



Saddlebag Newsletter
July 2026
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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

Tracy Pless, Reston, VA
Shannon Plowman, Graham, TX
John Goetz, Parker, CO
William Scott, Lubbock, TX
David Nigh, Goodyear, AZ

James W. Kenney, of San Antonio, Texas, long time member of WWHA, passed away March 5, 2026 just shy of his 88th birthday. He had a variety of interests and in addition to WWHA his other Western affiliation was with the Order of Indian Wars. You can read about his long, interesting life and many careers in his obituary here:

<https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/san-antonio-tx/james-kenney-12772508>

Michael Lanning, Another Good One Gone.

Obit by Mark Boardman

Michael Lanning loved the West—its history, its people, its topography, the many books and articles covering the subject. It's no real surprise; Lanning was born in Phoenix in



1953. And while he spent most of his life in Indiana, the call of the West continued to lure him each year.

Michael Lanning died on June 8, 2026, after a long illness. But he left an impressive legacy.

In his professional life, he worked for 35 years in the emergency department at Indianapolis' Community East Hospital. He served the Indiana EMS Commission as its planning director, where he wrote Indiana's first comprehensive plan for Emergency Medical Services.

Michael also spent 44 years on the medical staff at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. He was part of the medical effort in this year's Indianapolis 500 race, just two weeks before he died.

But each October, he traveled to Arizona to participate in the Tombstone Territory Rendezvous/Wild West History Association gathering. It helped feed his interest in the Old West, which included regular travels through the region. Michael was a fixture at Old West meetings, a slight figure with a big hat and a remarkable knowledge. He was extremely well-read on Western history and could quote from a number of books and/or publications. He could (and did) also correct grammatical and spelling errors in any of them. That was just another part of who Michael was—precise, analytical but gifted with a ready wit.

Michael Lanning was 72 when he died. The Old West field is the poorer with his loss.

There will be a lot of books available at the silent auction.

THE HISTORY IS WAITING...

WILL YOU BE THERE?

For four days this July, historians, authors, researchers, collectors, and lovers of the American West will gather in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

- ★ They will walk ancient Pueblo ruins.
- ★ They will explore Spanish missions.
- ★ They will discuss Billy the Kid, frontier forts, Native American history, and the stories that shaped the West.

They will make new friends, renew old friendships, and share a passion that few people today truly understand.

And next year, they'll still be talking about it.

One month from now, you can say:

"I'M GLAD I WENT."

OR...

"I WISH I HAD."

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THE STORIES WILL BE TOLD WITH OR WITHOUT YOU.

been the greatest bank robber of the era of horseback bandits.

Born in 1872, Cherokee outlaw Henry Starr survived shootouts and death sentences, living long enough to witness the invention of moving pictures. In 1919, after Starr was released from the Oklahoma State Penitentiary, a hotshot movie producer convinced him he



had the looks, charisma, and “wild and woolly” life story to become the next big movie star. When filming began in 1920, powerful organizations aligned to censor Starr, attempting to prevent him from exposing Oklahoma’s corrupt legal system and the government’s mistreatment of the Cherokee. The Women’s Christian Temperance Union pressured theater owners to ban his film, state and federal lawmakers drafted legislation to stymie theatrical distribution, and police and district attorneys threatened to send him back to prison.

Starr’s only film, the biographical movie *A Debtor to the Law*, is lost to history, but through surviving memorabilia, newspaper accounts, and interviews with people who worked with him on set, author Mark Archuleta traces how the reformed Gentleman Bandit attempted to use the power of cinema to reframe his life story and redeem himself in the eyes of the public, his family, and the Cherokee Nation.

The Reel Thrilling Events of Bank Robber Henry Starr is about more than heists and Hollywood glamor. Starr’s journey is about the American myth of reinvention, recidivism, and the founding of the motion picture industry when racial tensions were simmering to a boil.

For media inquiries and personal appearances, please contact the author at info@henrystarrbook.com





WWHA at Morphy's Auction in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The weekend of June 20, 2026. Kurt House, Ellen Hagaman and Tim Hagaman.

