

Wyoming History News

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PRESERVING WYOMING TRADITIONS



Grandma Richardson decorating the Christmas tree, 1913. PHOTO AND CAPTION COURTESY OF WYOMING STATE ARCHIVES, RICHARDSON NEG 57.

When friends and family are gathered for the holidays, many of us treasure the moments when stories are shared. Memories of people, firsthand experiences of historical events, and / or the origins of cherished family and community traditions flow through the conversation. But how do we preserve these precious memories?

The Wyoming Historical Society offers seven best

practices to help friends and families capture these irreplaceable stories.

1. Ask First

Before documenting or recording an individual's story, make sure they are amenable with the idea. Consent is crucial to ensure they are willing to share their memories.

Choose a comfortable and convenient location that lends itself to free-flowing conversation.

2. Choose Your Recording Equipment

Decide whether to use an audio or video recording device based on your needs and comfort with technology. If a person can't be there in person, consider using remote recording platforms like Zoom.

The Wyoming State Archives has two oral history toolkits and two digitization toolkits available to borrow for up to three months at a time. To get information about the toolkits and loan process, contact the Wyoming State Archives at 307.777.8691 or online at: wyoarchives.wyo.gov/index.php/about-archives/oral-history-and-digitization-toolkits

3. Research and Prepare Questions Beforehand

Doing a bit of research about your narrator's life and timeline will help you formulate thoughtful questions. For example, ask about their holiday experiences as a child or the origins of favorite family traditions. Preparation helps overcome

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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Jessica Flock, PRESIDENT
jessica flock.wyo@gmail.com

Lucas Keeler, 1ST VICE PRESIDENT
HankMasonAndTheBear@outlook.com

Beki Speas, 2ND VICE PRESIDENT / NE REP
beki232@gmail.com

Heidi McCullough, TREASURER
heidih2202@yahoo.com

Nancy Tabb, SECRETARY
nancypabb@gmail.com

Dean King, NW REP
goldcreekcanyon@gmail.com

Deb Davidson, SE REP
tree1953@yahoo.com

Andrea Lewis, SW REP
flute42@yahoo.com

Bud Alley, OUT OF STATE REP
alleybud@gmail.com

Executive Director & Editor
Aley Philp, 307.322.3014

All correspondence, membership issues,
and questions should be sent,
preferably via email to:

executivedirector@wyshs.org
or addressed to:

Wyoming Historical Society
Aley Philp, Executive Director
PO Box 247
Wheatland, WY 82201

HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

Ann Chambers Noble, PRESIDENT
anoble1227@aol.com

Rick Robbins, VICE PRESIDENT
rarob@wyomingwisp.com

Alena Wagner, TREASURER
alena.wagner@yahoo.com

Linda Fabian, SECRETARY
lindafabianwy@gmail.com

Kristi Wallin
kristi.wallin@gmail.com

Brian Beauvais
bbeauvais@parkcounty.us

Lucas Fralick
lcfalrick42@gmail.com

NOTE: WHS Members names
appear in **bold** in the newsletter.

Women of Wyoming *Then & Now*

After nearly three years of work, the interview series, Women of Wyoming: Then & Now has officially reached the end of its first full season. This project was funded, in part, by a grant from the Wyoming Cultural Trust Fund and we are grateful to them for that support.

We want to thank the program hosts who donated thousands of hours to behind the scenes efforts of research, scripting, editing, digital design, program guide development and educational elements. And, of course, we appreciate the time and stories gifted to the WHS for this program by each and every special guest.

Our last few interviews (Sarah Ortegon HighWalking, Kathy Karpan, and Aura Sunada Newlin) were especially interesting and relevant to the times.

As part of our responsibility to the grant funder, we are asking for members and viewers to please complete a survey providing feedback on the viewing experience. We need to provide responses for an

upcoming mid-project update. The survey can be taken anonymously, if you choose.

To access the form manually, enter the web address:

www.TinyURL.com/WOWs1survey

You can also scan the QR code with your smartphone and it will bring up the form automatically in a web browser.



