

# News from the Red Caboose

FALL 2021



## Jo Sykes: A Genuine Montana Woman

By Bruce Graham

Jo Sykes was born in 1928 in American Falls, Idaho. Her family relocated to Livingston around 1936 and Jo graduated from Park County High School ten years later. And although she really didn't like school—she was too busy doing other things—she attended MacMurray College in Jacksonville, Illinois, and Rocky Mountain College in Billings, Montana.

To say that Jo had many skills and was involved in many activities in Livingston and the surrounding areas is an understatement. There doesn't seem to be anything that she couldn't do and while she lived her life she touched the lives of many.

Jo Sykes was one of the first authors who called Livingston and Park County home. During an interview with Alta LeDoux in 2008 Jo said that she knew when she was in fourth grade that she wanted to be a writer. She submitted her first full-length novel to the John C. Winston Company in New York when she was only sixteen years old, eventually publishing her first novel in 1957. Two of her novels were selected by the Junior Literary Guild. (See sidebar on page 11 for a list of her titles.)



Jo Sykes

As I grew up, I thought that Jo Sykes was writing about me. Her books were about young men, horses, and dogs in the mountains and she certainly wrote about what she knew. Jo revealed in LeDoux's interview that while she was still in high school, she worked for Nancy Brawner Fennell on the Herbert "Doc" Brawner Ranch. She wrangled cattle, broke horses, and built fence. Jo also worked for Jed Smith, an outfitter and guide, and was responsible for pack strings and cooking at his hunting camps.

In the fall, Jo and her dad hunted on my parent's ranch on Swingley Road and in the winter she kept her horses on our ranch. She also came out and cut fir tree branches to make Christmas wreaths that she sold; she always gave my mother a wreath.

Jo was a generous person in other ways. She gave over 20 gallons of blood at local blood drawings and continued that tradition when she grew older and someone had to drive her. She shared her love of (well-behaved) dogs with local people when in 1956 she became a dog obedience instructor. Jo taught at least through 2008.

Two or three Smooth Fox Terriers always accompanied her, which she also bred. Jo taught one of her dogs to find golf balls and bring them to her when she walked the river's edge of the local golf course in the early morning. Then she'd sell them back to the golf course. She also brought her terriers with her when getting fir boughs on our ranch and let them run free. One time when she called them to go home only two came back. She spent the next couple of days looking for her dog

(Continued on page 11)

# A Letter from the Executive Director

It has been uplifting to see our Museum buzzing with life this summer after missing visitors for 15 months. In the last newsletter I mentioned some of the new exhibits we were getting ready in preparation for reopening. Megafauna: From Ice Age to Our Age was complete and ready for visitors when we opened in June and the mammoth-sized mural has certainly been a crowd pleaser! We also worked hard to hang a new art show that highlights selections from the permanent collection. This show has been quite popular with visitors and it is a joy to show some of the great work that comes from artists in Park County. We live in such an inspiring area and it is wonderful to see the different ways artists manifest that inspiration.

I am sure you all noticed groups of people following a guide on YGM walking tours if you passed through downtown Livingston this summer. During the summer the YGM welcomed over 200 history fans on these tours, which were mostly guided by fabulous volunteers. These tours allowed us to introduce Park County history in a different way from the traditional museum visit. They have been so popular that we continue to get requests for private tours and we are looking for ways we can expand the program.

The Yellowstone Gateway Museum is able to provide these programs and develop different new exhibits because of the support shown by you. I want to thank everyone who has given to the museum over this past year whether you have become a member, volunteered your time, or by donating through Give-A-Hoot 2021. Because of your support we are able to continue the work of preserving the history of Park

County and providing meaningful programming to citizens and visitors alike. If you have any questions about the impact of your gift, please reach out and contact me at 406.222.4184. Thank you for everything you do for Park County.

This year we saw great support in donations through Give-A-Hoot and these funds will partly be used to open a new exhibit in the spring that focuses on the connection of Park County residents and

businesses with Yellowstone National Park. This opening will coincide with the 150th Anniversary of the founding of Yellowstone National Park in 1872. If you have any artifacts that relate to the park that you would be willing to donate, please get in touch with us. We are also looking for any stories you might have that tell of the connection of Yellowstone National Park with the people of Park County. This will be a fun exhibit and we look forward to expanding on our connection with the Park. If you think you have a good idea for an exhibit, we would love to hear it.

