

pointswest

WINTER 2021



CLIMBING
Cody's ICE

GRIZZLY QUADS | LEATHER TOGETHER | BEST WESTERNS

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

BILL SHIEBLER

Chairman of the Board

Change is inevitable. Today, I'd like to share two changes that have deeply affected our organization recently.



First, Director Peter Seibert is embarking on a new adventure in 2021: he has accepted a position as Director of the Independence Seaport Museum in Philadelphia and will assume the role in mid-February. Peter and his family leave Cody to be closer to family and loved ones — something we can all relate to in these difficult times.

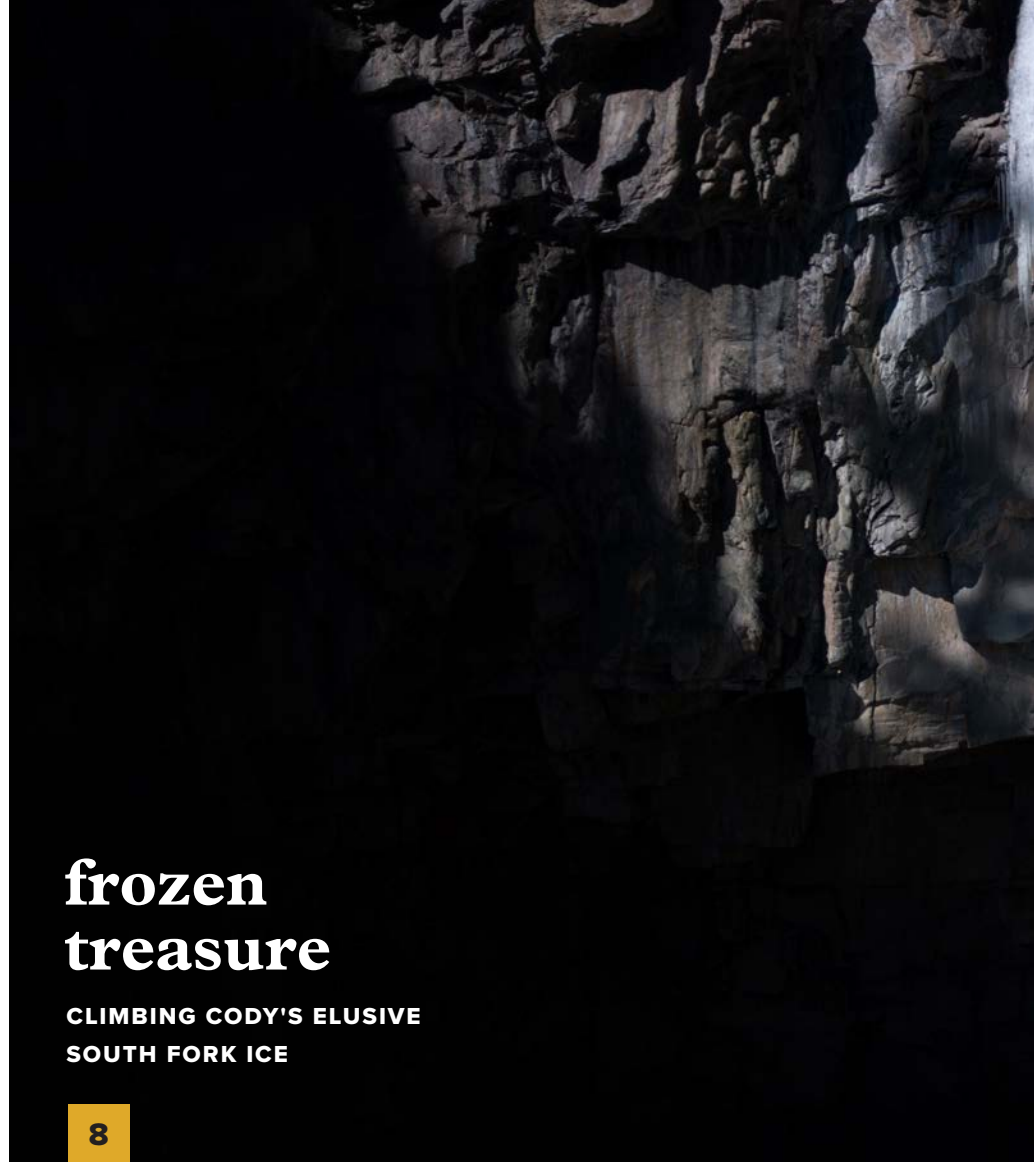
I want to thank Peter for his hard work and dedicated service over the past two years — he has been an excellent steward for the Center in extremely tough circumstances. COVID-19 has taken a tremendous operational and financial toll on museums across the country, yet Peter has kept our museum open, our staff employed, and our patrons safe and comfortable.

We are grateful for his steady leadership and compassion toward others during his time with us — and we wish him the best in the next step in his journey.

Second, the world has sadly lost an incredible father, philanthropist, and civil servant in the passing of Hank Coe last month at the age of 74. Hank dedicated his life to service — to the Center as a long-time board member, the Cody community as a volunteer firefighter, and to the state of Wyoming as a state legislator, among his many other acts of service.

I was lucky enough to serve on the Center's board with Hank for many years. His contributions to this organization are too numerous to list. He will be dearly missed.

In times of change and uncertainty, we can only do three things: remember the past fondly, enjoy the present moment, and march forward into the future. That's exactly what we plan to do. As Peter would say, "onward and upward."



frozen treasure

**CLIMBING CODY'S ELUSIVE
SOUTH FORK ICE**

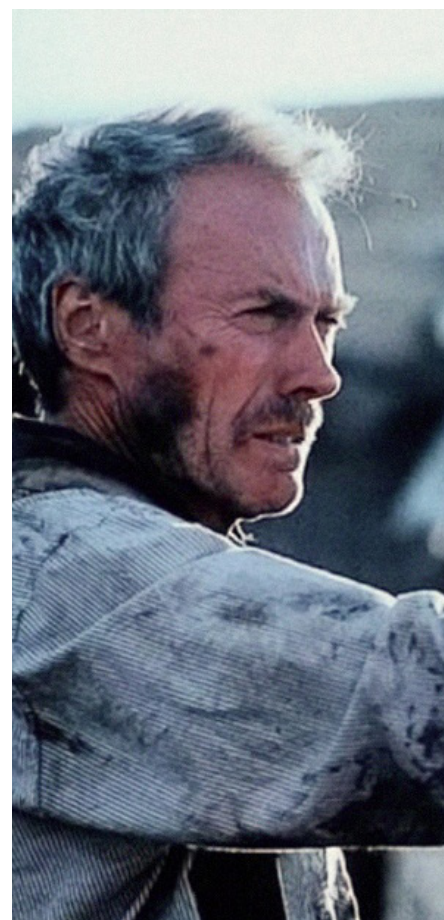
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leather together

**APPRENTICES SETTLING
IN AND SADDLING UP**





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By Peter Seibert

ABOUT THE COVER | Fresh snow falls on Cody-based ice climber Chris Guyer as he squeezes through the "chimney" of a route known as Stringer. At left, climber Dane Steadman moves up My Only Valentine, a section of the frozen waterfall climb called Broken Hearts. (Photos by Aaron Mulkey)

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10 best westerns

**THE GREATEST WESTERN FILMS
YOU CAN SCREEN AT HOME**



Points West is dedicated to connecting people to the stories of the American West as the quarterly membership magazine of the private, nonprofit Buffalo Bill Center of the West.