Thank you, in advance, for being an important part of this project as both viewers and sharers. We look forward to Season 2's launch in March of 2025.

See all of the interviews at:
<https://youtu.be/ssGHb0Vy8r8?si=3KcEYtSm2Z1mKKge>

Sincerely,

Tanette Molony

continued from page 1

any initial reluctance and makes the conversation flow more naturally.

4. Start with the Basics

Begin with simple questions about their background to provide context for their stories. Questions like “What is your a memory of your childhood?” and “Where did you live growing up?” are great icebreakers and provide a foundation for deeper conversations.

5. Ask Open-Ended Questions

Open-ended questions allow them to share their stories in their own words and provide a more accurate and personal account of their history. Avoid leading questions or making assumptions about their experiences.

Examples are “What are some of your favorite memories of those whom have passed on?” and “What do you remember about how it smelled / tasted / sounded / felt?”

6. Listen Closely

Listening is key. Pay attention not just to what they say, but also to what they might be leaving out. This is especially important when discussing sensitive topics, as some stories may take time to unfold fully.



Christmas in Sheridan, truck with deer heads on the front and City Furniture Co on the side.

PHOTO COURTESY OF WYOMING STATE ARCHIVES: ROBERTS COLL 104, P98-42, H66-95, UNDATED.

7. Be Patient

Remember that some people may need time to recall their memories. Patience is important as they navigate through years of experiences. Be prepared to repeat or reword the question, and ask them to clarify and expand.

The holiday season is an ideal time to initiate the gathering of oral histories, as families and friends share their experiences with one another. By requesting participation when everyone is together during the holidays, times for further and more in-depth sessions can be scheduled.

By following these best practices, you can capture the rich, personal stories of your loved ones and preserve them for future generations.



Eleanor Carrigen on Christmas morning.

PHOTO COURTESY OF WYOMING STATE ARCHIVES,
CARRIGEN NEG 7608, UNDATED.



The **Trail End State Historic Site**, also known as the Kendrick Mansion in Sheridan, has been nominated by USA Today as one of the Best Historic Holiday Home Tours in the USA. Twenty historic house museums around the country are chosen each year. This year, the list of nominees includes historical sites such as George Washington's Mount Vernon, Thomas Jefferson's Monticello, the Vanderbilt family's Biltmore Estate, and Elvis Presley's Graceland.

"With so many other famous and historically important homes on the list, it truly is an honor just to be selected for the competition," said Superintendent Sharie Shada.

...

On October 21st, the **Johnson County Historical Society** hosted a record crowd to listen to Ira Roadifer's talk on Sacajawea.

Heard Along the Historic Trail:

Your Place for Chapter News

Cindy Bower, President of the **Natrona County Historical Society** shared the following: Thanks a million to the Platte Bridge Company for their excellent program on October 26th. How refreshing to have youth in our community who enjoy sharing history! Also thanks to the National Historic Trails Interpretive Center for hosting our event.

Photo right.

...

Hot Springs County Historical Society hosted "From Flying Door Gunner to Flying with Honor" presentation by Tony Absteter, a Vietnam Veteran on November 9th. After graduating in 1967, he went on to serve in the military. Tony survived being shot down twice during his thirteen month tour. Most recently he was a member of a Rocky Mountain Honor Flight to Washington, D.C. He moved to Wyoming in 1979.

...

On November 11th, **Johanna Wickman** received the Community Partner of the Year award from the Casper College Student Veterans Club and the American Legion. It was presented at the Veteran's Ball in Natrona County for her work on the cemetery and headstone project at Fort Caspar.



In Torrington on November 26th the **Goshen County Historical Society** hosted Ben Milner of the Wyoming Game and Fish Downar Bird farm. Milner spoke on the history of the farm near Yoder and raising pheasants for release.

Corrections:

September 2024:

Heard Along the Historic Trail: It was the Star on the hill in Afton that celebrated its 100th year, not the town itself.

2025 Calendar:

January photo caption:

The photo is from Stephen N. Leek collection and depicts a youth skiing scene near Jackson.

