

Wyoming History News[©]

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THE ENDURING RESILIENCE OF THE ARAPAHO NATION



Cheyenne and Arapaho scouts, 1884. Photo by William S. Prettyman.

Photo courtesy Ben Ridgley

By Ben Ridgley

The Northern Arapaho Elders have reflected on our tribal history on many phases of cultural understanding. For millennia, our people, the *Inuna-ina* (Our People), maintained a vast migratory territory spanning what is now Wyoming, Colorado, Nebraska, and Kansas, following the buffalo. The main source of these reflections comes from oral histories, carried down over generations. These histories are not merely stories of war, but of ceremony, the profound spiritual life centered around the Sun Dance (*Nii'eiei*), and the intricate social structure of our

seven-pipe council. Our elders emphasized the need to sit, listen, and show respectful gratitude to hear what they, and the women of our clan, had to say, ensuring these essential stories were carried forward to today. Resilience was brought upon bravery and true understanding of leadership roles that contributed to our tribe's well being.

During the period of migration, our communication was exclusively in Arapaho. Our language was the vessel for all our laws, governance, and spiritual knowledge. We did not use English until the boarding school era. We utilized our spoken language, and even sign

language, to share the historical encounters our clan reflected upon. Our resilience was built upon bravery and a true understanding of the leadership roles that contributed to our tribe's well-being.

A STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL AND HONOR

During the wars between Native American nations and non-Natives, our survival was tested in many ways, including enduring brutal weather and the pressures of relentless encroachment. The discovery of gold and the movement of settlers across our territory after the 1850s dramatically increased tensions. While we sought peace, we faced challenges from intruders from the east and the U.S. military. The

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impact of events like the Sand Creek Massacre in 1864, where many peaceful Arapaho were killed, profoundly shaped our distrust of the U.S. government.

My personal dedication to preserving and sharing the painful truth of this past is one way I honor those who suffered. In the past, I was honored to take part in the project that established the signage for the Sand Creek Massacre Trail. This work involved close collaboration to develop and install markers along the route. Through this dedication, I help ensure that this crucial history is shared and remembered by communities, scholars, and visitors in both Wyoming and Colorado.

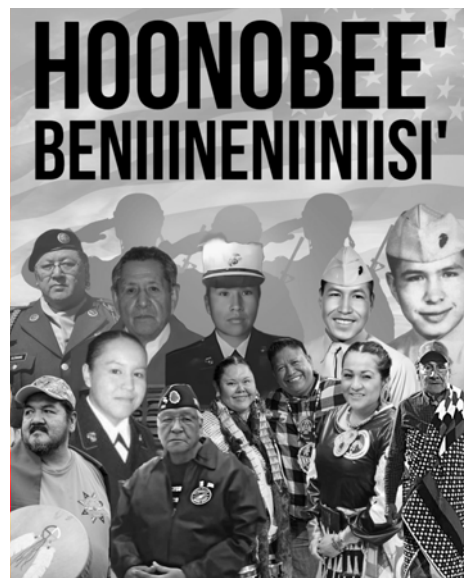


Our tribe constantly had to strategize for survival, and the elders spoke of bravery in planning, not just for themselves but for the entire tribe.

Some educated Arapahos learned English at that time to

translate with government missionaries and the army. We reflected on the treaties, such as the Treaty of Fort Laramie in 1868, which promised the Arapaho Nation a permanent reservation, but that promise was never honored by the U.S. government. Instead of receiving our own land, the Northern Arapaho were eventually forced onto the Wind River territory alongside our traditional enemies, the Eastern Shoshone. The dishonor we feel today stems from our trust being betrayed when land promises and essential annuities were not upheld.

Paradoxically, we volunteered many of our people, men and women, to serve in militias and the U.S. military, often in a pragmatic attempt to prove loyalty and secure some measure of protection, even as our fundamental rights were denied. These reflections highlight the paramount importance of movement and survival in every phase to ensure the safety of our people, our children, and our elders through these terrible historical moments of being Arapaho.



"Hoonobee' Beniineniiniisi' (Happy Veteran's Day) Generational Veterans of a Single Arapaho Family.

Photo courtesy B. Ridgley via Facebook

THE BOARDING SCHOOL ERA AND SELF-DETERMINATION

When the missionaries arrived, followed by the boarding schools, we suffered the profound loss of many values, language skills, and cultural protocols. This trauma fractured families and nearly erased a generation's knowledge of Arapaho. Tragically, many students died during that era, far from home.

Our ability to survive led to the creation of a tribal government in 1938 under the Indian Reorganization Act (Howard-Wheeler Act). This was a complex turning point; it offered self-governance but forced us to adopt governmental structures, bylaws and constitutions, based on Western models, sometimes conflicting with our traditional leadership structure. Our few members who could translate English were a major asset during this time. While the U.S. government, through the Indian Agent (later the Bureau of Indian Affairs), attempted to manage our affairs, the loss of our language wounded the tribe deeply. Despite the damage to our culture, this period allowed us to establish a government-to-government relationship with the U.S., a format we maintain today.

