

Figure 1 (left): José Brito at age 29 in 1893. Photo taken in Los Angeles at the Galería de la Plaza, 513 N. Main St. Figure 2 (right): Frank C. Brito at age 20 in his 1st U.S. Volunteer Cavalry "Rough Rider" uniform, 1898. Both photos, Brito collection.

The Rough Rider Brito Brothers and their Shooting Irons

Frank J. Brito

Introduction

New Mexico Territory in the late 1800s and early 1900s could be a rough and lawless place. This reputation delayed statehood

until 1912 because it was considered "uncivilized." Gunfights, murders and street brawls still occurred on unpaved streets and wooden sidewalks. Prosecutor Albert Fountain and

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The Branding Iron

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The Branding Iron is always seeking articles of up to around 20 pages dealing with every phase of the history of the Old West and California. Contributions from both members and friends are always welcome.

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Editor's Corner . . .

We could hardly believe it! After what felt like an eternity of pandemic lockdown restrictions, the Los Angeles Corral of Westerners has at long last returned to in-person Roundups. To kick off this Fall 2021 issue, Frank Brito shares some family history of the Brito brothers and the firearms they used as Rough Riders and in law enforcement (and law breaking!). Living Legend Monsignor Weber also shares an Apache myth of the making of the Grand Canyon.

If you missed any meetings this fall, you can catch up on what you missed with summaries of recent Roundups and the spectacu-

lar 75th Anniversary Gather, written by fellows Alan Griffin and Patrick Mulvey, and resident Corral yarn-spinner Gary Turner.

Looking for good books to read? Check out book reviews by Brian Dillon and fellow Arkaz Vardanyan. Brian also eulogizes one of Westerners International's great authors, Will Bagley, who has recently left us.

The Branding Iron would not be possible without the enthusiastic contributions of its readers. Thank you all!

Happy Trails!

John Dillon

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Figure 3: Colt Single Army Action Revolver, 5 ½" barrel, .45 caliber issued to José Brito, Troop I, 1st U.S. Volunteer Cavalry ("Rough Riders"). Brito collection.

his young son were killed by Albert Fall's gang as they were on their way home to La Mesilla in 1896. Pat Garrett was assassinated in 1908 because he was close to identifying the killers. Violence diminished in Lincoln County and migrated to Doña Ana and Grant Counties. Elections were rigged and outlaws easily escaped to Mexico just 45 miles away. The law was often corrupt, ignored, or bypassed and disputes were dealt with personally, often in violent ways. This was the time and place in which the Brito Brothers grew up. Except for one tragic mistake in judgment, they had productive careers in honest law enforcement and the military—always with their firearms at hand.

José Brito and his Rough Rider Revolver

The Brito Family of Las Cruces, New Mexico includes two veterans of the 1st U.S. Volunteer Cavalry, commonly known as "Roosevelt's Rough Riders." This group of 1,060 officers and men, many from New Mexico and Arizona, enlisted in May 1898 to fight the Spanish at the beginning of the Spanish-American War. Two of these men were Frank C. Brito, and his brother, José Brito. Both were cowboys working in April 1898 for the Circle Bar Ranch near Silver City, New Mexico. After the War, Frank and José

returned home after mustering out at Camp Wikoff on Montauk Point, Long Island in New York State. José reenlisted in the Regular Army and was sent to the Philippines where he, presumably, was missing in action or killed. Searching for his Philippine military records in the National Archives reveals that they are destroyed or lost.

An article appeared in the January/February 1989 issue of *Man at Arms—The NRA Journal for the American Arms Collector*, listing the serial numbers of the firearms issued to the Rough Riders. The Spanish-American War sidearms were Colt Single Action Army revolvers (Colt SAA) in .45 Colt caliber with manufacturing dates between 1873 and 1897. Two of these pistols were issued to Frank and José and their names and firearm serial numbers were recorded and documented by the U.S. Army at the Springfield Armory. These records are now held by the National Park Service. Antique arms collectors commonly call these Rough Rider revolvers "Artillery Models" because U.S. Army Ordnance cut 7 ½ inch cavalry barrels down to 5 ½ inches. Kenneth Moore in his research and book with the eponymous title says the correct name is "Single Action Army Revolvers—U.S. Alterations."¹

Making Rough Rider firearms difficult to research is that only Troops "G" and "I"

listed the serial numbers by soldiers' names. Therefore, only about 160 revolvers can be unquestionably documented as Rough Rider issues. Of these, only eight are known to exist today. Since 1997, a search has been conducted at gun shows and antique arms web sites seeking these revolvers more from curiosity and with little expectation of success. The serial numbers were memorized, inquiries made in internet antique arms forums and every opportunity was sought to check gun show displays of Colt Artillery Models.

In February 2010 during a regular internet search for either pistol, 13 years of patience were finally rewarded. José's pistol was placed for sale with an antique arms broker and the history of the pistol was determined by the seller, a retired university professor. The provenance added a premium to the rarity as a military item, and now the revolver has been returned to Brito family custody by the seller.²

Even if you are unfamiliar with firearms, you would still quickly recognize this revolver as a "cowboy gun" from the movies. This is a misnomer, as it was invented and patented in 1871 and manufactured by Colt's Manufacturing Company for the U.S. Cavalry beginning in 1873.³ The Colt SAA fired a 250-grain lead projectile nearly ½ inch in diameter (.452") and was a man-stopper. As an effective military sidearm, it was later replaced by the semi-automatic Colt Model 1911 in .45 caliber. It was purchased by the military from 1873 through 1897, and was the official sidearm for the Army during the Indian Wars, but also won early acceptance by civilians. In both military and commercial markets, the revolver in various barrel lengths was a great success. You may be familiar with the World War Two photo of Gen. Patton wearing a nickel-plated Colt SAA as his unofficial sidearm.

José Brito's Colt revolver was manufactured for black powder cartridge use and while capable of being operated today, it should not be fired with modern, high-pressure, smokeless powder cartridges to avoid risk of damage. It is a military and family history artifact that has been passed on to younger generations. Because of small

production numbers there is a scarcity of Colt Single Action Army "Martial" revolvers. Martial Colt SAA revolvers were purchased by the military for about 24 years. They are stamped with a prominent "U.S." on the left side of the frame and have other U.S. Army Ordnance inspector markings known as "cartouches." José's pistol was one of 8,000 made in 1891 for civilian and military use. I discovered that there is a sub-community of collectors that seeks antique arms identified with named individuals. Not only do collectors seek martial arms of specific manufacturers, models, conflicts, dates and eras, certain collectors specialize in items that are documented as issued to specific soldiers. Therefore, the José Brito revolver is "doubly scarce" as a U.S. Army Artillery Model used in the Spanish-American War and listed as issued to José Brito. As an extreme example in the military collector community, General George Pershing's documented Cavalry Model Colt SAA was valued at \$106,000 in 2010.

Besides training at the Tampa, Florida military gun range with their revolvers, Frank and José were involved in an escapade that caused a panic. A carnival in nearby Ybor City erected a shooting gallery for .22 caliber rifles. Hearing about the carnival, Frank, José, and other Rough Riders attended the carnival after hours looking for amusement. Disdaining the weak bullets at the gallery, the troopers used their own revolvers in .45 Colt and with a deafening noise, had the gallery employees jumping over the hay bales and carnival attendees running for the exits. The Georgia Volunteers were called in to restore order and only later did Colonel Roosevelt discover that our Rough Riders had shut down the festivities.

Frank and José never boarded the ship to Cuba, but stayed in Tampa, Florida. Four Troops (Companies) of the 1st U.S. Voluntary Cavalry did not venture to battle because of lack of space on the ships. Troop I was one of those that stayed in Tampa. Roosevelt considered the Brito brothers more valuable as jailers because they could speak, read, and write Spanish. They worked in the stockade and tended to Spanish prisoners and also

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



Territory of New Mexico }
City or Town of Santa Fe } ss.

I, Jose Brito, born in El Paso, in the State of Texas, aged 34 years and _____ months, and by occupation a cowboy, DO HEREBY ACKNOWLEDGE to have voluntarily enlisted, this 6th day of May, 1898, as a **SOLDIER** in the VOLUNTEER ARMY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, for the period of TWO YEARS unless sooner discharged by proper authority: And do also agree to accept from the United States such bounty, pay, rations, and clothing as are or may be established by law. And I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, and that I will serve them honestly and faithfully against all their enemies whomsoever; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States, and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to the Rules and Articles of War.

Subscribed and duly sworn to before me this 6th day of May, A. D. 1898.

Jose Brito
Charles L. Cooper
Captain, 10th Cavalry.
Recruiting Officer.

