

POINTS WEST

JOURNAL OF THE BUFFALO BILL HISTORICAL CENTER ■ CODY, WY ■ WINTER 2002



Contents

WINTER 2002

4 THE NATURE OF SPRING IN YELLOWSTONE COUNTRY

by Charles R. Preston, Ph.D., Curator
Draper Museum of Natural History

12 ODE TO SPRING

by Valarie Hamm

18 WORK AND MORE WORK: A SEASONAL LOOK AT BUFFALO BILL

by Judi A. Winchester, Ph.D., Ernest J. Goppert Curator of the
Buffalo Bill Museum and Western American History

24 MEET THE NEW DIRECTOR

by Barbara Foote Colvert

29 RENDEZVOUS ROYALE: Buffalo Bill Art Show and the Patrons Ball

POINTS WEST

© 2002 Buffalo Bill Historical Center. Written permission is required to copy, reprint, or distribute *Points West* materials in any medium or format. All photographs in *Points West* are Buffalo Bill Historical Center photos unless otherwise noted. Address correspondence to Editor, *Points West*, Buffalo Bill Historical Center, 720 Sheridan Avenue, Cody, WY 82414 or thomh@bbhc.org.

Editor:
Designer:
Production Coordinator:
Photography Staff:

Thom Huge
Jan Woods-Krier/PRODESIGN
Barbara Foote Colvert
Chris Gimmeson
Sean Campbell

Points West is published quarterly as a benefit of membership in the Buffalo Bill Historical Center. For membership information contact:

Kathy McLane, Director of Membership
Buffalo Bill Historical Center
720 Sheridan Avenue, Cody, WY 82414
kathym@bbhc.org 307.578.4032

The Buffalo Bill Historical Center is a private, non-profit, educational institution dedicated to preserving and interpreting the natural and cultural history of the American West. Founded in 1917, the Historical Center is home to the Buffalo Bill Museum, Whitney Gallery of Western Art, Plains Indian Museum, Cody Firearms Museum, Draper Museum of Natural History, and McCracken Research Library.

www.bbhc.org

Cover photo by Chris Gimmeson

Calendar

OF UPCOMING EVENTS

DECEMBER

- 1–31** Museum open 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday. Closed Christmas Day and New Year's Day.
- 7** Buffalo Bill Historical Center's Annual Holiday Open House and Museum Selections Gift Shop Sale, 10 a.m. – 8 p.m. A free day of holiday music and traditions.
- 10** Natural History Lunchtime Expeditions. 12:15 p.m. Free.
- 25** Christmas Day. Museum closed.
- 31** *Arthur Amiotte Retrospective: Continuity and Diversity* exhibition closes.

JANUARY

- 14, 21, 28** *Early Explorers*. Preschoolers and parents. Tuesdays. Advance registration.
- 14** Natural History Lunchtime Expeditions. 12:15 p.m. Free.
- 18** Studio Art Course. *Learning from the Western Masters*, M.C. Poulsen. Advance registration.
- 25** Winter Wonder Workshops. Adults and Kids 4–17 years. Advance registration.
- 25** Western Book Club. *Challenging the Canyon* by Beryl Gail Churchill. Discussion Leader, the author.
- 25** Winter Eagle Watch. Natural History Field Trip—date to be determined. Advance registration.

FEBRUARY

- 4, 11, 18** *Early Explorers*. Preschoolers and Parents. Tuesdays. Advance Registration.
- 8** Studio Art Course continued. *Learning from the Western Masters*, M. C. Poulsen. Advance Registration.
- 11** Natural History Lunchtime Expeditions. 12:15 p.m. Free.
- 22** Winter Wonder Workshops. Adults and Kids 4–17 years. Advance registration.
- 22** Western Book Club. *This House of Sky: Landscapes of a Western Mind* by Ivan Doig. Discussion leader, Lolly Jolley.
- 26** Buffalo Bill's Birthday. Wreath-laying Ceremony at *Buffalo Bill — The Scout*, presented by Cody High School's Future Farmers of America chapter, 11 a.m.
- 27–28** Buffalo Bill's Birthday School Event. Third and fourth grades. Reservations required.

MARCH

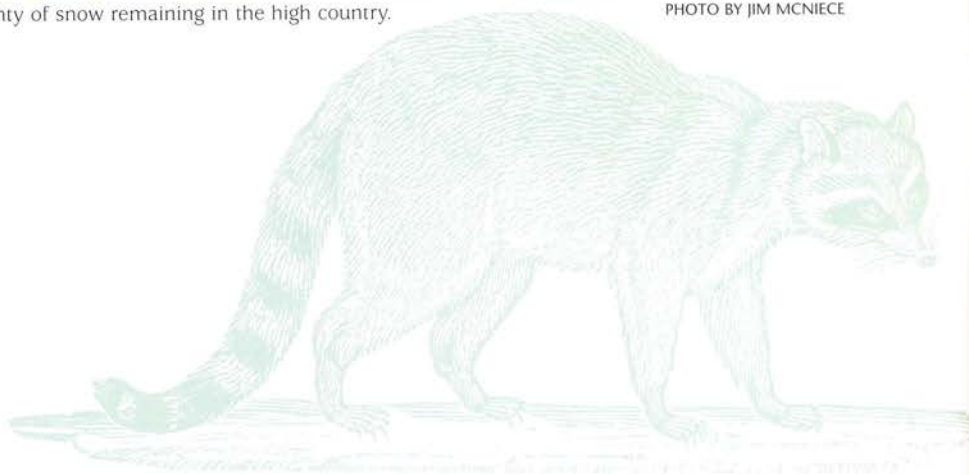
- 11** Natural History Lunchtime Expedition Lecture Series. 12:15 p.m. Free.
- 22** Winter Wonder Workshops. Adults and Kids 4–17 years. Advance registration.
- 22** Western Book Club. *The Beast That Walks Like a Man: The Story of the Grizzly Bear* by Harold McCracken. Discussion leader, Dr. Charles R. Preston.
- 29** Studio Art Course Continued. *Learning from the Western Masters*, M. C. Poulsen. Advance Registration.

The Nature



Springtime in the Rockies typically means plenty of snow remaining in the high country.

PHOTO BY JIM MCNIECE



of Spring in Yellowstone Country

by Charles R. Preston, Ph.D.

