

Saddlebag Newsletter

September 2026

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A supplement to the WWA *Journal*

Available On-Line via www.wildwesthistory.org

Welcome to the Saddlebag Newsletter. Here is the latest information from WWA. 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!

Lee Ralph, Topeka, KS

Laura Love, Tucumcari, NM

Colleen Aycock, Albuquerque, NM

Donald Slade, Euless, TX

Kimberly Randleas, Canyon City, OR

Stacy Anderson Gunfighter APO

Raymond & Sharon Schirmer, Gunfighters

Wes Sheffield, Burleson, TX

Kathleen Mancino, Prescott, AZ

Spring DeLeon Wallace, Drummond, MT

Edward Zito, Miami, FL

HORSEHEAD CROSSING
— ON THE PECOS RIVER —
OCTOBER 8-9, 2027
FREE & OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

- ★ Chuck Wagon Meals
- ★ Re-enactors
- ★ Live Cannon Fire
- ★ Historians & Presenters
- ★ Cowboy Poetry
- ★ Exhibitors
- ★ Gunslinger Shootouts
- ★ Walking Tours

★ **THE REAL LONESOME DOVE** ★
★ HAPPENED HERE ★
★ **FREE DRY CAMPING** ★



Hi WWHA Members,

Summer is almost over. Most students are back in school, and everyone is starting their fall routines.

From August 14th-16th, over twenty WWHA members attended Doc Hollidaze in Prescott, Arizona. It was a very successful meeting with presentations, dinners and social time with other Wild West history lovers. I was able to spend time talking to members and recruiting new members. It was also a great networking experience as I spent time talking to Stuart Rosebrook, President of Western Writers of America.

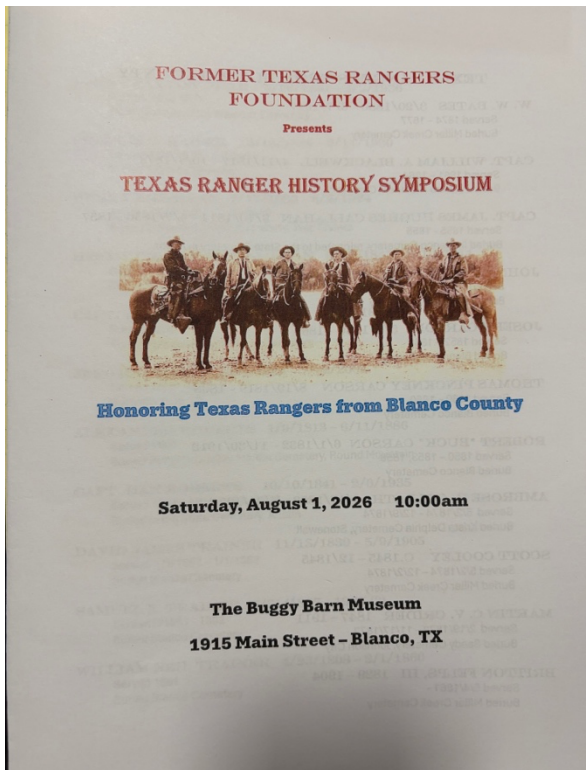
One very special event was a grave marker dedication for J. D. Kinnear. Many people, including those that were well-known, were buried without a headstone. Wild West History Association partners with families and historians to help fund grave markers for notable figures in Wild West history who currently have unmarked graves. If you know of someone who should be recognized, we welcome your suggestions.

There are many ways you can help keep history alive and thriving. Every time you tell your children or grandchildren a story about your family's connection to the Wild West, the depression or a war you or an ancestor fought in, you give them a personal connection to history which they'll be more likely to remember. Visiting historic sites, museums, and the places where history took place helps deepen that connection and, hopefully, inspires them to care about it too. When you tell friends, neighbors, or fellow history lovers about WWHA, you help strengthen our organization and our mission to preserve an important part of our country's history.

Keep watching our excellent YouTube videos and exploring content on our social media platforms Facebook and Instagram.

