

# Wyoming History News

*The Newsletter of the Wyoming Historical Society - Est. 1953*

September 2025

www.wyshs.org

Volume 72, Number 8

## LABOR DAY IN WYOMING

### *A Legacy of Labor and Community*



**"Cowboy rides bucking horse on Labor Day in Meeteetse" by Charles Belden.**

Given to the Buffalo Bill Center of the West, Cody, WY; McCracken Research Library

by A. Philp

For many, Labor Day marks the unofficial end of summer, a final chance for a long weekend getaway to the lake, a barbecue with friends, or a last taste of freedom before the routine of school and work returns in full force. For all who appreciate the state's rich past, in addition Labor Day is a

moment to reflect on its true meaning: a tribute to the social and economic contributions of American workers.

The origins of Labor Day are rooted in the seismic shifts of the Industrial Revolution. As factories and mines replaced agrarian life, workers faced unprecedented challenges. The average American worker in the late 19th century toiled for

12 hours a day, six days a week, often in unsafe environments with little to no job security. Child labor was rampant and poverty was a constant threat. This created fertile ground for a growing labor movement that sought to improve working conditions and secure basic rights.

The first Labor Day celebration in the United States took place in New York City on September 5, 1882. Over 10,000 workers, organized by the Central Labor Union, took unpaid leave to march in a parade with banners held high

*continued on page 2*

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# Labor Day Proclamation:



State of Wyoming  
Executive Department

Whereas, The congress of the United States has designated the first Monday In September of each year a national holiday, to be known as Labor Day. Now, therefore, I, William A. Richards, governor of the state of Wyoming, do hereby appoint and proclaim Monday, September 2, 1895, a legal holiday throughout the state of Wyoming. This day has been by law set apart as a holiday, as an evidence of the fact that the people of this great republic recognize the worth and dignity of human labor, the foundation of our national prosperity. It is especially appropriate that we of Wyoming should observe such a holiday as this because we probably have fewer people of leisure than any other state.

"Those who do not work do not become permanent residents. The recent trouble on our western border was largely a protest against allowing unusual privilege to a class of beings who have not yet learned that they cannot live without labor. It is

earnestly requested and recommended that upon the day named all business be suspended and that it be appropriately observed and celebrated as Labor Day.

In testimony whereof I have here unto set my hand and caused the great seal of the state to be here to affixed, at the capitol in the city of Cheyenne this 24th day of August, A. D. 1895.

*Wm. A. Richards*

(Seal) Governor.

By the Governor:

*Charles W. Sundick*

Secretary of State.

One of the earliest references in Wyoming newspapers comes from the Cheyenne Daily Sun Leader on August 28, 1895, where they relayed, in full, the proclamation of Governor William A. Richards. This traditional proclamation has continued each year with each of Wyoming's Governors.

It is included above as found through the Wyoming Digital Newspaper Collection.

*'Labor' continued from page 1*

proclaiming their demands. This was a pivotal moment for the movement and our nation's history. The idea quickly spread across the country, with many states adopting the holiday before it became federal law.

The movement gained momentum, and by 1887, several states had already declared a Labor Day holiday. The federal government officially recognized the first Monday in September as a legal holiday in 1894, a response to the growing political influence of the labor movement and a specific reaction to the Pullman Strike, a nationwide railroad strike that paralyzed the country. President Grover Cleveland, seeking to appease the labor movement and end the strike, signed the bill into law just days after the conflict.

Wyoming's embrace of the official Labor Day came swiftly. On August 30, 1894, the Rock Springs Miner reported that Governor John E. Osborne had proclaimed Monday, Sept. 3, 1894, a legal holiday throughout the state. He "earnestly recommends that business be suspended upon that day and that it be appropriately observed as Labor Day." This early recognition highlights the state's deep ties to labor, particularly in the coal, railroad, and ranching industries that were the lifeblood of its economy.