Later, the passage of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act in 1975 allowed us to move away from direct federal control. This was a true turning point, enabling us to become more self-reliant and self-determining. The landmark act allowed tribes to enter into self-governance compacts or contracts with the federal government to directly manage vital programs, such as healthcare, education, and social services, which was a significant step toward reversing the damage of decades of federal control.



Arapaho Honor Guard at the Denver Bronco game. They presented the colors on November 6, 2025.

Photo courtesy B. Ridgley

SHARED LAND AND FUTURE HOPE

The establishment of our reservation was unique because we came to live alongside another sovereign nation, the Eastern Shoshone Tribe, on what became the Wind River Reservation. Historically, we were fierce enemies. The U.S. government's failure to provide a separate reservation means the Arapaho Nation was initially received as guests on Shoshone land—a debt that the U.S. government still legally owes the Arapaho Tribe. We operate as two separate, sovereign governments but share the environmental resources, including the water, minerals, and land. This joint occupancy is rare among tribes and required immense leadership to overcome the initial tensions.

While the migration to Wind River initially caused hardship, we eventually worked to establish our own governments and began contracting to sell our own oil and gas for income. The future of our economic growth is tied to managing these resources, including utilizing our timber, land, and minerals like uranium and coal, for future royalties.

Furthermore, our shared water rights, quantified under the Big Horn II court case, are crucial for our people's well-being and development.

While the modern system has both advantages and disadvantages, the Arapaho Tribe and other tribal nations continue to fight the U.S. government for adequate funding. This struggle is rooted in the federal government's "trust responsibility," a legal obligation to provide essential services in exchange for the millions of acres of land ceded by our ancestors. Federal support for the basic needs of our people is severely underfunded, often contributing to only about 30 percent of what the tribe requires to survive.

The observance of Native American Heritage Month in November gives us a vital opportunity to host cultural events, honor our veterans, and involve our schools, fostering a deeper understanding of who we are as Arapaho people. One thing that gives me a positive outlook is education and our focus on economic diversification and cultural preservation as two sides of the same coin. By celebrating our cultural heritage and focusing on a

better future, I help our people and our students tell the story of who we are, ensuring that the general public who lives alongside us can also understand the enduring spirit of the Arapaho Nation.

The challenge before us is not merely to remember the past, but to actively honor the vibrant and often painful history of Wyoming's original peoples. This requires shifting our perspective to fully integrate the stories, traditions, and resilience of the Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho into every layer of our historical understanding. The Wyoming Historical Society is uniquely positioned to be an integral part of this effort, transforming from a passive keeper of records into a dynamic stage where all voices are heard, respected, and fully integrated into the state's narrative. As a member of the WHS Board, I am committed to this mission, ensuring that our society is not just chronicling the past, but actively shaping a future built on truth and mutual respect. Let this deep, complex tapestry of Wyoming's history serve as the foundation that ushers us all into a new, shared era of authentic partnership.

OUR LEGACY OF LISTENING

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR & WHS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As the year winds down and the holiday season approaches, our thoughts naturally turn toward gathering; gathering our family, our friends, and our recollections from the year. This is a time of reflection and a moment to consider the history that surrounds us every day.

This month, we had the profound honor of featuring Ben Ridgley's piece, *The Enduring Resilience of the Arapaho Nation*. Mr. Ridgley's reflection on the Arapaho experience serves as a powerful reminder of how

or dusty treaty documents; it is carried within the memories of our neighbors, our parents, and our grandparents.

This is why, during this upcoming time of gathering, I urge you to embrace a simple, yet monumental, task: record your "Everyday Histories."

Whether you're gathered around a holiday dinner table or celebrating the New Year, take the time to set aside your phones, quiet the background noise, and genuinely listen. Ask your uncle about his first job, your grandmother about what the Depression era was

accounts. A simple voice memo on your phone, a quick video, or detailed handwritten notes taken while they speak, can transform a fleeting memory into a permanent historical document.

As we look ahead, we are rapidly approaching a massive national milestone: America's 250th anniversary in 2026. This celebration is an opportunity to tell the story of the United States not only through the narrative of presidents and wars but through the experiences of its everyday people, the pioneers, the Native American communities, the miners, the teachers, and the ranchers of Wyoming. The historical society is dedicated to making sure the national tapestry is woven with Wyoming threads.

Your family's memories are crucial to this effort. By recording the stories around your holiday table this year, you are not just honoring your family; you are performing an invaluable act of preservation for future historians. You are ensuring that the resilience, courage, and daily life of Wyomingites will be integrated into the state's legacy for the next 250 years.

Wishing you a reflective and story-filled holiday season,



Alexandra Philp

"Our elders emphasized the need to sit, listen, and show respectful gratitude to hear what they, and the women of our clan, had to say, ensuring these essential stories were carried forward to today."

- Ben Ridgley, Member and former Co-Chairman Northern Arapaho Tribal Leadership

history is truly maintained: through persistent, generations-deep oral tradition. He emphasizes the critical need for tribal members to "sit, listen, and show respectful gratitude" to their elders, ensuring that the essential stories of ceremony, spiritual life, and struggle are carried forward.