The Secret Family Story Behind Jesse James

By Eddie Lanham

Family stories are funny things. Some are polished with time until they sound like legend. Others survive because they are simply too strange to forget. One of the strangest in American frontier history is the story of the "Potato-Hole" Woodsons.



The tale begins in colonial Virginia on April 18, 1644, during one of the most violent periods of conflict between settlers and Indians in the Tidewater region. Dr. John Woodson, an Oxford-educated physician living near present-day Richmond, had been away making medical rounds when Indian warriors attacked the settlement. Learning his family was in danger, Woodson mounted his horse and raced home.

According to family tradition, he rode directly into the attack and was killed within sight of his house.

Inside the cabin, his wife Sarah Woodson suddenly found herself alone with two small sons, Robert and John, while war cries echoed outside. Realizing the attackers could burst through the door at any moment, Sarah acted quickly. She barred the entrance and handed a visiting friend the family's massive, long rifle — a weapon so enormous it later became famous in Virginia history.

Then came the decision that would brand generations of descendants with nicknames still remembered nearly four centuries later. Fearing for her children's lives, Sarah hid



one son, Robert, beneath the floor in the family's potato storage pit. Her other son, John, was concealed beneath a large wash tub.

As the attackers pressed toward the house, Sarah reportedly fought back with boiling water while the rifleman fired through openings in the cabin. Several warriors were said to have been killed before the others finally retreated into the forest. The family survived.

And from that day forward, descendants of Dr. and Sarah Woodson became known as the “Potato-Hole” Woodsons, while descendants of John were forever labeled the “Wash-Tub” Woodsons.

It sounds almost too colorful to be true, yet the story endured generation after generation across Virginia, Kentucky, Missouri, and Texas.

The Woodson family tree eventually produced a remarkable collection of Americans. Among the “Potato-Hole” branch were the infamous James brothers — Jesse James and Frank James — along with Dolley Madison. Other related lines included names such as Davy Crockett, Meriwether Lewis, and Confederate cavalry legend John S. Mosby. Not a bad collection for one frightened boy hidden beneath potatoes. I happen to be a “Potato-Hole” Woodson myself.

My grown children have never let me forget it. They find great humor in the title. Unfortunately for them, I have fully embraced it. While I have no plans to die at the Alamo, explore the West with Lewis and Clark, terrorize Union troops in Virginia, marry a future president, or rob trains and banks across Missouri, a fellow is still allowed to dream.

My favorite question to ask distant cousins is simple:

“Are you a Wash-Tub Woodson, or a Potato-Hole?”

Of course, once folks learn of the connection to Frank and Jesse James, the conversation quickly changes direction.

“What do you think about the James brothers?”

That question has started many arguments around campfires and conference tables. Like most men shaped by the border violence of the Civil War and Reconstruction, Frank and Jesse were products of their times — hard times. Missouri during and after the war was a brutal place filled with guerrilla warfare, revenge killings, political hatred, and blood feuds that often lasted generations.

One event especially, hardened public attitude toward the James family. In 1875. Pinkerton detectives seeking the James brothers raided the home of their mother, Zerelda James Samuel. During the nighttime assault, an incendiary device was thrown into the cabin. The explosion blew off Zerelda’s right arm and killed Jesse’s young half-brother Archie, who was only eight years old.

To supporters of the James boys, the raid confirmed that the authorities were no better than the outlaws they hunted. To others, it only deepened the cycle of violence already consuming the frontier.

History rarely offers clean heroes and villains.

One final note for firearms collectors and students of early America: the legendary Woodson rifle still survives today. The massive firearm remains preserved in Richmond, Virginia. Early Virginia historian C. W. Venable described it this way:

“The gun is, by exact measurement, seven feet six inches in length, and the bore is so large that I can easily put my whole thumb into it.” According to tradition, the rifle originally measured eight feet long but later lost six inches during repairs performed in England. That old rifle, like the family story itself, has survived war, time, and generations of retelling.



