

POINTS**WEST**

SPRING 2018

Cody Firearms Museum to get **EXTREME MAKEOVER**

- From Thorofare to Destination, PART 3
- Golden eagles take off in *Monarch of the Skies*

**BUFFALO BILL
CENTER
OF THE WEST**

to the point

BY BRUCE ELDREDGE | *Executive Director and CEO*



"Now for the next century."

With these words, I concluded this column in the last issue of *Points West*. Our Centennial year was nearly at an end, and I hinted that we had "significant surprises in store" going forward into 2018.

And we have a big one!

As you turn to page four, you'll discover a very important announcement: We are renovating our Cody Firearms Museum (CFM)! We are all very excited at the prospect, but none more so than Firearms Curator Ashley Hlebinsky. As she explains, "The transformation of the Firearms Museum promises to be extraordinary. The hours and hours of interviews, research, planning, and brainstorming have led us to a stunning design...we're convinced our plan engages everyone from the firearms novice to collectors and researchers."

In Ashley's article that begins on page four, you'll discover the design and content for the "new" CFM. With our "Developments" and news pages, you'll find out about the generosity of the Timney Triggers organization who pledged \$500,000 toward the CFM reconstruction, leading the charge in the firearms world as the first substantial industry gift. The donation combines with several federal grants and high-level individual donations received so far, allowing us to really shift into gear on the project.

Since the Winchester Collection arrived in 1976, the CFM has obviously been a destination museum for firearms enthusiasts. However, one particularly unique feature of the Firearms Museum—now and into the future—is that we also have four other museums and a research library focused on the West. This is an unprecedented opportunity to educate and enlighten thousands of non-firearms enthusiasts, a message that Ashley summarizes this way: "The reimagining of the Cody Firearms Museum looks at not only how guns were used, but why they're important to the understanding of our nation's history."

The reinstallation project begins in fall 2018, with the "new" CFM opening in June 2019. How can you find about our progress? Watch for updates here, on centerofthewest.org, and on social media. ■



About the cover:

Famed western artist Frederic Remington (1861 – 1909) painted his last composition for a Winchester Repeating Arms Company calendar in 1894. Three years later, he acquired this striking Winchester Model 1894 lever-action rifle (1.67.335). This made it a "Remington Winchester," an unusual juxtaposition of well-known firearms names. It's pictured here with one of Remington's paint palettes, ca. 1905 (1.67.219). Both are gifts of the Coe Foundation.

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The Buffalo Bill Center of the West is a private, non-profit, educational institution dedicated to preserving and interpreting the natural and cultural history of the American West. Founded in 1917, its collections include: Buffalo Bill and the West he lived and loved, historic photographs and documents, firearms, natural science of the Greater Yellowstone region, Plains Indians, and masterworks of western art.

The mission of *Points West* is to deliver an engaging, educational magazine primarily to our members and friends. *Points West* uses a multi-disciplinary strategy to connect the reader to the nature and culture of the American West, and the Buffalo Bill Center of the West in particular, through exceptional images and appealing, reader-friendly stories.

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VISIT US ONLINE | Stay in touch with all that's happening at the Buffalo Bill Center of the West; visit centerofthewest.org.

Points West is the magazine of the Buffalo Bill Center of the West, Cody, Wyoming.

 **Smithsonian Affiliations**



If this gun could talk! With the “new” Cody Firearms Museum (CFM), visitors can expect more “talking” firearms, that is, a greater number of actual stories from and about manufacturers, owners, and history—like the ones that might be related to this 1894 Colt .45 that belonged to beloved western actor Gary Cooper, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Karabiane. (1982.4.1). Read more about the planned CFM reinstallation beginning on page four.



CFM: Extreme makeover coming in 2019

Through engaging and interpretive displays, the CFM can better contextualize the various roles firearms have played in the history of human endeavor.



**CODY
FIREARMS MUSEUM**

EXTREME MAKEOVER

COMING IN 2019



BY ASHLEY HLEBINSKY

Firearms have existed for hundreds of years. They play integral roles in countless narratives that address conflict, war, individual usage and ownership, manufacturing, sport, science, technology, and art. The Cody Firearms Museum (CFM) at the Buffalo Bill Center of the West celebrates this diversity in firearms history. After twenty-five years of interpreting firearms, however, the CFM is about to undergo a major reinstallation. Through this renovation, the museum seeks to better highlight these stories for a twenty-first-century audience.

The new museum will exhibit thousands of firearms dating back to 1400, and continuing to modern day. Through engaging and interpretive displays, the CFM can better contextualize the various roles firearms have played in the history of human endeavor.



William F. “Buffalo Bill” Cody exhibit—including his firearms—in the original Buffalo Bill Museum, ca. 1930. MS 228 Buffalo Bill Museum Photographs Collection. PN.228.156



Firearms are found throughout the Center’s galleries including this one from the Buffalo Bill Museum: Model 1851 Colt Navy revolver, .36 caliber, engraved with gold and ivory. Belonged to Wild Bill Hickok and sold to help pay for his burial expenses. Eventually, a buyer purchased it for \$.25. Gift of Florence Jenkins and the Donald Becker Family. 1.69.6284.1

A HUNDRED YEARS AT THE BUFFALO BILL CENTER OF THE WEST

The Cody Firearms Museum is part of a complex of five major museums and a research library at the Buffalo Bill Center of the West in Cody, Wyoming. While firearms are specifically the focus and mission of the CFM—a relatively recent addition to the Center (1976)—firearms have been integral artifacts in the Center’s hundred-year history.

In 1917, William F. “Buffalo Bill” Cody passed away. That same year in Cody, the community, including Cody’s niece Mary Jester Allen, founded the Buffalo Bill Memorial Association to commemorate his life. A hundred years later, the Center has grown into a 40-acre property that features the Whitney Western Art Museum, Buffalo Bill Museum, Plains Indian Museum, Draper Natural History Museum, Cody Firearms Museum, and the McCracken Research Library. Each museum has at least one firearm in its collection; taken together, the Center’s firearms collection totals more than 8,000 guns. About 90 percent, however, are part of the Cody Firearms Museum Collection—one that has grown significantly over the past few decades.

In 1975, the Olin Corporation began the necessary paperwork to loan the Winchester Arms Collection to the Center. This loan included thousands of firearms and tens of thousands of design drawings, ephemera, and corporate records. It was international in scale and included firearms from as early as 1425. On July 4, 1976, famed western actor John Wayne was a part of the dedication of the collection to the Center. Because of its generous lender, the museum initially opened in the basement of the Buffalo Bill Museum as the Winchester Arms Museum in the early 1980s. However, in 1988, Olin donated the collection, and the Center built a separate wing to house the

growing museum.

Before reopening in its new location within the Center in 1991, the firearms museum underwent a name change. Firearms manufacturer William B. Ruger, who housed a portion of his personal collection in the museum and was a member of the Center’s board of trustees, provided a substantial donation to alter the name to be more reflective of the diverse collection. Thus, in the summer of 1991, the Cody Firearms Museum opened. At present, the CFM boasts about 7,000 firearms and more than 20,000 firearms-related artifacts.

Today, the Buffalo Bill Center of the West is an American Alliance of Museums accredited institution—an honor bestowed upon only 5 percent of all museums in the country. As part of a larger institution, the CFM is privy to several advantages. First, the interdisciplinary nature of the Center incorporates firearms history into all facets of both American and international history. Second, the Center attracts a diverse audience. Nearly 200,000 people visit the Center per annum, most on their way to or from Yellowstone National Park. Thus, the CFM has an opportunity to reach not only gun enthusiasts, but an international audience—many without a great familiarity with firearms. These advantages—especially the diverse audience base—have been taken into consideration in the future of the museum.



A display of air guns in the current Cody Firearms Museum is typical of displays prevalent throughout the museum.

A TIME FOR CHANGE

Project Vision: The CFM will become an even stronger destination for both firearm enthusiasts and the general public as the foremost institution in the nation for interpreting firearms.

The Cody Firearms Museum has been in existence for more than twenty-five years. While that may not seem like a long time in the hundred-year history of the Center, a reinstallation is long overdue. *It is important to note: In the reinstallation, the staff will not take away the elements of the museum that make it so iconic.* Instead, our hope is to supplement the collection's significance with interactives and refined casework that permit more guns on display than is currently possible. At present, the museum has 3,948 firearms on exhibit; the new museum has a target goal of more than 4,500 firearms on display.

The current CFM's main floor is divided

into the following wings: Coors Theater, Robert W. Woodruff Gallery of Sporting Arms and Action Types, Military History Gallery, Boone & Crockett Cabin, Firearms by Manufacturer (a wing with several smaller named galleries), and the Robert W. Woodruff Embellished Arms Gallery. Each of these exhibits examines a different aspect in the comprehensive history of firearms. Nevertheless, the average non-gun-enthusiast visitor often finds the museum difficult to digest. In reality, the visitor almost needs a baseline of understanding to absorb larger concepts of why firearms are so essential throughout history. While the enthusiast can draw these connections simply, it is a struggle for our firearms-novice visitors. In the reinstallation, we seek a balance between these two ends of the spectrum. To complete this task, we intend to double the number of media and mechanical interactives, in addition to increasing the number of guns on display.

NEW GALLERY THEMES

CENTER-OF-THE-WEST enthusiasts
TECHNOLOGY veterans
 INTERPRETATION stories **makeover** RENOVATION
history shooting
 NEW WEST insight **LEARNING**
CFM NOVICE research visitors
 Cody Firearms Museum

1 INTRODUCTION

The front of the museum is dedicated to Firearms Safety and Basics alongside the modern shooting sports. It encompasses a tactile learning experience where visitors can interact with mechanical actions to discover how the distinct types of firearms function. They'll also learn pertinent terminology (rifle, cartridge,



A birds-eye view of the reinstalled CFM.

carbine, caliber, pistol, revolver, gauge, etc.) that they'll encounter on labels and within text panels throughout the rest of the museum. To the rear of this section is a simulated firearms experience where visitors find out about modern day shooting sports, firearms safety, proper firearms handling, and other tips on the range.

Essentially, the entrance to the new museum orients the firearms novice to the function of firearms to gain that "baseline of understanding" as they explore the museum. For those more adept at firearms, visitors can choose to participate in the discovery learning area or walk left into the museum's galleries.

2 EVOLUTION OF FIREARMS

This section is a comprehensive timeline covering the entirety of firearms history. A central case runs down the left side of the museum discussing not only technological changes, but why these technologies evolved. This is an opportunity for visitors to draw larger connections to firearms with diverse cultures and world events. These artifacts

are accompanied by a series of tablets that demonstrate the firearms in action. While the timeline is a chronology, it is also accompanied by thematic pullout galleries on both sides that discuss significant times of transition in this lengthy history.

This timeline also functions as a "Fast Track" version of the museum for those who do not have enough time or the desire to linger in the museum.

3 STORY OF THE WEST

In the center of the timeline, one of the thematic segments is dedicated to the mythology of the West and the reality behind firearms "Winning the West." It will posit the popular culture that we associate with the region and challenge misperceptions about the actual history. This small display on the timeline opens to

Story of the West interactive.





Military history and veterans oral history section.

the right to lead visitors down a corridor where they next address firearms roles in the real West.

