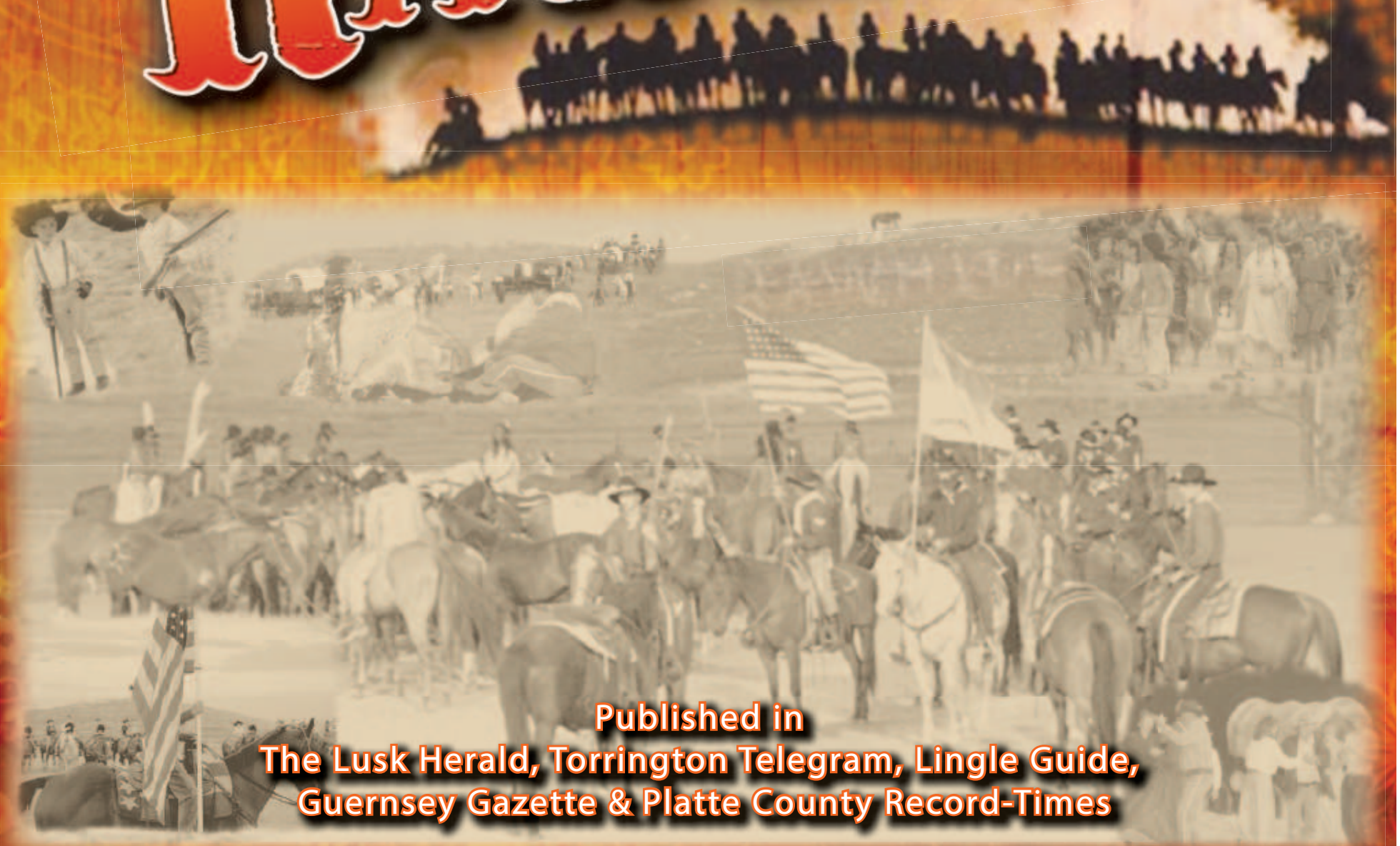


July 13, 14, & 15, 2023

The LEGEND of RAWHIDE



Published in
The Lusk Herald, Torrington Telegram, Lingle Guide,
Guernsey Gazette & Platte County Record-Times

Introduction to the Legend of Rawhide

From the original souvenir program printed in 1947 and reprinted in 1986.