These industries were both the engines of the state's growth and the sites of its most significant labor struggles. Coal mining was particularly dangerous, and miners faced

thinking ideals. The willingness of Wyoming's leaders to recognize the importance of workers showed a progressive spirit that saw labor not as a source of conflict, but as a partnership for prosperity. This

public demonstration of the importance of labor to the state's development, a recognition that without the brawn and hard work of its people, Wyoming would not have risen to the dignity of a

**"It is especially appropriate that we of Wyoming should observe such a holiday as this because we probably have fewer people of leisure than any other state."**

- Wyoming Governor William A. Richards, 1895

the constant threat of cave-ins, explosions, and risk of black lung disease. The Union Pacific Railroad, which snaked through the state, was another major employer, and its workers faced brutal conditions laying and maintaining track across the vast, rugged landscape. The ranching industry, while often romanticized, is also a source of tough physical labor, with cowboys and ranch hands working long hours in all weather conditions.

Despite these challenges, the state's leaders and its people recognized the importance of labor. The early gubernatorial proclamations declaring Labor Day a holiday were more than just political gestures. They were a recognition of the fundamental truth that a state's prosperity is inextricably linked to the well-being and dignity of its workforce.

The state's connection to the labor movement was a testament to its forward-

sentiment was echoed in subsequent gubernatorial proclamations, such as the one issued by Governor William A. Richards on August 24, 1895. He declared Labor Day to be "evidence of the fact that the people of this great republic recognize the worth and dignity of human labor, the foundation of our national prosperity." A powerful statement that speak to the core values of the state.

Early Labor Day celebrations in Wyoming were a mix of solemn reflection and jubilant community gatherings. Newspaper accounts from towns like Sheridan and Cheyenne describe parades, speeches, and various community activities, including baseball games. The accounts of the festivities provide a fascinating glimpse into the state's community life during that time period. These events were a chance for employers and employees to come together. They were a

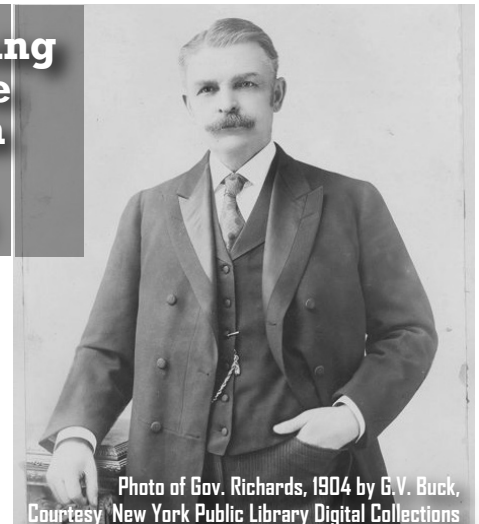


Photo of Gov. Richards, 1904 by G.V. Buck, Courtesy New York Public Library Digital Collections

substantial commonwealth.

As the decades passed, the character of Labor Day evolved. While the parades and speeches of the early years waned in prominence, the holiday's essence as a day of rest and appreciation for workers' contributions remained. Today, it serves as a powerful bridge between the past and present, a reminder of the historical struggles and triumphs that have shaped the American workforce. For the Wyoming Historical Society, Labor Day is more than just a day off; it's a living part of our state's story, a time to honor the hard work and resilience of the American worker, a legacy that is particularly resonant in a state like Wyoming, built by the grit and determination of its people.

WYOMING HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
ANNUAL CONFERENCE



# EXPLORE. PRESERVE. ENJOY.

Sept. 12-14, 2025  
Friday - Sunday

9:00 - 5:00  
AM PM

**Sheridan Inn**  
856 Broadway Street,  
Sheridan, WY

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**WYSHS.ORG/EVENTS**

## Informational Tours

Our Conference offers many opportunities to **EXPLORE** Sheridan County's History through tours to Kendrick Mansion, Historic Downtown, Fort Phil Kearny, and more!

## Inspirational Speakers

Learn how best to **PRESERVE** and share Wyoming's History with our guest speakers and panelists. Our keynote speaker is Bill Yellowtail.