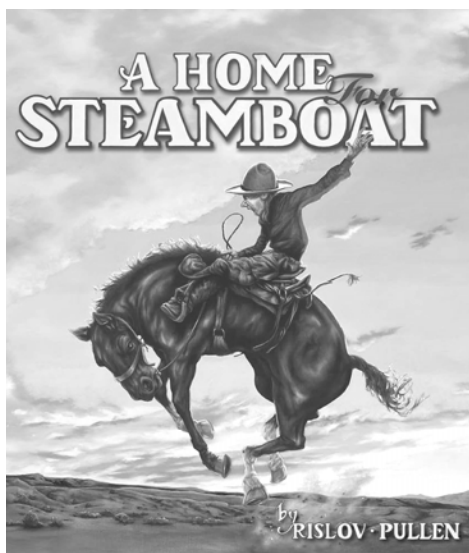
This insight into the Arapaho experience resonates with us at the Wyoming Historical Society. History is not just found in state archives

like in her small town, or your parents about the decisions that brought your family to Wyoming. These seemingly small, personal anecdotes; stories of migration, ranching life, overcoming setbacks, and celebrating triumphs are the essential building blocks of our shared state history.

And then, record them. History is fragile, and memory fades. Even if you aren't an expert archivist, you can preserve these priceless

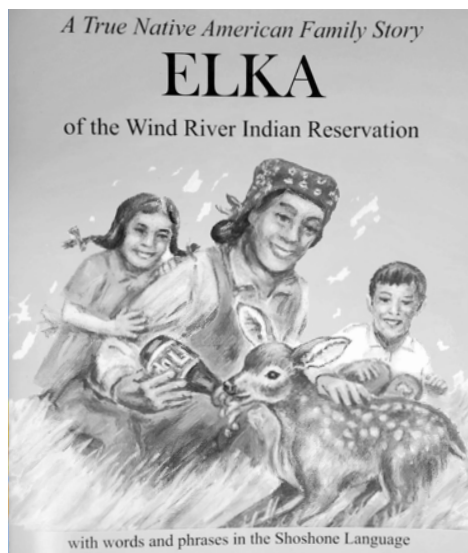
ON THE BOOKSHELF

LOOKING FOR A HOLIDAY GIFT? HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR ALL AGES!



\$24.95, Amazon.com

Based on the famous Wyoming horse's life, *A Home for Steamboat* will inspire young cowboys and cowgirls to never give up. Recommended ages 6-10.



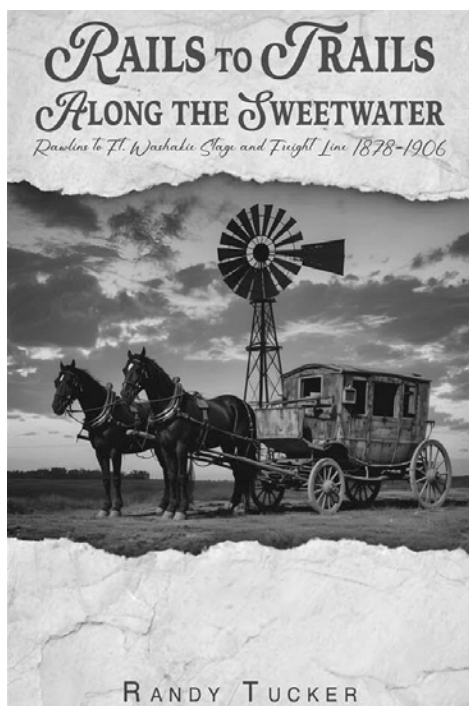
\$8.95, store.wyshs.org

A true Native American family story of the Wind River Indian Reservation in Wyoming. Recommended ages 8-12.



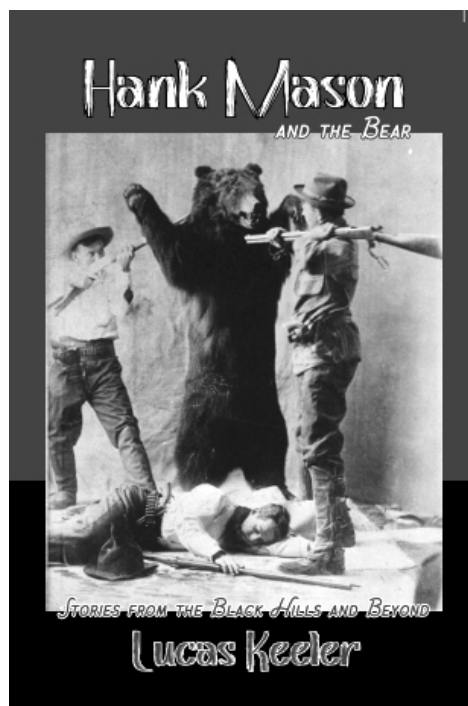
\$14.99, Amazon.com

While staying at her aunt's house in Wyoming, Jade meets Roy Parker, a boy with the same name as legendary rebel cowboy Butch Cassidy. Recommended ages 9-12.



