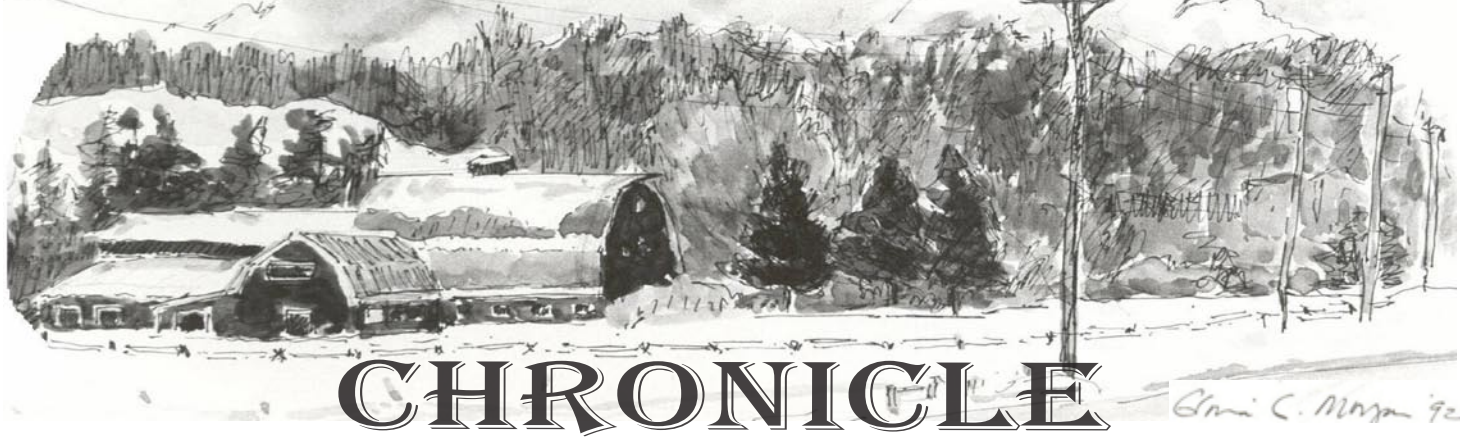


# JACKSON HOLE

50th Anniversary  
1958-2008

## HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM



## CHRONICLE

VOLUME XXVIII NO. 1

JACKSON'S HOLE, WYOMING

SPRING 2008

### ***Jackson Hole Museum's 50th Anniversary Show "Everyone Has a Story"***

Want to see the faces of Jackson Hole's rich, living history? Visit the Jackson Hole Museum this summer! We are celebrating our 50th year with an exciting student exhibit that honors the cultural history of Jackson Hole through the personal stories and photographs of fifty or more residents. There is no better way to celebrate the legacy of the museum that was started fifty years ago than by showcasing stories of the people who have helped make this valley great. Some of the interviewees have lived here all their lives, and some were here when the museum was begun by Slim Lawrence and Homer Richards in 1958. Our criterion was that people had to be residents of the valley at least since 1970.

To make this multi-faceted project possible, the historical society is collaborating with pARTners—a non-profit organization which orchestrates

art projects in the classroom—the Teton County School District, Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival, and of course, long-time residents of the area. The new exhibit engages not only the valley's older generation but spans the generations by actively involving the youth of Jackson.

There were many steps and many people involved with this project. Staff from the Jackson Hole Historical Society and Museum compiled a list of people who were long-time residents, representing a broad sampling of families and occupations. In February, Karen Reinhart, Curator of Education, visited 5th grade classrooms and gave the students and their teachers a "jump start" for conducting oral history interviews. Marylee White, executive director of the pARTners organization, coordinated getting children and residents together for interviews and

photograph sessions. Students and teachers compiled questions, and then two or three students interviewed and photographed each long-time resident. The children adapted their interviews into a narrative storyline with the help of their teachers and writer Matt Daly of the pARTners staff.

Linda Franklin, Curator of Collections, will coordinate preparing the exhibit of black and white photos and student interviews. The premiere viewing of this multi-generational project will be during the Museum Open House slated for May 23, 2008. Keeping with tradition, museum staff and volunteers will host the Open House, tantalizing you with cookies, other treats, and beverages. Come and gaze at the faces of Jackson Hole and their stories, refresh your acquaintance with our outstanding collections, and help us celebrate our 50th year!