September photo caption:

It is a 1948 Dodge car.



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends:

155 years ago, on December 10, 1869, the Wyoming Territorial Legislature passed an act to grant to the women of Wyoming Territory the right of suffrage and to hold public office putting them on equal footing with men. In 1890, this right was written into Article 6 of Wyoming's new constitution ensuring universal suffrage.

As a result of women's suffrage in Wyoming, on February 14, 1870, Esther Hobart Morris was appointed as the first woman justice of the peace. In March 1870, six women in Albany County were seated on a formal grand jury for the first time. After statehood, Mary G. Bellamy was the first woman elected to the Wyoming State Legislature in 1910. Elected in 1912, Susan Wissler became the first female mayor in Wyoming serving the community of Dayton. In 1937, the first woman elected to the Northern Arapaho Tribal Business Council was Nellie Scott. Wyoming's first female Secretary of State was Thyra Thomson, elected in 1963.

When the 68th Legislature for the state of Wyoming convenes on Jan. 14, 2025, women will comprise 26% of its members. According to the 2020 census, women represented 48.8% of the population of Wyoming. Former Secretary of State Kathy Karpan offered the following message to the women of Wyoming, "Don't be afraid to run, take the chance, you might win. Jump in, get involved, run! If you lose, it's nothing. Trust me, I lost a couple of times. The important thing, to quote Teddy Roosevelt, is to 'Get in the Arena' Believe in Yourself. Invest in yourself. Take a chance. Don't be afraid."

The conversation with Kathy Karpan is part of the "Women of Wyoming (WoW): Then & Now" interview series viewable on the Wyoming Historical Society's YouTube page. On Dec. 6, the WoW series features Aura Sunada-Newlin, a fourth-

generation Wyomingite, fourth-generation Japanese American, and Executive Director for the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation. Promoting and sharing the rich history of women in Wyoming remains an on-going effort of the Society.

In 1953, thanks to the dedicated efforts of Mrs. Lola Homsher, we formed a statewide historical society. She traveled the state discussing the importance of a Society and encouraged people to participate in an organizational effort. Shortly thereafter county chapters began to form, with the Fremont County Historical Society being the first. Drawing inspiration from Lola Homsher, I anticipate traveling the state to visit our county chapters in an effort to improve communication, increase collaboration and encourage membership in the Society.

Growing our membership remains a critical component for the long-term sustainability of the Society. At the 2024 WHS annual meeting, an increase in general membership dues from \$40 to \$50 was approved. In addition, several new categories of membership were approved including for Seniors (\$40), Veterans (\$45), Students (\$20) and a digital membership (\$30). Our new Bylaws went into effect on October 1st and membership renewal letters were mailed shortly thereafter. Regrettably, some errors occurred with the rollout of these new membership options. I'll work closely with Aley at Society headquarters to fix those errors.

With the impending arrival of winter, the next meeting of the Executive Committee is via Zoom on Saturday, January 18th from 9am-noon. I hope many of you will join the meeting to share your successes and provide insight into current challenges.

Sincerely,

Jessica Flock

Editor's Note:

The opinions expressed by Ms. Flock are her own.

As both the Editor of Wyoming History News and Executive Director of the Wyoming Historical Society, my focus is always on continued growth, positive visibility, and longevity of the Society. I am both encouraged and motivated by the dedication our members have to preserving Wyoming's history for the future.

Small changes can make a large impact for ensuring the future of the Society. The process of setting up the new membership levels, both online and in the database, is ongoing. Minor glitches during this transition are to be expected. I appreciate your feedback when this happens so it can be resolved. I value your patience in this matter.

It is my stance that the informational letters that were sent to each member were not in error, and were positively received by the membership.

The response to the letters in the first week resulted with donations of nearly \$2000 to the Society. We also received updated information regarding desired membership levels and missing contact information for responding members.

Working together we can strengthen and grow the Society. I look forward to working with all members in all aspects.

