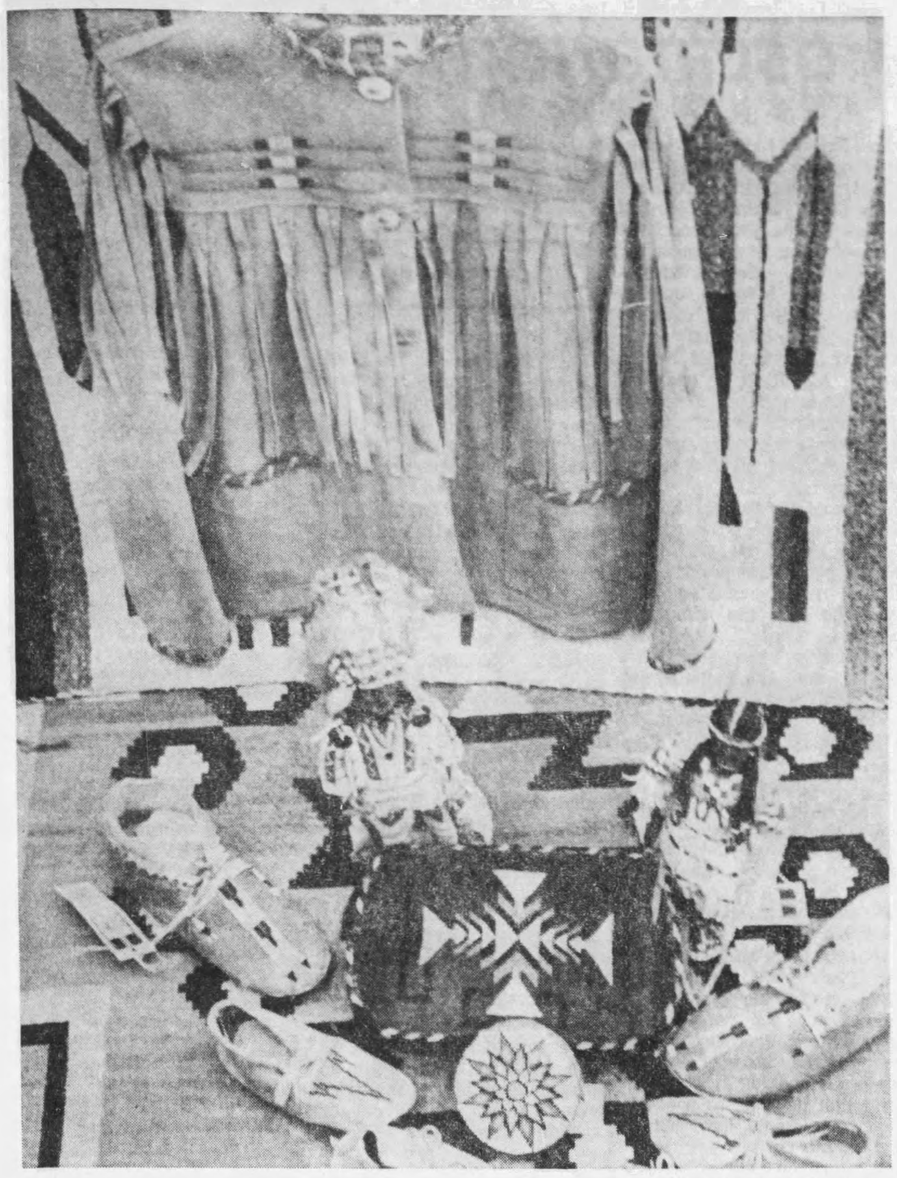
Indians Powwow for War



—Photo by Roger Clawson

No counterfeit here—All the real stuff

By ROGER CLAWSON

The old cry, "White man speak with forked tongue," was revived at a meeting of Indian representatives called by the State Employment Service.

The villains, however, were not treaty breakers but vendors of bogus Indian crafts. And rather than seek revenge on the warpath, the tribal organizations may take legislative action.

The thousands of tourists who visit Montana and other western states buy moccassins, Indian dolls and beaded buckskin articles.

Returning home, many visitors discover to their dismay the "Indian crafts" they bought were made in Hong Kong or Hoboken. The chagrin is heightened if the buyer happens to be from Hoboken, N.J., in the first place.

Mahala Mueller of the Bureau of Indian Affairs office in Billings said the tribal organizations may seek legislation making it unlawful to sell imitations of Indian crafts under the implication the articles were made by Indians.