By Karen Reinhart

## **Bridges Through Time**

From the time people arrived in the valley until present day, it has always been a challenge to cross natural barriers. When homesteaders arrived in the valley, whether crossing the Snake River or a mountain pass, it soon became clear that bridges in Jackson Hole were needed for transporting people and supplies. Some bridges succumbed to the powerful forces of nature while others still remain today as important links.

### **The First Wilson Bridge**

As the settlement of Jackson Hole increased in the late 1800s and early 1900s, it became more

common for settlers to ford the Snake River at the bottom of the trail over Teton Pass rather than going north

fifteen miles to cross at Menor's Ferry. This route near the town of Wilson thus became a major route in and out of the valley. (Cassity, p. 464)

Ferries operated in the area until the first Snake River Bridge between Jackson and Wilson was "built in 1915 with local labor and subscriptions under the management of Richard Winger." (Hayden) Records at the historical society mention that Dick Winger was Jackson's third mayor, serving from 1917 – 1919.

This steel bridge was a truss-type bridge that consisted of five sections which spanned the river



Wilson Bridge 1923

2005.0024.117

Continued on page four

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**Mission Statement**

*The Jackson Hole Historical Society and Museum collects, interprets, and preserves our unique heritage in an engaging and enriching manner.*



The *Jackson Hole Historical Society and Museum Chronicle* is published quarterly for members and friends of the Jackson Hole Historical Society and Museum. Suggestions and comments are always welcome.

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# Organizational News

## Greetings from the Chair . . .

### Progress on the Museum Remodel

Planning for the new museum is moving forward very well. We have been quietly doing the conceptual planning on both the building itself and on the exhibitions. Our architect, Charles Rose Architects, Inc., has been working with our building committee, headed by John Carney, to evaluate possible layouts of the space at 225 North Cache. Our exhibition design firm, Andre and Associates, has met with the board and staff in Jackson and established a basic arrangement for the exhibitions. The group has written a comprehensive storyline that describes what aspects of the history of Jackson Hole we want to show. Karen Reinhart and Lokey Lytjen are developing and refining that storyline. Linda Franklin, our Curator of Collections, has been inventorying, photographing and measuring our artifacts, and she is beginning to recommend which ones should be on display to help us document the storyline.

We have begun hosting gatherings at the Mercill log cabin to tell both members and non-members about our progress, and to get your continued input on this community project. We hope to invite as many people as we can to these community conversations. Your comments and ideas are welcome.

Jim Luebbers, Board President

## Jacques Dubois Joins Board of Directors

Jacques Dubois is the newest addition to our Board of Directors, and brings a world of experience to the position. His background is in investment banking and reinsurance. He and two partners ran an investment banking business focusing on mergers and acquisitions of insurance companies. In the course of running this business, they acquired a reinsurance company that became Life Re, and took it public on the New York Stock Exchange. Upon the sale of Life Re in 1998 to Swiss Re, Jacques stayed involved and became chairman of the Swiss Re American Holding Company. He was in charge of all the Swiss Re American operations, and retired from this position at the end of 2006.

Jacques and his wife Carine moved to Jackson in the summer of 2006, but they have been coming here for skiing and summer vacations since 1996. They have three children, Jacques, Gigi, and Danielle who lives and works in Jackson. "As an avid student of history, I look forward to participating in preserving the community's heritage."



The Jackson Hole Historical Society and Museum has gratefully received the following memorial donations:

**In memory of John M. Ryan**

- Helen Goodrick
- Dee Luton

**In memory of Lanny Ross May**

- Ted and Lois Kaliebe
- Charles and Betty Terrill

**In memory of Herdis Olson**

- Harold and Berniece Turner

## The Jackson Hole Historical Society and Museum welcomes the following new members (December, January, and February):

- Stephen and Sara Adamson
- Anne and Steve Ashley
- D. Paul Barbour
- Mike and Stephanie Brennan
- Buck and Julie Buchenroth
- George Campbell
- Lana and Jeff Crabtree
- Jamie Dakis
- Richard and Tricia Dornan
- Dotty Hodges
- Nancy Hoffman
- Stan Klassen
- Bob and Julie McLaurin
- John Osborne
- Ed and Judy Schmitt
- Catherine Smith
- Mary Carol Staiger
- Matt and Jamie Turner
- Lisa and Richard Warner
- John and Ann Willott

**Thank you for your support!**

## Historical Happenings



### April

**Thursday, April 17, 2008**

Potluck at the Senior Center  
6:30 p.m.  
Program to be determined.



