



# MIDWESTERN SCOUT

## STURGIS



THE INAUGURAL ISSUE

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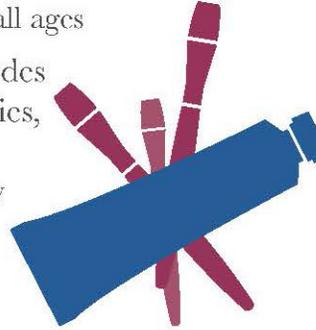
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All that remains of the Town of Runkel, a few apple trees. Full story on page 34.

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**On the Cover** *Driving Through the Colors* by Dustin White. Taken on the way to Dalton Lake as the colors began changing in the hills. **Opposite page** *Along the Banks* by Dustin White. Taken this spring after the snow melt made dry streams flow once again.



## Starting a Local Magazine

One of the first things that occurred in new towns as they were established was the creation of a newspaper or other media to keep people connected not only with each other, but also with the news and events back home. Written media was the backbone of many communities.

Times change though and sadly, written media didn't keep up. Local newspapers have slowly died away, either vanishing completely or being gobbled up by larger organizations that are only looking at the bottom dollar. With printers shutting down, other forms of written media also disappear, which leaves a void within the community.

Sturgis hasn't been immune to that. It was just a couple years ago that the Meade County Times-Tribune closed. There have been various attempts at filling that void, but none have yet quite succeeded. Part of the issue lies at the heart of why printed media is struggling to begin with; it isn't evolving with the times.

Before my family and I moved to Sturgis, I was also effected by the consolidation and loss of local papers. For years I worked as the editor of a county newspaper. I made the choice to focus more on the internet side of it, and the results were promising as readership was up drastically. The paper served a real purpose, it reported the news that makes up a small community. The parent company ended up deciding it was better to cut out the small paper though, as it did with the local papers here.

After that, I opened up an alternative paper that followed the focus of what I was doing at the county publication. Running a publication is a unique adventure, and it was definitely a learning process. And it means adapting the traditional manner that written media pursues to our current times.

This magazine is the product of all those years. It's building on my past mistakes, and learning from them. And it is being built from the ground up to be suited for our current times. Instead of jumping into a print product, we're putting the focus at where people are increasingly getting their news, the internet. In the future, we hope to also bring our publication to print, but baby steps.

There is another aspect here though. The goal we have is to create a publication that truly focuses on this community. So we want to bring the community into the discussion. If there is a story you think deserves to be covered, we want to cover it. If there are events you think should be photographed, we want to photograph them. If you have interesting stories about the past, we want to listen to them. We want to make this truly a community publication.

We have some lofty goals with this magazine, and we are excited to begin this journey. So here is to taking the first step in discovering more of this wonderful community, and I hope you take the trip with us.

One more thing, when I say we want you to be included, I sincerely mean that. If you have news, tips, suggestions, or just want to chat, don't hesitate to contact me at [Dustin@WhiteCanvasArtCo.com](mailto:Dustin@WhiteCanvasArtCo.com), or stop by White Canvas Art Co at 1060 Main Street.



### Volume 1 Number 1

So what is Midwestern Scout and how does it work? We are a free online publication that comes out every other month. But we also stay up to date with frequent weekly posts with the goal of keeping the community connected and informed.

Even though we are a free publication, you can still subscribe and get the magazine electronically delivered to you as soon as it comes out. By being a subscriber, we will also send you a weekly blast of the highlights of the week, so you can keep in the know.

To subscribe, just contact us with the information below, and we will get you on the list.

How do we cover our costs? As a free publication, we rely primarily on ads in order to cover our costs. We make every attempt to make sure the ads aren't aggressive, as we want to keep the viewing of the publication enjoyable. If you would like to advertise with us, contact us with the information below

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If you have a story idea, please send us a message at [Editor@MidwesternScout.com](mailto:Editor@MidwesternScout.com).

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**Opposite Page** *Upon Bear Butte by Derek White. Photo was taken last spring after a late snow storm.*



# Our Classes

Art should be for everyone. That is something we firmly believe in at White Canvas Art. It is with that mindset that we approach the aspect of teaching. What we strive to do is help nurture those artistic abilities in others, and help them find the form that suits them best.

Art is quite diverse. What one person may enjoy may not be another's cup of tea. Here though, we try to offer something for everyone. And if we can't achieve that, we will work until we can. We ourselves are continually learning, because there is always something

new to explore.

Our art classes aim to develop artistic skill by teaching techniques and encouraging personal growth. All projects leave room for individual creativity. The main skill or technique being taught allows for individuals to leave class with an acquired new skill or understanding of art techniques. Each class attended increases ability and skill of each participant.

Our goal is to improve your artistic talent. We believe that everyone has an artistic talent and we aim to direct and nurture that growth by helping to hone those

abilities and teach something of value. Sometimes though, Art is more about the process versus the actual product. Art can be such a therapeutic and relaxing process and makes for a great hobby for any age.

We are continually updating our class schedule, and are always open to suggestions. If there is an art technique you'd like to learn, let us know.

To keep up to date on our classes, to register for a class, or to request private instruction, go to [whitecanvasartco.com/classes](http://whitecanvasartco.com/classes). We'll love to see you there.

## Upcoming



November 2nd, 1 p.m, Pumpkin Painting Class

Enjoy the chilly weather by spending time inside our cozy art studio. White Canvas is offering a class painting pictures of beautiful pumpkins to match your harvest fall decor. Hot apple cider and cookies will also be served during this relaxing afternoon painting class. Price \$25

November 16th, 1 p.m, Glazing Class

Just in time for Thanksgiving. These corn themed butter warmer and S&P shakers are so unique and fun. Come spend a chilly afternoon inside White Canvas Art Studio creating something beautiful for your holiday table. Refreshments will be served at this fun and easy glazing class. Price \$25

Glaze your own  
**BUTTER WARMER  
AND SALT & PEPPER  
SHAKERS**  
Ceramic Class

**November 16th, 1-2pm**

Just in time for Thanksgiving. These corn themed butter warmer and S&P shakers are so unique and fun. Come spend a chilly afternoon inside White Canvas Art Studio creating something beautiful for your holiday table. Refreshments will be served at this fun and easy glazing class.

Instructor: Elizabeth White  
Price: \$25  
Location: 1060 Main Street, Sturgis SD  
Phone: 605-389-6019  
Reservations can be made by phone, in person, or online at:  
[www.whitecanvasartco.com](http://www.whitecanvasartco.com)

# Nativity Set Painting Class



**Saturday, November 30th 1-3pm**

November 30th, 1 p.m, Nativity Set

Thinking of Christmas? White Canvas has a perfect class to add something special to your Christmas collection. We are offering a class where you can paint your own nativity set! Make something special to cherish for years to come or a great gift for someone you love. Each set includes eight, 3-4" figures plus animals. \$25 per set

Every Saturday in December, leading up to Christmas: Ornament making classes. We will be making a variety of ornaments each Saturday. A Great family activity.



A coffee painting from one of our October Classes.

# Cabin 22



Nearly 100 years ago, a small building was constructed for the government. It was to act as a grain bin for a short period of time. It wasn't much to look at, but it did the job it was built for.

It wouldn't be long until it was repurposed. As tourism was picking up in the Black Hills, various camping areas were being developed. In comes the Round Up Cabins of Belle Fourche. The one time grain bin would be converted into a vacation home.

The cabin would sit in Belle Fourche for a few decades. In 1952, the inside of the building would be remodeled. It would outlast the Round Up Cabins, but unlike many of the other buildings, it would find a new life.

It would be moved out to Newell, and there it ended up being

used for storage. That is where we found it. The lady who owned it wanted it moved from her property, and while others had looked at the building, there were no takers.

Part of moving the building was emptying it. Sorting through all the mess, we discovered many items that were waiting to see a new life, whether they became a piece of art, or they were included into our old time photo scenes.

But it was the wood that had first attracted us, and the history that went with it.

Out of that wood, a new collection was born, Cabin 22, a throw-

back to when the building was still a Round Up Cabin. The goal is to build pieces that represent the history of the building, and the home it once was.

The first built for this collection was a coffee table. Every piece on the table came from the cabin, making it a good representation of what the collection will become.





Along Vanocker Canyon in the Fall.  
Dustin White

# Our Artists

Part of the fun and enjoyment of art is showcasing it. Having others share in the art is part of the experience. Realizing that, we wanted to create a place that allowed local artists to have an outlet for their work. Over the last year, we have had seven members join the gallery, and we'd like to highlight the work they do.