Thank you for all your support,
Donna Harrell
President





Pam Potter and Roy Young

The Former Texas Ranger Foundation presented a Texas Ranger History Symposium in Blanco, Texas on August 1, 2026, honoring Texas Rangers from Blanco County. The well attended event was held at the impressive Buggy Barn Museum. There were several interesting presentations, mostly about Texas Rangers including fictional rangers Gus and Call from Lonesome Dove. Roy Young spoke about his relatives, The Sowell Family of Texas Rangers.

There were many relatives of famous Texas Rangers from the 1880's in the audience, including relations of Rufus Perry, whose career was long and eventful.



Eddie Lanham and Charlotte Young



Preserving a Legend: The New Billy the Kid Gravesite Monument at Fort Sumner

By Josh Slatten

Few graves in the American West carry the mystique and controversy of Billy the Kid. Resting in the old military cemetery at Fort Sumner, his burial site has survived floods, the theft of its original marker, repeated attempts to identify its exact location, and nearly a century and a half of debate. Every twist in the grave's history has only added to its legend. Today, it remains one of the American West's most recognizable historic landmarks, drawing tourists, historians, and skeptics from around the world who come seeking a real connection to the Boy Bandit King.

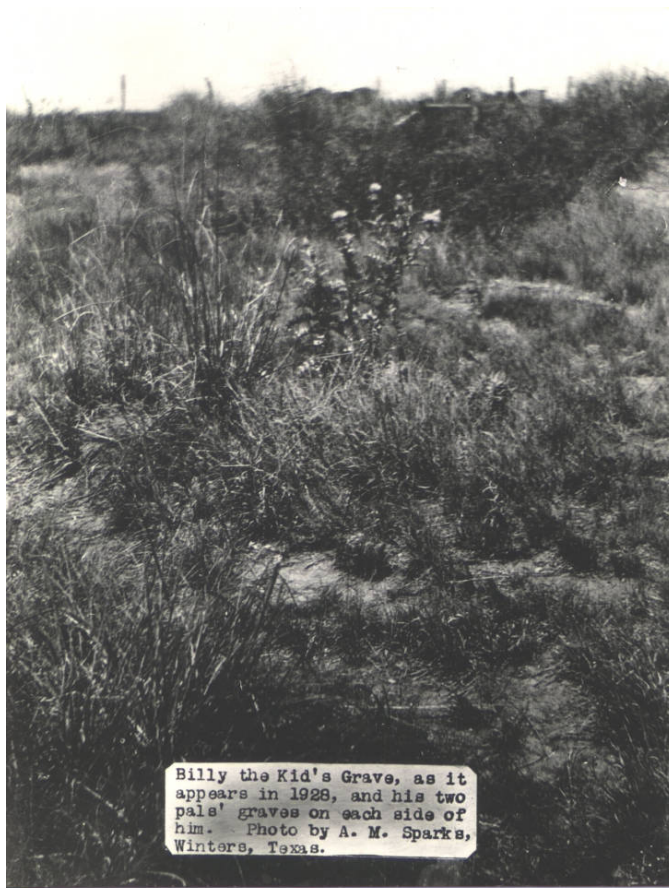
Recognizing the importance of preserving this iconic site, Billy the Kid's Historical Coalition partnered with the Fort Sumner Chamber of Commerce, the Fort Sumner City Council, and the Mayor's Office in June 2026 to install a permanent monument telling the remarkable story of Billy's gravesite. The project was made possible through the generosity of Boulder Designs of Waco, Texas, whose craftsmanship transformed a simple idea into a lasting tribute worthy of one of the West's most famous historical landmarks.

The new monument replaced an aging wooden sign that had become weathered and faded and was literally falling over after years of exposure to the harsh New Mexico sun

and wind. While that sign had welcomed visitors for years, it no longer reflected the historical importance of a site that attracts thousands of people each year from across the country and beyond.

For Billy the Kid's Historical Coalition, however, this project was never just about replacing a sign. It was about preserving a piece of American history. Since its founding, the Coalition has remained committed to protecting, preserving, and promoting the authentic history of Billy the Kid, the Lincoln County War, and the broader story of the American Wild West.

