I**F THESE LOGS COULD ONLY TALK what stories they would tell!**
The 149-year account of the 'Dutch Henry' and Mandel Cabins in the history of Sheridan, Wyo
 *Program given to the National Society of Colonial Dames of America-- in Wyoming,  and with guests Roy Garber and Patrick Henderson of Whitney Benefits Foundation, on March 14, 2022 at the clubhouse at Powder Horn.
By Mary Ellen McWilliams, assisted by Jane Ferril*

Welcome everybody and thank you for the opportunity to speak today on the almost 150-year story of the early cabins in Sheridan. The program, entitled "If These Logs Could Only Talk what stories they would tell"  is a very much over- the- top review of the total story, beginning in 1873, but a copy of this talk will be just one of many items  included in a large 3-ring binder to include documents, letters, photos and other materials  which Jane Ferril and I are putting  together to be placed in the Wyoming Room at the Sheridan Library. One of the segments includes a review of  many of the difficulties we encountered in struggling to  provide correct information.

This has not been an easy task. As Jane says, "History not written at the time, is soon forgotten and much contradiction and confusion is the result.  The J. Peter Henry Van Dover known as "Dutch Henry", and  the George Mandel cabins are a perfect example, for although these two cabins formed the embryos which would see the budding of the town  of "Sheridan" their history and importance would take years to sort through simply because of very little history  written at the time... only years later. "

  As the  story begins  Sheridan County and the town of Sheridan did not exist and  Wyoming would not become a State for another 17 years. The nation in the aftermath of the Civil War  was deeply into the financial panic of 1873;   The Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868, problematic in our courts even today,  had closed the Bozeman Trail to emigrants, had abandoned the forts along the route, and basically gave  Indian tribes the land for their use.   Travel was by team and wagon, horseback or afoot;  communications  were fraught with difficulties; modern conveniences were also nil and those hardy folks  who lived in this area were few and far between.

However, a far-thinking President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln, in 1862 had signed the Homestead Act, the Railroad Act and the Land Grant College Act into law.  Probably only the Homestead Act affected the situation for people here at the time.

Into this frontier,  'Dutch Henry' arrived  in the Little Goose area near present day Big Horn to trap  beaver.  Five years later in 1878 he, accompanied by another, whose name,  according to early Big Horn settler O.P. Hanna,  was James Mason and each with a Shoshone Indian woman, moved over to the confluence of Little and Big Goose creeks and built a log cabin.  There was a large stable there used by the Patrick Brothers who established the PK ranch, and who had the contract to operate the Rock Creek Stage Line and mail route,  through to Montana. The one room cabin was built in the spring with the sod roof not added until fall.

Dutch Henry would abandon his cabin roughly a year later, his Shoshone woman would return to her people and he would move to the headwaters of Beaver Creek to trap. He stayed about a year and then moved up Big Goose creek and worked for  George Beck for 5 years, probably helping to build Beck's flour mill. Actually Dutch Henry lived on the place where my husband's family lived for 83 years, now  owned and inhabited by Laurie and Richard Bratten. He then left the country but ran into Sheridan's founder John Loucks, in Oregon, who asked him to write his history in a letter.  Dutch Henry's fascinating letter is included in our binder and also in author Ida McPherron's Vol. 2 of her book "Empire Builders" re-written to include the letter and thus correct many errors carried down.

An example of mistakes made is that in later years the DAR (Daughters of the American Revolution) in an effort to memoralize the history of the Mandel cabin, dedicated a monument on Smith Street to "the first building in Sheridan" and dated it 1878...which was the date of the building of the Dutch Henry cabin.

However, what became known as the Dutch Henry cabin remained and had a fascinating second life of its own, critical to our early history of the Mandel Cabin, built nearby by George Mandel in 1880-81.  Mandel lived in the Dutch Henry cabin while he built what became for a short time, the Mandel Post Office. But he too left and Dr. Lloyd Rhodes, son-in-law of early settler, Jim Works, moved in and became postmaster.