The core of this section is a recreated western town. In the middle of the gallery is a media interactive that addresses well-known firearms of the American West and tracks them from design to distribution. The museum retains its nineteenth-century arms factory from the current configuration so that visitors can learn about brand names associated with the West, such as Winchester and Colt. In a hunting cabin, they can view an exhibit and a movie on the history of hunting from fur trapping to the conservation movement. In a recreation of the Browning Brothers original store, visitors learn about gun designers who lived and worked in the West. The final structure is a small store where visitors learn the types of guns that people could afford in the American West.

4 MILITARY HISTORY

The military history wing has two main components. The first is a traditional military weapons display around the



Vertical firearms storage and display.

periphery of the exhibition area. This section is to be densely packed with firearms and showcases the evolution of firearms from early conflicts on American soil to more modern battles fought globally by Americans. Using a simulator, visitors may even fire a Browning M2 machine gun.

The second component focuses on soldiers' experiences expressed through

oral histories. A tent is in the center of the gallery, and inside, viewers can hear and read oral histories of soldiers. Projected on the outside of the tent is filmed battle footage. The Room of Reflection at the back of the gallery is an ongoing oral history space for current veterans. There, they can record their own stories for the Center to keep and share in the future.

5 SCIENCE OF FIREARMS

This miniature science center comprehensively examines the physics of precision. Like the Introductory area, this hands-on gallery invites visitors to learn and understand firearms mechanics. It also looks at popular misperceptions of firearms and their accessories. For example, are silencers silent?

The section also features long-range rifle and shotgun simulators. Unlike the shooting galleries at the entrance of the current museum that focus on basic handling, the new section takes that knowledge one step further: It teaches visitors about the mechanics of both firearms and ammunition.

6 ART OF FIREARMS

Located next to the science wing, the art of the firearms exhibit looks at embellishment throughout history, with an emphasis on nineteenth-century factory custom shop engraving, presentation arms, and commemorative firearms. In addition to drawing connections to art, visitors can create their own styles of engraving using a computer program.

7 TEMPORARY EXHIBITS

The special exhibits gallery is the most fluid. It will have displays on a rotating basis which may include thematic exhibitions, as well as manufacturer's and collector's displays.

COLLECTOR AND RESEARCH LEVEL

The CFM's lower level is dedicated to the enthusiast and collector, and includes a video about the art of collecting. A gun library allows visitors to study thousands of firearms up close and on both sides by means of clear storage displays. Also in the lower level, visitors can view patents and prototypes, and scholars are able to schedule time to do their own research in the museum's new reading rooms.

MOVING FORWARD

Currently, the CFM is in its final phase of design for its renovation, with a projected opening of summer 2019.



Pictured here are today's visitors who are sure to marvel on their return visit to the "new" CFM.

To reiterate: The goal of the Cody Firearms Museum is to become "an even stronger destination for both firearm enthusiasts and the general public." Through this new plan, the museum has something for everyone, and as a non-advocacy institution, the CFM holds a niche for visitors unfamiliar with guns. The purpose of the museum is not necessarily to breed a next generation of gun enthusiasts. Rather, we plan to create a learning environment that addresses the significance of firearms while hopefully reducing both the stigma and the misinformation that is so widespread today. ■



Ashley Hlebinsky is the Robert W. Woodruff Curator of the Cody Firearms Museum. She has a master's degree in American History and Museum Studies from the University of Delaware, where she studied the perception of firearms in culture. She also spent three years researching in the Smithsonian Institution's National Firearms Collection. Hlebinsky assumed the firearms curator position in January 2015.

In addition to her duties as curator, she lectures around the country and in Canada to both the firearms industry and the academic community on the glamorization and stigmatization of firearms both in modern culture and in museums. She also is a freelance writer and has appeared on both national and international television networks.





Pete and Al

REFLECTING ON THE CENTER'S PAST— IMAGINING ITS FUTURE

BY MICHAELA JONES

For one hundred years, the Buffalo Bill Center of the West has shared the story of the authentic American West with millions of visitors. For many travelers, the wild scenes of the frontier, artwork ranging from cowboy to contemporary, the comprehensive collection of firearms, and the ecosystem of the nearby cherished Yellowstone National Park create a long-lasting impression. These vibrant visions of a time long ago unite under one roof to create the most remarkable tribute to the

West, and it simply isn't something that's easily forgotten. In fact, many travelers fondly remember the Center years after their visit.

But for some, the attachment to the Center of the West runs much deeper. In a recent interview, brothers Peter K. Simpson (United States Navy veteran, Screen Actors Guild card holder, historian, former professor, and actor) and Alan K. Simpson (former United States Senator, R-Wyo., United States Army veteran, historian, and author) share their insights to the Center of the West's past, present, and future, and

explain how the Simpson family roots are forever intertwined with its rich history.

Do you think the original members of the Buffalo Bill Memorial Association imagined what the Center of the West would grow to become?

"They imagined greatness," Al said of the members of the Buffalo Bill Memorial Association (BBMA).

Following William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody's



The Irma Hotel, ca. 1927. MS 006 William F. Cody Collection. P.69.1282

death on January 10, 1917, the townspeople desired to create a meaningful tribute to commemorate his life, legacy, and history. This desire resulted in a meeting on the front porch of the local Irma Hotel to discuss and consider the many ways they could choose to honor their town's beloved namesake.

Only seven weeks after Cody's death, the group that began as a simple, informal association of individuals soon flourished into a formal establishment of the BBMA.

The original members of the BBMA (Margaret L. Simpson, grandmother of Al and Pete Simpson; L.L. Newton; Charles Hayden; W.T. Hogg; and Sam Parks) initially considered creating a park in Cody's memory, though their idea soon expanded and turned into something far more grand.

Following much deliberation and planning, prominent American sculptor and talented New York artist Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney sculpted the monumental bronze statue *Buffalo Bill—The Scout*.

After completing the memorial, Whitney purchased forty acres of land in view of the Shoshone Canyon and the beautiful surrounding mountains—a spot where the statue remains. The unveiling of the statue took place July 4, 1924, with an estimated 6,000–10,000 people in attendance. This memorial, which remains at the Center more than ninety years later, has emerged as an iconic image of the West, the town of Cody, and Buffalo Bill's lasting legacy.

While the BBMA's devotion to commemorate Cody's life was unshakable, the Simpsons agreed that the original members would have been amazed to see such a comprehensive tribute to the West in a single, vast building.

"They imagined the perpetuity of the memory of Buffalo Bill—they imagined that as forever," Pete stated.

In present day, would this institution meet the expectations of your grandmother, Margaret Simpson?

In a 2016 interview for *Points West*, Pete noted, "My grandmother knew Buffalo Bill, and he was simply enamored of her. He brought her a rose every time he came into town." Margaret—or "Maggie" as many called her—and Buffalo Bill had a friendship that spanned many years.

Though there are many Simpson family stories woven throughout the history of the town of Cody, one in particular always stands out for Al and Pete. Following the opening of the Irma Hotel, an extravagant ball was scheduled, and it was certain Buffalo Bill would be present. The town of Cody buzzed with excitement, and everyone knew it was an event not to be missed.

She'd be immensely satisfied

Unfortunately, Al explained, Margaret sprained her ankle leading up to the ball and knew she would be unable to attend. Shortly after her injury, disappointed and distressed, she was sitting alone by the ditch when—to her surprise—Buffalo Bill arrived to visit her.

"She was sitting there with her leg up," Al explained, "and then Buffalo Bill said, 'Maggie, I'm so sorry that you can't make the ball.' Then he sang the song, 'When you and I were young, Maggie,' which is a great old song, and then he did

They imagined greatness



A coach stops in front of the statue *Buffalo Bill – The Scout* by Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, ca. 1924 – 1940. MS 327 James Wojtowicz Collection. MS 327.07.29.001.01

the customary cowboy hat tilt,” Al added. “He even brought her flowers—she talked about that for years.”

“She was thoroughly enamored,” Pete laughed. “Given the fact that she already saw [the Center’s] direction and its development with at least two of these wings, I think she’d be immensely satisfied.”



William F. Cody, 1902. MS 006 William F. Cody Collection. P.6.0136

Throughout the past one hundred years, this institution that started as a small log cabin has flourished into five museums and a research library. How do you envision the Center of the West in its bicentennial?

“As the next hundred years progresses in this country, who knows where we’re going to be?” Pete said. “Wherever we’re going to be, there are always lessons to be taught.”

For example, Pete explained, the *Papers of William F. Cody* have shown that Buffalo Bill’s complex, ever-unfolding role offers a wide range of topics to be further explored for many years to come. The *Papers* have also demonstrated that teaching takes place with every generation.

“History, if anything, is simply refocusing the lens of the present of where you are now on the past—circumstances in the present lead you to ask different questions of the past,” Pete noted. “As a consequence, different questions will be asked fifty years from now, seventy-five years from now, or a hundred years from now.”

“As long as there is a Yellowstone Park, there will be a Buffalo Bill Center of the



Pete Simpson

West,” Pete added. “People, I think, are going to come here to see a place that is largely pristine—that is saved in nature with the Park, and with our America’s First National Forest and other things. [Cody] will be a place of destination to revive and refresh one’s memory.”

What are your most memorable moments at this museum?

“I can think of so many,” Al chuckled.

The Simpson brothers agreed that perhaps the funniest memory—though not exactly funny at the time—was the arrival of Cornelius Ryan, author of *The Longest Day*. He was on hand to dedicate the Buffalo Bill Museum in its new location on July 4, 1968. (The Museum would open to the public in 1969.)

“He [Ryan] was big at the time,” Pete noted.

“He came to dedicate the museum, and Dad (Milward L. Simpson) was the emcee and introduced him,” Al added.

As a whole, the dedication was intended to be quite a memorable event for all who attended. After making a slew of intricate arrangements, the plan was simple: First, a giant, fiberglass buffalo was to be tethered to a helicopter. Then, just as Ryan was nearing the end his speech, the helicopter would leave the airport, land with the buffalo at the dedication for all to see, and then fly it to the top of Cedar Mountain where it was to be placed on a pedestal. There Buffalo Bill had always said he wanted a massive bison statue, and once in place, the spirit of Buffalo Bill would be renewed.

Despite careful planning prior to the event, though, the arrangements did not exactly come to fruition as all had hoped. “Well, Ryan is mesmerizing people with his speech,” Al explained. “And all the sudden in the



Al Simpson



Milward Simpson (1897 – 1993). MS 089 Jack Richard Photograph Collection. PN.89.107.21020.01.8

Images from MS 089 Jack Richard Photograph Collection, PN89.49.10081, commemorating William F. Cody with buffalo statue placement in his honor on Cedar Mountain, Cody, Wyoming, July 4, 1968. [Clockwise from top] Aerial view of Buffalo Bill Historical Center — note buffalo encircled by vehicles, awaiting transport (#144); helicopter readies for pick up (#59); liftoff (#61); and landing (#54).



distance to the east, we heard a chopper, and people looked way back over the eastern hills. Ryan is in the middle of his speech, and turns to my father and says, 'What is that?!'

Unfortunately, it did not take long for the massive crowd to realize the pilot was a little off in calculating the correct time of arrival. Because of all the racket, Ryan initially decided he would not finish his speech despite attempts to calm him down.

"Like any great speaker, he had prepared a beautiful talk," Al noted. However, the early arrival of the helicopter really "threw a wrench" into the original plans. Fortunately, organizers soon decided that the giant fiberglass buffalo must be taken back.

Pete also explained that he, too, had a favorite memory related to the dedication of what is now the Cody Firearms Museum.



The pilot was a little off in calculating

"It wasn't right here at the museum, but I'll never forget the dedication of the Winchester Museum with Curt Gowdy and John Wayne," Pete recalled.