Thank you,

Aley Philp

CELEBRATIONS AND COMMEMORATIONS

BE PART OF AMERICA & WYOMING 250 WITH THE WYOMING HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2026 CALENDAR



DECLARATION OF IMAGINATION

As we celebrate 250 years of the United States of America in 2026 with the Semi-quintcentennial, the Wyoming Historical Society invites the public to submit historic photographs or original illustrations or paintings for its 2026 Calendar. The theme for the 2026 Calendar is “Celebrations and Commemorations,” focusing on significant historical moments in Wyoming.

The popular calendar features historical images from around the state creating an informative and picturesque view of Wyoming history. It includes a snippet on each day noting “what happened and where” that aligns directly with that day in the past. The tidbits range from the serious to the entertaining, but all newsworthy in their day.

Wyoming Historical Society is specifically interested in images from the

years 1776, 1826, 1876, 1926, and 1976. Photographs should be historical. Illustrations and paintings can be historical or original works of art that capture the spirit of Wyoming during those years.

Submitted images should align with the Wyoming 250 theme, “Declaration of Imagination: Inspire, Encourage, Celebrate.” They should honor Wyoming’s rich history and highlight the state’s unique cultural heritage.

Photographs from individuals, families, museums, newspapers, libraries, and other organizations are welcome to be submitted. Photographs must be at least 5 inches tall by 7 inches wide landscape format or be able to be cropped to that ratio.

Illustrations or paintings should be no smaller than 8.5 inches tall x 11 inches wide and include a quarter-inch bleed.

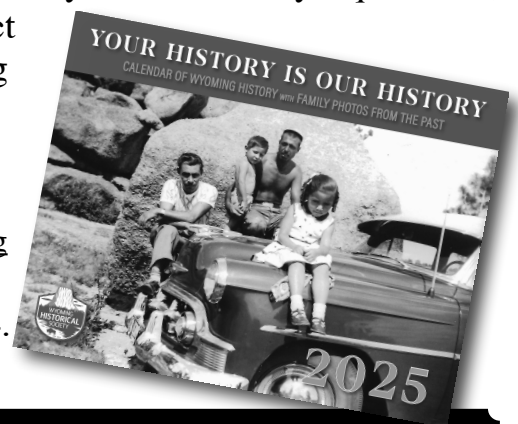
Submissions, either physical or a digital scan at 600 dpi, must be received by February 1, 2025. People, location, date, and the activity, if known, should be identified with submission. Original submissions will be returned.

Final selections will be made by the Wyoming Historical Society’s Publications Committee. If you have any questions, please contact the Wyoming Historical Society by email

info@wyshs.org

or call

307.322.3014.



WyoHistory.org WELCOMES NEW PROJECT DIRECTOR

In 2008, Tom Rea set about writing a series of articles on Wyoming History aimed at high school students. In the process of researching and writing, he realized how unreliable the internet was when it came to our state's history. Tom knew that there were great stories that needed to be shared with a wider audience and began to envision our online encyclopedia.

Since its founding in 2010, WyoHistory.org has become the number one go-to source of online information about Wyoming history. Tom grew the website from a few dozen articles to hundreds covering a wide variety of topics. We are proud to publish original scholarship that is rigorously researched but still appeals to a popular audience. The website has also expanded beyond its original vision of an online encyclopedia—for instance, now we host amazing oral histories. Check out our latest—a series of interviews on the Wyoming Symphony Orchestra. We have also become a reliable source for teachers by publishing lesson plans to accompany our articles.

For the explorers of Wyoming, we have created curated travel itineraries and hundreds of field trips that encourage travelers to dig into Wyoming's past. Over the course of 14 years, Tom has fulfilled WyoHistory.org's vision of becoming the primary source of online information about Wyoming history for the public, including teachers,

students, tourists, public officials, history buffs and scholars.