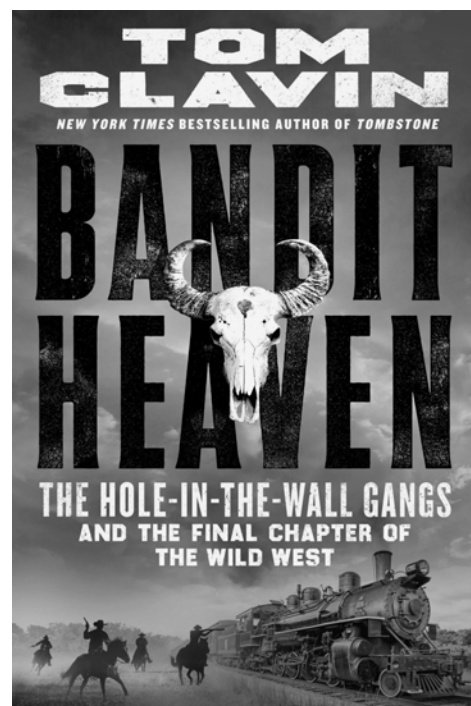
\$29.95, store.wyshs.org

Rawlins-Fort Washakie Stage Line (1878-1906): Stations like Lost Soldier and Crooks Gap tell tales of Wyoming frontier hardship.



\$29.95, store.wyshs.org

The true story of Black Hills buffalo hunter, gold prospector, and sawmill operator, Henry "Hank" Mason by Wyoming author Lucas Keeler.



\$24.95, Amazon.com

The thrilling true story of the most infamous hangout for bandits, thieves and murderers of all time—and the lawmen tasked with rooting them out.

WHS BLAST FROM THE PAST

A Look Back, A Leap Forward: Securing Wyoming's History

As we close out 2025, our December edition of the *Wyoming History News* features a truly remarkable "Blast From the Past," one that offers both a poignant reflection and a timely message.

This month's historical articles focus on the history of our Society itself, highlighting several articles separated by a decade. The first two, from 1995, chronicle the difficult moment when the State of Wyoming "cut loose" the Society due to budget cuts. The second, from 2005, celebrates the spirit of reconciliation and the importance of history. It addresses then - Governor Dave Freudenthal's request to mend that split with renewed state funding of \$100,000 per year. While the full request was unsuccessful, for the next twenty years, limited funding was offered as a pass-through grant of approximately \$27,000 per year for the publication of *The Annals of Wyoming* and was greatly appreciated while it lasted.

The following three articles remind us that the Wyoming Historical Society (WHS) has always persevered, regardless of the political or economic winds blowing throughout the state. It is a history of resilience; a trait we find ourselves calling upon yet again.

Today, 30 years after that initial split, we face a strikingly similar state budget crunch. Wyoming State Parks and Cultural Resources has, mid-grant cycle, suspended the grant that funded the printing of our esteemed journal, the *Annals of Wyoming*. They have also insisted that the name *Annals of Wyoming* is for their use only, despite the Society offering to continue publishing the journal without state funding.

Their actions and decision is disappointing, but it will not stop us.

A NEW CHAPTER FOR OUR HISTORICAL JOURNAL

The Wyoming Historical Society has been and will remain a publisher of a high-quality, Wyoming history journal. I am thrilled to announce that we will continue this vital work under a new name: *The Wyoming Historian*. Our first issue will be available in February 2026, with additional, regular issues to follow. This new publication will carry on the tradition of excellence and dedication to preserving and sharing the stories of our great state.

The reality is that the Wyoming Historical Society is currently operating without any state funding or state funded grants.

The WHS is entirely self-funded by the generosity

of our dedicated donors. This new financial landscape means we must rely on your support to keep our publications, our statewide programming, and our educational initiatives not just surviving, but thriving.

CONTINUING OUR SHARED MISSION

Looking ahead, we remain incredibly hopeful and committed to the core mission of sharing Wyoming's rich heritage. The WHS fully intends to continue working closely with Wyoming State Parks and Cultural Resources, albeit in a different capacity, to advance our shared goals.

The need to preserve, share, and enjoy Wyoming's history is far too important to let funding challenges diminish our collaboration. We look forward to supporting their work, partnering on future projects, and finding new, innovative ways to bring the stories of our past to every corner of the state.

Our commitment is to history itself, and in that, we are and will always be allies.

SECURING THE FUTURE OF WYOMING'S PAST

This brings me to our critical "\$250K for the 250th" capital campaign.

This campaign isn't just about weathering a temporary

budget storm; it's about securing the future of history in Wyoming. The year 2026 marks the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, and it is our goal to raise \$250,000, roughly our yearly budget, to continue to fund our operations and projects.

We need your help to ensure that for generations to come, the Wyoming Historical Society has the resources to look back at our treasured

past and continue the good works that secure its future. A donation of any size, whether it supports the printing of *The Wyoming Historian* or contributes to our ongoing operations, is an investment in the stories, the people, and the legacy of our unique state.

Please, make a generous, tax-deductible donation today. Let's show everyone that the spirit and resilience of the Wyoming Historical Society remain unbroken.

With profound gratitude for your steadfast support,



(Beki Speas)

President, Wyoming Historical Society

P.S. You can help secure our legacy by donating to the "\$250K for the 250th" campaign on our website today!

www.wyshs.org/donate

The Sheridan Press

Vol. 109, No 25

June 16, 1995

STATE CONSIDERING CUTTING FUNDING FOR HISTORICAL GROUP

CHEYENNE (AP) A state official today will spell out possible changes in the way Wyoming helps a private organization and this may mean cutting an estimated \$100,000 in funding.