It was 1976, and Pete was living in Casper at the time having just participated in a production of *1776*, a musical based on the events surrounding the signing of the Declaration of Independence. He played the part of Richard Henry Lee, and on the first night of the show, there was a bit of an accident as he made an "energetic" exit off stage as part of a scene during the play.

"Well, Ben Franklin and Tom Jefferson ran into me and broke a metatarsal in my foot, which meant I had a cast on my leg at the time [of the dedication]," Pete explained.

Following the dedication of the Winchester Museum, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Peg Coe, held a reception at her home where John Wayne was

scheduled to be a guest. “I was thrilled to be there, but I was hobbling with my cast, and I had the occasion to be introduced to John Wayne,” Pete recalled. “He was smiling and had a little drink in his hand.”

An attachment that comes from your roots

Once he approached the iconic western celebrity, Pete told him how honored and thrilled he was to meet him. Wayne carefully eyed his cast with a smile, leapt forward—as if he was going to stomp on

Pete’s foot—and then quickly pulled back. Startled, Pete promptly jumped back, and Wayne began to laugh hysterically. “[Wayne] asked if it still hurt, and I said, ‘It would have!’”

Despite the brief—but comical—scare, Pete said it was a truly fun moment with a notable individual.

“There were so many amazing people who would come, and they would make themselves available,” Al recalled. “All those stories are somewhere in the archive.”

Whether it was being involved in teaching or politics, or a variety of other duties, and you weren’t living in Cody, how did you each maintain your relationship with the Center?

Al observed that their mother (Lorna K. Simpson) was a very beautiful and talented

woman. She knew Mary Jester Allen, niece of Buffalo Bill, who desired not only to commemorate her famous uncle’s life and legacy, but also to show travelers who arrived in Cody that the town had culture and excitement to offer. Allen would host high teas at the old log cabin building, and Lorna would play the piano for visitors, while someone else typically sang.

“There was no babysitter,” Al said. “Pete and I would be over there just messing around—and nobody paying a bit of attention. We’d get in the stagecoaches; there wasn’t anyone around.

Additionally, as children, every year, Pete and Al would faithfully go to the famed statue *Buffalo Bill—The Scout* on the Great Showman’s birthday and stand in the cold with the FFA (Future Farmers of America). “Mom loved and met Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, and loved the statue and admired her as an artist,” Pete recalled.

“It’s one hundred years of the bloodline,”

(L – R) R.N. Buswell, Harold McCracken, John Wayne, William E. Talley, Cliff Hansen, Margaret “Peg” Coe, Gale McGee, and Curt Gowdy, July 4, 1976, on the occasion of America’s Bicentennial and the dedication of the Winchester Arms Museum at the then Buffalo Bill Historical Center. MS 41 Mary Jester Allen Collection. P.41.505





The original Buffalo Bill Museum (BBM). From top, clockwise: The BBM opened on July 4, 1927 (MS 228 BBM Photographs Collection, PN.228.080); the brothers Simpson often found themselves “in the stagecoaches” (MS 089 Jack Richard Photograph Collection, PN.89.05.1083b.13); and BBM interior view, July 4, 1927 (MS 228 BBM Photographs Collection, PN.228.162).

Al noted. “Every time you drive down the main drag, you think, ‘look at that—look at that statue.’”

“All of what Al is talking about—you don’t forget it,” Pete said. “You have an attachment that comes from your roots, your beginnings...Even when I was off in Oregon doing graduate work, or in the Navy, I read the *Cody Enterprise* [newspaper]. In the Navy I had to get it a month late.”

Following his service in the military, Pete explained that he had visited several European museums. “It kind of knocked me out that [the Center of the West] was in this town. It was solid, attractive, and beautifully designed, and I remember being very struck by that after being out of town.

“It’s always been a living part of our memories, and I was both honored and thrilled to be a part of one of the advisory boards here,” Pete shared. “It’s a matter of serving an institution that you have not only come to know, but love, too.”

Although no one may know exactly what the Center of the West’s next one hundred years hold, as Al says, there is something we can be certain of: “It will be here, and it will match the grandeur we see now in a different way.” ■



Brothers Al and Pete Simpson

Michaela Jones, a Cody, Wyoming, native, was the Centennial Media intern at the Center of the West for the summer of 2017. She recently graduated from the University of Wyoming with a bachelor’s in English and minors in professional writing and psychology. Currently, she is the interim communications specialist at Northwest College in Powell, Wyoming.

Member stories

For the past hundred years, the Buffalo Bill Memorial Association has benefited from the support of thousands of individuals across the nation and around the world. We're honored that so many of our members choose to remain loyal supporters long after joining, in many cases for the rest of their lives. Such is the case of Arnold A. Brown of Poulsbo, Washington, who shares his story below:

I was 7 years old in 1953, when our family vacationed from our home in Minnesota through the Black Hills of South Dakota, and across to Sheridan, Wyoming, for the rodeo there. After that, we went to Cody where we stopped to view the statue of Buffalo Bill before continuing to Yellowstone's east entrance to visit my grandmother who was working there as a camp cook and baker for the park employees.

In 1957, after moving to Washington state, we vacationed with my uncle's family in the opposite direction. Once again, we saw the sights of Yellowstone, and then spent a night at Blackwater Creek Lodge just outside the Park where we had a wonderful meal and rode horses into the primitive back country at dusk. After that, we visited Cody and marveled once more at the statue of *The Scout* before continuing "home" to visit relatives in Minnesota.

In the succeeding years, I made many more trips back and forth along that route and others throughout the western states. There, I loved the beauty of the land, the openness, the wildlife, and the unspoiled



nature of the land. To my eye, the Rocky Mountain states of Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, and Colorado were, without a doubt, the most beautiful I had ever seen.

In 1990, my wife and I set off once again on a vacation that covered visits to Glacier National Park, Great Falls [Montana], Yellowstone, and Cody. While staying in Cody, we took the opportunity to visit the Buffalo Bill Center of the West for the first time together, walking through all the different museums, taking in the enormity of the exhibits. I was so awestruck by what I saw that I was moved to visit the membership office and become a member on the spot; I have been a sustaining member ever since.

In the years following, I returned many times, once with a cousin visiting from Denmark and twice

accompanied by my father for the Cowboy Songs & Range Ballads music festival. We both enjoyed the event immensely, and there I met my now longtime friend, the symposium host and recording artist Skip Gorman. Then in 2004, with two daughters, ages 13 and 11, we took a three-week vacation to Glacier National Park, Calgary and Edmonton, Canada, South Dakota, and then back through Cody. We attended the Cody Nite Rodeo and wandered the museums over a three-day period, after which we visited Yellowstone on our way back home.

I have made two solo visits to Cody and the Center since that time and never tire of what I encounter on each visit. My affinity for the attractions of the West never wanes, and I cannot wait for my next sojourn to my favorite spots on the map. The Buffalo Bill Center of the West is without a doubt the largest and best museum of any kind I have ever seen, and I am proud to be a decades-long member. I share my passion for the place with everyone I know who may be considering a western state vacation, and I enthusiastically encourage them to make time to see ALL the different museums housed in the Center.

With a little luck, I will get to visit many more times before I become too old to travel. There is always something new and exciting to see—both at the Center and on the road—taking in the scenery of western life and nature unspoiled!

Ways to give: estate planning

Many of us lament that we're not able to contribute as much as we would like to our favorite charities. In addition to our day-to-day expenses, we must plan for the long term—such as education for our kids and our retirement.

Remembering charities in your will is a way to make that significant gift that you just can't do right now. Your estate planner can find the most effective way for you to accomplish your goals. In the meantime, here are some options to consider:

→ Typically, your estate value fluctuates over time. You might want to choose a percentage of your estate to go to charity, rather than pledging a set amount.

→ You may want to ensure that your principle heirs receive at least a certain amount from your estate. You can stipulate that your charitable gifts derive from the residual of the estate only after the distributions to your heirs have been made.

→ Providing for your kids? Some people treat their charities as another child. For example, someone with four children would divide their estate five ways, with the fifth share going to charity.

→ Do you currently pay taxes on distributions from IRAs or other retirement income? If those accounts are part of your estate, Uncle Sam will tax that amount if it goes to your heirs. Consider assigning those assets to your charitable beneficiaries—as non-profits, they won't have to pay taxes, which means more money to both your heirs and your charities.

→ Are your assets in one or more trusts? Again, your advisors can set the terms to include charities.

It is important to ensure that the charity or charities you designate can accept your gift in the way you desire. You may be more comfortable restricting your gift to a specific project or fund instead of allowing the charity to apply it to the area of greatest need. Work with their development department to find wording that clarifies your intent, but maintains flexibility for changing priorities. A program you like today may not be in place by the time the organization receives your bequest.

Since you won't be around for us to thank you then, we'll say it now: Thank you for including the Buffalo Bill Center of the West in your estate plans!

Timney Triggers donates to Cody Firearms reinstallation

Timney Triggers, a Phoenix-based manufacturer of high-quality replacement firearm triggers, has committed \$500,000 to the Cody Firearms Museum reinstallation, a project slated to begin in fall 2018 and to be completed by early summer 2019. (Read more on page 18.)

One of the renovated museum's new galleries, "The Science of Firearms," explores triggering mechanisms, the physics of shooting, and product innovation. It was these plans that caught the eye of the company's owner, John Vehr.

The Buffalo Bill Center of the West is very excited to have Timney Triggers's support as we move forward with this complete renovation of the Cody Firearms Museum. ■

Architectural renderings of the upcoming renovation are pictured below.



bits & bytes

News, Activities, & Events

Learn more about these news stories online at centerofthewest.org/category/newsroom.



Center receives four *True West* “best of” awards for 2018

The Buffalo Bill Center of the West has garnered four of *True West Magazine's* “Best of the West” awards for 2018. In a three-peat from 2017, the publication tapped the Center as Best Western Museum acknowledging “all the folks who turned the Center into the incredible anchor of western history it has become today.” In addition, two of the Center’s museums each received “best of” awards: the Plains Indian Museum as the Best American Indian Collection, and the Whitney Western Art Museum as the Best Western Art Gallery.

For the second year in a row, *True West* also named the Center’s Centennial rifle—a replica Model 1873 Winchester—Best Commemorative Rifle. Finally, Cody, Wyoming, earned the reader’s choice award for “Best Old West Art Town.”



WYOMING PUBLIC MEDIA

Center and Wyoming Public Media launch partnership

As part of their new collaboration, the Buffalo Bill Center of the West and

Wyoming Public Media (WPM) have hired Kamila Kudelska, a graduate of the Columbia School of Broadcasting, as their first multimedia journalist. Based at the Center of the West, Kudelska reports on northwest Wyoming for WPM and produces multimedia content for the Center. Both organizations plan to have the content available on their respective websites, including broadcasts heard on Wyoming Public Radio and distributed regionally and nationally. The Center provides a sound booth in the museum, equipped for recording and visible to the public.

The collaboration is made possible through the generosity of the Hal R. and Naoma J. Tate Foundation.



Timney Triggers invests in Cody Firearms Museum’s future

Timney Triggers has pledged \$500,000 toward the Cody Firearms Museum (CFM) reconstruction. The company’s donation combines with several federal grants and individual donations received to date, and is the first substantial industry gift.

“I am happy to make this gift,” said John Vehr, owner of Timney Triggers, “because our industry must support and appreciate the benefits derived from having the finest gun museum in the world educate hundreds of thousands of people who visit [the museum] AND are new to guns, on the historical importance and the positive aspects of our industry.”