Coming from California, Pam Browning's style is heavily inspired by Mexican art and artists. Sugar skulls, Dia de los Muertos, and Frida Kahlo are among some of the things she draws inspiration from. Pam specializes in assemblage art, which make for some great plays on texture and dimension. Her colorful shadow boxes never fail to spark joy and add intrigue to any collection.

Paula Rae specializes in fluid painting. Her unique acrylic pieces are mesmerizing as well as beautiful, making them perfect accent pieces for any home or office. Being a self taught painter, she brings with her an approach that is unique to her, and it shows in her work.





From Hot Springs, Trisha Blair spends countless hours creating pieces out of leather or pine needles. Much of her work is created from a single piece of leather that is cut and manipulated to create three dimensional forms that lift off the surface and move past the frame. They are something you have to see to appreciate.

David Westfall has a very expressive style of painting. He specializes in portraits done in acrylic paint, but ventures into other areas as well. His brushwork gives feeling and energy to each of his pieces. Combined with his use of color, the pieces have an impressionistic quality.





Specializing in watercolor painting, Angie Heinze is definitively finding her artistic voice. Taking scenes from places she has visited, she breathes a new life into them as she puts them to paper. But she also ventures into fantasy, taking real scenes and creating something unique, that stretches reality.

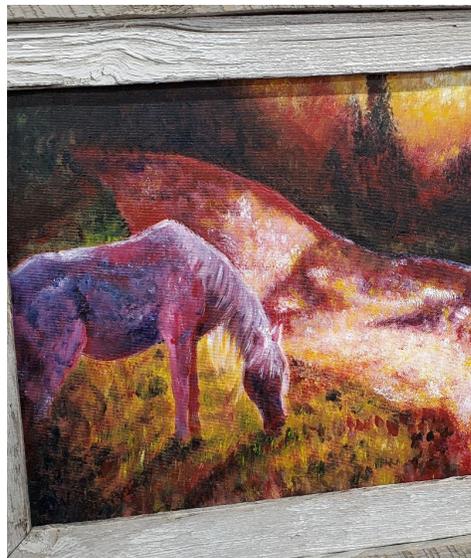
David Lyons works in both watercolor and oil painting. He paints scenery from around the area, as well as wildlife. His fine detail work is what makes his painting special and draws people in. Having lived in Sturgis his whole life, David is retired and finally able to focus on his passion for painting.





Always coming up with a new creative idea, Dean White specializes in woodworking and metal projects. His excellent craftsmanship and unique creations is what makes his work truly stand out. Typically furniture pieces, his work incorporates found objects and makes them into a truly one-of-a-kind piece of functional art.

Derek, Dustin and Elizabeth also display their art. Combining their passions for the arts as a whole, they add an assortment of different art forms, from photography, to metal work, to more of the fine arts. And they always are continuing to expand their own art forms.





*Under the Milky Way by  
Dustin White*



# EXPLORING LOCAL HISTORY

If history isn't recorded, it becomes lost. In the course of the life of a town, that means that a lot of history can vanish from one generation to the next, leaving only clues to the past. Exploring these clues can lead to a host of amazing stories, if one knows where to dig.

Sturgis was founded in 1878, and since then has been making its mark on the map. Today it is known internationally for the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally, but that hasn't always been the case. Before there were motorcycles, there were cars, and horses. There was the wild west, and Germans who were a step away from being prisoners of war. And before all of that, there were various American Indian tribes that moved in and out of the area for centuries.

With such a diverse history, there also comes a host of myster-

ies and misconceptions. At times, there are stories we only get bits and pieces to, leaving us scratching our heads, while at other times there are multiple stories about one event or person that don't quite square up. Getting a full picture can be a difficulty, but chasing the pieces is enthralling.

## The Personalities

Sturgis has been home to many incredible people. In this issue, we explore Charles Nolin, the pony mail carrier that was killed on his way to Deadwood. His impact is seen in a variety of places from giving name to Deadman's Gulch to having a memorial along Junction.

In later issues we will explore other intriguing figures and the myths that surround them. Poker Alice is a quintessential gambler, but could she have been given her

nickname because she was nosy; poking her nose into everyone's business.

Then there is Annie Tallent, who is said to be the first white woman in the Black Hills, whose house continues to stand in town. But maybe it was Sarah Campbell



*Grasshopper Jim as a young man*

who should hold the title, even though she was considered African American. Both have amazing stories just waiting to be told.

And we can't forget about Grasshopper Jim, J.C. "Pappy" Hoel, or the Davenport family, all who have left their imprints on the local environment. Sturgis may be a small town, but it has larger than life figures.

### Historical Sturgis

A part of the problem in exploring local history is that finding credible and easily accessible sources can be exceptionally difficult. Local newspapers can be an amazing resource, but digging through years and years worth of papers can be overwhelming. Digging through journals and the current books available isn't something many of us have the time or ability to do.

With the internet, some sources are more easily accessible, but most only begin to touch the surface, and that's if you can find them. The internet really is an ocean, and diving through it to find

what you're looking for can often be a monumental task.

Along with this magazine, we are also launching a couple of online resources that we believe will be a benefit to the community. Among those is [www.HistoricalSturgis.com](http://www.HistoricalSturgis.com) which we are developing as somewhat of an online encyclopedia when it comes to local history.

We began working on this project a year ago, and it stemmed from a simple event. Walking through downtown Sturgis, we noticed that there was a lot of possible history. We just didn't know what it was. There were buildings that were more than a hundred years old, which certainly told a story. But that story wasn't being told. So we decided to create



*Annie Tallent*

a guide that helps connect people with the history of Sturgis. A guide that allows you to walk through the city, and explore the history in a fun and exciting manner.

While some of those articles will feature in future issues of this magazine, we will also be updating the Historical Sturgis website on a regular basis in order to help tell the story of Sturgis a bit better.

### Community Involvement

History is a community activity.

We share stories with each other, and we tell tales of things we experienced growing up. We share memories, and by doing so, we also share history. Without that sharing and spreading of information, much of history can simply vanish or even become sterile.

Oral history is an important factor and any town's history as it gives that history a personal aspect. But oral history can also be quite fragile, as when a person passes away, their stories go along with them. Captur-



*Annie Tallent's House in Sturgis*



*Sarah Campbell*

ing oral history can be said to be vital, which is why we want to hear from you, so we can help preserve your unique personal perspective of history.

There is more than just oral history that the community can add to this project. Many of us have documents, film, photos, or other artifacts that tell a piece of history, but has largely been forgotten. Over the years we have rescued thousands of images that share a snapshot in time, and help add to the past.

We want to partner with the community to bring these sorts of artifacts to life. Whether it be undeveloped film from years past, film negatives that need to be digitize, or photos and documents that need to be restored, we are here to help that part of history to come back into the light.

If you'd be interested in becoming involved in this project, we would love to hear from you. Send us an email at [Dustin@WhiteCanvasArtCo.com](mailto:Dustin@WhiteCanvasArtCo.com), a call at (605) 389-6019 or just stop in at White Canvas Art Co.

at 1060 Main Street here in Sturgis.

**Preservation**

Every day new history is made. The town of Sturgis is constantly changing, sometimes more noticeably than others. Buildings go up, they are remodeled, and at times they are destroyed.

Realizing this, part of our goal is not only to look at the distant history, but also preserve our current history. Over the next year, part of this project will include documenting what Sturgis looks like in 2019-2020, and showing how it has transformed over nearly a century and a half.

How are we going to do this? The first step is to take a series of photographs of buildings and structures in Sturgis. If you vis-

it [www.HistoricalSturgis.com](http://www.HistoricalSturgis.com), we have begun that process by photographing the buildings along Main Street. While we took those photos around a year ago, the way Main Street looks has already changed.

This images will be captured on film, as film allows for an extra level of archivability, so that future generations can look back and see what Sturgis was like.

We are also attempting to create a map of Sturgis that not only shows how Sturgis looks like today, but also dives into the past, and highlights what once was.

This is a project we are extremely excited about, and can't wait to share it with the community. We hope that our work on local history, as well as this magazine, provide something that of importance in this community, and we look forward to working with you.

If there is a historical story that you would like covered, let us know and we would be happy to start digging.



*The Sturgis Benevolent Hall, before it was remodeled for the Hotel Sturgis*

## RIDING FOR A PONY EXPRESS



## THE TALE OF CHARLES NOLIN

### Charles Nolin

#### *Historical Sturgis and the Black Hills*

The blowing mail was ominous. It was clear that a tragedy had occurred, and soon that would be confirmed through the lifeless body of a young pony mail carrier. His death most likely came swiftly, with multiple bullet wounds to the head. He would later be scalped; his gun and horse stolen. The mail bag he had been carrying was slashed and the letters littered the area.