In 1882, John D. Loucks returned to the area he had been through with Jim Works on their way to Bozeman, Montana  in 1880 and would buy the Mandel cabin from Dr. Rhodes for $50, take over as postmaster and also start a small store there to furnish the area with basic food needs. In a flurry of activity, Loucks had gathered friends, J. Walter Scott, M.L. Sawin, J.G. Hunter, Ken Burkitt and Alex Gould to discuss forming a town nearby to be named Sheridan, for General Phil Sheridan,  his commander in the Civil War. They agreed and formed a company. It would be 40 acres to be surveyed by Jack Dow of Big Horn and with assistance in staking out the town  by early settlers George Brundage, Ken Burkitt and Dudley Thurmond, and very probably,  Henry Held, to be Sheridan's first blacksmith and first resident of a lot in the new town and probably a resident,  briefly, of the Dutch Henry cabin.
Loucks would have George Brundage move Louck's wife Annie and children from Miles City, 150 miles away, in a 15 day trip by wagon.  The store and a tin box on the counter, used for a mail box, were separated from the living quarters by a sheet in this one room cabin.  Loucks became postmaster, and had the name of his building changed to Sheridan Post Office and Store.   However for the next 140 years the building would retain  the name of the Mandel Cabin and still is so called today, though technically it was only correct  for about 2 years in the early 1880s.

In 1882, the family was in need of a kitchen so Loucks moved the abandoned Dutch Henry cabin nearby over and attached it  to his home,  post office and store, with a breezeway in between. However,  there was also need for a school and in Oct.  a school with 17 students and with Jim Works' daughter Clara as teacher was established. (One of our attachments in the binder includes the story of the school....the desks, the hard winter down to 40 below zero,  names of all the students, and other details.) The addition also became a convenient place for an election (the first), a church service, and community gatherings.

In the following spring of 1883, Loucks dismanteld  the Mandel cabin, (leaving the Dutch Henry cabin in place), moved the logs, and some of the wood, and rebuilt it much larger on what would become  Main Street in the brand  new town.  He added an expansion using  the original hand-hewn logs for 2 of the walls, and sawed logs for another 2 walls,  giving the building 4 times its original ground floor space.   Then he added an upstairs living quarters for his family.  Another room upstairs was used as a 'reading room' for the public with books reportedly gifted by another early settler,  Henry A. Coffeen.  Teacher and lawyer, Tom Cotton, came in that year and rented a corner of the downstairs area for Sheridan's first  law practice,  while Loucks continued with the store and most likely, the post office.

In 1884 the town of  Sheridan was incorporated  by acts of territorial legislation.  Sheridan was then a part  of Johnson County, Territory of Wyoming  which would not become a state until 1890.

In 1885,  the building was  purchased by new resident, Edward A. Whitney, for the  town's first bank, the 'Bank of Sheridan', and to continue to include the office for the town's first attorney, Tom Cotton, and Louck's store and perhaps the Post Office on the main floor.

  In 1886, Edward Whitney would take over the upstairs living space when John Loucks and family  moved to their new home on Loucks Street.  Loucks would serve as Sheridan's first Mayor. Whitney would continue to maintain the reading room for the public until a library was established, and would follow Loucks as Sheridan's second mayor.  In 1888,  Loucks succeeded in having Sheridan County established by virtue of being carved out of what had been formerly, a part of Johnson County. This complicated story is included in detail in one of the attachments in the binder.

  The Bank of Sheridan was absorbed by the First National Bank,  in 1893, also with E.A. Whitney as President,  and when a new building was built, the original Mandel cabin, much enlarged and with the pine logs on the outside protected by clapboard and on the inside by plaster, was moved behind Main Street to the west and used for the next 75 years as a rentalincluding to Holcomb and Sons Insurance Agency, and as a ballet studio.  Whitney continued to live upstairs, however,  until his death in 1917.  According to John Loucks'  son Homer, the old Dutch Henry cabin would become an ice house,  and sometime during those years, just disinigrated.  Over those long  75 years, It's early history and that of the Mandel cabin,  was largely forgotten.

In 1968,  demolition by contractor, later to be  Sheridan's mayor, Russell York, was started  when the bank needed to expand onto that site.  When siding was removed and logs were discovered underneath,  York called in Elsa Spear Byron with the  Sheridan County  Historical Society, who identified the hand hewn logs as those of the original Mandel cabin. Elsa declared it  the "most historic building in Sheridan", so to save the building from destruction,  Neltje took it, planning to renovate it to its original size, to  what had been the Mandel cabin, with the original logs on the grounds of The Sheridan Inn. HusmanBrothers donated the move and a large group of people followed  along with many from around the county coming for a celebration and lunch on the grounds at the Inn.  However Neltje found she had too much to do for the Sheridan Inn**itself** and so  George Barker gave it a home on his lot on 8th street where it sat for a number of years.

