



Old News

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World War I Records

World War I is not well remembered today, and like the Spanish American War, will soon be but a distant memory. Yet, the Archives contains a variety of records documenting what was a pivotal turning point in world history.

There are a variety of records directly relevant to the war itself. The Adjutant General, the Stark Collection, and the Mentzer Collection contain copies of military records. Some individuals saved various publications from their service overseas. Uinta County and Sheridan County published books about the men who served from their respective counties. The staff of the historical department compiled index cards with information about Wyoming men in the military. There are personal reminiscences in the form of newspaper articles, interviews, and family letters. After the war, veterans gathered together, a band of brothers so to speak, and the records of the Veterans of War I of the USA, Inc. document their activities.

Efforts on the home front are also well documented. Across the state 100 per cent American Clubs were organized to promote loyalty and to ferret out pro-German thinking. The Archives has the minute book of the Cheyenne chapter. The records of Governor Frank Houx and the Wyoming State Council for National Defense document efforts to mobilize the home front.

Post-war records are also evident. A pass to visit Coblenz and a program for a carnival sponsored by the Third Army show how soldiers spent their leisure time. Employment for returning veterans was a topic of concern in the records of Governor Robert D. Carey.

World War I had a profound impact in Wyoming during the course of the war and afterward. The records at the Wyoming State Archives are the first step for research.

Part of a Letter from Fort Fetterman, 1873

“Our Company is stationed in the ‘hills,’ about twenty four miles from here, cutting logs building purposes. We have a very fine camp . . . [unreadable]. No roll calls to answer, no regular hours for meals, plenty of time for hunting, and the strict discipline, habitual to a soldier, is partially dispensed with. Game is very plenty, and Monday two of our boys ran into a herd about one hundred and fifty Elk, killing seven.

“Colonel Grover has enough work planned here to keep us busy until late in the fall. He is going to erect a new Guard House, a set of Company Quarters, a new Headquarters Building, repair the Commissary and Quartermaster storehouses, the stockade around the garrison, and erect a cavalry stable for 160 horses.

“The boys are very much dissatisfied with the amount of fatigue they have to do, besides two drills per day and dress parade every evening, and we expect to see them desert in large numbers as soon as the fine weather sets in. . . .

“I do not know as I am sorry for enlisting, for the army is a splendid school for some, and I would not sell my experience for something handsome. The only thing I regret is, that it has put me back five years in my trade, but I think with application to it, I can soon catch up again. The predominant vices are drinking and gambling. Of course, being a ‘Good Templar,’ I do not indulge in the former, and as to the latter, I have whiled away as idle hours to enliven the ennui that we are sometimes afflicted with, but I never allow myself to be carried away by it. I have been around the table with money watching the game and never had a desire to invest even a quarter. I think, that to a great extent, close association with a social evil, tends to disgust a person, and give him a strong antipathy to it.”

Letter from George _____ to Sister, Fort Fetterman Wyoming, April 5, 1873.
(Collection H90-37).



This previously unidentified photograph in the Archives shows Wyoming representatives at the national Townsend Convention in Cleveland, Ohio in 1936. Only a handful of individuals are identified. During the Depression, Dr. Francis E. Townsend proposed the establishment of a federal old age pension for individuals over the age of 65 with the proviso that the money would be readily spent within the month to help stimulate the lagging economy. Townsend's idea was widely supported, and Townsend Clubs across the country. Between 1936 and 1950, there were 78 clubs in Wyoming. (Source: Abraham Holtzman, *The Townsend Movement: A Political Study* (New York: Brookman Associates, 1963), p. 50)

New Publications on Wyoming and Western History

The Colonel and Little Missie: Buffalo Bill, Annie Oakley, and The Beginnings of Superstardom in America. By Larry McMurtry. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005. \$26.00.

Echoes of Elkol: The Story of a Western Coal Camp. By Dorothy Wright. Greybull: Pronghorn Press, 2004. \$22.95.

Hard Knocks: A Life Story of the Vanishing West. By Harry "Sam" Young. Pierre: South Dakota State Historical Society Press, 2004. Originally published in 1915. \$17.95.

Mystery in History: Legends of Currant Creek Ranch of Sweetwater County of Wyoming. By Eva Potts Wells Burton and Roberta Vaughn. Cheyenne: Pioneer Printing, 2005. \$30.00

Forthcoming Publication

Next spring, the University of Oklahoma Press will publish Casper writer Tom Rea's book *The Middle of Nowhere* which is about the country around Independence Rock and Devil's Gate from fur trappers to the present. Rea examines how people, land, property, and storytelling affect

each other over time. Rea's first book, *Bone Wars*, now out in paperback from the University of Pittsburgh Press, told the story of the discovery and subsequent worldwide celebrity of a dinosaur unearthed north of Medicine Bow in 1899. The book won a Spur Award from the Western Writers of America in 2002.

I need your feedback! If you have questions, comments, suggestions, or complaints, please contact Carl Hallberg by phone at 307/777-6423 or by email at challb@state.wy.us.

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