It was truly an honor when Tom asked me to take over this project. Although I grew up in Wyoming, I didn't begin to dig into our past until I returned home to Casper with my master's degree in history. In 2019, I started a business as a public speaker—traveling the state and sharing my research on our past with topics like the Wyoming State Flag, women's suffrage, and marking our historic trails. My favorite part of my business (besides the fun research and visits to the archive!) has been getting to visit different communities around the state, meet our local history buffs and listen to stories about each town's history.

After leaving my part-time position with the National Historic Trails Interpretive Center, Tom asked me to join the WyoHistory.org team in the fall of 2022. Since then, I have fallen even more in love with Wyoming and our history. Each article that we publish is an opportunity to learn something new about our past, and sometimes a chance to reflect on our future.

I hope that WyoHistory.org's future is as successful as its past has been. I will strive to maintain the incredible work that Tom has done and expand on it. I want to build bridges between WyoHistory.org and different communities such as our educators and our young scholars at the



WyoHistory.org's new Project Director
Kylie McCormick.

university and our community colleges. Fortunately, Tom isn't quite finished with WyoHistory.org yet. He is chairing our volunteer advisory committee and will help to shape our vision for the future. With deep gratitude for all who came before me, I am honored to carry on the torch of Wyoming's history.

Of course, all of this wouldn't be possible without your support. Thank you to the Wyoming Historical Society for your continued commitment to WyoHistory.org, to our contributors who publish their scholarship with us, to our readers who keep the site active and to our individual donors whose funding makes all of this happen. I look forward to working with all of you.

Kylie McCormick

WYOMING MUSEUMS: BE COUNTED IN THE NATIONAL MUSEUM SURVEY

by Leslie Waggener, PAST WHS PRESIDENT

As a WHS member, you know the vital role museums and cultural institutions play in our state. Now, you have an opportunity to ensure Wyoming is well-represented in a landmark national study.

The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) is launching the first-ever National Museum Survey (NMS). With Wyoming currently lacking resources to conduct our own comprehensive state survey, this presents a crucial

opportunity to gather valuable data about our museums at no cost to our institutions. The insights gained will help us better understand where to focus our time and resources as we approach America 250 in 2026.

This important survey will help museum administrators across the country benchmark their work, while also informing policymakers and the public about the essential contributions of museums.

The survey is new and IMLS wants to include as many

voices as possible! We urge you to provide your museum's information even if you're unsure whether it will qualify for the survey.

The survey will cover a wide range of topics, including institutional characteristics, facilities, finances, human resources, admissions and visitors, and digital presence.

Don't miss this opportunity to have your organization represented in this landmark national study of the museum field.

THANK YOU DONORS!!

Wyoming History Day
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Kim Viner

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

At Large:

Damian Bennett - WAVERLY, VA

Diana Denison - LARAMIE, WY

Kay Dooley - TORRINGTON, WY

Mark Smoyer - BROOKLYN, NY

Katy Thompson - UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING

Albany:

Rick Fisher

Onies Heckart

Robert Wysocki

Carbon:

Lillie Criswell

Fremont:

Jeffery Running

Goshen:

Fort Laramie Historical Association

Laramie:

Robin & Carol Day

South Lincoln:

Lanny Bettine

HOMSHER GRANT APPLICATION PERIOD OPEN

The Lola Homsher grant offers cash grants to people involved in research activities based on various aspects of Wyoming's history.

The grants, ranging from \$100.⁰⁰ up to \$1500.⁰⁰ are awarded based on applications submitted to the Society's Lola Homsher Endowment Fund Committee. The deadline is Friday, February 28, 2025, with applicants notified of the results in the spring. All applications must be submitted electronically via the Society's website at www.wyshs.org.

Wyoming Historical Society's First Vice President **Lucas Keeler** says that work done by amateur and professional historians through these grants supports the Society's mission to make Wyoming's past accessible to present and future generations.

"Providing funds for researcher travel and for research-related costs such as scanning can make all the difference in completing a project. Creating opportunities for original research is a mainstay of the Homsher Grant program," Keeler stated.

Grant monies are drawn from a fund established by

the late Lola Homsher, a noted historian and state archivist. One of Homsher's most significant contributions to preserve Wyoming history came when she spearheaded creating the Wyoming Historical Society in 1953. After her retirement Miss Homsher made a major donation to the Society that has been used as an endowment to help fund Society programs.