I CERTIFY That I have carefully examined the above-named man agreeable to the General Regulations of the Army, and that, in my opinion, he is free from all bodily defects and mental infirmity which would in any way, disqualify him from performing the duties of a soldier.

Wm. A. Surgeon
Examining Officer.

I CERTIFY That I have minutely inspected the above-named man, Jose Brito, previous to his _____ enlistment, and that he was entirely sober when enlisted; that, to the best of my judgment and belief, he fulfills all legal requirements; and that I have accepted and enlisted him into the service of the United States under this contract of enlistment as duly qualified to perform the duties of an able-bodied soldier, and, in doing so, have strictly observed the Regulations which govern the Recruiting Service. This soldier has dark brown eyes, black hair, dark complexion, is _____ feet _____ inches high.

Charles L. Cooper
Captain, 10th Cavalry.
Recruiting Officer.

NOTE.—Indelible or permanent marks found upon the person of a Recruit will be here noted.

Figure 4: José Brito's enlistment contract, 1898. Brito collection.

cared for the many horses that could not be transported to Cuba. Remaining behind in Florida bitterly disappointed both brothers. Because of their assignment, the revolvers never made it to Cuba. However, José's

gun most likely made it to the Philippines and was used in combat because documentation shows it may have been refurbished at the Manila Arsenal. Unfortunately, while José did not return to the U.S., his revolver

did. Undoubtedly, José was required to turn in his pistol at Camp Wikoff, NY after service in Florida and it would have been recalled by the arsenal for refurbishing. José left New York for Pinos Altos and a brief rest after mustering out of the Rough Riders on September 15, 1898 and before reporting for duty to the Philippines via San Francisco. It is well documented that U.S. soldiers shipping out to the Philippines left via Fort McDowell on Angel Island in San Francisco Bay.

Arriving in the Philippines, the U.S. Army soldiers were issued a Model 1892 Colt double action revolver in .38 LC (Long Colt) caliber. This was a weak cartridge and it often took several shots to stop a charging Philippine rebel. Many U.S. soldiers were killed and injured before the wounded rebels dropped or expired. After several officers complained, the Ordnance Corps resurrected the thought-to-be-outdated 1873 Colt SAA revolvers in .45 caliber and shipped them to the Philippines, replacing the weaker guns. The Spanish-American War in the Philippines was the last conflict where the Colt SAA was in official use. At its end, the Colt SAA revolvers were turned in, warehoused in Armory vaults and eventually sold to the public.

José Brito's enlistment record (Figure 4) shows that he was born in El Paso, Texas in 1864. His mother, Ancelma, lived there or more likely in nearby San Elizario while his father, Santiago, worked the gold mines in Pinos Altos, New Mexico about 160 miles distant. Santiago was a Janos Mission-educated, Spanish-speaking Apache Indian. As a former Janos, Chihuahua Militia trooper, Santiago had a connection to the Presidio in San Elizario, Texas and lived there for several years. Pinos Altos lacked the comforts or necessities for Santiago to raise a family with three children, and this mining camp was unsafe due to the Apache Wars. When Pinos Altos became more settled by the mid 1870s, Santiago's wife and children (Estanislada, Estéfana and José) joined him to live in a house (still in use) across from the blacksmith shop.

As a single man in 1886, José served as a police officer in Georgetown, a silver mining



Figure 5: The Old Plaza Church, Los Angeles, California, in the 1890s. The Galería where José Brito had his photo taken (Figure 1) was likely in the building at the far left with the awning. Photo by William Henry Jackson, and in the public domain.

town of 1,200 people just northeast of Silver City. Only rock foundations, dirt streets, prospect holes and mine dumps remain of Georgetown. Retired Police Chief and Santiago Brito descendant Thomas J. Ryan of Silver City has guided and shown family members the foundations of the store where José fell unconscious after being stabbed by a drunkard he was attempting to arrest. Four news articles in Silver City newspapers recorded José's adventures in Grant County. One such episode read:⁴

Letter to the editor from Cassins Common, Georgetown:

One Eugenio Romero, a Mexican, who had been indulging [in alcohol] too freely... picked a quarrel with a Mexican woman, who sent for the constable to come and arrest the offender.

José Brito and John Carter, acting as special constables during the absence of Constable Spencer, upon being informed of the difficulty proceeded at once to the home where Romero was, to make the arrest. Brito having reached the house first, arrested Romero and started to take him to jail, where the prisoner, watching his chance, grabbed the officer's six-shooter with one hand and with the other clutching a large sized Spanish dirk drove it to the handle into Brito's left breast just

above the heart. He then took refuge behind the corner of the house having possessed himself of the constable's gun, and still holding on to the knife. At this stage of the proceedings Carter arrived on the scene and fired two or three shots at the would-be murderer, who since he got loose from the officer had been shooting at everyone whom he chanced to see; but being shielded by the corner of the house, Carter's shots did not take effect; he kept on advancing toward Romero however, until he reached him, who by this time had emptied his shooter and sprang upon Carter with the dirk inflicting a very ugly and painful wound in the left thigh. Brito by this time was on hand again and in a few seconds had the prisoner at his mercy using a full grown colt to tame him with by repeated blows over the head.

The prisoner was taken to jail by Brito and others and although it was hard to tell his face from hamburger steak the doctor reported him all right. Aside from his bruises he (Romero) was shot in the leg.

Brito after having turned his prisoner over to other parties walked back to the store of John Deemer, a distance of some hundred and fifty yards and fell to the floor, and was for a long time insensible. He finally regained consciousness and was taken to Hefley's Hotel where he is slowly recovering. Carter's wound, though not so bad as Brito's, will probably lay him up for several weeks.

Leaving New Mexico about 1893, José moved to Los Angeles, California at age 29. He had his photo taken at the downtown plaza next to the La Nuestra Señora Catholic Church (Figure 5). Shortly thereafter in 1894, he moved north to Kern County, and was a miner in the town of Keene in the Tehachapi Mountains east of Bakersfield. José moved back to Los Angeles in 1896 and listed his occupation as a laborer. An elementary school was built over 1262 Temple Street, José's old home address.⁵ He rejoined his family in Grant County, New Mexico to work as

a cowboy with his younger brother Frank, both subsequently enlisting in the Rough Riders in 1898.

José Brito's military enlistment contract (Figure 4), pay and mustering out documents for the Cuban period were obtained from the National Archives (NARA). More problematic has been obtaining his service records for the Philippine Insurrection. Despite a third attempt, using different terminology, to obtain José's Philippine military file, NARA was unable to locate his records. José's height has been listed variously at 5 feet 9 $\frac{7}{8}$ inches and 6 feet; he had brown eyes and black hair. In both Kern and Los Angeles Counties, he was a voter, his name appearing in the Great Registers.

Did José Brito die in combat against the Moros? Or did he desert the Army to make a home in the Philippines and raise a family, as did a number of other soldiers? His niece Anselma Mendoza said there are family rumors to that effect. Whatever the answer is, José disappeared there and he left us no clues. All we have to remember him by are a photo and his old revolver.

Frank C. Brito, Rough Rider

Frank Charles Brito was an enlisted man in the Spanish-American War serving in the U.S. 1st Volunteer Cavalry, "Roosevelt's Rough Riders." He was born in the gold mining camp of Pinos Altos, New Mexico on August 24, 1877 during the height of the Apache Wars to a mission-educated Native American of Apache descent. His father Santiago, a gold miner, claimed to be a Yaqui (for obvious reasons), but DNA and Mexican Archives reveal the true origins of the family. With Frank's birth, he joined in the family of two sisters and one brother, all considerably older: Estanislada born in 1856, Estéfana born in 1858 and José born in 1864. All his older siblings were born in San Elizario, Texas, the former Mexican Presidio where his father Santiago was posted as a corporal in the Chihuahua State Militia. These older children were baptized at the El Paso (*Paso del Norte*) Mission, in the Mexican border city now known as Juarez.

Santiago built a house in Pinos Altos, New Mexico and brought the family there sometime in the late 1860s or early '70s when it became somewhat safer from Apache depredations. As Frank matured into his teens, his older sisters were married to John McDonald and William Fletcher, Irish-American miners. Frank had many cousins with whom to play and attend school. He attended the elementary school in Pinos Altos, but since there were limited opportunities for education beyond the 6th grade, he became a "Printer's Devil," the common term for an apprentice printer, for the *Pinos Altos Miner*. The *Miner* was a newspaper as well as a job printing shop. It's not known if the newspaper was bi-lingual, but Frank became accomplished in speaking, reading and writing in both Spanish and English.

