

Buckskin Bulletin

VOL. XLIV

NEWSLETTER OF WESTERNERS INTERNATIONAL
www.westerners-international.org

ISSUE 2, 2011

Omaha Westerners Honor Nebraska Pioneer

By Paul L. Hedren

At a winter meeting in its 2010-11 season, the **Omaha Westerners** heard the colorful story of Per-simmon Bill Chambers, a notorious Wyoming outlaw who spewed mayhem on the Cheyenne-Custer City Road during the earliest years of the Black Hills gold rush.

One of Chambers' luckless victims was H.E. "Stuttering" Brown, a division superintendent of the Cheyenne-Black Hills State Company, who was gunned down north of the Hat Creek Station in Wyoming. Gut shot, his death was gruesome. The stage company promptly returned Brown's body to Omaha for burial, and on April 28, 1876, with wife Mattie and daughter Lizzie at hand, a Methodist minister read the burial rite as the

casket was interred in the Brown Plot in Omaha's stately Prospect Hill Cemetery. For some, that was the end of it for Stuttering Brown, but not for the Omaha Westerners.

Despite leaving his widow "in comfortable circumstances," or so reported the *Omaha Daily Bee*, and in light of Brown's considerable pioneer legacy, Widow Brown did not mark her husband's grave. Mattie and her daughter and son then lived in Salt Lake City and likely now only regarded Omaha as a sorrowful memory.

A simple suggestion at the Corral meeting that evening, that the Westerners "ought to make this right" elicited a boisterous response and a charge to several members to procure a monument for Brown's lonely grave. The



It took 135 years to get a stone for Brown. (Photos by Paul L. Hedren)

campaign was completed in early June 2011 when Omaha's Bloom Monument Company located the grave and set the stone.

Brown was, indeed, a heralded Nebraska and Wyoming pioneer. Remembered as a partner in the operation of a gambling den and pawnshop in early Omaha, as a substantial property owner in that city, as a freighter on the overland trail and for Union Pacific during the construction of the first trans-continental railroad and, at the time of his death, as a division superintendent for the new Cheyenne-Black Hills State Mail and Express Company responsible for operations north of Fort Laramie. A contemporary remembered Brown as one of the "bravest and best men on the frontier." Oh yes, H. E. Brown did stutter, an impediment that variously embarrassed and humored him. History books remember him only as "Stuttering Brown." Now, thanks to the Omaha Westerners, history also records his grave.



Employees of the Bloom Monument Company, Omaha, Nebraska, set the stone for H.E. "Stuttering" Brown in Prospect Hill Cemetery.

From the WI President

It has been a while since we have traveled but, how could we stay away from the Black Hills of South Dakota any longer? After all, this is where **Leland Case**, Westerners co-founder was and developed a love affair with this area. Shirley and I have, too.

In 1994 **Jarvis Harriman** of the **Tucson Corral** wrote a biography of Case, published by WI, called "**The Man from the Hills.**" We saw this part of our nation five visits ago and it is so full of beauty and history we had to return again in June of this year. We stayed in the only time-share in South Dakota and at its high elevation woke up to five inches of snow! As we drove down the mountain it turned into rain.

We drove through Deadwood to Lead to Spearfish to re-visit the High Plains Western Heritage Center and met **Peggy Ables**, Executive Director, who had been a Westerner when she lived in Belle Fourche, SD, and hopefully will establish a new corral. We went back to this center because it is full of history.

We returned to the Spearfish Canyon Savoy for our usual trout lunch. We always take the dirt road that follows the stream for a mile or so remembering the "Dances with Wolves" scene—"You will always be my friend."

Rapid City offers a Wildlife park, Prairie Edge (art of the Lakota), City of Presidents walking tour and many interesting and unusual restaurants and museums. The Badlands National Park is on the way, Deadwood is the Cemetery where Wild Bill Hickok and Calamity Jane are buried, there is the #10 Saloon where Hickok was shot, "TaTankon (story of the bison) by Kevin Costner, and lots of casinos that since November 1, 1989 when gambling was legalized, have created an economic transformation nothing short of astounding.

We took the back dirt roads from Lead to Hill City hoping to see wildlife but just saw beautiful countryside. Hill City is like an artist colony and loaded with friendly people.