Timney Triggers is one of the oldest and largest trigger manufacturers in the world, producing replacement triggers since 1946 in the U.S. “When we set out to plan the new museum, we wanted to make sure that our historic roots were cultivated

throughout,” explains firearms curator, Ashley Hlebnsky. “However, it is equally important that we include representation from newer companies, or companies whose stories haven’t been told previously in museums.”



Hunter Old Elk accepts WESTAF diversity fellowship

Hunter C. Old Elk, curatorial assistant for the Buffalo Bill Center of the West’s Plains Indian Museum, was recently accepted into the Western States Arts Federation’s (WESTAF) Emerging Leaders of Color (ELC) program, funded by the National Endowment for the Arts.

WESTAF accepts just one person of color from each of thirteen western states, and

Old Elk attended the annual conference in Denver, November 13 – 15, as the only representative from Wyoming.

"The rise and support of persons of color as art administrators is especially significant because of the influence we have in our communities—impacts that can truly further cultural institutions," Old Elk explains.

Old Elk is a member of the Crow Tribe of eastern Montana and the Yakama Tribe of Washington. As a high school student in Ashland, Montana, she traveled many times with St. Labre Indian School to study the Plains Indian Museum collection. She earned a bachelor's degree in history with a concentration in Native American history from Mount St. Mary's University near Emmitsburg, Maryland, and joined the Center staff in 2016.



Charles M. Russell (1864 – 1926). *Russell on a Bucking Horse*, 1919. Watercolor and photograph. Gift of William E. Weiss. 60.72

WWAM exhibition features C.M. Russell works

Currently on view in the CFM breezeway, the Center's Whitney Western Art Museum has assembled a special exhibition to celebrate the legacy of beloved cowboy artist Charles M. Russell (1864 – 1926).

Drawn entirely from the Whitney's permanent collection, *Charlie's Circle: The Art and Influence of Charles M. Russell*, is on display through May 13, 2018. The exhibition complements the November 2017 release of the new Montana PBS documentary, *C.M. Russell and the American West*. Additionally, *Charlie's Circle* answers a common call among Center visitors: We want more Russells.

spring CALENDAR OF EVENTS

CENTER HOURS

- **Through February 28: 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.**
Thursday – Sunday
- **March 1 – April 30: 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.** daily
- **May 1 – September 15: 8 a.m. – 6 p.m.** daily

PROGRAMS, TALKS, AND EVENTS

Draper Museum Raptor Experience

- **Relaxing with Raptors, 1 – 1:30 p.m.** each day the Center is open to the public

Buffalo Bill's Birthday Celebration

- **February 25:** Celebrate William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody's birthday with a day of free admission and special activities. Watch our website calendar for details!

Lunchtime Expeditions

- **March 1, April 5, and May 3, 12:15 p.m.** Organized and hosted by the Draper Natural History Museum, and supported in part by Sage Creek Ranch and the Nancy-Carroll Draper Foundation.

Cody Culture Club

Sponsored by Burg Simpson, P.C.; Carlene Lebus and Harris Haston; and the UPS Store. 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

- **March 8:** *History of Dude Ranching* by Colleen Hodson with members of the Dominick and Fales families. Cody Club Room (1240 Beck Avenue).
- **April 12:** *Prohibition in Park County: Encounters with the "Noble Experiment," 1919 – 1933* by Dr. Phil Roberts. Center of the West.

Family Fun Day

- **March 16, 3 – 7 p.m.** SpringFest! Crafts and activities explore what animals do during the change of season, and visitors see our museum galleries through a fresh lens. Supported in part by a generous grant from the R. Harold Burton Foundation.

Earth Day Celebration

- The Center celebrates Earth Day the weekend of **April 21 – 22**. Watch our website calendar for details!

Cody Firearms Museum Symposium: Arsenals of History

- **May 21 – 23:** Bringing together authorities in the field to explore practical guidelines for museums with firearms.

Stay abreast of all the Center's activities at centerofthewest.org/calendar.

MEMBERSHIP EVENTS

Members Double-Discount Shopping Days

May 5 – 6, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. The weekend before Mother's Day, Center of the West members receive a special 20 percent discount in our Center Store, and online at store.centerofthewest.org.

Coffee & Curators:

- This series, where members gather for coffee, refreshments, and a curator's talk, resumes May 5. Look for our postcard with details soon!

Buffalo Gals Luncheon

- **May 23, 11:45 a.m. – 1 p.m.** Enjoy lunch and a presentation by artist Jenny Booth. Space limited; reserve in advance at membership@centerofthewest.org or 307-578-4008.

CODY FIREARMS RECORDS OFFICE SPECIAL HOURS

Regular office hours are Monday–Thursday, 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m., Friday 8 a.m.–3 p.m.

- **February 24:** In the office 7 a.m. – 3 p.m. for National Gun Day (Louisville, Kentucky)
- **March 16 – 18:** Attending Maryland Arms Collectors Baltimore Show (Timonium, Maryland)
- **March 24:** In the office for Big Reno Show (Reno, Nevada)
- **April 6 – 8:** Attending Wanenmacher's Tulsa Arms Show (Tulsa, Oklahoma)
- **April 22:** In the office 7 a.m. – 3 p.m. for Texas Gun Collectors Show (Waco, Texas)
- **May 18 – 20:** Attending Colorado Gun Collectors Show (Denver); also covering Ohio Gun Collectors Show by phone

SPECIAL TEMPORARY EXHIBITIONS

- *Charlie's Circle: The Art and Influence of Charles M. Russell*
- *GLOCK Makes History: The Birth of the Polymer Handgun Market*
- *Yellowstone Discovered: William Henry Jackson's Lost Prints Reveal the Park for America*



Reid Christie (b. 1951). *Southfork Summer*, 1991. Oil on board. Gift of James G. Taggart. 21.91

From “Thorofare” to Destination: *the South Fork of the Shoshone River*

BY JEREMY M. JOHNSTON, PHD

As we’ve learned, the South Fork of the Shoshone River—southwest of Cody, Wyoming—was a busy place in the nineteenth century. In the last two issues of *Points West*, Dr. Jeremy Johnston has shared stories from this area—a colorful history of characters and landscapes.

Johnston based this series on a presentation he made to the to the Upper South Fork Land Owners Association on August 6, 2016, at Valley Ranch. At the time, he told the group, “As members, all of you are aware how truly blessed you are to own and live on a little

piece of heaven. The South Fork is a wonderful, unique paradise that few people in the world today experience.” And these installments have shown the reader why...

One New Yorker who was attracted to the region for its hunting potential was Archibald Rogers who noted the following as he crossed the Big Horn Basin:

The great main range of the Rocky Mountains stretches before us, its rugged snow-capped peaks glistening in the morning sun, and we long to be there; but many a long mile still

intervenes, and forty-four miles of desert have to be crossed to-day. This is always an arduous undertaking. It is monotonous in the extreme, and men and animals are sure to suffer for want of good water; for after leaving Sage Creek on the other side of the Gap, there is no water to be had until Stinking Water River is reached. But all things must have an end; and at last, late in the evening, we find ourselves encamped on the banks of that stream, beautiful despite its unfortunate name.



Frederick Courtney Selous, ca. 1910. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA. LC-B2- 173- 11[P&P]

There is little evidence to support the idea that Theodore Roosevelt hunted along either the North Fork or South Fork of the Shoshone River. His published hunting accounts indicated he hunted in the Hoodoo Basin, then located outside Yellowstone National Park boundaries, north of the Shoshone drainage. In 1897, Roosevelt wrote to internationally renowned sport hunter Frederick Courtney Selous who was then planning a hunting trip to the South Fork. Roosevelt shared with Selous his knowledge about northwest Wyoming:

Unfortunately I can’t give you definite information about the passes of which you speak, because I have never come into country quite the way in which you will have to come into it; but Archibald Rogers has two or three times been over the Stinking Water with a pack train, so I know you can get in from that side... You must remember that it is quite a trip down from the Big Horn mountains into and across the Big Horn valley and up to the Jackson’s Lake country... The best place I know for [bighorn] sheep is just east of the Yellowstone Park.

Then, in the fall of 1897, Frederick Courtney Selous arrived in Wyoming, and he described the South Fork region this way:

The North and South Forks of the Stinking Water meet just above the Cedar Mountain and then run in one rushing stream through a deep canyon which divides the last spur of the Rattlesnake Mountains from the main range. A little below the gorge there are some very remarkable hot sulphur springs, some of which are situated just at the edge of the river,



Theodore Roosevelt, September 22, 1898. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA. LC-DIG- ppsmsca-36052

whilst others come bubbling up to the top of the water from the bed of the stream of itself. The smell of these sulphur springs is very strong, and it is perceptible at the distance of several miles down wind. To this fact does this beautiful clear mountain stream owe its unsavoury name, Stinking Water being the literal translation of its old Indian designation. The sulphur springs, of which I have spoken, are now known to possess medicinal properties of a very useful nature. Their temperature, which is exactly blood heat,— ninety-eight degrees,— never varies, summer or winter. If all I heard concerning the curative properties of these springs is true,— they are said to be specially [sic] efficacious in cases of chronic rheumatism and syphilis — invalids will soon be resorting to them from all parts of the United States, if not from Europe. Already the world renowned Colonel William Cody has started a small township in their vicinity named after its founder “Cody City,” whilst a small house of accommodation and a plank-built bathroom, heated with a stove in the winter, have been put up at the Springs themselves.

Both the North and South Forks of the Stinking Water River, clear cold mountain streams of purest water, are full of delicious trout. They contain greyling, too which I thought very good eating, though locally they are not much esteemed. The trout are not

able to get more than two-thirds of the way up the South Fork, owing to the fact that they cannot pass a certain small waterfall; but whenever we were camped near the water below this fall we could always secure a good dish of trout for breakfast or dinner. They were uneducated fish—which is what I like—and when on the feed would rise readily at almost any kind of fly.

Although greatly impressed with the scenery and fishing, Selous was concerned by the lack of game in the region. He noted in his 1900 hunting account, *Sport and Travel: East and West*, settlers and sport hunters were over hunting the region. Selous reported a conversation with a South Fork settler from Texas by the name of Timberline Johnson:

A discussion having subsequently arisen concerning the game laws of the State of Wyoming, Mr. Johnson frankly confessed his ignorance on this subject. “He’d heard tell,” he said, “that there were game laws, but they’d never troubled him much.” One of our men then expressed the opinion that all game laws in the United States were unconstitutional, as then game belonged to the people. Naturally, with such ideas abroad, the game is rapidly decreasing in this part of America, nor would it be possible to enforce the laws without the assistance of a very large staff of officials; for you can’t prevent men from shooting



Confluence of the North and South Forks of the Shoshone River, 1913. MS 089 Jack Richard Photograph Collection. PN.89.108.21055.01



Robert Farrington Elwell (1874 – 1962). *At Home on the TE Ranch Near Cody, Wyoming*, undated. Pencil drawing. 153.69.12 (detail).

wild animals in a wild country where otherwise no fresh meat is obtainable; and my sympathies are with the settlers in this matter, as long as they are not wasteful...