## Author & Vendor Fair

Meet Wyoming Authors and gather resources through our vendor fair.

## Lively Entertainment

**ENJOY** a private concert by Wyoming's own Jalan Crossland during our President's Gala Saturday Night. Separate Saturday night Gala tickets available, \$50.



**SPEAKER**

*Mark Demple*

**KEYNOTE**

*Bill Yellowtail*

**ENTERTAINER**

*Jalan Crossland*



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# **PRESERVE WYO.'s HISTORICAL TREASURES**

## **NEW ROVING ARCHIVIST READY TO HELP**

Wyoming's museums, historical societies, archives, and cultural heritage institutions can access free, professional archival expertise through the Wyoming Roving Archivist Program (RAP). The program is excited to welcome Morgan Stence as the new Roving Archivist, ready to visit institutions across the state to help preserve and share Wyoming's irreplaceable historical collections.

"We know that many of Wyoming's cultural heritage institutions want to better care for their collections but may not know where to start or lack the resources for professional consultation," said Marcie Blaylock, reference historian and archivist for the Wyoming State Archives. "The Roving Archivist Program brings that expertise directly to you - at no cost to your institution."

The program offers comprehensive, on-site assessments that help institutions understand their collections' needs and develop realistic improvement plans. Whether you're a small-town museum run entirely by volunteers or a tribal archive seeking to enhance preservation practices, the Roving Archivist Program is designed to meet you where you are.

Getting started is easy. Interested institutions complete a brief online application describing their collections and primary concerns. The Roving Archivist team reviews each application and schedules a

consultation to discuss needs in detail before determining if a site visit would be beneficial.

During site visits, the Roving Archivist works directly with staff, volunteers, and stakeholders to evaluate:

- Physical condition of collections and storage areas
- Environmental risks and disaster preparedness
- Collection management policies and practices
- Preservation and conservation needs
- Budget considerations and funding opportunities
- Public access and outreach possibilities

Within 60 days of the visit, institutions receive a detailed report with practical, prioritized recommendations tailored to their specific situation and resources. These reports provide roadmaps that institutions can follow over time, implementing improvements as resources become available.

The program recognizes that Wyoming's cultural heritage institutions face unique challenges - limited budgets, volunteer staffing, geographic isolation, and harsh environmental conditions. Rather than offering one-size-fits-all solutions, the Roving Archivist provides recommendations that acknowledge these realities while building toward professional preservation standards.

"We focus on practical solutions that institutions can actually implement," Blaylock explained. "This might mean

starting with simple, low-cost improvements that provide immediate benefits while working toward longer-term preservation goals."

Applications are now open, and institutions across Wyoming are encouraged to apply. The program serves museums, historical societies, archives, libraries with special collections, tribal cultural centers, and an organization caring for historical materials.

The Roving Archivist Program was developed by the Wyoming State Historical Records Advisory Board (SHRAB) to promote the identification, preservation, and dissemination of Wyoming's historical records.

The Wyoming SHRAB supports ongoing training and assistance for state, tribal, and local governments, repositories, and organizations involved in records care throughout Wyoming. The National Historical Publications and Records Commission of the National Archives provides funding, which is administered by the Wyoming State Archives, a program under the Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources.

Learn more about the Roving Archivist Program by visiting [www.rovingarchivist.wyo.gov](http://www.rovingarchivist.wyo.gov).

Contact:

Morgan Stence  
307-777-7826  
[spcr.rovingarchivist@wyo.gov](mailto:spcr.rovingarchivist@wyo.gov)



# WHS BLAST FROM THE PAST

Over 70 Years of Projects and Awards honor Wyoming's History and Historical Contributions

Wyoming's representative statue of Esther Hobart Morris in Statuary Hall, Washington, D.C., was the first major project of the Wyoming Historical Society (WHS).

In 1953, Senator Lester Hunt wrote to WHS President Frank Bowan, relaying the need that Wyoming, one of only six states at the time not represented, needed representation in the Statuary Hall in Washington, D.C.

