

# JACKSON HOLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM CHRONICLE

VOLUME XXXV NO. 4

JACKSON'S HOLE, WYOMING

AUTUMN 2015

# Happy Holidays!



*From your Museum Staff!*

## Jackson Hole's American Indian Dancers

The names of Reginald and Gladys Laubin are recognized by few folks today either in Jackson Hole or elsewhere in the country, but in their heyday they were celebrated internationally for their interpretation of true Native American dance as well as their knowledge of Indian lifeways, and as artisans of their crafts. The three books they published are still in print and considered to be classics as well as the standard resources on their respective subjects: *The Indian Tipi*, *Indian Dances of North America*, and *American Indian Archery*.

Those who do remember them here in the valley will do so most likely as friends and neighbors, or for their over 30 years of summer performances at Jackson Lake Lodge. Those concerts finally concluded at the end of August, 1988, when Reginald decided, at age 84, that it was time to retire!

Neither of the Laubins had a Native American background; he was of German ancestry and she was Belgian-French. By 1926 they had been

*[Continued on page 4]*



The Laubins in costume.

## Mission Statement

*Preserving and sharing the heritage of Jackson Hole*

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## FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK:

Looking back over the past year, we would like to draw your attention to one of the highlights of 2015 that may not be so visible to the public eye: this past year the JHSM welcomed a total of eight new board members: Clayton Andrews, Sybilla Balkanski, Mike Gireau, Jim Hunt, Laura Ladd, John Lummis, Bob McLaurin and Rob Wallace. We are excited to have them on board and welcome the enthusiasm and expertise they bring!



Another highlight is the development of our new website at [jacksonholehistory.org](http://jacksonholehistory.org). Our thanks to Heather Hamilton-Brown from Gliffen Design for working with us to create the site and our new look. In addition to what is currently on the site, we have some exciting additions coming online very soon – a ‘Historical Atlas’ of Jackson Hole that focuses on early settlement north of town and a timeline that dates back to the pre-contact era. The Historical Atlas, designed by JHSM’s Director of Historical Research Samantha Ford, will be up by the end of the year, and the timeline will be available by the time our next newsletter comes out in the spring. Stay tuned – we will be sending out an email alert to our members as soon as these are up!

As we wind up the year, we would like to give a special thanks to Bob Lenz (our official liaison with the Town) and his wife Miriam for their generous donation which paid for the graphics which have allowed us to have the word “MUSEUM” on the two covered wagons that grace our Cache Street location [see photo above]. We would also like to welcome our newest volunteers, Reade and David Dornan, who are working in the Stan Klassen Research Center, assisting our Director of Archives Emily Winters in the W.C. “Slim” Lawrence Library.

If you would like to volunteer or help support the museum, please see our End of the Year Appeal on page 3. And don’t forget *Olde Tyme Christmas* on December 10 at 7pm in the Jackson Room of the Wort Hotel: we look forward to seeing you there – come early and enjoy music with Shelley Rubrecht and her fiddlers!

Sharon Kahin Ph.D.  
Executive Director

## Coming soon!

An anonymous donor is giving JHSM the sculpture of Bud Boller’s “Mountain Man” based on Charlton Heston’s portrayal of Bill Tyler in Columbia Pictures’ “Mountain Man.”



According to Monty Paddleford of Eagle Bronze Foundry in Lander, the late artist’s son-in-law, Heston actually came to Boller’s studio outside of Dubois to pose to the piece. The sculpture, which is quite large, is scheduled to arrive in Jackson

# SANTA WISH LIST



## Help us get off to a good start for 2016!

🎄 Sponsorships for our signature **Voices of the Valley** program series: these can be named sponsorships, either individually or as a complete series at a cost of approximately \$1,500 each or \$6,000 for the annual series of 4. Or consider donating any amount as a partial sponsor. Thank you either way!

