



Published for members of the Wyoming Historical Society

Jan-Feb 2023

Volume 70, Number 1

Heard on the Historical Trail



Orders can be placed now for the 2023 *Calendar of Wyoming History*. Calendars are available at bookstores and museums around the state. To place your order email linda@wyshs.org or call 307-322-3014,

The **Weston County Historical Society** celebrated Wyoming Day (December 10th) with a presentation about the history of church music and the women who played the music. The chapter's annual meeting will be held January 15th at 12:30 p.m. Guests will hear about WWII Patriot Herbert Peck. For details call 307-746-2113.

The 2023 Awards Manual will be available in mid-January, with nominations due the end of April. Special thanks to Awards Committee member **Bob Townsend** for volunteering to update the manual with a fine-tooth comb. Start thinking about who you're going to nominate now. This is a time to celebrate our history, and to recognize those who preserve our history. *(Continued on page 3)*

In Celebration of Black History Month

EMANCIPATION DAY AT CHEYENNE'S ALLEN CHAPEL AME CHURCH

by Brigida Blasi, Public History Educator, American Heritage Center

You've probably heard of Juneteenth, but have you ever heard of Emancipation Day? Emancipation Day has been celebrated on different dates in the U.S. since the Emancipation Proclamation was signed by President Abraham Lincoln in 1862. The tradition of Watch Night is still sometimes celebrated in Black churches on December 31st to commemorate the night that abolitionists waited up for word of whether Lincoln had signed the proclamation. For many, continuing to celebrate Watch Night and Emancipation Day on January 1st was also a way to commemorate another new year of freedom each. As you have probably noticed, January 1st coincides with another big holiday, so other dates were also used over the years but the federal government now officially recognizes Emancipation Day on April 16th, the day Lincoln signed the Compensated Emancipation Act. Juneteenth is an iteration Emancipation Day, first celebrated in 1865 and now widely recognized in the U.S., which commemorates the day enslaved people in Texas were notified of their freedom two and a half years after it had been signed into law.

At Cheyenne's Allen Chapel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church in the 1960s, Emancipation Day was recognized in January. The Allen Chapel AME is the oldest Black church in Wyoming. It was founded in 1878 by Reverend Whitlock and continues to operate more than 140 years later.

In January of 1969, congregation member Casper Leroy Jordan included a multi-part history of Emancipation titled "Our African Methodist Heritage" in the church service packet. Jordan gave special emphasis to the role of various church leaders played in convincing Lincoln to sign the Emancipation Proclamation, like that of AME bishop Daniel Alexander Payne. Meeting with Lincoln just days before he signed, the "ascetic prelate knew the evils of slavery, and sought, along with other communicats (sic) of his church to persuade the President to free the black man." *(Continued page 6)*

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**From the
 President. . .**

Dear Friends,
 The New Year is always a good time to re-focus our attention on important projects and activities. With that in mind, I want to update you on some things the Executive Committee has been working on. As recommended at the recent annual meeting, the Executive Committee consulted with the Oversight and Management Committee to name **Linda Fabian** the Society's Executive Director. Linda has always taken on a lot of that responsibility anyway, and is extremely qualified and proven apt to serve as the director.

The Executive Committee is also hoping to hire a part-time office assistant to help with the day-to-day administrative duties. This will allow Linda more time to focus on pressing issues such as chapter growth and support, coordinating strategic planning, and fund raising for special projects. Funding for the part-time position is available through next fall, and at that point, we will evaluate the fiscal feasibility of the Society being able to continue supporting this position. Hopefully, the new structure will help kick-start a lot of the work recommended by the Membership Task Force and the upcoming strategic planning session scheduled for March 18th in Casper. More details to follow about that.

Work continues on our two websites, Wyoming Historical Society and WyoHistory.org. Our webmaster, WHS member **Steve Foster**, is working hard to upgrade the sites from Drupal 7 to Drupal 10. In addition to a fresh new look, emphasis is being placed on how the websites can be used to help support the chapters and members.