Mrs. Mueller said it is not the competition of the mass-produced articles that bothers the Indians. It is that they are not the same product.

"It's like the difference between an original oil painting and a cheap print." she says.

True Indian crafts are hand made and each article is an original, taking many hours to produce. The cost, therefore, is higher for the authentic piece than it is for an imitation.

Articles made in the Orient and New Jersey are cast from plastic or other cheap materials at a few cents and are only copies of Indian design, Mrs. Mueller said.

She said the proposed legislation would not attempt to curtail sale of the imitation articles, but rather to protect the unsuspecting tourist.

One of the first steps would be the adoption of a trade mark, such as the red buffalo patented 25 years ago by the Northern Plains Indian Crafts Association, a guild comprising six tribal craft groups in Montana, Wyoming and the Dakotas.

The association's marketing center is in Billings, and all-Indian judging and buying committees are set up for each member reservation. Montana tribes represented are the Blackfeet, Chippewa-Cree, Assiniboine and Gros Ventre.

With adoption of a trade mark accepted throughout the state, a bill could be drafted for the 1967 Legislature, Mrs. Mueller said.

She envisions a law that would prevent authentic Indian articles and imitations from being displayed in the same showcase. An investigator would be named to assure compliance.

Mrs. Mueller said several states have passed similar legislation and the courts upheld the laws. Arizona enacted the first such protective law in 1955. Since then Alaska, South Dakota, New Mexico, Colorado and California have followed suit.

Mrs. Mueller said some of those states have less need for a protective law than Montana.

'Spend-a-Million' Not 'Bet-a-Million'

It was "Spend - a - Million" Gates — not his papa, "Bet-a-Million," who paid off the mortgages on Cody, Wyo., churches, bought the widows, orphans and jobless overcoats and died at Cody.

E. D. (Kid)Wilson of Cody, Dick J. Nelson, former Montana and Wyoming resident, now of San Diego, and Page One of The Billings Gazette for Oct. 29, 1913, set the record straight.

There'd been some controversy over whether it was John W. Gates, known as "Bet - a - Million," who paid off Codyites' debts and died or a fellow they all called "Charley."

Charles G. Gates was the son of John W. Gates, who died in Paris. Charles, The Billings Gazette article reports, was stricken in the Irma hotel, revived and taken to his railroad private car on a railroad siding at Cody. Death was the result of apoplexy and cerebral hemorrhage.

"Charley's income, "Wilson writes, "was around $36,000 a day. He was known here as 'spend-a-million,' but he'd bet you a million even on one of two houseflies climbing a windowpane and let you pick your housefly. His open pocketbook paid the mortgages off on all the Cody churches and while one minister was thanking him for $4,500, Charley invited him to have a drink. The minister accepted a drink of water in Jess Frost's saloon.

"Charley was at Cody for a hunting trip with outfitter and guide Ned Frost. Every 'savage' on the trip was to receive a $250 fur coat at Charley's expense and when Dave Jones' store ran out of them, Charley staked the rest to that amount in merchandise at any store. I still have my camera, bathrobe and hat. I wore out the suit and boots.

"Charley's private car sat on the siding here all the time he was on the hunting trip, equipped with chef, waiter, porter, barber, valet and two doctors."

Wilson's account of where Charley died differs with the newspaper version. Wilson says, "He died in a card room off the Irma bar where we carried him after he passed out in the bar. I then carried him out to the Stanley Steamer, which he had chartered at $50 per day, drove over to the depot and carried him to his bed. . .

"I know all this to be fact because I was working for Holm Transportation of Cody at the time. Charley chartered the Stanley Steamer from them and I was his chauffeur."

Nelson, who came to Crook County, Wyo., in 1888, helped build the Cody - Toluca railroad line and was with the Burlington Railroad 45 years, writes: "I saw Gates at times when he was paying off the Cody church debts, tipping the swampers and buying overcoats. I saw him after he died. I saw the special train that carried his body to New York leave Cody."

So the confusion over which Gates died in Cody is cleared up. An understandable confusion, though. Both father and son were millionaires and — spenders.

Crew Surveys The 'Impossible'

Editor's Note — William R. Bandy spent many years as an employe of the former U.S. General Land Office, now the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, surveying public lands and national park bounaries. He has now retired from government service and lives in Helena.

