



HERITAGE HIGHLIGHTS

November 2011 Newsletter from the
American Heritage Center

AHC Explores Impact of Niobrara Oil Play

Leslie Waggener

Next time you drive by Glendo in southeastern Wyoming you may see signs of a new business park as the town annexes land to host potential oil-related businesses. There are also plans for a 66-lot housing development to accommodate possible permanent oil industry employees. Wheatland has similar plans for housing and a business park; Cheyenne already has a business park in the works. What is causing all this economic flurry in some of Wyoming's traditionally non-energy developed areas? You could say it was because of "Jake," a Colorado oil well. Just below Wyoming's southern border, Houston-based EOG Resources in 2009 drilled an oil well. While the average onshore U.S. oil well yields about 300 barrels a month, Jake gave up 1,558 barrels a day, according to the company. Oil and gas companies quickly began leasing land in the same formation, the Niobrara Shale Formation, sparking enthusiasm, and some trepidation, for an economic boom in northern Colorado, northwest Kansas, southwest Nebraska, and southeastern Wyoming. The Niobrara Shale in Wyoming is still under exploration, and industry representatives generally agree it's too early to tell if the play will prove itself worthy of the hype, but hopes are high.

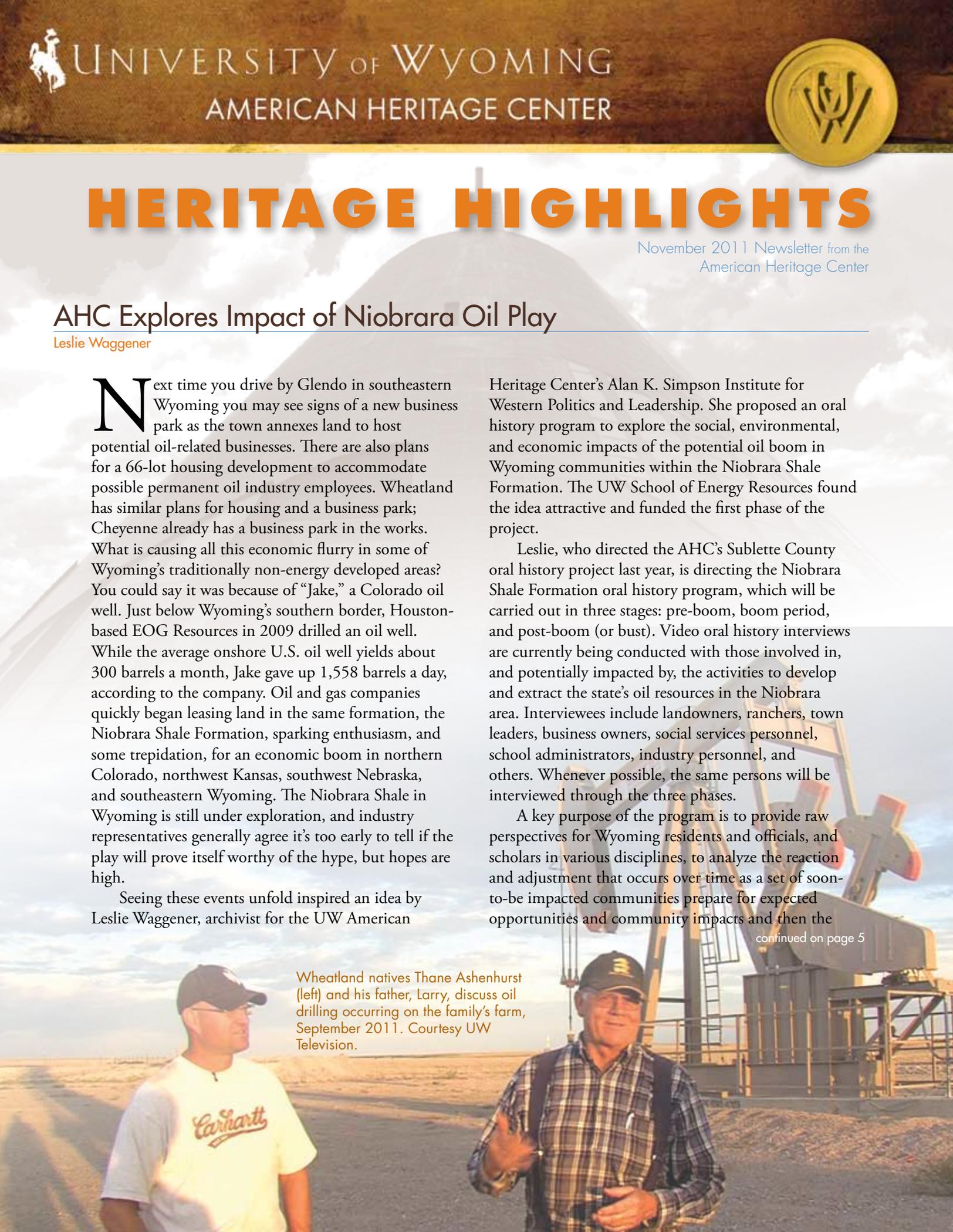
Seeing these events unfold inspired an idea by Leslie Waggener, archivist for the UW American