Late in 1894, an international celebrity arrived in the Big Horn Basin for his first visit and decided to invest in the region, a decision that brought intense worldwide attention to the South Fork. South Fork. (Cody’s dates and stories changed through the years. As far as we can determine, he first visited the region in 1894.) William F. “Buffalo Bill” Cody noted the potential for ranching and outdoor sports during his first visit. Soon he purchased the Carter Ranch and the TE Ranch. Eventually, he would sell the Carter Ranch to William Robertson Coe, yet he retained the TE Ranch as a working ranch and a private retreat from his busy performance schedule.

Credit for bringing Buffalo Bill to this region belongs to George W.T. Beck, who lured him to the basin to advance a

proposed reclamation project that resulted in the establishment of the town of Cody, Wyoming. Beck rightly believed that Buffalo Bill’s tremendous marketing machine would lure potential settlers to the Stinking Water valley. An example of this dynamic marketing scheme is found in Helen Cody Wetmore’s biography of Buffalo Bill titled *Last of the Great Scouts*.

Wetmore detailed a tall tale told by her brother regarding his first view of the Bighorn Basin. Buffalo Bill claimed he first learned of the region in the 1870s and visited the area in 1881. According to the story, Buffalo Bill suffered from an eye infection. The doctor prescribed washing the eyes with alcohol, but Buffalo Bill did not want to waste whisky so he bandaged his eyes instead.

Upon reaching the Bighorn Mountains, Buffalo Bill claimed his guide washed his eyes with medicinal spring water—residents of Thermopolis claimed the water came from their hot spring; Cody residents claimed it came from DeMaris Springs located within

Colter’s Hell, west of Cody. With his eyes cleared by the healing properties of the spring water, he first viewed the Basin. His sister detailed the scene in the biography of her brother:

Off came the bandage, and I shall quote Will’s own words to describe the scene that met his delighted gaze:

To my right stretched a towering range of snow-capped mountains, broken here and there into minarets, obelisks, and spires. Between me and this range of lofty peaks a long irregular line of stately cottonwoods told me a stream wound its way beneath. The rainbow-tinted carpet under me was formed of innumerable brilliant-hued wild flowers; it spread about me in every direction, and sloped gracefully to the stream.

The story continues on page 24

- YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK
- YELLOWSTONE PARK TIMBER RESERVE
- BOUNDARY ACCORDING TO SENATE BILL NO 1753
- BOUNDARY ACCORDING TO SENATE BILL NO 1302 & HOUSE BILL NO. 7

EXPLANATIONS

Surveyor Generals Office U.S. Land Offices Townships not Subdivided

MAP LOCATION

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| 1 Present day Cody, WY | 8 Shoshone Mountains (modern name: Absaroka Mountains) | 15 TE Ranch |
| 2 Corbett | 9 Two Ocean Pass | 16 Ishawooa “Knob”/Castle Rock |
| 3 Heart Mountain | 10 Thorofare Creek | 17 South Fork, Stinking Water River [Shoshone] |
| 4 McCullough’s Peak | 11 Two Ocean Plateau | 18 Cedar Mountain |
| 5 Stinking Water River (modern name: Shoshone River) | 12 Yellowstone Lake | 19 Rattlesnake Mountain |
| 6 Greybull River | 13 Jones Creek | 20 Demaris Hot Springs |
| 7 Jackson’s Hole | 14 North Fork, Stinking Water River [Shoshone] | 21 Sage Creek |

From House Rept. 1763 53C., 2S. United States House of Representatives Report no. 1763, 53rd Congress (1893–1895), 3d Session.

(The Senate and House Bills were proposed boundary changes to Yellowstone National Park. The boundaries were later adjusted in the 1920s to the Park’s current configuration.)

Yellowstone National Park boundaries, 1895.
Library of Congress, Geography and Map, Division, Washington, DC 205-4650. G4262. Y4 1895. Y4 TIL

From “Thorofare” to Destination



(L – R) Associates George Beck and William F. Cody, and Henry Fulton. 1905 – 1915. MS 006. William F. Cody Collection. P.6.267

A postcard advertising Demaris Hot Springs at the mouth of the Shoshone River Canyon, 1910 – 1915. MS 006 William F. Cody Collection. P.6.1643.279



Game of every kind played on the turf, and bright-hued birds flitted over it. It was a scene no mortal can satisfactorily describe. At such a moment a man, no matter what his creed, sees the hand of the mighty Maker of the universe majestically displayed in the beauty of nature; he becomes sensibly conscious, too, of his own littleness. I uttered no word for very awe; I looked upon one of nature's masterpieces.

Instantly my heart went out to my sorrowful Arapahoe friend of 1875 [who informed Buffalo Bill of the Big Horn Basin]. He had not exaggerated; he had scarcely done the scene justice. He spoke of it as the Ijis, the heaven of the red man. I regarded it then, and still regard it, as the Mecca of all appreciative humanity.

To the west of the Big Horn Basin, Hart Mountain [*sic*] rises abruptly from the Shoshone River. It is covered with grassy slopes and deep ravines; perpendicular rocks of every hue rise in various places and are fringed with evergreens. Beyond this mountain, in the distance, tower the hoary head of Table Mountain. Five miles to the southwest the mountains recede some distance from the river, and from its bank Castle Rock rises in solitary grandeur. The name indicates, it has the appearance of a castle, with towers, turrets, bastions, and balconies.

Grand as is the western view, the chief beauty lies in the south. Here the Carter Mountain lies along the entire distance, and the grassy spaces on its side furnish pasturage for the deer, antelope, and mountain sheep that abound in this favored region. Fine timber, too, grows on its rugged slopes; jagged picturesque, rock-forms are seen in all directions, and the numerous cold springs send up their welcome nectar.

Although he praised the scenery, Buffalo Bill was greatly concerned regarding the future of wildlife and sport hunting in northwest Wyoming. Buffalo Bill became a strong advocate for protection of the region's wildlife and the establishment of state game preserves, which was critical to the financial success of his investments in tourism and the promotion of sport hunting. In an article titled "Preserving the Game," which appeared in the June 6, 1901, issue of *The Independent*, Buffalo Bill noted:

The condition of game laws in the West is now very satisfactory, and we can confidently look forward to a rapid increase in the number of elk,



Heart Mountain has always been a landmark to travelers in the Cody area. Nick Eggenhofer (1897 – 1985). *Wyoming String Team* c. 1880, 1966. Oil on canvas. Museum purchase. 2.66

mountain sheep, deer, antelopes, and all the smaller game, such as ducks, geese, grouse and sage hens.

About three years ago the agitation for game protection in the West began to have good results, and since then Legislatures have passed strict laws and enforced them. Game wardens have been appointed by the various Governors, and men caught violating the laws have been severely punished. It is too late, now, to save the buffalo, but all other game we can preserve.

In addition to advocating for greater game protection, Buffalo Bill also lobbied to officially change the name of the Stinking Water River to Shoshone. In 1901, a few years after settlers homesteaded the region and the town of Cody emerged, State Senator of Big Horn County Atwood C. Thomas introduced



Game populations were important to Buffalo Bill and his fellow hunters, such as these pals, ca. 1900. Buffalo Bill is on the right. P.69.0492

a successful bill in the Wyoming State Legislature to rename the river “Shoshone.”

In 1919, the Park Service advocated constructing a road from Jackson, through the Thorofare region, down the South Fork, to Cody, Wyoming. This highway would bring in auto tourism to the region, resulting in various concessions along the South Fork of the Shoshone River, once again promising the region would become a main transportation route, similar to the North Fork highway to Yellowstone.

Due to intense opposition, Stephen Mather, Director of the National Park Service, changed his mind, stating, “... it is my firm conviction that a part of the Yellowstone country should be maintained as a wilderness for the ever-increasing numbers of people who prefer to walk and ride over trails in a region abounding in wild life [sic].” Many who reside in the South Fork area today likely agree that, fortunately, no such road was constructed; thus, preserving the current isolated nature of the upper region of the South Fork Valley.

Through the efforts of Buffalo Bill, the upper South Fork assumed its current land-use status, a region for ranching, hunting, and fishing—not a thoroughfare for tourists traveling to Yellowstone Park with commercial interests providing concessions. Instead, the area became a destination, an idyllic retreat, one that continues to offer visitors and residents a taste of rugged Wyoming as it was at the end of the nineteenth century. ■



Dr. Jeremy M. Johnston is the Buffalo Bill Center of the West’s Hal & Naoma Tate Endowed Chair and Curator of Western American History, Ernest J. Goppert Curator of the Buffalo Bill Museum, and Managing Editor of the Papers of William F. Cody. His ancestors settled on the South Fork of the Shoshone in the late 1890s near Castle Rock. He received a BA in 1993 and an MA in 1995, both from the University of Wyoming. Then, he taught, history at Northwest College in Powell for more than fifteen years. He recently earned his doctorate from the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, Scotland. His doctoral dissertation examines the connections between Theodore Roosevelt and William F. “Buffalo Bill” Cody.

So first, the
good news



Fig. 1: *Bronc on a Frosty Morn*, ca. 1897. Painted wax. 13.125 x 10.375 x 6.25 inches. 9.68

BY DR. PETER HASSRICK

(All works of art are from the hands of Charles M. "Charlie" Russell (1864–1926), and are gifts of William E. Weiss unless noted otherwise.)

The Buffalo Bill Center of the West's Whitney Western Art Museum holds, among its many national treasures, a remarkable and sizeable collection of works by the celebrated Montana artist Charles M. Russell. In its early iterations, what was then named the Whitney Gallery of Western Art (opened 1959) had an entire wing devoted to the productions

of Russell's creative genius with more than a hundred works on display at any one time.

There was one special piece, though, that always remained sequestered in the vaults: an incredibly important painted wax model of a cowboy on a bucking horse. Known as



Fig. 2: William E. Weiss Jr., ca. 1966.

Bronc on a Frosty Morn [Fig. 1], it is perhaps the largest and one of the earliest of Russell's single-figure waxes and, although never cast in bronze during his lifetime, represented the artist at a most vigorous and individual stage in his creative life.

Casting for a Russell

Between 1959 and 1985, one of the museum's most distinguished, devoted, and generous trustees, William E. Weiss Jr. [Fig. 2], gave the Whitney Gallery a substantial number of Russell artworks. Many of the pieces had been placed on loan since the gallery's inception in 1959 and were donated a few at a time throughout the ensuing years. Weiss's early gifts were composed of



*It was not
Russell's
work*

mostly oil paintings and watercolors that had once belonged to a prominent banker from Butte, Montana, one Andrew "Andy" Jackson Davis Sr. and his family. Davis had acquired a collection of forty-seven Russell works to decorate his home. Eventually, the



Fig. 3: *Bronc on a Frosty Morn*, 1968. Posthumous cast, bronze. 14 x 7 x 11.25 inches. 24.68

pieces were passed down to his son, Andrew Jackson Davis Jr., also of Butte, whose widow sold them in 1956 to M. Knoedler & Co., a commercial gallery in New York City. Weiss purchased the entire Davis collection in 1959.

One piece from that collection stood out: the wax model of the *Bronc on a Frosty Morn*. It had probably been purchased directly from the artist by Andy Davis prior to 1909. Weiss donated the polychromed sculpture to the museum in 1968, and Director Dr. Harold McCracken accepted it as an original Russell work. There was no question about McCracken's credentials as a student of Russell and his waxes. By the date of the Weiss gift, McCracken had written two important books on the artist, one of which was a 1957 catalogue of the Homer E. Britzman collection which contained more than a hundred Russell waxes acquired from the estate of Nancy Russell, the artist's widow.