Dan was sitting on a sidewalk bench talking to a friend when we struck up a conversation. He took us a half a block up the street to his Desperados Cowboy Restaurant, the oldest log cabin commercial building still in existence. Breakfast was over, too early for lunch but just the right timing for a friendly visit and chat.

We had seen Keystone, home of Mount Rushmore and Custer on past visits but we stopped by the visitor's center to chat and who should happen by but **George Armstrong Custer** in his uniform. He made himself available for a picture with us. Then we headed for Custer State Park where we saw antelope, prairie dogs, bison and lots of deer. On previous visits I had seen a mountain lion, big horn sheep and Rocky Mountain goats.

Lunch at Blue Bell Lodge in Custer State Park was another fresh trout meal. Our little waitress asked if she could get anything else and when I requested dancing girls she giggled all the way to the kitchen and then we heard a loud bunch of giggles.

Next day we drove down to Hot Springs and met Sheriff and WI Vice president **Bernice Landers** of the **Jedediah Smith Corral** and several of her members including **Laura Batchelor**, **Gladys Reed**, **Carol Sides**, **Charlie Reynor** and **Harold Wyatt**. A newspaper reporter, Curt Nettinga of the *Hot Springs Star* was there to interview me. After that we had lunch and talked about Westerners and Gladys told us about Badger Clark, Poet Laureate of South Dakota, whom she had known.

Bernice Landers is a unique person. Not only does she own a ranch, ride horses, write poetry and has been Corral sheriff for many many years; she was invited to and attended the Wild Horse Sanctuary to watch the Sioux Indians do their ceremonial Sun Dance. A rare honor indeed. This is the ritual where the men pierce their bodies and hang by ropes from a tree. It is their tradition to give back to the land (as seen in the movie "A Man Called Horse").

Drove through Custer State Park again then back to the time-share. Wall Drug for breakfast, lunch in Sioux Falls, saw flooding around Omaha and Council Bluffs. Then back to Lee's Summit and on home to Fort Smith.

Riding for the Brand *David L. Carter*

Prescott Corral Co-Sponsors Event

The **Prescott Corral** was co-sponsor the the Eighth Annual Western History Symposium with the **Sharlot Hall Museum**. The free event was held August 6 at the museum.

Fred Veil of the corral is the originator and ramrod of the annual event in association with **John Langolier**, Museum Director.

As always there were a number of interesting speakers and topics. Included were "Life and War on the Edge of the Spanish Frontier" by **Richard Collins**; "Cora Viola Slaughter: Southern Arizona Ranch Woman" by WI Past President **Reba Wells Grandrud** and "Arizona's Famous Army Belle: Carrie Wilkins and Her Lovelorn Suitors" by **Thomas P. Collins** and **Karen Churchill** and "Batter Up: Arizona Women's Softball Teams" by **Mary Melcher**.

WHA Meeting Plans Are Set

Each October the Western History Association holds its annual meeting and **Westerners International** is a part of the conference. This year the event will be October 13 through 16 (Thursday through Sunday) at the Oakland Marriott City Center, Oakland, California.

Thanks to WI Executive Board members **Melvena Heisch** and **Don Reeves** this year WI's participation at WHA will be Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning, making it more convenient for WI members who might like to attend some of the conference but not all of it.

Saturday, October 15, from 2 until 3:30 p.m. will be the **WI Session**, arranged by Heisch and Reeves. "Building Tranquility Base on the Moon: Foundations in the Western United States" will be presented by **Lisa Westwood**, Registered Professional Archaeologist with over 15 years of cultural resource management, contract archaeology, museum curation and teaching experience in northern and central California, southern Utah, New Mexico and the Midwest. She is a member of the Apollo 11 Preservation Task Force, a four-person volunteer committee of preservation professionals working toward designation of Tranquility Base on the moon as a World Heritage site.

The **WI Board Meeting** will be from 4 to 5:30 p.m. Saturday. All Westerners are welcome to attend but board members attending the conference are urged to put this on their schedule so there will be a quorum present.

The annual **WI Breakfast, Awards Presentation and Book Auction** will be Sunday from 7 until 8 a.m. For locations of these events, stop by the WI Booth in the Exhibit Hall for information.