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**BUFFALO BILL
CENTER
OF THE WEST**



Smithsonian
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ALMOST HOME



SHOT WITH SONY A7RIV

Lens: Sony FE 200 - 600 f/5.6 - 6.3 G OSS
Focal length 232 mm.
Exposure 1/1600 f/8.
ISO 320

SHARE YOUR PHOTOS WITH US FOR THIS FEATURE!

SEND HI-RES IMAGE AND 400-WORD STORY TO
EDITOR@CENTEROFTHEWEST.ORG.

BY JACK BAYLES

Grizzly 399 is perhaps the most famous grizzly bear in the world. Now 25 years old, she is a living legend for her fertility and cub-rearing skills, and has become an accidental ambassador for her species. My wife, Gina, and I have had the distinct privilege of watching her and her broods over the years. As wildlife advocates, we also watch over her, occasionally working to tip an uncertain outcome or dangerous situation in her favor.

Grizzly 399 is known for previously birthing three different sets of triplets and many other cubs, and is often spotted along roads around Grand Teton National Park. In the spring of 2020, her followers waited anxiously to see when she would come out of her den near Pilgrim Creek, and if she would bring cubs with her.

There are only 11 recorded instances of grizzly bears in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem producing litters of four cubs, and none have ever successfully raised all four cubs through their first year—until Grizzly 399 did just that this past year.

Grizzly 399 had to use every bit of her skill to see her babies through 2020. We were watching

over her as the family fed from an elk carcass in the southern part of Grand Teton National Park until December 29, when she started her journey to her usual den area. We followed her as she traversed some 28 miles over the next three days, arriving at Pilgrim Creek late on New Year's morning.

As she came plowing through the snow, almost home, near Pilgrim Creek's intersection with Highway 89, we noticed she was following a serpentine path of shallower snow. Projecting her course, we waited until she briefly turned toward us on her way to the den. Then we took this photograph from the safety of the Pilgrim Creek bridge, and helped to create a clear, protected space so she could safely cross the road, and take her cubs home to their winter den.



Jack and Gina Bayles are full-time photographers, filmmakers, and naturalist guides working out of the Jackson, Wyoming, area. They stay busy sharing their love of the wild with guests on private photography workshops, and support wildlife advocacy through their Team 399 merchandise brand.

Ooey-Goey Cowboy cinnamon rolls



PREP
6 hrs*

ASSEMBLY
20 min

COOK
30 min

Not all of us can make chuckwagon cinnamon rolls over hot coals like Rich Herman, our resident chuckwagon cook. Luckily, his Dutch oven rolls easily translate to your 12-inch cast iron baking dish at home. With plenty of frosting and classic sourdough texture, these won't last long!

INGREDIENTS

Sponge:

- 1 cup sourdough starter
- 1 cup warm milk
- 1 cup flour
- 1 tsp sugar

Mix well and refrigerate 6 hours or overnight.

Frosting:

- 3 Tbs butter, softened
- 3 Tbs cream cheese, softened
- $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp vanilla
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup powdered sugar
- Add milk to thin as needed

Dough:

- 1 pkg dry yeast
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup warm water
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup shortening or lard
- 1 lb of sour cream
- Cinnamon and sugar to taste
- Dry Ingredients:
 - » 2 cups flour
 - » 1 tsp sugar
 - » 1 tsp salt
 - » 1 Tbs baking powder

INSTRUCTIONS

Preheat oven to 425°F. Dissolve 1 pkg dry yeast in $\frac{1}{4}$ cup warm water. Add with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar to sponge and let sit while mixing dry ingredients. Cut shortening into dry ingredients with pastry blender or fork.

Combine dry and wet mixtures. Add small amounts of flour until dough isn't sticky. Don't worry about proofing — cinnamon rolls rise as they bake.

Assemble:

Roll dough out in a rectangle about $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch thick. Cover evenly with sour cream. Sprinkle on cinnamon and sugar mixture evenly. Roll up like a jelly roll and cut rolls about 1 inch thick.

Cook:

Arrange rolls in a greased 12-inch baking dish. Cook at 425°F for 30 minutes or until golden brown on top. While rolls are cooking, make frosting.

Frosting:

Mix softened butter and softened cream cheese together. Slowly add powdered sugar while continuing to beat together. Then add vanilla and continue to beat. When mixed well, add small amounts of milk until frosting reaches desired consistency. Spread on rolls immediately after coming out of oven. Serve warm.



* 6 hour prep for sponge (make night before or at least six hours before making dough)

PHOTO by Tera Gigot
@rootsnradishes

RECIPE by Center of
the West Maintenance
Manager & Chuckwagon
Cook Rich Herman





Snow fun on the slopes and trails

BY SCOTT KATH

Winter in Wyoming means finding fun in the snow. While the weather can be cold and windy, there are also usually plenty of blue-sky days where you can enjoy hours of outdoor fun, soaking up the sunshine without ever getting too cold.

Lately, I have been getting into snowshoeing and cross-country skiing at **PAHASKA TEEPEE**, about 50 miles west of Cody. The original lodge there was built by William F. “Buffalo Bill” Cody around the turn of the twentieth century. Located in the Shoshone National Forest at the edge of Yellowstone National Park, the lodging complex is surrounded by 12 miles of ski trails maintained by the nonprofit Park County Nordic Ski Association.

It’s fun to ski or snowshoe along the river or into Yellowstone and watch for wildlife in the silence and seclusion of a winter wonderland.

Just down the road is **SLEEPING GIANT**, a historic community ski area that has recently added outdoor fire pits, a snow bar, and lots of other great improvements. “Sleepy G” (as the kids call it) is an affordable, family-friendly downhill ski area that offers tubing, night skiing, and a laid-back, welcoming atmosphere. If you go to the top of the hill, there’s great skiing through the trees.

I also like to ski in **RED LODGE, MONTANA**, just a little more than an hour north of Cody. When there’s lots of snow and the whole mountain is open, I like to ski the Cole Creek drainage. Runs like Sluice Box and True Grit are a fun challenge.

After a day skiing Red Lodge, I like to stop by **SAM’S TAP ROOM** at Red Lodge Ales. Over many years, Red Lodge Ales has developed into a really great craft brewery, and it’s a nice spot to sit in front of the fire and enjoy a good beer at the end of the day. I also like to stop at Red Lodge’s Cattail Bakery for a baguette.

In Powell, Wyoming, where I live, **EL TAPATIO** is the spot for a great dinner out after a day in the snow. It’s a longtime local favorite for authentic Mexican food.

Skiing can be expensive, especially when first buying gear. So be sure to check your local second-hand stores for deals. You’ll be surprised what you can pick up. At the **POWELL HABITAT FOR HUMANITY RESTORE**, I found some vintage but perfectly good cross-country skis that have turned out to be the best \$10 I’ve spent in a long time.