And somewhere out there today, another descendant is probably still asking: “Potato-Hole or Wash-Tub?”

**WILD WEST HISTORY ASSOCIATION
COUNTRY STORE**

Grey Fleece Vest XL, 2XL \$40 	Grey Blanket In Pouch 40 X 56 \$10 	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, Fuchsia 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

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WWHA Button Freebie

Texas Ranger History Symposium
Buggy Barn Museum, Blanco, Texas
1915 Main St.
Blanco, Texas
10 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 1, 2026

Schedule

Welcome: Joe Davis

Moderator: Mike Cox, FTRA Historian

The Sowell Family of Texas Rangers

Roy Young, Apache, OK

22 Arrows, 7 Bullets: Cisero Rufus Perry

Mike Cox

Lynch Mobs, Vigilantes, and Gangs in Blanco County

Steve Rossignol, Blanco County Historical Society

Robert Duval and Lonesome Dove

George Getschow, Director, Larry McMurtry Literary Center,
Archer City, Texas

Confessions of a Serial Lonesome Dove Reader

Wayne Jackson, Tucson, Arizona

Sixty Years Ago, Today: The UT Tower Sniper

Retired Ranger Ramiro Martinez, New Braunfels, Texas



*Figure 1 Texas
Ranger A J Sowell*

Vendors:

Roy Young, books and Wild West History Association materials

Ray Martinez books

FTRA, books, general store

Mike Cox, books

Larry McMurtry Literary Center, books, swag

Several of us are already planning to attend this event.



WILD WEST HISTORY ASSOCIATION YOUTUBE

Learn More About Wild West History

July 2026

Released Every Friday After 3:00PM EST

PLEASE! LIKE, COMMENT AND SUBSCRIBE

(This Channel Helps to Fund the WWH)

July 3rd

Biscuit the Donkey vs Comanches

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4fvG9F856xg>

July 10th

**O. C. Hanks, Outlaw, Headstone Dedication. Baddest member of
The Wild Bunch.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FqiVhFgwsuc>

July 17th

**Colt Single Action Revolvers: Guns & Holsters That Conquered the
Wild West**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Z1_afVQeFY

July 24th

**Hollywood Made Wyatt Famous... But Virgil Earp Was the Real
Marshal of Tombstone**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pp99-IEZ2Eg>

July 31st

**Wounded for Texas: Samuel McCulloch Jr., the First Texan
Casualty, was almost erased from history.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hSaSfv7UVnY>

WILD WEST HISTORY ASSOCIATION

YouTube SHORTS

(Less Than 3 Minutes) (Cell Phone View)

Learn More About Wild West History

July 2026

Released Every Tuesday After 3:00PM EST

PLEASE! LIKE, COMMENT AND SUBSCRIBE

(This Channel Helps to Fund the WWhA)

July 7th

I Killed Outlaw Sam Bass in a Running Gunfight. Richard "Dick" Ware, Texas Ranger.

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/84ZxOxOPNZc>

July 14th

A Relic Hunter's Dream. A Historian's Mother Lode. Buried Treasure from the late 1600s...Found.

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/hOly0mZkZG8>

July 21st

Thirteen Year Old BOY SCALPED by INDIANS and LIVED.

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/tGjYc7XuSZk>

July 28th

Who Was Curly Bill Brocius? Was he killed by Wyatt Earp?

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/-hDrtgJUvoc>

WWhA is in immediate need of a new Merchandise Manager to take over after the Albuquerque Roundup in July.

Responsibilities include ordering new merchandise for each Roundup, keeping an inventory, promoting the merchandise, and manning the table at each Roundup. The ability to drive to each Roundup is necessary, in order to transport the merchandise.

Please contact Jean Smith, Treasurer, crystalkate@gmail.com if you are interested.

The merchandise left from the Albuquerque Roundup will be given to the new Manager at the Roundup.