A new State History Day Coordinator has been hired. **Bryce Mittelstadt** is a social studies instructor at Casper Kelly Walsh High School. We are excited to have him serve as state coordinator because he is familiar with the program through his participation in History Day as a student, judge, and teacher. The Society has provided support to History Day since the very first contest that Wyoming students participated in on a national level – that was 1980, and **Dr. David Kathka** was the coordinator! History Day is our primary outreach for supporting students researching history. I look forward to working with Bryce as he begins coordinating the contest with **Brie Blasi** from the American Heritage Center at the University of Wyoming. This year's theme is *Frontiers in History: People, Places, Ideas*. Bryce will be looking for judges for the state competition scheduled for May 1st in Laramie. For details visit <https://www.wyominghistoryday.org> or contact Bryce via email at whd@uwyo.edu.

Jeremy Johnston, Mike Jording and Heidi McCullough have graciously volunteered to work with Linda to reach out to the chapters for suggestions about standardizing dues. At this point we have received some feedback but hope you will send us your comments about this idea. Email linda@wyshs.org for more information.

February is Black History Month. I encourage you to take a moment to research Wyoming's Black communities' history. WyoHistory.org's blog titled, Wyoming's Black Past (<https://www.wyohistory.org/blog/wyomings-black-past>) provides links to some great, informative articles.

We have had a busy and productive year. It feels like this column serves a dual purpose: summarizes our progress and our “to do/working on list.” It fits with the New Year season. Happy New Year!

Cindy

(Heard on the Historical Trail continued from page 1)

The Wyoming Military Department is publishing a two-volume, full-color coffee table style book describing the colorful history of the Wyoming National Guard. Several WSHS members are involved in the project including **Bev Holmes, Rosalind Schliske and Larry Barttelbort**. Larry asked that if you have a memory of your loved one that served (or serves) in the guard to please contact him via email at [wyobartt@gmail.com](mailto:wyoartt@gmail.com). To find out more about the book, including about how you can make a contribution visit <https://wynghistory.org>.

The Wyoming State Museum will resume its speakers series on January 12, 2023 at 7 p.m. Renee Slider, cultural resources specialist, will talk about the Wyoming Territorial Prison. For more details email **Sara Davis** at sara.davis@wyo.gov.

WHS member and chair of the Society's oral history committee **Janelle Molony**, along with past president **Leslie Waggener**, continue their work to develop the Women of Wyoming oral history project. If you are interested in participating, or know of a Wyoming woman that should be featured, please email janelle.molony@yahoo.com.

After the holidays most chapters will renew their public programming opportunities. **The Laramie County Chapter** will host a meeting at the Laramie County Library on January 15th when guest speaker Heyward Schrock will talk about two Civil War soldiers stationed in Wyoming with the 11th Ohio Volunteer Cavalry from 1862-1865. For details contact **Jack Mueller** at 307-632-9717.

The next meeting of the **Natrona County Historical Society** will be Thursday, January 26 at 6:30 p.m. in the Crawford Room of the Natrona County Library. The speaker will be storyteller India Hayford telling about the development of the Natrona County Library through Sarah Place, a real-life influence in the history of the library. For details email robinbroumley@gmail.com.

Congratulations to Tom Mensik, new director of the **Carbon County Museum** in Rawlins. Tom has been in the museum field for more than a decade. Previously he has worked for the Colorado Railroad Museum, Historic Georgetown, The Denver Art Museum, and Wings Over the Rockies. Stop by and welcome him to the neighborhood.

The **Johnson County Historical Society** will host a program on January 9th, 7:30 p.m. at the Johnson County Library featuring a program of Basque music performed by author and musician David Romtvedt. The program is being held in

partnership with Worlds of Music, a program founded by Romtvedt, with support from the Wyoming Cultural Trust Fund. For details about the program email lindakwilson@att.net.

In Memory

Our dear devoted friend, **Pinky Ellis**, died on October 26th in Casper. Pinky was a long-time member of the Society, and served on the board of the Wyoming Historical Foundation for many years. Pinky was born in Casper to Irish immigrants, graduated from NCHS, and attended the University of Wyoming where he graduated with a degree in Agriculture. He spent years learning the sheep business and also served his community well. He was a member of many service organizations, and of numerous boards. He also served as a city councilman and a Natrona County commissioner. Pinky was a founding member of the Natl. Historic Trails Interpretative Center and board member. Pinky's sense of humor will always be missed. We share his loss with his wife, Jackie, and their children and grandchildren.