We hope you will go away from Lusk with the feeling that you have been among friendly people.

The little show which is being presented has its origin in the folklore of this community. We have no actual knowledge that Legend is true. There are many versions of this story. Many folks who are relatives

of the men who were present at the time of the skinning have sworn to this or that version of the happenings. Their stories are conflicting.

The particular version you are seeing comes from the pen of Eva Lou Bonsell. Miss Bonsell has written this after reading and studying the various stories and statements of people who claimed to know.

She offers no assurance that any, or a part, of this story, is true. It is her version of the Legend.



g them wagons into a circle—the Sioux are comin'! A county fair annually with a convincing realism. Hollywood might well envy. Some tourists protest it is too realistic.

Enjoy the

LEGEND OF RAWHIDE!



Play a round of Golf at the
Lusk Golf Course!
Take a swim at the Lusk
Tiger Plunge!

THE TOWN OF LUSK

Rawhide 2023 Schedule

Thursday, July 13th, 2023

Main Character rehearsal 4:00 pm
Cast & Crew Dinner 5:00-6:00 pm
Dress Rehearsal starting at 6:30 pm

Friday, July 14th, 2023

Gates Open at 7:00 pm

Pre-Show at 7:30 pm

Flag Ceremony at 8:15 pm

Performance at 8:30 pm

Concert featuring Brandon Jones immediately following the show
(Approx. 9:30 pm)

(Concert tickets sold separate from show)

Saturday, July 15th, 2023

Closest to the Pin in the arena 9 - 11 am

Volleyball Tournament 8:30 am registration

Pitch Tournament 10:00 registration

Corn Hole Tournament registration 10:30 am

Ranch Feed/Team Driving Contest 1:30 - 4 pm

(The above events will be held at the fairgrounds)

Parade line up at 4 pm at the Niobrara County Fairgrounds.
Parade will go by the hospital and then proceed down main street.

Gates Open at 7:00 pm

Pre-Show at 7:30 pm

Flag Ceremony at 8:15 pm

Performance at 8:30 pm

Dance Featuring Southern Fried immediately following the show.
Auction, Belt Buckle Drawing and Gun/Money Drawing at the
first break of the band.

(ITEMS MUST BE PAID FOR THE NIGHT OF
THE AUCTION!!!!)

Enjoy the Legend of Rawhide

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"Legend of Rawhide" Pageant Born in 1946

*Originally printed in the Lusk
Herald August 17, 1961*

Doc Reckling walked through the browning prairie grass, snapping his galluses. His eyes, look-araing above his half-moon specs followed the humped form of a pine-darkened hill. The germ of an idea sprouted in his head. That was in 1941. For twenty years the Pageant of the Rawhide Buttes has grown in length, polish and importance. This year the 16th and 17th presentations will be given as the main feature of Niobrara County Fair, and the celebration of Lusk's 75th anniversary.

To go back twenty years: The start is not easy. Doc Reckling wanted a civic celebration for his community, unlike one ever staged before. He also wanted to help raise the price of a much-needed community building in Lusk. He started talking and using his medical influence. Many were the versions of how the Rawhide Buttes got their name. All roads into Wyoming lead upward. Travelers and freighters uncured their long rawhide whips and tickled the backs of the oxen to hurry them on the westward climb. They called this "rawhiding it."

But there was another, more dramatic version - that of an Indian hater who shot an Indian squaw. When the enraged Indians swooped down on the wagon train and demanded the killer, this many finally gave himself up to save his sweetheart and fellow-travelers. He was skinned alive - rawhided - by the Indians. This version had been known to George Earl Peet all his life.

But the war came and all was laid aside until after VJ Day in 1945. T. A. Godfrey, president of the Fair Board, wanted a good program to start off the first fair in this new age. He remembered the pageant idea.