To learn more about the WHA Conference or to register go to www.westernhistoryassociation.org



WI Bola Ties are finally available again (Photo by Jim Argo)

Good News from WI Board

Many members new to Westerners may not be aware that the **Home Ranch** has a selection of items available for sale and at "friendly prices." The good news is the prices may soon be even more "friendly."

At the recent **WI Summer Board Meeting**, held in July at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City, members voted to re-price these items as closely as possible to the actual cost of having them made, allowing a little extra to cover shipping costs, as a service to our members. This is going to be possible, in part, because of the increase in dues and the timely manner in which the Corrals and Posses are sending them in.

Board member **Leon Nelson** has volunteered to research the prices we pay for the pins, paperweights, bola ties, book plates, wood speaker's gifts and other items. Then a new price list will be approved and posted on the WI Web Site:

www.westerners-international.org and printed in the bulletin. Some items are already priced close to actual cost but those that are not will change.

As always, membership cards and WI brochures are free.

Another benefit voted on was to again do our fourth *Buckskin Bulletin* each year in a printed version to mail out rather than as a WI Website only issue as it has been the past two years.

So a great big **Thank You** to our Corrals and Posses for sending in the yearly dues (\$5 per member). This helps the Home Ranch be of better service to the entire membership.

Wind River Conference

The 19th Annual Wind River History Conference will be held September 22–24 at the Surbeck Center on the campus of the South Dakota School of Mines & Technology in Rapid City. Theme this year is "Lowdowns and Showdowns — Western Events & Happenings."

The Bob Lee Award, named for South Dakota historian, journalist and Westerner, honors the best paper on frontier military history.

The collected papers of the conference are published annually in a permanent bound volume available to institutions and others.

More information about the conference is available at wrhc@shebbyleets.com or by writing to PO Box 9276, Rapid City, SD 57709.

WI Summer Board Meeting



The WI Summer Board Meeting attracted 29 people July 16 to the dinner and meeting at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum. **Mary Marvel**, assistant treasurer, above, gives the financial report while Chairman **Kent McInnis** waits in the background for his turn. **Dennis** and **Sandra Noble** and **Ann Marshall** are pictured above right. **Don Reeves**, secretary, lower left photo, takes the minutes. To his right are **David Carter**, International President, his wife, **Shirley**, and **Cheryl McInnis**. In the lower right photo are **Melvena** and **John Heisch** and bulletin editor **Burnis Argo**. The minutes of this meeting as well as other board meetings are now being posted on the WI Website: <http://www.westerners-international.org> (Photos by Jim Argo)



By Richard Dillon

Oddly, it was a gentleman, not one of "the gentler sex," who struck a blow for Women's History in its infancy. **Kenneth Holmes** edited an 11-volume series for Robert Clark's **Arthur E. Clark Co.**, Covered Wagon Women, starting in 1983.

We now have Covered Wagon Women, Volume II, (19.95) from the **University of Oklahoma Press**. This is a careful selection of the best of the first-person Overland Trail accounts, with a focus on the 1850s, from the female viewpoint. Those selected were all written by young women, girls.

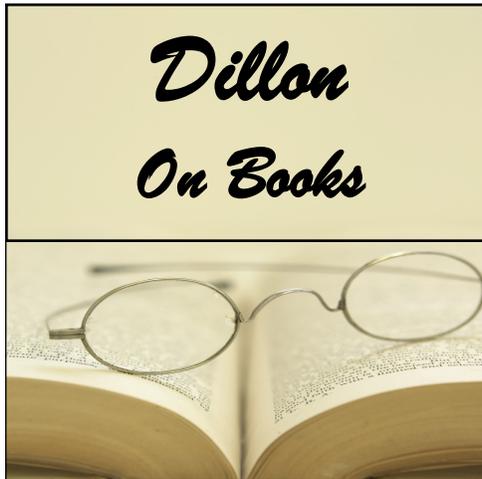
The adventure of a lifetime in the mid-19th Century was the arduous crossing of plains and mountains to golden California.

Of great importance here are Holmes's original annotation because virtually all of the young ladies, save the Donner Party's Tamsen Donner and Virginia Reed, were little-known, practically anonymous. This is excellent grassroots history.