By W. R. Bandy
Special for The Gazette

HELENA—That great gorge separating the Pryor Mountains from the Big Horn Range —called Big Horn Canyon— has always been a challenge to land surveyors.

The gorge, now site of Yellowtail Reservoir, is several thousand feet deep, walled with perpendicular cliffs, limestone palisades and sliderock slopes.

Rollin Reeves, astronomer and surveyor, was the first cadestral engineer to confront it.

He started in August, 1879, at the north boundary of Wyoming territory with an elaborate outfit — chainmen, flagmen, axemen, cornermen, plus astronomers and mathematicians with equipment to observe the sun and stars for latitude. They followed the 45th parallel and observed latitude every 27 miles.

The next land surveyor record is 1916, when Surveyor Charles M. Pidgeon and crew of the U.S. General Land Office undertook to extend the rectangular system of public land surveys into the Big Horn canyon area by dividing land into townships and sections.

At this time, the east end of Pryor Mountain and all land between the Pryors and west bank of the Big Horn River was surveyed with the exception of 11 sections of the roughest part of the east slope of Pryors. This was considered too difficult.

It was this unsurveyed maze of perpendicular cliffs, pinnacles and sliderock I was directed to survey in the fall of 1936.

We had two crews of six men each. We spent the summer surveying section lines in mountainous areas north and east of Cooke City.

My men were experienced mountain climbers, willing and dependable, hard as nails. They were Roy Romberg, transitman in charge of the other party; Jim Minnie, Billings; John Masterson, Miles City; Sam Roberts, Helena; Oliver Tingley, Butte; Blackie Postle, Helena; Seib Hottenstein, Moore; Bob Pyle, Billings; Harry Bean, Bridger; George Kortum, Anaconda, truck driver; and a Mr. Hodgkiss, Red Lodge, the cook.

I've lost account of some of the boys in 30 years, but I know others are now a state cadastral engineer, a captain in the U.S. Navy, a colonel in the Air Force and a district surveyor for U.S. Bureau of Fish and Wildlife.

We put our pack animals on winter pasture and moved by truck Sept. 25 to a small spring at the head of Lost Water Creek, near the summit of Pryor Mountain.

We found section corners the next day and started surveying as fast as we could. We completed all the lines in a week, except two of the east and west miles that start near the top of the mountain and go east down the roughest portion of the face of Pryor Mountain into the canyon.

Each of the two crews could run one of these miles down over the maze of cliffs to the objective corner 3,000 feet below in one long day. Then they'd have to climb back up to camp after dark and through snow. Or—they could spend the night at the foot of the mountain without blankets, supper or breakfast.

But—there was a possibility of riding in the truck back to camp. The forest map showed an old wagon trail down the west side of the Big Horn River from Lovell, Wyo. If George Kortum, driver, could get the truck down that trail by going back from camp to the Pryor Gap road and down south of the Pryors through Wyoming to Lovell, we could ride back to camp with him.

There were a lot of "ifs" involved, but we thought it worth trying. So both crews left camp early in the morning, going by truck as far as possible. Then George turned around and headed west and south, hunting for the old wagon trail none of us had ever seen.

After completing our line about 4:30 p.m. we started down the mountain. There was no sign of the truck, although George had been traveling about eight hours since we'd left him.

We anxiously watched. Pretty soon we saw Romberg's crew trailing down the mountain looking for the same thing we were . . . The truck.

Then a shout went up from all of us.

The truck was pulling out on an open ridge. Good old George had done himself proud.

George said he'd traveled steadily ever since he left us, except for stopping to repair washouts and throw rocks off the old wagon road.