Eva Lou Bonsell (now Mrs. Paris) needed a historical plot around which she could weave a play as

part of her master's degree thesis. She was a talented graduate of Lusk High School and Colorado Woman's College, and was working toward her master's degree in drama at Denver University, and "The Legend of Rawhide" was just what she was looking for. Mr. Peet told her all he knew and she did many hours of research to augment the story.

Once written, the pageant had to be brought to life over the doubts of many. Committees were named and meetings held night after night. Carl Bruch made a Conestoga wagon and a yoke for oxen. Ralph Larson spent many days training long-horned steers to pull the wagon. Forrest Van Tassell was chosen for the Indian-hating murderer. Doc Reckling made a plaster cast of Van Tassell's body, and painted it red. Elizabeth and Pauline Bruch sewed on the skin that was to be ripped off on the fatal night.

Ranchers with teams fashioned seventeen more covered wagons; their wives sewed old-fashioned dresses and sun bonnets. Bill Watt was the narrator; Bill Magoon was the boss of the wagon train that came winding down over the hill at sundown. Eleanor Witzemberger was the heroine, the girl Clyde Pickett (Forrest Van Tassell) loved. E. R. Whitman was the Indian scout. Jasper Seaman was an Indian brave; George Earl Peet, the Indian chief. (See History article Peet Indian Head Dress). Mrs. Bunny Chard was the Indian maiden that got shot.

Many were the practices directed by Miss Bonsell, aided by Homer Paris, her fiancé and technical adviser.

Meanwhile, Doc Reckling was busy writing a souvenir booklet and a program of the pageant. It contained the histories and pictures of ranchers and farmers willing to contribute to the project; 2,000 copies of this booklet, printed by The Lusk Herald, were sold. Proceeds were given for the erection of the auditori-



um on the Fair Grounds, the booklet making his much-needed building possible.

Came the fair and the night for the first showing. Grandstand and bleachers were filled with spectators. Even the weather had its inning. Lightning flashed over the blue-black hills to the south. Rain poured on the encamped wagon train. But the Indian maiden was shot. Naked Indians riding bareback attacked and burned a wagon. The guilty man surrendered and was skinned alive. The wagons escaped.

In 1947 another scene was added to the pageant; an Indian village with squaws and children busy setting up tipis and tanning hides. Hazel Seaman was the Indian girl shot while wandering through the pine trees that grew overnight on the Lusk Fair Grounds. Mr. and Mrs. William Watt were directors. Mr. Watt was again narrator. The entire cast with

all horses, wagons and equipment moved to Douglas and camped under the cottonwood trees along the Platte River. The pageant was enacted one evening on the State Fair Grounds before a record crowd. Red Fenwick called it "hair raising realism" in his column in the Denver Post. That fall the Carl Bruch and Ralph Larson families took their covered wagon and oxen to Billings, Montana, to appear in a parade.

In August, 1948, the pageant was again shown at Lusk. In July, 1949, it was put on for the State American Legion convention in Lusk. Other showings were in Lusk in 1950, and in Crawford, Neb., in 1951. Merritt Wallace of Harrison, Nebraska, was president of the Pageant Corporation at this time. George Clarke of Harrison narrated; Mrs. Ford Porter directed.

Pageant: 'Wooden nickels were used for advertising the Pageant'

FROM PAGE A3

In 1952 George Clark again narrated at a Lusk showing. Bill Magoon played the part of Jim Farley; Donna Paisley was Kate, the sweetheart of Clyde Pickett, played by Charles Blagg. Shirley Seaman was the Indian maiden. C. E. (Blondie) Marvin narrated for the 1953 Pageant presentation.

Enthusiasm died down. It was hard to get men and boys to ride bareback as Indians. Teams to pull the covered wagons also became scarce. Rural people were busy with harvest at Pageant time. It was not presented in 1954.

Then George Gibson, with his community spirit and enthusiasm, aided by Dr. Richard Collins and many other Lusk people, decided to revive the Pageant and add color to its presentation. Doc Reckling was still an enthusiastic booster, but too busy with his medical practice to give the needed time.