While Nolin's life was cut short, at just 24 years, he would become immortalized through his death with millions of people pass-

ing by his memorial. But exactly who was this Pony Express rider. Let's see in this issue of Historical Sturgis and the Black Hills.

In this article we will be looking at Charles Nolin, the Battle of the Little Bighorn, mail on the frontier, and how they all mixed to lead to the death of a young man.

Charles Nolin was born in Akron, Ohio, but as a small child, his family moved to Beatrice, Nebraska. It would be Nebraska that he would call home for the rest of his life, moving around the state as he grew older.

Not much more is known about the early life of Nolin. It's possible that he moved around

quite a bit, as he would later be associated with various towns in Nebraska. We also know that he had red hair, which lent itself to his nickname of either Red or Reddy.

It truly was in death that Nolin's legacy would live. It just so happened that his death was at the corner of events that changed the history of the west.

### Discovery of Gold

On July 27, 1874, a discovery would be made that would have a very long lasting impact. Horatio N Ross, a miner in Custer's 7th Cavalry, discovered gold in the French Creek of the Black Hills. Only a small amount of gold was initially discovered, but the search was building up.

As word about gold began being passed on, a rush to the Black Hills, in what was considered the

last of the gold rushes, started to escalate. In November of 1875, larger gold deposits were found in Deadwood Gulch, and by 1876, thousands of gold seekers would pour in.

With an increasing amount of miners flooding into the area, tensions quickly rose among the Lakota. According to the Treaty of Fort Laramie in 1868, the area of the Black Hills was closed off to Americans.

There are many aspects that led to this growing tension though, and in future podcasts we will delve into that matter more fully. However, after the Laramie Treaty of 1868, white men were forbid-

den to trespass in the Black Hills, except for officials of the U.S. Government.

But it wouldn't be long before resources from the Black Hills would be sought after. Initially, it was the timber that the U.S. Government had looked at as settlements began to pop up in Missouri that needed lumber. In addition, it was suspected that the area was also rich in mineral resources. Because of that, the U.S. Government sent a commission to the Red Cloud Agency that sought the possibility of the Lakota selling away the Black Hills. The answer they got was a definite no, and Colonel John E. Smith concluded that, quote, nothing short of their annihilation will get it from them.

For their part, the U.S. Army did make some attempts though to keep miners out of the region. They were relatively successful in evicting miners from the Black Hills in the beginning, but such evictions then led to a growing pressure on President Grant to secure the Black Hills.

A storm was brewing over the nation though that put additional pressure on the government to take control of the Black Hills. In 1873, an economic panic took hold that would put the US in a depression that lasted until 1879. Coupled with Custer's expedition finding gold in the Black Hills in 1874, stopping the influx of people into the region was a mounting issue, one that the U.S. Army was neither fully equipped to handle, nor really were overly concerned about.

So by 1876, thousands of miners were pouring into the area, and the government was still actively trying to secure the rights to the land. When diplomacy continued to fail, President Grant decided

an alternative route was needed. Looking to provoke the Lakota, Grant instructed Indian agents to notify all Lakota that they must return to their reservation by January 31, 1876, a task that was deemed impossible by many of the agents themselves.

As the deadline passed, and the task was not completed, the U.S. Army prepared to go to war. On February 8, 1876, General Sheridan made the order to commence the winter military campaign against the "hostiles," and thus, the Great Sioux War of 1876-77 began.

### **War and Mail**

As war was breaking out in the Black Hills and across the prairie, there was another issue that had caused problem for the U.S. Government; how to deliver mail to these new frontier towns.

This was a problem that had been dealt with decades earlier as the California Gold Rush was in full swing. It was then that the legendary Pony Express was conceived.

On April 3, 1860, the first horse and rider packed his mail bag and headed out from Missouri to California. The trip was to take about 10 days, but came with a hefty price; \$130 in today's money to send a half ounce letter.

The Pony Express would operate for just 18 months, closing it's doors in October of 1861. With such high prices, and the establishment of the transcontinental telegraph, on October 24, 1861, the Pony Express was no longer a viable option.

But the legend of the Pony Express would live on much longer, and it would quickly be romanticized, with figures such as Wil-

liam "Buffalo Bill" Cody bringing it center stage.

There was an added difficulty though for the Black Hills. As they were still part of the Great Sioux Reservation, the U.S. Government was not able to make any arrangements for handling mail in the Black Hills region. Instead, it was entrusted to private individuals.

Initially, letters traveled in and out of the hills in the hands of people passing through. As a result, whether one would receive their mail was questionable at best. If their letter would be delivered, it was often tattered and soiled, and bore the marks of it having been well read.

Various solutions were posed to improve mail delivery, such as using freight outfits to transport it. But such outfits were slow, and often were furthered delayed by skirmishes with local Lakota Indians. When it would finally arrive to its destination, there would be a large backlog of mail to then go out, which further complicated the situation.

It was in that environment that a new Pony Express would be formed. Sometime in July of 1876, Charlie Utter and Dick Seymour formed the Pioneer Pony and Express. The new service would be announced in the Black Hills Pioneer as early as July 8th, and by July 22nd, was already in full swing.

The Pioneer Pony would be open for just three months, yet it deserves a podcast episode in itself. Wild Bill Hickok would be one of the riders for this express, and was so at the time of his death. Charles Nolin would also become one of the riders for this group.

They would officially be

labeled volunteers, but the pay was quite well at 25 cents per letter, which quickly added up as they could carry hundreds or even thousands of letters in a trip. Coupled with the adventure and romanticism that the 1860 Pony Express was surrounded with, it is of little wonder why Nolin would choose that career.

It would be just a couple months after the death of Nolin that the Pioneer Pony and Express would go under and the delivery of mail would be temporarily turned over to the Cheyenne and Black Hills Stage Company. By the next year, the Black Hills would be open to settlement by the U.S. Government, and regular government mail service established in the Spring of 1877.

### **The Bighorn**

At the top of this article, I mentioned how the Battle of the Little Big Horn would fit in to the story. The Great Sioux War had begun in February of 1876, but it was that June that a major turning point would occur. On June 25, Custer and his Seventh Cavalry had come across the combined forces of the Lakota, Northern Cheyenne, and Arapaho tribes. In another subject that deserves its own episode, the short version is that the battle would be an overwhelming victory for the Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho.

History now sees the Battle of the Little Bighorn, or as the Lakota and other Plains Indians know it as, the Battle of the Greasy Grass, as the beginning of the end of the Indian Wars. It would directly lead to the ownership of the Black Hills



*Charles Nolin's monument along Junction.*

being seized by the United States. Within 48 hours of the battle, the tribes would break up into smaller groups and would slowly return to the reservation.

Bolstered by the victory at the Little Bighorn, skirmishes escalated in the Black Hills. It was one of these returning parties that Nolin is thought to have encountered, and ultimately lost his life to.

For Nolin, it was a matter of being in the wrong place at the wrong time. His untimely death may have also been caused by a bit of impatience among the young man. But lets go back to the beginning.

Charles Nolin hadn't been a rider with the Pioneer Pony for long. He was not among the first riders in the company, but most likely was recruited as the route extended to Sydney, Nebraska, a town where he was associated with.

From most accounts, it was a life that he wasn't well suited for. While the money was good, with him being able to make upwards of \$200 a month, it was strenuous work and quite dangerous. According to John McClintock, in his book, *Pioneer Days in the Black Hills*, he claims to have met Nolin in Deadwood. McClintock records Nolin as saying that he was tired of the job and was planning on making just one more trip before quitting. He also mentions that Nolin said he always traveled at night, which was a common practice among Pony riders as it was seen as being safer.

It would later be reported that Nolin had told his mother that this would be his final trip and then he'd be home. He was correct at least in part.

The beginning of Nolin's final ride seemed to be normal

enough. He would pass through Rapid City on August 19, and later meet up with a group of freighters along the Alkali Creek, just southwest of the present day Sturgis. He was headed to Crook City, and from there Deadwood, where it was rumored he had previously met a young lady that he was enamored with.

Taking a short break, Nolin would have supper with the camp. Jesse Brown, who was a member of the freighting company and would later be a resident of Sturgis, as well as sheriff, recalls that his group had been hearing war whoops and calls by an Indian party that was returning from the Little Bighorn.

Brown and his party urged Nolin to stay and help protect their camp through the night, but Nolin was insistent on moving on. While Brown would warn Nolin of the danger of continuing that night, Nolin just responded that quote, the boys in Deadwood are waiting for news from their homes; the mail must go through.