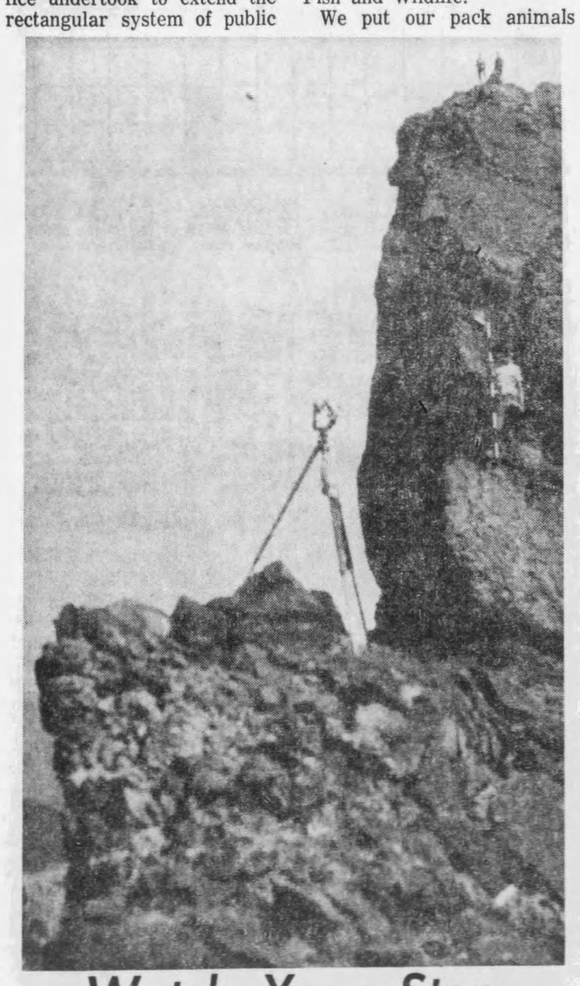
We all piled in the truck and headed for camp over the long, bumpy, crooked road. The boys sang a while and then dropped off the sleep.

Climbing the Pryors on the Crooked Creek road, we ran into snow and mud and had to wake up the boys for help in putting on chains. A disagreeable job in the dark. After that the old truck kept chugging along and carried us into camp about 2 a.m. The camp cook got up and served a meal. Then everyone went to bed feeling he'd earned his pay that day. I declared the next day a holiday.

We broke camp and headed for Helena the day after, feeling satisfied we'd finished the job in spite of snow and mud.

Up With Dog, Transit

W. R. Bandy boosts the transit up to crewmen on top as pet dog, Shep, gets a lift via rope.—Photo courtesy W. R. Bandy.



Watch Your Step

Survey crew's experienced and tough as nails, but this is rugged country and you watch your step.—Photo by W. R. Bandy.

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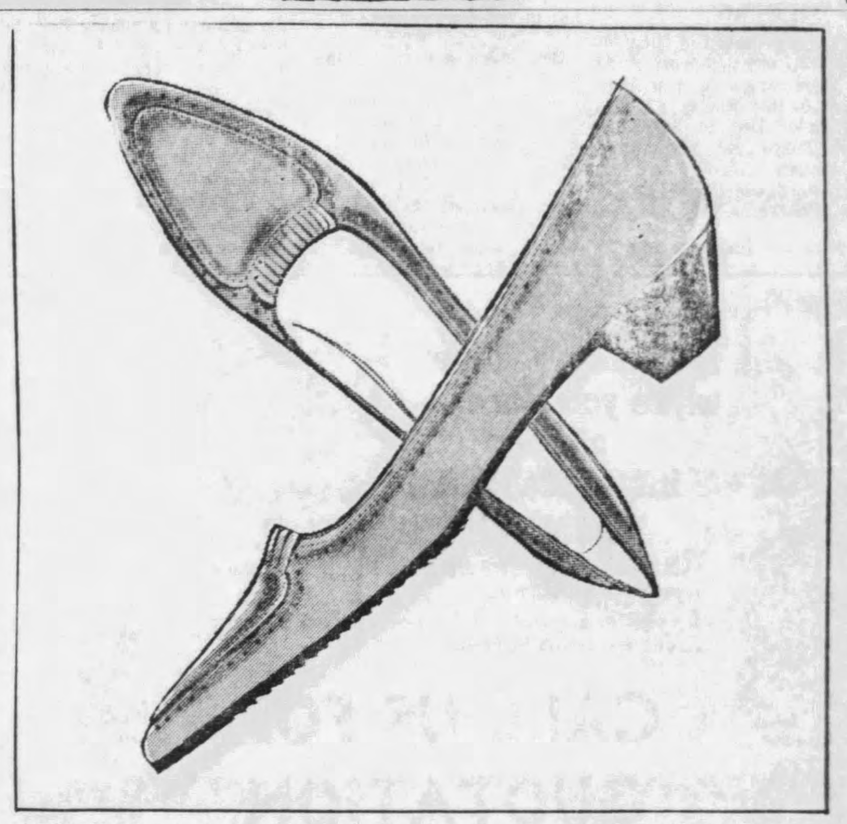

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