Tungsten is, of course, a mineral (a metallic chemical element), but it is also a place, a Nevada mining camp. **Ronald H. Limbaugh** tells the story of tungsten, necessary for hardening steel alloys, in Tungsten In Peace and War (**University of Nevada Press**, \$44.95).

Precious metals gold and silver have been much written about (perhaps too much?), but this is the first full book on this rare heavy metal with the highest melting point of any metallic element. Also called wolfram and wolframite, it became very important during World Wars I and II.

"Raw" tungsten is not found in nature, as is. Tungsten is produced by refining wolframite and scheelite. Most sources of



these "parent" minerals are in our West. Limbaugh has his focus on Nevada as a key supplier, with attention paid to Charles E. Segestrom.

California Rocks!, by **Katherine J. Baylor**, from the **Mountain Press** (\$16), is a guide to geological sites in California. Ms. Baylor singles out 65 key sites for attention.

The eastern Sierra Nevada is particularly rich in rocks, including the ghost mining camp of Bodie (gold and silver); Mono Lake's tufa formations and nearby volcanic craters, Devil's Postpile and Convict Lake.

But volcanic rocks are common in California, from Tule Lake's Modoc Lave Beds to the natural traps of saber-toothed cats in the Los Angeles La Brea Tarpits.

A great curiosity is the rock called tafoni, a sandstone that is pitted like Swiss cheese, and is found both on the coast and inland. It is, of course, the result of erosion, but not just ordinary weathering. It takes the acidic rain to dissolve its calcium carbonate cement.

Interesting also are sea caves, caused by wave erosion, and lava tubes. A real oddity is the shortest mountain range in America, the Sutter buttes which have (literally) erupted in the pool-table flat Sacramento Valley.

The title of a new true crime book, California Justice by **David Kulzik** from **Quail Driver Books** in Sanger, California, may be ironic. For the posses and pursuits, the shootouts, the hangings and lynchings involved in the story of California justice were not always justified.

Kulzik's well-told (but awfully brief) chapters trace the underbelly of our system of law and order, starting with the Squatter Riots of 1850 in Sacramento where both the Mayor and the Sheriff were killed. Some cases involved vigilantism, which Californians invented, to their disgrace. One affair at Little Lake, now Ukiah, was a genuine family feud, the Frosts versus the Coates clan. The best-known of the badmen in this book are Sontag (John) and Evans (Chris), who went to war against the hated Southern Pacific Railroad monopoly.

No one since the late Professor Herbert E. Bolton has done more to keep Borderlands studies alive than the recently deceased **David J. Weber**. Recently released is his book The Spanish Frontier In North America: The Brief Edition (\$20, **Yale University Press**).

This is a condensation of Weber's 1992 award-winning study of Spain's 300-year tenure in America, especially the area north of Mexico. This is a very readable narrative of the Spanish presence in early Florida, Louisiana, Texas, New Mexico and California.

The original notes and bibliography have been deleted in this concise edition, but Weber has appended a post-1992 bibliography. The text remains well-illustrated, and there are excellent maps to facilitate understanding the story of Spain in the New World.

Corral

"Doctors in the Wilderness" was the topic of the program at the May meeting of the **Boulder Corral**. Speaker was **Bruce C. Paton, M.D.**, who told the group how the early explorers of the West coped with hunger, starvation, searing heat, disease and injuries through the course of their journeys. Dr. Paton is a retired cardiac surgeon and wilderness medicine expert having accompanied expeditions as a trip doctor to Alaska, South America, Africa and Nepal. He is also a published historian with many texts, articles and books to his credit.

The **Pine Ridge Corral**, Chadron, Nebraska, met in May for a program about basket weaving by **Mary Frances Waldron**.