Curator, Draper Museum of Natural History

I couldn't believe my eyes when I peered outside the tent. The ground was swathed in a quilt of white, and big, fluffy flakes of snow filled the sky! The only sounds were the lonesome calls of ravens somewhere in the milky distance. Just two days earlier, I had been surrounded by the crystalline songs of Northern cardinals and Carolina wrens, the brilliant pink and white

blossoms of redbud and dogwood trees, and the sweltering 90-degree heat and 90-percent humidity of spring in the Arkansas Ozarks.

But I wasn't in Arkansas anymore, and this snowy introduction to springtime in the Rockies was a bit unexpected. I had visited the high country of the Yellowstone region before—but only in midsummer. This time, I was taking part in an expedition assigned to bring back Western plant and animal specimens and photographs for research and educational programs for an Arkansas museum. It was during that expedition nearly 30 years ago that I began a lifelong infatuation with the wild life and wild landscapes that continue to distinguish the Greater Yellowstone region from the rest of our planet.

Wildness, almost by definition, is chaos. It is messy, sometimes inconvenient, often dangerous, and usually unpredictable. But even in the midst of chaos, nature lays down patterns that repeat themselves with enough regularity to give us some sense of anticipation and perhaps comfort.

In temperate regions of the world, seasons change with comforting regularity in response to the position and orientation of Earth in relation to the Sun. Seasonal changes don't occur overnight to match calendar designations, however. They unfold gradually, with new signs of transformation revealed daily. Some of these signposts are dramatic, like the appearance of wildflower carpets in late spring, or the multihued tapestry of autumn leaves. Other harbingers of seasonal change are far more subtle to human senses. And, as I found out during my first spring expedition to the Rocky Mountains, seasonal changes follow a vastly different script in different geographic areas and environments.

“There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature — the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after winter.”

— Rachel Carson

Learning to recognize signposts that herald the seasons adds greatly to an improved understanding and appreciation for the patterns of nature. The following are some annotated excerpts from field notes I've recorded during spring expeditions in the last few years. These are mere snapshots documenting a fraction of the story that unfolds each year, as spring captures the highlands and lowlands of the Greater Yellowstone region.

Entry: 22 March 2001 . . . Wapiti Valley, North Fork corridor of Shoshone River, between Wapiti, Wyoming, and east gate of Yellowstone National Park . . . morning overcast, with winds gusting to about 25 miles per hour; temperature hovering about 30 degrees, F . . . no snow falling, but patches of snow remain on ground from last week's snowfall . . . Absaroka Mountain peaks still covered with snow pack, but lighter than normal for this time of year . . . hope to shoot video and still photos of bighorn sheep for upcoming exhibits in the Draper Museum of Natural History . . . heard two great horned owls calling back and forth across the valley early this morning . . . saw a rough-legged hawk perched on a utility pole in the valley just east of Shoshone National Forest boundary . . . adult bald eagle flying above Shoshone River nearby . . . finally found large group of bighorn sheep grazing and loafing in sagebrush flat near U. S. Forest Service Ranger Station . . . 16 rams in the group . . . two of the smaller rams sparring with some light head-butting . . . several magpies hanging around the bighorn sheep.

Remarks: Most visitors from the Southern or Midwestern U.S. would not recognize March in the Rocky Mountains as springtime, but subtle events are occurring at this time that foreshadow more dramatic transformations to come. As we found on that late March day in Wapiti Valley, snow still covers most of the high country in early and mid spring, and may even extend well into the lower, intermountain basins. This is usually the period of greatest yearly snowfall—heavy, water-laden crystals that help top off the alpine snowpack that will melt into summer and nourish lowlands many months and many miles away. The depth of the snowpack determines how much water will be available for wildlands and irrigated croplands during the typically dry summer. Ambient temperatures can fluctuate widely from day to day, challenging the versatility of any outdoor enthusiast's wardrobe.

Birds of prey are among the most conspicuous wildlife species in many areas, and keeping tabs on their comings and goings is a good way to mark the seasons. Most great horned owls in our area begin nesting in February and early March. These large, aggressive owls don't build their own nests; instead they commandeer nests built and used by ravens, hawks, or eagles in previous years. Because the owls begin nesting earlier than most hawks and eagles, they often have first choice of former nest sites. By late March, the eggs in many great horned owl nests have hatched, and adults are busy feeding their hungry nestlings. The youngsters will remain in the nest for 9-10 weeks before they are ready to fly. The two owls we heard at first light on 22 March might have been reminding one another of the territorial boundaries they had established much earlier in the year.

The rough-legged hawk we spotted on this field trip was a winter resident. Many rough-legged hawks can still be found searching open fields in foothills and lowlands for mice and voles in early March, but they begin their annual northern flight to breeding grounds in northern Canada and Alaska by mid-March. They are typically absent from our region by early April.



This young great horned owl will be out of the nest well before summer arrives in Yellowstone Country.

PHOTO BY C.R. PRESTON

By mid-March in the Greater Yellowstone region, most resident adult bald eagles are already incubating eggs. The eagle we spotted on the 22 March field trip might indicate that a pair of bald eagles was nesting nearby, though we did not find any active nest site. Nest site characteristics can vary greatly among bald eagle families, but each nest site will be within eagle eyesight of water.



These bighorn rams, killed by poachers in 2000, captivate and educate visitors in the Draper Museum of Natural History.

The bighorn sheep we found and photographed were on their critical winter range in Wapiti Valley. Elk, mule deer, and even a few bison migrate down from the high country and share space and other resources through the winter in Wapiti Valley. In response to weather, food resources, and other factors, these animals typically begin migrating back to higher elevations in March and April. You can often see ewes with newborn lambs scurrying along the rugged Absaroka peaks and ledges above Wapiti Valley in late spring.

During winter months, bighorns often graze near roadsides and are unfortunately easy targets for poachers. The two bighorn specimens displayed in the Draper Museum of Natural History Alpine Environment were confiscated from poachers. These two magnificent rams were illegally killed on Christmas Eve 2000 in Wapiti Valley. The two poachers were caught and convicted, thanks to a tip from the public and heads-up investigation by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD). The WGFD made it possible for us to include the specimens in our exhibit.

Entry: 06 April 2000 . . . sagebrush-steppe bench in Bighorn Basin . . . early morning . . . sky mostly overcast, but with a few stars visible . . . no wind . . . roads and ground clear of snow . . . temperature 43 degrees F . . . I'm getting an early start to observe and document greater sage grouse booming lek . . . I slipped into position at the lek site well before sunrise to avoid disturbing the birds . . . after quietly listening for about 15 minutes, I heard the first eerie "balloompp, balloompp" of a booming male . . . by sunrise at least 20 males strutting and booming to impress only five attending females . . . four of the females hanging around one large, aggressive male near the center of the lek.