According to Brown, those were Nolin's last words. Just 2 hours after Nolin left camp, Brown and his party would hear gun shots. They feared the worse, and the next day, those fears were confirmed, as they came along Nolin's body. He had been shot, some say three times in the head, and scalped. His mail bags were slashed open and the letters he was meant to deliver scattered along the ground.

As Brown's party came across the scene, they would attempt to bury Nolin's body. Not having any shovels, they were only able to dig a shallow grave and rest Nolin's body there. Rocks would be laid upon the grave, and the scattered mail would be collected

and delivered to Crook City.

Nolin would be the first Pony mail rider, and possibly the only, who was killed in the line of duty in the Black Hills.

After his death, and quick burial, another freighter, E. L. Carl would pass by the shallow grave and noticed that coyotes had begun digging open the grave. He would fill it in with heavy rocks, and it was there that his body remained until 1880, when his remains were reinterred at Bear Butte Cemetery.

His story didn't end there. The pile of stones that had marked his grave continued to be apparent, and in 1932, the Society of Black Hills Pioneers erected a monument upon Nolin's grave in memorial of the pony mail carrier. Some report that at that time, 5 black walnut trees, from slips obtained from 5 different historic battlefields, including Gettysburg, Valley Forge and Antietam were planted behind the monument.

In 2018, the monument would be renovated, and continues to be a reminder of Charles Nolin.

In our next episode, we will be looking at Sturgis's favorite card shark, Poker Alice.

*Historical Sturgis and the Black Hills is a new multi-media project that seeks to explore the people, places, and events that make this area what it is today. While this project is beginning in written form, it will be expanding to both podcasts and videos in the near future.*

*Podcasts and videos will be hosted at [www.HistoricalSturgis.com](http://www.HistoricalSturgis.com) and will be available via YouTube and your favorite Podcast apps.*



## Kneophla Soup Food History

### **Kneophla Soup** *Food History*

Kneophla soup is probably my favorite soup. It's a soup I grew up on, and something that is part of my heritage. My wife's family also grew up on it, and when we married, we began combining our two family recipes into one, which I believe far exceeds the former ones. But I'm a bit biased. The soup is just delicious.

I also really enjoy cooking. However, I am also a bit obsessive, which can show in the manner in which I look at cooking something. I want to know the history of the dish, why I have to do the steps that I do, the science behind the whole process. When I decided to try a new dish, it may take me weeks or months before I feel comfortable cooking it just because I want all the background.

I also think that looking at a dish like kneophla soup, a dish

so tied to a particular heritage, it can tell a lot about their history. So a few years ago I set off to find out everything I could about this delicious soup.

At the foundation, kneophla soup is a dumpling soup. This sort of soup is something that is enjoyed by people around the world. The first known recipe for dumpling appears in a Roman text called Apicius. The Chinese were probably the first to make stuffed dumplings. According to legend, the inventor was Zhang Zhongjian, who was living during the Han Dynasty (which existed between 206 BCE to 220 CE).

So dumpling soups have been around for thousands of years. We can zero in a bit more though in order to find where kneophla soup originated. Now, it can be mentioned that the parts of Germany where kneophla soup is most associated with was part of the Roman empire, and the use of dumplings

appears to have continued through out the history of the region. What we are really looking at is southern Germany and France to a certain extent (specifically German lands within France, such as Alsace).

When talking about kneophla soup, there really are two types of dumplings used. One is a standard dough dumpling, the kneophla, which probably derives its name from the term button. The second is the Spatzle, which gets its name from its kind of looking like a sparrow. Spatzle is a bit easier to deal with historically, so we will start there.

The earliest records of Spatzle go back to the 18th century, but it most likely predates that. It really made its mark in more of the southern part of Europe, in places such as modern day southern Germany and Austria, Switzerland, Hungary and Alsace. Generally though, its associated with the Swabian culture, which is from the south

western portion of Germany.

Less can be found about the kneophla, but by the mid 18th century, the two were often being seen almost as one. It very well could be that the kneophla existed first and then was modified into the Spatzle. The word itself comes from the same area, and that is the important part here.

Now to take a little side step to the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Turks and the Germans (or citizens of the German states at that time) have been in contact since at least the 16th century. Beginning in the 16th century, the Ottomans were attempting to expand their territory further north into Europe. In 1529, and then 1683, the Ottomans held siege to the town of Vienna, but were unsuccessful. But this did accomplish two things that helped lead to my favorite soup. First, it brought the Ottomans into the area of southern German. Second, it really provided the circumstances in which many Ottoman Turks would migrate to Germany and permanently settle. And again, this was largely in southern Germany. Just as a note, these immigrants came in different ways. Some migrated to Germany. Others were captured during a series of battles and forcibly relocated to Germany. Others migrated to become mercenaries in various armies.

This is where it gets interesting. With the arrival of the Turks to the southern German area, which just so happens to be where kneophla and spatzle originated, Turkish foods also came. And for us in the Midwest, that was a great thing to happen.

Important in this case, one of the foods they brought over were cream based soups that had

the beginning foundation of kneophla soup. These soups had almost the look of kneophla soup, but the dumpling element, while there in a form, just lacked. But southern Germany had what the soup needed.

With the Turkish soup as a base, and the development of the kneophla/spatzle, all the elements of a great soup were there. But that's not the end of the story.

Everything comes together with Russia. As I mentioned before, spatzle first makes an appearance in the literature in the 18th century. Something else very important to this story also happened in the 18th century. Catherine II issued a manifesto on July 22, 1763, inviting foreigners to settle in Russia. And Germans, specifically southern Germans, took to the call. Just as a note, Germans had already started to settle in Russia prior to that. The history of Germans in Russia date hundreds of years prior to Catherine, but Catherine really pushed for foreigners to settle in the vast uninhabitable and unused land in the empire which had recently been expanding.

Now for the last aside. I have to mention the Tartar people, and in future food history posts, they will come up. It's a bit ironic that the Tartar people pop up here though. So, the Tartar people were a nomadic group that had joined Genghis Khan's army in the 13th century. And they were Turkish. At least in part. They mixed with the Mongolians, and were important to that empire; until it dissolved. They would then take some control over the western part of the former Mongolian empire, and then Russia comes into play again. Russia would expand and eventually the Tartar people would become inter-

twined with one area in Russia, the Volga region.

And guess what? Those southern Germans, who had Turkish influences and mingling, just happened to also settle largely in the Volga region. Another group of the Tartars settled in the Crimean area, where these Germans would also settle. Just to sum up, because I find this amazing, we have Germans, from southern Germany who have Turkish influences and intermarried with Turks moving to Russia where they just happen to settle in areas where the Tartar people live, who are Turkish individuals who intermarried with Mongolians. It's a family reunion. Just a note as well. With the new DNA testing that people are doing, many Germans from Russia are finding out that they have Asian ancestry. That's the Tartar people.

So Russia is really where this soup comes to life. We already have the base, but with the help of the Tartar people, who really helped the Germans while in Russia, we get the added components. Potatoes really begin to be added. In some cases you get what's called smazhennya or zazharka, which is considered the Holy Trinity in Russian cooking: onion, celery, and carrots (sometimes beets or peppers are added as well). Now many will skip the carrots (I don't), but this base really brought levels of flavor to the soup. And we begin seeing more poultry stock being added to the soup which brought everything together.

If we want to give kneophla soup a place of origin, I really think Russia would be it. The soup was developing already, but it was in Russia where it came together. And it was from Russia that it came to the United States.



### **Best Tacos in Town** *BlackHills Food Guide*

La Risa's is a new comer to Sturgis, but it offers something you couldn't find in town; authentic Mexican food. But Lisa Cress, the owner, brings much more than that. Born and raised in Southern California, she brings a love to her food, and it shows.

So what's different about the tacos? First, we are looking at homemade Mexican food. This is the stuff families grow up on. It's something that has developed over years, and now Lisa is bringing it here. And we can't stress just how much that brings to a dish. It's not something mass produced. It's homemade cuisine.

It's also fresh and local products that are being used. That is a great connection to the area. For us, that always scores good points. Another connection to the area is that Lisa has been serving people food in the area for a decade. Before opening up La Risa's, she was working at the Side Hack, where she was a manager for 5 years. For most people in Sturgis, she's probably served them a ham-

burger or a beer. She's someone you can trust to put out a quality dish.

What really stands out though is the actual flavor. Lisa is not afraid to season her food, and that means there is no bland meat. She is able to get the meat to shine, while also transforming it so it takes on those notes that we associate with Mexican food. But what may be most impressive is that she doesn't overly complicate the tacos.

