

Jim White

Jim White's remains were reinterred in the Old Trail Town Cemetery in Cody, Wyoming, on May 6, 1979. The following is a reproduction of the memorial plaque on his grave site:

Jim White was born in Missouri in 1828. He found his way into the southwest as a young man, where he was a freighter with ox-drawn wagons.

When the Civil War broke out in 1861, Jim White served the Confederate Army as a grain buyer and wagon boss. At the end of the Civil War, Jim White married and returned to the southwest.

In 1868, he drifted down into Mexico, where a rich Spaniard won his wife away. White killed him and several others in the fracas that followed. There was a large reward offered for him, dead or alive. This is when he dropped his original name and adopted Jim White, for which he is known. His original name is unknown.

White walked 700 miles back into Texas where he got into the buffalo hunting profession. White kept several skinnners busy as he preyed on the wandering herds.

One day a group of ciboleros rode over a hill and scared away a small herd of buffalo that White was firing on. In a fit of temper, he shot the horses out from under four of the party.



Jim White was hunting in the Texas panhandle in the mid-1870s. He was in the region at the time of the battle of Adobe Walls and other lesser battles with the Kiowa's and Comanche.

White had the reputation in Texas as being a tough character. He operated best alone or with his own men.

By 1878, the buffalo on the Southern Plains were gone. Many hunters started looking toward the unspoiled Northern Plains of Wyoming and Montana.

Jim White was among the first hunters to reach the northern buffalo range. By late summer, 1878, he had reached the Big Horn Mountains with two big span of

mules, two wagons, 700 pounds of lead, five kegs of gun powder, three 16 pound Sharp's rifles, varied equipment and an old buffalo skinner named Watson.

White soon met Oliver Hanna, who had been a scout with General Crook in 1876, and they became hunting partners.

During the winter of 1878-79 the two men had a contract to furnish 5,000 pounds of game meat to the Army at Fort McKinney, near present Buffalo Wyoming.

The following winter of 1879-80, White and Hanna had a buffalo hunting camp north of the Yellowstone River near Miles City. The two hunters kept six buffalo skinners busy. By spring, they had collected 4,600 buffalo hides which were freighted to the Yellowstone River by ox teams and then hauled down the river by steam boats.

In the following fall of 1880, White and Hanna came into the Big Horn Basin and set up a hunting camp on Shell Creek, near the foot of the Big Horn Mountains. They were hunting and trapping in the area. In late October, Hanna made a quick trip over the Big Horns. When he returned he found Jim White dead. He had been shot in the head by thieves who had stolen their horses, mules, wagon, guns, hides, furs, etc.

Hanna buried Jim White on the upper bank, on the north side of Shell Creek, presently on the ranch of Irvy Davis near Shell, Wyoming.

Hanna later stated that Jim White was the greatest buffalo hunter the world had ever known. Hanna stated that White had a ledger book that contained records of hide sales for over 16,000 buffalo.

Recent examination of his remains revealed that he was killed by a 50 caliber bullet; probably from a Sharp's buffalo rifle. Possibly from the same gun that killed his own victims.

The bronze statue of White was sculpted by Tom Hillis of Stanton, Michigan.

In an article found on the internet about famous Sharps Rifles written for the C. Sharps Arms, Inc., Ralph Heinz of Newport, Washington, tells the story just a bit differently from the plaque on the grave site:

When a group of three men camped below them, Hanna went down to their camp and talked with them but felt very uncomfortable about them. He then started to worry about how things were going at his ranch on the east side and decided to travel over the mountains before winter set in with heavy snows. It was October, 1880. He was gone about a week and found everything OK at his home ranch but when he arrived back at the cabin on Shell Creek that he and White had built, White was nowhere to be found and all their equipment was gone.

A short distance from the now deserted cabin, Hanna discovered a fresh grave under some pine trees. About two feet down, he found the body of his partner wrapped in a buffalo robe, and shot in the back of the head. The three rough strangers had killed him for their outfit of four guns, hides, wagons, teams of mules and everything else they could pack up and steal. Jim White had hunted extensively during the early hide hunting days in Kansas and the Texas Panhandle, and Hanna estimated that White had killed sixteen thousand buffalo but he'd never seen the bullet that killed him fired from ambush from behind him. The killers were never found.

About twenty-seven years later, Hanna was back in the Big Horn Basin having his horses shod at a blacksmith shop when he saw a Sharps buffalo rifle sitting in the

corner of the shop. It looked like his rifle and when he picked it up, it had the initial "H" on it.

Today, the rifle can be seen along with the Hanna-White cabin (moved to the site) at Bob Edgar's Old Trail Town in Cody, Wyoming.





Jim White's grave and marker in Old Trail Town Cemetery