A memorial commission was formed in 1955. As its first project, the Wyoming Historical Society sought opinions from various statewide associations on who should be monumentalized. Morris, the first woman to serve as a justice of the peace in the United States, was the most popular choice.

The Society then helped raise the necessary funds to commission sculptor Dr. Avard Fairbanks to create the bronze statue. It was unveiled in Washington, D.C. in 1960. Senator Hunt believed Dr. Fairbanks, an

internationally acclaimed and highly respected sculptor, was the ideal artist to create a statue that would properly represent Wyoming among the other states in Statuary Hall.

A replica of the statue was later commissioned for \$7,500 in 1961 by the State Legislature and unveiled in front of the Wyoming State Capitol in 1963.

The Wyoming statue has had a notable journey of its own. It stood outside the State Capitol for decades, a prominent symbol of the state's pioneering role in women's rights. However, due to damage from car accidents and the wear and tear of the harsh Wyoming climate, the statue was moved indoors during a major Capitol renovation that began around 2015.

Since 2019, the replica of the Esther Hobart Morris statue has been located inside the Wyoming State Capitol, in the Capitol Extension hallway, where it is protected and serves as a centerpiece for historical exhibits.

Soon after the Society's inaugural project, which highlighted the nature of combining history and art, the Society was inspired to establish its Annual Awards program. The awards recognize achievements in art, literature, film, and drama related to Wyoming history.

The Wyoming Historical Society's Awards Program continues to be a vital tool for encouraging and recognizing efforts to preserve and celebrate Wyoming's history. It spotlights

the work of individuals and organizations who contribute to the state's historical legacy through publications, exhibits, digital

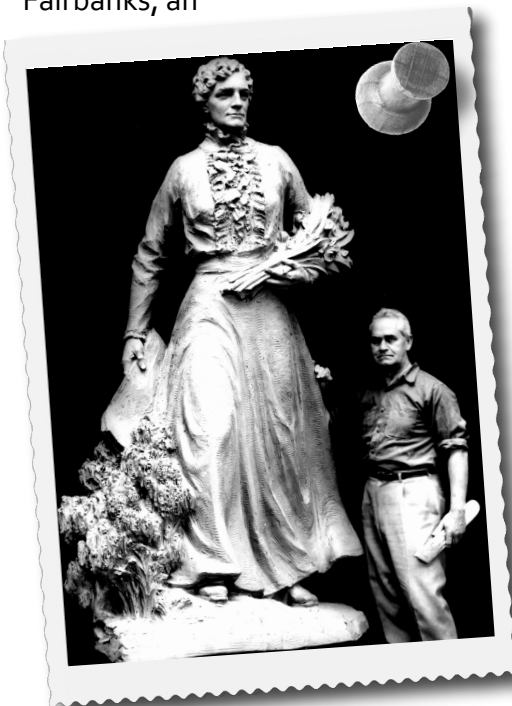
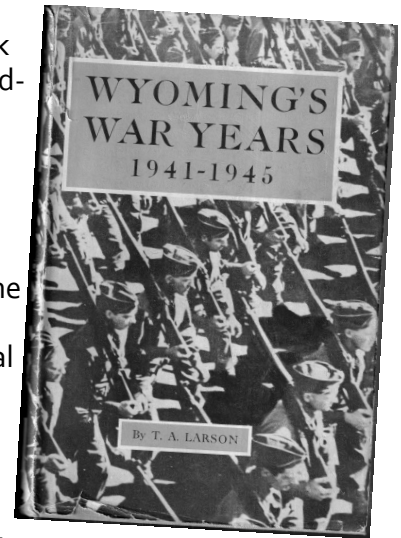
media, and other projects, ensuring that Wyoming's past remains accessible and valued by present and future generations.

L. C. Bishop's work, "Organizing Historical Treks on the Old Oregon Trail," and T. A. Larson's book, "Wyoming's War Years 1941-1945," were among the first to receive awards.