Scott Kath has been an attorney for 36 years and is a partner in the law firm Copenhaver, Kath, Kitchen & Kolpitke in Powell, Wyoming. His interests also include whitewater rafting, bad golf, and a weak tennis game.



Ice Climbing GEAR

The South Fork Valley near Cody, Wyoming, is one of the best spots in the U.S. for ice climbers to scale frozen waterfalls. They use specialized gear—much of it adapted from or similar to gear used by rock climbers—to scale vertical walls of ice.

ICE CRAMPONS: ATTACHED TO BOTTOMS OF BOOTS, SPIKES ARE EMBEDDED PERPENDICULAR AND VERTICAL TO PROVIDE TRACTION AND FOOTHOLDS WHILE ASCENDING THE ICE.

ICE SCREWS: SCREWED INTO THE ICE BY HAND TO PROTECT THE CLIMBER FROM A POTENTIAL FALL. THEY ARE REMOVED AS THE SECOND CLIMBER ASCENDS.

BOOTS: EQUIPPED WITH STIFF, RIGID SOLES FOR “STANDING” AGAINST VERTICAL ICE.

HARNES: WORN BY CLIMBER AROUND WAIST AND LEGS; ATTACHES TO ROPES TO SECURE FROM FALLING.

GLOVES: DURABLE, INSULATED TO PROTECT AGAINST ELEMENTS, BUT ALSO ALLOW DEXTERITY FOR CLIMBING.

ICE AXES: SWUNG INTO ICE AND USED TO PULL CLIMBER UP.

CARABINERS: QUICK, SECURE ATTACHMENT POINTS BETWEEN CLIMBERS AND ANCHORS.

HELMET: PROTECTS AGAINST FALLING ICE, DEBRIS, OR POTENTIAL FALL.

DYNAMIC ROPE: SPECIALLY CONSTRUCTED TO BE SOMEWHAT ELASTIC TO CATCH CLIMBER IN CASE OF A FALL. AN OUTER SHEATH PROTECTS THE CORE OF THE ROPE FROM ABRASION.

FROZEN TREASURE

BY RUFFIN PREVOST

All kinds of people come from all sorts of places to search for all types of treasure around the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. Big game hunters want to bag that elusive trophy. Miners have long sought gold and other buried treasure here. Many others hunt for coal, oil, and natural gas. Photographers spend days—even decades—searching for the perfect shot.

But the hills around Cody are arguably richer in one particular kind of treasure than any other place in the country. Fanatics come from around the world, and some even move here, to hunt for ice. Not just any ice, mind you, but tall, shimmering pillars begging to be conquered by elite climbers looking for singular, unforgettable experiences.

Less than an hour's drive southwest of Cody, ice climbers gather each winter in the South Fork Valley to scale literal frozen waterfalls. Some are freestanding columns of ice—gargantuan icicles the size of grain silos—unconnected to anything but the ground below and cliff above. Others are towering, multi-leveled cascades of seemingly endless ice, stair-stepping into the winter clouds overhead.

Yet, even for most Cody residents, ice climbing is relatively unknown compared to Cody's nightly summer rodeo, Yellowstone National Park's abundant wildlife and thermal

wonders, or even the Buffalo Bill Center of the West's sprawling campus of collections and attractions. But for top ice climbers, Cody is rightly famous for its frozen treasure.

With roots in mountaineering, and similar to rock climbing, ice climbing involves using specialized gear like ice axes and spiked boot attachments called crampons to aid climbers in ascending columns and walls of ice. The Cody area is home to the largest concentration of challenging climbing routes in the U.S., aficionados say.

"Cody is unique because it's the only place in the continental U.S. that has this big valley of alpine wilderness full of so much challenging, or even intimidating, ice," said Aaron Mulkey, a top ice climber who moved to Cody to pursue the sport.

Now in his mid-40s, Mulkey moved to Cody from Boulder, Colorado, in his early twenties specifically because the ice climbing opportunities are so abundant and challenging.

"The wildness, the adventure, and the potential for new routes—that's what resonated with me," he said. "Climbing was my focus. It wasn't a social scene or dating. Climbing is what I wanted to do."

The South Fork Valley is accessed by Wyoming Highway 291, which runs more than 40 miles along the South Fork of the Shoshone River before it dead-ends, making the area far less-traveled by tourists than the road to Yellowstone.





CLIMBING CODY'S ELUSIVE SOUTH FORK ICE

Rugged, remote, and isolated, the upper valley is home to several large, historic ranches, properties now prized as much for their scenery and recreational value. Aside from bison and caribou, every wild ungulate species found in the Northern Rockies can be spotted along the South Fork Valley: moose, pronghorn antelope, elk, mule deer, white-tailed deer, mountain goats, and bighorn sheep. And with all that big game wandering around, predators are always nearby, including grizzly bears, black bears, wolves, coyotes, and foxes, along with raptors like hawks and eagles.

A number of factors make the South Fork Valley the ice climbing paradise it has become, said Nathan Doerr, curator of the Draper Natural History Museum.

"Amid the vertical cliffs and deep canyons that create the rugged topography of the South Fork Valley, geology, elevation, and climate come together to create a dynamic landscape," he said. "Of the many distinct characteristics of the valley, its countless drainages, sheer rock faces and overhanging cliffs, and resulting waterfalls make it especially unique when it comes to recreation, particularly for ice climbing."

"The layers of volcanic breccia, sandstone, and shale have been easily eroded by glaciers, water, wind, and gravity. The result has been drainages that are supplied by both ground and surface water," Doerr said. "Given the high elevation of the surrounding mountaintops, cold temperatures, and angle of the sun, the water

Red and green climbing ropes hang down from Dane Steadman as he climbs Too Cold To Fire, a frozen waterfall in Cody's South Fork Valley. (Photo by Aaron Mulkey)

“I’ve scared myself on numerous occasions. It becomes a very personal and complex thing.

— BOB NEWSOME

in the drainages begins to freeze, forming frozen waterfalls early in the season. As the angle of the sun changes over the winter months, other waterfalls freeze over, melting snow continually builds up the formations, and they last later into the season.”

Those natural processes and the ongoing freeze-thaw cycle mean the location, size, and composition of ice routes change continuously from fall through spring. Some routes appear only briefly when conditions align perfectly, making the hunt for frozen treasure part of the challenge of conquering a particular climb.

“One of the allures of ice climbing is a route can be there this year and not be seen for another 20 years,” Mulkey said. “I enjoy that hunt and the once-in-a-lifetime potential experience of finding a trophy piece of ice.”

Like many climbers, Mulkey documents his frosty conquests with jaw-dropping photos and videos on Instagram, Facebook, and other social media platforms. But he is also writing a guidebook to help climbers navigate the more reliably found and popular routes—climbs with names like Mean Green, Broken Hearts, and Bozo’s Revenge.

Though the sport is relatively new and

has grown fairly slowly, climbers have been scaling ice in the South Fork Valley since the 1970s, said Bob Newsome, a longtime climber who started Cody sporting goods store Sunlight Sports in 1971.

Throughout the 1970s, Newsome and other climbers from around Cody began climbing ice near town, later expanding to the South Fork Valley and around Cooke City, Montana. Climbers from Bozeman were also part of the scene that saw early adopters improvising their own gear.