Seven years later, in 1975 : ENTER THE ATTENTION OF THE NATIONAL SOCIETY of THE COLONIAL DAMES OF AMERICA...in WYOMING!

In response to a request for a project to providehistoric preservation ideas for commemorating Wyoming's upcoming Bi-Centennial celebration, Mrs. Bruce (Inez) Bridgford, later to become President of the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America,  was chosen  to present ideas to a special meeting of the Society.  The suggestion she presented, to resurrect the Mandel Post Office, was chosen. Mrs. Torrey (Adrianne) Johnson was President of the Wyoming Society and appointed Mrs. Bridgford and Mrs. Maurice (Adah) Cartier from Casper, who was Wyomings' Historical Activities Chair, to co-chair the Wyoming Society's Bi-Cenntenial committee.

  Mrs. Bridgford negotiated with Neltje for the building, which Neltje gladly  turned over to the Wyoming Society and In 1976,  Mrs. Bridgford and Mrs. Cartier, met with the Wyoming Bi-Centennial commission in Rawlins and succeeded in obtaining a $2,000 matching grant to help fund the restoration project. In September of that year,  Mrs. Robert (Jane) Ferril, newly appointed Historical Activities Chair, joined Mrs. Bridgford and the newly appointed  committee (Mrs. George (Vickie) Ewan, Mrs. Francis (Catherine) Williams, Mrs. Raymond (Julia) Stevens, Mrs. Lyman (Ceci) Brooks and Mrs. Don (Dippy) King to get the project rolling.  Jane said, "Saving the Mandel cabin's historic  logs by the Wyoming Society is their primary focus, making sure that future generations can see and enjoy where and how the most humble beginnings of Sheridan began."

In September of that year a lease agreement was signed between the Sheridan County Historical Society,  then owner of the property at Trail End, and the  Wyoming  Society of the Colonial Dames to move the Mandel cabin onto the property near the Kendrick's historic home. The agreement was signed by Louis Smith, President of Sheridan County Historical Society  and Adrienne Johnson, President of the Wyoming Society. The Wyoming Society installed a security light, with meter, paying MDU monthy; maintained insurance and upkeep of leased area; and installed a security fence. They also had to have the leased area surveyed.

In the spring of 1977,  the Society hired contractor Duane Harvey to  tear down the structure resting on Barker Brothers  Salvage lot  and restore it close to its original size at Trail End.  It took him, and an assistant, 6 weeks to complete.  He used the original hand-hewn pine logs for the walls,  and lumber for other materials and utilized many of the same techniques as were used on the original cabin as built almost 100 years before.

The cabin location on the lawn at Trail End, was leased from  the  Sheridan County Historical Society, which had been given the property by the Kendrick Family and was using the house also as a County Museum. In  August of  1977, the public was invited to the Dedication of the Mandel Post Office on the grounds of Trail End and many attended. Speakers included Adrienne Johnson with the Colonial Dames; General George Pearson representing the Historical Society; Margery Loucks Masters speaking on her Grandfather,  John Loucks; Tom Kinnison with the Sheridan City Council and Duane Harvey on the story of restoration.

Just five years later, In 1982,  a new lease had to be negotiated after the State AMH (Archives, Museums and Historical Dept.) took over ownership of the property at Trail End from the Sheridan County Historical Society.Trail End then became a State Historic Site. The agreement was signed in 1883 by AMH Director Robert Bush and Jane Ferril, then President of the  Wyoming Society. Shortly after, it became clear that as the State felt the appropriate use of the site should be to tell the story of the history of Wyoming Governor and U.S. Senator, John B. Kendrick and his family...and that both the Mandel cabin and the Sheridan Historical Society would need at some point to be moved.

The new agreement would give the Wyoming Society  a 10 year lease, to 1994, with the provision it could be extended in 3-year inclements.  During those years, the society members continued a policy from 1977 of providing tours both privately and to third graders studying Wyoming history.