The Seventh Cavalry was added.

George Gibson made a purchase of blue trousers. The yellow stripes were sewed on in Lusk. After the mounted troopers became popular, more trousers were needed. So George made another buy; dyed the second batch of trousers to match the first; and more yellow stripes were sewed on.

With much work, Oscar Bostrom and many helpers constructed the water falls and stream near the grandstand. Indian and white children in turn fished in the flowing water. Indian squaws skinned an antelope and dried the meat. Coyotes roamed on the hill. When the wagon train camped for the night, mothers put their children to bed with prayer; lovers strolled by the falling water; and angry wives dampened their husbands' love of chance. Tape-recorded, these scenes were played from the narrator's booth, while the action took place below. Ralph Olinger was director. William Watt again narrated in his Western drawl

as sixteen wagons rolled down the hill. Velma Linford, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, and an historical author, was an out-of-town guest among the 3,000 spectators at the 1955 presentation.

Rex Yocum directed the Pageant in 1956. A yoke of spotted steers was donated by the U. S. government and received at Fort Niobrara, Valentine, Nebraska. Vern Torrance trained the steers and drove them in the Frontier Days parade at Cheyenne to attract spectators to the Pageant showing. The Seventh Cavalry also appeared at Frontier Days. At the showing in Lusk, Father DeSmet, play by Coye Jennewein, appeared for the first time in a scene with the trappers, Don C. Taylor and Thomas J. Fagan. Mrs. Pete Briscoe was in charge of the Indian village scene. Willadell Story play the part of the Indian maiden who was shot by Clyde Pickett, and Jim Thompson was the Indian hater who got skinned alive. Dick Pfister was captain of the

Cavalry. Pete Briscoe rode on the hill as Indian scout. A check showed that cars from 20 States, the District of Columbia and Ontario, Canada, were parked at the Fair Grounds. Large delegations came from Goshen, Platte and Converse counties.

Wooden nickels were used for advertising the Pageant in 1957. Godfrey Broken Rope, an Indian artist, with Indians from Pine Ridge Reservation, gave nightly dances on the street preceding the Pageant. Salt and Pepper, the oxen, were trained by Aaron Eisenbarth. Jan Thompson was Kate, sweetheart of her father, Jim Thompson, Clyde Pickett. Governor and Mrs. Milward Simpson, William "Scotty" Jack and Mrs. Jack, Miss Lola Homsher and Miss Retaa W. Ridings from the Wyoming Historical Society were among the viewers.

In 1958 the Pageant of the Rawhide gained national recognition. Gov-

see Pageant page A5

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2023 Scholarship Recipients

LUSK – This year the Legend of Rawhide awarded 3 scholarships. All three were to 2023 graduates of NCHS. The scholarship recipients were Larkin Williams, Lily Krueger and Jazmin Ladwig. All three young ladies have participated in Legend as pioneer kids, indians, team drivers and floozies.

Ladwig will be attending Dickinson State to pursue her degree in nursing. She was raised by Shelley Ladwig



Williams plans to attend the University of Wyoming with a double major in special and elementary education with her eye on law school. She is the daughter of JD and Lisa Williams.



Krueger is the daughter of Andrew and Candice Krueger. She plans to attend Laramie County Community College to begin on her journey to becoming a physical therapist.

Pageant: "Rifle Hoax..."

FROM PAGE A4

ernor Simpson, an enthusiastic booster, hired William Bragg, Jr., to write national publicity advertising it. Carl Iwasaki, a photographer, and Bayard Hooper, a writer, from Life Magazine, were present for the afternoon presentation on July 20th. The story of the Pageant and a picture of Jim Thompson being shinned alive appeared in the April 13, 1959, issue of Life Magazine. Look Magazine also featured the Pageant in an article "How the West Was Won." The Pageant was also given a second time in 1958 on a Sunday evening.