By the time the battleship USS *Maine* was sunk in Havana Harbor, Frank was alternately a miner and cowboy. While he was tending cattle with his brother José for the Circle Bar Ranch near Silver City, both were summoned home by Santiago. Entering the home, they were instructed to enlist in the Army, their father explaining, "Because our nation is at war." Former soldier Santiago was a stern parent, and the boys obeyed him immediately. José had just returned from Los Angeles and the brothers were just getting acquainted again.

The Brito brothers enlisted on May 6, 1898 at Santa Fé and went by train with their fellow enlistees and officers for training to San Antonio, Texas. After a short interval of training, the "Rough Riders" traveled to Tampa where most of the Volunteers shipped out to Cuba. There being no room for all the Troops and any of the horses, the Brito brothers stayed behind. Because of their expertise with Spanish and livestock, they took care of Spanish prisoners and the cavalry mounts. At the end of the hostilities in Cuba, the brothers and all returning soldiers were interned at Montauk Point, New York, suffering from various tropical diseases. Malaria and dysentery were prevalent here and the brothers were quite ill as well, Tampa being a festering incubator of malaria-bearing mosquitoes. Many troopers died in Montauk and

treatment was poor. Newsmen were prevented from entering the compound and when reports of dismal conditions finally reached the public, creating a scandal, treatment improved. Frank remembered complaining to Colonel Roosevelt that there was no milk available. Shortly thereafter, all the troopers, except those most ill and unable to travel, were discharged and returned home by train. Roosevelt called Frank "Monte," short for *Montezuma*, as an acknowledgement of his Native American heritage.

When Frank and José arrived back in Pinos Altos along with fellow trooper George Shafer, a welcome home party was given.⁶

A big celebration, to welcome home the Rough Riders, George Shafer and Brito Brothers, was held at Pinos Altos, Saturday Evening. The young soldiers were warmly welcomed home and a general jubilee was held, ending with a dance. The big hall of Ogleby and Norton was crowded, many persons from Silver City and neighboring towns being present.

As a side note, Rough Rider George Shafer was the son of George Shafer the 1st, also known by the childhood sobriquet of "Sombrero Jack," the childhood friend of Billy the Kid. Both George the 1st and Billy were arrested for theft and placed in the Silver City jail, 8 miles downhill from Pinos Altos. This was the first known transgression of Billy who escaped incarceration by climbing up the jail chimney. There have been four George Shafers known to the Brito Family: their descendants still live in Pinos Altos.

In 1899 Frank Brito married Dolores Calles, a local Pinos Altos resident. They had one child, Theodore Roosevelt Brito, but their marriage began to fail. Frank had taken up mining and became aware of rumors that Dolores had a paramour while he was away, working in the mountains. One day a friend, late coming to the mine, informed Frank that there was a stranger in his house with his wife. Frank borrowed a shotgun and hurried down to his home. According to Frank's testimony, he saw a "man" in overalls rushing

out the back door. He fired the shotgun, killing the stranger who turned out to be Delfina Calles, his wife's sister. Discovering his tragic error, Frank escaped to the mountains but was talked into surrendering a few days later.

In Frank's defense, New Mexico in 1900 was still the "Wild West." If Delfina had been a man, the shooting of an adulterous Lothario may easily have resulted in a "Not Guilty" verdict. Frank's prison record shows that he was admitted with a bullet wound scar on his left knee joint. Did this occur during his surrender? No cause was given.

After a trial, Frank was convicted of 3rd degree murder and sentenced to 10 years at the Territorial Prison in Santa Fé.⁷ During his incarceration, Frank learned to operate electric dynamos and was a model inmate. It was also learned that Dolores had indeed been unfaithful and that she and her paramour were brazenly consorting about the town. Public sympathy emerged and a petition was circulated among influential citizens, including the sentencing judge Frank Parker, and a pardon for Prisoner 1442 was signed by Territorial Governor Miguel Otero.⁸ Learning of the pardon, Dolores and her boyfriend abandoned Frank's child and headed for Mexico. It was the consensus of the Pinos Altos citizens that they had a fair head start should Frank decide to go after them. Fortunately, this was not his course of action. He likely listened to his father and other relatives' advice that violent revenge would be destructive to him, so he initiated a divorce while in prison and was freed from both prison and from marriage.

During his incarceration, Frank was unable to attend the first few Rough Rider reunions and wrote Theodore Roosevelt asking for help. Teddy declined, saying shooting a woman was ungentlemanly. In Roosevelt's autobiography, he calls Frank "Gritto," not using Frank's name nor "Monte."

Frank's infant son Theodore Roosevelt Brito was raised at home by his stepmother and aunts until about the age of six, when he was enrolled at the Chilocco, Oklahoma Indian School. Theodore passed away there at age 9, probably from influenza or

pneumonia. Native Americans of all ages were extremely vulnerable to diseases at Indian Schools, which most students were forcibly required to attend. Destruction of cultures, languages and death remain a national and historical disgrace in these institutions.

One of the signers of Frank's release petition was Colonel Eugene Van Patten, a New Mexico National Guard officer. Van Patten was a Las Cruces resident and had a beautiful daughter, Concepción, nicknamed, "Concha." Upon release from prison, Frank found it wise to leave Pinos Altos and relocate to this city. Using his skills learned in Santa Fé, Frank found employment with the Las Cruces City Electric Company as a dynamo engineer. This turned out to be a short assignment. In June 1906, he married Van Patten's daughter. Concha's mother was a Pueblo Native American from the Piro Tribe. This marriage lasted until Concha passed away in 1934 from pneumonia.

After his employment at the electric company and possibly during, as a part-time job, Frank became a Las Cruces City Constable, then a Doña Ana County Deputy Sheriff, and finally the city jailer. Simultaneously, he enlisted as a trooper with Company A, 1st Regiment of the New Mexico National Guard. In 1916 he deployed with his Company to Camp Furlong on the Mexican border, adjacent to Columbus, New Mexico. Both places had just been attacked by Pancho Villa on March 10, 1916, and Company A was sent to defend them against further attacks, to secure the surrounding area and bury the dead. Company A returned to Las Cruces upon the arrival of General Pershing's troops. In addition to Frank's duties as electrician, lawman and National Guard trooper, he served Las Cruces as a volunteer fireman. He also worked as a bartender at two saloons and was a friend of Pat Garrett, the sheriff that killed Billy the Kid.

Unlike brother José's revolver, we have searched in vain for two decades for Frank's Rough Rider Colt SAA. The quest is ongoing, but there appears little realistic chance of finding it. These old U.S. Army Colts were purchased by civilians and used, abused, and



Figure 6 (top left): Frank C. Brito's Colt SAA in .44-40 caliber. **Figure 7 (top right):** Frank C. Brito's Colt 1911 in .45 ACP caliber. **Figure 8 (above):** Frank C. Brito's Winchester Model 97 shotgun in 16 gauge. Brito collection.

often lost or discarded. Many were replaced by modern, double-action revolvers or semi-automatic pistols. There may still be a few forgotten in trunks or attics, but too many members of the younger generations are unaware of the historical value of "Grandpa's old gun."

The Colt Single Action Army Revolver

Three firearms once owned by Frank C. Brito, fortunately, are now in the hands of his descendants. The first is a Colt Single Action Army "Colt Frontier Six-Shooter" (Figure 6). This label is roll-marked on the barrel and appears only on revolvers in .44-40 caliber, earlier called Winchester Center Fire (.44 WCF). It was made in 1906 with a 4 ¾" barrel. It has rosewood grips and was partially nickel plated, though the Colt factory letter shows it as originally blued. Frank may have done the nickel plating himself because he had a large blacksmith shop in his backyard and he had gold-plated his own watch chain. Interestingly, the hammer has been heat-treated and its spur turned up. Santiago Brito (1912–2006), Frank's oldest son, said this was done to facilitate "fanning," which may have helped Frank in law enforcement.

However, there is no certainty that this revolver was used in his law enforcement duties and Santiago was too young to remember if it was. Of the three photos of Frank in law enforcement poses, none show this revolver in a holster and belt. However, one of his belongings was an H.H. Heiser gun belt and holster made for a Colt SAA with loops for .44-40 cartridges. Several of the loops are clean where a badge may have been worn, as in Figure 9.

Santiago also said that earlier in his law enforcement career, his father told him that José Espalín, a rough character and one of Sheriff Pat Garrett's deputies from the Wildey Well gunfight with Oliver Lee's gang, pulled a gun on Frank. Officer Frank backed him down with his own gun and no shots were fired. With which gun did this confrontation take place? Frank never told his son.