There was an additional premium with the donation of *Bronc on a Frosty Morn*: Weiss and McCracken decided that three bronze castings should be made of the work before it came into the museum's possession. One casting would be retained by Weiss; one would become part of the Whitney Gallery's collection [Fig. 3], and the third would be sold publicly to generate funds for acquisitions of art by the museum. That third bronze was marketed by the Kennedy Galleries in New York as a signed, posthumous casting.

The original wax figure is mounted on a wooden upright support which is attached to a wooden base—and it is unsigned. The bronzes, cast by Roman Bronze Works in New York, however, were signed "CM Russell" and inscribed with his buffalo skull monogram on the base. All parties involved in the project were so convinced of the Russell authorship that it seemed not to matter that they were authorizing an ersatz signature to be placed



Fig. 4: Russell exhibition at the Schatzlein Gallery, Butte, Montana, 1909. C.M. Russell Museum, Great Falls, Montana.



Weiss and McCracken had been right all along!

on the bronze versions.

Then, something strange occurred. The esteemed Russell authority, Frederic G. Renner, asserted that while the wax bronco was well-executed, it was **not** Russell's work. Instead, Renner insisted in the late 1960s that the wax should be attributed to a far less heralded and capable Montana sculptor, an artist forty-six years Russell's junior, Earle E. Heikka. The records of the museum were accordingly altered, and the work disappeared into the institution's vaults.

There are at least two perplexing aspects about Renner's recommendation and the museum's decision to change the object record. First, the Davis family had originally hired Renner in 1956 to assess their Russell collection. He personally inspected the wax and listed it by title in a document labeled *Works of Art by Charles M. Russell: Catalogue of the Mrs. Andrew Davis Collection* under the category of "Models." Why he would change his mind a dozen years later is confounding. And, why McCracken—who had accepted the wax as an original Russell sculpture in 1968—would accede to such a revision is equally mystifying.

Heikka or Russell?

Nonetheless, when I became museum director (and temporary Whitney Gallery curator) in 1976, I foolishly disregarded the piece. Not being especially interested in Heikka's work, I ignored it in any reviews I undertook of the art collections. The standard Heikka source book, Vivian A. Paladin's *E.E. Heikka: Sculptor of the American West*, 1990, listed the wax and bronze versions of *Bronc on a Frosty Morn* as Heikka works. When the eminent Russell scholar Rick Stewart published his definitive treatise, *Charles M. Russell: Sculptor*, in 1994, he knew the piece had once existed since it appeared in a 1909 photograph of a Russell exhibit in Butte—and Heikka was not born until the next year [Fig.4]. But neither Stewart nor I put two and two together, and he had no idea where the wax sculpture's home might be.

In 2005, the Whitney curator, Dr. Sarah Boehme, took time to review the wax with Russell authority Dr. Brian Dippie. They concluded that it was in fact a Russell work, but somehow the record was not changed as a result. Russell's best wax sculpture thus remained in the vaults and out of the public eye. It was not until 2016, when I received a call from an American art dealer, David DeFrancesca, that the matter captured my attention sufficiently to take a careful look. DeFrancesca had uncovered the third bronze casting of *Bronc on a Frosty Morn* and wondered why the museum was listing the companion works as Heikka sculptures. He produced a copy of the Butte exhibit photo, and he and I visited the vault to make a careful review. There was instantly no question for either of us that what we were looking at was an original Russell wax. It was a revelation to me, for sure. Weiss and McCracken had been right all along!

As McCracken and Weiss no doubt understood, Russell's painted waxes have special significance. First, they present Russell—an inveterate modeler of wax throughout his career—at the primary stage of creation as a sculptor. What one sees is the immediate, inventive gesture of the artist.

Secondly, by painting his sculptures, Russell introduced a time-honored practice that was relatively novel among sculptors of his day. In these works, we discover Russell as a witness of and a chromatic respondent to the full range of details that his world had to offer. The rich scarlet kerchief around the neck of the temporarily aloft cowboy is visually tied back to his horse with a few red highlights in the saddle blanket [Fig. 1]. The creamy white stockings on the horse's lower legs as they plunge toward the earth mirror the color of the rider's hat that at any moment may be sent skyward. And, with its opacity, the ochre-colored oilskin slicker that flaps behind the saddle hints at its own readiness to shelter the bronc's vanquisher on days when rain brings them both to a quiescent halt, hunkered down together against a storm.

Signature bronzes

In 1982, the I.B. Bloxom family of Virginia offered the museum a painted plaster cast of the Heikka sculpture, *Cowboy on a Bucking Horse* [Fig. 5]. Since we had so few examples of his work, we accepted the gift. We moved it to the vaults beside *Bronc on a Frosty Morn*. At that moment, had we taken



Fig. 5: E.E. Heikka (1910 – 1941). *Cowboy on a Bucking Bronco*, ca. 1931. Painted plaster. 11.75 x 8.25 x 12 in. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. I.B. Bloxum. 20.82

the time to review the works side-by-side, we would no doubt have concluded the true authorship of the latter. Although quite rare, and about the same size as the Russell wax, Heikka's *Cowboy on a Bucking Horse*, with its muted colors, stiffly frozen, awkward form, and smoothly textured surfaces, lacks much of the visual excitement of its Russell counterpart. Missing is a real sense of action—of kinetic force and vitality of handling.

Comparing Russell's works in other media in which he used a composition similar to *Bronc on a Frosty Morn*—such as a watercolor *Bucking Bronco* at the Eiteljorg Museum in



Fig. 6: *Bronco Buster*, 1915. Watercolor on paper. 11 x 16.625 inches. 58.72

Indianapolis—suggests that the sculpture may have been created in 1899. Recent XRF (X-ray Fluorescence) spectroscopy readings on the Heikka and Russell pieces also help to date the Russell wax. Its lead white highlights would indicate production some time before the turn of the last century. On the other hand, the Heikka plaster, dating from the early 1930s, reveals zinc white highlights—and zinc was not commonly used by artists until the 1920s and after.

For Russell, the bucking horse in any medium was a signature image. From his earliest paintings in the mid-1880s, he incorporated the theme into the forefront of many of his compositions. His 1915 watercolor, *Bronco Buster* [Fig. 6]—which Weiss donated in 1972—is an example of his mature treatment of the subject. We also know that Russell explored the bucking horse and rider as protagonists in early sculptures. A photograph, dated around 1897, pictures the artist showing off a wax sculpture of a bucking bronco quite similar to *Bronc on a Frosty Morn* [Fig. 7]. This

sculptural duo suggests that Russell enjoyed articulating the contest between man and horse in three dimensions rather early in his career.



Fig. 7: Russell with cowboy sculpture, ca. 1897. C.M. Russell Museum, Great Falls, Montana.

in New York. Those waxes came from the estate of Russell's widow, Nancy, and had been lovingly displayed in her Pasadena home after Charlie died. The best of the lot was a painted wax titled *On Neenah* [Fig. 8], a self-portrait of the artist on one of his

Today, the Whitney Western Art Museum holds a collection of fifty-nine Russell wax models including *Bronc on a Frosty Morn*. Apart from that one, all were donated in 1960 by Charles Jones, president of Richfield Oil of California, and Dr. Armand Hammer, chairman of Occidental Petroleum and founder of the Hammer Galleries

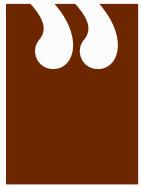
favorite horses that also appeared in the photograph of the 1909 Butte exhibition.

More dilemmas

Besides Weiss, many other early museum trustees were generous with their gifts of collections. Larry Larom, a founding member of the museum's governing body, the Buffalo Bill Memorial Association, was a pioneer dude rancher [Fig. 9]. His beautiful Valley Ranch was festooned with an array of western art and artifacts. At his demise in 1973, he donated countless fine Plains Indian artifacts to the institution's first iteration of a Plains Indian Museum. Larom also made a gift in his will of an oil painting, *Cowboys Roping a Steer*, attributed to Charles Russell [Fig. 10], that had no doubt once decorated one of Larom's many guest cabins and service buildings on the ranch.

Although the Larom painting is clearly signed, monogrammed, and dated, "CM Russell [skull] 1903," the work's underlying drawing is awkward, its coloration garish,

and the signature labored. Besides myself, other museum staff have questioned the attribution of the work over the years, including Dr. Boehme between 1988 and 2008. Recent x-rays and scans of the painting reveal no underlying signature of the real artist. Even so, the painting is now formally re-attributed to Russell's some-time friend and imitator, the Great Falls artist Olaf Seltzer. Learning the artist's identity was all the easier since research



A good news—bad news tale

reveals that the composition and drawing in *Cowboys Roping a Steer* are replicated with surprising exactitude in a known Seltzer watercolor, *Laying a Trap* [Fig. 11], now in a private collection. The re-attribution has thus far been buoyed only by connoisseurship. Perhaps science may assist once the painting undergoes conservation later this year.

Intersections

So, this story is a good news/bad news tale. The museum only owns one other Seltzer work, a large and important Indian scene titled *Watching for White Man's Boats* that came into the museum's possession in 1975 through a "sweetheart sale" from the personal collection of the revered western art dealer Jack Bartfield of New York. Consequently, while the museum thus lost a Russell painting in the re-attribution of *Cowboys Roping a Steer*, it gained a second, perfectly good Seltzer cowboy scene in the bargain.

Once the fraudulent signature is removed by conservators, the newly recovered example of

Seltzer's best creative efforts may be exhibited. Perhaps it can be displayed next to a Russell work of a similar subject and date to demonstrate to visitors the difference in the artists' styles and execution. A perfect comparison would be a 1904 Russell watercolor titled *Cowboys from the Bar Triangle* [Fig. 12] that came from the Davis collection and that Weiss donated in 1972.

This brief recounting of the modern Russell-Heikka-Seltzer intersections reveals the variant styles and techniques of three of Montana's pioneering western artists and their uniquely individual contributions to the canon of western American art. As far as we know, none of this triumvirate were involved in the machinations, misattributions, and alterations of the works discussed above. They have merely become helpless victims of history. But, fortunately, the works have remained essentially intact, and once their histories are straightened out, they can be more fully appreciated by today's audiences. ■



Fig. 8: *On Neenah* (self-portrait), ca. 1897. Painted wax. 9.75 x 4.25 x 9 inches. Gift of Dr. Armand Hammer and Charles Stone Jones. 15.59

Fig. 10: Olaf C. Seltzer (1857 – 1977). *Untitled* (cowboys roping a steer on the plains), 1903. Oil on canvas. 20.75 x 26.625 inches. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. I.H. "Larry" Larom. 22.74



Fig. 9: Larry Larom at his Valley Ranch, located along the South Fork of the Shoshone River southwest of Cody, Wyoming, ca. 1950. MS 089 Jack Richard Photograph Collection. PN.89.116.21416.1 (detail).



Fig. 11: Olaf C. Seltzer (1857 – 1977). *Laying a Trap*, ca. 1904. Watercolor and pencil on paper. 10 x 14 inches. Image courtesy Christie's.



Fig 12: *Cowboys from Bar Triangle*, 1904. Watercolor on paper. 11 x 16 inches. 59.72



A prolific writer and speaker, Peter Hassrick was recently honored by the University of Wyoming with an honorary doctorate degree. He has served as guest curator of numerous exhibits nationally and internationally. He is a former twenty-year Executive Director of the Center of the West and has served tenures directing the Denver Art

Museum's Petrie Institute of Western American Art, the University of Oklahoma's Charles M. Russell Center for the Study of Art of the American West, and the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, as well as working as collections curator at the Amon Carter Museum. He is currently Director Emeritus and Senior Scholar for the Center.