### May

**Saturday, May 17, 2008**

As part of the Elkfest celebrations, the Jackson Hole Historical Society and Museum will be hosting a booth on the Town Square from 7:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m. We'll be promoting the new Museum of Jackson Hole.

**Friday, May 23, 2008**

Museum Open House  
50th Anniversary of the Jackson Hole Museum!  
9:30 a.m.—6:00 p.m.  
Doors open to visitors for the 2008 season with an open house offering refreshments, door prizes, free admission, and a free walking tour. The tour will start at 1:30 p.m. Living historian and fur trade expert Steve Banks will be on hand to demonstrate mountain man skills and talk with visitors throughout the day.

**Saturday, May 24, 2008**

Old West Days Parade  
10:00 a.m.  
Don't miss our entry—we'll be waving from Stubbs Free's vintage Yellowstone touring car.



### June

**Saturday and Sunday, June 14 & 15, 2008**

Locals' Appreciation Weekend at the Jackson Hole Museum. Free admission for locals.

**Thursday, June 19, 2008**

Potluck location and program to be determined.  
6:30 p.m.

## Caring for Collections Continues

Aside from preserving history, one of the most crucial jobs in our organization is organizing it. Everything in its place and a place for everything. The exhibition design phase for the new museum has only reinforced this adage. While much has been done in the past, we are streamlining and making the process consistent so that objects and photographs that are part of the museum story will find their way into the exhibitions or become readied for future exhibits.

Among the necessities that have been overlooked through the years due to lack of staff and time are photographing and computerizing details of every piece in the collection.



Marisa and Shannon Sullivan recycle electronics.

Helping with all this work is a cadre of tough and dedicated volunteers and staff. They have been doing everything from hard labor, reorganizing large objects in the Wiley building to freezing their fingers off in the dead of winter, meticulously checking objects in the unheated museum against fifty-year-old records.

One of the projects that doesn't involve subzero temperatures is digitizing oral histories that are on reels. Ideally, all of our audio and video will be digitized in the near future, but because reel-to-reel players are fast becoming historical relics, it took some

time to locate people with the know-how and means to transfer them. Luckily, there is a small but dedicated group of reel-to-reel enthusiasts in the valley helping us. As the newly digitized oral histories have come back, both volunteers and staff have been listening to them to get a clearer idea of what's on them and how they can be used in the future to improve the educational experience. One of the gems we've rediscovered is a radio program called "Hometown Jackson" with speakers such as former Mayor Harry Clissold and former Governor Millward Simpson.

On the other end of the technology spectrum, we have just purchased a new scanner. Essential to any organization with archives, the scanner will help to preserve digital copies of our photographs and negatives which number around fifteen thousand. Digital copies can be used for research purposes enabling patrons to pull up photographs by keywords on the computer rather than searching by hand through hundreds of folders. It will also reduce the stress on the collection that over-handling can cause, and enable us to preserve the originals for a long time.

Because of the size of the collection some of these projects can be daunting, and the fact that our volunteers are willing to do all this makes them even more precious to us. It's not an easy job but it is satisfying especially if you enjoy discovering strange objects and piecing puzzles together. And after all, isn't that what preserving history is all about?



Linda Franklin and Mindy Barnett tagged everything in the Wiley Building, including each other.

By Shannon Sullivan, Curatorial Assistant

### Are You a HANDYMAN?

Do you like to fix things? Are you good with a screwdriver? Do you have a strong back? Would you like to volunteer as a handyman for the Jackson Hole Historical Society and Museum? We could sure use the help, and you would be surrounded by appreciative employees! Hours are very flexible, and scheduling would be at your convenience. If you are interested, please contact Mindy at 733-9605.