Remarks: One of the most dramatic events signaling the onset of spring in the Greater Yellowstone region is the elaborate courtship ritual performed by the greater sage grouse. Males select a large, relatively open area as a stage for attracting mates. The area is called a lek. At dawn and dusk in late March and early April, each male defends a small site within the lek, where he vocalizes (“booms”) and displays his plumage, experience, and energy in a ritualized “dance.” Up to forty males and dozens of females may attend a breeding lek. Females are presumably most stimulated by the male(s) who demonstrates traits that will help offspring survive and successfully mate. It remains unclear just what traits are most important in stimulating females, and it is doubtful that females are aware of the ultimate consequences of their mate choice. We do know that larger, older males tend to attract the most females, but the most important trait might be the ability to defend a preferred area within the lek—apparently not all sites within a lek carry the same cachet!

Sage grouse are limited to sagebrush-dominated environments. Significant sagebrush environments and sage grouse populations remain in the Bighorn Basin and other areas of Wyoming, but scientists consider the sagebrush-steppe ecosystem to be critically threatened through much of its former range. Sagebrush environments, so closely tied to the myth and reality of the American West, are fast disappearing from the Western scene to make way for croplands, livestock grazing, and especially housing developments. We have recreated a slice of Wyoming sagebrush-steppe, including a sage grouse booming lek, in the Plains/Basins Environment of the Draper Museum of Natural History.



Male sage grouse compete for the attention of females in this dramatic spring ritual recreated in the Draper Museum of Natural History.

Entry: 07 June 1997 . . . Lamar Valley, Yellowstone National Park . . . late afternoon . . . light mist and overcast earlier, but sky now clear, light breeze from northwest . . . temperature 51 degrees F . . . I'm leading natural history tour from Denver to study Yellowstone's northern range and observe ungulates and wolves . . . aspens completely leafed out . . . larkspur and silvery lupine in bloom . . . several elk with newborn calves, a few hundred bison, mule deer, pronghorn in Lamar Valley . . . four wolves resting until lead female roused others . . . wolves split up and one black wolf ran through small herd of elk . . . other wolves chased one cow elk that split from herd . . . she got away this time . . . just before dark we saw a grizzly sow and two cubs feasting on a large elk carcass in a meadow near Lamar River . . . wolf kill, grizzly kill, winter kill? . . . bear property now!

Remarks: Lamar Valley is often called the Serengeti of North America. Although the numbers and diversity of animals don't really rival those of the grasslands of East Africa, the landscape and assemblage of large grazing animals and predators found in Lamar Valley is unparalleled in North America. Spring brings large numbers of predators and prey together each year in this broad, lush valley. Ungulates (i.e., elk, bison, deer, pronghorn) and wolves give birth and nurture their young, and grizzly and black bears support cubs born during winter sleep. Bears typically emerge from hibernation by late March, depending on weather and their physical condition going into hibernation. In spring they feed largely on winter-killed carcasses, a wide assortment of plants (e.g., biscuitroot, yarrow), spawning cutthroat trout, and an occasional elk or moose calf.



A grizzly bear comes to reclaim her cached elk carcass in this popular Draper Museum of Natural History exhibit.



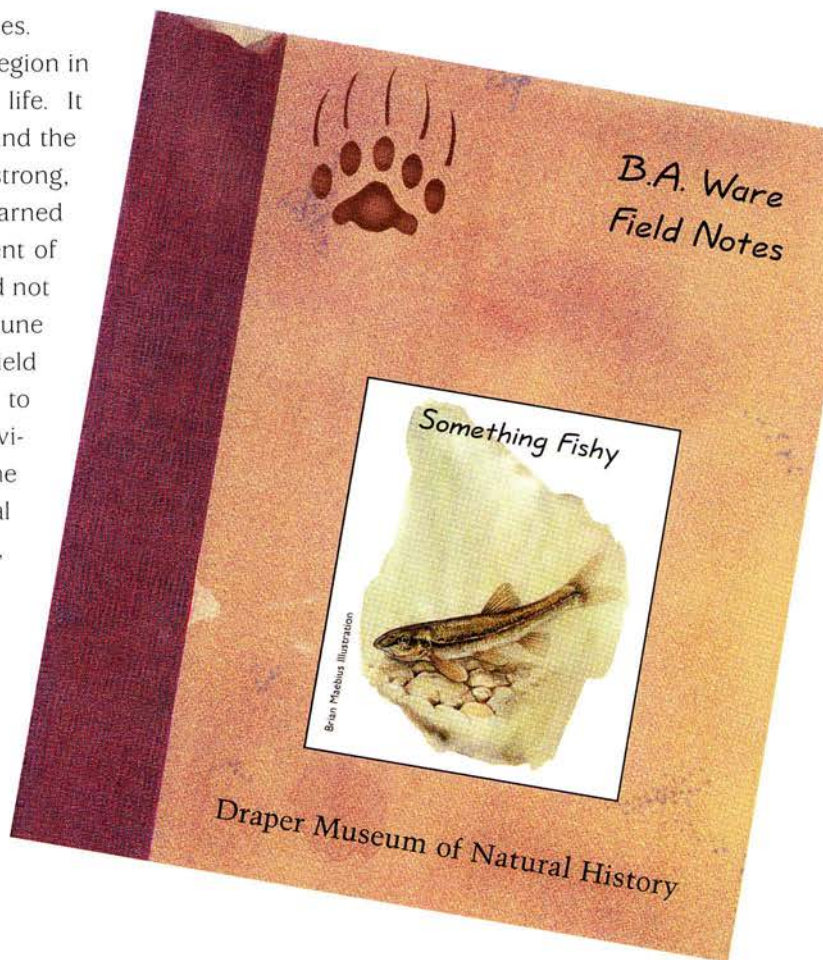
humans and large predators. It has become clear that, with adequate habitat resources, wolves and grizzlies can tolerate living in close proximity to humans; it remains unclear if humans can tolerate living in close proximity to wolves and grizzlies.