The sale of WWhA merchandise is one of the fundraisers used to support our organization. Please help us out!

Prescott's Doc Holliday Weekend, August 14-16, 2026

Join the gathering in downtown Prescott, Arizona, for Prescott's Doc Holliday weekend,

**PRESCOTT'S
DOC HOLLIDAZE**

J.H. Holliday

August 14-16

Victorian Garden Party Reception & Downtown Pub Crawl
Wild West History Forum & Catered Lunch
Gravestone Dedication for JD Kinnear
Doc's Birthday Dinner with Whiskey & Cigar Tasting
Walking History Tours

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WILD WEST MUSEUM

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SCAN FOR INFO & TICKETS
PrescottTombstoneConnection.org
Email: Prescott.Tombstone@gmail.com
Call: 928-713-5136

August 14-16, 2026! The celebration is designed to promote the history of Prescott with entertaining and engaging education and to provide a fun weekend of events for both locals and out of town attendees. A discounted All Weekend Pass includes entrance to all events for \$165, and tickets for individual events are available as well at www.PrescottTombstoneConnection.org.

Begin the weekend with a Victorian Garden Party at Sharlot Hall Museum on Friday, August 14th, beginning at 5:00 PM, followed by a downtown Saloon Crawl. Our "Welcome to the Weekend Reception"! Meet your fellow history enthusiasts and enjoy some light bites and music by Chip Hanna while you stroll the 4 acres of gardens and historic buildings of this iconic museum. The Prescott Regulators and their Shady Ladies will entertain with a "Doc" skit! Then take a tour of several local watering holes. Each guest will receive a drink ticket in the form of a wooden nickel good for one special "Doc Drink" offered by one of the participating bars. Western or 1880's period attire is encouraged! Tickets for the Victorian Garden Party and Saloon Crawl only are \$40.

On Saturday, August 15th, from 9:00 AM to 3:30 PM, learn some fascinating history at the Wild West History Forum at the fabulous Elks Theatre! Scheduled speakers for the History Forum include Roy Young, Mark Boardman, Peter Brand, Michael Paul Mihaljeich and Anastasia Sitnina. Seating for the History Forum is General Admission, and the concession stand will be open. Tickets for the History Forum only are \$25.

There will be a lunch break from 12:00 to 1:30. A catered lunch will be available at the Hassayampa Inn's Marina Room, with sandwiches and salads of your choice. Meet the History Forum speakers and relax before returning to the Elks Theatre for the afternoon sessions. Tickets for the Luncheon only are \$40.

After the History Forum on Saturday, there will be a grave marker dedication for JD Kinnear's grave at the Pioneer's Home Cemetery at 4:00 PM. There is no charge to attend the dedication. The grave marker has been arranged and funded by the Wild West History Association.



All Trails Lead to Young County, Texas

By
Donna Harrell

A two-hour drive West from Dallas-Fort Worth brings to you Young County, Texas. The county is packed with Wild West history—from cattle trails and frontier forts to stage lines and frontier conflicts. The real-life events that inspired the John Wayne-Dean Martin movie “The Sons of Katie Elder” happened in Young County.

Fort Belknap was established in 1851. It was at the Northern end of a group of Texas forts founded to protect settlers. The Butterfield Overland Mail route went through Young County and Fort Belknap was an important supply stop on the route. The fort was abandoned by Union troops in 1861. During the Civil War, the fort was used



intermittently by local militia, Texas Rangers and passing Confederate units. In June 1866, Charles Goodnight and Oliver Loving drove roughly 2,000 cattle out of Fort Belknap, marking the beginning of the Goodnight–Loving Trail.

The army stopped using the fort in late 1867. In 1936, restoration of the fort began with the help of local citizens. The restored stone buildings and the grounds are available for viewing on most days of the week. The main building, usually manned by author/historian Jim Hammond, houses artifacts

from the fort’s history. Mr. Hammond takes care of the fort and is a wealth of knowledge about Fort Belknap as well as Texas frontier history. On the grounds is an arbor made up of the largest known mustang grape vine in existence. There are numerous tables for picnics or meetings in the arbor. There are events held at the fort throughout the year.