Dr. Bill Ward of Saratoga died on April 16th. Bill was an accomplished physician and dedicated his practice to serving rural western communities. He was introduced to the art of William Gollings, a true cowboy artist, and became the pre-eminent Gollings expert. He passed away exactly 90 years to the day that his beloved William Gollings died. Bill inspired a sense of adventure in those around him and appreciated a good tall tale and was a prankster through and through. His wife Carole said he constantly reminded his family to "not sweat the small stuff because it is all small stuff." He is survived by his wife, Carole, seven children and 11 grandchildren.

Bob Holmes of Cheyenne died on May 12th. Bob enlisted in the Wyoming Natl. Guard in 1949. A highlight of his career was to establish an ANG unit in the Virgin Islands in 1973. While on active duty in Washington, D.C., Bob designed the new National Guard recruiter badge. He had a distinguished military career for more than forty-two years, retiring in 1991. He was instrumental in creating the Wyoming National Guard Museum. Bob and his wife, Bev, met each other in debate class at Cheyenne High School, and were married for over 70 years. Our thoughts go out to Bev, their five children, and their grandchildren.

Wyoming History Calendar

January 9-*Buffalo*—An evening of Basque music hosted by the Johnson County Historical Society featuring David Romtvedt. Library, 7:30 p.m.

Email lindakwilson@att.net for details.

January 12-*Cheyenne*. Wyoming State Museum speakers series, 7 p.m. Email sara.davis@wyo.gov for details or call 307—777-7826.

January 15-*Cheyenne*. Laramie County Historical Society features “Yankee Cavalry in Indian Country,” 2 p.m., Laramie County Library. Call 307-632-9717 for details.

January 26-*Casper*. Natrona County Historical Society features a program by storyteller India Hayford, Natrona County Library, 6:30 p.m.

January 27-*Wheatland*. Platte County Historical Society, 7 p.m., Library. “Truth or Myth by Alice Perkins. Call 331-3024 for details.

February 21-*Buffalo*. Johnson County Historical Society program about the Bighorn Natl. Forest Historical Collection. Email lindakwilson@att.net for details.

May 1—*Laramie*. State History Day competition.

June 15-17—*Star Valley*. 2023 Trek sponsored by Star Valley Historical Society. Watch for details.

Future Dates of Treks and Annual Meetings

* September, 2023—Park County Historical Society (Annual Meeting)

* June 2024—Will you host the Trek?

Wyoming History News welcomes information about events of interest to the general membership and others. Information should be sent at least a month in advance and should reach the WHN editor by the 15th. Send items to linda@wyshs.org

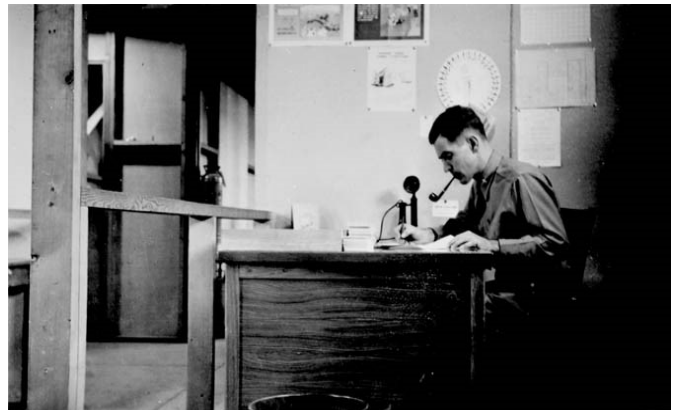


NATIONAL PARK SERVICE NAMES CASPER AS A WWII HERITAGE CITY

The National Park Service (NPS) recently announced that Casper received designation as a World War II Heritage City due to its standing as a training site for B-17 and B-24 bomber groups. The Casper Army Air Base was one of only four WWII installations constructed in Wyoming.

According to the NPS more than 16,000 combat crew members trained in Casper for overseas assignments in Europe and the Pacific. They said, “The facility, including its outlying gunnery and bomb ranges, was the largest military installation in Wyoming’s history.”

These images, courtesy of the Wyoming State Archives, show Lt. Richard H. Brake working at his desk in 1943 at the Casper Army Air Base. The second photo is an image of troops perfecting combat maneuvers.