The trip I led to the Greater Yellowstone region in 1997 proved to be a key turning point in my life. It was during that trip that I first visited Cody and the Buffalo Bill Historical Center. Both made a strong, positive impression on me, and when I learned about the opportunity to lead the development of the Draper Museum of Natural History, I could not wait to throw my hat in the ring. I relive that June 1997 field trip every time I review my field notes. Keeping a field journal is a great way to find again old memories and keep track of environmental patterns and changes. Follow the lead of our resident Draper Museum of Natural History "naturalist and tour guide," B. A. Ware, and record your own observations of the sequence of natural events wherever you are during the spring of 2003. ■

Above: An alpha male wolf brings a meal to his mate and spring-born pups in this Draper Museum of Natural History exhibit.

Right: Recording your observations in a field journal is a great way to document your experiences and relive them in years to come.

The restoration of the gray wolf to Yellowstone National Park in 1995 returned a key player to the ecosystem that evolved and prevailed in the Greater Yellowstone region for approximately 10,000 years before Euro-American settlement. But the presence of wolves and grizzlies is not universally embraced. Most of the Greater Yellowstone region has changed significantly since Euro-American settlement. Human population, development, and economic interests continue to grow in the region, creating increasing opportunities for conflicts between



Spring is arguably the most vibrant of seasons, an outgoing optimist full of life and activity.

Ode to



A melting snow bank, running stream and a sliver of sunlight mean spring is on its way.

Spring

by Valarie Hamm



I once watched a single golden leaf drift silently to the ground in eastern Washington. "Today," I wrote in my journal, "I saw autumn begin."

More than a hundred years earlier, a Wyoming rancher had also noted the arrival of a season — spring. *[Saw] the first meadowlark*, wrote Otto Franc in March of 1888. *The river which commenced to break up on the 14th but froze up again, breaks up today in good earnest.*

The song of a bird, melting ice . . . the signs of spring in the Greater Yellowstone are timeless. What Otto Franc observed in 1888 is still noted today by farmers like Beryl Churchill.

"Spring arrives when the red-winged blackbird arrives," Beryl tells me one morning. Beryl's family has farmed land surrounding Powell, Wyoming, since 1909, when her husband's grandparents homesteaded. "My husband and I walk every day, and every year we record in the diary when we see the red-winged blackbird. Right after the blackbird, we hear the meadowlark. Then we know that pretty soon we'll be able to get into the field."

Jack Turnell, a cattle rancher who manages the same Pitchfork Ranch that Otto Franc once owned, senses spring in his bones. "I can look out my window and see it happening. I just know it's there," says Jack. "I don't know how to explain spring except that your bones don't hurt so bad. Spring hits and your bones thaw out and even your body has new life, not just the things around you."

When this writer lived in Seattle, spring manifested itself in the incessantly dripping gray skies and a monotonous seasonal wardrobe of rain boots and slickers. If I'd had my way, we would have skipped spring altogether and moved right into summer. But in the Greater Yellowstone region, spring is arguably the most vibrant of seasons, an outgoing optimist full of life and activity who inspires ice to crack, animals to birth, roots to grow and people to start fresh after a long winter.

"I think people's dispositions get better. It's not the cold and harshness of winter," says Jack Turnell. "They see new life, and they have a new outlook."

For ranchers and farmers like Jack and Beryl, spring kicks off one of the busiest times of the year. "We don't turn the tractors off once they're on. We work in shifts from seven to seven in the spring," says Beryl Churchill.



*“In Wyoming,
ranchers can
scarcely take
time even
to be married
in the
springtime.”*

— Elinore Pruitt Stewart

In spring, a young man's fancy supposedly turns to love, but Elinore Pruitt Stewart wrote in 1912, “In Wyoming, ranchers can scarcely take time even to be married in the springtime.” While spring isn't devoid of marriage ceremonies today, the routine of springtime ranch life hasn't changed much since homesteaders first settled in the region.

“You get up in the morning and plan the day. It may be riding, it may be irrigating. It could be plumbing, electrical work, carpentry,” Jack Turnell explains. “We always have something to do. Digging ditches, fixing roads. There's just never a dull moment.”

Again Franc wrote one spring . . . *We start work on the big ditch again but have to give it up as the ground in some places is frozen; we haul manure, gather up cow chips; clean sheds . . . The roof of the bunkhouse leaks badly and we have to spread lay sheets over it; storms until noon after which it lets up a little. . . . we clean horse corral and shed.*

It was spring when this writer phoned the manager of a western Wyoming ranch to say, "I'll take the job." I'd never seen Wyoming and its sagebrush steppes, never visited the first national park—Yellowstone—and never ridden a horse bareback into the hills. For four years, my life had revolved around college exams, professors' office hours, clocks and school holidays. Seasons were secondary. Fall arrived when classes began. Winter arrived with Christmas vacation. Spring started because the college calendar said Spring Break.