The county seat of Graham proudly boasts the largest town square in the United States. With a stop at Pratt’s Books which carries thousands of Texas and Wild West history books, the traveler can get started. The Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association was founded in Graham by forty ranchers in February, 1877. The first president was C. L. Carter and the secretary was J. C. Loving.

In 1889, the Graham area became the site of a shoot-out between townspeople and a group of brothers named Marlow. At their Young County farm, Boone Marlow was to be served with an arrest warrant by Sheriff Marion Wallace. There was a brief shoot-out which led to the Sheriff being mortally wounded and Boone Marlow escaping. Although not part of the shoot-out, Boone’s remaining four brothers were arrested and held in the Young County jail in Graham. Fearing a lynch mob, the Deputy Sheriff decided to move the brothers to Weatherford. The wagons of the lawmen and Marlow brothers were ambushed outside of Graham along Dry Creek. Two of the Marlow brothers were killed. Boone was later killed. The three are buried together in Finis, Jack County, Texas.

Today, the Young County jail building is a store but parts of the original building be viewed. Dry Creek can be observed along Highway 380 a few miles outside of Graham heading towards Newcastle. In 1965, the John Wayne-Dean Martin Western, "The Sons of Katie Elder" was released. The story of the Elder brothers was based on the Marlow brothers. The ambush of the movie Elders is very close to what happened to the real Marlow brothers.

Another famous event in Young County was the Warren Wagon Train massacre. In May, 1871, a freight wagon train was travelling between Fort Belknap and Fort Richardson when it was ambushed by close to 100 braves. Seven teamsters were killed.

The new Young County Museum of History and Culture is at 609 4th Street, across the street from the old Young County Jail. The museum, expertly overseen by the ever-helpful WWHHA member Shannon Potts, is a wonderful place to explore Young County's remarkable history. There are exhibits about the Native Americans who lived along the Brazos River going back thousands of years. The Brazos River Indian Reservation was established in 1854 then closed in 1859 when the tribes were moved to Oklahoma Territory. Whether you're drawn to the history of the local oil fields, wagon trains, the drama of the Santa Claus Bank Robbery, or modern military firearms, the Young County Museum offers a surprisingly wide range of stories.

Besides Wild West history, there is the Post Office museum, beautiful Fireman's Park, Lake Graham and many other places to keep the tourist busy. Check out Young County, Texas!



CA(t)—BOOM!

by Preston Lewis

As predictable as thunder after lightning, cats followed prospectors to mining bonanzas throughout the Old West once entrepreneurs realized herding cats was easier than extracting ore. Even better, the return on investment was often much higher.

From California boomtowns in 1849 to the Yukon in 1899, cats became as necessary as picks, shovels and sluice boxes to counter the millions of rodents that overran roughhewn communities on the fringe of civilization and civility.

When the world rushed into San Francisco in 1849, so did rats, disembarking from the global sailing ships that had docked by the hundreds along the water front. The imported rats and indigenous rodents went wild. Soon another schooner brought the solution, a load of cats from the village of Los Angeles, where a black barber named Peter Briggs had seen the pussibilities in exporting cats to the Bay Area. Every night after a day of cutting hair, Briggs set traps for cats and when he had “enough to make a schooner cargo,” according to the *San Francisco Call*, he sailed for the Barbary Coast. Selling cats for up to \$25 apiece, the equivalent of \$789 in today’s money, Briggs netted “a modest fortune.”ⁱ



Another Los Angeles entrepreneur, whose name is lost to history, borrowed all the money he could and then bought up “every cat south of Tehachipi (sic) at four for one dollar.” He loaded his cats on “Cap Haley’s *Sea Bird*” and sailed to San Francisco, where he auctioned them off “for as high as \$75 apiece,” clearing several thousand dollars. As the old ‘49er recalled to the *Chicago Post*, perhaps with some exaggeration, “The cats did the business, too, and inside of six weeks there wasn’t a solitary rat in San Francisco. But we had a time afterward getting rid of the cats.”ⁱⁱ