### Open House Helpers Needed

The Jackson Hole Museum is celebrating its 50th anniversary and will open its doors to visitors on Friday, May 23 for the 2008 season with an Open House offering refreshments, door prizes, free admission, and a free walking tour. We need volunteers to help meet and greet our visitors throughout the day, and to make cookies to share. If you would like to help us usher in this special year, please give Karen Reinhart a call at 733-9605.

### Thank You, Laura!

After seven years as our Museum Manager, Laura Koch is pursuing a new chapter in her life and moving to Delta, Colorado. "My time with the Jackson Hole Historical Society and Museum has been an enjoyable, enriching experience. The best part has been interacting with people and learning about the history of the area. I look forward to visiting the new Museum of Jackson Hole in the future." Thank you, Laura, for your dedicated service to the organization.

Continued from page one

upstream from the current location by about 450 feet. Each span was 130 feet long—the longest bridge in the state of Wyoming at the time. When you travel over today's Wilson Bridge, look for the four sets of piers and associated structures to the north. In the spring of 1917, however, the Snake River flooded and washed away the approaches to the bridge on both sides, thus leaving the bridge itself intact but disconnected from either shore. Workers rebuilt the bridge, and it was back in service in 1922. (Cassity, p. 465)

In 1925, a massive landslide on the opposite side of Jackson Hole from Wilson dammed the Gros Ventre River, forming a lake upstream from the natural dam. Two years later, the water broke through, wiping out the town of Kelly and causing the Gros Ventre and Snake Rivers to flood. The bridge was once again damaged, but was operable before too long, and continued to serve traffic between Jackson and Wilson for thirty years. (Cassity, p. 465) Construction on the bridge in its current location appears to have begun in September of 1958, and was completed in June of 1960. (Kaufman) The resident engineer was a man named Johnson, and the contractor was a man named Peterson. The total cost of the bridge was \$670,381.92. Its total length is 884 feet. (Herbin)

### The Swinging Bridge

At the southern end of the valley, a group of ranches owned by members of the Grisamer and Robertson families were isolated by the Snake River. The road at the time was on the east side of the river (now called Henry's Road), and the ranches were on the west side of the river. Their only way across was by a swaying footbridge sagging from a half-inch cable. (Patric, p. 95) At one time there had been a ferry, but it washed away. The ranchers raised a few pigs, and since the river was a natural boundary, they let the pigs range around free. Their little nook along the west side of the Snake became known as Hog Island. (Nelson)

In 1938, Ora Grisamer's tractor broke down, and there was no way to get it to the repair shop. Grisamer heard about a fellow named Charles McCrary—a wizard mechanic—who was camping in the canyon across the river. Grisamer tracked him down and hired him to repair his tractor. The two men had to carry McCrary's tools across the narrow footbridge. "A wagon bridge would be worth \$1,000 to me and my neighbors," said Grisamer, "but there's no use talking about it. Government engineers say it would cost at least \$10,000 to swing any kind of a bridge across this river."

McCrary thought about it, and did some figuring in the back of his mind while he worked on the tractor. He told Grisamer he would build him a bridge for \$1,250 and guarantee it would hold three tons. Grisamer agreed, and that night in a simple contract McCrary agreed to

build a suspension bridge eight feet wide, from secondhand steel and old cables.

McCrary knew nothing of engineering, having only a picture postcard of the Golden Gate Bridge that would serve him in lieu of blueprints. He dug the foundations of the bridge with a contraption he had made himself which he called his "drag-line" excavator. It was made from an old truck with a sort of power shovel whose bucket hung from pulleys at the end of a crane. It had a 900-pound bucket made of old bridge



Swinging Bridge

2005.0025.025

girders cunningly welded together which could scoop up half a ton of gravel at a single bite. The rest of the machine consisted of such things as scrambled bits of gas pipe, a bicycle chain, a hay-rake seat, a locomotive coupling, and parts from automobiles and farm machines that McCrary had found on junk heaps.