🎄 Computer touch screens for each of our **exhibits** in our *Indians of the Greater Yellowstone* Museum at Deloney and/or our homesteading and ranching museum at North Cache; these will allow us to greatly expand our interpretation at a total of 10 strategic locations. Estimated \$2,000 per station (includes content design) – either separately or as a package for each location, we are happy to put your name on each and every one!

🎄 Support the **Jackson Hole Archaeological Initiative**; join in the adventure of exploring the past! Please consider helping support any (or all) of the following:  
Obsidian Sourcing- per object- \$30 (need 100)  
Lipid Residue Analysis- per object \$250  
AMS/Radio-Carbon Dates- per object \$595  
Summer AmeriCorps Intern: \$3500



🎄 **General operations:** we do need help with our general operating budget so please consider a gift to help us keep the lights on and our toes warm – and thank you again for your support!



Questions on how best to give? Contact Brenda Roberts, Assistant Director at 307-733-2414.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

CC# \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_ Code \_\_\_\_\_

In Memory or to Honor at Christmas \_\_\_\_\_

Jackson Hole Historical Society & Museum

P.O. Box 1005, Jackson, WY 83001

## American Indian Dancers - continued from page 1



Reginald Laubin

experimenting with Indian dances and were intrigued with the idea that learning, living, and sharing American Indian lifeways and crafts could possibly become their life's work or at least a worthy endeavor, requiring years of effort and dedication.

Typical of the era they emerged from was the notion that the real Native American was doomed for extinction and what little of their customs and culture that remained was in vital need of preserving. Ethnologists and photographers, like Edward Curtis, were busily roaming the West interviewing 'the old ones' and creating films and photos in an effort to record what was left.

On the other end of the spectrum were the entertainers and showmen who were offering exciting, but mostly skewed, portrayals of Native Americans. These included the Wild West shows that were roaming the country and Europe, such as Buffalo Bill's, as well as the blossoming film industry that found the 'cowboy and Indian' genre to be

a popular moneymaker.

Even the new and expanding Boy Scout movement, along with its competing groups, including Daniel Beard's Sons of Daniel Boone and Ernest Seton's Woodcraft Indians, used the notion of learning and using American Indian arts and wood lore to create more noble and productive citizens. Additionally, the burgeoning campcraft movement, under the guiding leadership of men like Horace Kephart, George Sears, Warren Miller, and others like them, promoted learning the skills and lifeways of Native Americans as the pathway to success in the woods and in life itself.

In the midst of all this 'playing Indian' atmosphere, the Laubins offered a refreshing change in presenting concerts that endeavored to teach and demonstrate what they had learned from their time living on reservations and traveling among the Sioux, Crow, Shoshoni, and listening to the remaining elders. To quote some high praise indeed about Reginald and Gladys Laubin from Louis R. Bruce (Sioux-Mohawk), Commissioner of Indian Affairs (1969-73):

*"I have known them and their lifetime dedication to the preservation of Indian dance and culture for a long time, when they first presented their Ancient Indian Dances for the National Congress of American Indians. Without question, it was one of the finest programs I have ever witnessed and I have seen many Indian performances. We Indians are very skeptical of non-Indians interpreting our dances, but Reginald and Gladys are imbued with their true spirit and character, and are the first to present real Indian dancing on the concert stage, either here at home or abroad."*

Although they had already been performing Indian dances in the East, the Laubins truly began their Native journey when they loaded their self-made tipi along with their belongings into a Model-T Ford and headed to the Standing Rock Indian Reservation in the Dakotas. There they met with some of the tribal elders, through introductions made by Frank Zahn (Frank Flying Cloud) with whom they had corresponded before they left the East.