Tacos are a street food. We believe that they should thus reflect that. A great taco should be simple and delicious. La Risa nailed that. What we have is simply a fried tortilla, with meat, a Mexican cheese, tomatoes and lettuce. It can be topped with fresh pico de gallo for a little bit more of a kick.

What we like about this is that it allows the hero of the dish, the meat, to really shine through. You get the full flavor of the meat in each bite, and it's not being overpowered, it's not getting lost. You get nice tender pieces of your choice of meat, that are well seasoned, but not overly so. You get the hints of flavor you expect; a

little cumin, some chili, some salt, flavors that combine well and accent the meat.

The rest adds a harmony to the dish. The cheese adds a bit of salt to the dish, which really helps the other flavors shine. The pico de gallo adds a touch of heat, but also some citrus to the dish that helps bring out more flavor in the rest of the dish, while also leaving more of a clean taste. Topped with lettuce, you get a nice crunch to the dish, while helping balance the dish as a whole.

It could end at that, but she bumps it up a few notches. Coupled with her homemade salsa, rice and beans, it's a dinner to die for. Her salsa is some of the best we've had. If she sold it by the pitcher, we may just be tempted to drink it. It's fresh, has just enough heat to it, and really bursts with flavor. And now, while we said taco don't need to be elevated, somehow Lisa has elevated her beans and rice to another level. That's where the homemade factor comes into play.

Now, if you want something besides a taco, La Risa also has other options that deliver great flavor. Her burritos are some of the best we've tasted. And there always seems to be some new dish of the day that takes the flavors that La Risa has developed so finely, and creates something new and delicious that helps mix it up a bit.

If you're looking for authentic Mexican food, La Risa is the place to go. They have the best tacos in the town, if not the Black Hills, and rest of her dishes would give any Mexican restaurant a run for their money.



In the Presence of Heroes  
Dustin White

# Around Sturgis



Sturgis is known for the yearly motorcycle rally that is hosted in the city. But after the rally wraps up, the small town begins to get back to normal. That means new businesses come and go, and a few stick around.

While the rally transforms the city for a few weeks in the summer, it also opens opportunities for Sturgis that many small towns don't have. It allows Sturgis to

have some amazing and unique stores, which are helping to transform the city once again.

In this issue, we will look at a few of those stores along Main Street.

### New Businesses

Opening up in the historic Benevolent Hall, Hotel Sturgis has added a new piece of history to Main. As Sturgis begins to change, the Hotel

Sturgis is there to help anchor the downtown area, and allow visitors a chance to be in walking distance to the many unique store on the street.

The hotel also sports a coffee shop that is very much appreciated by locals as well as those visiting.

Another new store, just off Main, is Heartland Homestore. Saving locals a trip to either Rapid City or Spearfish, Heartland is the





place to go for new appliances as well as mattresses, items that make any house into a home.

But even if you aren't in the market for a large purchase, they also stock linens as well as items that make great gifts, such as truffles and chocolates.

Filling another need in Sturgis, Uncle Louie's Diner is providing a family friendly restaurant. The owner, Dave Stewart spent a good amount of time listening to what area residents wanted, and proceeded from there. He wanted to open a good old fashion diner, that uses fresh ingredients, and had a friendly environment. From the reviews, he certainly has achieved that.

### Sticking Around

While gaining new stores downtown is great for the community, having those who stick around year after year has also been a huge benefit.

Two of the cornerstone businesses that have invested in the community are Black Hills Rally and Gold, and Sturgis Photo and Gifts. While the cater to tourists,

they also don't forget about locals. Keeping great items in stock that make wonderful gifts for any season, what really makes these businesses special is just how much they invest into the community.

A rather unique store to make Sturgis their home is Xtreme Dakota Bicycles. Having found a new location on Main a year ago, they are working hard to help put Sturgis on the map for a different type of bike. With the Black Hills a great place to ride, and many trails available, they have filled a niche that was needed. And like many of the businesses that stick around, they are heavily involved with the community.

Another business that sticks around, and has a bit of fame around the area, is Weimer's Diner and Donuts. Now open for lunch, what really has set them apart are

their donuts. Often named as the best donuts in the Hills, it can be a bit difficult to get your hands on their donuts before they sell out. If you're looking for a hometown diner though, Weimer's is a place that instantly comes to mind.

### Other Businesses

There are many other businesses that make Sturgis a special place to live, and that are very invested in the community. As this publication grows, we will be looking at more local businesses, and building larger more in depth profiles, to really highlight those places that make Sturgis a great place to live.



# Why Printing Your Photos Matter



A two foot drop. That's all it took to make forty thousand photos become inaccessible. In the matter of just a few seconds, terabytes of information was gone; years of work undone. That hard drive still sits in storage, with the hope that one day the information can be retrieved. But for many, once the information vanishes, it's simply gone.

Many of us have faced similar situations. We get a new phone and never backup or transfer the photos, thinking we can do it later. Or we place our photos on an online hosting site, and that site ends up vanishing, or changes their terms, forcing their users to either download all of their photos or lose them. And if you never get the memo, then those photos are just gone.

There is another danger to our photos that often isn't thought about. As we move forward with technology, it means older image formats, and media used to store photos become obsolete. The oldest digital camera we have in our collection is a Sony Mavica, that used floppy disks to store the images. Not many of us have floppy drives anymore.

## Physical Format

There are a variety of ways to help prevent the total loss of a person's photos. Some ways are a bit more practical than others. For some, having multiple backups of the images on different hard drives or online may be a solution. If you're running a business that needs those photos, that is an excellent route.

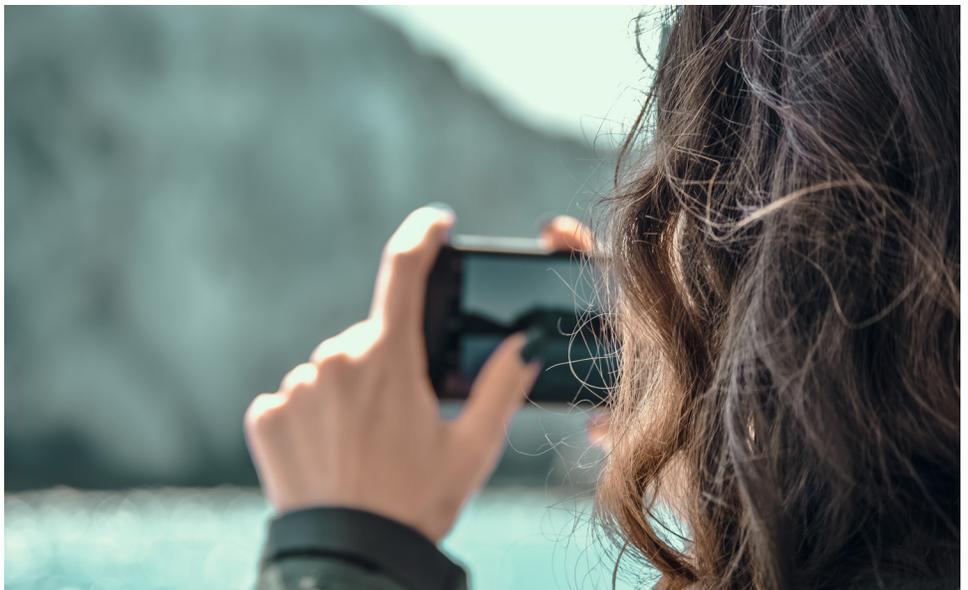
For many people though, the work and effort on maintaining those multiple backups just isn't practical. Instead, an option that suits most people is to print their photos.

That's not to mean that every photo we take should be printed. We probably don't need to preserve that photo of our last

meal, or that quick snapshot of a craft we want to create later on. A lot of the photos we take are ones that if they vanished, it wouldn't be a big deal. We probably don't need thousands of photos of our last trip, photos we will never look at again.

But there are certain photos that have a special meaning, that if they were lost, it would matter to us. Photos of a child's first steps, or the last photo of a loved one. Or there's that landscape photo we shot that we are very proud of. Those are the photos that deserve some extra attention; some extra preservation.

By printing a photo, it takes on a physical format that is



*With cellphones acting as cameras, nearly all of us have a camera in our pocket at all times.*

easier to preserve. Today, photos that were taken over a century ago continue to be preserved in their physical forms. They are passed on from one generation to the other, allowing us to keep a piece of our history secure.

### The Selection

Having a physical copy also forces a person to be a bit more selective on what images they want to preserve. Today, with gigabytes of space reserved for photos, and nearly everyone of us having a camera in our pockets, we are taking more photos every 2 minutes, then all the photos in the 1800s. Over half a trillion photos are taken every year now. That's more than all the photos taken in the first century and a half that people have been shooting.