McCrary salvaged steel for the huge supporting towers of his bridge from a twisted heap of bridge ruins

washed out in a flood of the Gros Ventre River. For the cables, McCrary set out in his old truck for the oil fields where he knew that the long cables used in well drilling were discarded when they developed kinks. Oil men gave him all the discarded cable he could haul away. During construction of the bridge, the county engineer came up to McCrary and asked to see the blueprints. When McCrary produced the postcard, the engineer shook his head and turned to gaze admiringly at the bridge. After a careful inspection, the engineer said he would approve the bridge for a three-ton limit if McCrary would make a few minor changes.

At the opening of the bridge, just two months from the day McCrary started building it, there was a ceremony with a touch of sadness. Ora Grisamer, who had waited half his life for a bridge, died just before it was finished. His daughter led the procession across the bridge driving his tractor in a fitting tribute. (Patric, pp. 95-98)

Betty Cook, Ora Grisamer's granddaughter, remembers walking across the bridge to get to the highway and feeling it bounce. The ranch didn't have any

snow plows, so she remembers her dad feeding the cattle on the road from the ranch house to the bridge in order to pack down the snow. Her dad would also hitch a team of horses on the car to get the momentum to get the car up to the highway from the bridge. "It was almost a hairpin turn and steep. That was scary," Betty remembers.

The Swinging Bridge served the Grisamers and the Robertsons for a quarter of a century until nature forced the highway to be rerouted to the west side of the river. A landslide pushed the road and a big chunk of hillside down into the river. Hog Island was no longer an island. (Nelson) The current bridge, still referred to as the Swinging Bridge, is located just south of the location of the original swinging bridge. Parts from the old Snake River Bridge near Wilson were used to build it as well as the bridge at Johnny Counts Flat (Astoria Hot Springs) in the Snake River Canyon. (Cassity, p. 465)

### The Cattleman's Bridge

Since the settlement of Jackson Hole, cattlemen have been grazing their cattle on public lands, including the Potholes area south of Signal Mountain and west of the Snake River. The ranchers moved the cattle from this area to summer range by herding them north, crossing the river on the dam at Jackson Lake. Cattlemen from the Porter, Brown and Hansen Ranches formed a group called



Cattleman's Bridge

Courtesy of Mike Cassity

the Potholes Grazing Association to coordinate this effort. As the economy shifted away from cattle ranching to tourism, increasing numbers of visitors crowded the roads. The administration of Grand Teton National Park asked the cattlemen to move its cattle drive away from the dam. To do this, they needed to construct an alternative route that would cross the Snake River in a less conspicuous location. (Cassity Report, p. 2) Jim Brown, whose father was a member of the Potholes Grazing Association, wasn't sure but thought the Association may have footed the bill for the new bridge which was built by Lew Wilson. Ralph Gill, whose father was also a member of the Association, confirmed that the Association built the bridge. He said that between 2,400

Continued on page five

Continued from page four

and 2,500 cattle were driven from above Moose north to above Colter Bay around the last week in June.

It is not clear when the Cattleman's Bridge was built, but by most accounts it was sometime between 1951 and 1954. (Cassity Report, p. 2-3) Loal Jacobson, who herded cattle for the Hansens in the 1950s, remembers taking cattle across the bridge. The 1955 movie *Far Horizons* told the story of the journey of Lewis and Clark, and was being filmed in the area, and Jacobson remembers having lunch with the movie crew. The actor Charlton Heston asked Jacobson if he could ride his horse, saying he had never ridden a real cow pony. The bridge also made an appearance in the 1963 movie *Spencer's Mountain*. In that movie, the son, Clayboy, made a dramatic run for help for the doctor, and the cameras showed him running across Cattleman's Bridge. (Cassity Report, p. 3-4)

