

HERITAGE TIMES

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Thank you to our 2025 Volunteers!

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*Look for our monthly
article online in the Cody
Journal. We are
featuring notable women
in Cody's history this
winter!*



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: PHYLLIS PREATOR

Phyllis Preator is a local author, historian, McCullough Peaks mustang advocate, and a member of the Cody Heritage Museum from its beginnings. She was born on February 8, 1949, in Nebraska to Irene and Leonard Foxworthy, and grew up with two brothers, an older and a younger. Phyllis spent her elementary school years on ranches across eastern Wyoming and South Dakota where her father worked and competed in ranch rodeos. When she was an eighth grader, Phyllis and her family moved to Cody. She graduated from Cody High School in 1967, then studied art at Northwest College and earned a teaching degree at the University of Northern Colorado. During college she was awarded a scholarship in art history and spent three and a half months traveling across Europe, learning about European art. One of Phyllis's fondest memories from that time was hitchhiking with friends through Austria, Holland, and Denmark, eventually crossing by ferry to England and traveling north to Scotland. She recalls the beautiful green hillsides, dotted with sheep and purple heather. In Switzerland, she took gondola rides into the Alps to hike mountain trails. . . .



Phyllis poses with the 1860-era saddle that she commissioned for the 1990 Pony Express Historical Reenactment, part of Wyoming's Centennial Wagon Train celebrations. She created the buckskin bag from her own home-tanned buckskin. At left in the background is her portrait by artist James Bama.

[story continued on page 2]

From our President/Director

We had a wonderful summer! Our attendance was up by about 50 visitors this year. While not a tremendous increase, the number moved in the right direction! Our admissions desk volunteers received great feedback from our visitors who were even more interested in the history of Cody by the time they left than when they arrived.

Speaking of volunteers, we would not be able to run the museum without them! They are there 6 days a week for 3-hour shifts each except for Todd Valley who is there for 4 hours on Sundays. Todd has been with us since the first year (2018) – thank you, Todd! Our volunteer coordinator, Linda Hofmann, does an absolutely wonderful job of setting the schedule and finding substitutes when necessary. Thank you, Linda; you're the best!

We are now closed for the season but will reopen next Memorial Day weekend. We wish you all a safe winter! — Lynn



SPOTLIGHT: PHYLLIS PREATOR [story continued from page 1]

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While studying art in Vienna in 1971, Phyllis missed her Wyoming home and asked a coach driver for permission to pet his horses for a moment.

... Yet despite these adventures, Phyllis missed Wyoming and always planned to return. She remembers the moment she stepped off the plane in Casper and felt the Wyoming wind again. She was so happy to be home that tears came to her eyes.

Horses have been a central part of Phyllis's life since age 5. She learned horse training from her father, who once told her, "Train your own horse, then you won't have anyone else to blame if you don't like how he turns out." She recalls some of her favorite horses throughout her life, including "Scout," a black and white Tobiano paint, "Willow," a bright sorrel with a blaze, and "Cimarron," a solid dark

bay. Her horse, Laredo, came to her as a yearling and lived with her for 25 years. Laredo, a grullo who later turned white, wore a beaded custom-made browband and is featured in several of Phyllis's artworks. Phyllis enjoys the mountains and trails all across Park County, but the place most special to her heart is McCullough Peaks. Over the years, she has explored every hill, plateau, and shale slope in the McCullough Peaks area.



Laredo, Phyllis's beloved horse, lived for 25 years and is featured in her oil paintings.

[story continued on page 3]

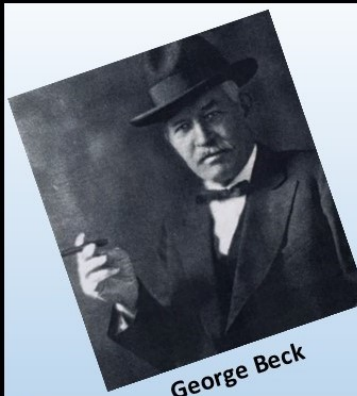
Heritage Garden Report

The CHM garden really became a tourist attraction this year. We saw people from all over the world stop to take photographs and examine our flowers. Even the Cody High School media classes used the garden for photography and inspiration.