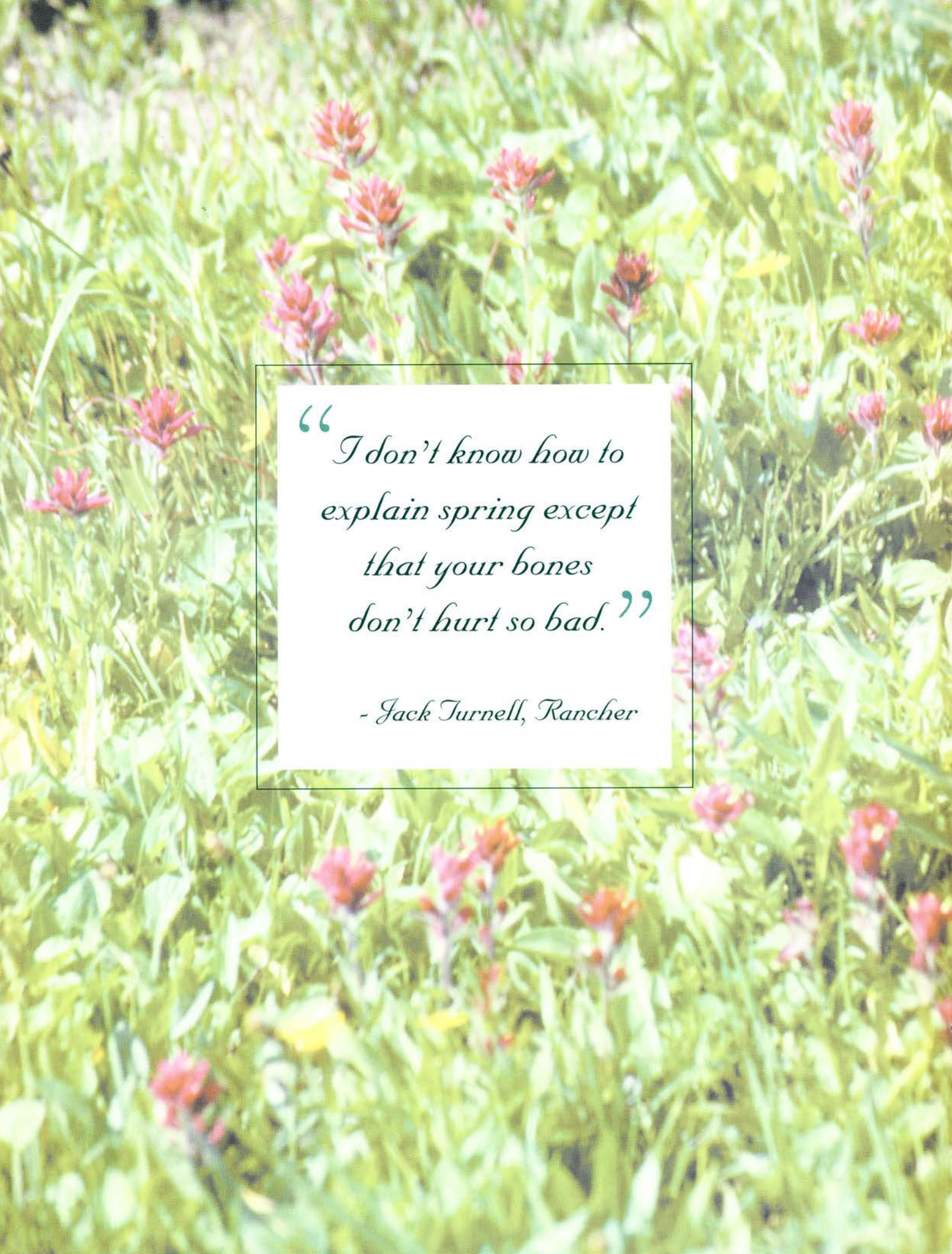
In Wyoming's spring, I found myself chasing a young steer across the pasture in an attempt to vaccinate him. I saw a dead elk calf caught in a fence along the flats, too young to make the jump, too tired to find a way around. I watched the snowy roads give way to dirt and fresh flowers. Yes, it rained, but it also snowed and sometimes the sky opened up clear and wide.

Expect one type of weather and you'll probably get the opposite of what you planned for, agrees Jack Turnell. "The weather can change by the hour. We once lost 100 head of cattle in three days. In other years, you expect a storm and it doesn't happen. You just expect change all the time."

Snowing . . . wrote Franc. We are all in the cow shed spreading manure; we drive toward home as quick as possible. Ling and Manning take their team out of the wagon and run for home; we all get lost as one cannot see 10 yards ahead, we bring up against the bank of the [corral?] very suddenly and from there find the house, it is all over by 5 o'clock.



"It may be riding, it may be irrigating. . . We always have something to do."—Jack Turnell. Photograph. Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, WY; Gift of W.H.D. Koerner, III and Mrs. Ruth Koerner Oliver. P.78.1191.

A photograph of a field of green plants with red flowers, likely Colorado blue columbine, in bloom. The flowers are in various stages of development, with some showing bright red petals and others as buds. The background is a dense field of similar plants, creating a textured, natural setting.

*“I don’t know how to
explain spring except
that your bones
don’t hurt so bad.”*

- Jack Turnell, Rancher



"I watched the snowy roads give way to dirt and fresh flowers."— Valarie Hamm.

PHOTO BY C. R. PRESTON

Such random weather can be the downfall of crops. For farmers like Beryl Churchill, whose family invests thousands of dollars in the ground and generates no income until a successful harvest in August or September, every planting is a risk.

"You're so vulnerable," she explains. "You worry if you're going to have enough water and if it rains, you worry there's going to be too much water." But it doesn't prevent her from embracing spring.

At the tail end of this past winter, when we thought the last snow had probably passed but the cold lingered, a friend and I searched for shed elk antlers. The snow was still substantial in the draw, its cold captured by the depth of the streambed and the surrounding tree shade. After hiking much of the morning, my pants were wet to the knees and my bony heels complained of blisters.

I don't recall hearing a single bird and no magnificent antler poked its point out of the snow. Finally, the cheery black mutt who accompanied us began digging in the snow bank ahead. She uncovered fur and a single pink-stained horn. We kicked at the snow with our boots, but the head with its other horn—if there *were* another horn—remained buried beneath four feet of snow. "We'll have to come back in the spring," said my friend. He tied a piece of fluorescent tape to a nearby tree as a marker, and we continued up the draw.

Weeks later, we returned. The stream that had been frozen a few weeks earlier was now loud and fluid; plants that had been still and white grew green and sturdy. And nestled in the stream bottom were a skull and the other pinkish horn. "Today," I wrote in my journal, "I saw spring arrive." ■

Journal excerpts from MS 10, Count Otto Franc von Lechenstein Collection. Box 1 March and April of 1888. McCracken Research Library, Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, WY. On loan from Landis Webber.

WORK



Buffalo Bill and Sitting Bull.
Photograph (detail). Buffalo
Bill Historical Center, Cody,
WY. P.69.2125.

AND MORE WORK

A SEASONAL LOOK AT BUFFALO BILL

Juti A. Winchester, Ph.D.

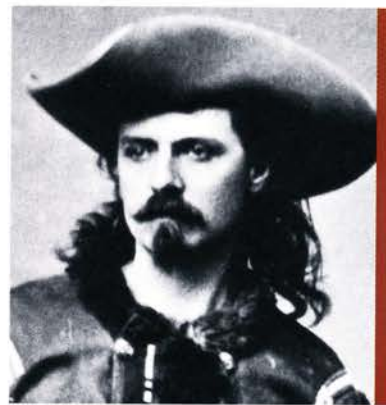
*Ernest J. Goppert Curator of the Buffalo Bill Museum
and Western American History*

Historians have spent much time and paper documenting everything one could think of concerning Buffalo Bill, generally segmenting his life chronologically according to his activities. For example, a scholar might look at Cody's stage career from 1872 to 1885, or they could examine his involvement with the town of Cody, Wyoming, from 1894 to his death in 1917. However, studying his life's work from a seasonal perspective offers another view of William F. Cody. The Colonel's summer exploits are his most well known and often told. By looking at the period of time between Cody's birthday (February 26) and the first of June, we can see what "spring" meant in Buffalo Bill's world.