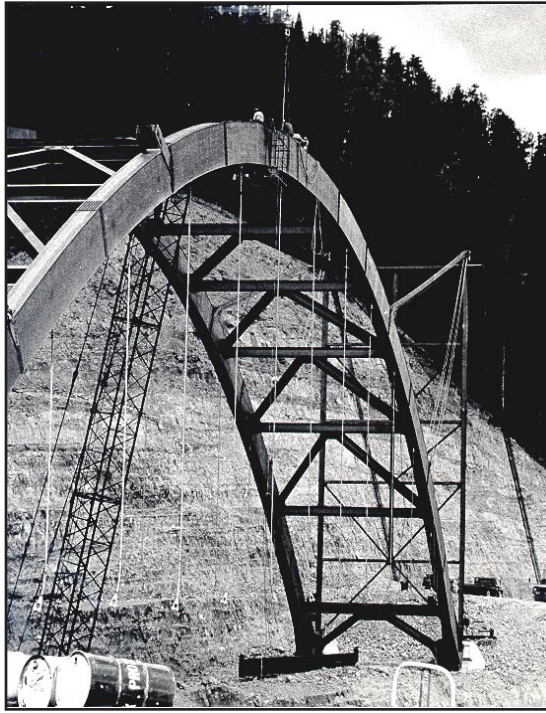
Mike Cassity, an historical researcher, found notes of a conversation between former Grand Teton National Park Cultural Resource Officer Mike Johnson and Senator Cliff Hansen. Hansen mentioned that "around 1957 the park decided to focus grazing more on the east side of the Snake River, so the Potholes area fell into only limited use."

Cassity says this "may imply that the traffic across the river did not come to an abrupt halt that year, but rather declined over the following years." One thing is for certain. Cattleman's Bridge served its purpose as a bridge for cattle drives for as long as they lasted, and later served recreationists as well.

Ranchers didn't have much of a reason to cross Cattleman's Bridge after grazing shifted geographically, and interest in the maintenance of the bridge by its builders or its owners waned. The bridge fell into disrepair. Cassity says "an October 1995 report by staff at Grand Teton National Park indicated that the bridge suffered damage and was repaired. That report noted, however, that 'the bulk of the bridge is rotten: piers, stringers, braces, and decking. Little solid wood remains.'" No one remembers exactly when the Cattleman's Bridge was dismantled, but Cassity believes it was not long after he did his report in August of 2000.

#### The Crater Lake Bridge

In 1967, the highway department began to realign the Teton Pass highway. This included the construction of the Crater Lake Bridge, sometimes known as the Mt. Glory Bridge, which would allow avalanches from Glory Bowl to pass unimpeded under the highway. The bridge was designed by the Wyoming Highway Department with the aid of Dr. Shieh W. Shen of the Engineering Research Dept. of



Crater Lake Bridge Courtesy of the Wyoming Department of Transportation

Colorado State University at Ft. Collins. After considerable research including the construction of a scale model, Dr. Shen used pure mathematics to verify that the department's design would weather any avalanche. (Jackson Hole Guide) Due to the lack of good rock for footing, the original bridge location was moved uphill and therefore, closer to the ground. A foreshadowing of what was in store for the bridge occurred in 1969 when the north skew back (foundation) was buried twice in avalanches. When it was nearing completion, a huge avalanche on January 22, 1970 destroyed the bridge.



Crater Lake Bridge Courtesy of Wyoming Department of Transportation

This proved to be a costly embarrassment for the highway department. They defended the structure, claiming that had the deck been poured, it would have survived the slide. Several experts were consulted, and one said that the distance from the bottom of the bridge to the gully, based on past events, should have been 160 feet when in fact it was only 110 feet. People discussed ideas such as building a new bridge. In the end the highway alignment was shifted uphill to where the road exists today. The new highway opened during the summer of 1970. Active avalanche control by blasting was begun in 1971 and continues today. (Yount)

Bridges in our county continue to make headlines. Currently, the existing structure on the Snake River at the Hoback Junction is scheduled for replacement — not because it's structurally unsafe, but because officials are concerned about improving the

safety and efficiency of the corridor. (Herbin) Additionally, there is an ongoing controversial discussion about the need for another bridge north of the Wilson Bridge.

By Liz Jacobson

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#### Resources

Brown, Jim. Telephone discussion, February 2008.

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Cassity, Michael, Ph.D. Report: "Cattleman's Bridge on the Snake River: Historical Background," August 14, 2000.

Cook, Betty. Telephone discussion, February 2008.

Gill, Ralph. Telephone discussion, March 2008.

Hayden, Elizabeth Wied. "History of Jackson Hole." Given at Eleventh Annual Field Conference of the Wyoming Geological Association, 1956, p. 18.