Heritage Center's Alan K. Simpson Institute for Western Politics and Leadership. She proposed an oral history program to explore the social, environmental, and economic impacts of the potential oil boom in Wyoming communities within the Niobrara Shale Formation. The UW School of Energy Resources found the idea attractive and funded the first phase of the project.

Leslie, who directed the AHC's Sublette County oral history project last year, is directing the Niobrara Shale Formation oral history program, which will be carried out in three stages: pre-boom, boom period, and post-boom (or bust). Video oral history interviews are currently being conducted with those involved in, and potentially impacted by, the activities to develop and extract the state's oil resources in the Niobrara area. Interviewees include landowners, ranchers, town leaders, business owners, social services personnel, school administrators, industry personnel, and others. Whenever possible, the same persons will be interviewed through the three phases.

A key purpose of the program is to provide raw perspectives for Wyoming residents and officials, and scholars in various disciplines, to analyze the reaction and adjustment that occurs over time as a set of soon-to-be impacted communities prepare for expected opportunities and community impacts and then the

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A photograph of two men standing in front of an oil well. The man on the left is wearing a white t-shirt with 'Carnhart' written on it and a dark cap. The man on the right is wearing a plaid shirt, a dark cap, and glasses. They are both looking towards the camera. The background shows an oil well structure against a clear sky.

Wheatland natives Thane Ashenhurst (left) and his father, Larry, discuss oil drilling occurring on the family's farm, September 2011. Courtesy UW Television.



From the Director

Mark Greene

It is rare for me to be at a loss for words, particularly where the American Heritage Center is concerned, but when Rick Ewig, editor and publisher of our newsletters let me know he was ready to go to print he just needed my column, I finally had a case of writer's block. What had I not already said about the AHC in my past ten-plus columns (not to mention my columns in the annual report)?

I finally had an idea: Why not describe some of the activities here at the AHC that are largely invisible to anyone who doesn't work here, the type of projects that are essential to the Center's operations (even to its excellence) but are rarely highlighted? For example, Collection Manager Bill Hopkins has for over a year been chairing a task force whose mission is to find and implement a replacement for our collection management system (CMS), the computer system that does everything from tracking the location of every box in our collections (more than 100,000 of them) to recording every time a box is pulled for a patron and much, much more.

Our current CMS, named "GRACE" for AHC founder Grace Raymond Hebard, went live in 1996, the product of broad input and the particular skill of our indefatigable Senior Computer Support Specialist, Tony Wickersham. It is unheard of for a computer application to remain viable for 15 years as GRACE has, which is a testament to how forward-thinking it was when it was created.

To replace it we decided to purchase a proprietary product based on the vendor's commitment to upgrade that system to meet all our needs. The task force is currently in the final stages of reviewing those upgrades, and we hope the new system will be in place early next year. Not only will it—dubbed SAGE, because it holds so much knowledge—do what GRACE now does it will do more, eliminating some workflow redundancies, improving data input, and enhancing our ability to analyze important trends. The purchase of the new system was made possible by assistance from UW's provost's office and from an anonymous donation.

When the new CMS comes on line it should be completely transparent to our users. Not so with the revision of our website, which is also slated for operation early in 2013. Manager of Digital Programs Ben Goldman, with advice and support from his website

committee, has been engaged for more than a year in dramatically reshaping our website to be compatible with the University of Wyoming's new content management system (also CMS; very confusing).

