Reflections on Collections

By Alexandra Deselms, Interim Director & Director of Collections

We can’t believe 2022 is already over half gone! Time is flying by while projects and visitors keep us busy!

We have purchased most of the collections care items we received the Greenwood Fund grant for, including archival boxes, board, and tissue to continue housing new collections (like the bison bones from our bison butchering) and rehousing other collections. We have ordered special shelving that should ship soon as well for our potential and incoming acquisitions storage. We have also ordered and received our arsenic testing kit to test our taxidermy; we plan to do the testing this fall or winter when things are quieter. Most of our taxidermy collections should be post-1970s and clear of the arsenic that was previously used in taxidermy preparation, but we want to double-check to better care for the collections…and ourselves, and you our visitors! We plan to share results and photographs on social media and in future newsletters. We again thank the Greenwood Fund for supporting our collections endeavors.

In between helping with summer programs, visitors, and writing blogs for our summer series (and new duties as interim director), I’ve continued to slowly catalog items and double-check the museum’s storage inventory. In this re-inventory, I’ve been adding a lot of distinguishing features or words to the inventories so that we can better identify objects. For those items we can’t reconcile with a catalog number or record, I am creating a lot of “Found in Collections” numbers so these items can be identified and tracked while we work our way through everything to know what is best for us to have, what might be better in another institution, or what objects we still need to tell the story of Meeteetse and the surrounding areas.

We had a Collections Committee meeting the end of June and accepted some great things to go with our ranching oral history project, like a complete set of hand-forged age brands, a cattle logbook, and historic ranch videos! We’re also excited for the new education collection item – a historic mail canceler!

Our dedicated collections volunteer, Pam Johnston, continues to work on cataloging the collection, which is a large help as there are many items still to catalog and cataloging is not my only focus. Her work will be added to our online collections soon. We have a remote collection volunteer (thanks, Mom!) continuing to work on the photo inventory project, so we know what photos we have without constantly opening files and folders. The less we have to touch the original photos, the better for the photographs themselves. This inventory also makes it easier on us when we need photos for blogs, newsletters, social media, or for researchers so we can search the computer and spend less time searching through the entire photograph collection. As always, if you believe you have an old loan with us and haven’t been contacted in the last few years about it, please contact me. And please take a look at either PastPerfect Online or the Digital Public Library of America to see our online collections, which continue to grow as we catalog new and previous accessions into the collections!
The Meeteetse Museums is auctioning off several items to raise money for both the Museums and the Museum Foundation. Each item will be expressly marked so you can see where your money goes. Bidding will take place from August 21st and continue until September 5th.

All the items will be on display over Labor Day weekend and a staff member will be available to help you bid on any items you would like. All bidding will take place through BetterWorld. Even if you would like to pay cash to the Museums rather than bid through BetterWorld, you must enter a card and bid through the site. If you are the winning bidder, your card won't be charged provided you speak to a staff member prior to the end of bidding.

If you'd just like to make a donation to the Museums instead of bidding on an object, you can do that either through the BetterWorld platform or by stopping at the Museums.

More information available here: https://support.betterworld.org/donor-or-participant-questions

**Items Up for Grabs**

These are some of the items up for grabs! "Angus Bull Sketches" by Sue Sommers, bison hide from stone tool butchering in October, "Tools of the Trade" and "Clouds of Tradition" by McKenzy Ellisen, "Sunrise at Beartooth Ranch" by Jennifer Litterer-Trevino, and the opportunity to release a black-footed ferret on September 28th.

**How it Works**

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**Plus ...**

- Lake Tahoe Splendid Alpine Adventure
- See the Northern Lights in Canada
- American History Comes Alive in a City of Your Choice!
- Personal Cooking Lesson For 10 From a Top Chef

**THE DETAILS**

**WHEN**

Bidding starts on August 21st online. The objects will be on display over Labor Day weekend and bidding closes September 5th at 5 pm.

**WHERE**

https://meeteetsemuseums.betterworld.org/auctions/meeteetse-museums-labor-day-auction

**WHAT**

Funds will go toward the Museums and the Foundation.
Summer Recap

Perspectives of the Past

Our summer programming was made possible by Wyoming Humanities and Wyoming Arts Council. We aimed to show the variety of perspectives in Meeteetse’s history through our tours, blogs, and speaker events.