We all have photos that we will probably never look at again, or that just clutter our phones or computers. It also means that many of the photos we really enjoy, that we want to show others, get lost in the noise.

Having to, what we say in the photography business, cull our images, and only select the photos that are worthy to be printed,

means that we save those memories and images that mean something to us. It also means that when we want to show people a specific photo, it is more easily accessible. We can sit down and have a nice selection that also tells a story.

Think of the last trip you went on. Trying to show a person hundreds of photos will lead them to become bored and uninterested, and each photo ends up blending into the next. But a handful of selected photos allows a story to be told, and allows the viewer to feel more connected. It opens a different door.

### Problems

Printing a photo doesn't necessarily mean that the image will be immune to destruction. House fires, floods, theft, and even mildew can damage physical prints, as they would also ruin digital copies.

No one single precaution will guarantee that an image survives over the long haul. But having multiple formats helps reduce the risk that the information is completely lost. Physical prints also add a different advantage though.

While photos can be ruined

by water, mildew, tears, etc., they can also be repaired. Nearly as long as there have been photographers, there have also been those who retouch and restore photos.

With today's technology, restoring photos has become increasingly more practical. Restorers today can more quickly bring an image back from near destruction through the use of computer programs. Restoring color to images that have faded, colorizing photos that are black and white, eliminating tears, holes, and creases are all possible, and much more available to those who want such retouching done.

There are photos that are too far gone, and simply can't be repaired, but often, there is some saving that can be done, which adds another layer of protection to our cherished images.

### A Bit of Magic

Having a physical copy of a photo can add a bit of magic to the image. We spend countless hours staring at screens. Most of the photos we see today are digital. Printing a photo though adds something to it.

At times, the medium that the image is printed on can bring something new to it. Printing on canvas can give the image a more painterly quality, while printing it on glass can allow it to shine in a way you wouldn't get with a digital image.

Not all prints are created equally though. The printer used, and the material that is being printed on, adds or takes away a lot in a final print. At times, that can be fine, but when looking at getting high quality prints, choosing the right printer can make a huge difference.

A professional print shop,



*The printed photo adds a new dimension to our photos, something we can physically reach out and touch.*

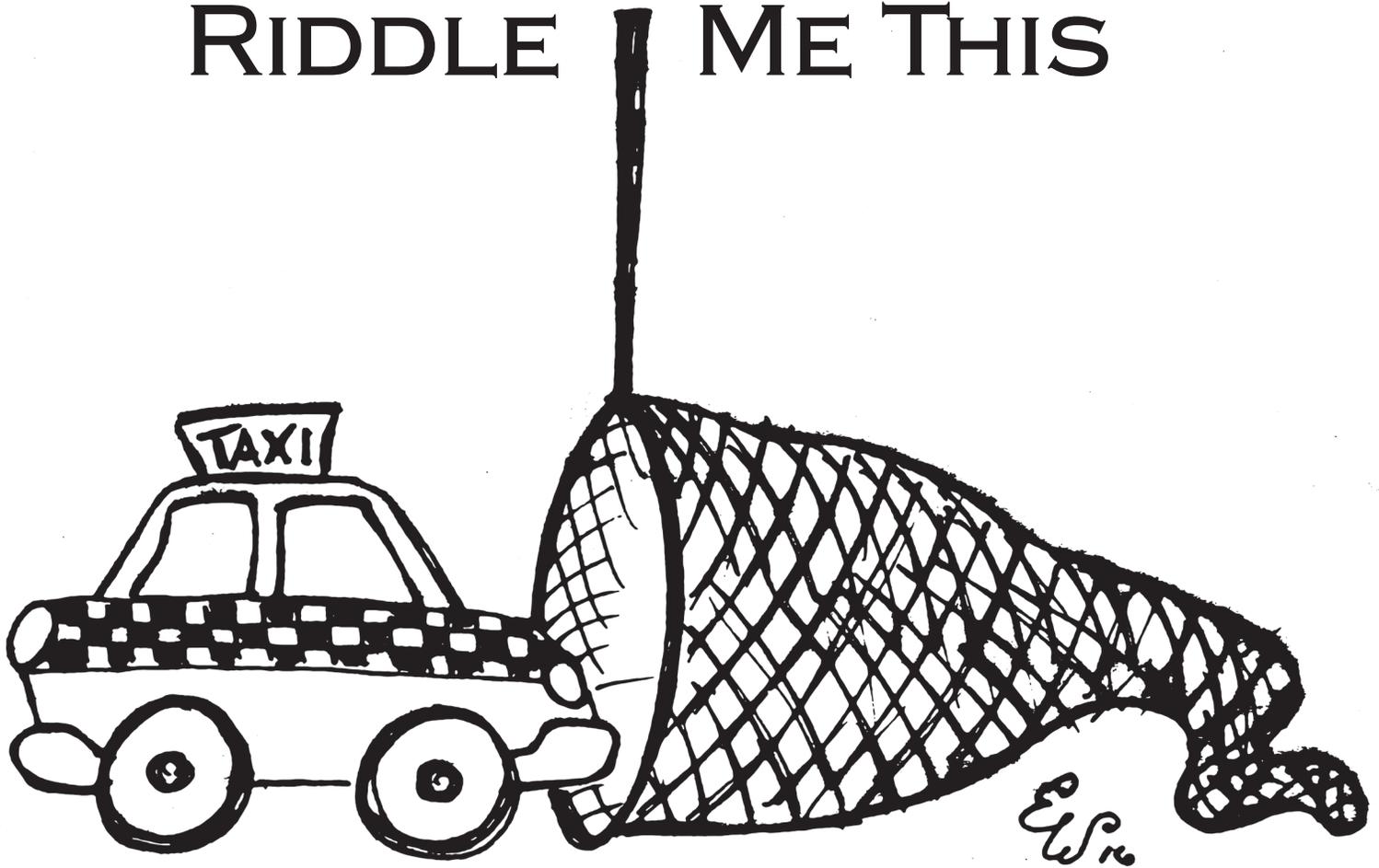
with a skilled person printing the images, will generally give you a much higher quality final print compared to a place where the files are simply processed through a machine. With a professional print shop, you will also generally get a higher quality medium that the image is printed on. Some materials are prepared better and have a longer life than others.

Finding a print shop you trust can make a big difference, and add some comfort in having your photos printed. But regardless of what avenue you decide to go with, printing an image can be a great way to help preserve that photo, and save it from possibly vanishing, as so many photos do.



A View From Bear Butte  
Dustin White

# RIDDLE ME THIS



Created by Elizabeth White, this riddle challenges the reader to put the images together, and decipher the hidden word or meaning. Hint for this week's puzzle: think kitchen.



## OLD FORT MEADE MUSEUM

It was at Fort Meade that the National Anthem began to become more than just a poem. In 1892, it would become the official music for a military retreat at the Fort. It would be promoted by the Fort and eventually, in 1931, the Star Spangled Banner became the national anthem.

That's just one historic gem you will learn at the Fort Meade Museum which keeps the history of the area alive.

While the museum is currently closed for the season, activity there hasn't quit, with a new exhibit taking form. And plans for future events, including the annual Calvary Days, are

underway.

But even with the museum currently closed, their website is also open. New features have been updated, including a monthly newsletter as well as a Director's report that helps keep the community in touch.

Group tours are also available by contacting the museum. And there are always opportunities to volunteer, and jump back into local history.

If you want to learn more about the museum, or just check it out a bit, visit their website at [www.fortmeademuseum.org](http://www.fortmeademuseum.org).



*The Runkel Home in Crystal Falls. Before moving to the Black Hills, George Runkel's worked with his father in getting a railroad to run near their mine, and the city they were building, which was Crystal Falls Wisconsin.*

## REMEMBERING THE TOWN OF RUNKEL

More than a century ago, tiny towns dotted the Black Hills. Gold had been discovered and thousands would descend on the area looking to strike it rich. Mining camps would grow into full fledged towns, creating an ever growing need for efficient transportation for both travel as well as goods, which created additional towns. But as with many such booms, it wasn't to last, and as quickly as people flooded into the region, they moved out. Many of the towns that thrived during the boom years would vanish; some with almost no trace.

While a few ghosts towns

have left with them some sort of reminder that there was once a bustling town, Runkel is not such a place. Unless you know exactly what you're looking for, the ghost town of Runkel only appears to be a field. No buildings, no foundations, hardly any clue remains. Yet, in it's heyday, Runkel, and its founder, George Runkel, played important roles in the Black Hills.