Commerce Director Celeste Colgan has been examining the department's financial support of the Wyoming Historical Society in wake of recent budget restrictions, according to a state spokeswoman.

A meeting is scheduled between state officials and historical society members this afternoon.

Deputy Attorney General Mary Guthrie wrote an opinion in April that said the use of state money for the society is contrary to sections of the Wyoming Constitution.

Guthrie's opinion said that using state funds for an office and fulltime secretary and to publish

the historical journal "Annals of Wyoming" is improper.

But Glen Morris, vice president of the society, said officials are puzzled that the issue has come up now because the organization has been receiving state aid for 43 years.

"It's shaken all of us up because we thought we'd done everything we could to help our state and to promote our state," Morris said.

"One of the things is to help tourism and everything else through history."

The question about financially supporting the private nonprofit agency came up earlier this year, said Melinda Brazzale, a spokeswoman for the commerce department.

While Guthrie wrote that in her view funding was not

appropriate, she added that state law also provides that the director of the Department of Commerce promote the founding and development of a state historical society. But Guthrie noted that role doesn't extend to the use of state funds for the society.

Colgan said that while she worked for the National Endowment for the Humanities she developed a "very high level of appreciation and sensitivity to the use of public money."

The society's newsletter, Wyoming History News, noted that the group has been supportive of history related functions of state government and has contributed more than \$7,000 in the past two years. The society also contributed \$3,000 to help publicize the centennial celebration at the Wyoming State Museum, according to the newsletter.

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2026

The Sheridan Press

Vol. 109, No 115

October 2, 1995

200 ATTEND GERINGER'S TOWN MEETING

LARAMIE (AP) Welfare reform, balancing the state budget and funding a state historical journal were some of the topics addressed by Gov. Jim Geringer at Laramie's town meeting last week.

Nearly 200 people attended the session, which are being held to include the public in the state's budget strategic planning process. The next town meeting will be held Tuesday at Casper College.

Wyoming faces an estimated budget deficit of at least \$72 million for 1997-98. Geringer has ruled out a tax increase.

Some people worried Wyoming would cut programs like vocational rehabilitation and welfare as these programs are shifted to the states. But Geringer assured these people that the state would meet the needs of people.

"What is a high priority for Wyoming will remain high," Geringer said. "It's not our objective to leave people out. It's our objective to do better with less."

Geringer said states like Wyoming will use federal block grants in places where they are most needed.

He said that is a reason the state needs to set its priorities and map out a way of meeting objectives.

Ken Kamis, director of the state's Health Department, said outlining priorities amid the budget was "a very gut-wrenching process."

He didn't say which programs in his department had been given low priorities or are the verge of getting cut or reduced.

Kamis said prevention programs are getting top billing in his department.

A member from the Wyoming State Historical Society questioned Geringer on why the state is proposing to put \$100,000 in the budget for Commerce Department's publications.

Amy Lawrence, a Historical Society member, said the proposal was a waste of money because the department publication would be a duplication of the "Wyoming History Journal," which the Historical Society publishes.

Earlier this year, the Historical Society and the Commerce Department severed ties. The Historical Society had been the publisher of what was called the "Wyoming Annals." Now the Commerce Department is proposing to publish its own historical journal.

Geringer said he would examine the proposed appropriation when officials go over the department budgets.

Freudenthal calls for Renewed Support of Wyoming State Historical Society

CHEYENNE (AP) The state of Wyoming may re-establish its partnership with the private Wyoming State Historical Society.

Gov. Dave Freudenthal's budget request to the Legislature endorses a request from State Parks and Cultural Resources Department for \$189,804 over the next two years to re-establish a partnership between the state and the non-profit society.

The state severed its relationship with the society in 1995 during former Gov. Jim Geringer's administration. The break came after an attorney general's opinion said funding the society was an improper use of state funds.

The opinion, which came

during a state budget crunch, said funding the society was improper even though state law requires the state to "promote the founding and development of a State Historical Society and of county historical societies."

Charles Lanham, Society President, recently sent a letter to Society members urging them to contact their lawmakers to encourage renewed state support. Lanham noted the society and the state have been partners on many projects.

Lanham commended Phil Noble, director of the state Parks and Cultural Resources Department, for attempting to rebuild the relationship.

"The Society will not be returning to the pre-1995

arrangement, however," Lanham wrote. "Instead, the Society will continue to function as an independent entity, but the support from the state will further the Society's ability to promote Wyoming's heritage.

Noble has asked the Legislature to approve nearly \$100,000 to fund salary and benefits of a liaison position in the Division of Cultural Resources which existed before the 1995 split. Noble is also seeking over \$90,000 for grants over the next two years. Noble wrote that the money would allow the state to meet its obligations under the law, "and will create partnerships which were severely damaged by agency actions."

NOTES: The WHS remained the publisher of *The Wyoming Annals* through Summer 2025 via a pass through grant that covered approximately two-thirds of the cost to produce the journal.