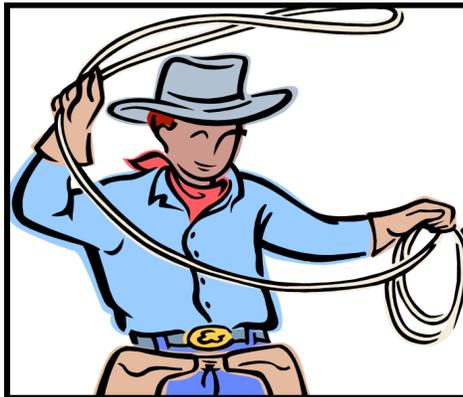
Members of the **Pahaska Corral**, Cody, Wyoming, are always advised to bring a pocket full of quarters to meetings if they plan to wear their "city duds" or "plan to cuss!"

In May **Paul Fees**, a founding member of the group presented a program titled "Chief Joseph, Buffalo Bill, and the Power of Myth."

The **Denver Posse** held an "Author's Night" in April at which any members who were book authors were able to bring a supply along to sell.

Program topic for the evening was "Rival Rails" by **Walter R. Borneman** about the battles to control the heavily contested transportation corridors of the American Southwest and to build the greatest transcontinental route through them.

The **South Canadian Cross-Timbers Corral**, Norman, Okla-



homa, met in April for a program "Mexicans in the Wild West: Bullfighters, Bronc Riders and Trick Ropers." Speaker was **Gary Moreno**, a Ph.D student at the University of Oklahoma.

"**Goodbye, God: We are going to Bodie...**" was the title of the program given by **Ken Cilch, Sr.**, at the July meeting of the **San Diego Corral**. Cilch, said to be the "resident gold mine buff" for the group showed his collection of color slides of the hereto unseen section of the storied gold camp of Bodie that today, as a California state park, remains largely off limits to the public.

The title of the program was taken from the reputed bedtime prayer of a little San Jose 3-year-old after she learned her family was moving to the mining town.

Last Chance Gulch Corral, Helena, Montana, met in April to hear a talk by **Jon Axline** on "Montana Port of Entry Stations, 1936-1957" and in May listened to **Margaret Hollow** share the history of "The 1890s Fort-nightly Club"—the first book club in Helena.

In June the **San Francisco Corral** met for a talk with slides by **Ray Wille** and **John Schmale**. Title of the program was "The Ocean Shore Railroad, the Line That Couldn't Make Ends Meet." The two railway historians traced

Roundup

the history of this "hard-luck railroad" which originally was intended to be built from San Francisco to Santa Cruz along the Coast. In 1905 construction began at both ends but was never completed, due in large part to the 1906 earthquake.

Matthew Grow gave the program at the March meeting of the **Utah Westerners**. Title was "Thomas L. Kane and the Utah War." Kane was a 19th century social reformer who befriended and defended Mormons from 1846 until his death in 1883 and "most dramatically shaped Utah and Western history through his intervention in the 1857-58 Utah War.

From the Editor

Once again—**Your Editor** has a request. If it is possible could the name of your group (or at least a good clue) be included somewhere in meeting notices? Sometimes a meeting place or information about a speaker will give a hint as to who is getting together. However, your editor still can't figure out who was holding the **Spring Buffalo Barbecue** at the **Boillot** home in **Hallsville**—the state also being a secret.

It probably would have been possible to tell from the envelope the notice came in but the paper trail at the Home Ranch is large so we try to eliminate envelopes if possible when they arrive. So maybe this is all our fault but like the rest of you we are getting older and need as much help as possible. Thanks in advance and we are sure the buffalo barbecue was a great success. We saw there was good fishing there, too, in the Boillot's pond.

Burnie G. Argo

Trailing The West

With the coming of autumn, and hopefully cooler weather, thoughts often turn to a trip of some kind. Here are a couple of possibilities from Shebby Lee Tours. **Shebby Lee** is a Westerner herself so many of the trips her company offers are of special interest to those who enjoy and study the history of the Western United States.

Custer State Park Buffalo Roundup is scheduled September 24 to 19.

States the information "Ever since park rangers started rounding up some 1,500 head of buffalo each fall for the annual branding, sorting and vaccinating, visitors have been fascinated by this Old West Tradition."

This tour goes in and out of Rapid City, SD and includes a chuck wagon Buffalo cookout, arts festival, buffalo wallow chili cook-off, cowboy poets, musical entertainment, buffalo chip throwing contest and much more.

Another possibility is **Bleeding Kansas: Where the Civil War Began** October 15 to the 22.