Uncle Santiago also said that in the 1930s, he and his brother Joseph "Joe" (1916 – 2010) attended a gambling den where moonshine liquor was served and where both became intoxicated. Joe was slightly less intoxicated and drove the car Santiago had "borrowed" from their father. Santiago drew the revolver and fired it out the window into the air on Amador Street. Doña Ana County Deputy

Sheriff José Gonzalez recognized the boys, pulled the car over and confiscated the revolver. He told the brothers to go home and sober up. José eventually returned the seized revolver to their father, Frank. Interestingly, this occurred before Joseph was married several years later to Emma Reyes, the cousin of Deputy Gonzalez's wife. During many visits to Las Cruces, Santiago always pointed out the exact spot where he leaned out the window firing the gun. By 1920, the old Colt Single Action Army revolver might have been retired because Frank was now using his National Guard-issued Model 1911 for law enforcement work (Figure 7).

By the 1950s, .44-40 caliber ammunition was scarce, so after Santiago inherited the gun he had it converted to .38 Special with a new barrel and cylinder. Upon later receipt of the Colt Factory Letter, the original caliber was revealed and it was restored to its original configuration. It is in beautiful condition, though a hybrid because of the wooden grips and partial nickel plating.

The Colt Model 1911 Semiautomatic Pistol

As mentioned above, Frank C. Brito was a private in Company A of the 1st Regiment of the New Mexico National Guard. Normally, a private soldier is not issued a sidearm, but shoulders a rifle. There are exceptions such as cavalry regiments, but perhaps the Pancho Villa raid and the quasi-law enforcement duties after the attack made this a necessity. For most of his law enforcement career, Frank Brito carried a Model 1911 semi-automatic pistol manufactured in 1914 in .45 ACP (Automatic Colt Pistol) caliber. There is a photo of him as a Las Cruces City Constable (Figure 9) carrying this pistol in a government holster. It is stamped "United States Property" and we can only wonder where this gun came from. Perhaps it was a surplus purchase or a government issue to local law enforcement. In this photo, he is standing next to Santa Rosa Rico, his deputy. Deputy Rico is carrying a Colt SAA in a holster, so these older revolvers were, in fact, carried in the era Frank worked.

An item of tantalizing curiosity in the



Figure 9: Frank C. Brito at right, the Las Cruces Constable for Route #3, with his deputy, Santa Rosa Rico at left. Brito Collection.

photo is that the gun belt Frank is wearing has loops for cartridges that appear too long for this Model 1911. Normally, a belt for this pistol is worn with long fabric or leather pouches for extra magazines. The .45 Colt ACP is a shorter cartridge than the .45 Colt for the SAA revolver. The loops with long cartridges are correct for a Colt SAA, so it seems that he was carrying two sidearms, perhaps one inside his overcoat. This is the only clue we have that Frank possibly carried a Colt SAA revolver as a backup on his rounds.

The Winchester 16 Gauge Shotgun, Model 1897

Frank also carried a Winchester pump 16-gauge shotgun (Figure 8) in his law



Figure 10 (left): Frank C. Brito, Doña Ana County Deputy Sheriff, ca. 1921. Figure 11 (top right): Frank C. Brito's game warden badge. Figure 12 (bottom right): Frank C. Brito's jailer badge. Brito collection.

enforcement duties and for personal use. It was made in 1910 and his two sons remember the gun well. Frank used it for killing many cottontail rabbits for the stew pot. Rabbit was a favorite dish of Frank's.

One story Frank told his grandson is that while serving as a deputy, he was ordered by the sheriff to break up a Ku Klux Klan gathering on the city outskirts. Alone, Deputy Sheriff Brito lit several small fires some distance around the gathering, walked up to the leaders and gave the order to vacate Las Cruces. The head Klansman said, "We have a large group here, and you're only one man. What makes you think you can run us out before we disarm you?" Frank replied, "See those campfires? I have men around every one and I'm the messenger. You'd better

leave town." The group quickly broke up and left Las Cruces. We would like to think Frank was carrying his shotgun and made the KKK men believe there were other shotguns in proximity.

The military version of this shotgun in 12-gauge was used in trench warfare in World War One and in World War Two by Marines and soldiers against fanatical enemy charges because it was reliable under wet and dirty conditions and lacked a trigger disconnect. This allowed the user to shoot it by holding down the trigger and pumping the action quickly to fire all the shells in the internal tube magazine without interruption. Frank was also a New Mexico Deputy Game Warden and this gun would have been very intimidating when dealing with suspected



Figure 13: José Brito's Rough Rider revolver with Frank C Brito's Rough Rider medals. They are (1) a commemorative medal issued to Spanish-American War veterans of the "John Bonney Camp Number 10," region, (2) a military-issued medal awarded to U.S. 1st Volunteer Cavalry veterans, (3) a reunion commemorative pin issued to Rough Riders at their annual reunions held in Las Vegas, New Mexico, (4) a necktie clasp, probably also a reunion commemorative item, and (5 & 6) lapel pins—likely also reunion gifts. Brito collection.

poachers. A Winchester Model 97 was a fine law enforcement choice holding five shells in the magazine and a sixth in the chamber.

On July 8, 1968, Frank was commissioned a Colonel, Aide-De-Camp by New Mexico Governor David F. Cargo, recognizing his long service to his state and country.

Firearms and the Brito Brothers were inseparable throughout their lifetimes. In military training, self-defense, murder, law enforcement, hunting and game conservation, José and Frank C. Brito were connected to their weapons for *usually* constructive purposes. It's astonishing that they have remained in their family's hands and hopefully will continue to be for generations.

Conclusion

Sadly, the Brito brothers never saw each other again after José left for the Philippines. Frank lived for another 73 years, seeing statehood achieved in 1912 and had a strongly productive life. He was pardoned from prison by one governor and appointed a colonel

by another. Frank was a formidable New Mexico influence in bringing law, order, safety and peace to a once violent territory. And, it took strong will and shooting irons to do it.

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God's Signature on Planet Earth

Monsignor Francis J. Weber

The study of folklore reveals a great deal about the religious beliefs of a people. That is surely true of America's Indians as indicated by the following legend.

The Apaches, for example, have a tradition that God visited the earth, shortly after its creation, for a closer look at what He had made. He said to Himself, "It's all very good, but there's something lacking. In a few million years it will look all too man-made."

The mountains, with their peaks stretching heavenward, were majestic and magnificent. Yet a mountain was only a cluster of dirt and rock and nothing more. And equally so with the oceans, the lakes, the deserts and even humankind.

The longer He pondered, the more His creation seemed to need a unique trademark that proclaimed God as its total and only Creator.

Having fashioned humankind in His own image and likeness, God foresaw the likelihood, in the years ahead, that someone might come along claiming to have created the world and all it contains.

God was understandably proud of His creation and didn't relish the idea that one of His creatures might claim credit for His six-day masterpiece.

He had been earthbound since dawn. About noon He crossed mid-continent and making one easy hop over the Western mountains, God found Himself in an immense, wide-open space, where He could see nothing in any direction.

Suddenly, a great thirst came over the Lord. He reared up to full stature and, far to the northeast, He caught sight of a glistening inlet of flowing water.

He could have tipped the planet to hasten the rush of water, but it was a little soon to tinker with the balance of His newly-created ecosystem.

Then, in an impulsive moment, He stomped one of His feet onto the ground. The whole planet trembled, the earth crumbled and the river came rushing toward Him. He

knelt down on the ground, cooled His face in the fresh water and imbibed of its refreshing substance.

By the time He raised up, the original flow of water had become a chasm, cutting a pattern into the ground. He watched as the river, dropping from its level, zig-zagged its way westward, in a happy, carefree kind of dance.

Before Him gradually rose the shadow of a city, unlike anything in paradise, with temples, towers and parapets.

God was pleased with what He saw. Finally, He had implanted a distinctive signature or trademark for His masterpiece that even man, with power to move mountains, change the course of streams, create lakes and alter shorelines could never match or claim for his own.

Looking for a final time on that portion of earth, the Lord painted its sands with colored sand, froze its trees into stones and endowed its climate with perpetual sunshine. This He did so that all peoples from every nation could come and admire His work.

Then He returned to heaven, leaving behind His distinctive impression upon the earth, a trademark of God's creation known to the people of modern times as the Grand Canyon.



Figure 14: This Apache tale accompanied the above 2c commemorative postage stamp issued by the U.S. Postal Service in 1934. Image courtesy of the Smithsonian National Postage Museum (postalmuseum.si.edu), for non-commercial Fair Use.

Los Angeles Corral 75th Anniversary and Westerners International 3rd Annual Gather



Figure 15: Hot Rod Night at Bob's Big Boy, Burbank CA, October 9, 2021. John Dillon photo.