The committee reviews all proposals and makes awards after the selection process has been completed, usually in the spring. Preference is given to proposals that promise original research on topics related to Wyoming history. Wyoming residents are also given preference, but all applications are welcome. Proposals must include a statement of purpose, an explanation of the project, the value to Wyoming history, and a description of how the public will benefit from the research.

Keeler says it is always exciting to see the creative avenues being explored in Wyoming history. Last year's recipients used funds to enhance their research on topics ranging from researching the rosters of former



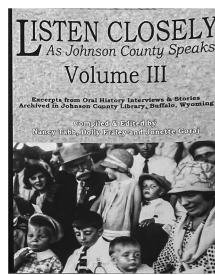
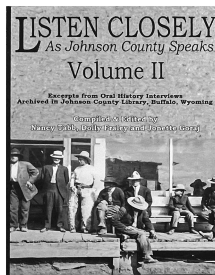
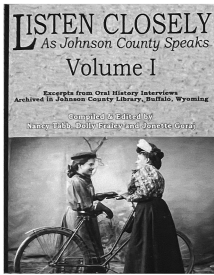
Lola Homsher.
Photo courtesy of the Wyoming State Archives.

inmates of the Wyoming Frontier Prison, rephotography, historic area school research, and cultural impacts of Greek and German immigrants. "Applications that touch upon all aspects of Wyoming history are welcome," Keeler says.

Applications and rules can be obtained by visiting the Society's website at www.wyshs.org and selecting "Programs" and then "Lola Homsher Research Grant Program."

If you do not have access to the internet, please contact the Wyoming Historical Society at 307.322.3014 or executivedirector@wyshs.org to receive a hard copy of the application. Proposals are due Friday, February 28, 2025. All funded recipients must provide the Society with an interim report and a final report about their projects.

On the Bookshelf



Listen Closely As Johnson County Speaks

The Johnson County Library's local history room has recently published two of three volumes of oral histories from our archives. Volume III is currently at the publishers. Luckily the library has a collection of more than 350 manuscripts of oral histories gathered through the years. At first the project began by creating indexes for these sketches of long-ago everyday life in Johnson County. However, the team of **Nancy Tabb**, Dolly Fraley, and **Jonette Goraj** quickly realized they needed to share these beautiful stories in a book which grew into three books including photos.

These ladies began choosing the stories, verifying that facts are accurate, checking the spelling of names and places, and helping the stories flow. The storytellers became their friends as these voices have lived with them through the past four years. The goal was to make the stories more readable without changing the storyteller's character, the tone of the words, or speech patterns.

Some of the memories go back to the early days of the Powder River Country. The people recorded on these pages treasured the fact that they were blessed to live at the foot of the Bighorn Mountains. They tell of arriving by wagon, stagecoach, or train and of homesteading, ranching, dry farming, cowboying, sheepherding, and tie hacking. They speak of good times and hard times. They tell of dances, brandings, and much

needed social times. Their stories show how life was full of love and fear, birth and death, hard work, adventure, relationships, and celebrations.

Oral history gathering is ongoing at the library. A few of the people who graciously shared a peek at their personal lives and told of their ancestors are still among us and are valuable sources for local history research questions. They also have shared precious family photos. The books are dedicated to local historian Patty Myers who recorded many of the interviews.

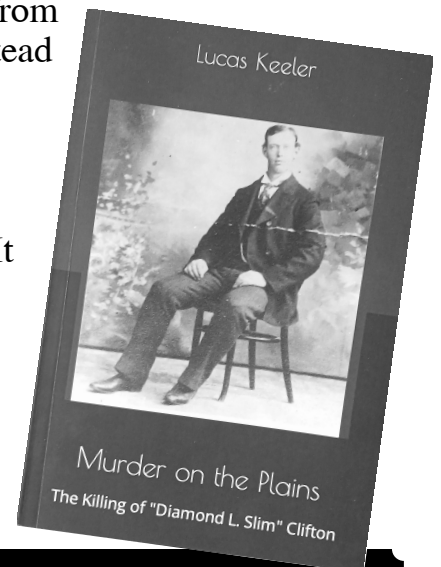
The books are available to check out at many Wyoming libraries and are available to purchase at the Johnson County Library for a suggested donation of \$15 each to help cover the cost of printing. If you cannot get to Buffalo, then we can mail them. Just call 307.684.5546. The books are also available on Ingram and Amazon.