“We took old leather ski boots, peeled the soles off and had Waynes Boot Shop put a (custom) sole on them so they would stay rigid” for climbing vertical ice, Newsome recalled. Early ice climbers modified rock climbing equipment to create home-brew axes, crampons, and other ice gear until an industry grew up around the sport in the 1980s.

“Word started getting out that we had route after route, icicle after icicle in the South Fork, and people would just show up,” Newsome said.

Cody climbers and tourism boosters worked to publicize the area, and the local scene has continued to expand, with simi-

lar but less challenging scenes developing around Ouray, Colorado, and Bozeman, Montana.

An annual ice climbing festival in Cody that has been on hiatus in recent years is set to make a comeback in 2022, Mulkey said. And Newsome sees the sport continuing to slowly grow in the area.

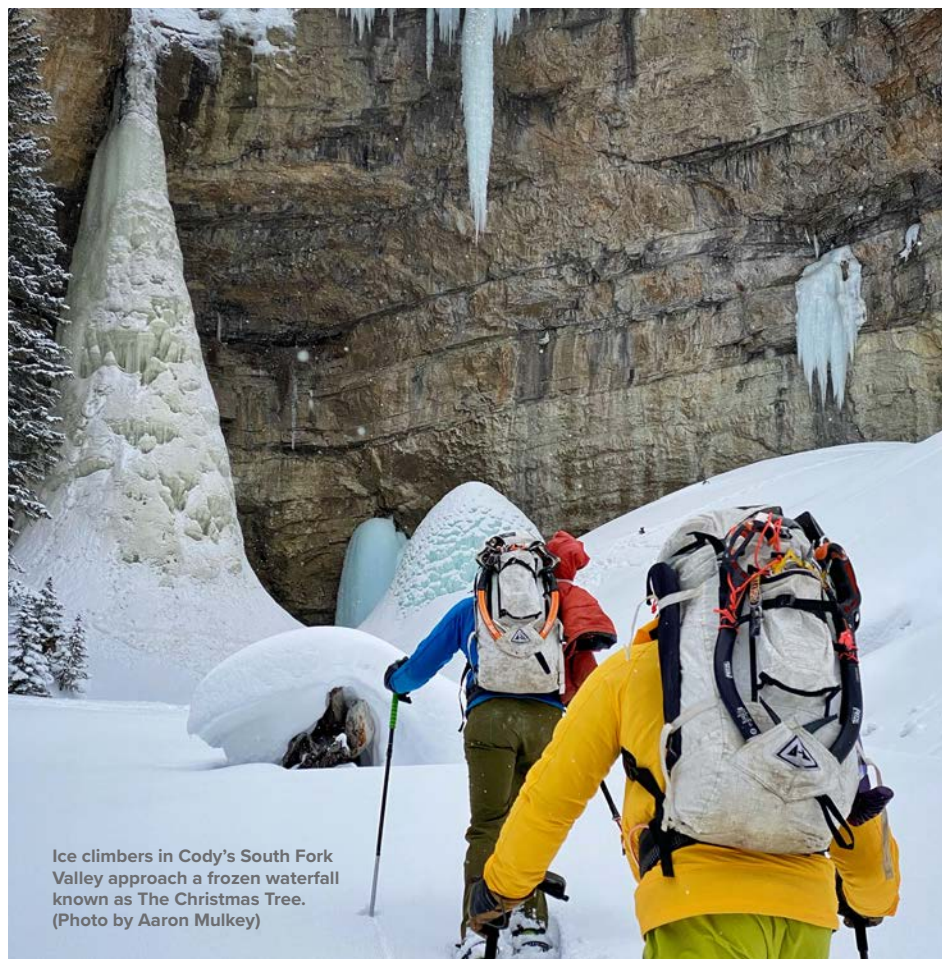
That’s good news for winter tourism around Cody, as both Mulkey and Newsome said ice climbers are typically big spenders, investing thousands in gear alone.

Claudia Wade, marketing director for the Park County Travel Council, said Cody is “fortunate to be a world-class ice climber destination.”

“These enthusiasts come during the time of year when Cody lodging rates are at their lowest and coffee shops, restaurants, and breweries are less crowded,” she said.

“Less crowded,” of course, is also part of the appeal for Cody climbers like Mulkey and Newsome, who cherish the solitude and quiet splendor of winter in the South Fork Valley. It’s a spot that has more than enough ice to handle all comers, and abundant big, difficult ice to continually challenge longtime experts.

“A little bit of the attraction is doing



Ice climbers in Cody's South Fork Valley approach a frozen waterfall known as The Christmas Tree. (Photo by Aaron Mulkey)



Cody-based ice climber Aaron Mulkey makes his way up a frozen waterfall called Bitches Brew, named after the song by Miles Davis. (Photo by Doug Shepherd)



something that not everyone else can do or wants to do," Newsome said. "Why do people swim with great white sharks? There's an exhilaration. I've scared myself on numerous occasions. It becomes a very personal and complex thing."

Mulkey said he likes the "here today, gone tomorrow" nature of finding and climbing ice.

"Rock is always there. It doesn't move or melt. Ice changes every year," he said. "I can climb the same chunk of ice 10 times and it's always different."

"Then, it will literally melt and be gone."

Three months from now, there's no way you can get up the path I just climbed," he said. "I've been in places where no one has ever stood before—I'm the only person. For me, that's really cool."



Ruffin Prevost is a freelance writer from Cody, Wyoming, and editor of Points West. He operates the Yellowstone Gate website and covers Wyoming and Yellowstone National Park for the Reuters global news service.

leather

APPRENTICES SETTLING IN

BY MARK DAVIS

If you ask 100 people across the American West to describe the smell of leather, you might get 100 different answers.

It depends on a piece of leather's age, use, and environment. But the actual smell isn't nearly as important as the memories it triggers — a cattle drive at sunrise on an early spring morning, the mix of dust with smoke from the grill at the arena on rodeo day, or a whiff of fresh flakes of hay thrown into a stall. Scent is inseparable from memories.

For Kali Shatto, fine leather smells exactly "like my grandfather."

Arriving in Cody from Orange County, California, Shatto, 26, used to watch her grandfather's strong hands confidently work his well-made tools on thick slabs of cowhide that he used to create beautiful, custom saddles.

Having first learned from her grandfather, Shatto and fellow saddle-making students Levi Nelson, 43, arriving from Park County, Montana, and Mark Barcus, 53, arriving from southeastern Wyoming, have dedicated themselves to working in Cody, Wyoming, to bring fresh memories to new generations of riders.

The three apprentices at the Scout Saddle Co., launched last summer at the Buffalo Bill Center of the West, have acclimated to their new community. They know well the layout of the brand new workshop, as well as the work ethic of their demanding mentor, Keith Seidel. After a half dozen months of introductory instruction, they've now begun to dive deeper into their coursework. And with that comes a steep learning curve and the stress that can accompany high expectations.

Respect for Seidel's mastery of the tools of the trade and artistic standards keep the apprentices moving forward with purpose.