TREASURES

from our west

Charles M. Russell (1864 – 1926). *Self Portrait*, 1900. Watercolor on paper, 12.375 x 6.875 inches. Gift of Charles Ulrick and Josephine Bay Foundation, Inc. 98.60



WHITNEY
WESTERN ART MUSEUM

Charles M. Russell *Self-Portrait*

This self-portrait pictures artist Charles M. Russell at age thirty-six, striking a relaxed yet strong pose. Feet planted solidly, chest puffed out, and with his hands at his hips, he exudes confidence. Russell wears his everyday duds: high-heeled riding boots, a cowboy hat, and his trademark sash. The “Cowboy Artist” began wearing sashes upon his arrival in Montana, and amassed quite a collection which included, among other types, Chinese silk sashes. In this portrait, he wears a distinctive red sash of Métis manufacture, a carry-over from the French-Canadian fur trade. It has been suggested that Russell wore this slightly eccentric get-up to attract attention, to honor tradition, for comfort, and for utility, too; he tucked a paint box and brushes into his sash when painting out-of-doors.

Though he sometimes included his likeness in illustrated letters to friends and snuck his visage into polished studio paintings, this is one of only about a dozen or so stand-alone self-portraits. This special piece illustrates Russell’s personality, his affections, and his satisfaction with the life that he forged. It was included in the Whitney’s second exhibition in 1960, the year it was gifted by the Charles Ulrick and Josephine Bay Foundation, Inc. (now the Bay and Paul Foundations). ■

Beaded Trousers

An impractical but spectacular clothing item, these circa-1920s beaded trousers with attached suspenders represent the resurgence of Plains Indian artistic traditions during the Reservation Era. The trousers, sized for an adult male, were made by a Northern Arapaho artist. Both the front and back feature glass beadwork on hide. The trousers belonged to Tim McCoy, famed Hollywood actor known for his roles in westerns such as *War Paint* (MGM 1929), and *Two-Fisted Law* (Columbia 1932) alongside John Wayne and Walter Brennan.

McCoy lived and worked on the Double Diamond Ranch on the Wind River of Wyoming where he returned to a

quiet ranch life between films and other entertainment-based ventures. He often employed members of the Northern Arapaho tribe in films, as well as his short-lived “Wild West” style show in 1936.

McCoy gifted the trousers to Florence Trimble Ames, after which they were acquired from Trimble’s daughter by the Buffalo Bill Museum in 2001. While the trousers reside in the collections of the Buffalo Bill Museum as a memento of a bygone era of Hollywood westerns, they are also of interest to the Plains Indian Museum as a vivid example of cultural expression in the rapidly changing times of the early twentieth century. ■

Trousers and suspenders, ca.
1920s. Northern Arapaho.
Leather, beads. 1.69.5935

Black-footed ferret
(*Mustela nigripes*)
specimen. DRA.305.37



Black-Footed Ferret

If the black-footed ferret (*Mustela nigripes*) could be summed up in one word it would be tenacious. Black-footed ferrets historically numbered in the tens of thousands across the fertile prairies and basins wherever colonies of prairie dogs, their primary prey, were found. Measuring 18 – 24 inches long and typically weighing less than three pounds, the black-footed ferret is a highly specialized predator of the prairie dog.

Prairie dogs routinely comprise more than 90 percent of the black-footed ferret’s diet and are intrinsically linked to the survival of the species. Not only do ferrets depend on prairie dogs for food, they also reside and raise young in prairie

dog burrows. Extensive habitat conversion and range-wide extermination programs targeting prairie dogs almost caused the extinction of the black-footed ferret by the 1950s. In 1964, scientists learned of a small remnant population in South Dakota thought to be the only surviving members of the species. Captive breeding programs were initiated but the last surviving ferret in the captive population died in 1979. For a second time, the black-footed ferret was declared extinct, until 1981 when a ranch dog named Shep came home with a dead ferret in his mouth. Unbeknownst to the rest of the world, a ranch near Meeteetse, Wyoming, harbored the only surviving population of black-footed ferrets in the world.

With renewed hope, a second captive breeding attempt was initiated (though sylvatic plague and canine distemper virus almost wiped out the Meeteetse population before the ferrets were captured). Today, more than four hundred black-footed ferrets are living in the wild, with a recovery goal of three thousand across their historical range. The black-footed ferrets in the Draper Natural History Museum’s Plains/Basin Environment are displayed on authority from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Black-Footed Ferret Recovery Program. After the ferrets died in captivity, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Smithsonian Institution transferred them to the Draper for educational purposes. ■



A new exhibit takes flight in the Draper Natural History Museum

BY CHARLES R. PRESTON, PhD, AND BONNIE LAWRENCE-SMITH



East of Cody, Wyoming, with Heart Mountain as the backdrop, a golden eagle alights on a branch. Moosejaw Bravo Photography.

Monarch of the Skies: The Golden Eagle in Greater Yellowstone and the American West

It was truly a dark and stormy night. The storm brought torrential rain, sleet, snow, golf-ball-sized hail, and wind—Wyoming-level wind! It had driven us from the field the afternoon before, and now we were back to discover the storm's effects on the newly-hatched golden eagles we had documented



The sagebrush-steppe environment near Cody, Wyoming, home to numerous golden eagles.

in several nests the previous week. The morning was cool and damp, and the sky was still drenched with gray clouds. The first nest we checked left us worried for the rest of the nesting population. We scrambled, slipped, and scrambled again up a nearby hill overlooking the nest site. After focusing our powerful spotting scope on the distant nest, it became clear that the two downy eagle nestlings we had seen the day before were now missing.

Neither was there any sign of the parents, and a portion of the nest had broken away from the cliff face. This nest site was particularly vulnerable to weather because there was only a small rock outcrop to protect it from above. After observing the nest for a few hours without detecting any activity, we searched the muddy area below the nest. Nothing. We presumed the nestlings dead and the nest abandoned for this breeding season.

We moved on with a growing sense of gloom that matched the sky. As we approached the next site, we observed one adult eagle flying just below the clouds nearly a mile away from the nest that had been home to two eagle nestlings a few days

earlier. We placed our scope several hundred yards away for a good view into it without disturbing any eagles that might be nearby. At first, the nest appeared empty. But, as we watched in dread, we detected a distinct movement at the very back of the nest. Soon, two white, downy eaglets came into view! They were alive, but looked weak and a little ragged. We could not see any prey remains in the nest and worried that the parents may have abandoned the nest in the aftermath of the storm.



A golden eagle feeds her hungry nestlings. MooseJaw Bravo Photography.

Suddenly the big, adult female appeared from the low-hanging clouds and perched on a nearby limber pine snag. She had brought a freshly-killed cottontail for breakfast! We watched as she delivered the rabbit to the nest and began tearing bits of flesh from the carcass to feed her little offspring. It turned out that most of the nests and eagle nestlings we surveyed that day had survived the freak June storm—a testimony to well-placed nests; dedicated, attentive parents; and eons of natural selection.



For some, the sagebrush landscape pales in comparison to the tall mountain peaks.

This is only one of countless dramas that members of our Draper Natural History Museum research team have experienced since 2009 when we began the long-term golden eagle/sagebrush-steppe ecology study we've reported on in past issues of *Points West*. The golden eagle is an apex predator in the Bighorn Basin and other sagebrush-dominated landscapes that have been disappearing, shrinking, and changing during the last several decades. Unfortunately, this iconic western landscape that once dominated much of the American West is often overlooked and undervalued in the shadow

of the dramatic heights and gaudy majesty of the Rocky Mountains. But when you work daily in the sagebrush landscape—if you're paying attention—you can't help becoming enchanted by its dynamic nature, unexpected beauty, and the complex stories and mysteries it reveals.

And the golden eagle is the fascinating and charismatic celebrity of this place. It is also ecologically significant, providing a barometer for detecting environmental integrity and change. Recent studies have indicated that while golden eagle populations in some areas of western North America are declining, others are stable. Wildlife managers and scientists are concerned, however, that even this stability will be short-lived with the rapid loss of habitat and increasing sources of mortality. To help prevent significant population declines and crisis management in the future, it is important to document and better evaluate the status, population dynamics, and ecological role of the golden eagle in local study areas across the species' range.

The saga we began unraveling in the Bighorn Basin went far beyond the golden eagle; it encompassed the complex interactions among predator, prey, and environment, and the influence of human land use changes on these interactions. Early in our study, it became clear that we had a compelling story to tell. We now had an exceptional opportunity to share our field-based experiences and discoveries to the public through field tours, programs, publications, and possibly an exhibition.

While many museums traditionally build exhibitions focused on artwork, artifacts, and other materials, natural history museums typically create exhibitions around stories or ideas using specimens and other materials to help illustrate the stories. When research assistant and photographer, Nick Ciaravella (aka Moosejaw Bravo Photography) joined



The Draper crew in the field (L – R), Nate Horton, Dr. Charles Preston, Melissa Hill, and Bonnie Lawrence-Smith.

the Draper Museum field crew in 2015, we asked him to use much of his time and his exceptional photographic skills to help document the subjects of our research and our work in the field. (See “The eagles of Rattlesnake Gulch” in the Fall/Winter 2017 issue of *Points West*.) Initially, we thought we could tell our story exclusively through photographs. But, as national interest grew, and we strengthened existing partnerships and established new collaborative relationships with all levels of government agencies and other researchers, we realized this story warranted a more robust and lasting vehicle.

By the end of the 2013 season, we had decided to create a major, interdisciplinary, and multidimensional exhibition to extend the Alpine-to-Plains Trail exhibits in the Draper. The gallery adjacent to the Draper's popular tile map of Greater Yellowstone, just outside our Draper Museum Discovery Laboratory, is the perfect setting for this new exhibition. Its location, down the ramp from the Plains/Basin exhibit environment and outside our laboratory, makes it ideal to showcase the Draper's own golden eagle research conducted in the shrub-steppe country of the Bighorn Basin.

The initial concept took on a new, exciting dimension, when we recognized that we had a unique opportunity to partner with



Artist drawings of some of the features of the *Monarch of the Skies* exhibition.

the Center's Plains Indian Museum. The plan would enrich our story with the addition of eagle-related ethnographic materials and insights of Plains Indian cultural associations with the golden eagle and its environment (see sidebar by Bonnie Smith). Plains Indian Museum Curator, Rebecca West, became a key member of our exhibit development team. By early 2016, we were ready to contact an external exhibit design and fabrication studio.

We had been working very closely with Chase Studio, Inc. for several years to enhance and update our natural history exhibits annually. The firm's principal, Dr. Terry Chase, is world-renowned for his exhibit design and fabrication skills, and he knows the Center and Draper audiences, physical layout, and facilities intimately. Chase Studio, working closely with our team, completed the exhibit design drawings and plan in early 2017 and began fabricating key exhibit elements in their extensive facilities in Cedar Creek, Missouri. With the completed design renderings in hand, we began writing grant proposals for the exhibition. And, we decided on a title—*Monarch of the Skies: The Golden Eagle in Greater Yellowstone and the American West*.

As you descend the ramp from the Draper's



Thunderbird rock art at Legend Rock State Petroglyph Site, 55 miles southeast of Cody, Wyoming.

Plains/Basin exhibit environment, you encounter *Monarch*. The gateway section of the exhibition immerses you in the Bighorn Basin as two large sandstone cliffs and a breathtaking video presentation introduce you to our study area, the wildlife that inhabits it, and our research team in action. One of the cliffs features a large golden eagle nest, and two golden eagles greet you from above, one perched and one flying toward the nest.