Cody's life was filled with a whirl of activity beginning with his childhood. March of 1857 found him without a father and, before summer, Russell and Majors employed him as a messenger, making it possible for him to gain later fame as a relay rider for the Pony Express. In late February 1864 Cody, like many young men of his generation, enlisted in the army on the Union side in the Civil War.

A number of other life-altering events occurred in Cody's life in springtime. On March 6, 1866, he married Louisa Frederici, embarking on a life-long but rocky union with her. In the spring of 1872, Cody traveled east and was induced to step on the stage for the first time. He immediately fled the footlights and the notoriety. He was later lured back by his friend John B. "Texas Jack" Omohundro, and subsequent springs found him on the road to everlasting fame with the "Buffalo Bill Combination." In April 1876, Cody's only son, Kit Carson, died—a sorrowful loss that Buffalo Bill later said he never really got over.

Many of us have visions of budding plants, newborn animals, and other images of new life and regeneration when we think of "spring." For farmers, ranchers and others whose livelihood depends on the seasons, spring means a new round of work in order to ensure the year's production. Buffalo Bill faced the same situation with his seasonally produced show, as work for the next year had to be commenced almost before the past year was truly finished.



Buffalo Bill in the springtime of his life. Photograph (detail). Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, WY. Vincent Mercaldo Collection. P.71.14



Away from the Wild West between seasons late in 1903 or early in 1904, Buffalo Bill headed out to the TE Ranch with friends but still had work to do. Here, he examines a herd of cattle while his guests look on. Photograph by Irving R. Bacon. Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, WY. P.6.546.34.

Study of the stacks of correspondence in the McCracken Research Library's collection of Buffalo Bill material reveals an interesting pattern. Although he was a prolific summer, autumn, and winter correspondent, Cody didn't seem to write many letters between about the middle of January and the middle of May. Looking at the routes and schedules compiled by library staff, we find that for over thirty years, from sometime in April to around the middle of November, Buffalo Bill's Wild West (or some form of his exhibition) was on the road.

Letter writing was Cody's only means of keeping up with activities among his extended family as well as his business associates while he was traveling with the Wild West. While the show went into

winter quarters in the East, Buffalo Bill sped west to his ranch at North Platte, Nebraska, and later to Cody, Wyoming, to rest however he could and to see his family. When the winter holidays were over, Cody again crisscrossed the nation checking on his business interests, visiting potential investors, organizing the show route, and recruiting talent for the Wild West. By the end of February, he had returned to the East and was deep in preparation for the next show season. Thus, in the springtime, Cody was able to conduct his business face-to-face, making paper correspondence unnecessary.

An April 5, 1912, letter to Clarence Rowley written from Scout's Rest Ranch, shows how busy the Colonel's time off could be. Cody scribbled:

I arrived here this morning in fine health. But very tired. Had so much to do at Cody in a snow storm and so short a time to do it in. Besides my own business I had so much to do for the town which they expect me to do. As I am heavily interested there. And being the father of the town. When I am there they expect me to lead.

Cody goes on to relate plans to "go over" the North Platte ranch with his son-in-law, speak at the Commercial Club in Omaha, go to Trenton, New Jersey, to work with the wintered show, and meet other mine investors in New York City, all within a week of the letter. He finishes:

Ex. Haste. A lot of town people just drove out to see me. More talk & I am tired with a big bunch of mail as yet unopened.¹

Incidentally, opening day for the 1912 show was April 20.



Bacon captured Buffalo Bill in a rare moment of repose in front of the fire at the TE Ranch. Photograph by Irving R. Bacon. Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, WY. P.6.546.58B.

After the Wild West was bankrupted in Denver in summer 1913, the old scout began to have a little more time to himself—a very little. Later that same year, Buffalo Bill was able to accompany the Prince of Monaco on what later turned out to be a famous and successful hunt, something he wouldn't have been able to do had business been as usual with the Wild West. Spring 1914 and 1915 found Cody again busily rehearsing, this time with the Sells-Floto Circus, but his workload was lighter because he no longer had to organize the show or supervise employees. In March 1916 he was busy again, writing his biography for *Hearst* magazine while staying with his nephew in New Rochelle, New York.²

Cody spent some of the last spring of his life in the East with family and at the scene of some of his earlier triumphs. By the end of April 1916, however, Buffalo Bill was on the road again, bringing the West to audiences far from the wild places he loved. He had big plans for the spring of 1917. Cody hoped to get his own Wild West off the ground and running again in order to restore his fortune and reassume command of his future, but his health failed him before winter released its grip on the West. ■

¹ Letter from William F. Cody to Clarence W. Rowley, April 5, 1912. McCracken Research Library, Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, WY. MS6 Series I:B Box 2, F17.

² Nellie Snyder Yost, *Buffalo Bill: His Family, Friends, Fame, Failures, and Fortunes* (Chicago: The Swallow Press, 1979), 397.



Buffalo Bill and eight Indian scouts, ca. 1886. Anderson Cabinet photograph.
Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, WY. P.69.1800.



Even on vacation with his friends around him, Cody conducts his business from a desk at the ranch. Dr. Frank "White Beaver" Powell, Irving R. Bacon, and "Professor Lennon" enjoy their cigars while discussing mining prospects with the Colonel. Photograph. Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, WY. P.6.546.46.



PHOTO BY BOB RICHARD

MEET THE NEW DIRECTOR

by Barbara Foote Colvert

Bob Shimp considers himself one lucky guy. “How many people at my point in life get to experience an opportunity like this?” he asks from his desk in the freshly refurbished director’s office at the Buffalo Bill Historical Center.

Shimp and his wife, Lyn, have just enjoyed an amazing spring and summer with the opening of the Draper Museum of Natural History, several remarkable exhibitions, and a tourist season of burgeoning attendance capped off by the Rendezvous Royale weekend.

Given a heady and auspicious beginning, they eagerly anticipate completion of a new home on the outskirts of Cody and the unfolding of the fall and winter seasons in this not-so-small Western town that has welcomed them with open arms.

“We’ve lived in a lot of places, from London, England, to Delaware, Ohio,” Shimp says, “and we’ve never lived in a town where we’ve felt as welcome and comfortable as we have here.”

Their Western odyssey began when a muse tickled Shimp’s fancy some time last November, 2001.