The compliments were thick with praise. We are very proud of our beautiful garden.

—Geri and the Garden Team



George Beck

*A new
bronze
statue is
coming to
town!*

Cody Heritage Museum member Tom Ducey is spearheading a project to create a bronze statue of one of Cody's most important town founders, George W. T. Beck. If you'd like to contribute or get involved, please visit georgebeckfund.com



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: [story continued from page 2]

Phyllis has written and published four books about McCullough Peaks horses and the natural and cultural history of the area. During her time in the McCullough Peaks, she has discovered teepee rings, fasting beds, and rock cairns. Some are likely prehistoric, but others were built by early 20th-century sheepherders. She notes in one of her books that the tall, cylindrical cairns made of stackable stones served as navigational markers for the sheep herders. A longtime advocate for local history, Phyllis has been a member of the Cody Heritage Museum since its founding. Her parents were active in the Park County Historical Society, and Phyllis became involved in 1990 when she was asked to organize a Pony Express reenactment for the Wyoming Centennial Wagon Train celebration. She led the project, overseeing the design and construction of her historically accurate 1860s saddle, tack, and clothing. When the wagon train passed through small towns on its route from Casper along the Bridger Trail, Phyllis did Pony Express demonstrations for locals. This included the exchange of a fresh horse and the transfer of the mochilla (mail bag) in under two minutes. She later served as an officer and program director for the Historical Society.

Phyllis's interest in McCullough Peaks bridges her love of history, horses, and art. The current mustang population in the area is believed to descend in part from Crow Indian herds left behind after the Crow were forced to relocate to the Crow Reservation after the second Treaty of Fort Laramie in 1868. The McCullough Peaks mustangs also descend from draft horses brought in to help dig the Wiley Ditch and other local irrigation canals at the turn of the 20th century. Phyllis was able to incorporate her love of art with her work with the mustangs when she discovered charcoal at one of the old sheep camps. She gathered some of the charcoal, took it home, and used it as the medium for several drawings of her favorite mustangs.

Today, Phyllis is the foremost local expert on the McCullough Peaks mustangs. As the herd's historian, she has tracked and documented every individual horse in partnership with Abel Guevara, the Wildlife Biologist at the Cody Field Office. She has also worked closely with Patricia Hatle, who was the herd specialist who started the fertility program around 2000. To aid in field identification, Phyllis developed a shorthand system using leg markings, quickly notating the color of each hoof with dots. Her naming of the horses is practical, designed to simplify communication among her team and the BLM, rather than for sentimentality. Over the years, she has observed the full range of mustang behavior, from the camaraderie among mares to the erratic movements of lone bachelor stallions. She also serves as an advisor to Friends of a Legacy (FOAL), and currently monitors water sources in the Peaks for the Bureau of Land Management.

Phyllis and her husband, Richard Preator, live on a 160-acre farm between Cody and Powell. Richard descends from the earliest LDS settlers in Burlington, Wyoming. His grandfather served as the town's first postmaster in the 1890s and his original cabin is still preserved in Burlington. Phyllis and Richard met as students at Cody High School and were married in 1984. Today, with their beloved grandchildren nearby, they produce hay on their land, preferring small rectangular bales for local outfitters and for summer Cody Nite Rodeo contestants.

Thank you, Phyllis, for your hard work with the McCullough Peaks mustangs and for supporting the Cody Heritage Museum from its beginnings!



Phyllis gathered natural charcoal from McCullough Peaks and used it to create this charcoal drawing of her horse, Tiago.

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As you would like it to appear on card

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◇\$45/year—Family

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[adult parents & minor children]

◇\$100/year—Friend

◇\$1000/year—Sustaining

Looking for a great gift idea? Give the gift of history and knowledge with a membership to the museum!

Consider getting involved and become a CHM volunteer!

If you or your family have a piece of family/Cody history, please consider donating it. Please call Lynn Houze at 586-4272



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Yesterday's Cody Today . . .

A bridge from past to present