Beyond the introductory area, the exhibition features sections highlighting golden eagle ecology and natural history, sagebrush-steppe distribution, and changes in Greater Yellowstone. It also includes Plains Indian associations with eagles; the

adventure, excitement, and trials of field exploration and discovery; and conservation challenges and innovative, new opportunities emerging to help protect golden eagles and associated wildlife.

One theme woven through the exhibition is the importance of scientific research to wildlife conservation and management. To that end, we present some of the key adventures and results from our own study on reproduction and diet of golden eagles in the Bighorn Basin compared with a network of similar studies across Greater Yellowstone and the American West.

Additionally, families can "visit" distant sites and learn about studies and research teams in Alaska, Washington, Idaho, Yellowstone National Park, and other key locations. We enhance the exhibition's rich stories with natural history specimens (including actual prey remains recovered from golden eagle nests and an articulated golden eagle skeleton cast); Plains Indian materials including a feather bonnet, talon necklace, and wing fan; interactive touch screens and audiovisual presentations; large, colorful graphic panels, and a large selection of stunning, color photographs of wildlife, including golden eagles, pronghorn, burrowing owls, badgers, and other species in the dramatic landscapes where we encountered them.

The exhibition is designed to engage, satisfy, and excite curious minds of all ages. One of the simplest and most popular elements of the exhibition is sure to be a life-sized silhouette of a soaring golden eagle positioned so that you can compare your "wing-span" to that of this magnificent aerial predator. This and other elements in the exhibition provide splendid photo opportunities. We're also adding a new station with a soaring eagle to emboss the Draper Museum passports as a lasting memento.

To extend and expand the experience of the exhibition, we are creating a *Monarch* website with "Dig Deeper" pages containing more photographs, video clips, interviews, and information related to each of the content areas of the exhibition. Draper and Plains Indian Museum staff, together with the Center's Interpretive Education Department, are also developing online classroom modules and a suite of educational programming launched from the *Monarch of the Skies* platform.

The exhibition is a wonderful connection to our highly popular Draper Museum



Assistant Curator-Draper Museum Raptor Experience, Melissa Hill is pictured with Kateri, the Center's resident golden eagle.

Raptor Experience, too. We now feature ten live raptors—including Kateri, our own golden eagle—in both in-house and outreach programs managed by Melissa Hill and Brandon Lewis, and supported by nearly twenty volunteers. And because the exhibition remains in the Draper far into the future, we can update and enhance the experience for years to come. For example, we're exploring technologies that provide visitors with opportunities to experience simulated eagle flight across a North American migration route and to detect an eagle approaching a wind farm with a challenge to shut down one or more turbines to prevent a deadly collision.

Monarch of the Skies is a natural addition to the Draper Museum, highlighting our own original research in the broader context of exploring and celebrating the profound relationships binding people with nature in Greater Yellowstone and the American West. Following Members and Partners opening events on June 8 – 9, 2018, the exhibition opens to the public. Keep up with exhibition progress at centerofthewest.org/explore/greater-yellowstone-natural-history/exhibits/monarch-of-the-skies. ■



Dr. Charles R. Preston is the Willis McDonald, IV Senior Curator of Natural Science and Founding Curator-in-Charge of the Draper Natural History Museum.

A flash of lightning & a clap of thunder

BY BONNIE LAWRENCE-SMITH

I remember clearly the first time the idea came to me: Was it possible there was a correlation or relationship between golden eagle nesting locations and Native American rock art—thunderbird figures specifically? For these peoples, thunderbirds are known to be messengers to the Creator. The flapping of their wings creates thunder, and as the opening of their mouth and eyes generates lightning, the term “thunderbird” originated.

It was my first adventure in the field with the Buffalo Bill Center of the West’s Draper Natural History Museum crew of staff and volunteers in 2013. Bundled up that chilly October morning, we piled into our field vehicle, “Old Blue,” ready to see some birds—especially raptors. Loaded with several cups of coffee and my Nikon camera, I had no idea where the day would take us with Dr. Preston (Chuck) leading the charge. We drove south toward Meeteetse first where Chuck pointed to the rough-legged hawks (*Buteo lagopus*). The telephone poles and irrigation wheel lines were littered with them.

Then, we turned east toward Burlington, and the fun really began. Golden eagles were everywhere! Eventually, turning back toward town, we came to a gate adjacent to YU Bench Road, and Chuck announced, “Just over there are three nests.”

“All together?” I asked.

“Yep, and there are some petroglyphs out here too,” he replied. I remember thinking, “Isn’t that interesting?” We returned to the Center where I searched out then Plains Indian Museum Curator Emma Hansen. I asked her if she knew of any research that had been done on golden eagle nest sites and Native American rock art. She said no, but agreed that it could be interesting. The connection seemed so obvious—so much so, that I found it hard to believe that modern scholars hadn’t made the same connection sooner.

I spent four years researching this idea. In 2015, I began using Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office site forms to identify possible rock art sites that may or may not support my hypothesis. Some scholars have suggested site location was incidental. Some data indicate, however, that these locations may have been carefully chosen for landscape features, spiritual significance, and available resources that are site specific, such as water and white clay.

I have identified more than fifty archaeological sites in the Bighorn Basin that could offer evidence to support my hypothesis. I suggest that Native peoples were seeking out specific locations—where golden eagles nested—to leave their messages to the Creator or Great Spirit.

In Rupert Weeks’s book *Pachee Goyo: History and Legends from the Shoshone*, 1981, the main character, Pachee, must ritualistically purify himself in a lake (water) and cover his entire body in white clay to demonstrate that his heart and soul are clean and ready to obtain his “medicine.” Pachee describes the animals and fantastic creatures carved into the rock face of this spiritually significant place. His grandfather told him that “whenever you see a drawing high on the face of steep cliffs, you will know that is where the Great Spirit dwells.” These are the places to go to acquire one’s “medicine,” i.e., the power to heal. As Pachee sleeps that night, he dreams of a radiant figure holding a golden eagle and singing a medicine song of healing. In this dream, the figure plucks one



An eagle feather flutters in the breeze at Medicine Wheel in the Bighorn Mountains of Wyoming.

feather from the golden eagle’s wing and gifts it to Pachee. Upon waking, he finds a single golden eagle feather, an act representing his receipt and acceptance of his “medicine,” bestowed upon him by the Great Spirit.

I have researched nesting locations, archaeological sites, and the material record; read the legends and myths of Plains Indian people; and interviewed living Native Americans. As a result, it’s clear to me that the golden eagle, or “thunderbird,” has always held, and continues to hold, a revered status among Native people of the Plains. I believe it deserves our protection. ■



Bonnie Lawrence-Smith is the Curatorial Assistant, Draper Natural History Museum.



Charles M. Russell (1864 – 1926). *When Wagons Meant Plunder*, 1900. Oil on board. 17.75 x 23.625 inches. Bequest of Lewis B. Maytag Jr. 3.93



William T. Ranney (1813 – 1857). *Advice on the Prairie*, 1853. Oil on canvas. 38.75 x 55.25 inches. Gift of Mrs. J. Maxwell Moran. 10.91

On the Trail of the West: Salt Lake City

“a smartly curated show for how it underscores the inevitable, informed ironic view of history.”

—Les Roka, *Utah Review*

“By crafting a dynamic conversation between the region’s numerous inhabitants, the show exposes the pivotal yet tragic replacement of one dominant culture to another. This unflinching look at colonial inhabitation is perhaps the exhibition’s shining achievement.”

—Scotti Hill, *Deseret News*

“These celebrated artworks exemplify how newcomers mythologized their vision of the region, and Native peoples sought to preserve their vanishing way of life.”

—Now Playing-Utah

“One way to mythologize the West was to show it without any people in it. One gallery of the exhibit is devoted to landscapes...”

—Sean P. Means, *Salt Lake Tribune*

It’s clear: *Go West! Art of the American Frontier from the Buffalo Bill Center of the West*, the Center’s exhibition on display at the Utah Museum of Fine Arts (UMFA) in Salt Lake City, is receiving rave reviews. Featuring some of the Center’s most important works—and presented with a host of complementary programming—the exhibition has generated conversation, prompted critical thinking, and created new relationships.

“We are thrilled with the opportunity to bring these beautiful and important works to our community, where there are so many devoted fans of art from our region,” says UMFA Executive Director Gretchen Dietrich. “The remarkable quality of these objects, their art historical significance, and their cultural relevance make this a must-see exhibition. We also welcome the chance to collaborate with the Buffalo Bill Center of the West—an institution widely admired by Utahns.”

From the UMFA *Go West!* opening gala to the performance of the *High Noon* movie score by the Utah Symphony, that “citywide

celebration,” *On the Trail of the West: Salt Lake City*, is providing its share of buzz, too. The Salt Lake community banded together for a host of programs and activities related to the exhibition. Besides the UMFA, cooperating organizations include: Church History Museum, University of Utah, Utah State Historical Society, Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, Utah Symphony, O.C. Tanner Jewelers, and Classic Art & Architecture. Find the full schedule of events on the Center’s website at centeroftthewest.org/gowest-slc.

Augmenting the *Go West!* exhibition, Center of the West staffers and friends have played an important part in the *On the Trail* programming. Presenting talks at the University of Utah’s Osher Institute of Lifelong Learning were Karen McWhorter, Whitney Western Art Museum; Jeremy Johnston, Buffalo Bill Museum; Rebecca West, Plains Indian Museum; and Board Member/Art Historian Donna Poulton. Research Fellow Gregory Hinton lectured at the UMFA.

Still to come at the UMFA: Curator Emerita Emma Hansen of the Plains Indian Museum is set to speak on February 22, and Center of the West Director Emeritus Peter Hassrick is at the podium March 8.



On the Trail of the West is the brainchild of Center of the West Trustee Naoma Tate, whose goal is simply to share the culture, vibrancy, and pathos of the West, allowing exhibition visitors to make their own connections with the frontier. The program is generously sponsored by the Hal R. and Naoma J. Tate Foundation, with added contributions

from the Center of the West, David Dee Fine Arts, and Circle of Art Loving Friends (CALF).

Go West! closes March 11. ■

Mary Jester Allen with Frank Butler's rifle, ca. 1950. MS 228
Buffalo Bill Museum Photographs Collection. PN.228.202



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words

After the death of William F. “Buffalo Bill” Cody in 1917, his niece Mary Jester Allen (1875-1960) committed to establishing a museum in her uncle’s name. Determined to keep Cody’s chronicle alive in the town of his founding, she helped orchestrate a \$5,000 memorial appropriation from the State of Wyoming in 1917 into a log structure that opened its doors in 1927 as the Buffalo Bill Museum.

Mrs. Allen worked with the museum until her last visit there in 1960. Throughout her tenure, she guided the museum, watched it grow into a multi-structured facility, shepherded it through a depression and two world wars, and helped enrich its holdings. She managed the acquisition and transport of Buffalo Bill’s family home from LeClaire, Iowa, to Cody in 1933. Were it not for Mary Jester Allen, the Center of the West would never have become the formidable institution it is today.

One picture is worth a thousand words.

The McCracken Research Library at the Buffalo Bill Center of the West offers access to thousands of historic images for research and publication, thanks in part to the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). To learn more, contact the library at 307-578-4063, or visit library.centerofthewest.org.

BUFFALO BILL CENTER OF THE WEST

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