Day One — October 9, 2021

After a muggy October day spent mostly indoors—thanks to a sky that threatened our anniversary celebration with rain—but never delivered, Hot Rod Night at Bob's Big Boy was as welcome a summer occurrence as ever there was. The presentations by Dr. Dillon on Native Californians and Monsignor Weber on the Mission San Fernando archives were outstanding, as were the guided tour of the old mission, the splendid Bear Pit lunch, and book sale. But the chrome-clad customs arrayed on Riverside Drive held dominion that night over the hearts of we, the assembled gearheads. Indeed, our 75th anniversary couldn't have been truly complete without a trip to this marvelous mechanical Mecca.

The atmosphere around this classic California car meet may have been *electric*, but its constituents were none but pure-bred *gas guzzlers*. From American standards like the Packard, Bel Aire, and Mustang, to foreign oddities like the Volkswagen Karmann Ghia and Steyr Pinzgauer, the folks at Bob's had it all. Our eyes were treated to a sparkly new kit-car Cobra, while our hearts and souls were inspired by the *real thing*: an honest-to-goodness Shelby Cobra 427 S/C (swoon)! It was almost enough to send one into octane-induced, tongue-speaking fits of automotive

ecstasy. Of course, Bob's Big Boy would never have become the iconic hangout that it is without having more to offer hot-rodders than a giant fiberglass kiddo. Those intrepid among us, who braved the crowds to dine inside, were treated to a fantastic meal that's as American as...well, as American as a Bob's Big Boy burger! Their perfectly seasoned fries are almost as essential as the double-decker burger that made them famous. And if the burger and fries are the wafers, then Bob's communion wine has got to be their chocolate malted milkshakes. If Shakespeare had a Bob's Big Boy, then music would never have become known as the food of love, because surely the food of love is a Bob's chocolate malted milkshake.

So, if you missed out on Hot Rod Night, and on Bob's Big Boy, then I guess you'll just have to wait another seventy-five years for our next big anniversary. Or, failing that, I suppose you could always just take a spin down Riverside Drive some Friday night between 4p.m. and 10p.m. Who knows? You may just find yourself there. But, if you do wait seventy-five years, let me know if the Toyota Prius becomes a classic. I've got a feeling about that one.

— Alan Griffin



*Above: Westerners chat in the hall of the San Fernando Mission. **Top Right:** Sheriff Ann Shea welcomes everyone to the 75th Anniversary & 2021 Gather. **Right:** Terry Terrell swaps stories with Monsignor Weber about how old they are, appropriately in the Archives of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. **Below:** Classic hot rods from all eras were on display at Bob's Big Boy, from 1930's rumble seaters to 1960's muscle cars. **Bottom Left:** The body has seen better days, but it's what is under the hood that counts for this 100% original Shelby Cobra 427 S/C. **Bottom Right:** One of the wildest customs at Bob's Big Boy began life as a 1934 Ford Victoria. Mission photos by Jim Macklin and Ken Pirtle, and car photos by John Dillon and Alan Griffin.*



Day Two — October 10, 2021

Has it really been 75 years that the Los Angeles Corral of Westerners has been meeting for dinners, listening to specialized historical talks, publishing articles, visiting historical places, laughing, discussing, arguing, producing *Branding Irons* (the Corral's quarterly publication of articles, interests, and current events), and specialized Brand Books, writing cowboy and cowgirl poetry and limericks, sponsoring an Autry Fellow and student scholarships, handing out keepsakes, and generally having more fun and more serious discussions than any other organization in Los Angeles? The answer is an emphatic "YES!"

I am just not sure where the time has gone, and I certainly was not around for all the 75 years, but I do have a memory bank crammed full of wonderful experiences, with the most interesting group of characters I have ever associated with. It never could have happened unless I was a Westerner. As "Living Legend" Jerry Selmer told me shortly before he passed, "The Los Angeles Corral of Westerners is the greatest collection of personal friends I have and it has provided me with the best memories of my entire life. I have been so fortunate in my life to have known such a wonderful group of people." Jerry summed the essence of the Los Angeles Corral in two sentences.

Homer E. Britzman was an oil executive who purchased the C. M. Russell estate, "Trails End," named by C. M. Russell himself. He was a devotee of "Old West" history and learned of a new organization, "The Westerners," organized in Chicago, in 1944. Britzman brought together a group of men with similar interests in the West, and met with them at his house on December 3, 1946. "Trails End," became "Trails Beginning," for the Los Angeles Corral.

The history of the Corral and its members is much too long for this article to include. But it can be said that every meeting and every special get-together is an experience that brings smiles, laughter, and, at times, some melancholy. Such is the closeness of our membership; such is the seriousness of our

content; such is the special bond of Western History that binds us all together.

The 75th Anniversary extravaganza was enhanced by the inclusion of representatives from many Corrals throughout the West. This was facilitated with the help of Westerners International Chairperson, Bonney MacDonald. Working with LA Corral WI Representative Brian D. Dillon, these two exceptional leaders toiled for over two years in planning a weekend that will not soon be forgotten. All of this planning was done in conjunction with State and City regulations on gatherings of more than ten persons due to the varied, changing procedures of the Coronavirus. It cannot be emphasized enough the hard work and dedication of these two people who undertook such a great task with so many COVID-related obstacles not usually a factor in these events. A special THANK YOU is hereby given to Brian and Bonney for their diligent work.

There are always uncertainties in operational plannings, but 2020-2021, were exceptionally difficult years to facilitate travel and accommodations, schedule special sessions at the Autry Museum and the San Fernando Mission, and deliver a quality weekend that included business, fun, food, and drink. Brian and Bonney delivered on all aspects of the 75th Anniversary. Since I will not be around for the 100th Anniversary, I will just state that a young Corral member better start now and be prepared to work and go the extra mile if the Centennial Festivities are to be the equal of the current event.

After more than two years of planning, an unknown number of e-mails, hours of personal phone conversations, input on the type and variety of activities, logistical considerations, accommodations, cost estimates, and more advice from friends, family, and Corral members that can ever be recorded here, decisions were made, preliminary bulletins produced, news releases were published and a basic understanding of weekend events were determined. The easy work was over and the real work, organizing a special weekend for an unknown number of Westerner guests, had begun. It is noted here, that this planning took place before the pandemic!

Day Two's activities were more extensive than Day One's and began with four lectures at the Autry Museum of the West. The Autry Museum festivities could have easily filled the entire weekend, but a special 75th Anniversary Party had been planned for everyone at the Hacienda Turner, AKA, *La Casa de los Animales Muertos*.

The home of Gary and Vicki Turner has been used a number of times for Westerner Fandangos and Rendezvous as the backyard is not only large and flat, but, most importantly, has a big bar. Denny "Too Tall" Thompson, Ed Riegler, and Daryl Turner served as bartenders and made sure the drinks were not watered. The timing of these festivities was perfect as the "Taco Man" fired up his *comales* and the mariachis marched in playing and singing in harmony "El Rey" the Mexican Truck Driver's National Anthem, and a personal favorite of Brian Dillon.

It might be noted here that a world record for the tallest mariachi horn player and singer was attained at 6'7". Talk about looking distinguished, with his height and voice and mariachi outfit; the vocal strains did indeed come from the heavens. But there were also many prizes awarded that day:

1. **Best Cowboy Boots:** Sue Hoffman won for the best-looking boots. Her husband Abe also wore them to the last Westerners meeting, but Sue always does look much better than him regardless of boots.
2. **Best Cowboy Hat:** DeeDee Ruhlow, the LA Corral's first female Sheriff, outdid the competition with a terrific Stetson.
3. **Best Cowboy Shirt:** Dick Jensen from "Baja British Columbia" (Washington) wowed all with his beautifully embroidered white-on-black shirt.
4. **Best Hog Call:** Sherry Cavallo beat six of the Corral's best callers with a long and loud "Soooooooooooooeeeeey!" One of the losers complained, "Sherry had an unfair advantage as she calls her husband Joe to dinner with that call every night." The protest was overruled.
5. **Arm Wrestling:** Mark Mutz faced some stiff competition from Dillon brothers Dave and Ross, but beat all challengers.
6. **Shovel Racing:** Natalie Spitzzeri beat all

comers in a race around the pool, balancing a glass of wine on a shovel. Husband Paul wisely backed off from commenting on how she wielded a shovel, saying, "Some things are left better-off unsaid!"

7. **Ugliest Truck:** Dr. Dillon's million-mile Chevy pickup was medically excused from attending, but still scarred retinas *in absentia*.