In starting to work on our site, Ben discovered that it had grown over the years to 15,000+ pages, several levels of magnitude larger than is recommended for a site that is easy for visitors to navigate and find what they are looking for. To make matters worse, thousands of those pages were woefully out of date. The new website will be leaner and cleaner, and will make our most popular and important pages much easier to find.

One of the most popular and important pages is the entrance to our digital collections. The 100,000 items (and counting) from our holdings available in digital form on the web did not get their by accident. Ben oversees a process of prioritizing digitization, and the task of actually converting analog photos, correspondence, sound recordings, and video tape to digital form falls to the indefatigable Keith Reynolds and Jamie Greene.

As you know, several years ago a series of task forces at the AHC developed our collecting policy (<http://ahc.uwyo.edu/about/policies.htm>) for our 75,000 cubic foot manuscripts collections. What I haven't yet reported on is that we currently have two additional task forces operating, one to develop a collecting policy for the Toppan Rare Books Library and one to develop a collecting policy for the University Archives and Records Management (UARM) program. Collecting policies permit us to focus our limited resources on the types of acquisitions we have, after considerable analysis and reflection, decided are of most significance and/or utility (utility to our patrons).

While other rare books programs do have collecting policies, most are considerably broader than we intend ours to be. On the other hand relatively few university archives have collecting policies, so there has been little to guide the task force led by University Archivist Laura Jackson. When completed, the UARM collecting policy will actually have three components: prioritization of administrative units, faculty papers, and the records of student organizations. The rare books policy is being developed in collaboration with the special collections unit of the University Libraries, to

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avoid duplication of effort and maximize the material both units can provide to researchers.

If you pay close attention to our newsletter and annual report, you will know that both are produced by the internal team of Rick Ewig (associate director), Vicki Schuster (her title, Graphic Designer, belies the fact that she is at the same time my trusted administrative assistant, as well as the AHC liaison with external groups wishing to use our building), and senior photographic technician Rick Walters (who, when he isn't taking event photos for us, is in his darkroom reproducing nitrate negatives and creating digital images of oversized collection material). When I arrived at the Center in 2002, we contracted out the design and layout of all of our publications; shortly thereafter Vicki asked if she could try her hand at those activities, and she has since taken over design and production for all of our other publications as well: brochures (over a dozen of them), event posters, graphic ads, and more.

Archival Processor Mary Ann Meyer, in Bill Hopkins' department, performs a host of often invisible tasks that are crucial for the AHC, from accessioning every new collection and addition to existing collections, coordinating shipping of everything from collection donations to traveling exhibits, overseeing administration and maintenance of our vehicle (a small SUV used principally to haul in collections), to taking minutes of our Acquisitions Committee minutes—to name just a few of her responsibilities.

Accessioning is the process whereby new collections and accretions to existing collections formally become part of the AHC's holdings, by entering them (and their shelf locations) into the CMS and by creating preliminary catalog records and finding aids (which are later expanded by faculty and staff in our Arrangement and Description department). In a typical year Mary Ann is responsible for about 150 such accessions. In the same department are the individuals who staff our information desk and answer and route phone calls. Ty Russell and Carmella Chavez also direct traffic in our building lobby, directing visitors which way to go and what floor to find; Ty also has the unglamorous and unthankful responsibility for ordering the supplies that keep our whole unit operating.

I could not write about "behind-the-scenes" activities at the AHC without mentioning our business

office, which ensures not only that everyone from student Pages to the director gets paid regularly but so much more besides. Executive Business Manager Megan Barber not only oversees 67 special funds (most of them endowments), including keeping track of any restrictions or guidelines for their use and prepares and tracks our annual budget, she is also our de facto human resources manager (and liaison to UW's Human Resources department) and as such does everything from orienting new employees to assisting with job searches.

Megan is assisted by Senior Accounting Associate Crystal Hill, who (among other things) tracks income and expenditures on daily basis, is responsible for entering time cards and what are called "exception reports" (basically time cards for exempt employees) into the payroll system, keeps on top of faculty and staff professional development allocations, and provides all manner of customer service to both Center employees and external customers.