I hope you enjoy this snapshot of our collective achievements over the past couple of months and join us in this celebration of our success.

In Gratitude,

Mark Brammer  
Executive Director



Mark Brammer holds a branding iron that was found behind the homestead at the Silver Tip Ranch after the 1988 fires. It likely belonged to G. Milton Ames, original homesteader of the ranch. The brand-covered door behind Mark is from an early-day blacksmith shop located at the south end of Main Street in Livingston, once operated by Al Robertson and George Colpitts, and later by J. E. Gilpin. Colpitts is known for his beautiful ironwork that adorns Old Faithful Inn's door, fireplace clock, and more. Artifacts are part of YGM's Sax and Fryer Collection.

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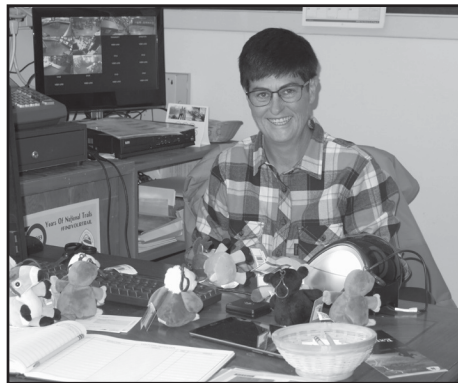
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Rosamond Stanton, collections,  
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Left: Cessie Wafer working at front desk;  
Top: Suzanne Brown taking photograph  
of collection object for cataloging;  
Above: Ray Overweg after painting the  
front doors of the museum;  
Below: Hank Poeschl, Ed Dodge, Mike  
Palmer, and Mark Brammer, cleaning  
collection storage shelves.

## MUSEUM HOURS

10 AM - 5 PM, Tuesday - Saturday

### RESEARCH CENTER

Please call for an appointment.

### Yellowstone Gateway Museum of Park County

118 W. Chinook St., Livingston, MT 59047 ~ 406.222.4184  
museum@parkcounty.org ~ www.yellowstonegatewaymuseum.org

Find us on Facebook, Instagram, & YouTube!



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\*memorial donations, see pg 8

## New Vietnam Veterans Exhibit

The Yellowstone Gateway Museum received a 2019 Community Closet grant to conduct oral history interviews of Park County servicemen and women, specifically Vietnam veterans. The grant also supports an exhibit to commemorate the 45th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War in 2020. The pandemic slowed this effort.

Over the past few months, volunteer Anna Simons inter-

viewed sixteen veterans and wrote their narratives, which will form the heart of an upcoming Vietnam Veterans exhibit. The museum's larger exhibit, Honoring Park County Veterans, features servicemen and women from the Civil War forward. Our last installment was a special First World War exhibit in 2017.

The Vietnam War ended on April 30, 1975. The 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War is

being recognized nationwide from May 28, 2012 through November 11, 2025 as part of The United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration.

The museum honors Vietnam veterans and their contributions, as well as their families, with this exhibit. Additional outreach is planned. Please watch local newspapers and social media for future announcements and events regarding this new exhibit.

# BORDERLANDS

A VIRTUAL SPEAKER SERIES

Wed., October 20, 7PM, Zoom\*

*Wilderness, Wildness, & the Absaroka-Beartooth  
Wilderness Area: From Grasshoppers to Grizzly Bears*

The promise of protected wilderness and the challenges presented by their artificial boundaries are explored using two examples from *Voices of Yellowstone's Capstone: A Narrative Atlas of the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness*.

Jesse Logan, presenter



Wed., November 10, 7PM, Zoom\*

*Ivan Doig: Writer of Montana's Land & People*

Doig's voice was born in Meagher County in his beloved memoir *This House of Sky*. Murphy discusses the deep respect for working people and the love of Montana language that characterize all Doig's works and that grew from his own experiences.

Mary Murphy, presenter



Wed., November 17, 7PM, Zoom\*

*The Beartooth Highway:  
A History of America's Most Beautiful Drive*

The story of how the highway came about and the story of the men who designed it and the contractors who built America's most scenic highway, as presented by the author of a book of the same title.

Jon Axline, presenter



**\*All programs are free & held via Zoom. Registration is required for each webinar program at [www.yellowstonegatewaymuseum.org/webinars/programs](http://www.yellowstonegatewaymuseum.org/webinars/programs).**

The web site includes speaker bios & more information. After registration you'll receive emails with links to the programs. Questions? 406.222.4184.