In 1851 a San Francisco correspondent of the *New York Journal Commerce* reported the steamer *Ohio* had arrived from San Diego with “Cats, 96 in number” that cost 50 cents a head in Southern California and sold in San Francisco from \$10 to \$20,

“according to size, sex and general condition.” As late as 1852, cats from as far away as Boston, a hundred kitties in this instance, were still being exported by ship to San Francisco, a trend that repeated itself with successive mining booms throughout the West.ⁱⁱⁱ

Whether in gold or silver camps, cats became a valuable commodity because pervasive rats and mice found readymade homes and a varied diet available from filthy boomtown conditions. For instance, mines around Boise, Idaho, as early as 1863 created demand in the city where “a respectable ‘tabby’ readily commands \$10,” according to the *Weekly Oregon Statesman*. Below ground in the mines, rodents were tolerated as an early warning system for cave-ins. When the earth began to settle or shift, rats would stampede from their holes alerting miners of an impending collapse and offering them a chance to escape.^{iv}

Above ground, though, rats had little to offer boomtown residents other than damage, pestilence and proliferation, especially proliferation. As the *Columbus* (Nebraska) *Journal* observed in 1887, “It is easier to render a building fire-proof than rat-proof.” Simply put, rats are reproductive machines. A rat reaches sexual maturity in three to four months so a single pair of brown rats and their offspring could produce up to 2,000 descendants annually as well as untold damage to foodstuffs and merchandise. For instance, operators of the N.W.S. & T Company warehouse in 1878 Deadwood, Dakota Territory, estimated that mice alone destroyed between \$10 and \$20 worth of goods a day. Almost 20 years later the *San Francisco Call* pegged warehouse rodent damage at \$50 to \$100 a month, including everything from foodstuffs to such innocuous merchandise as 500 bales of twine rendered useless by rats at the Eagle Warehouse.^v

After a major silver strike on the Comstock Lode in 1859, an elderly Mormon Island, California, man faced foreclosure on his property until a stranger stopped by his house and mentioned in passing that the kittens running around his place could bring \$20 apiece in Virginia City, Nevada. For the next two weeks, his neighbors thought him crazy as he begged people to give him their cats or bought them when they wouldn’t. After collecting 500 cats, he herded them to the Comstock and returned with profit enough to pay off his \$1,500 mortgage and to bank another \$500.^{vi}

At about the same time the Comstock was booming, gold was discovered near Pike’s Peak in Colorado Territory and another cat rush was on. As usual, mining properties were overrun with rats. As the Newton, Kansas, paper reported, these rats were “not your domesticated, house mice and rats of an old civilized community, but rats—large, ravenous rats—with teeth and digestive apparatus capable of managing anything from a tough old boot to a dainty piece of breakfast bacon.” A poor but thrifty Dutchman in Omaha, Nebraska, heard of the problem and “secured a yoke of oxen, rigged a prairie-schooner with three stories (of cages) and filled the same with good cats, which his neighbors were glad to be rid of.” He then started the perilous 600-mile journey to Pike’s Peak, barely feeding his cats so they would be ravenously hungry when they arrived in gold country.^{vii}

When the Dutchman reached the mining claims with his felines, “Their arrival spread joy among the householders and everything was set aside to purchase cats,” reported the Newton paper. The vendor sold all his cats, then his wagon and even his oxen, converting everything to gold and walking all the way back to Nebraska with more than \$1,500. He used his profits to buy a farm near Omaha. Weeks later the thrifty Dutchman got an unexpected dividend on his cat investment when “his faithful oxen strayed back to him.”^{viii}