At the start of summer, the south side of the Museums facing the Wea Market was overrun with weeds and the gravel heated up the building. With input from the Wyoming Native Plants Society, Pollen’s Landscape, Northern Gardens, the Meeteetse Conservation District, and Park County Weed & Pest, the Museums developed a native plants garden that would take little water (once established), beautify the large corner, and educate the public on native plants in the area.

We selected native plants from our local garden centers and nurseries along with some hybrid varieties of native plants that wouldn’t be found in nature. The center of the garden will be filled with native seeds provided by Park County Weed and Pest this fall. As you can see, pollinators already love it!

Thank you to all those who helped including our staff, WYDOT, Town of Meeteetse, Northern Gardens, Pollen’s Landscapes, our business members, Wyoming Native Plants Society, Steve Roshon, Michael Oliver, Lynn Sessions, Lili Turnell, Mary Jane Luther, Linda Benson, Pam Johnston, Steven Cornell, Maggie Eshleman, Kassandra Skeen, Bobbie Holder, and Ivy Elderedge.
This year, the Museums' summer events reached 200 people so far! That's 14% of our summer visitation so far. Our most popular event was the Whit Ranch Tour. Unfortunately, construction coincides with a decrease in both program attendance and visitation.

From top to bottom, left to right: Milky way photograph captured by Daniel Jakli at the Star Party, Alan Corey shows Star Party participants his telescope, Rebecca Levine gives a presentation on moose ecology at the Double Dee Tour, Brian Beauvais presents on Colonel William Cody, Jennifer Baldwin instructs a workshop on genealogy, Lenox Baker shares stories of the Pitchfork Ranch.
NEW ON THE BLOG

"PERSPECTIVES OF THE PAST"

This summer, we continued our summer programming inspiration by looking into the lives of some of Meeteetse's most notorious, famous/infamous, and even legendary residents. These stories are up on the blog with more to come including posts on Victor Arland and Josh Deane.

### RICHARD ASHWORTH

Richard Ashworth was one of the first ranchers in Meeteetse, alongside Otto Franc, Colonel Pickett, and more. While rumors and stories about Ashworth are plentiful, what is the truth? Director of Collections, Alexandra Deselms, did some digging to find out.

### A.J. MCDONALD

A.J. McDonald is best known for his role in the Meeteetse Mercantile. However, as with many of Meeteetse's early residents, his achievements included many more things.

### DR. WILLIAM BENNETT

As one of Meeteetse's first doctors, Dr. William Sabine Bennett led an interesting life. Perhaps one of Meeteetse's most controversial yet underrated figures, Bennett's story is worth a read!

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Award-Winning

Brian Beauvais, Park County Archivist, nominated the Meeteetse Museums' podcast, "Meeteetse Stories" and "The Mining Town of Kirwin" booklet for Wyoming Historical Society awards and we're pleased to announce that both nominations won first place in their categories!
This April, Alexandra Deselms along with MMD Board members, Larry Todd and Lili Turnell, and Foundation member, Margaret Baker, went down to Colorado Springs and presented at the CWAM conference. The conference allows our staff to stay current with the Museum field, see other museums, and puts Meeteetse's name out there!

"Alex did a great job presenting at the conference. I think the question and answer session was helpful, with people from other museums sharing their experiences with trying to fundraise. I like that the Meeteetse Museums is actively involved in this conference each year."
- Margaret Baker, Foundation

"As a first time attendee at CWAM, I found the session I attended to be very informative. People attending were very helpful in offering suggestions on fundraising and the interchange was very educational."
- Lili Turnell, Meeteetse Museum District

"The range of options for expanding my understanding of the complexity of museum operations was eye opening. I definitely will plan on attending again!"
- Larry Todd, Meeteetse Museum District

Meet our Programs Intern

Tommy Canfield is a recent film and New Media Studies and Creative Writing graduate from Wheaton College in Massachusetts. In his spare time, he loves to box. He has an intense passion for reading and loves reading about history. He is excited to be involved in a project that deals with the accounts of people and places that have such incredible stories.
Schedule of Events

still to come

**August 21st:** Online Labor Day Auction Begins

**August 27th:** Arland Tour, **must RSVP**

**September 1 - 17th:** Chatelaine Quilt Show

**September 3rd:** Go with the Flow Acrylic Paint Pour Workshop with Rhonda Schmeltzer, limited spots available, must RSVP

**September 5th:** Online Labor Day Auction Ends

**September 17th:** Ranches of Meeteetse presentation by Dr. Amy McKinney, Associate Professor of History at Northwest College at 1 pm

**September 24th:** Members field trip to the Wind River Bison Herd, led by Jason Baldes