Did you know that all of the museum's past virtual programs on our YouTube channel? Enjoy Montana Native Peoples: Perspectives on the Clovis Child & People and Place programs.

# A Spotlight on Board Members

By Karen Reinhart



Diane Chalfant and her new puppy Millie pause during a hike.

Diane Chalfant, Park County Board Vice President, moved to the area in 1998 when she became Chief of Interpretation for Yellowstone National Park, a position she held for ten years. After her thirty-six-year career with the National Park Service, she and her husband Paul moved to Livingston.

Diane wrote, “Of all of the places we have lived, this area has always felt the most like home. The Yellowstone area first caught my imagination on family vacations when I was very young in the early '60's.... Our daughter has spent most of her life here in Park County and she and our son-in-law live nearby. We love hiking and Nordic skiing, and we treasure a group of friends

who make it a priority to get out and explore the Custer Gallatin National Forest trails.” Diane has some Montana roots—her great grandfather was a copper miner and is buried in Butte. She respects the deep history of the many lifelong residents who built this community.

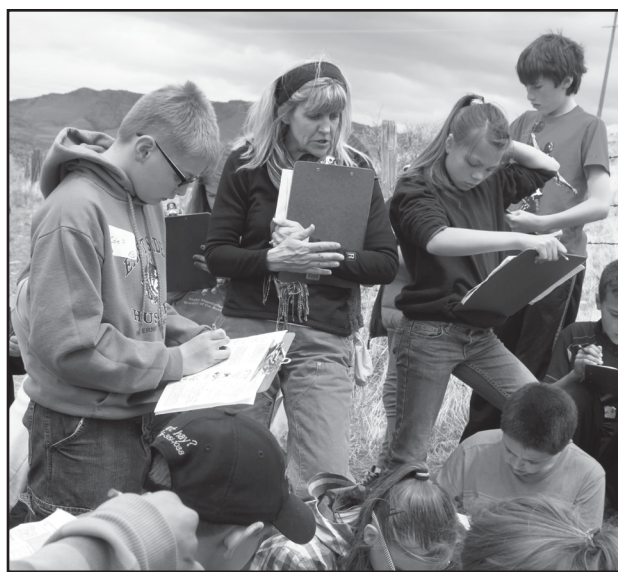
She believes that the museum’s programs, collections, and research archives and photographs, are a tremendous resource for this community. Diane is excited about the future of the YGM and the museum’s upcoming strategic planning effort, recognizing that residents' and visitors' needs are changing and their motivations and methods of learning are becoming more sophisticated. Diane is also interested in collaborating with partner organizations and doing more to facilitate the work of tribal members telling their own histories through the museum’s programs and exhibits.

Diane has specific skills and experience in interpretation and education, museum management, partnerships, and natural and cultural history. She wrote, “It is my time to give back to this community, and I want to use my experience and education to help the Yellowstone Gateway Museum best serve its public.

.....

Robin Lovec recently retired as board member of the Friends of the Yellowstone Gateway Museum, serving at least ten years. A fifth-grade teacher at East Side School in Livingston, Robin promotes cross-cultural collaborations and programs for students and the community, embracing Indian Education for All (IEFA).

Since 2007, Robin’s dedication, passion, hard work, and intuitive and respectful approach to working with tribal people resulted in programs that inspire, including the Smithsonian Institute’s National Museum of the American Indian. Their Education Office wrote after witnessing a museum-



Robin Lovec, center, with her students at Fort Parker.

school collaboration during a visit to Livingston, “The schools and tribes are critical pieces of IEFA, but the strong museum involvement provided valuable ideas as we look to creating a  
(continued on next page)

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national platform for communities to share resources and ideas.” Robin was the spark that made the program between the school, Crow Tribe, and the museum possible.

In 2016 she received the Teresa Veltkamp Advocacy Award for Excellence in Indian Education at the OPI Best Practices in Indian Education Conference in Billings.

Robin was recognized for her work with the Elk River Watershed Speaker Series, which she began in 2010. She also brings Crow Tribe youth and elders to the museum and to Fort Parker, east of Livingston and now owned by The Archaeological Conservancy, for a full-day field trip at the historical first Crow agency during Fort Parker Days, held in May over the

past several years. The day involves many community members and parents who run hands-on stations, including: History of First Crow Agency, Native Games, Archaeology, Horses, Native Plants, and Game Equipment Making.