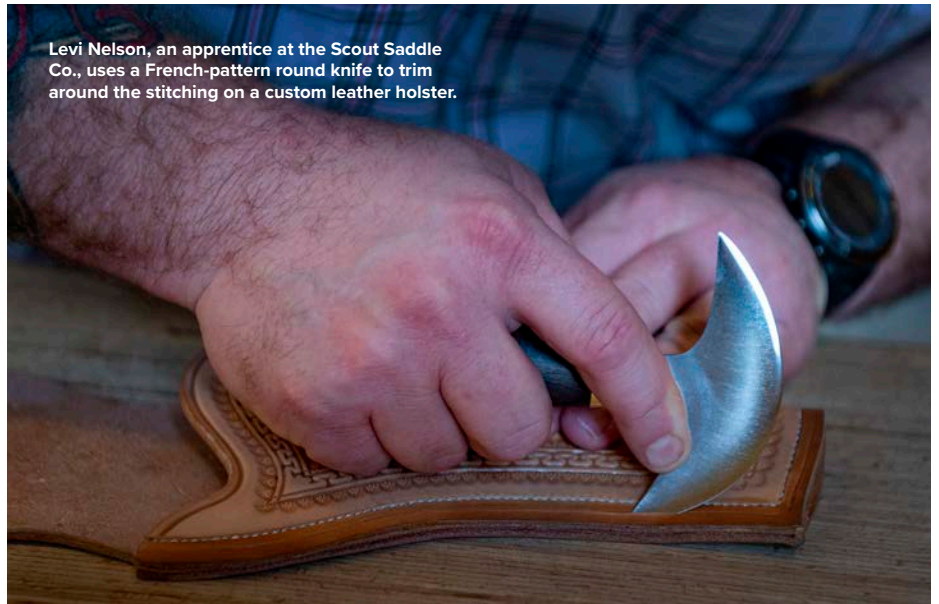
"If you work for someone who isn't demanding, how



together



Mark Barcus and other apprentices at the Scout Saddle Co. use century-old tools like this stitching horse to create unique custom leather saddles by hand.



Levi Nelson, an apprentice at the Scout Saddle Co., uses a French-pattern round knife to trim around the stitching on a custom leather holster.

AND SADDLING UP

do you get better?" Nelson said.

For Seidel, there is no such thing as a trivial detail. You either consider and execute every minute element, or you begin again. He will build the first saddle, explaining the fundamentals, while the apprentices work toward building their own. It's a crucial moment in the learning process, one that will stay with them the rest of their professional lives.

At first, the process was hard for all involved, including Seidel. It is his first teaching assignment outside the confines of his longtime business, Seidel Saddlery, an acclaimed leather goods workshop in downtown Cody. In business, he couldn't take time to let employees grow at a slow pace, pressing hard to get products done right and out the door. Most of those he hired had years of experience.

The process of starting an apprentice program at the

SCOUT SADDLE COMPANY



Scout Saddle Co. instructor Keith Seidel shares insight with his apprentices on how custom leather saddles are made.

TOP: Scout Saddle Co. apprentices Kali Shatto, left, and Levi Nelson, right, work on projects with help from instructor Keith Seidel, middle.

Center has been challenging.

"As far as my curriculum is concerned, the first couple of months were very difficult, very challenging – not only for them, but for me – because I had forgotten how far the basics were down the ladder," Seidel said.

Still, Seidel and his three pupils have pressed forward at a fast pace, despite the apprentices having committed to a program that could last more than 5 years. Seidel's intensity comes from both his decades in business and his passion to ensure the process is respected. Winter hours and fewer off-season visitors at the museum have given Seidel time to escalate his training schedule, he said.

"I'm taking advantage of the quiet, doing a lot more concentrated training," he said. "We have gotten through the fundamentals and everybody has done a really good job of mastering the basics, to the point where now we're ready to move on into much more complex things."

That means finally beginning to build saddles. A fresh tree – the base to any good saddle – now has a prominent spot near Seidel's station. With each piece of leather that he applies, Seidel shares lessons from decades of expert craftsmanship. You don't make a fine saddle in a day, Seidel said. Learning to build a quality saddle takes years.

"There is a tremendous amount of learning yet to come. When we start talking about

saddles, it's a huge subject. Every little piece is really involved. And so I'm trying to break that up a little bit, not overload them," Seidel said. "They won't remember everything on their first saddle, but after a course of 10 to 20 saddles, they'll have eventually figured it all out."

Seidel has made thousands of saddles. Most

“There is a tremendous amount of learning yet to come.

— KEITH SEIDEL

recently, he has been doing highly customized saddles with hundreds of hours of tooling, pieces that are essentially artistic sculptures rather than models for everyday use. But the apprentices will first be making traditional saddles ready for the dusty trail.

Having a master as a mentor isn't the way most saddle-makers learn. Most who enter the business started out of necessity. A piece of tack had worn out and there wasn't enough money or time to replace it or take it to town

for repairs. It's a tough way to learn. Barcus has been working with leather for years. But it wasn't until he was accepted into the apprenticeship program that he has felt confident in a process.

"Previously, I learned by trial and error. Here I actually have somebody that can describe and explain reasons for what he does," he said.

The apprentices weren't just selected for their ability to learn the trade and carry it into the future, but also for their ability to elucidate the process and the importance of quality craftsmanship to visitors to the Center.

"We have no need for an introverted tradesman. It won't work," said Peter Seibert, departing Executive Director and CEO of the Center. "That sort of sounds funny to say, but it's true. I need someone who is both comfortable doing the work and comfortable talking to everyone from a 6-year-old to an 80-year-old. And from a visitor who has never seen a horse in their life to someone who is an experienced rider, and wants desperately to know an arcane detail of saddle construction."

The program has been extremely successful for the Center, Seibert said. So much so that traditional western hand-crafters of all kinds have been contacting him looking for an outlet for their trades. "Calls are kind of coming out of the woodwork from folks who really want to see their trade kept alive. I think that's pretty cool," Seibert said.

There are already plans to add a milliner to the trades displays, but another disappearing art has come to the fore in recent months that seems like a natural fit for the program: gun engraving.

The Center's newly redesigned Cody Firearms Museum could be the perfect fit for what is slowly becoming a lost art. The pandemic has hindered progress on adding new trades, including in finding new donors to support the programs.

"I'm out there in the midst of COVID, which is a bit of a challenge, to see how we can identify donors who could help bring the hat shop or gun engraver into the Center," Seibert said.

Meanwhile, the investment by donors in the Scout Saddle Co. continues to pay dividends.

As the apprenticeship continues, more visitors are perching themselves at the Center's windows to view the world of saddle-making.



It's not just children, eager to learn. People from all walks of life will watch the processes for hours, Nelson said.

"I enjoy talking to people. And that was a big part of this program; trying to educate people. You know, we've talked to people all summer who had never seen anything actually made by hand," he said. "Kids will stand for an hour and watch you make things because they've never seen anybody make anything."

The success of the program isn't just in creating an attraction at the Center, but an attempt to preserve and grow important historical trades and art forms into the future, Seibert said.

As far as moving from selling belts, portfolio covers, and holsters in the Points West Market to eventually adding saddles to the inventory, Seibert is sure there is room in the shop for new product lines.

"I suspect because we've had such interest in the work they're doing already, that they're probably going to have a lot of customer orders that will keep them busy for a long time," he said.