George Runkel's story began in Wisconsin. His father, George Runkel Sr., had been instrumental in expanding the Chicago and Northwestern Railway from Florence Wisconsin to Crystal Falls Michigan, a town he helped found.

It was by no chance that the railroad would pass near Runkel Sr.'s town. Using his connections in Chicago, Runkel Sr. was able to persuade the Chicago and Northwestern Railway to reroute close to where Crystal Falls would sit.

Runkel Sr. would have a hand in helping not only a new town to flourish, but also was invested in both the lumber and mining industry, where his sons would also gain experience. This experience would prove crucial for George Runkel when he moved to the Black Hills.

**The Black Hills**



*George Runkel Sr.*

George Runkel would first enter the Black Hills the fall of 1884, as a railroad contractor. His goal was to familiarize himself with the area. He was certain that development would begin around the Black Hills, and he wanted to know the area so he could make intelligent bids for the contracts that would be coming. His initial stay would be short, but it would provide him with enough information to start making plans.

Sometime around 1885, Runkel would return to the Hills, this time with his cousin, Cady Hollister. They made their way to Rapid City, S.D., and established Runkel, Hollister & Co, the C.O.D. Store, or known locally as the new store. Runkel and Hollister would run the store for around a year, and while there were some problems they ran into during the winter of 1885, by the new year, their store was considered a fixture of Rapid City.

But the store would only be a stepping stone. In July of 1886,

Runkel and Hollister would sell the C.O.D. Store to a Chas. M Robertson.

The year 1886 would also mark another stepping stone of sorts for Runkel; it was the year of his first legal issues in the Black Hills. In this case, Runkel issued a suit against a C.W. Snowden, who, according to Runkel, was in possession of a rifle that belonged to one of Runkel's relatives. It would only be the first of many court cases Runkel would experience in the Black Hills.

From the C.O.D. Store, Runkel would get back to his family roots, the railroad and mining. And in that, he would find himself benefiting from one of the most famous mining scams in the Black Hills

### **Greenwood Mine**

In 1882, Bob Flormann began acquiring claims along the Box Elder creek. His goal would soon become clear, to sell a mine for a greatly inflated price. By 1883, the pieces were in place to get the scam going. With the help of Joseph Taylor, the two began promoting the Greenwood mine, with papers quickly picking up the story of the next great gold mine, "one of the greatest of the age." Local papers would claim that it would prove to be bigger than the Homestake mine.

With the news hitting Chicago, one investor, Matthew Laflin, would be snared by the scam, investing one hundred thousand dollars into the mine, and the Greenwood Gold Mining and Milling Company was born. A 120-stamp mill was constructed, and an open-pit mine was developed in 1884. All the signs were

pointing to success, but it wasn't to be had.

Shortly after the mine opened, it became clear that there was no fortune to be had. In January of 1885, the mine would yield it's first portions of gold, worth just five dollars. Three thousand tons of ore had been processed up to that point. The news spread like wildfire, and it wouldn't be long before the mine closed. In steps Runkel.

In 1886, Runkel and A.J. Smoots would begin setting up a large mine themselves, known as the Smoots Group, which included six locations: Atwater, Pelican, Buckshot, Harry, Convention and Candiyo, which were all near the Greenwood Mine.

At the same time, Runkel was also busy with side ventures. As the Smoots Group was setting up, Runkel was also acquiring the Greenwood Mine, setting up a lumber mill, and attempting to push the railroad through the hills. In short, Runkel was busy.

As with Flormann, the goal of Runkel was to build up the mining area, and then sell it for a profit. With the Greenwood Mine scam fresh in the minds of locals, as well as potential investors, Runkel was able to obtain the mine for very little.

By 1887, the Smoots Group mines were in place, Greenwood was being reopened, a lumber mill was set up and churning out a great amount of wood, and a railroad was being built through a portion of the hills. The Greenwood Mine and the Smoots group would also be connected via railway that same year, which helped increase the value of both.

But Runkel would also begin to find himself in a mess of legal troubles, stemming from the

Greenwood Mine. Beginning the year prior, Runkel's Greenwood Mining Company ran into issues with not paying their employees, and when brought to court, were found guilty of such by default. That was only the beginning though.

In 1887, lawsuits regarding the mine itself started to appear. The first was involved Daniel Miles, that would stretch on for nearly a year. It started with a dispute over a mining shaft that the Greenwood Mining Company drilled. Miles forcibly entered the area of the shaft, but claimed that the land was actually his.

The suit would be granted multiple continuances, and both sides provided evidence of their claims, including testimonies from different land surveyors. In the end, Runkel would win the suit, which would allow the mine to be sold later that year.

As the case with Miles was underway, Runkel would find himself mixed up in another suit, which brought Bob Flormann back into the Greenwood Mine ordeal. And it also showed just how deeply entwined Runkel was with the area.

### The Scam of Scams

While Runkel came to the Black Hills in 1884 as a railroad contractor, he also appears to have been open to other business ventures. It was during that first trip that it appears that Runkel met Flormann, and was able to maneuver into the position of superintendent of the Greenwood Gold Mining Company.

After Flormann's scam was uncovered, and his company went out of business, Runkel was able to come in and purchase the mine for virtually nothing as it was believed

that the mine was worthless. However, Runkel would quickly run into problems as he attempted to get the mine back up and running.

As Runkel was working to sort out the Miles land dispute, he also had to settle the matter of who owned the mineral rights of the Greenwood Mine. The patent had been put in Flormann's name, which put a stop to the work Runkel was pursuing.

Runkel would help get Flormann off the hook for the Greenwood Mining scam, by claiming that Flormann was only acting as an agent for the Greenwood company. This allowed Runkel to make the claim that the mineral rights, and the property, belonged to himself.

While it was clear that there wasn't gold to be had on the property, other ores of value, including silver, had been discovered. There was also a mass of quality timber on the property, and lumber was in demand around the Hills. What was previously declared worthless land had, under Runkel, become valuable. And it was once again off to Chicago to find buyers.

Runkel would secure buyers for the Greenwood Mine, as well as the Smoots Group. His confidence in the venture, as well as his family connections in Chicago proved to greatly help in that endeavor. But he would go one step further. After the sale of the mines, Runkel would remain involved in the operations of the site by being hired on as the superintendent. Yet, he still had his eyes elsewhere.

### Founding of Runkel

Runkel was a man who seemed to never slow

down. In 1889, Runkel would make two filings with the land office, one for timber, and the other for a homestead. It wouldn't be the only land he had in the area, either under his name or another family member's name, but it would begin the founding of a town under his name.

During the years following the Greenwood Mine, Runkel would work as a superintendent or similar positions at various mines along the Elk Creek, including the Elk Creek Station which was just a few miles away from the future town of Runkel.

At the same time, Runkel was also busy in the lumber business, setting up a new saw mill, while also working to get the railroad to push through the Black Hills. In 1890, everything was beginning to fall in place, but there was one road block; a tolled road.

At a time in which the railroad was finishing up a line from Lead, through Elk Creek Station and Runkel, to Piedmont, another road was being completed up to the Runkel area.

Early in 1890, a road that pass through Tilford, Elk Creek station, and near Runkel was completed. It had been built largely by subscription, with the understanding that it would be a public and free highway, but A.M. Morse had other ideas. As soon as the road was completed, Morse built a gate



*Depot at Crystal Falls Wis. It was in Crystal Falls that Runkel would get his start.*

across the road, and started collecting a toll. Runkel would not have this.

Having an open road was imperative for the work Runkel was pursuing, and nothing was going to stop that. He would go directly to Judge Thomas, and demanded that a restraining order be placed on Morse. As Runkel was used to, the Judge listened, and the road which passed by his home, and the town he was forming, was once again free to travel. With the railroad also passing through his town, within fifty feet of his house, Runkel was set.

Copper had recently been discovered in the area, and mining operations had sprouted up throughout the region as various valuable ores were being mined. While the lure of mining was one factor in Runkel establishing his town, his big enterprise was lumber,

Lumber was in great demand in the Black Hills as not only the railroad demanded it, but the growing towns needed it to expand, or to start. Runkel saw a need, and decided to fill it.

The town of Runkel was settled largely around a saw mill. Those who worked in the mill, for the most part, also lived in the area, which allowed the town to quickly grow.

But Runkel had larger plans. While his town would supply the wood, it was in Lead that it was to be sold, and having arranged for the railroad to pass through his town, shipping the lumber wasn't a problem.

In 1891, Runkel would set up his first lumber yard in Lead, just opposite the hospital. Runkel would keep the work within his family, by hiring his son to manage

the yard. Runkel would quickly expand the enterprise with an additional two large saw mills, all situated along railroad lines. Within a few years, the business would grow so large that a second lumber yard would have to be opened in Lead.