Thank you, Robin, for your commitment to the board and for helping us prioritize IEFA in our museum and area schools.

## Home Waters: A Gardiner School & Museum Partnership

The Library of Congress and the Museums Association of Montana recently awarded a \$750 grant to Gardiner Schools in partnership with the Yellowstone Gateway Museum. We are one of twelve teams across Montana to participate in Home Waters: Primary Sources and the Places of Montana.

The museum staff and public-school teacher partnerships use primary sources, literature, and place in the classroom and museum settings. Participants will gain knowledge about the place they are living, and how it fits into the larger perspective of Montana. The project’s goals include strengthening community learning partners and providing a place-based educational program that can be integrated into classrooms in Montana and across the nation.

Junior and Senior high school students at Gardiner High School,



Gardiner students on a Cultural Perspectives on the Land field trip in 2015, a museum-school partnership.

led by English teacher Hali Kirby, will connect the new book *Home Waters* by John Maclean and a well-known familial companion, *A River Runs through It* by Norman Maclean, with primary sources

from the museum’s collections with the help of Curator Karen Reinhart. Students will analyze these sources to help them gain a deeper understanding of the books when reading them.

Reinhart will also help train

students in the art of oral history interviews. They will interview local people who rely in various ways on the Yellowstone River. Students will also create a web site, making interview transcriptions widely available. A link will be placed on the museum’s web site.

Other grant-sponsored activities include memoir writing classes for members of the Gardiner community.

We are looking for local river experts to engage students in experiential learning opportunities. If you are interested, please call 406.222.4184.

The Library of Congress trains teachers and museum staff

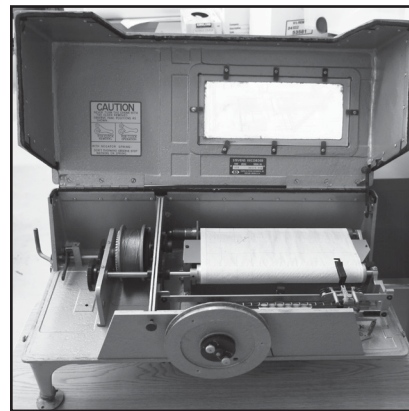
participants how to search the deeper collections of their own archives as well as other archives, and how these resources can expand an understanding of places that appear in literature and history, providing connections to state and national standards in multiple disciplines.

**We are looking for local river experts to engage students in experiential learning opportunities.**

## RECENT COLLECTIONS DONORS

**Martha Adkins:** Video cassettes, photos  
**Glenn Altimus:** Certificate, genealogies, photos  
**Michael Bunker:** 1985 Gardiner School fire slides  
**Community Closet Thrift Store:** Federation of Fly Fishers items, book  
**Frances Conklin:** Lean Family Slides  
**Penny Cooper:** Certificate, coat, photos, plate, figurines  
**Gay Copenhaver:** Railroad items  
**Kris Dunn:** Oval-framed portrait  
**Lorena Ford:** Jayceens' Scrapbook  
**Fredrick Giannelli:** Yellowstone whiskey bottle  
**Robert Gollmyer:** Northern Pacific items  
**Patricia Grabow:** Bozeman Trail research  
**Bruce Graham:** Book  
**Great Bend of the Yell. Lewis & Clark Heritage Comm.:** Scrapbook  
**Andrea Gullickson:** Father's Korean War records, drawings, yearbooks  
**David Haug:** Livingston Ditch device  
**Nancy Hopkins:** J. K. Ralston framed print  
**Leona Hoven:** 1906 business receipts  
**Judy Hunter:** Milk and cream cans, clothes stomper  
**Dan Hurwitz & Dorothy Bradley:** Booklet  
**Kevin Kazan:** 1904 school diploma  
**Dagan Klein:** Woven covid-19 art  
**Gary Lee:** NP Railway Park Branch maps  
**Ed Lomeland:** Rifle, sword, assorted artifacts  
**Jack Luther:** A. W. Miles board, 1887 ledger, book