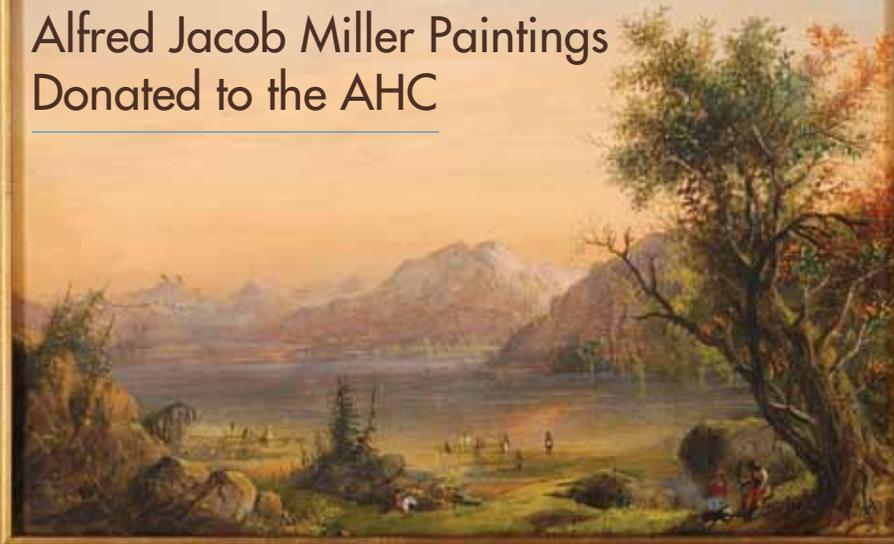
Last but not least, there are the numerous and tireless student pages, who keep our manuscripts and archives reading room operating by retrieving boxes for researchers and performing the countless hours of copying necessary to fulfill patron demand. Other students occasionally work as interns. The AHC could not function without any of these individuals. Indeed, we could not succeed as we have without the contributions of everyone employed here, staff and faculty and students, part- and full-time, exempt and non-exempt. Invisible or not, every employee of the AHC contributes to our excellence.

Let me end by changing subjects radically. In late October we mailed out our regular appeal for annual fund gifts, and I hope that, if you haven't already done so, you will seriously consider making a donation—of any size. We continue to rely on private philanthropy for roughly 50% of our overall budget, including for about 50% of our salaries and benefits. I realize not only are times tight for all of us, but also that all of you receive far more requests for philanthropy than you can possibly support. Please know that, truly, every gift to the AHC makes a difference, whether of \$25 or of \$25,000. Thank you for considering this request. And as always, if you ever have any questions about the AHC, please feel free to contact me directly at 307/766-2474 or mgreene@uwyo.edu. ■

AHC staff visiting the Wyoming Frontier Prison, July 2011.



Alfred Jacob Miller Paintings Donated to the AHC



One of the Miller paintings recently donated by Robert Graff.

maintain the Alfred Jacob Miller Classroom adjacent to our manuscripts reading room; in 2009 Robert Graff's brother-in-law Charles Nevins donated additional works of art by Miller, while Mr. Graff's generosity allowed those paintings to be stabilized and safely displayed in the Loggia. Most recently, this autumn, Robert Graff donated seven stunning Miller works to add to his family's enduring legacy; his previous kindness will enable us to provide secure display space for these newest additions. In all, Robert Graff and his family have made inestimable contributions to the collections of the AHC. Thank you! ■

AHC 2011 Bernard L. Majewski Fellow

Dr. Jeremy Vetter, Assistant Professor of History at the University of Arizona (Tucson), was the American Heritage Center's 2011 Bernard L. Majewski Fellow. As part of his fellowship, Vetter presented a public talk, "Capitalist Nature: The Sciences of Development in the American West, 1860-1920," in the Wyoming Stock Growers Room on September 23. The talk focused on the Great Plains and the Rocky Mountain West and examined the role of field sciences in economic development in such sectors as agriculture, ranching, and mining.

Vetter received his Ph.D. in the History and Sociology of Science from the University of Pennsylvania. His dissertation was titled "The Regional Development of Science: Knowledge, Environment, and Field Work in the U.S. Central Plains and Rocky Mountains, 1860-1920." During his time researching at the AHC, Vetter studied the papers of Charles Laurence Baker, Eliot Blackwelder, and Charles T. Upton, as well as the correspondence of the Wyoming State Geologist.