The monument tells a story that is nearly as fascinating as the man buried beneath it.



Billy the Kid's Grave, as it appears in 1928, and his two pale' graves on each side of him. Photo by A. M. Sparks, Winters, Texas.

The earliest known description of Billy's grave appeared in the Las Vegas Daily Optic in January 1882, less than a year after his death. At the time, his resting place was identified only by a simple wooden board bearing the words "Billy the Kid." By the late 1880s, even that modest marker had reportedly disappeared after being removed by a Boston collector who hoped to place it in a museum. Over the decades that followed, the cemetery endured devastating floods, proposals to relocate every grave to Santa Fe, and continuing uncertainty about the exact location of Billy's burial. Thankfully, the careful records created when the military graves were exhumed in 1906, including the now-famous Dudrow Map, provide compelling evidence that Billy's grave lies within only a few feet of its present-day location.

As the years passed, local citizens worked tirelessly to preserve the famous gravesite. In 1930, longtime Fort Sumner residents, including Paco Anaya and Charlie Foor, met to determine the most likely location of Billy's grave before concrete was poured over the grave site to secure it. The iconic "PALS" monument followed in 1931, and Billy received his own individual headstone in 1940. Unfortunately, the grave's fame also made it a target. His headstone was stolen twice: once before being recovered in Texas in 1975, and again in 1981, when it was taken by a California truck driver. Following the second theft, the now-famous steel cage was installed to protect the marker, becoming an unmistakable part of the gravesite itself.

Through floods, vandalism, theft, relocation attempts, and generations of speculation, Billy the Kid's gravesite has endured as one of the most recognizable and enduring landmarks of the American West. The installation of the new monument in 2026 ensures that visitors will not only stand at one of the West's most famous graves but will also understand the extraordinary history that surrounds it. More importantly, it reflects the Coalition's continuing commitment to preserving the places, stories, and people that shaped the frontier so those stories can continue to inspire generations to come.



Prescott's Doc HolliDaze

Elks Theater, Doc HolliDaze, Prescott Arizona, August 15, 2026



Roy Young at the speaker's podium

The Wild West History association participated with Prescott's DocHolliDaze, August 14-16 in Prescott, AZ. Roy Young, Mike Mihaljevich, Peter Brand, Ana Sitnina and Pam Potter were speakers. The Elks Theater in Prescott was a most outstanding location for the speakers with wonderful sound, lighting and a huge screen for PowerPoint. Brad and Wendi Courtney, were the driving force behind the event as well as Stuart Rosebrook and Ron Williams who were a big part of the event. I am sure there were many more behind the scenes whose names I don't know or can't remember but they were a big part of the successful event. I know there were many volunteers who helped with all the details from the theater to the Hassayampa Hotel and other businesses who contributed. It was a real community effort.

WWHA provided a headstone for J D Kinnear, the stagecoach proprietor in Tombstone who was buried at the Pioneer Cemetery in Prescott. He had been without a headstone for 110 years. We installed and had a ceremony at the DocHollyDaze event.



David
Guyton,
Pam Potter,
Eddie
Lanham



"Wild West History Association's "Memorial Tombstone Project" has once again marked the grave of an early Wild West character. On Saturday, August 15th, we dedicated the first-ever tombstone for J. D. Kinnear, dead for 110 years, in the Prescott, Arizona, "Pioneers Home Cemetery." Kinnear was the proprietor of a stage line that ran Tombstone to Tucson, Benson and points in between. It was upon his stage that the Benson or Drew Station robbery occurred resulting in two deaths with Doc Holliday being accused with complicity in the attempted holdup.



Other historic characters in this cemetery include Mary Katherine Haroney "Big Nose Kate" Holliday/Cummings, paramour of Doc Holliday. Additionally, Albert Price Behan (1872-1949), the son of Cochise County Sheriff John Behan is buried there, the same town in which he was born.