**Ashea Mills:** Gardiner Garage time cards, 1949  
**John Nash:** Nash Family brand items  
**Park Co. Covid Incident Mgmt Team:** Assorted items  
**Park Co. Health Dept.:** Covid-19 items  
**Park Co. High School:** Annuals  
**Dick Payne:** Railroad publication  
**Shirley Petersen:** Lanterns, gloves, necklace  
**Ruth Quinn:** "Harry W. Child" book by donor  
**Karen Reinhart:** Yellowstone National Park items  
**Dave Ricks:** Park High annuals  
**Ricki Rom:** 1954 Livingston map  
**Nickola Southard:** Fringed jacket, photo  
**Esther Stratton:** Bozeman Tunnel photos  
**Norman Tjeltveit:** Livingston objects, archival items  
**Tom's Jewelers:** Ring box, token  
**Robbie Vaughn:** Yellowstone postcards



**Mary Weamer:** Sheet music  
**Carol Woodley:** Maps, Chico Cemetery Research  
**Pat Yaney:** Dresses  
**Ellen Zazzarino:** Cookbooks, coasters

Livingston Ditch water measuring device was used from 1936 until 2021. A float moved a graph stylus.

## MEMORIALS

**For Louise Ammerman**  
*By Bruce & Margery Graham*

**For Donna Armentaro**  
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**For Carol Woodley**  
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Membership forms available at [www.yellowstonegatewaymuseum.org](http://www.yellowstonegatewaymuseum.org).  
Please mail to P.O. Box 815, Livingston, MT 59047.

# Jack Luther: Today's Mover and Shaker

By Karen Reinhart

Jack Luther's actions clearly reveal his love of history. Since 2006, Jack has made a lot of history-related things happen in Livingston, including museum programming. But first, a little of his backstory.

Native to Illinois, Jack lived in Fort Collins, Colorado for forty years, retiring from a twenty-seven-year career with Mountain Bell in 1985. Then, he went back to Colorado State University in Fort Collins and earned a bachelor's degree in Mathematics and a teaching certificate. After three or four years of substitute teaching, he and his wife Betsy traveled and biked throughout the U.S., and in Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. They toured China.

Now residing in Livingston during the summer (and wintering in Mexico), Jack has more time to research history. Soon after moving here, he met longtime Livingston residents Fred Shellenberg and Jim Hunt, who helped spark Jack's interest in local history. He "got enraptured with Livingston and Park County, Montana in general." When Bruce Austin loaned a vintage 1938 White Motor Co. yellow bus that once rolled through Yellowstone National Park to Livingston's Downtown Building and Business Owners Association fourteen years ago, Jack developed tours and served as a docent for ten years. Now he's the bus maintenance guy.

Jack is treasurer for the Park County Historical Society (PCHS). Several years ago, he rallied local volunteers and began Cemetery Walks, modeling them after similar

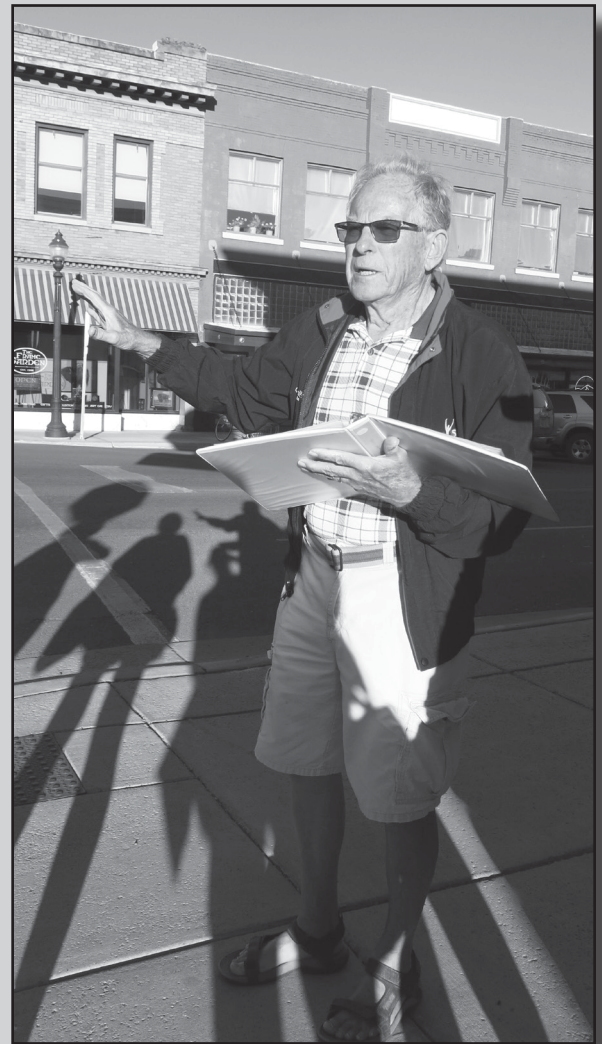
tours in Colorado. He researched the history of many characters of Livingston's past and portrayed them during the walks, including Lewis Terwilliger (wearing a Klu Klux Klan robe), Billy Miles (businessman), George Alderson (Livingston Post editor), and Dr. George Townsend.