The Wyoming Historical Society is now independently publishing, with no ties to Wyoming State Parks and Cultural Resources Department, the historical journal *The Wyoming Historian* with its first issue planned for February 2026.

If you would like to receive a copy of *The Wyoming Historian*, sole subscriptions are available at \$75 per year, or, as part of a donor-membership perk with donations to our General Support fund of \$100 or more.

If you are interested in supporting the Wyoming Historical Society publications directly, please direct your donation to "Julia Yelvington Publications Fund."

If you are interested in submitting written articles to *The Wyoming Historian*, please check out our submission / writers guidelines on: www.wyshs.org/writers

The historical articles, in thier unedited entirety, two from The Sheridan Press, are 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. The unedited historical article for the Uinta County Herald was obtained through the Uinta County Library.

TAKE NOTE - THANK YOU:

Both Governor Geringer and Governor Freudenthal are, and have remained ardent supporters and members of the Wyoming Historical Society to this day.

We thank them again for their dedication to Wyoming history and for years of public service.

We greatly appreciate their continued contributions to Wyoming history in all forms; from books to advice, and beyond.

'HEAP-O-LIVIN'

THE LORA WEBB NICHOLS HOUSE RECEIVES NATIONAL REGISTRATION



808 Winchell Avenue, Encampment, Wyoming in 1904.

Lora Webb Nichols Collection, Grand Encampment Museum

by Tim Nicklas

Director of the Grand Encampment Museum

The house owned by Nancy Anderson at 808 Winchell Avenue in Encampment, Wyoming, recently erected a sign commemorating the property's inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. On the National Register, the house is listed as the Lora Webb Nichols House, though Lora called the house "Heap-O-Livin'." It joins one other house in Encampment just down the street on Winchell Avenue to be placed on the Register: the Willis House, or the so-called "Stone House." Both homes were built near the turn of the 20th century during the height of Encampment's copper-mining boom.

The House's National Significance

The Lora Webb Nichols House is worthy of its national historic designation for multiple reasons. First, it was built in 1901 by James Kyner and represents the architectural style that was prominent during Encampment,

Wyoming's mining boom. Second, two legendary and influential U.S. Forest Service Rangers resided at the residence during the first half of the 20th century. Third, photographer and businesswoman Lora Webb Nichols owned the property from 1938 until her death in 1962.

Built by a Rail-Building Pioneer

Civil War veteran James Kyner was a rail builder who left his mark on the transportation network throughout the western United States. Kyner was drawn to Encampment during the emerging mining boom in 1901 following his construction of the Kyner's Cut, an upgrade on the Union Pacific Railroad between Wolcott and Hanna in Wyoming. Upon arriving in Encampment, he quickly acquired an interest in the Blanche Mine and built the two houses, the Stone House and Heap-O-Livin', on adjoining lots on Winchell Avenue.

Home to Influential Forest Rangers

Following its construction, the house was inhabited in succession by two U.S. Forest Service Rangers, Ranger Blackhall and Ranger Williams.

Ranger James Blackhall was the first and only supervisor of the Hayden National Forest when he was appointed superintendent in 1908 until his death in 1928. The Hayden National Forest covered the Sierra Madre Range in south-central Wyoming, straddling the border with Colorado. Following Blackhall's death, the Hayden National Forest was absorbed into the Medicine Bow National Forest. Also of note, Blackhall Mountain, named after the ranger, stands prominently over the Encampment valley at 10,984 feet elevation.

The next forest ranger to reside at the future Lora Webb Nichols House was Evan "Evie"

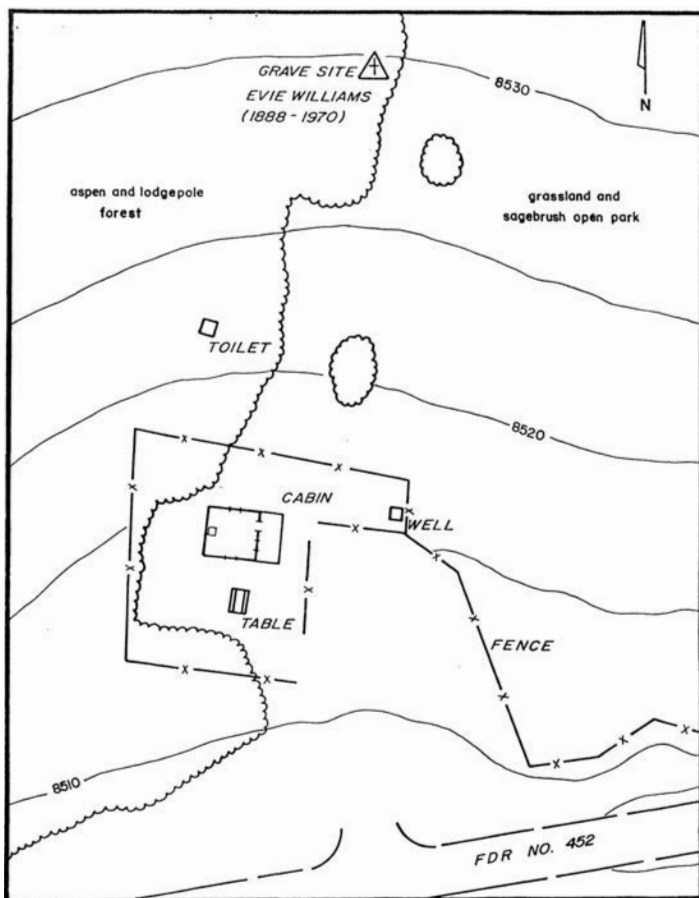


Figure 2: Plan Map of Jack Creek Guard Station (48CR4074)
 From: USDAFS Medicine Bow National Forest Site Development Map, 1985
 Scale: 1" = 30' Contour Interval: 5'