WWHA's "Memorial Tombstone Project" has marked numerous graves of Wild West era characters in the 19 years since the merger of WOLA and NOLA. Both former organizations had similar projects and it seemed natural to continue doing the good work of recognizing the lives of both the "good guys" and the "bad guys" as they were, and are, important personages in the reason why WWHHA exists.



Members may submit proposals for other memorial tombstones to be placed, requesting WWHHA's participation with a grant. WWHHA does not organize such projects but helps with financing approved projects, based on a grant of up to



\$250.00 when a project is completed and invoices submitted reaching the \$250.00 mark or greater. It should be noted that WWHHA

does not approve grant requests for projects already completed. We are here to help supplement and participate in such projects, promoting them, publishing photos of the completed projects, etc.

Proposed projects may be submitted to Roy B. Young, "Memorial Tombstone Project" chairperson, via e-mail. Proposals should include the name of the person to be memorialized, a capsulized few paragraphs about the person, the location of the grave to be marked, and the names of those involved in the project. We will help fund a maximum of four projects in a calendar year. Once the WWHHA board has approved the project and the grant request, we ask that those submitting the proposal keep us informed of the progress in completing the project.



SAMUEL WILLIS TUCKER LANHAM

Frontier Prosecutor, Congressman & Governor of Texas

The Twenty-Five-Year-Old Man Who Prosecuted the Kiowa Chiefs After the Warren Wagon Train Massacre

By Eddie Lanham

INTRODUCTION

There are some men in Texas history whose lives seem almost too large to fit within a single generation. Samuel Willis Tucker Lanham was one of those men. Confederate soldier, frontier attorney, district attorney, prosecutor of Kiowa war chiefs, United States Congressman, and eventually Governor of Texas — Lanham's life stretched across some of the wildest and most violent years of the American frontier.

Today, most Texans know little about him. Yet in 1871, his name was printed in newspapers across the nation after he prosecuted the Indian chiefs responsible for the infamous Warren Wagon Train Massacre.

For the Lanham family, however, Samuel Willis Tucker Lanham was more than a historical figure. He was family. And for students of the Old West, he remains one of the last true frontier politicians — a man forged in war, shaped by the frontier, and hardened by the realities of Texas during its most dangerous years.

A BOY OF THE OLD SOUTH

Samuel Willis Tucker Lanham was born on July 4, 1846, in Spartanburg District, South Carolina. His parents, James Madison Lanham and Louisa D'Aubrey Tucker Lanham, raised him during a time when the nation itself was drifting toward division and war.

By the time Lanham was a teenager, the Civil War had erupted.

Like thousands of Southern boys of his generation, he entered military service while still very young. He enlisted in the Confederate Army and served in the 3rd South Carolina Regiment. Though still barely old enough to shave, Lanham endured the brutal campaigns of the Army of Northern Virginia and reportedly fought in several major engagements before the Confederacy collapsed in 1865.

The war left deep scars upon his generation. For many former Confederates, the South offered little opportunity after the surrender. Like countless others, Lanham looked west...and Texas beckoned.

WEST TO TEXAS

After the war, Lanham married Sarah Beona Meng and moved to Texas during the turbulent Reconstruction years.