Jack is also a member of the Historic Preservation Commission, an advisory board for the Commercial Business District in Livingston, a post he's held for twelve years. So far, Jack has put up fifteen Downtown Historic District plaques; the commission pays for the research and the PCHS pays for plaques.

In 2018 the museum decided to offer walking tours, and of course I called Jack. He developed Movers and Shakers: Westside Historic District tour, first giving the tour in 2019 and again this year. (We didn't give tours in 2020.) Ghost signs on Livingston's downtown buildings have always fascinated him, so this year he added Ghosts and Ghost Signs to our growing roster of tours. Sometimes multi-layered, ghost signs indicate earlier businesses and/or items sold. Jack said, "When I first moved here, I took pictures of all the ghosts signs because I

was afraid they'd get painted over. What most surprised me is that the property owners didn't realize their significance." Jack also mentored two new tour guides this year.

A measure of the success of the new "Ghosts" tour is that several



Jack Luther shares ghost and ghost sign stories in downtown Livingston during a recent late afternoon.

people have told Jack that they learned a lot about the town and found themselves looking for ghost signs in other towns.

We plan to offer special walking tours next summer with  
(continued next page)

(continued from previous page) characters in costume giving programs stationed in front of historic downtown buildings. Jack will be one of our guides.

For a couple of years, Jack has been working toward creating a fifth historic district in Livingston to include Sacajawea Park, Miles Park, the 1939 bridge, band shell, and Civic Center. Jack explained

his motive, "People have expressed concern about the civic center being razed for a new recreation center and while an historic district won't prevent that, gathering information about the history of these public areas is valuable for the future."

We're grateful to Jack for the energy he expends to support historic preservation in Park

County, safeguarding the stories of people and businesses, and our beloved old structures.

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**Editor's Note:** You can support next summer's new self-guided walking tour "Livingston History: Meet Downtown Characters" by becoming a sponsor. Contact Mark Brammer at 406-222-4184 or MBrammer@parkcounty.org.

(Continued from page 1) with no success; I am sure that a coyote got it.

Beginning in high school, Jo played and pitched for women's league softball, fast-pitch and slow-pitch. A fall at seventy-seven years old while picking apples on a ladder ended her fifty-year softball career.

She also worked for a surveyor, at a fish factory on L Street as a secretary and occasionally, as a trout processor, tied flies for Dan Bailey's, and worked as a contract driver for the post office delivering mail to Emigrant, Gardiner, Mammoth, Wyoming, Cooke City, and Cody, Wyoming. This last job she called "the best job I ever had."

After she stopped writing she started painting landscapes and animals using acrylics, oils, and watercolors. She sold more than 350 paintings over twenty-five years and taught people how to paint.

Jo was also a musician. In addition to the clarinet, she played the trombone, E flat bass horn, and drums. Jo played for four years in the high school band and was a member of the All-State Band her Senior year. After graduation she performed with the Livingston



"On Top of the World," oil painting by Jo Sykes, courtesy of Mary Weamer

City Band, marching in parades and in the Miles Park band shell.

The Park High School annual published class prophesies for all members of the Senior Class. When Jo was a Senior she was prophesized as that famous writer who made her fortune writing a sequence to the "Call of the Wild." Senior Class members also willed other people, usually junior class mates, their high school talents. Jo willed her artist ability to Walt Disney. Often prophesies and

wills fall far from the mark but Jo Skyes did become a famous writer and had enough artistic ability that she could have given some away.

It's difficult to sum up a person's life in a few paragraphs and this article does not include all of her accolades or affiliations. But looking at the passions that Jo Sykes pursued during her life, it appears that she led a full and happy

life. Jo passed away in 2013.

She was quoted in a 1998 newspaper article by Jay Booth, "Happiness is like potato salad. Share it with others and you have a picnic."