The annual Awards Luncheon honors those who, in the previous year, made significant contributions to recording and sharing the state's story. It is a great opportunity for the public to join the Wyoming Historical Society in recognizing both nominees and winners across a wide variety of categories.

Awards for the 2024 year will take place on Saturday, September 13, 2025 at noon, at the Historic Sheridan Inn. Please visit [wyshs.org/events](https://wyshs.org/events) for more information and to purchase tickets.

Learn more about the history of the Wyoming Historical Society in our ongoing feature "Blast from the Past" in subsequent issues of the Wyoming History News.



[LEFT] Sculptor Dr. Avard Fairbanks with the Washington, DC statue in 1960. Photo courtesy Wyoming Secretary of State.

# SHARING WYOMING'S EVERYDAY HISTORIES

## Help Celebrate America250 with your submissions

History isn't just about famous names and grand events. It's woven into the daily fabric of our lives - the stories passed down through generations, the traditions that define our families, and the small moments that make our communities unique. The Wyoming Historical Society is launching a new initiative, *Wyoming's Everyday Histories*, and we need your help to capture the heart of our state's past.

Aimed at preserving personal narratives, our goal is to create a dynamic archive of Wyoming life. The project will be part of and is inspired by national projects that are an essential component of the Semiquincentennial / America250 celebrations. We're inviting you to share the stories that often go untold, the moments that might not be in a textbook but are a crucial part of our collective heritage. We are looking for memories, traditions, and experiences from people of all ages and backgrounds across all of Wyoming.

### What Kind of Stories Are We Looking For?

Think about the stories that define your family or community. Have you ever listened to an elder recount a day on the ranch that changed

their life? Do you have a beloved family recipe tied to a specific Wyoming town? What was it like attending a high school football game in decades past, or building a new life in a boom-and-bust town? Your story doesn't have to be dramatic; every voice contributes to the larger mosaic of Wyoming's history.

We are seeking submissions in a variety of forms:

#### Written Stories

Share a personal essay, a family history, or a cherished memory.

#### Photographs

Submit a photo with detailed caption that tells the story behind the image.

#### Audio Recordings

Record a conversation with a family member or friend, preserving their voice and memories.

#### Ideas

Do you know someone with a great story who might not be able to submit it themselves? Let us know, and we may be able to help.

Your contributions will help us create a living record of our state. The most compelling submissions will be featured on our website under "Everyday Histories", and in future newsletters.



Dessie A. (Svilar) Bebout pictured here in 1944 in her Naval uniform. Bebout, who passed away at age 102 in 2023, was recently honored by having the Shoshoni Post Office named in her honor. Her story is a prime example of how everyday life has a greater impact on Wyoming's historical legacy.

### How to Participate

To submit your story or idea, please email us at [everyday.stories@historythatswy.org](mailto:everyday.stories@historythatswy.org). Our staff is ready to answer any questions and help guide you through the submission process.

Your stories are the foundation of our state's history. By sharing them, you are ensuring that the past of everyday Wyomingites is not only remembered but celebrated for generations to come.

Sincerely,  
*The Executive Board of the  
Wyoming Historical Society*

# FROM PUMPKIN SPICE TO PIONEER PRIDE: A SHERIDAN HISTORICAL ADVENTURE AWAITS YOU THIS LABOR DAY

by **Beki Speas**, WHS Executive Board President

As autumn approaches, bringing with it the vibrant hues of changing leaves, the scent of pumpkin spice, and the task of raking fallen leaves, our focus for September 2025 at the Wyoming Historical Society shifts to Sheridan County. Sheridan is the host city for our Annual Conference and 72<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting, scheduled for September 12-14th at the Historic Sheridan Inn. We look forward to sharing our county's history, strengthening our connections with fellow members, and highlighting the benefits of collaboration among our various historical groups.