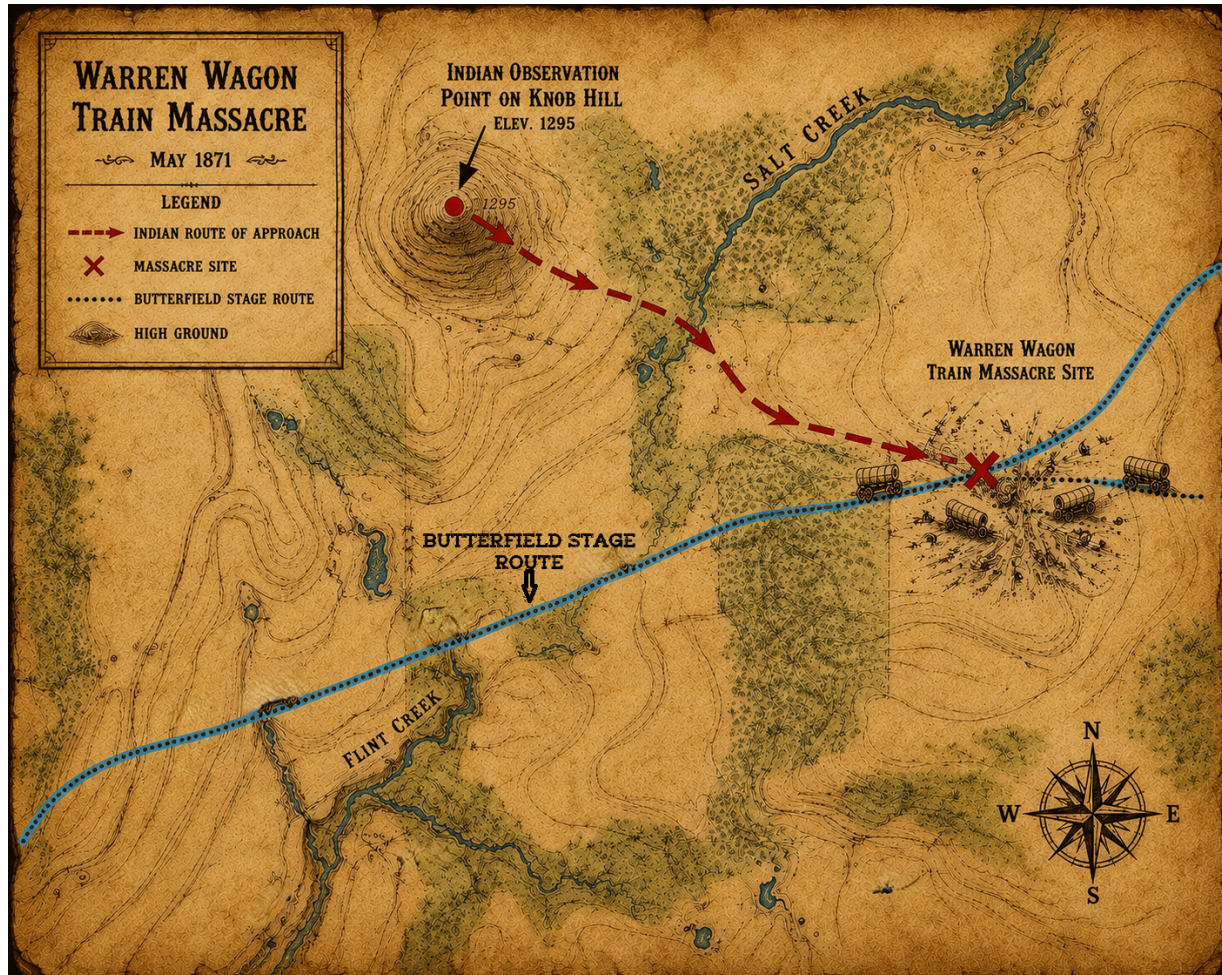
Texas in the late 1860s was still very much frontier country. Large portions of the state remained dangerous and unsettled. Indian raids struck isolated ranches and wagon roads. Buffalo hunters and freighters crossed the plains under constant threat. Military forts dotted the frontier line from the Red River to the Rio Grande.

Lanham first settled in Red River County before eventually moving to Weatherford in Parker County — a community sitting directly on the edge of the Indian frontier.

While teaching school, Lanham studied law and was admitted to the Texas bar in 1869.

He could not have known it then, but only two years later his name would become tied forever to one of the most famous Indian raid trials in Texas history.

THE WARREN WAGON TRAIN MASSACRE



In May 1871, freighter Henry Warren organized a wagon train carrying supplies westward across Salt Creek Prairie near present-day Jacksboro, Texas.

At the same time, General William Tecumseh Sherman himself was touring frontier forts in Texas to inspect conditions along the troubled Indian frontier.

On May 18, a large war party of Kiowa warriors attacked the Warren freight train. Seven teamsters were killed. Their bodies were mutilated and scalped, some beheaded and burned, in one of the most shocking frontier attacks of the era.

The raid became known as the Warren Wagon Train Massacre, or Salt Creek Massacre.