Awards were also handed out for the annual Westerners International competition for best publication and the best cowboy poetry of 2020. The Los Angeles Corral has won many of the Westerners International Awards, and 2020 was another great year:

Brian Dervin Dillon won the Co-Founders Best Book Award for *Aloha, Amigos!* Brian was also promoted to Honorary Membership in the Corral—"honorary" meaning *esteemed*, not *unofficial*! CONGRATULATIONS!

Tim Heflin won The Fred Olds Poetry Award: "Round-Heeled Woman" and "The Saga of Hank Vaughn."

Gary Turner was Second Place in the Fred Olds Poetry Award: "Ode to Toilet Paper," "Wash my Hands," and "The Last Card."

Tim Heflin has won this award more than any other international or local poet, and Gary Turner has won more second place awards than any other poet. It is not true that a petition is being circulated by many of the cowboy poets (i.e. Gary Turner) to have Tim banned from the competitions.

The tacos, enchiladas, tamale casserole, fresh fruit, desserts, and drink were all part of the late afternoon meal. Everyone had their fill and it was quite a successful ending to an activity filled weekend. When one compares the mostly humble beginnings of the Los Angeles Corral to the 75th Anniversary Party, it has been a most successful three quarters of a century. I doubt if the early Sheriffs, Galleher, Boelter, Bailey, et. al. could have imagined how great and diverse their Corral has become. But, I bet they would enthusiastically join in the discussions and the laughter as they did 75 years ago. Thanks to those early sheriffs and members of the Corral who have set the basic standards of excellence and enjoyment that we still have with us today.

— Gary Turner



Top Left: The Westerners muster at the Autry Museum. Above: Abe Hoffman delivers a presentation. Above Left: Westerners wine and dine at the Hacienda Turner. Left: Mariachis provide live musical entertainment. Below left: Denny Thompson and Ed Riegler make the evening "sobriety-optional." Bottom: The massive Mark "Man Mountain" Mutz (foreground) magnificently manhandled a more marginally-muscular mortal (Ross Dillon) in a match of manipulatory might, and was made master. Photos by Brian Dillon, Claudia Heller, and Ken Pirtle.



Monthly Roundup . . .

August 21, 2021

Brian D. Dillon

In August, the Westerners held, possibly, the last of our web-based roundups. Serendipitously, our need to gather at a distance led us to join with the Hawaii chapter of the Tsung Tsin Association and Chinese genealogical organizations in San Francisco and Los Angeles. Together, we explored an area in which our respective spheres of interest overlapped. As such, we dipped our collective toes into the rich waters made up by the stories of Chinese immigrants to Hawaii and California. The gathering on August 23rd was the culmination of a special two-part series hosted by our newfound collaborators. It featured a lecture by Dr. Brian Dillon which focused on the experiences of Chinese immigrants in our part of the country and their influence in helping to shape the California that we see today.

The introductory portion of Dillon's talk reminded us that, until the latter half of the 20th century, the Chinese were all but omitted from the history of this country. When an author deigned to mention them at all, it often served only to perpetuate general misconceptions with something trite, along the lines of, "They built the railroads, then moved to San Francisco." As we learned throughout Dillon's presentation, the Chinese story in California is much more complicated.

The construction of railroads was not the only undertaking of large numbers of Chinese workers, as they also left a significant stamp on the mining industry. Indeed, by 1854, as many as one-in-five California miners were Chinese, often working abandoned claims and making them profitable. Remnants of mining ditches, wagon trails, and irrigation



Figure 15: Chinese miners at work in the California Gold Fields, drawing by Charles Nahl, from *Hutchings California Magazine*, 1860.

canals hand-dug by Chinese, today serve as testament to their creators' contributions to the progress of the West, apart from the railroads which made their fellows famous.

Unfortunately, these Chinese immigrants were subject to terrible mistreatment in their new homeland. Racially motivated mass murders, including the largest lynching in California's history in Los Angeles in 1871, were far from the only crimes to which these people were subjected by their white neighbors. Both rural and urban Chinese communities endured unfair hardships perpetrated by their neighbors. Making things worse, all levels of government, from local to federal, stripped the Chinese of their civil rights, making it impossible for injured parties among them to seek justice.

The Chinese who stayed in California after the Gold Rush, being mostly single men, eventually died of old age. Their slow decline led to many "One-Man Chinatowns" dispersed throughout California's small rural communities. Afterwards, urban Chinatowns became the last significant haven for California's Chinese population. Some of these urban Chinatowns still thrive today.

This cooperative presentation enabled us to learn more about the efforts of Chinese immigrants in the 19th-century development of our home state. Especially in this present, COVID-induced era of rising anti-Asian racism, it is essential that we celebrate such contributions and lament the mistreatment which is too often the only reward of such

immigrants. Here's to future communions with groups like the Tsung Tsin Association, which provide a great opportunity, for all

involved, to incorporate new perspectives into our respective worldviews.

— Alan Griffin



September 8, 2021

Geraldine Knatz

The guest speaker for the September Roundup was Geraldine Knatz, speaking about the early 20th-century history of the Port of Los Angeles, centered around her recent 2019 book, *Port of Los Angeles: Conflict, Commerce, and the Fight for Control*.

Thomas Gibbon in 1891 attempted to build a wharf on Rattlesnake Island (now Terminal island), on tidelands held by individuals erroneously sold by the state. His case was successful, but no action occurred until he was appointed to the Board of Harbor Commissioners in 1907, when he then pushed for the state to recover the property. An agreement was reached in 1917 for the property owners to turn the land over to the city in 30 years. This land would eventually become the Port of Los Angeles. Wilmington and San Pedro would eventually be consolidated with Los Angeles, with the tidelands being transferred to the city. Mormon Island,

belonging to the Banning family, was also absorbed by the city in the 1930s after a long legal battle. Thomas Gibbon also attempted to have a railroad built, but this never saw the light of day.

In the 1920s Walter B. Allen was appointed to the Board of Harbor Commissioners, and was seen as someone who could clean up the corruption, though he had his own conflicts of interest in trucking port cargo with his own delivery company. Allen was tasked by the city mayor to merge the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach. Politics, rate wars, duplicate facilities, and Los Angeles' desire to control Long Beach's oil money triggered many attempts to merge the two ports, but they remained separate. Allen was eventually removed due to bad publicity for his involvement with the Julian Petroleum scandal. Many years later Assemblyman Vincent Thomas would also attempt to merge the two ports and was similarly unsuccessful.

WWII forever changed the world's appreciation of the port. Los Angeles proved that it could move more than just oil, and could be a general cargo port as well. Meanwhile the port customer base was shifting from locally based oil companies to international shipping companies. By the 1960s, trade through Los Angeles Harbor had grown faster than its terminal facilities, longshore workforce, and its own office space could handle. The 1960s for the harbor also saw exciting developments, as if ripped straight from the latest *film noir*: corruption, graft, secretly taped meetings, indictments, a suspicious death, and a Pulitzer Prize-winning exposé by the *Los Angeles Times*.

The Port of Long Beach would grow so rapidly that the Los Angeles Board of Harbor Commissioners voted to support merging of the two ports. We continue to hear past and present arguments supporting this initiative, but the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach remain separate to this day

— Patrick Mulvey



November 10, 2021

Mark Mutz

In November, we all traded our Stetsons for silly hats, as Crazy Hat Night descended upon Almansor Court. As usual, three stand-outs were chosen to take home prizes in honor of their daring fashion sensibilities. Mike Johnson had family to thank for his absurdly tall rainbow squid hat. Hal Eaton donned a bovine beauty, complete with twitching ears, and Dorothy Mutz looked lovely and over the top in her rose-covered cartwheel. Thanks to everyone who threw caution to the wind and sailed the silly seas. I would like to take this opportunity to buck for the next Crazy Shirt Night to come soon!

The evening's presentation was given by a trilby-clad Mark Mutz (clearly, his better half had more hat mojo working that evening). Mr. Mutz took us on a journey through some of the area's communities, exploring their beginnings as "irrigation colonies" created by Canadian-born developer George Chaffey.

George Chaffey was a man who understood that land without water wasn't worth much. As such, when he sought to sell parcels of land in his first development, Etiwanda, the water rights were inexorably tied to the land. Each parcel could be sold and transferred as any other, but its right to water always went with it. This practice led to a far less murky and litigious environment than the one it succeeded. Its "water corporation" concept quickly became the standard system

of distribution for water rights in California.

The success of the Etiwanda colony led Chaffey and Holt to purchase 6,216 more acres nearby, for what would become Ontario. This colony was founded with four guarantees: water rights for every land owner, a construction plan for beautiful Euclid avenue, a planned college of agriculture—which later became Chaffey High School, and a prohibition against alcohol. These tenets struck a resounding chord in line with the mores of the burgeoning progressive movement, and Ontario's parcels sold well, marking another successful venture for Chaffey hot on the heels of his first.