An excerpt from *The Sheridan Enterprise* on Tuesday, September 7, 1909 states on the founding of Labor Day as:

*Master Workman Powderly was standing in the reviewing stand with General Worthy Foreman Griffith, a veteran of the labor movement. Robert Price, a coal miner, and a member of the assembly watched the parade for a few moments and then, slapping Griffith on the back, said: "Well, Jack, this is Labor Day all right, isn't it?"*

*That remark, overheard by George M. Lloyd of the New York Central Labor Union, led him to introduce a resolution in his local, setting aside the first Monday in September as a day to celebrate labor's progress. He took his resolution to the New York legislature.*

In Sheridan County, Labor Day is not just a federal holiday but a time to honor a local legend: master saddle maker and leather artisan, Don King. Visitors can tour King's Saddlery and admire the extraordinary leatherworks of Don King and his associates. The remarkable craftsmanship and hand-tooled saddles created by his

celebrating world-class bronc riding, steer roping, and polo events while honoring the craftsmanship of King's work.

The largest polo tournament of the Big Horn Polo Club's season is played over this weekend, culminating with the Don King Days Cup on Monday. Cowboy polo has also become a half-time tradition, featuring wild and woolly teams from local dude ranches. Players ride stock saddles, use wide mallets (some teams use brooms), and a basketball-sized ball. With no rules, aside from chugging a can of beer at the start, cowboy polo is a definite crowd favorite.

These "Old West" rodeo events are held at the Big Horn Equestrian Center, offering a no-fence setting in the majestic foothills south of Sheridan. This family-oriented celebration honors renowned saddle maker Don King.

You are invited to attend and bring a group for an unforgettable time. Bring your lawn chairs, a cooler, and a packed lunch, or visit the food vendors on-site. Don't forget to stop by the Club House to view historical equestrian photos. Events are held on Sunday and Monday. Gates open at 9 a.m., with events starting at 11 a.m.

Visit [DonKingDays.com](http://DonKingDays.com) and their Facebook page for more information.



team have made Sheridan County proud to be called home by Don King and his family.

This year marks the 37th year of Don King Days in Sheridan County, Wyoming. Held over Labor Day weekend, the event began in 1989 when a group of ranchers and friends of King organized a series of equestrian events to honor the world-renowned saddle maker. Don King Days continues to this day,



# The Sheridan Enterprise

SHERIDAN, WYOMING - AUGUST 27, 1907

## BIG TIME LABOR DAY CELEBRATIONS COMMENCE ON MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 2<sup>ND</sup>

Big Time Labor Day Celebration Will Be Under Supervision of Sheridan Trades and Labor Council. Will Have Fine Parade, Speeches at Kendrick Park—Long List of Races and Sports, including Baseball

Monday is Labor Day and the occasion will be appropriately celebrated in Sheridan. The exercises will be under the direction of the Sheridan Trades and Labor Council.

The parade will start from Eagles' hall at 8:30 and proceed to the Burlington depot, where it will meet the organization from Dietz, Carneyville and Monarch. The parade will then proceed south on Main Street to Works, west on Works to Linden Avenue, thence to Kendrick Park.

At the park speeches will be made by Hon. John S. Taylor, mayor of Sheridan, and other prominent men.

At 2 p. m. there will be sports and races on Grinnell Avenue, occupying the time from 2 till 4 o'clock. There will be two boys' races, a young men's race, old men's race, fat men's race, girls' race, young ladies' race, old ladies' race, three-legged race, sack race, running high jump, tug-of-war.

Suitable prizes are offered in all these contests. A prize of \$25 is offered for the local making the best showing in the parade. A game of ball between the Sheridan Tigers and the World for a purse of \$100 at the baseball park.

The executive committee of the Trades and Labor Council desire to state that it has no control over the closing of stores on Labor Day, but requests a general observance of the closing order, at least between the hours of 10 and 6.

Many stores have agreed to close during these hours, and it is announced that all employees will be free to join in the exercises on Monday. On account of Saturday being payday at the mines, requests have come from that quarter to allow visitors from these places an opportunity to purchase what they desire sometime during the day.

This excerpt from The Sheridan Enterprise is taken from the online Wyoming Digital Newspaper Collection.

Find out how you can support the digital archiving of Wyoming's past by contacting the WHS.



## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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For a full calendar of events,  
please visit [wyshs.org/events](http://wyshs.org/events).

For comments  
or questions regarding  
*Wyoming History News*,  
please call 307.322.3014  
or email [info@wyshs.org](mailto:info@wyshs.org).

**WHS Member names mentioned  
in articles appear in bold.**

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funded through donations.  
The Wyoming Historical Society is not part of the  
Wyoming State Government.

Wyoming Historical Society  
PO Box 33  
Riverton, WY 82501

**Aley Philp, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**  
[executivedirector@wyshs.org](mailto:executivedirector@wyshs.org)

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# UPCOMING EVENTS

## **Sept. 3 - Cemetary Walk at Fort Phil Kearny**

Led by Sharie Shada of Wyoming State Parks

**6:00 PM - Fort Phil Kearny**

**528 Wagon Box Rd, Banner, WY 82832**

## **Sept. 4 - Battle at Bonepile Creek: 1865 Sawyers Expedition**

In partnership with the Pumpkin Buttes Chapter of the Wyoming Archaeological Society (WAS), the Rockpile Museum is proud to present the Battle of Bonepile Creek: The 1865 Sawyers Expedition on Thursday, September 4, 2025 at 6:00 pm.

**6:00 PM - Rockpile Museum**

**900 W. 2nd St., Gillette, WY 82716**

## **Sept. 9 - Explore History: Artifacts of the Big Goose Creek Walking Tour**

Come explore the artifacts that pertain to the historical sites of the Big Goose Creek walking tour. Museum at the Bighorns Museum Director, Carrie Ida Edinger will share visuals of photographs, objects and other items from the museum's collection that relate to the Sheridan Brewery, Sheridan Manufacturing Company Flour Mill, the Mandel Cabin, and Big Goose Creek. This presentation will share a portion of the museum's collection as well as Sheridan's history, culture, and Big Goose Creek as an essential natural resource to our area. Hosted by Sheridan Community Land Trust.

**10:00 to 11:30 AM**

**Hub on Smith, A Center for All Generations  
211 Smith St., Sheridan, WY. 82801**

## **Sept. 13 - Wyoming Archaeology Fair**

Presented by Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office - Gwendolyn Kristy, Coordinator.

**10:00 AM - 3:00 PM**

**Wyoming Territorial Prison**

**975 Snowy Range Rd, Laramie, WY 82070**

## **Sept. 13 - Homesteader Days**

This event celebrates the days of homesteading and farming with a vintage truck and tractor show, antique machinery demonstrations, activities, food, and music. Fun for all ages!

**10:00 AM**

**Homesteader Museum**

**324 E 1st Powell, WY. 82435**

## **WYOMING HISTORICAL SOCIETY**



**2025 ANNUAL CONFERENCE ★ SHERIDAN, WYO**

### **Sept. 12 thru 14**

Registration open until Sept. 5!!!

[wyshs.org/events](http://wyshs.org/events)

**Historic Sheridan Inn,**

**856 Broadway St., Sheridan, WY. 82801**

## **Sept. 13 - A Night at the Museum**

Fundraiser event for the Hot Springs County Museum.

**6:00 - 8:00 PM**

**Hot Springs County Museum**

**700 Broadway St., Thermopolis, WY. 82443**

## **Sept. 13 - Tours & Toddies McCracken Research Library**

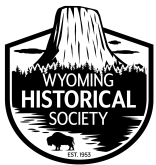
The McCracken holds 36,000 books, more than 600 numbered manuscript collections, more than one million photographic images, and countless stories. Yours can be one of them! Cassandra Day, Lead Archivist, bring guests behind the scenes to showcase treasures from the vaults. Guests will have the chance to participate in a mini-oral history activity during the program. We're dusting off our cameras and getting out the recorder to interview YOU.

**6:00 - 8:00 PM**

**Buffalo Bill Center of the West**

**720 Sheridan Ave., Cody, WY. 82414**





Wyoming Historical Society  
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**2026**