The attack enraged Texans.

Even more alarming, several Kiowa chiefs openly boasted about participating in the raid, including the famous war chief Satanta, often called the “Orator of the Plains.”

Sherman was determined to make an example of the attackers.



THE YOUNG FRONTIER PROSECUTOR

At only twenty-five years old, Samuel Willis Tucker Lanham was selected to help prosecute the captured Kiowa chiefs.

The trial would become nationally famous.

For perhaps the first time in frontier history, major Indian war leaders would be tried in a Texas civil court rather than handled strictly through military channels.

Satanta, Big Tree, and Satank were arrested. Satank was killed while attempting escape during transport. Satanta and Big Tree were brought to trial in Weatherford, Texas.

The courtroom overflowed with spectators. Settlers, ranchers, soldiers, newspapermen, and curious citizens packed the proceedings. Many Texans believed the future safety of the frontier depended upon the outcome.

Lanham quickly proved himself a powerful courtroom presence.

Tall, articulate, and confident, the young attorney represented the growing determination of frontier Texans who were exhausted by raids, killings, and



violence along the western settlements.

The learned and eloquent S. W. T. Lanham, district attorney, closed the argument with an appeal that made him famous throughout the nation, and loved by all Texans. It was published in the leading papers and copied in speech books for schoolboy declamations. In part, he said: "This vast collection of our border people-this sea of faces, including distinguished gentlemen; the matron and the maid; the gray-haired man and the immature lad-have

been attracted here to witness the triumph of law and justice over barbarity and assassination. "Satanta, the veteran chief of the Kiowas, the orator, the diplomat, the counselor of his tribe, the pulse of his race. We recognize in him the arch fiend of treachery and blood, the promoter of strife, the artful dealer in bravado while in the pow-wow, but the canting double-tongued hypocrite when detected and overcome. "In Big Tree we perceive the tiger demon-the mighty warrior athlete, with the speed of a deer and eye of the eagle, who has tasted blood and loves it, who is swift at every species of ferocity and pities not at any sight of agony or death. He can scalp, bum, torture, mangle and deface his victims with all the superlatives of cruelty and have no feelings of sympathy or remorse. "They are both hideous and loathsome in appearance. We look in vain to see in them anything to be admired or even endured. Federal munificence has fostered and nourished them; fed and clothed them. From the strongholds of protection they have come down on us like wolves on the fold, murdered and scalped our people and carried off our women and children into captivity worse than death. We have cried aloud for help, we have begged for relief and the story of our wrongs has been discredited. It speaks well for the humanity of our laws that these prisoners are permitted to be tried in this Christian land by a Christian tribunal. We have proven beyond a doubt that these prisoners were present when the seven teamsters were murdered, scalped, mutilated and burned, and that they boasted of what they had done. By their own



words let them be condemned. "Their conviction and punishment cannot repair the loss nor avenge the death of the good men they have slain, but it is due law, justice and humanity that they should receive the highest punishment This is too mild and humane for them. The State expects a verdict in accordance with the law and evidence."

The evidence against the Kiowa chiefs proved overwhelming.

Satanta and Big Tree were convicted and sentenced to death.

Though political concerns, with pressure from President Grant, Quaker factions and others, later caused Texas Governor Edmund J. Davis to commute the sentences to life imprisonment. The commuted sentences were too much for Sherman. "Satanta ought to have been hung and that would have ended the trouble," he fumed.

The trial itself marked a turning point in frontier Texas history. And it launched Samuel Lanham into statewide prominence.



A RISING TEXAS POLITICIAN

Following the famous Indian trials, Lanham built a successful legal practice and entered Texas politics.



Known as a gifted public speaker and skilled debater, he quickly became influential within the Democratic Party during the post-Reconstruction years.

In 1882, Texans elected him to the United States Congress.

His congressional district covered enormous portions of frontier West Texas. He represented ranchers, cattlemen, frontier communities, and growing railroad interests during a period when Texas itself was rapidly transforming.

Lanham eventually served multiple terms in Congress and became widely respected for his intelligence, speaking ability, and knowledge of frontier affairs.