Mark Davis is the outdoors reporter for the Powell Tribune. He has worked previously as a reporter and photojournalist in Chicago and Omaha and enjoys hunting, fishing, birdwatching, and all outdoor sports.



Apprentice Mark Barcus works with a stitcher, a machine built in 1905 and still used for custom leather work.

TOP: Leather belts made by apprentices at the Scout Saddle Co. are on display for sale at Points West Market at the Buffalo Bill Center of the West.

10 BEST WESTERNS



Director John Ford, left, consults with star John Wayne in a color publicity still from *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*.



Jean Arthur, left, and Van Heflin, co-stars in *Shane*, appear in a color publicity still from the film.



Gene Wilder, left, and Cleavon Little star in the satiric 1974 western *Blazing Saddles*.

BY LEVI MEYER

In April of last year, our staff, trustees, advisors, and volunteers ranked a list of more than 85 Western films released from 1930 onward.

For your consideration during the long, dark hours of winter, here are the top 10 of the bunch.

Each film was ranked on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the best. The film with the highest average score was declared the winner.

Because some of the best cowboy stories blur the lines between myth and reality, this list does not consider historical accuracy. It focuses on the most enjoyable Western films, fact or fiction.

Every film on this list is available on at least one of the major streaming platforms. But if you have a chance to safely screen one in your local theater with friends, that's always a great option.

THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE

RELEASED 1962

AVERAGE SCORE 8.32

10 How many times will we see John Wayne and John Ford on this list? *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* is often viewed as one of the best Westerns (and films) of the 1960s.

Pairing John Wayne with Jimmy Stewart and making the conscious decision to shoot in black and white in the infancy of technicolor earned this film a big box office haul and international acclaim. While some critics felt the final act left them wanting, *Liberty Valance* cemented John Ford as one of the best directors. It's a must-watch (or re-watch) for anyone interested in Westerns.

The greatest Western films you can screen at home



Robert Redford, left, and Paul Newman co-star in the blockbuster *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, set in Wyoming.



Sam Elliott, left, and Kurt Russell play brothers Virgil and Wyatt Earp, respectively, in the 1993 hit *Tombstone*.

HIGH NOON

RELEASED 1952
AVERAGE SCORE 8.37

9 There has never been a Western where time means so much — where every minute that goes by cranks up the tension. That's the magic and suspense of *High Noon*. Starring Gary Cooper and including performances by Lloyd Bridges and Grace Kelly, this film asks a simple question: what will happen when four very bad men arrive for revenge at noon?

Strong characters and a simple premise make this film a highly engaging watch. It's hard to look away from the screen the closer you get to noon. *High Noon* might be short at 1 hour 25 minutes, but that's an eternity to go without blinking.

BUTCH CASSIDY & THE SUNDANCE KID

RELEASED 1969
AVERAGE SCORE 8.41

8 To say that this film is based loosely on fact would be an understatement. It's thrilling all the same. With 1899 Wyoming as a beautiful backdrop and the perfect one-two punch of Paul Newman and Robert Redford as the titular characters, *Butch Cassidy and The Sundance Kid* has all the fixings of a great Western.

With a budget of only \$6 million, *Butch Cassidy* grossed more than \$100 million worldwide. It's a film that's best watched on the biggest screen possible. Pop some popcorn, pour yourself a Diet Coke, and settle in for a blockbuster Western experience at home.

BLAZING SADDLES

RELEASED 1974
AVERAGE SCORE 8.66

7 On our 1-to-10 rating scale, *Blazing Saddles* received 10s and 1s. Surprised? This film is known as a comedy classic in some circles and a complete misfire in others. Regardless, it changed how people think about western tropes and stereotypes.

John Wayne almost made an appearance in the film, either as a cameo or the Waco Kid. He read the script and declined. Oh, what could've been.

After nearly three decades of Western films that took themselves seriously, *Blazing Saddles* took the wagon in the opposite direction and created a controversial and memorable commentary on cowboys and the West.



John Wayne stars as Rooster Cogburn in the 1969 film *True Grit*, adapted from the novel by Charles Portis.



Clint Eastwood, left, and Morgan Freeman play reluctant bounty hunters in *Unforgiven*, a gritty and violent 1992 award-winner.

THE SEARCHERS

RELEASED 1956

AVERAGE SCORE 8.81

6 For any other film, landing at #6 on a “best of all time” list would be an honor. But for *The Searchers*, it seems like an unfair spot for what is often considered the greatest Western of all time.

This is, after all, the best Western film from the best Western director (John Ford) starring the best Western actor (John Wayne) filmed by the best Western cinematographer (Winton C. Hoch). It captured the West so perfectly — its ruggedness, beauty, vastness, and unforgiving nature. It’s a Western that transcended the genre completely and entered the canon of masterpiece filmmaking. If you haven’t seen it, watch it.

THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY

RELEASED 1966

AVERAGE SCORE 8.81

5 *The Magnificent Seven* isn’t the only film to borrow from legendary director Akira Kurosawa. Sergio Leone had to fork over 15 percent of his earnings on *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964) for carbon-copying the plot from Kurosawa’s *Yojimbo*. Kurosawa wrote a letter to Leone saying “This is a very fine film. But it is my film.”

Leone released two films in the next two years: *For a Few Dollars More* (1965) and *The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly* (1966). While all three films featured a young Clint Eastwood and paved a path for more stylish, violent, and culturally diverse Westerns, it was the third film of the trilogy that seems to stick with audiences the most.

Is it the clever name of the film that keeps it top of mind? Is it because of Eastwood’s excellent performance? Is it because Leone had refined his craft by the third film? Whatever the reason, *The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly* is very, very good.

UNFORGIVEN

RELEASED 1992

AVERAGE SCORE 8.99

4 I spent my entire childhood growing up in Wyoming. My mom showed me every Western film there was to see over the years — I enjoyed about 10 percent of them. In my teenage years, I would’ve rather watched Transformers. Then my mom showed me *Unforgiven* — a darker, more nuanced take on cowboys, Wyoming, and the West.

That’s when things changed for me. I have since watched 66 of the 85 films that were up for consideration. I have seen all 10 films that make up this top 10 list. I can say, without any doubt, that this is my favorite film on the list.

This is prime Clint Eastwood playing a past-his-prime cowboy. It’s a story about the blurred line between justice and revenge. It’s a story about friendship. It’s a story about how some people change for the better and some people don’t — no matter how much they want to.

There’s a reason that Eastwood picked up Best Picture and Best Director for this film. It has an emotional impact second to none in cinema history.



The Searchers, one of the first films selected by the Library of Congress for preservation in its National Film Registry, features John Wayne as Ethan Edwards.

TRUE GRIT

RELEASED 1969

AVERAGE SCORE 9.01

3 Millennials might prefer Jeff Bridges over John Wayne and the electrifying Hailee Steinfeld over Kim Darby. But this voting consisted of staff members who are primarily 40 and older — it's no surprise that the original (deservingly) wins out here.

There's a case that the Coen Brothers classic of 2010 is an objectively better film. It's more polished and it turns in some generational acting performances. But none of it would've been possible without the original film's charm, acting prowess, and — dare I say — grit.