Herbin, Theresa. Public Involvement Specialist, Wyoming Department of Transportation, District 3, Rock Springs, Wyoming.

Jackson Hole Guide. September 25, 1969.

Jacobson, Loal. Telephone discussion, January 2008.

Kaufman, Dave. Engineering Senior, Wyoming Department of Transportation, Jackson office. Telephone and email discussions, January 2008.

Nelson, Fern. Scenes from a Long Life. "The Swinging Bridge."

Patric, John. Enterprise and Old Iron (condensed from The Christian Science Monitor). The Reader's Digest, January 1941, pp. 95-98.

Yount, Jamie. Avalanche Technician, Wyoming Department of Transportation, Jackson office. Excerpt from JHHSM Avalanche Program, "History of Avalanche Control on Teton Pass," January 6, 2005.

# Herdis Olson's Legacy

Another supporter of the Historical Society has passed from our midst, and we would like to remember her with this life sketch. Herdis Olson was born and raised in Copenhagen, Denmark. Her life of travel began when she graduated from high school and became an au pair in England where she lived for a year or two. She then took a job with the Danish Foreign Ministry, and was posted as a secretary at the Danish Embassy in Greenland for two years. When she returned to Denmark, the family for whom she had worked in England invited her to relocate with them to Australia for a year until they got settled. When she returned to Denmark she once again worked for the Foreign Ministry in Warsaw, Poland. It was there at an embassy party she met her husband Pierce who was working for the U.S. Foreign Service. She was in her late twenties by the time she met her soulmate, and they were married a year later. Herdis left her position at the Danish Embassy and became

a U.S. citizen. Pierce and Herdis lived in Washington, D.C. as well as in eight overseas posts.

Pierce and Herdis loved Jackson Hole and spent many vacations here. They bought a condo in Teton Village, and eventually bought a home in Skyline Ranch where they retired. They were both involved with the museum and historical society. Pierce gave walking tours and was on the board for years, serving as board president for two years. The Jackson Hole Historical Society and Museum published his book *Landmarks of the Rocky Mountain Fur Trade* in 1997. Herdis made an impact on the community by working at the women's shelter and with the hospice group. Jean Day met Herdis in 1986 when they both were involved with the Task Force on Family Violence and Sexual Assault (now the Community Safety Network). They served on the hotline and on the board of directors together. Jean remembers Herdis as "the strongest woman I've ever known, very intelligent, and so proud

to be Danish. She had such a special love and respect for her husband and daughter." She was an avid bridge player, and her bridge group was a very important part of her life in Jackson. She was also an artist, working in traditional Norwegian folk art called rosemaling.

Her daughter Vibeke says her mother "was intelligent, had a great sense of humor, and she loved to travel! She lived her life like one great adventure, and I think that's one of the most cherished gifts she gave me—the desire to see and experience as much of the world as possible." Five years ago, after Pierce died and Herdis was being treated for cancer, she moved back to North Carolina to live with Vibeke. Before her death in December 2007, Herdis generously pledged \$100,000 towards the capital campaign for the new Museum of Jackson Hole. We gratefully accept this gift as a legacy which will live on in our hearts and community.

Thank you, Herdis.



Rodeo parade on Broadway 1958.1813.001

### LEAVE A LEGACY

*Please remember us during your estate planning. By leaving a bequest, creating a memorial, or donating historical items you will help the Jackson Hole Historical Society and Museum preserve a lasting heritage for generations to come. For more information on how you can help, please contact us at 733-9605.*

## Photographs

The Jackson Hole Historical Society and Museum has a collection of over 14,000 historic photographs. Most of the images used in the newsletter are part of that collection. Copies of these photographs are great for keepsakes, gifts, or decorating your home. Photographs are available in four sizes and in both black and white or sepia.

Come in and browse, or visit our website photo gallery for additional ideas at [www.jacksonholehistory.org](http://www.jacksonholehistory.org). Proceeds from the sale of these photographs help support the efforts of the Jackson Hole Historical Society and Museum.



Looking at the Tetons 1993.4922.001



Branding a calf, Wilson, WY 1992.4409.001



*Jackson Hole*  
Historical Society  
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