This tour "explores the issues that threatened the delicate balance of America's 'peculiar institution', when free-soilers fought to enter the union as a free state and pro-slavers sought to extend slavery into the territories." Historians and re-enactors will join this tour to lend insights into the places on the border between Kansas and Missouri where the Missouri Compromise came unraveled, and the seeds of civil war took root." This tour begins and ends at Kansas City.

For more information about these tours and many others, write Shebby Lee Tours, PO Box 1032, Rapid City, SD 57709 or visit the website: www.shebbyleetours.com.

Special Events are Held

Each spring and summer many of our Corrals and Posses hold special events. Something a little different from the usual "meet, eat and enjoy a program."

In June the **Los Angeles Westerners** invited the **Huntington Westerners** to join them for their annual "Fandango" held in Northridge, at the home of **Gary** and **Vicki Turner**. Included was a dinner, book sale and auction as well as Marachi music for entertainment and a tour of the hosts Western American Art and Artifacts collection.

Members of the **Prescott Corral** held their Annual Bar-B-Que/Picnic in June at Thumb Butte Picnic Area in the Prescott Forest. **Roland Michaelis** gave a short history of the Arizona Old Time Fiddlers. He is a member of the Mile High Chapter of the fiddlers group.

The **Chisholm Trail Corral** in Oklahoma City invited members and guests of the other two Oklahoma groups, **Indian Territory Posse** and **South Canadian Cross-Timbers Corral**, and the **Fort Smith Corral** to join them in May at their annual Chuck Wagon Cookout at the home of **Will** and **Vi Jones**. Current sheriff of the host corral, **Susan Rushing** and her husband **Trammel**, a past sheriff, have two authentic chuck wagons which they use in chuck wagon cooking competitions.

The annual May outing of the **San Francisco Westerners** was at Crissy Field where the group enjoyed the Aviation Walk and learned about the site's history as an airfield, drill ground for the Buffalo Soldiers, a Grand Prix racetrack and the site of an Intelligence School.

Annual "Fandango" of the **San Dimas Corral**, was in early August at the home of **Winnie Robertson**. The event featured a Taco Stand where the guests could assemble their favorite beef, chicken or pork taco.

Fort Abraham Lincoln Corral, Bismarck-Mandan, ND, took a road trip to Almont and Sims in July. Following a meal at the Muddy Creek Bar in Almont, **Donna** and **Joel Johnson** led the group to Sims to tour the historic Sims Lutheran Church and parsonage.

(Editor's Note: if your group has a special activity let us know about it and be sure to take a few pictures we can use on the web site and in the bulletin.)

BUCKSKIN BULLETIN

Issued quarterly by Westerners International, a Foundation to stimulate interest and research in frontier history. Send correspondence to:

Westerners International
c/o National Cowboy & Western
Heritage Museum
1700 NE 63rd St.
Oklahoma City, OK 73111
Phone: 1-800-541-4650
E-mail
WIHomeRanch@gmail.com
Annual Dues
\$5 per member

WI Home Ranch Bunch
Kent McInnis, David Carter,
Don Reeves, John Marshall,
Leon Nelson, Bill Deupree,
Mary Marvel, Cheryl McInnis,
Noel Kruger, Shirley Carter,
Fred Marvel, Jim Argo, John &
Melvena Heisch, Dennis & Sandra Noble, Jerry Burson, Ed Kelsay, Rodney Goddard, Burnis Argo.

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Permit No. 891

Westerners Like to Have Fun

If your travels take you through Nebraska, especially around the North Platte area,

be sure to be on the look-out for a couple of pretty famous guys, Buffalo Bill Cody and

friend Chief Porcupine Jaw (sometimes known as **Bruce Richman** and **John Freitas**.)



These two, Sheriff and Deputy of the **Buffalo Bill Corral**, like to appear in costume at various events in the North Platte area and according to the corral historian, **Vicki Lacey-Freitas**, who took this picture, the two have a lot of fun with their portrayals.

This particular day they were greeting people at an I-80 truck stop in Hershey which was having an open house for a restaurant which was advertising a new menu.

So keep your eyes open if you are in Nebraska as you might have a chance to have your picture taken with two well-known folks.