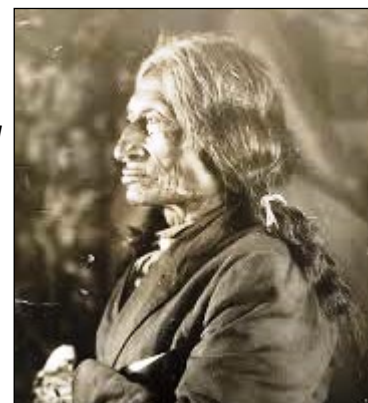
Probably the most noteworthy experience of their careers came when they were adopted by the Sioux. Zahn wanted them to meet Chief One Bull, who was the nephew and adopted son of Sitting Bull. Gladys' diary offers this picture of the event:

*One Bull had come to the fair with his wife, daughter and her husband, Joshua Spotted Horse, in a little old Model-T Ford so loaded down with bedding and camping equipment that there was no room for costumes. Flying Cloud wanted us to take a good picture of the old man, but when he learned the One Bull had no costume with him, Frank was very much disappointed, until Reginald offered the use of his own, which saved the day.*

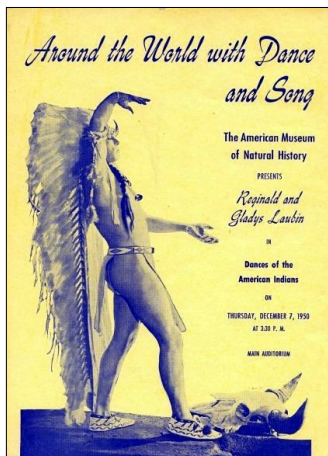
*At about the same time a crowd of Indian women collected around me. Before I knew what was happening the old women had gathered around me like bumblebees, admiring and measuring my long dark braids. ... It was a new experience for me and to say I was frightened is putting it mildly, until I caught Flying Cloud's laughing eyes assuring me it was all right. One Bull's wife held up her small hands showing that my hair was nine hands long! The women*



Gladys Laubin



Chief One Bull



Program cover from JHHSM collection.

squealed their delight in little high pitched voices. I looked up and now One Bull was holding my braids and ... he was telling the people, "The Indian girls cut their hair. They are neither Indian nor white. ... I like this nice long hair. She's more Indian than our Indian girls are."

When One Bull put on Reginald's costume he seemed transformed from an old man into a proud chief. When he saw the shield that Reginald had made with the buffalo head on it he exclaimed, "He has my name on his shield!"

Reginald's journal continues the story:

*I had been using the name Black Buffalo as my Indian name and a picture of a black buffalo on my shield could just as well be One Bull. Flying Cloud then told One Bull that we did Indian dancing and he immediately invited us to dance with the Indians that night. ... We took part in the Crow, Victory, Buffalo, and Grass dances. One Bull still wore my costume and danced every dance from 7:30 to midnight. He was only 82 then.*

*The next morning...the old man came to us and said, "I am going to adopt you tonight." He didn't ask if we would like it or not. He was just going to do it. Needless to say we were as happy as meadowlarks.*

*One Bull painted our faces that afternoon in preparation for the ceremony that night. He gave me the "mountain lion paint," representing the tracks of a mountain lion... Gladys' face he painted with a design that showed he had rescued a wounded comrade in battle."*

During that evening's ceremony One Bull spoke to the gathered tribes:

*You see them dressed in the garb of our people but they belong to the white race. They have come a long way to see us and I am going to adopt them into this great nation. Upon the man I confer the name of One Bull (Tatanka Wanjilia), the name of your chief. Upon the woman I bestow the name Wiyaka Wastewin, Good Feather. Good Feather is the name of my mother as you all know. So now my friends and tribesmen, recognize these two people by the names I have given them!*

Reginald's journal continues:

*It changed my entire outlook on life – I had come home, I had Indian kinsfolk, now, with whom I could dance and sing, and share stories about 'the old days.' I was two personalities in one, but we were both Americans. I told Gladys that night: "For the past dozen years our dancing has spoken from our research in libraries, museums, and third-hand retold stories. But, now, here at the horses mouth, so to speak, we should carefully review every movement, of every dance, to ensure its accuracy in the eyes of our kinsmen." It was a lofty thought. I knew then that my dancing would have soul.*

And so it did. For the next 50 plus years they continued to travel the country and the world, sharing their message and dances. Settling in Jackson Hole, they added the weekly summer concerts at the Jackson Lake Lodge and focused much of their presentations in schools around the country. They wrote books, made films, and received awards; they toured Europe with their troupe of Crow dancers; contributed articles to *The Dance Encyclopedia*; and donated much of their artifacts and paraphernalia collected over the years to the new Spurlock Museum at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where it still is housed today. Their legacy still endures even though they are gone: Gladys died in 1996 and Reginald followed her in 2000 at age 96.