Not all of Chaffey's endeavours would meet with the same success as Etiwanda and Ontario, however. There was his failed bid to plot the Werribee River valley in Australia, scuttled by drought, a banking crisis, and Chaffey's construction of a fancy home for himself while most investors were struggling to make use of their land. Manzanar, though not a fiscal failure, never thrived as a colony because it was purchased entirely by Los Angeles, and is now best known as the site of the infamous WWII Japanese internment camp. Another project truly did end in disaster, though not entirely due to Chaffey's actions. That was his diversion of part of the Colorado River to irrigate the Imperial and Coachella Valleys and the Salton Sink. Heavy rain and runoff destroyed a relief canal, causing a flood that damaged large amounts of property, and led to not only a lawsuit by Southern Pacific, but to formation of the Salton Sea as we see it now.

In all, an entertaining evening that was kicked off by some hilarious headwear was capped by Mark's fascinating portrait of one of our region's less-well-known early developers. We were all reminded that one's name needn't have been Griffith, Doheny, or Huntington to have mattered to the creation of our humble little corner of the state. See you all on Crazy Shirt Night, whenever that may be.

— Alan Griffin



Figure 16 (above): Hat Night winners posing next to “Old Joe,” the Corral’s resident buffalo skull. From left to right, we have Hal Eaton wearing a cow hat with toggle-operated flapping ears, Dorothy Mutz with bouquet of roses atop her sun hat, Sheriff Ann Shea, and Mike Johnson, who is strangely unperturbed by the giant rainbow squid eating his head. Figure 17 (below): Many hats and humans congregated at the November Roundup. Other headgear highlights included Deputy Sheriff Pete Fries’ mining cap with carbide lamp, Alan Heller’s pith helmet, and the WW1 painted doughboy helmet and pickelhaube worn by Brian and John Dillon, respectively. Photos by Michelle Clark.





Figure 18: 2010 Photo by Steve Griffin, courtesy of the Salt Lake Tribune, September 30, 2021.

In Memoriam, Will “Prairie Dawg” Bagley, 1950-2021

William Grant Bagley was, quite simply, the most productive and insightful historian who ever wrote about Utah and the Mormon West. Born in Salt Lake City, he grew up in Oceanside, California, where his father was re-elected Mayor many times over and where “Bill” (as he was then called) managed to avoid both USMC and surfer culture. A teenaged Bagley was the class president of Oceanside High School, from which he graduated in 1967. He went on to college at Brigham Young University and then to the University of California, Santa Cruz, while the paint was still wet on that brand-new institution, graduating with a B.A. in 1971. Before he found his true calling as a historian, and assumed the *nom de plume* of “Prairie Dawg,” Bagley piloted a raft down the Mississippi River from Illinois to its Louisiana Delta, played guitar in Country-Western bands, and worked in the nascent computer industry. Will became what we of similar ilk call a “Redneck Hippie” with beard and long hair under a cowboy hat.

First published in 1991, Will Bagley cranked out one outstanding, full-length book after another, on Western Trails, American Indians, Great Basin History, and especially Mormon History. Within the latter area his work was on both sides of the LDS fence, sometimes with the blessing of devout “Saints,” other times very much outside the pale of traditional LDS church doctrine. Will had a long and very productive relationship with the A.H. Clark Publishing Company, which had the honor of producing many of his books. He was the long-time editor of their outstanding *Kingdom of the West* series. His best-known works, to name only a few, were *Scoundrel’s Tale* (1999), *Blood of the Prophets* (2002), *So Rugged and Mountainous* (2010), *Mormon Rebellion* (2011, with David L. Bigler), *Golden Visions Bright Before Them* (2012), *South Pass* (2014), and *The Whites Want Everything: Native Voices from the Mormon West* (2019). From 2000 to 2004 Bagley wrote the “History Matters” column for the *Salt Lake Tribune* newspaper. For many years he

was a regular on radio programs devoted to Western History, and the “star” of educational videos playing on public television.

Will was very proud of his association with Westerners International. He was a member of the Salt Lake City Corral and a WI board member. Year after year he gave outstanding illustrated presentations to hundreds of Westerners at a wide range of corrals, including those in California: the San Francisco and the Los Angeles Corrals were both fortunate enough to host his recent talks on Western American History. His books were regularly reviewed most favorably within the pages of the Los Angeles Corral’s *Branding Iron*. One of Bagley’s last literary efforts was the exuberant final chapter in last year’s, award-winning, Los Angeles Corral Brand Book No. 24, *Aloha Amigos!*

Will Bagley published more than 20 full-length books and hundreds of articles on Western American History during only three decades: surely a record for literary productivity within any field of scholarship. Will was honored with a Huntington

Library research fellowship, and dozens of awards for his writing, and by Westerners International (Best Book, 2002), the Mormon History Association, the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum, the Western History Association, the Western Writers of America Association, the Oregon-California Trails Association, and the Utah Historical Society.

Will leaves behind three brothers and sisters, his wife and two children, three grandchildren, hundreds of friends and admirers, and many thousands of enthusiastic and appreciative readers of his books. All Westerners around the world are saddened by the loss of one of our most illustrious and feverishly productive historical authors at far too young an age. Will had so many more books to write that we all feel cheated by his leaving us long before what should have been his allotted time on earth. Fortunately, he lives on through his writing, now, and forever. R.I.P. Prairie Dawg. We will miss you.

— Brian Dervin Dillon, Ph.D.

Special Issue *Branding Iron*, Coming Soon!



Batter up! Start your engines! Hike! Pull! We have another special issue of *The Branding Iron* coming up in Spring 2022, and its theme is SPORTS! All Westerners and friends are invited to share histories and personal stories about athletes, teams, venues, or anything else about anything competitive in the West. Team sports, individual sports, motor sports, adventure sports—all are welcome!

To be considered for publication, please submit your articles by May 15th, 2022. Please observe a minimum article length of a half page, single-spaced. Illustrations are welcome and encouraged.

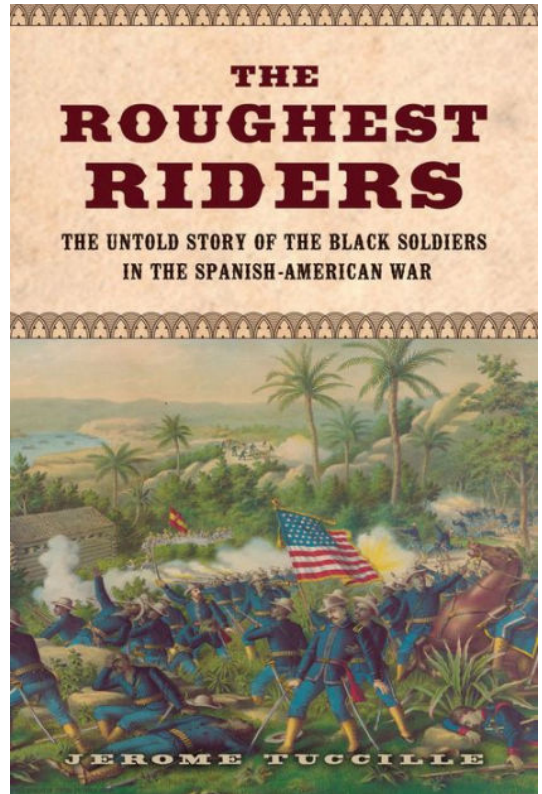
For submissions and inquiries, please contact *Branding Iron* editor John Dillon at John.Dervin.Dillon@gmail.com. Thank you all, and Happy Trails!

Down the Western Book Trail . . .

THE ROUGHEST RIDERS: *The Untold Story of the Black Soldiers in the Spanish-American War*, by Jerome Tuccille, Chicago Review Press, Chicago, IL, 2015. Hardbound, 282 + xxii pages, Illustrations, Cast of Characters, Prologue, Acknowledgements, Bibliography, Index. \$26.95.

The two words that best describe this book are *sloppy* and *superficial*. Sloppy in terms of research, referencing, editing and proof-reading. Superficial in terms of the lack of development of the “big picture” against which the compelling story of the final decades during which Buffalo Soldier military history was played out, but especially in the biographical sense. Despite the promising “cast of characters” section at the book’s beginning, you never come to know any of the Black enlisted men nor the very few Black officers serving with them. In *The Roughest Riders* all the heroes are Black, and all of the villains White: yet, while its author develops some of his slightly-flawed white protagonist/antagonists (Teddy Roosevelt, John J. Pershing, etc.) as three-dimensional historical personalities, the few Black soldiers mentioned by name never become more than two-dimensional, cardboard cut-outs.

