p. 1.
[ix] *Luling Signal*, July 8, 1880, cited in *The Bad Boys of Caldwell County, Texas, Book One,* p. 50.
[x] *Luling Signal*, July 13, 1881, cited in *The Bad Boys of Caldwell County, Texas, Book One,* p. 51.
[xi] Case Number 1805, State of Texas vs. Clifton Ellison, October 12, 1881, Caldwell County District Court Minute Book G, p. 43.
[xii] "Clifton Ellison v. The State," 12 Texas Court of Appeals 557 [Austin Term 1882]; also "The Court," *Dallas Weekly Herald*, (Dallas, Texas), July 6, 1882, p. 6.
[xiii] "Special Telegrams. San Marcos. [Special to the Statesman]," *Austin Weekly Statesman*, (Austin, Texas), September 27, 1883, p. 3.
[xiv] "Indictment," Case 462, May Term 1885; State of Texas vs. C. T. Ellison, Minute Book A, Blanco County District Court, June 2, 1885, pp. 284-285, Blanco County District Clerk Records, Johnson City, Texas.
[xv] "Arrested on Several Charges," *Galveston Daily News*, April 25, 1885, p. 1.
[xvi] Allan A. Stovall, *Nueces Headwater Country: A Regional History*, The Naylor Company, (San Antonio, Texas), 1959, p. 34; Allan A Stoval, *Breaks of the Balcones: A Regional History*, published by Allan A. Stovall, (Barksdale, Texas), 1967, p. 237, p. 253.
[xvii] "Wanted for a Murderous Assault," *Galveston Daily News,* April 27, 1885, p. 1.
[xviii] "Arrested on Several Charges," *Galveston Daily News*, April 25, 1885, p. 1.

[xix] Indictment, Case File 462, State of Texas vs. C.T. Ellison, Blanco County District Clerk Records; "State News," *Austin Weekly Statesman,* April 23, 1885, p. 5; also "From Blanco," *West Texas Free Press*, (San Marcos, Texas), June 11, 1885, p.2.
[xx] F. [*sic*], "From Blanco," *San Marcos Free Press,* (San Marcos, Texas), June 25, 1885, p. 1.
[xxi] Case #462, State of Texas vs, C.T. Ellison, Blanco County District Court Criminal Minute Book A, p. 272, p. 301, pp. 309-310.
[xxii] C. T. Ellison, Convict Record 1875-1954, Texas State Penitentiary, Huntsville, Texas, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, (Austin, Texas), Convict Number Range: 0001-4622; Volume Number: 1998/038-148, p. 36.
[xxiii] Luling Signal, (Luling, Texas), March 31, 1887, cited in Victoria Dunnahoo Daywood and Peggy White Engledow, *The Bad Boys of Caldwell County, Book Two: Mayhem and Mishaps in the 1800's*, self-published, 2019, p. 121.
[xxiv] "Kyle," *Austin American-Statesman*, August 5, 1888, p. 3.
[xxv] Case 39 and Case 40, State of Texas vs. Cliff Ellison, May 11, 1889, pp. 66-68.
[xxvi] Ibid., pp. 113-114.
[xxvii] C. T. Ellison, Convict and Conduct Register 1875-1954, Texas State Penitentiary, Huntsville, Texas, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, (Austin, Texas), Convict Number Range: 0001-4622; Volume Number: 1998/038-148, p. 225.
[xxviii] Case #262, Minnie Ellison vs. C.T. Ellison, Blanco County District Court Civil Minute Book A, February 7, 1890, pp. 186-187.

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