## Novels by Jo Sykes

- "The Stubborn Mare" 1957
- "Wolf Dog of Ambush Creek" 1959
- "Chip on his Shoulder" 1961
- "Trouble Creek" 1963
- "Saddle a Thunderbolt" 1967
- "Leashed Lightning" 1969

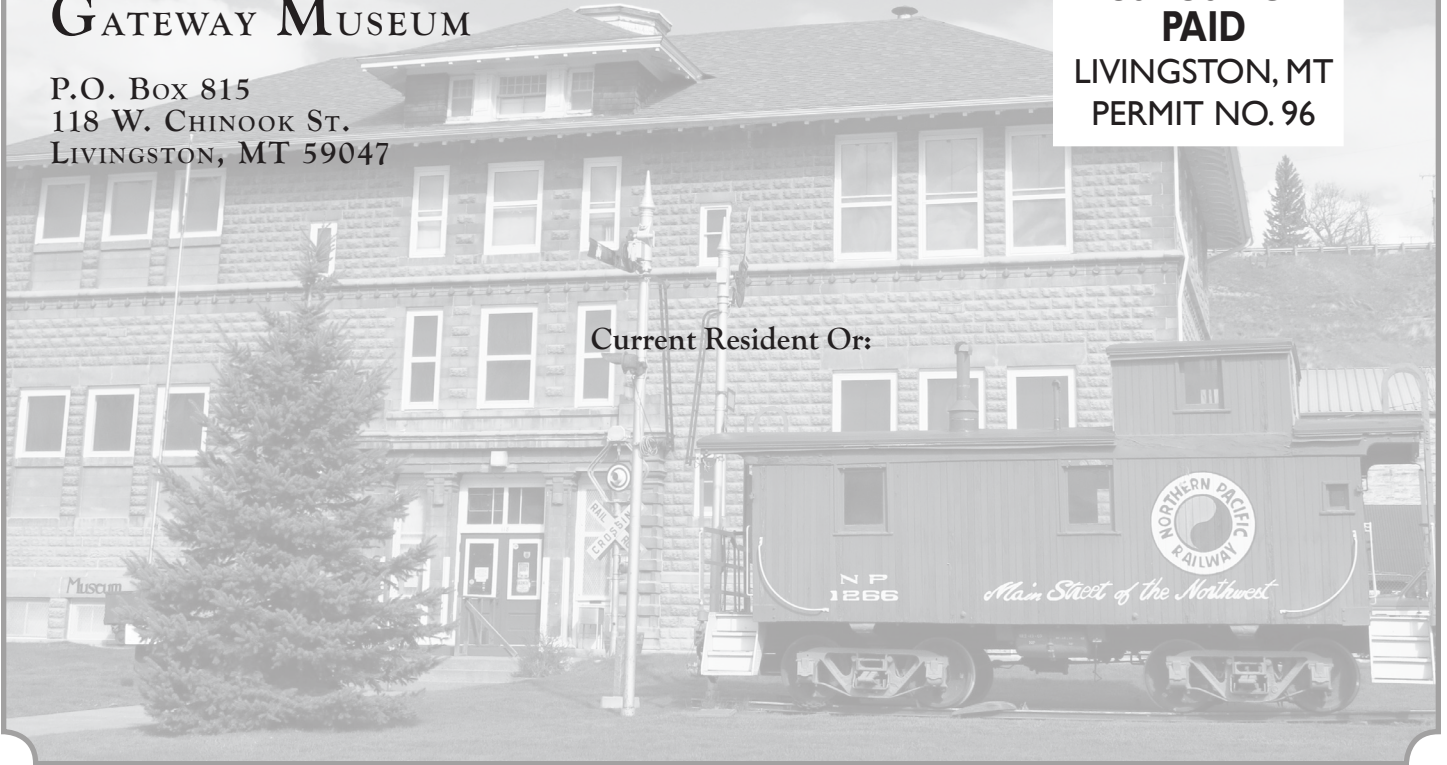
The Yellowstone Gateway Museum houses her collection, including correspondence and contracts with her publishers and other archival items (scrapbooks, photographs and more) that help tell the story of her accomplished life. She also served as a trustee of the Park County Museum Association.

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This photograph was taken in 1938 by John Haberstroh, who lived most of his life in Park County. He wrote on the negative, "Buck Deer Fight - Yellowstone Park." His photography, and his skill in the dark room, captured hundreds of regional images over decades of his life. He especially loved Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks. Images like this one were printed as postcards and enlargements and sold locally as souvenirs, leaving us a beautiful, vital record of our history. —Photo Archivist Scott Franzen