Murder on the Plains

Three homesteaders, lured to Wyoming by its beauty, with hopes and dreams, established their ranches along Porcupine Creek in Western Weston County. Little did they know that their arrival in Wyoming would lead to their deaths.

A factual tale from Wyoming's homestead era, author **Lucas Keeler** shares the story of Weston County's most infamous murder. It is available online both at the WHS online store, or by emailing:

HankMasonAndTheBear@outlook.com



WYOMING HISTORY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

DECEMBER

6-8: Holiday Open House

4:00 to 7:00 pm nightly

Trail End State Historic Site / Kendrick Mansion
400 Clarendon Avenue, Sheridan, WY
307.674.4589

6: Holiday Open House

6:00 pm - Crook County Museum
120 North 4th Street, Sundance, WY
307.283.3666

7: Christmas on the Frontier

10:00 am - 5:00 pm
at Fort Laramie National Historic Site
965 Gray Rocks Road, Fort Laramie, WY

7: Candlelight Christmas at Fort Caspar

5:30 - 8:30 pm
4001 Fort Caspar Road, Casper, WY
307.235.8462 - fortcaspar.org

8: Christmas Open House with Santa

5:00 pm at the West Texas Trail Museum
100 East Weston Street, Moorcroft, WY
307.756.9300

13 & 14: Lights on the Range at the Historic Governor's Mansion

5:30 - 8:00 pm
Enjoy some hot cocoa as you stroll
through the lights and the Mansion
decorated in the Holiday Spirit!
300 East 21st Street, Cheyenne, WY
307.777.7878

14: An Old Fashioned Christmas at the Pioneer Village

6:00 pm at the
Fremont County Pioneer Museum
1443 West Main Street, Lander, WY
307.332.3339

14: Christmas Crafts at the Rockpile

10:00 am - 12 noon at the Rockpile Museum
900 West 2nd Street, Gillette, WY
307.682.5723

14: Christmas Open House

10:00 am - 5:00 pm
at the Carbon County Museum
904 Walnut Street, Rawlins, WY
307.328.2740 - info@carboncountymuseum.org
carboncountymuseum.org

14 & 15: Holiday Open House

2:00 pm at the Iverson Mansion,
Laramie Plains Museum, and
Alice Hardie Stevens Center
603 East University Avenue, Laramie, WY
307.742.4448

18: Gillette Genealogy Consultations

2:00 - 8:00 pm
at the Campbell County Public Library
900 West 2nd Street, Gillette, WY
307.682.5723

20 - 22: Sheridan Christmas with the Kendricks

During this popular event, visitors tour the
Kendrick Mansion and watch live actors
perform a play that unfolds room by room
5:00 pm nightly at the
Trail End State Historic Site / Kendrick Mansion
400 Clarendon Avenue, Sheridan, WY
307.674.4589

ONGOING EVENTS

Dec. 1 - 23:

"Big Horn Small Works" Show

The Brinton Museum
239 Brinton Road, Big Horn, WY
307.672.3173

Please send events for this calendar list by the 10th of each month previous to lainprior.wyhs@gmail.com.



Wyoming Historical Society
PO Box 247
Wheatland, WY 82201

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Holiday Gift Guide

REMEMBER TO GET ALL OF YOUR WHS GEAR AT store.wyshs.org!

Stickers
Ball Caps
Mugs
Tshirts

2025 Calendars
Verna Inspired Wyoming Flag
Water Bottles
Books

Give the gift that goes all year!

**WHS
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