The Majewski Fellowship is funded by an endowment provided through the generosity of Mrs. Thelma Majewski and is intended to provide research support for a recognized scholar in the history of economic geology and to facilitate the use of the collections of the AHC. ■

Dr. Jeremy Vetter



AHC 2011 George A. Rentschler Distinguished Lecturer

Dr. Michael Barson served as the American Heritage Center's 2011 George A. Rentschler Distinguished Lecturer. On October 17, in the Wyoming Stock Growers Room, he presented a public talk during which he discussed his book, *Red Scared! The Commie Menace in Propaganda and Popular Culture*. Barson examined the books, films, magazines, posters, and other media which recounted the Communist threat to the United States during the 1940s through the 1960s.

Barson received his Ph.D. in American Culture from Bowling Green State University. He has published more than a dozen books, including *Teenage Confidential: An Illustrated History of the American Teen, Born to Be Bad*, and *True West: An Illustrated Guide to the Heyday of the Western*. His most recent book is *Agonizing Love: The Golden Era of Romance Comics* published in May 2011.

The Rentschler Distinguished Visiting Lectureship is made possible by an endowment established by the late Frederick B. Rentschler and his mother, the late Rita Rentschler Cushman. ■



Dr. Michael Barson

AHC Explores Impact of Niobrara Oil Play (continued from page 1)

Leslie Waggener

ensuring reality of the environmental, sociological, and economic changes. After the boom has played out or the area has experienced a downturn, another set of interviews will be conducted to gauge the reactions and adjustments of the communities. The program, combined with other sources, will allow community members, present and future, to better understand the impact of an energy boom and bust on their area. It should also be of use to Wyoming residents and officials as a planning tool to deal with future booms and busts.

The AHC is creating an online exhibit/interface on its website to provide a contextual tool for the energy boom and bust interviews and the related materials. Also, after each phase of the project, and when the interviews and transcriptions are accessioned into the AHC's collections, material will be introduced to the scholarly community and the public through panel discussions held in select impacted communities and at UW. Interviewees who participated in the project will be invited to the discussion, as well as other interested parties such as local officials, energy company administrators and employees, local ranchers, business owners, and others in the affected area.

This oral history project will add substantially to the many collections held by the AHC which document the history of energy development in Wyoming. ■



History Day Student Rediscovered Hindenburg Materials



Two relatively unknown collections at the AHC earlier this year produced some valuable information for a 2011 Wyoming History Day student. London Homer-Wambeam, a home-schooled student from Laramie, selected the Hindenburg disaster for his documentary topic, which fit the History Day theme of “Debate and Diplomacy in History.” During his research, London visited the AHC to see what related collections the Center might have. It turned out the Denis J. Mulligan Papers had recently been cataloged. There was not an inventory for the collection created, so no one knew it contained items from the Hindenburg. Since Mulligan was the head of the Air Commerce Bureau during the 1930s, London researched

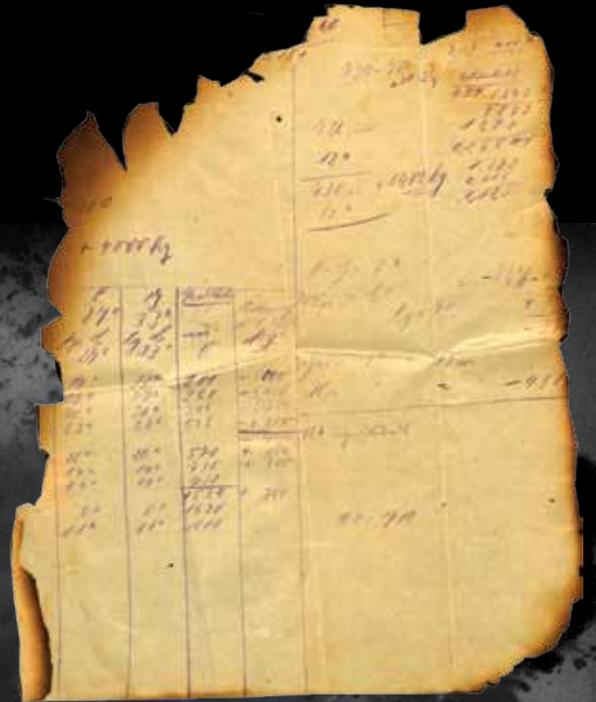
the collection and found “five unmarked postcards of the Hindenburg interior, four unmarked envelopes, and one log book sheet from an engine car.” The items had been burned on the edges from the accident. He used images of these items in his documentary.