Yet despite his years in Washington, he never lost his identity as a frontier Texan.

GOVERNOR OF TEXAS

In 1902, Samuel Willis Tucker Lanham was elected the 23rd Governor of Texas.

By then, the frontier era that had shaped his early life was fading rapidly into history.

Railroads crossed the state. Barbed wire fenced the open range. Oil development and industrial growth were reshaping Texas into a modern economic power.

Lanham governed during this transitional period between Old West Texas and modern Texas.

Though respected across much of Texas, Lanham reportedly found the burdens of politics exhausting. The endless pressure from office seekers and political factions weighed heavily upon him. He left office in 1907.

Only a year later, on July 29, 1908, Samuel Willis Tucker Lanham died in Weatherford, Texas. He was sixty-two years old.

Lanham is buried in the “Old City Greenwood Cemetery” along with Oliver Loving, Boze Ikard, and “Peter Pan” (Mary Martin.) All four have State of Texas Historical Markers.

LEGACY OF A FRONTIER TEXAN

Samuel Willis Tucker Lanham lived through nearly every defining chapter of nineteenth-century Texas history.

He witnessed: The Civil War, Reconstruction, Indian frontier warfare, the bison era, the cattle trail years, the closing of the frontier and the rise of modern Texas government. Very few men could claim such a life.

Today, his role in prosecuting the Kiowa chiefs after the Warren Wagon Train Massacre remains one of the most historically significant moments of his career. The trial itself symbolized the changing relationship between the United States government, Texas settlers, and the Plains tribes during the final years of the Indian Wars.

For descendants of the Lanham family, however, Samuel Willis Tucker Lanham represents something even greater: A direct connection to the raw, violent, and transformative years of the American frontier, which we refer to today as “The Wild West.”

Credits:

South Carolina Historical Society

Young County Texas Museum of History and Culture

Library of Congress

Texas State Historical Society

Oklahoma Historical Society

University of Texas

“The Indian Trial,” Charles M. Richardson III



WILD WEST HISTORY ASSOCIATION

YOUTUBE

Learn More About Wild West History

September 2026

Released Every Friday After 3:00PM EST

PLEASE! LIKE, COMMENT AND SUBSCRIBE

(This Channel Helps to Fund the WWHA)

Sept 4th

Did James Earp and Johnny Ringo Travel West on the Same Wagon Train? Austin, Nevada Mystery of 1864

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-d0RmKfrGo>

Sept 11th

DOC HOLLIDAY'S TOMBSTONE ESCAPADES.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2lWzqsEQCY>

Sept 18th

The Boomtown Where Virgil Earp Died — And Wyatt Came to Visit

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

Sept 25th

Two Girls, One Tragedy: A Texas Frontier Comanche Attack in 1864

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

WILD WEST HISTORY ASSOCIATION

YouTube SHORTS

(Less Than 3 Minutes) (Cell Phone View)

Learn More About Wild West History

August 2026

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(This Channel Helps to Fund the WWHA)

Sept 1st

Bigfoot Wallace, Who Fought Comanche Indians, Mexicans, and Bandits.

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/tGEn2pvpLaw>

Sept 8th

Death on the Pecos. Skulls Tell the Stories of Over 90 Years of Comanche Raiding in the Wild West.

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/0zdN-wsCMVs>

Sept 15th

Wild Bunch Member Outlaw Will Carver. Gunned Down on the Streets of Sonora.

https://www.youtube.com/shorts/Dlh3L3L_MvE

Sept 22

Arizona Bill. Just A Pile of Rocks or a Grave? TOMBSTONE.

Bill tells the exciting story.

https://www.youtube.com/shorts/Yr_6HpEXaY4

Sept 29

Noted Train Robber. Killed: The last living member of the outlaw gang called

"The Wild Bunch"

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



WILD WEST HISTORY ASSOCIATION JOURNAL – SEPTEMBER 2026

Preserving the West: Archives, Libraries, and Museums

Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library

Medora, North Dakota

Douglas W. Ellison