Always the entrepreneur, Runkel would also become in charge of the Homestake saw mill in 1892. Over the next decade, Runkel would be a central figure in the lumber market. As his enterprise grew, he would bring in family members to help run the operation, including his brothers and cousins.

### **Explosion**

For the first years of the town of Runkel, and Runkel's operation of multiple saw mills, things appeared to move forward without a hitch. There were minor accidents, but nothing serious. That would change in 1895, with an explosion that demolished the mill at the town of Runkel.

On March 6th, 1895, a boiler exploded in the town of Runkel. Andy Dillhay and William E. Warren were instantly killed. Three others were injured, and the mill was almost completely wrecked. The explosion was so powerful that pieces of machinery were thrown over three hundred feet.

It would soon be ruled that the explosion was caused through negligence. Warren, who had just recently been hired, allowed the water in the boiler to run low, and decided to refill it with cold water, which set off the explosion.

Rebuilding began the next day, repairing the building, while Runkel was in search of a new boiler and engine. It would take just a week for him to procure a used

boiler, and just three weeks later, the town of Runkel was once again bustling. By the next year, a larger boiler would also be bought to add to the work being done in Runkel.

### **Legal Troubles**

The explosion in Runkel would in some ways also signal the downfall of the town. While Runkel would be able to rebuild, mounting legal troubles would find him as well.

In the same year as the explosion, Runkel would be sued by his company's cook, Ah Sam, a Chinese man who was one among many who put their faith in the legal system in Dakota Territory, which allowed them to actually file complaints against not only fellow Asians, but also whites. From 1895-1897, Runkel's company had short changed Ah Sam to the sum of \$233.89. Runkel was found guilty, and had to pay the wages, plus interest, totaling \$262.04.

Additional lawsuits would follow, some making their way all the way up to the state's Supreme Court. The suits would be brought against Runkel, and centered around claims that Runkel's company attempted to defraud creditors by temporarily selling equipment to a third party, for it to be returned after a labor issue was settled.

As with Ah Sam, it appears that Runkel had failed to pay his workers, who then sought to attain their wages by selling one of Runkel's saw mills, known as Camp 5. The buyer of the mill though was a son-in-law of Runkel, and alerted Runkel of what was occurring. The series of suits would make its way to the state Supreme Court, and eventually, the series of suits would be found in favor of Runkel. For more than two years, Runkel was involved in these suits, and

while he would win in court, the toll seemed to have been too much. That or he found greener pastures.

### **Town of Runkel Declines**

Shortly after Runkel sorted out his legal troubles, he would move to Idaho. The move was of little surprise as in 1898, Runkel and his wife had moved into Lead, and were making business trips out to Idaho. A few members of his family would stay in the area, but would relocate to the larger towns, including Sturgis, Deadwood and Rapid City.

After Runkel moved, and the sawmill shut down, the rest of the businesses at the town of Runkel also began packing up and moving. What was left, would be sold off, leaving only a few residents.

In May of 1899, the sawmill at Runkel would go for

sale, for cheap. The town would continue on for two more decades, as the final residents decided to leave. In 1910, the mail route to Runkel would be discontinued.

By the early 1920s, the last residents had left the area, leaving only a few apple trees behind. The railroad would remain for a bit longer. A portion of the track would be wiped away from a flood in the 1910s. But it was the automobile that dealt the final blow.

With increasing auto traffic, the railroad was becoming obsolete in the Hills. The railroad would operate until March 20, 1930, and was dismantled shortly after. The town of Runkel was truly gone.

### **Slight Rebirth**

Five decades after the railroad left Runkel, a subdivision was being created in the Black Hills, off Vannocker Canyon. It was the Runkle

Homesteads. Runkel would get a name change, and a road named after him, suiting for a subdivision built in the region of the town that once bore the correct spelling of his name.

Only seven lots were available, and after just a year, each had been purchased. However, while the name would live on, the story of the town of Runkel, and of its namesake, had largely been forgotten.

There is a lot more that could be said about the Runkel family, who remained in the area for many decades, and played their parts in the growing cities of the Black Hills. The family would also play important parts in many of the areas that they would live, before and after they entered the Hills. But those are stories for another time.



*All left today of Runkel are a few apple trees.*

Dustin White

# How Things Were: This Day In History

**November 26, 1876:** General Sturgis, namesake of the city of Sturgis, returned to Fort Abraham Lincoln, with his troops of the Seventh Cavalry, after disarming American Indians at the Cheyenne Agency. 1,300 ponies and 180 stand of arms were confiscated. This was part of the campaign launched after Custer's defeat at the Little Big Horn.

**November 2, 1880:** Fort Meade was closely picketed in order to prevent soldiers from going to Sturgis to vote.

**November 6, 1884:** Ten thousand acres of timber land were destroyed by fire near Sturgis.

**November 16, 1888:** The Depot hotel in Sturgis caught fire and burned to the ground. The fire department was out fighting the flames, but the two story building couldn't be saved. The building itself was almost new, and was built and owned by Justin Schnell.

**November 29, 1889:** A conman visits Sturgis. The con's game was to fake a check, claiming it was written by someone of importance in the city. He claimed he was called off to Rapid City, and didn't have time to return home, but if he could just cash the check with the individual, it would be incredibly helpful. His first victim was a young man who was finishing up chores.

Gaining confidence, he next went to the Harney Hotel, where he registered, and then had supper. There he claimed he was in town

for a couple of days, but didn't have any cash on him, which he didn't like. But he had a check, that could be cashed on Monday morning when the banks reopened. That was his second victim.

Before leaving town though, he worked his game on a few other people, but it wasn't until Sunday night that Fay Cowden, a livery stable keeper in town, that the scam was fully exposed. Cowden had hired out a team of horses and a buggy to a man he said appeared to be a nice fellow. He found his horses and buggy at a local farm.

**December 2, 1892:** All outdoor work in Sturgis was suspended as a blizzard struck the city.

**December 18, 1894:** Judge Plowman convened the Meade County circuit court in Sturgis. One of the most important cases involved boys who were charged with throwing stones into an Elkhorn passenger train while it was passing through town. A number of passengers were injured by broken glass.

**December 8, 1899:** Mike Shea, a young man well known in Lead, and having spent quite some time on the Sioux Reservation, where he had been wolfing, turned in over

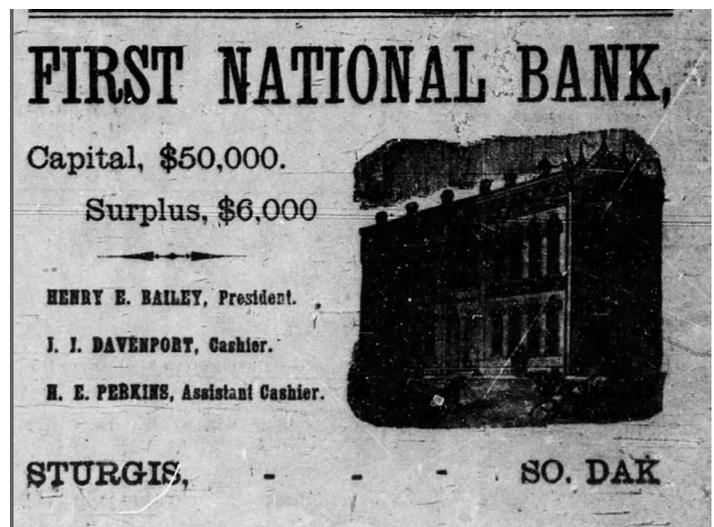
700 wolf pelts to the towns of Rapid City, Sturgis, and Belle Fourche.

A bounty had recently been placed on gray wolves, provided \$3 per head, and \$1 per coyote.

**December 14, 1904:** Sturgis had a basketball team. It was seen as a great opportunity for the young men of the city to get into the action. They were ready to square off with either high school teams or the Golden Star Club.

**December 23, 1909:** Kong On, a Chinese resident of Sturgis, left the town for the Pacific coast, where he was set to sail to Hong Kong.

It was also announced that \$100,000 worth of work at Fort Meade would begin. Additional buildings were to be erected, which excited the people of Sturgis, as they were looking forward to the "high moguls at Washington" to show their appreciation of the natural advantages of the Fort. The hope was that the post would be designated as a division post.



Ad in the November 16, 1894 issue of The Strugis Weekly Record.



In our next issue, we will be looking at how Vanocker Canyon got its name. For those interested in photography, we will also be looking at how to capture a photo like this.

Dustin White