WYOMING CULTURAL TRUST FUND SUPPORTS WyoHistory.org

The Society recently received a \$19,000 grant from the Wyoming Cultural Trust Fund to increase the reach of its encyclopedia, WyoHistory.org.

WyoHistory.org was a concept introduced to the Society's Executive Committee by WSHS member **Tom Rea** in 2010. The state-history oriented website offers hundreds of articles on Wyoming history along with historical maps, photos, field-trip suggestions, selected oral histories, history itineraries, lesson plans and other materials for classroom use. Tom said, "The funds will help us expand the number of our most basic offerings with 12-new major articles on interesting people, places and events in Wyoming's past. The funds will pay for the planning, writing, editing, photo editing, publishing and maintaining online of the articles." He added, "By continuing to expand our content we will grow and serve the readership, attract new partners and thereby contribute to the overall strength of the Society."

The wealth of information from our online articles has dramatically increased traffic to the WyoHistory.org website according to webmaster and WSHS member **Steve Foster**. Readership peaked in 2019, then fell off somewhat during COVID. Foster noted, "The 2022 numbers appear to be more in line with the actual traffic the Society site has seen over the years. For WyoHistory.org, after big increases month-over-month through May this year, things have been flat since then, but for the year it's been a good increase and more line with the site's peak traffic." **Tom Rea**, project director for WyoHistory.org said the upgrades expand and deepen our audience. "The Society website receives about 28,000 page views per year from 11,000 visitors. WyoHistory.org receives around 900,000 page views from 500,000 visitors. The upgrades should improve those figures, by making it easier to promote and host videos of historical talks and events, drawing potential new members to the Society and new readers to WyoHistory.org."

The subject matter of future articles is very broad but will include stories about Agnes Wright Spring, the first woman to graduate with a degree in civil engineering from the University of Wyoming in 1913. Her distinguished career included serving as the Wyoming State Librarian, and the Wyoming State Historian, among other accomplishments. She was also the Colorado State Historian, and achieved

recognition for being the only person to ever serve as the official state historian of two states! Another article will feature the History of the Nicolaysen Art Museum in Casper, and Alexander Gardner, a photographer in the 1860s who took many photos of the Lakota at the 1868 Fort Laramie treaty negotiations. Tom said, "The topics will be broad and feature people and things from every corner of the state."



The life of Agnes Wright Spring will be among many new articles on the Society's online encyclopedia, WyoHistory.org. Special thanks to the Wyoming Cultural Trust Fund for helping the Society to expand its reach.

(Photo courtesy Wyoming State Archives)



(Continued from page 1)

Like many other churches, the Allen Chapel AME took the opportunity in January to remember the roles that both abolitionists and churches played in the emancipation of enslaved Black people in the United States.

The American Heritage Center has a small collection of the Allen Chapel AME church records covering mainly the years 1967-1969. From these records we can get a glimpse into what was important to the pastors and the congregation, including drives to raise funds for Christian educational and missionary work, annual conferences, Sunday school, and other special projects.



This is one of three buildings that have housed the AME church in Cheyenne, ca. 1900. W.B.D. and Annette B. Gray Papers, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

From these records, we can get a glimpse into what was important to the pastors and the congregation, including drives to raise funds for Christian educational and missionary work, annual conferences, Sunday school, and other special projects. For instance, Robert "Buck" Rhone included a letter to the congregation in the church service packet of 3 December 1968 appealing for funds for the church's organ.



Robert "Buck" Rhone and his wife, Sudie, were active members of the congregation. Mr. Rhone served as Chairman of the Trustee Board. Also active was their daughter Harriett Elizabeth Rhone, later known to Wyomingites as a dedicated teacher and the first Black woman to serve in the Wyoming State Legislature, Liz Byrd.

*Photo Credits: American Heritage Center/ University of Wyoming
Researchers can browse both the African Methodist Episcopal Church (Cheyenne, WY) Records and the Harriett Elizabeth Byrd Family papers which have been digitized and available to browse in the AHC's digital records on Luna.*



Special thanks to historian and author Brigida Blasi for the use of this article reprinted from the Blog of the AHC. Visit <https://achwyo.org/> for a look at hundreds of interesting topics. To learn more about Black History Month and the programs offered throughout February please visit <https://www.blackhistorymonth.gov>.

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