The first cat to reach the Black Hills prospecting boom arrived in Spearfish in 1876 with eventual farmer D.C. Walker, who later brought a “double-deck wagon-load of mousers” to the region and sold his feline freight at a half an ounce of gold dust per cat. While Walker may have been the first to import cats to the region, the most famous cat cargo in the Black Hills—and perhaps in all of the Old West—was the “house cats for cat houses” load delivered in June of 1876 by Phatty Thompson to “the girls of the gulch,” as local prostitutes were called by the *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*. Thompson had paid Cheyenne, Wyoming, boys 25 cents for each cat they caught, then freighted the kitties to Deadwood to sell to “the lonely dancehall girls,” who by some accounts had requested them for companionship. Thompson sold the cats in Deadwood for between \$10 and \$40. Even the few that were too mangy to go at exorbitant prices were sold at reduced rates and Thompson cleared over a thousand dollars from the sale. While other cat wagons reached the Black Hills over the ensuing years, the contemporaneous *Pioneer-Times* account from 1876 confirms that Thompson’s was the first to reach Deadwood with the exotic cargo for his erotic clientele.^{ix}

In the 1880s, Colorado was still drawing cat herds from afar. Thomas Sheffery of Orleans, Nebraska, established “a cat farm” to meet the 1885 demand in Denver, shipping felines by the carload to the Mile High City at prices as high as \$5 apiece for tomcats. By 1887 Kansas had developed a new industry in supplying cats to “new Colorado towns overrun by rats,” according to the *Atchison Daily Champion*. “A thousand tomcats are being collected by the firm of Humphrey & Humphrey of Belle Plain, Kansas, for shipment to the rat-invaded town of Hugo, Colorado.” By 1890 the Prescott, Arizona, *Weekly Journal-Miner* was suggesting “to you fellows who say there is no chance here for a poor man, we say start a cat ranch.” Even the harsh climate of the Klondike didn’t stop cat merchants from carrying kitty cargo to Dawson City as Wisconsin attorney H.J. Coleman took “a large crate of cats” to Dawson City aboard the Steamer *Rosalie*.^x

But for all their good in combating boomtown vermin, cats came at a cost to the public tranquility. Barely four years after the first cats arrived in the Deadwood area, the *Black Hills Weekly Pioneer* complained that “the importation has multiplied until now the city favorably compares with any in the east as regards the abundance of midnight disturbers. In fact cats are becoming a positive nuisance.”^{xi}

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- ⁱ “From Tacks and Cats: How Two Snug Fortunes Were Acquired in Early Days,” *The San Francisco Call*, San Francisco, California, 25 September, 1892, 14; and Inflation Calculator Website, <<https://westegg.com/inflation/infl.cgi?money=25&first=1849&final=2020>> Retrieved 4 July 2021.
- ⁱⁱ “A Corner in Cats,” *Chicago Post* reprint in the *Daily Capital Journal*, Salem, Oregon, 6 October 1891, 4.
- ⁱⁱⁱ “The Cat Trade in California,” *New York Journal Commerce* article reprinted in *The Arkansas Banner*, Little Rock, Arkansas, 3 Jun 1851, 3; and “One Hundred Cats,” *Glasgow Weekly Times*, Glasgow, Missouri, 5 February 1852, 4.
- ^{iv} “News from Boise,” *Weekly Oregon Statesman*, Salem, Oregon, 12 Oct 1863, 3; and Dan De Quille, *The Big Bonanza* (Las Vegas: Nevada Publications, 1974), 250-51.
- ^v “First Appearance of Rats,” *The Columbus Journal*, Columbus, Nebraska, 2 February 1887, 4; Liza Lentini and David Mouzon, “20 Things You Didn't Know About... Rats,” *Discover*, December 2006, magazine Website <<http://discovermagazine.com/2006/dec/20-things-rats>> Retrieved 29 July 2016; “The Stock of Cats,” *The Black Hills Daily Times*, Deadwood, Dakota Territory, 30 January 1878, 4; and “Keep Many Cats,” *The San Francisco Call*, 20 September 1896, 23.
- ^{vi} “A Market for Cats,” *Arizona Daily Star*, Tucson, Arizona, 6 September 1884, 1.
- ^{vii} “A Western Whittington and His Cats,” *The Evening Kansan*, Newton, Kansas, 31 December 1891, 4.
- ^{viii} *Ibid.*
- ^{ix} “The First Cat,” *Black Hills Weekly Pioneer*, Deadwood, Dakota Territory, 7 February 1880, 1; John Hafnor, *Black Hills Believable: Strange-but-True Tales of the Old West* (Fort Collins, Colorado: Lone Pine Productions, 1984), 70; “Cats from Cheyenne,” *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, Deadwood, Dakota Territory, 8 June 1876, 1; and Shebby Lee, “The Cat Pioneers,” presented at the West River History Conference, Rapid City, South Dakota, October 14, 2006, <http://www.exploretheoldwest.com/the_cat_pioneers.htm> Retrieved 29 July 2016; and *Black Hills Weekly Pioneer*, 23 October 1880, 1.
- ^x “Thomas Sheffery,” *Great Falls Tribune*, Great Falls, Montana, 5 December 1885, 1; “Kansas Seems,” *The Atchison Daily Champion*, 4 December 1887, 3; “Big Thing in a Cat Ranch,” *Weekly Journal-Miner*, Prescott, Arizona, 2 July 1890, 2; and “More Trouble for Dawson,” *The Seattle (Washington) Star*, 13 Jul 1899.
- ^{xi} *Black Hills Weekly Pioneer*, 23 October 1880, 1.