Whether you're a fan of the old or new version, this is one of the best stories ever told in the Western genre. John Wayne has never been more charismatic.

SHANE

RELEASED 1953

AVERAGE SCORE 9.12

2 We Wyoming folks might be partial to *Shane* with its roots in Wyoming history and its unmistakable Wyoming setting. But that's not what makes this one of the best films — not just Westerns — of all time.

It's stunning. Exciting. Thoughtful. Heartbreaking. There are a number of Westerns that drive folks to tears, but you'll need an entire box of tissues for this one.

TOMBSTONE

RELEASED 1993

AVERAGE SCORE 9.21

1 Is it the best film on this list? Perhaps not. However, there isn't a film on this list (or any list) that offers more in terms of fun, excitement, and adventure. *Tombstone* takes the best things about Westerns over the decades and stuffs them into one movie: the mythic characters and vast landscapes of the '50s, the Leone-esque Spaghetti melodrama of the '60s, and the moral ambiguity and realism of the '70s. Much like Wyatt Earp himself, *Tombstone* is a tough talker with a soft heart. It's thoroughly deserving of the top spot on this list.



Levi Meyer, a Cody, Wyoming, native, is the PR & Marketing Manager at the Buffalo Bill Center of the West. As a former Center tour guide, Levi enjoys connecting people to stories of the American West — especially ones about western pop culture.

In his spare time, Levi markets for local businesses, searches for bears in Yellowstone, and improves his cooking skills.

IN MEMORIAM



HANK COE

Longtime Buffalo Bill Center of the West trustee Henry Huttleston Rogers “Hank” Coe, 74, died on January 21. Local memorial services were held in Cody, Wyoming, at the end of January.

Coe joined the Center’s Board of Trustees in 1980, following in the footsteps of his parents and grandparents, who were all early trustees. He served on the Buffalo Bill Museum Advisory Board since 2013, and was vice-chair of the Board of Trustees from 2011–19. Coe and his family were generous supporters and advocates of the Center for many years.

A Cody native and lifelong resident, Coe was active in community affairs and local and state politics throughout his life. He volunteered as a fireman for 23 years, and was a board member for the Cody Medical Foundation and the Yellowstone Regional Airport Board.

He was a Park County Commissioner for eight years, and served for 32 years in the Wyoming Legislature. He held numerous leadership roles there, including as President of the Wyoming Senate, and focused during his career on areas such as travel, transportation, energy, education, and economic development.

On January 19, 2021, numerous state, federal, and local elected officials joined in designating his birthday, April 29, as “Hank Coe Day” in Park County.

Additional details about Coe’s extraordinary service and contributions to the Center and local community will be included in the next issue of *Points West*.

EIGHT SECONDS ON VIEW IN MAY

Eight Seconds: Cowboys of Color will be on view in the Center of the West’s Anne & Charles Duncan Special Exhibition Gallery from May 7, 2021, to January 7, 2022.

The special photo exhibition focuses on the stories of Black cowboys through the lens of photographer Ivan McClellan, an acclaimed photographer and creator of the Eight Seconds Project. McClellan’s work is well-known for exploring western identities, stereotypes, myths, and other themes.

McClellan, a Kansas City, Kansas, native, was inspired to create the Eight Seconds Project after watching a Black rodeo in Oklahoma. His mission is to show how cowboys and cowgirls are more diverse than many might realize, and to “expand the cowboy icon to include people of color.”

For more information, visit www.eightsecs.com.

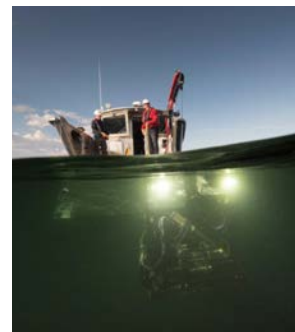
WHAT LIES BENEATH OPENS IN APRIL

What Lies Beneath, a special photo exhibition, will be on view at the Center of the West April 24 – Aug. 8, 2021, and Oct. 2, 2021 – May 1, 2022, in the John Bunker Sands Photography Gallery.

This exhibition documents the scientific expedition known as the Hydrothermal Dynamics of Yellowstone Lake (or HD-YLAKE) project. It features photos by Chris Linder of Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution.

The HD-YLAKE project sought to understand how earthquakes, volcanic processes, and climate affect the hydrothermal system located beneath Yellowstone Lake.

Linder’s photographs explore the present-day landscape, as well as the day-to-day operations of the expedition, including that of Yogi, a remotely operated vehicle used to gather samples and readings in and around vents on the lake floor.



What Lies Beneath: Exploring Yellowstone Lake’s Mysterious Vents | Photographs Courtesy of Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution

’59 CORVETTE FOR RAFFLE



Each year the Buffalo Bill Center of the West offers a classic car in one of its most anticipated and successful fundraisers. This year’s raffle car is a stunner—a beautiful 1959 Corvette convertible with a brilliant red paint job and interior. Additional features include: 283 cubic inch V8 – 250 HP engine, 4-speed manual transmission, and 5-spoke American Racing wheels.

Tickets may be purchased online at tickets.centerofthewest.org, by calling 307-578-4008, or in person at the Center. All proceeds from the Center’s raffles benefit the general operations and programs of the Center of the West. Drawing takes place September 18, 2021.

CODY CULTURE CLUB

Informal gatherings of the Cody Culture Club feature engaging presentations by local experts on topics related to the Center’s mission. If public health guidelines and pandemic conditions allow, sessions run 5:30 – 7:30 p.m., including appetizers and cash bar.

MARCH 11: *History of the Irma Hotel*

Owner Mike Darby shares stories of this historic downtown mainstay, built in 1902 by Buffalo Bill, who named it after his youngest daughter. The hotel is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and was designed by Alfred Wilderman Woods. At the Irma Hotel, 1192 Sheridan Ave.

APRIL 8: *Are We There Yet? The Ecology of Migration*

For thousands of years, wildlife and people have moved seasonally through the Cody area and the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, navigating a diverse landscape and perils along the way. Draper Natural History Museum Curator Nathan Doerr and Assistant Curator Corey Anco explore the history and ecology of life on the move. At the Buffalo Bill Center of the West.



CHILLER THRILLER & BOILER SPOILER

NEH INFRASTRUCTURE CHALLENGE GRANT REQUIRES 3-TO-1 MATCH

Operating Engineer Phil Anthony takes readings from the 30-year-old boiler in the Plains Indian Museum section of the Center. The only remaining steam boiler in the building, it is slated to be replaced with atomizer humidification.



It seems like a lifetime ago, but it was only January 2020 when the Buffalo Bill Center of the West celebrated receiving a \$500,000 Infrastructure and Capacity Building Challenge Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). This was great news! With this grant, we would be able to complete a five-year series of high-priority projects to make us more energy efficient, ensure an ideal environment to protect and preserve priceless collections, and vastly improve both security and access throughout the Center.

But (there's always a "but", isn't there?) ... it's called a challenge grant for a reason. The challenge requires a three-to-one match. That means that, by the end of July 2023, we need to raise \$1.5 million. The good news (there's always "good news" too, isn't there?) ... the generosity of donors exceeded what we needed to raise by the end of July 2020, making more than \$158,000 in NEH funds available to help pay for the security and access upgrades that have now been completed, and for the upcoming installation of a new chiller and cooling tower.