continued from page 10

Williams. He lived there with his wife Bessie and seven of their nine children from 1932 to 1938. Utilizing the Civilian Conservation Corps, Evie Williams was responsible for the construction of much of the infrastructure and buildings throughout the Sierra Madre Range of the Medicine Bow National Forest. Among these was the Jack Creek Guard Station, which is also on the National Register of Historic Places. Evie Williams was buried in a stone-covered grave next to the guard station in 1970. (above)

The Legacy of Lora Webb Nichols

After the Williams family, Lora Webb Nichols purchased the house at 808 Winchell Avenue from Evan Williams in 1938 for \$900. She christened her house "Heap-O-Livin'," named for a poem by Edgar Albert Guest. At the



JACK CREEK GUARD STATION HISTORIC SITE

The guard station once served as the northern ranger cabin for the historic Encampment Ranger District. It was constructed by Ranger Evie Williams in 1934. Oral history states that Ranger Williams spent most of his construction dollars on the material for the foundation and chimney, and used his own funds to finish the windows and roof.

The guard station is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places and offers guests recreation and relaxation in a delightful natural setting. The cabin is typically open from mid-June through mid-October and is accessible by vehicle. Basic amenities are provided, but guests will need to pack in some of their own supplies and gear. The one-room cabin can accommodate up to four people with two bunk beds.

The Jack Creek Guard Station is located southwest of Saratoga, Wyoming, offering visitors a unique lodging experience in the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests.

- from Recreation.gov

time, Lora was a well-known local photographer, owner of Rocky Mountain Studio (the local Kodak franchise), and owner of the Encampment Echo newspaper.

Lora received her first camera when she was sixteen years old in 1898 and accumulated a photo archive of over 23,000 images throughout the course of her life. Much of her photography

continued on page 12



Lora Webb Nichols and Nancy (Wilson) Anderson.

Nancy Anderson photograph

continued from page 11

captured the life and history of the upper-North Platte Valley in the first half of the 20th century. Subjects included tie-hack camps, mining camps, ranches, children and mothers, pets and livestock, and townscapes. Furthermore, she kept concise insights into her life in her diary entries starting as a pre-teen. Lora snapped her final photograph on the last day of her life in 1962.

A young Encampment teacher, the then Nancy Wilson, was beside Lora Nichols as she drew her last breath in "Heap-O-Livin'." That young teacher, the future Nancy Anderson, would soon own that very house and has owned it ever since.

In recent years, Nichols' photography has gained international attention, and her photos have been on exhibit throughout Europe and North America. The Lora Webb Nichols Collection can be viewed at the Grand Encampment Museum, along with several exhibits about her.

Much of the information in this article is courtesy of the application to the National Register of Historic Places, written and submitted by Nancy Anderson.

To find out more about Lora Webb Nichols and see some of her photographs, visit the Grand Encampment Museum or www.lorawebbnichols.org.



Lora Webb Nichols in the doorway of Heap-O-Livin' after a snowstorm.

Lora Webb Nichols Collection, Grand Encampment Museum



Zane Jacobson of Doggett Greenhouse and Nancy Anderson. Zane did the actual installation of the plaque in November 2025.

Photo Tim Nicklas

2025 WOMEN OF INFLUENCE ARTS AWARD GOES TO BUFFALO WHS MEMBER AND MUSEUM DIRECTOR

By A. Philp

The Wyoming Historical Society is proud to announce its sponsorship of the Arts category for the Adams MultiMedia of Wyoming / Wyoming Tribune Eagle's 2025 Wyoming Women of Influence Awards, with this year's honoree being Sylvia Bruner, Director of the Jim Gatchell Museum.

The Wyoming Women of Influence Awards are a highly prestigious recognition program in its twelfth year honoring women across the state who have made significant contributions in various sectors, including business, government, education, and the arts. Established to highlight the leadership, dedication, and positive impact of women on Wyoming's communities and economy, the annual awards celebrate those who are defining the state's future. By sponsoring the Arts category and partnering with the program, the Wyoming Historical Society seeks to acknowledge and celebrate individuals who use creative expression, or, in Sylvia Bruner's case, the powerful art of story-telling and preservation: to enrich our culture and protect our collective memory.

The Wyoming Historical Society applauds the selection by Adams MultiMedia of Wyoming of Sylvia Bruner as the 2025 Woman of Influence honoree in the Arts category. While this award is for influence in the Arts, Sylvia's career is a testament to the power of dedication, resilience, and tireless advocacy for history itself.