Be sure and see the article in the June issue of **COWBOYS AND INDIANS** by Mark Lee Gardner about the 150th Anniversary of the Custer Battle.





Museum Launches New Name

The Tread of Pioneers Museum is proud to announce an exciting new chapter: effective immediately, the museum will be known as the **Steamboat Springs History Museum**.

This new name reflects the museum's growth and long-standing commitment to preserving and sharing the broad, diverse, and continually unfolding history of Steamboat Springs and Routt County. While the name has changed, the museum's mission stands firm: to collect, preserve, share, and celebrate the history and heritage of the Steamboat Springs area.

"The transition to Steamboat Springs History Museum reflects our evolution and identity as a modern history museum in an extraordinary town," said Candice Bannister, the organization's Executive Director. "We remain focused on preserving the past, engaging the present, and inspiring future generations and stewardship."

When the museum was founded in 1959, the name “Tread of Pioneers Museum” reflected its original purpose as a new institution dedicated to preserving the stories and memorabilia of Routt County's early settlers. Inspired by a poem by John Greenleaf Whittier and a book by *Steamboat Pilot* editor Charles Leckenby, the name honored the pioneering spirit that shaped the region.

Preserving and sharing the history of Routt County's early settlers and families remains a cornerstone of the museum's work, collections, and exhibits in the historic Zimmerman and Utterback houses, modern galleries, and in locations throughout the community. The museum also explores Indigenous history and culture, ranching and agriculture, skiing and Olympic heritage, mining and industry, tourism and recreation, arts and culture, historic preservation, and the geology of the area's famed mineral springs. New programs and innovative exhibits connect local history themes with the broader stories of Colorado, the West, and the United States.

Over the past two decades in particular, the museum has expanded significantly in its facilities, activities, and services. Professional museum staff develop and lead exhibits, educational programs, collections stewardship, and community partnerships, drawing on local, statewide, and national networks to ensure the museum remains informed and relevant, and responsive to community needs.

Today, the museum serves more than 15,000 annual visitors, including 5,000 children, through permanent and changing exhibits and over 300 programs, tours, and events each year.

“We strive to create a community gathering place for learning, reflection, and celebration of the local heritage that makes Steamboat Springs and Routt County such a special place to live and visit,” Bannister said. “We remain true to the mission that has guided us since 1959, and we are building on the museum's momentum as we look toward an exciting future.”

For more information, visit steamboathistory.org or follow @SteamboatHistory on social media.

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HAPPY 4TH OF JULY