George Gibson pulled his famous "rifle hoax" for publicity purposes

es in 1959. The cache of old army rifles was "discovered" by George on a tip from Chief Broken Rope, buried in rotting wooden boxes. In reality George bought the old 11 mm Mauser rifles in California, and faked the well-planned discovery of them. They were wrapped in army blankets that George had dyed blue and soaked in acid, so they would appear well rotted. Claude Redding played the part of Indian Chief. Dale Fulerton was captain of the Seventh Cavalry. Jack Magoon was director. Governor J. J. Hickey and Velma Linford were present.

The 1960 Pageant was dedicated to George Gibson and narrated by Dr. Richard Collins.

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Brandon Jones: Rawhide featured performer

For the Herald

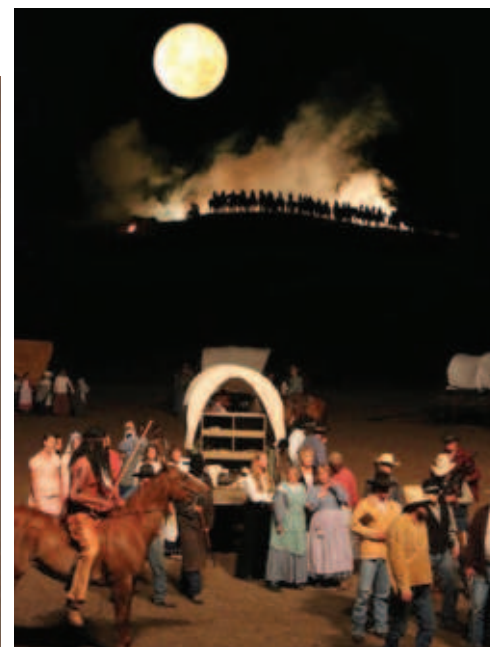
LUSK - Homegrown in the beautiful, rugged Black Hills, Brandon Jones has made a name for himself as one of the Midwest's premiere entertainers. In the last decade, the red-bearded Rapid City native went from strumming in his garage and a regional appearance at the Texaco Country Showdown to opening for some of country music's legendary acts. With a powerful, rustic voice, unmatched stage energy, and a cast of world-class musicians to his flanks, Brandon Jones and his band have been invited to share the stage with Black-Hawk, Sawyer Brown, Clint Black, Jordan Davis, Jo Dee Messina, Doug Stone, Aaron Watson, Kolby Cooper, Koe Wetzel, Diamond Rio, Chancey Williams, Ned LeDoux, Casey Donahew, and many others on stages across the American Heartland. The band has headlined or performed at Sturgis Motorcycle Rally, Wild Bill Days, Rapid City Stock Show, National Western Stock Show, and the South Dakota State Fair.


In 2019, Brandon Jones released his debut self-titled EP with Gram-

my Award winning engineer and producer Mills Logan, featuring "Black Hills Back Road" and "Kiss Me All Night," which had considerable play on regional country radio and YouTube, with his most popular music video being "Black Hills Back Road." The album release led to The Brandon Jones Band winning Rapid City Journal's "Best Band in The Black Hills" and New Artist of The Year by the Rocky Mountain Country Music Awards.

The artist's first release since the pandemic, "Picture" is set to debut as a single with an accompanying music video in March of 2022. The band's latest works are engineered by Tom Frear at Cottonwood Studios in Rapid City and mastered by Mills Logan.

The performer and radio host has always stood by his claim that he owes his success to his friends, family, and enthusiastic fanbase. The band currently tours from The Rocky Mountains to the Mississippi River, with first appearances in the South and Southwest later in 2022.