John Martin, the dance critic for the New York Times, perhaps summed it up best when he wrote in 1944: "Theoretically there is little to be said in defense of dancers who go about doing 'authentic' dances of other races. Why the same indefensibility does not attach itself to the Laubins it would be difficult to say, but it definitely does not. Though Mr. Laubin's explanations of the dances were those of an outsider, this air of the guide and interpreter falls away when he dances and he simply presents the Indian in his own art."

There is much more to this story, of course, as there is in any person's life. You can discover additional details by reading their biography, *Reginald & Gladys Laubin, American Indian Dancers*, by Starr West Jones or their own books, all of which are available in our Museum Store or online at [jacksonholehistory.org](http://jacksonholehistory.org). Their videos are also available for viewing in our Research Center by appointment.



One Bull paints Reginald.

# COLLABORATING WITH THE COMMUNITY

EMILY WINTERS

On the east side of Jackson stands a house that has been there almost a century. Construction started in 1917, and was completed in 1918; this former residence of Dr. Charles Huff and his family has seen a lot in its nearly 100 years. In 1918, the Huff family moved in. At that time, the family was comprised of Dr. Charles Huff, his wife, Edna, and their two year old daughter, Gretchen. Very soon, in June of 1918, another daughter, Kathleen, joined the family. The Huffs had been living in various rentals since they first arrived in the valley from Maryland. They lived at the Reed Hotel, a rental owned by Charlie Fox that later belonged to the Si Ferrin family, and a small log cabin that they rented from the Mercill family. The stability that the new house provided was a welcome relief to the young parents as they now had a home instead of a house.



Dr. Charles Huff

Over the years the family welcomed another addition, a son named Charles Huff, Jr. The family became known throughout the valley and so did their residence. Dr. Huff was a gifted surgeon and a well-respected doctor. As the first full-time doctor in Jackson Hole, he played a key role in setting up St John's Hospital in 1916. Edna was a registered nurse, and acted as her husband's assistant until other nurses came to town. Even after the hospital was completed, Dr. Huff would go and do what was needed for the community. In her oral history Gretchen Huff Francis recalls:

*"At one point my father moved all of his equipment out of the hospital into our house and we were moved out into the granary. Father put up beds and mother covered the walls with colored cheese cloth and they used the house for a hospital... I remember he removed [a man's] appendix in the office in our house and then he carried that man upstairs to the bed, Mother*

*helped him through that time. She got meals for the patients and took care of them. I can remember my mother taking kids and families into the house all the time and bathing, feeding them and giving them a place to stay as long as it was needed."*

Along with his dedicated service to others, Dr. Huff also thoroughly enjoyed life in this frontier community. Gretchen Francis recollects how her father *"...loved young people and he loved to dance and loved to give parties and have picnics."* It is fitting that so many years after the Huffs have gone, the Huff house, now renamed the Huff House Inn and Cabins, has once again become a place for others to relax and enjoy themselves.

This summer, JHSM partnered with the new management of the Huff House



Photos and artifacts on display.

Inn and Cabins to create an exhibit around the doctor and his family. Kristi Steiert, the general manager, and her husband Clint, have renovated and beautifully decorated the house, cabins and grounds that are all part of the Inn. Together we decided that the exhibit would be in the main hallway and consist of twelve images with labels and a case to display artifacts. The end result gives a broad overview of the history of the Huffs, as well as the role Dr. Huff played in developing St. John's Hospital. The case contains Huff's medical bag,

as well as medical instruments that belonged to Dr. MacLeod, Dr. Huff's successor - another highly respected physician. The Huff House Inn is located at 240 E. Deloney Ave. To see the exhibit for yourself, please call (307) 733-7141 to set up a time.