The book’s subtitle throws down the gauntlet, and reveals its *raison d’être*. The great historical “wrong to be righted” was Teddy Roosevelt’s supposed “theft” of the credit for Cuban War military successes from the Black Regular Army troops, which he gave to his own volunteers, the celebrated “Rough Riders.” We can all agree that an injustice was done by *the popular press here*, but nobody should jump to the conclusion that this was the result of some insidious, racist, Rooseveltian conspiracy. Most hidebound government officials as well as the lily-white top brass of the regular army thought that “Teethadore” Roosevelt was an out-of-control glory hog simply blessed with dumb luck in 1898, and many of the same people were shocked and dismayed when he accidentally became President in 1901.



The Roughest Riders’ subtitle is misleading on two counts, reflecting neither historical reality nor the actual contents of the book itself. First is its “untold story” statement, with all of its “conspiracy theory” overtones. Secondly, the impression conveyed that the book is exclusively about the few weeks of fighting in Cuba during the summer of 1898. The “untold story” notion is contradicted before you even open the book, by its splendid color cover illustration of Black American troops triumphant over their Spanish foes in Cuba. This popular, patriotic image in 1898 was neither suppressed nor “untold.” Contemporary newspaper articles also recounted the successes of the Buffalo Soldiers. Secondly, in terms of coverage, most of the book, what the author terms “Part 1 and Part 2,” is indeed set in Cuba, but its final “Part 3” takes us to the Philippines, on to the Mexican Border, and finally to Europe in WWI. Parts 1 and 2 are way too long, a dead horse still

beaten long after turning skeletal, while Part 3 is way too short. Part 3 should have been expanded to give justice to the great many later Buffalo Soldier episodes touched upon, or it should have been deleted as topically and chronologically irrelevant to the main thrust of the narrative and, especially, to the book's title. Part 3, the most interesting section of the volume, unfortunately comes across as an afterthought, written only after the author had either run out of steam or lost interest in the book as a whole.

The "proof-reading" of *The Roughest Riders* seems to have been relegated to a spell-check computer program, with all of the resulting shortcomings. The author, his editors, and the publisher seem unaware, or, perhaps, simply don't care, that spell-check programs cannot recognize errors of chronology, geography, or technology nor spelling errors in foreign languages. These can only be found and corrected by actual living human beings, and then only by humans with some familiarity with the time, place, and people being written about.

For a book purporting to be about American military history, the author, his editors, and the publishers demonstrate an appalling ignorance of military organization

and basic firearms technology. Regiments are confused with divisions, pistols with rifles, cannon with machine guns, bullets with cartridges, and so forth and so on. Writers who cannot comprehend the difference between *pistols* and *rifles* should not write about the American military at the turn of the 19th century, nor, indeed, at any time.

The consistent military/firearms errors in *The Roughest Riders* are equaled by ignorance about basic Spanish usage, truly embarrassing in a book mostly devoted to action in Latin America. Accent marks are missing from common Spanish place names, as are tildes from words that normally take them. The computer used to proof-read the book was probably a monolingual English-language one, for it committed the same errors that would be committed by any English speaker lacking familiarity with an introductory Spanish language class.

The story of the later years of the Buffalo Soldiers deserves to be told. It deserves to be told in depth and to be told well. Unfortunately, this book only scratches the surface of that story. Run, do not walk, away from the profoundly disappointing *Roughest Riders*.

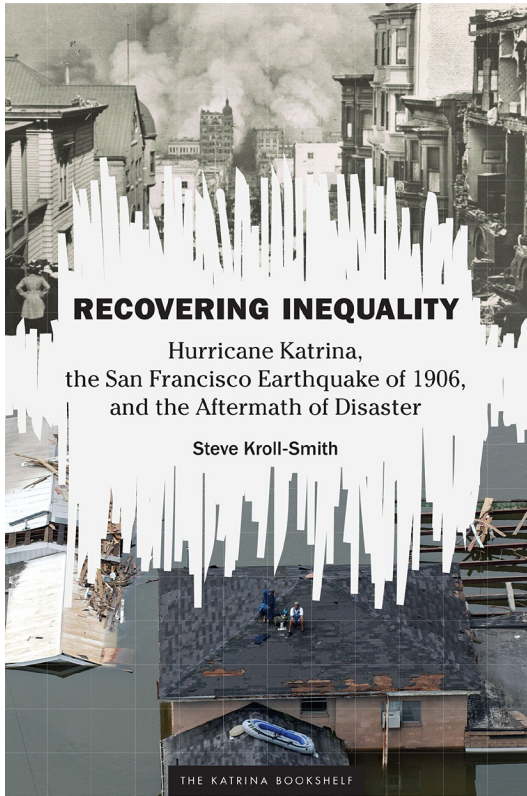
— Brian D. Dillon

RECOVERING INEQUALITY: *Hurricane Katrina, the San Francisco Earthquake of 1906, and the Aftermath of Disaster*, by Steve Kroll-Smith, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018. 198 pp. Notes, Index. Paperback, \$27.95.

Natural disasters cause enormous upheaval in American society on numerous levels, challenging the strength of state and federal authority while pushing the people surviving on the ground to their absolute limit. Common misconceptions about crime and psychology surround disasters, which affect survivors differently according to variables like bureaucracy, economics, social class, and race. Steve Kroll-Smith calls attention to this nefarious pattern in disaster relief when comparing Hurricane Katrina in 2005 with the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. He

argues that natural disasters have historically been exploited to reinforce the social order and to consolidate property (at *earthquake-* or *hurricane-sale* prices). He examines the man-made factors that contributed to both disasters, how dispossession changed the urban environment, and how people and places were categorized as worthy or unworthy to receive disaster relief.

Kroll-Smith uses a potent combination of well-analyzed secondary sources, historic documents, and personal interviews. An emphasis on oral history gives Kroll-Smith's text the life it needs to convince the reader of the concept of *Recovering Inequality*. The connections drawn between fictional literature and historic fact make for an entertaining read as well as an educational one. Even if the reader is familiar with both events in great detail, Kroll-Smith includes literary excerpts to give



an idea of the American culture surrounding catastrophes. This provides him with the foundation to dismantle harmful myths that sensationalize natural disasters whenever they strike us.

For instance, he uncovers the racial, ethnic, and class dynamics behind the infamous “looting” outbreaks connected to the earthquake and hurricane. During the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire, police, paramilitaries, and soldiers selectively and arbitrarily fired upon “looters.” White survivors were excused for “rescuing” valuables, while Chinese survivors were shot for “stealing” food. Indeed, two white businessmen were caught and tried for very obvious looting in Chinatown, but were acquitted as merely “sightseeing.” A similar story played out in New Orleans in 2005. Poor black survivors of Hurricane Katrina were criminalized as “looters” to much media hysteria, while whites were more commonly seen as “finding” essentials. Well-to-do white residents even barricaded their neighborhoods to block out survivors from the flooded, pre-

dominantly black Lower Ninth Ward. Thus, Kroll-Smith contends that the tribalistic chaos associated with disasters stems not from the disasters themselves, but from the efforts of the wealthy, the media, law enforcement, and bureaucracy to “recover inequality.”

Each chapter serves its purpose in strengthening his case, although some stylistic quirks in Kroll-Smith’s writing border on purple prose. The text meanders at times in ways that make certain arguments run for longer than necessary, and some sections drag with the weight of his literary style. This book places more emphasis on editorializing than on being concise. Still, the author shows a great passion for the subject, especially in documenting Hurricane Katrina’s ongoing toll on New Orleans. This asserts his sincerity and attention to detail but detours beyond the bounds of historical writing. For those interested in a sociologist’s perspective of two disasters in history, *Recovering Inequality* delivers, as long as one accepts the text as more “poetic social commentary” than “comprehensive historical analysis.” Both ends of the spectrum have their place in understanding how our culture responds to catastrophe, so this doesn’t completely detract from Kroll-Smith’s goal.

Some parts of *Recovering Inequality* might alienate some readers, especially traditional historians. The author assumes the reader has some knowledge of philosophers like Thomas Hobbes and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who frame his criticism of popular social misconceptions. Much of the book is grounded in sociology rather than history, and it uses fictional works as allegories for social issues. Entry-level history readers might find the text difficult to parse at times. Having at least cursory knowledge of both disasters helps with understanding the literary references. While the book is certainly unconventional, it is an engaging read for those looking for a different approach to the sociology of disasters and disaster relief in America.

— Arkaz Vardanyan