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An excerpt from 'Wyoming Tales and Trails' lends credence to "The Legend of Rawhide"

As seen in "Wyoming Tales and Trails"

But before the reader dismisses the legend out of hand, there may be some basis for the story. William F Drannan (1832-1913) in his 1910 account, Chief of Scouts as Pilot to Emigrant and Government trains Across the Plains fo the Wild West of Fifty Years Ago, recounted an incident in Nebraska in 1850:

Bridger and I rode down to where the emigrants were in camp, and we found the most excited people I ever saw in my life. They had passed through one of the most terrible experiences that had ever occurred on the frontier. There were thrity wagons in the train, and they were all from the southeastern part of Missouri, and it seemed that there was one man in the train by the name of Rebel who at the time they had left home had sworn that he would kill the first Indian he came across. This opportunity occurred this morning about five miles back of where we met them. The train was

moving along slowly when this man "Rebel" saw a squaw sitting on a log with a papoose in her arms, nursing. He shot her down; she was a Kiawah squaw, and it was right on the edge of their village where he killed her in cold blood. The Kiawahs were a very strong tribe, but up to this time they had never been hostile to the whites; but this deed so enraged the warriors that they came out in a body and surrounded the emigrants and demanded them to give up the man who had shot the squaw. Of course, his comrades tried not to give him to them, but the Indians told them if they did not give the man to them, they would kill them all. So know that the whole train was at the mercy of the Indians, they gave the man to them. The Indians dragged him about a hundred yards and tied him to a tree, and then they skinned him alive and then turned him loose. One of the men told us that the butchered creature lived about an hour, suffering the most intense agony. They had just buried him when we rode into the camp. The woman and some of the men talked about

Skinned Alive Every Year

By WILLIAM J. BARKER



ELEVEN miles south of Lusk, Wyo., Little Rawhide and Big Rawhide are purple warts on the vast flat horizon. Considering them one late summer afternoon, Doc Reckling latched thumbs in his galluses and squinted over his half-moon specs.

In those buttes beyond the bright distance, he saw more than just two topographical bumps. He saw back to the days of the '40ers when Clyde Pickett, the squaw-killer, was flayed alive there by the Sioux in the gory incident that named the twin formations. Doc also saw an idea for a special civic celebration that would rival anything ever staged. And suddenly he thought he saw a way to raise the price of a much-needed community building for Lusk.

That was in 1941. Walter E. Reckling, M. D., amateur historian, philosopher, promoter and father confessor to cattle-sheep-and-wheat solvent Lusk, had been nosing through the local legends with the vague thought of creating some sort of shindig with which to attract tourists. Now he was sure he had it.

Doc researched the legend of the Rawhide Buttes everywhere he could. Lancing an oldtimer's boil, Doc would ask the victim what his pappy had told him about the Sioux outrage. Soon

the board, wanted to do something extra big at the first post-war fair slated for August, 1946. So Doc opened the sluices and poured it on 'em.

After they'd heard him out, the practical Godfrey asked what the extravaganza would cost to stage.

Doc leaned back and laced his stumpy fingers in his black stubble hair. "It'll cost about \$2,500," he told them, pulling a figure out of the thin Wyoming blue.

doubts and those of some skeptics who said she was hardly a professional at her tender years, and Eva Lou got the legend down on paper.

The job of bringing it to life was mammoth as the Luskers straightaway learned. Committees were formed and meetings were held night after night. Everybody who could do something for the pageant was either bullied or seduced into co-operation.

Take Carl Bruch for example. Carl's inventiveness on his ranch, eight miles out of town, was widely known.

Could he make a Conestoga wagon? Yokes for oxen? Wagon wheels of the pioneer type? He not only could but did.

His sisters, Pauline and Elizabeth Bruch, became members of the cast: Pauline a pioneer woman and Elizabeth, a squaw. In jig time they had their costumes designed and made. Like Carl's work, theirs was authentic to the last stitch, bead and bonnet slat.

The Ralph Larsen outfit came up with some real old-time steers to haul the wagons, spent patient days breaking the 20th century spoiled beasts to oxbow and harness.

Other ranchers and their wives got into the swing of this

Reckling Photo by William J. Barker.
Dr. Walter E. Reckling and a Coffee Ranch patient. No vet, Doc's doing a friend a favor.

the dreadful thing; one of the men said it was a comfort to know that he had no family with him here or back home to grieve at his dreadful death.



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