"We're off to a very good start with this multi-year project," Mike Brown, Director of Operations and project director, says. "It hasn't been without a few glitches and frustrations, but our maintenance and IT crew has managed very well, working with our vendors and contractors."

Next on the list and planned for 2021 are installing a new chiller and cooling tower, removing an aging steam boiler, and retrofitting air handlers and humidifiers.

"Maintaining a consistent temperature and humidity level in our entire building is critical for the objects in our collection, as well as for the comfort of visitors and staff," Phil Anthony, Operating Engineer, says. "Our current equipment is beyond its expected life and is getting more and more difficult to maintain. New equipment will be much more energy-efficient as well."

Now our challenge is to raise \$300,000 and certify those gifts before the end of July 2021; \$425,000 by the end of July 2022; and another \$300,000 by the end of July 2023. A different kind of challenge is the 2020 decline in earned revenues – lower admissions and sales – caused by the coronavirus pandemic and the consequent need for increased support from donors to help cover this shortfall in 2020 and into 2021.

"So far, generosity has not flagged, especially when it comes to keeping our doors open to the public, preserving jobs, and protecting our collections," Amy Sullivan, Director of Development, says. "We will be asking for additional support for this challenge in a variety of ways in the coming months. We're confident our donors and members will continue to be generous."

The Environmental Controls and Security Upgrades to Protect the Collection project has been made possible in part by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities: Exploring the human endeavor.

the CHANGING FACE OF THE WEST



BY PETER SEIBERT



There is an old adage among historians that two things never change: museums and cemeteries. While I agree that one will probably never see an active cemetery being redeveloped, museums are another matter.

We can agree on historical and scientific facts. But how they are put together and interpreted is open for debate, discussion, and evaluation. And so, museums are constantly evolving to reflect changing interpretations, discoveries of new facts, and the desires of our audience.

For me, history is about the study of identity, rather than the simplified belief that “history always repeats itself.” We all are a product—intellectually and literally—of those who came before us. Our views and beliefs are colored not only by the present, but also by events reaching back over centuries.

Western rugged individualism did not

begin in Wyoming, but rather can be traced to the backcountry of Virginia and Pennsylvania, and before that to the borders of Scotland. Our embrace of rugged individualism probably owes more to John Knox than John Wayne.

The West, as an American idea, is as old as the Pilgrims. John Winthrop’s City on the Hill sermon of the 17th century physically defined the frontier as the East coast. It noted that in that wilderness, a new world—and a new city—would be built. And upon that city, the eyes of the world would gaze.

That look to the frontier begins, in a literary sense, at that moment, and extends forward to Nathaniel Hawthorne, Brett Harte, and Mark Twain. And while there was a desire to tame the frontier, there was also a rebuttal by authors like Helen Hunt Jackson, who highlighted Indigenous Peoples as victims of that expansion.

For the last 400 years, the idea of the western frontier became ever more deeply

ingrained in the American psyche. Though some feared the closing of the frontier would mark the decline of America, that prediction never came true.

The concept of the western frontier has shifted and changed for every generation. The West of Twain or Buffalo Bill is different than the West of John Wayne and Louis L’Amour. None is right or wrong, better or worse—only products of each generation. Some linger (like Twain) and others (like dime store novels) are fleeting. I would argue the West of the 21st century is Lil Nas X’s *Old Town Road* and the popular TV shows *Longmire* or *Yellowstone*.

All of these popular cultural images of the West share historical roots and values streaming forward from Winthrop to Whitman to Frost and beyond. The ideas of the West and frontier are fascinating to study, and arguably at the root of what we do at the Buffalo Bill Center of the West. It is a changing and evolving perspective that requires us to extend our minds as we consider what it all means.

- 1) John Wayne appeared in more than 150 films and starred in dozens of Westerns from the 1930s through the 1970s.
- 2) Kevin Costner stars as rancher John Dutton in *Yellowstone*, a dramatic TV series set in Montana's Paradise Valley.
- 3) Helen Hunt Jackson was a writer and activist who was critical of state and federal policies relating to Indigenous Peoples.
- 4) Hispanic beet farmer Ted Vigil, right, and son, Danny Vigil have also raised alfalfa, beans, and cattle in Worland, Wyoming. (Points West photo by Ruffin Prevost.)
- 5) *Old Town Road* by Li'l Nas X holds the record for the longest run, 19 weeks, atop Billboard Magazine's list of Hot 100 songs.
- 6) While William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody remains a legendary historic figure, his legacy will continue to be re-assessed by future generations.
- 7) Nellie Tayloe Ross was governor of Wyoming from 1925 to 1927, and the first woman to serve as governor of a U.S. state. She was director of the United States Mint from 1933 to 1953.



Changing perspectives on Buffalo Bill show this. Like all pop culture icons, Buffalo Bill has been interpreted differently over the decades since his passing. While his luster may have dulled with time, his name is still used—as it was by Donald Trump last year—to evoke an image of the rugged, independent thinker of the West.

Speaking July 3 from Mount Rushmore, Trump gave a perfect example of what historians describe as looking for a “useable past”—seeking events from history to justify and provide identity to our world today.

“We are the country of Andrew Jackson, Ulysses S. Grant, and Frederick Douglass. We are the land of Wild Bill Hickock and Buffalo Bill Cody,” Trump said, listing several more American icons before adding that “only America could have produced them all.”

Museums hold a unique place in the American psyche. People believe what we say because we devote our energy and resources to ensuring it is based on historical accuracy. At Colonial Williamsburg, people suspend their “presentism” to experience a

taste of the authentic 18th century. Here at the Center, the Scout Saddle Co. brings visitors into the world of small hand-production shops from the 1930s. There is no stepping behind the curtain and bringing out the finished product, like a TV cooking show. Here, everything is done in front of you, so you can accept and trust what you are seeing is real.

As the Center considers future exhibitions and programs, it must do so in terms of the accuracy of history and science. But we also should focus on a useable past predicated upon the rich patchwork that is the story of the American West. The idea of America as a “melting pot” presented us as a people of many histories and events that were distilled into a homogenized idea of “Americans.” An interesting social theory in its day, but one that completely failed to capture the distinctive threads of ethnicity, gender, and sexuality that are the essence of America. A better model is that our identity is more

like a patchwork quilt. We have common elements, but we also bring unique identities based upon our personal and cultural histories that provide diversity and vitality.

The West has always been a richly diverse patchwork. It was settled by those seeking independence from interference, as well as those who brought a pragmatic need and moral understanding to work together.

We embrace Butch and Sundance, as well as being proud of our state's role in the suffrage movement. We are a state that for decades has brought sugar beets to market with Hispanic laborers who have not always been treated as valued members of our communities. Cody is a town that was built by the hard work and organizational skills of the Mormon community. Wyoming is a place where free Blacks following the Civil War could find a place to start anew.

Those stories, and many more, are rich and wonderful. And most importantly, they show how we continue to build that city upon a hill, where the eyes of the world look upon our achievements.

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