While Bruner was unable to attend the Awards Luncheon on October 7 in Cheyenne, Wyoming

Historical Society Executive Director Aley Philp accepted the award on her behalf and as the award sponsoring organization.

Her professional life is a history in its own right: a remarkable 22 years spent serving the Jim Gatchell Museum in Buffalo, Wyoming. From her start as Registrar to Assistant Director, and for the last nine years as Director, Bruner hasn't just worked at the museum; she has been a part of its transformation.

Evidence of Bruner's leadership came in 2023, when the Jim Gatchell Museum was awarded the annual National Medal for Museum and Library Service, a national award recognizing exceptional community service. To be one of only four museums selected nationwide is an incredible achievement and a direct reflection of Bruner's commitment to excellence and outreach.

Bruner's dedication to bringing history to life doesn't stop at the museum door. She is an accomplished author, publishing this year *The Wyoming Bomber Crash of 1943*, a book that explores the poignant stories of the young men who lost their lives in the Bighorn Mountains. This project took years of painstaking research and writing, demonstrating a truly remarkable dedication to preserving and sharing these crucial Wyoming narratives.

Beyond the major awards and the publications, Bruner's career is built on grit. As Director of the Jim Gatchell Museum in Buffalo, she and her staff have had to overcome everything from costly



repairs to a historic building to the constant challenges of fundraising and advocating to keep staff and artifacts safe. The museum has also made sure that it remains accessible and welcoming, notably through participation in the Blue Star Museum program, which offers free admission to military families.

Bruner embodies the spirit of community service: she is a long-serving board member for the Wyoming State Historical Records Advisory and has been an officer of the Johnson County Historical Society.

Bruner has championed Wyoming's stories, protected its treasures, and set a national standard for historical preservation and community engagement.

Please join the Wyoming Historical Society this Equality Day on December 10 in congratulating the 2025 Wyoming Tribune Eagle's Woman of Influence in the Arts, Sylvia Bruner!

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**For a full calendar of events,
please visit wyshs.org/events.**

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**Subscriptions and memberships will automatically be dropped
if a donation has not be received by December 15, 2025.*

UPCOMING EVENTS

**Dec. 5 - Centennial Celebration
at Rawlins Branch Library**
5:00 PM - 10:00 PM
Rawlins Library Branch
Carbon Building, 215 W Buffalo St
Rawlins, WY

Dec. 5 - 7, Tell Your Story
Calling all Veterans! Tell Your Story, Your Way:
Make a film with your fellow veterans.
5:30 PM - 9:00 PM Friday & Saturday
9:00 AM - 7:00 PM Sunday
Casper, WY University Union (UU) Room 322,
125 College Dr, Casper, WY

Dec. 6 - Holiday Open House
Buffalo Bill Center of the West
10:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Buffalo Bill Center of the West
720 Sheridan Ave, Cody, WY

Dec. 6 - Christmas out of the Big House
Friends of the Old Pen
9:00 AM - 2:00 PM
Jeffrey Center, 315. Pine St, Rawlins, WY

Dec. 6 - Holiday Open House
Jim Gatchell Memorial Museum
10:00 AM - 3:00 PM
100 Fort St, Buffalo, WY

Dec. 6 - Candlelight Christmas at Ft. Caspar
5:30 PM - 8:30 PM
Fort Caspar, 4001 Fort Caspar Rd, Casper, WY

Dec. 6 - Winter Author's Festival
Pine Bluffs Historic High School
10:00 AM - 2:00 PM
Pine Bluffs Historic High School
607 Elm St, Pine Bluffs, WY

Dec. 7 - Annual Joint Christmas Lunch
Hot Springs County Pioneer Assoc. & Hot
Springs County Historical Society
12:00 noon
Hot Springs County Senior Citizen Center
206 Senior Ave, Thermopolis, WY

Dec. 9 - Holiday Banquet
Natrona County Historical Society
5:30 PM
Casper Country Club
4149 Country Club Rd. Casper, WY

**Dec. 11 - Complicity and Conscience in
America's WWII Concentration Camps**
Author Eric Muller will present on his book,
Lawyer, Jailer, Ally, Foe: Complicity and Conscience in
America's World War II Concentration Camps
7:00 PM
Wyoming State Museum
2301 Central Ave, Cheyenne, WY

**Dec. 13 - An Old Fashioned Christmas
in the Pioneer Village**
6:00 PM
Lander Pioneer Museum
1443 Main St, Lander, WY

Dec. 13 - Holiday Open House
Laramie Plains Museum
10:00 AM - 2:00 PM
Laramie Plains Museum
603 E Iverson Ave, Laramie, WY

Dec. 13 - Christmas Carnival Open House
Carbon County Museum
10:00 AM - 2:00 PM
Carbon County Museum
904 W Walnut St, Rawlins, WY

Dec. 19 - Homesteader Museum Book Club
Homesteader Museum
9:00 AM - 11:00 AM
Homesteader Museum
324 E 1st St, Powell, WY

Jan. 1, 2026 - First Day Hike
Trail End State Historic Site
10:00 AM
400 Clarendon Ave, Sheridan, WY

For more information on each event, visit:
wyshs.org/mission-vision/statewide-calendar-events



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