Entrance to the Huff house.



Edna Huff



Historic photos line the hallway.

# THE JACKSON HOLE ARCHAEOLOGY INITIATIVE

MATT STIRN & REBECCA SGOUROS

## The Mystery of the Ice Bison

Earlier this spring, a hiker sent photos to the JHSM which showed bison and bighorn sheep skulls melting out of an ice patch high in the Absaroka Mountains, not far from Jackson Hole. Ice patches, which can contain preserved organic artifacts for thousands of years, offer a glimpse into ancient alpine life. In September, the museum's environmental archaeologists Matt Stirn and Rebecca Sgouros - accompanied by Dr. Craig Lee from the Institute for Arctic and Alpine Research and Nealy Pound, the museum's Americorps Summer Archaeology Intern - visited the ice patch in hopes of finding evidence of prehistoric hunting. The team located bones from at least 4 (largely complete) bison and 3 (partial) bighorn sheep skeletons, plus a single elk bone. The bones and teeth recovered are undergoing further examination back at JHSM. The team did not find any stone tools, organic artifacts, or evidence of butchery to suggest that people were involved with the deaths of these animals. Therefore, the question remains: How and why did so many different animals end up in the ice?

Several of the bones have been sent out for radiocarbon dating to determine how long ago the animals lived. While bison rarely end up above 11,000 feet in the mountains today, it would not have been uncommon in the past. In recent years, research teams from several other archaeological projects have found bison remains high above tree line in the Greater Yellowstone area. It is also interesting to note that Shoshone oral histories mention an ancient bison migration route which ran from the Jackson Hole area over the Absaroka Mountains, through Dubois and into the Red Desert. Over the winter, with help from the June Frison Memorial Fund at UW, and Ed and Shirley Cheramy, the JHSM team plans to conduct scientific analyses on the bones to learn more about the animals who passed away. Stable isotope studies will help us reconstruct their diets, health, and possibly even where they came from. Additionally, these tests can help to reconstruct the environment and climate at the time of the animal's life.

## COLLECTIONS CORNER - JENNA N. THORBURN

Summer came and went so quickly here at the museum that some of my "to-do list" items did not get checked off while we had summer interns and volunteers. One of those items in the collections department was to inventory all the artifacts we have stored in the Wiley building behind the Mercill cabin. Therefore, I began the inventory work in Wiley in September and have worked on it at least once a week since and will have it finished by end of November. Let me explain why inventorying this building has become a priority for the museum.

The land where the Mercill Archeology Center (105 Mercill), the Wiley Building, the Shane Cabin and garage are located is owned by Teton County. The museum owns all the buildings. The museum's lease on the land expires in 2 years and there is a great possibility that it will not be renewed by the county. If this happens, the museum will face a serious challenge because all four buildings are used for storage and most are at capacity. The Coey Cabin and Wiley building are our two main storage areas for artifacts not on exhibit that the museum has acquired over the last fifty-seven years. Inventorying the Wiley building is so important because we need to see what we have, and to help create a priority list when it comes time to relocate. Moving would be an astronomical task to the museum staff, and most likely exceed costs the museum could afford. Knowing how much we have, and how much space we would need to occupy a new storage space is why inventory is so important at this time.

On a more cheerful note, while inventorying the building, I have come across some interesting items. One of those items is a pair of locked moose antlers. I have gone through files and the museum's database and cannot find where or how this item was acquired by the museum. Any information from our readers would be helpful. Please call the office (307-733-2414) if you can help solve this 'mystery at the museum'.





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**You are Invited!**



# **Olde Tyme Christmas**

at

**The Wort Hotel**

**Thursday, December 10, 2015**

**7:00 p.m. in the Jackson Room**

**Music ~ Stories ~ Treats ~ & More!**