“I said to my wife, ‘I like what I’m doing, but if I ever get a chance to do anything else I’d like to try.’ But what does a 17th century British historian do?”

Lyn’s musing was that if they moved again she would want three criteria met: they would have to move south of the Mason-Dixon Line, east of the Mississippi, and to a small town . . .

Not long afterwards, Shimp was contacted by a “headhunter” who said his name had turned up on a list of qualified potential candidates for the directorship of the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in Cody, Wyoming. Shimp was floored. After spending 30 years in higher education, and 10 years as a college president with an academic specialty in 17th century British history, it seemed an unlikely match. But he told the search agency to forward the material about the Historical Center anyway, and the rest is, well, history for this historian and his family.

“The material spoke for itself,” Shimp states, noting that he has always held an appreciation for art and architecture, painting and bronzes, let alone history. Still, the odds of bringing disparate elements together seemed remote.

After a whirlwind January interview weekend in Denver, a close friend and college president contacted Shimp.



Lynn and Vice President Dick Cheney with Lyn and Bob Shimp at the Buffalo Bill Historical Center last June.

"He asked me, 'What did you do this weekend?' and I said, 'You'll never believe this,'" Shimp recalls. His friend, who had worked in Billings, immediately began extolling the Buffalo Bill Historical Center. This, plus the caliber of people Shimp had met gave him a lot to think about, though he says that essentially he went about his business after returning home. But not for long.

"On Monday or Tuesday I received a call asking Lyn and me to come out and look at the museum." On January 21st the Shimps headed west to spend several days touring the Cody area and to become acquainted with the Buffalo Bill Historical Center. Any uncertainties they might have had about the area or the opportunity that lay before them were dispelled.

"We could tell almost instantly that we liked the community," says Shimp, who describes Cody as "a small town with a cosmopolitan heart."

In the few months since the Shimps began settling in here, he has begun making inroads that draw on all aspects of his experience in university level teaching and administration.

Bob Shimp began his academic career as a graduate of Theil College in 1964 with a degree in history. He earned a Master of Arts in history in 1965 and a doctorate in English history in 1970, both from Ohio State University. He also attended the Harvard University Institute for Educational Management in 1985.

Shimp was a professor of history and held a number of administrative posts at Ohio Wesleyan from 1968 to 1984, and he served as academic dean at Kentucky Wesleyan College from 1984 to 1988. He was provost/vice president for academic affairs and acting president at Millikin University from 1988 to 1992.

As the ninth president of McMurry University from 1993 to 2002, Shimp led the university to record enrollment growth to approximately 1,300 students—an increase of 33 percent—and developed an outstanding faculty during his tenure. He cites the \$25 million capital campaign and new construction as his greatest achievements at McMurry. The endowment fund doubled to \$42 million, and he presided over the construction of a new baseball complex and student apartment center as well as a number of renovations to existing campus buildings. The campus was also completely networked offering Internet access and distance learning.



Shimp joins dancers at the 2002 Plains Indian Museum Powwow.

Shimp will draw on all these accomplishments to develop his vision of what the Buffalo Bill Historical Center can become in the Twenty-first Century.

"There are similarities between museums and universities," he states. "They are staffed with the same kinds of people, education and experience."

"I see this place as an educational institution," he continues. "The people who come in here are interested in being educated and entertained."

Shimp has set short- and long-term priorities in attracting and serving the interests of visitors here. Continuing to build and interpret the collection, increasing the endowment, and keeping the center financially responsible are immediate goals. His long-term goal is seeing the Buffalo Bill Historical Center as a reference point for all that is Western.

"I would like to see us be *the* source for the American West, historical and contemporary," he says emphatically.

Shimp has enlisted the energy and imagination of the Board of Trustees, advisory board members, the Historical Center staff, and the community to bring this vision to reality.

"We have developed a vision statement and a mission statement and are in serious strategic planning for 2003-2008," he explains. "We had seven task forces meeting off and on this fall. By January we should have a set of key institutional goals with a full-scale plan by June of the vision, strategies, timelines and responsibilities to accomplish those goals."

Marketing is an overarching element that he is developing closely with Thom Huge, Director of Communications, and his staff, and Elizabeth Houghton, a New York City marketing consultant.

"We have to let people know who we are," he says. "People must come to see the collections." Taking this a step farther, he wants to see the Buffalo Bill Historical Center and Cody become destinations, not stops on the way to Yellowstone or somewhere else.



Clint Eastwood, escorted by Bob and Lyn Shimp, was touring the Buffalo Bill Historical Center for the opening day festivities of the Draper Museum of Natural History.

After seeing a 20 percent increase in attendance so far during the 2002 season, Shimp is encouraged. Other signs encourage him as well.

"The opening of the Draper may have tipped the scale, forcing people to stay longer. The percentage of people coming back for a second day has doubled," he says. "Now you *can't* do these museums in one day!"

He also sees a trend toward more multi-generation families visiting.

Marketing will direct more people here, but Shimp sees other possibilities to expand awareness and learning through distance education, traveling exhibitions, and elderhostel and alumni group visitations, particularly during "the shoulder seasons" of May and September.

Internet programming can expand educational opportunities for K through 12 students, undergraduates, and continuing education students. Shimp is uniquely experienced to address these areas of development and beyond.



Lyn and Bob Shimp with "Maggie."

"We're limited only by our imaginations with the collections, talented and experienced staff, community, board members, and the fine facilities we have here," he says. "That means we really don't have any limits."

What the Buffalo Bill Historical Center becomes rests on one consideration.

"Do we want to be a first rate regional museum, or a truly first-rate national/international museum?" Shimp asks, and quickly answers. "I know I am joined by the staff in wanting the latter."

Bob Shimp, listener to the muse, veteran of turning the illogical into the logical, the impossible into the possible, is clearly the right man in the right place at the right time for the right job. A man of vision and enthusiasm, a man who can convince his wife that meeting one out of three conditions makes a great move if that one condition—a small town—was enough to bring them to Cody. A man who can turn April Fools' Day—his first day as the Buffalo Bill Historical Center's new Director—in his favor.

"April 1 was not April Fools' Day, it was the beginning of a new era!" he states emphatically.

A new era indeed, for the Buffalo Bill Historical Center and for the Shimp family that includes three grown children—Gregg, Cecily and Jennifer—and three grandsons and two granddaughters ranging in age from 12 years old to 3 months old who will soon be visiting that new home on the outskirts of Wyoming's biggest-little-town.