The Bureau of Air Commerce, after investigating the disaster, classified it as an accident, citing the ignition of a mixture of free hydrogen and air from a leak that produced a combustible mixture at the upper stern. Various other theories about what caused the fire have been investigated and discussed for years, such as a conspiracy, lighting, engine failure, or a fuel leak. London’s documentary, titled “The Hindenburg: Debate, Diplomacy, Disaster,” reviewed and discussed the various theories.

During his time in the AHC reading room, London also came across the A.A. Hoehling Papers. Hoehling was a writer and military historian and had written books about the attack on Pearl Harbor, the sinking of the Monitor during the Civil War, various aircraft carriers, and the Hindenburg. In Hoehling’s papers, London found hundreds of letters to and from Hoehling and Hindenburg survivors and witnesses, which proved to be a great resource for London to learn more about those who survived the disaster.

London’s entry placed first in the Senior Individual Documentary category at the Wyoming History Day contest held in April at the University of Wyoming. He then participated at National History Day at the University of Maryland, College Park, in June. London’s documentary made the finals in his category, eventually placing fourteenth out of eighty entrants.

The Denis J. Mulligan and A.A. Hoehling papers are available for research at the AHC. Perhaps future researchers will find the information about the Hindenburg as helpful and informative as London did. ■



AHC and Butch Cassidy Share Spotlight

Earlier this fall, the AHC received some national publicity through a broadcast of the show *Mysteries at the Museum* on the Travel Channel. The October 18 program included a segment about Butch Cassidy and his possible assumption of a new identity upon his return to the United States. The AHC holds the papers of Larry Pointer, who in 1977 published a book titled *In Search of Butch Cassidy*. The thesis of the book is that Cassidy did not die in South America in 1908 as a certain movie may have you believe. Pointer believes the outlaw returned to the United States and took on the identity of a Spokane, Washington, businessman, William T. Phillips. During the 1920s and 1930s Phillips traveled to Wyoming and a number of people took him to be the well-known outlaw.

Pointer donated his papers to the AHC in the 1990s. Much of the collection deals with his research into the life of Cassidy. One item in the papers is an incomplete manuscript titled "The Bandit Invincible," which Pointer claims is an autobiography, including details too specific to Cassidy's life to have been written by anyone else.

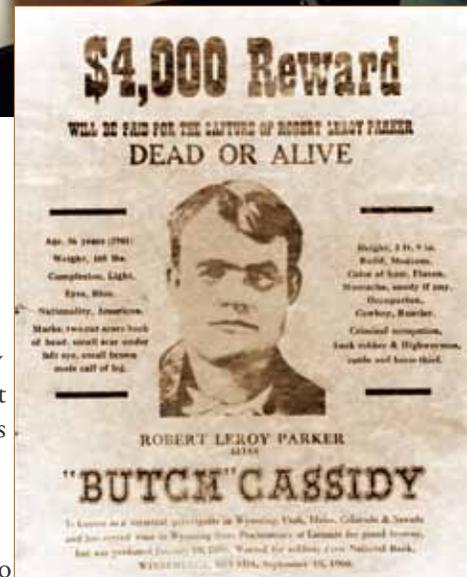
During May, a production company for *Mysteries at the Museum* traveled to Laramie and filmed Pointer at the AHC. He explained why he believed Phillips was Cassidy. The company also filmed the Center's storage area and various items in the Pointer papers, including the manuscript and photographs of Cassidy. The Cassidy segment was one of several included in the program, which will be repeated later this year. However, since



Travel Channel film crew in the AHC's Alfred Jacob Miller Classroom with Larry Pointer in the background.

the filming in May, a complete copy of "The Bandit Invincible" has been located and is now in the possession of Pointer, who is studying the document for other insights.

This discussion about whether Cassidy survived his sojourn in South America will continue to be debated by historians and others. For those who would like to research this topic the Larry Pointer Papers are available for research at the AHC. ■



If you would like to read future issues of *Heritage Highlights* on-line please send us your e-mail address at:

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PHOTO from the ARCHIVES: On March 4, 1886, Wyoming Territorial Governor Francis E. Warren signed a bill authorizing the construction of a capitol building in Cheyenne and a building for the establishment of the University of Wyoming at Laramie. The UW building, Old Main, was completed in time for the first university classes to begin in the fall of 1887.