In Sept. of 1994 Mrs. Mike (Sally) Morton became Chair of the Mandel P.O. project and Mrs. Doyle (Jackie) Fritz mentioned the possibility of moving the cabin, suggested by Deck Hunter, to place the cabin with Deck's planned for Cowboy Museum, to Ranchester.  The Society scrambled for a location knowing their days were numbered, while the cabin remained at Trail End.  In 1997  Mrs. Charlie ( Lee) Helvey informed Deck they would not be going with the Cowboy Museum which actually was never built and in 1999 the location was still a problem.

In what seemed at the time to be the worst possible news,  finally, by 2001,after providing 24 years at Trail End for the cabin's location,the State decided that as the cabin did not fit with their vision of Trail End as a historic home and space was needed, both the cabin and the HistoricalSociety's collections would have to be moved.  The Senior Citizens Center (now the Hub on Smith) agreed to place the cabin at their site until the Colonial Dames could find a place for it.  The move to the Sr. Center took place Sept. 12 & 13. The cabin was placed on beams, dirt roof covered with a tarp and a section of the chain link fence that the Wyoming Society installed in 1977 at Trail End placed around the cabin.

By 2002,   Whitney Benefits Foundation was finishing their Park  (Whitney Commons) nearby and because of E.A. Whitney's own over-30 years of history with the building, according to Whitney's Executive Director, Patrick Henderson, they  were delighted to give the building a  home not far from where it had been originally built.   Additionally, long time member of the Colonial Dames and both member and President of the Whitney Benefits board,  Dorothy King, had been  very supportive of the project. Actually, 'Dippy' had just gone off the Whitney Board, after 32 years of service, and I had just come on. Incidentally, Whitney Benefits President Roy Garber, here today, has served on the Whitney Benefits board for 30 years, most as V.P.l and Patrick Henderson has served as Executive Director for 21 years.

On Oct. 23, 2002, a License Agreement for the transfer, which will be included in our binder, was signed by Tom Kinnison, then President of Whitney Benefits and Elizabeth (Miff) Koltiska,  then President of the Wyoming Society of the Colonial Dames. Miff had represented the group in the negotiations with Whitney.  I was assigned to  represent Whitney Benefits in the negotiations with Miff Koltiska and in further activities exploring the history. This was also the continuation of the fascinating work with Jane Ferril in our efforts  to sort out the facts of the entire history to the best of our abilities.

By then the work Duane Harvey had done reconstructing the building back to somewhat its  original size at Trail End,  and major work he did through the years to stabilize the cabin plus issues with the sod roof...the move to the Senior Center, and then to Whitney Commons, resulted in significant damage and more work was needed, including  repairing chinking  and re-staining the logs.  Whitney Benefits built a foundation for the cabin in the Park and provided security cameras for the entire park. They also assisted the Society in providing lighting  for the cabin.  The Wyoming Society had the responsibility of overall upkeep.   Through letters to members asking for donations, and a grant from the Sunshine Lady Foundation for new sod and complete restoration work to the logs and with an assist from Whitney Benefits, they would swing into action. Many people donated work, money and services.

The Mandel cabin has  been featured in several publications in years past,  among them, the  magazine "Antiques" in July 2007 devoted their entire issue to the National Society's museum houses.  In 1992 the book "Domestic View" by William Seale, includes an article on the cabins,  among others. A  member of the Wyoming Society, Christy Love,  donated funds and took photographs for the cabin's brochure.

In 2020 the Mandel cabin and Post Office became a member of the NSCDA's GREAT AMERICAN TREASURERS , a collection of more than 60 sites across the country, both big and small, that tell the story of "how America became America."

Today the re-constructed Mandel cabin rests in the beautiful Dorothy King Reflective Garden at Whitney Commons Park...a stone's throw from where it was originally constructed and the perfect place for it to be. Today's members of the Wyoming Society,  with Isabel Wallop as President, have updated the cabin's  furnishings , continue  the task of giving programs and  tours to school children, and continue research to help preserve their town's  history.  Clearly, had it not been for the Society's continuous efforts and dedication through the past 47 years it is very likely this unique piece of our history would have been forgotten.

But in the  interest of taking even a longer view...The final word is Jane's. She says "Except that fate stepped in to save the "Soddy" seven times, each time a guardian angel stepped in, in the person of John D. Loucks, Elsa Spear Byron, Neltje, Barker Brothers, Duane Harvey, the Sheridan County Historical Society, State Archives Museum and Historical Dept. The Hub on Smith, and the Arch-Angel Whitney Benefits...it could not have happened."  We thank you all.  -----