"We're having a wonderful time living here," he says with hallmark Shimp exuberance. "You feel like you're on a perpetual vacation."

Lucky man. And lucky for the Buffalo Bill Historical Center. ■

Rendezvous Royale

A CELEBRATION OF THE ARTS IN CODY, WYOMING

Enjoy snapshots from the 21st annual Buffalo Bill Art Show & Sale and the 26th annual Patrons Ball. Hundreds of members, donors, friends, and guests attended these two glorious fund-raisers for the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in September. Join us for the Patrons Ball, Buffalo Bill Art Show & Sale, and the Western Design Conference in 2003. Contact Jill Osiecki for information at (307) 578-4025 or via email at jillo@bbhc.org.



Clockwise from top:

- (1) Linda St. Clair paints among a fascinated Quick Draw crowd.
- (2) Veteran Quick Draw participant Mel Fillerup puts the final touches on his painting.
- (3) Dean St. Clair shows off his finished work at the Quick Draw auction.
- (4) John Fawcett replicates a pretty paint horse.

PHOTOS BY MARK BAGNE

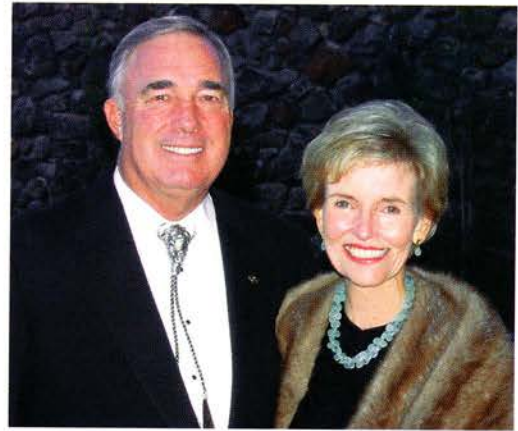
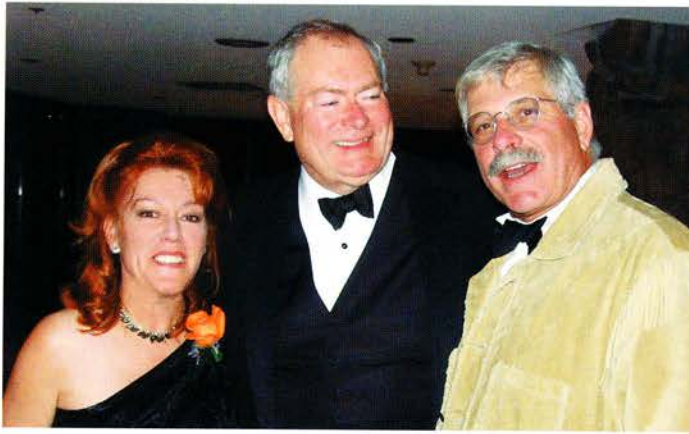
Patrons Ball 2002



Clockwise from top:

- (1) Al Simpson drawing the winning ticket for the Grand Prize of the Patrons Ball
- (2) Lynne Simpson, Pete Simpson, Delores Snyder and Bob Snyder
- (3) Marvin Smith, Jill Smith, Betty Lou Sheerin and Larry Sheerin
- (4) Debbie Oakley Simpson (Patrons Ball Chairperson), Heather Yeager, Chuck Oakley, Ann Simpson, Al Simpson, Eileen Oakley
- (5) Former Wyoming Governor Mike Sullivan





Clockwise from top:

- (1) Kathy McLane (BBHC Membership Director), Bill Ruger, Jr., and Bob Model
- (2) Richard and Maggie Scarlett
- (3) Charles and Anne Duncan
- (4) BBHC Executive Director, Bob Shimp and Associate Director, Wally Reber
- (5) John Sullivan, Meredith Sullivan, Naoma Tate and Darrell Tate
- (6) Sherri and Governor Jim Geringer

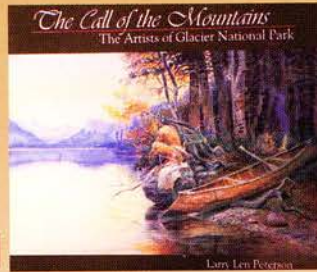


IMAGES OF THE AMERICAN WEST

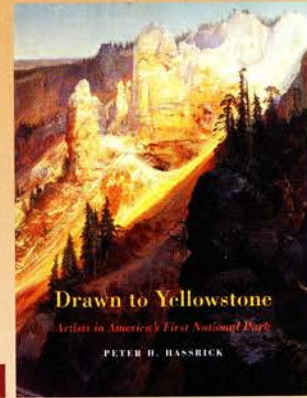
GREAT IDEAS FOR HOLIDAY GIFT-GIVING!



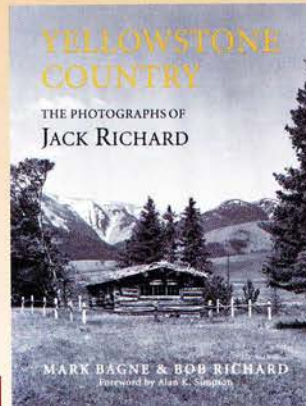
Yellowstone Falls (1881) — A new poster reproduction of Albert Bierstadt's famed painting. Regularly \$15, **Patrons price \$10.**



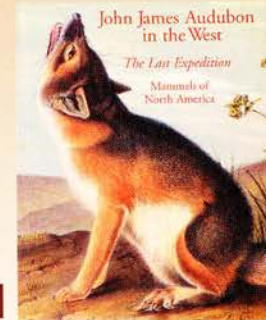
1.



2.



3.



4.

1. *The Call of the Mountains, The Artists of Glacier National Park*, by Larry Len Peterson. Regularly \$47.50, **Patrons price \$40.**
2. *Drawn to Yellowstone*, by Peter H. Hassrick. Regularly \$35, **Patrons price \$30.**
3. *Yellowstone Country*, by Bob Richard and Mark Bagne. Was \$29.95, **Patrons price \$19.95.**
4. *John James Audubon in the West: The Last Expedition: Mammals of North America*, by Sarah E. Boehme. Was \$45, **Patrons price \$30.**

**Museum
Selections**

307.587.3243

■ www.bbhcstore.com

BUFFALO BILL HISTORICAL CENTER
720 SHERIDAN AVENUE ■ CODY, WY 82414

www.bbhc.org

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U. S. POSTAGE PAID
BUFFALO BILL
HISTORICAL CENTER