

Story^{the} Catcher

Summer 2016 Issue

A publication of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society

"Mari Sandoz, Custer, and the Indian Wars"

"Mari Sandoz, Custer, and the Indian Wars" is the theme of the 2016 Pilster Lecture on October 13 at the Chadron State College Student Center. Paul Andrew Hutton, Distinguished Professor of History at the University of New Mexico is the guest speaker for this annual event sponsored by the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society and supported by the Esther and Raleigh Pilster Endowment. The mission of the lecture series is to bring speakers of national renown to the Chadron State College campus for the benefit of the college and residents of the high plains of Western Nebraska. The 7:30 pm MT lecture is free to the public. A reception and book signing will be held following the lecture at the CSC Student Center.

Hutton has published widely in both scholarly and popular magazines, and is a five-time winner of the Western Writers of America Spur Award and six-time winner of the Western Heritage Award from the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum for his print and film writing. His *Phil Sheridan and His Army* (1985) received the Billington Prize from the Organization of American Historians, the Evans Biography Award, and the Spur Award from the Western Writers of America. He is also the editor of *Western Heritage* (2011), *Roundup* (2010), *Frontier and Region* (1997), *The Custer Reader* (1992), *Soldiers West* (1987), and the ten-volume *Eyewitness to the Civil War* series from Bantam Books (1991-1993). From 1977 to 1984 he was associate editor of the *Western Historical Quarterly*, from 1985 to 1991 was editor of the *New Mexico Historical Review*, and from 1990-2006 served as Executive Director of the Western History Association. Hutton was also President of Western Writers of America from 2002-2004.

Hutton has written several short films for state and national parks as well as a dozen television documentaries and has appeared in more than 300 television programs on CBS, NBC, PBS, BBC, Fox, Discovery, the History Channel and other networks. In 2003 he was historical consultant for the Ron Howard film *The Missing*, in 2010 he repeated that role in Jon Favreau's *Cowboys and Aliens*, and again in 2016 on Gavin O'Connor's *Jane Got a Gun*. He has also been active as a public historian with museums, guest curating major exhibits: in 1985 on the Alamo at the DeGolyer Library in Dallas; in 1996 on the Custer legend at the Autry Museum of Western Heritage in Los Angeles; in 2002 on Davy Crockett at the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum in Austin; and in 2007 on Billy the Kid at the Albuquerque Museum of Art and History. His new book, *The Apache Wars*, was published by Crown in May 2016.



The Pilster endowment started with the gift from the late Esther Pilster of ranchland in Dawes County in honor of her late husband Raleigh who grew up there with his parents John and Grace Pilster. Esther, a teacher and school administrator for 44 years, lived in Omaha.

Support the Work of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society JOIN or RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP!

Join us in keeping the spirit and work of Mari Sandoz alive by supporting the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society with a new membership, gift membership or renewal! Visit our website at www.marisandoz.org to complete the online form and pay by credit card, or you can download a copy of the membership form, print it and mail it to us with a check.

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Another “Wildly” Successful Writer’s Workshop

In its five – year history, the Story Catcher Summer Writing Workshop and Festival has touched the lives of 49 people who attended and countless others who have been exposed to the literary material created by the attendees.

Workshop Director Matt Evertson, a Mari Sandoz Heritage Society Board member and instructor at Chadron State College, recently told the board that the portion of the June 2016 workshop that was held at the old Officer’s Quarters at nearby Fort Robinson received high praise as well and could become a permanent fixture of the 3-day event.



In a letter, workshop participant L. Cal Hitzrot of Concord, MA., commented: “Fort Robinson was a terrific locale for our work. There was plenty of space to spread out, in a beautiful setting, suffused with echoes of our American history. Moreover, the wide sweeping views of this part of Nebraska were quite stunning for this small town New England resident.” But Hitzrot’s praise didn’t end there. “As the veteran of a number of writing workshop experiences, I had somewhat measured expectations for Story Catcher before my arrival. However, I was thoroughly impressed with the quality of the featured writers, and also with the creative capacities of my fellow participants. The workshops and craft talks were productive and informative,” he wrote. “The high-quality experience offered to visiting writers seems to me to be a terrific tribute to Mari Sandoz and her enduring vision of literature of and for the people of the West,” Hitzrot concluded.



Evertson said the workshop improves every year and he and several of his fellow faculty members are constantly discussing improvement. Chief among those is spreading the word. Two faculty members attended the Association of Writers and Writing Programs earlier this year to promote the Chadron State College English Department and distribute material about Story Catcher. A membership in the Association of Writing Programs is also in the works to further promote the department and workshop.



He said they are also looking at working with high school teachers and students to “talk it up” next Spring to get more participation from that age group. He said planners are also looking at rescheduling the conference to a time that would avoid conflicts with similar programs. Finally, Evertson said the continuing financial support of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society has played a big part in the success of the workshop.

Participants enjoying a meal on the porch at Fort Robinson (top). Joe Wilkins leading a reading and discussion at Fort Robinson on “Writing Wild” (middle). Emerging writer L. Cal Hitzrot leading a session on Saturday of the workshop (bottom). Photos courtesy Matt Evertson

The Story Catcher is the title of a book by Mari Sandoz and is the title of Helen Winter Stauffer’s biography of Mari: *Mari Sandoz: The Story Catcher of the Plains*. The vision of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society is to perpetuate and foster an understanding of the literary and historical works of Mari Sandoz and to honor the land and the people about which she wrote; Native Americans, ranchers, farmers, and the people who settled the High Plains country. Sandoz was the author of 23 books and a tireless researcher, a true storyteller and artist passionately dedicated to the land.

Nebraska Hall of Fame Nomination Announcement Features Sandoz

Governor Pete Ricketts and members of the Nebraska Hall of Fame Commission chose Mari Sandoz 120th birthday, May 11, to urge Nebraskans to submit names for recognition of those who have made a significant impact on the lives of others and have put the state on the map. The announcement was made in front of the bust of the Sandhills native who was one of three people inducted in 1976. Located in the Nebraska State Capitol, the Hall of Fame contains busts of Sandoz and other famous Nebraskans including Buffalo Bill Cody, Governor Robert Furnas, Chief Standing Bear, and General John J. Pershing, to name a few. Their busts stand on pedestals in the hallways surrounding the chambers of the Nebraska Legislature. "The Nebraska Hall of Fame is a beautiful monument to the men and women who grew Nebraska into the best place in the world to live, work, and raise a family," Ricketts said. "Nebraskans who visit our State Capitol enjoy the statues in the Hall of Fame and learn about the history of the Nebraskans who built our state. These men and women are the iconic Nebraska figures who have shaped our state's character and defined what it means to be a Nebraskan." By state law, the Hall of Fame Commission has facilitated the nomination and selection process for the artistic depictions of the inductees. Every five years, a new Nebraskan may be selected for the Hall of Fame from nominations submitted to the commission. To be eligible, the nominee must have been deceased for a minimum of 35 years and meet several other criteria. An inductee's contributions will usually have been made in public affairs, or the arts, the sciences, or the professions. Secondary consideration is given to entertainment, athletics or fields of endeavor where interest, publicity and general recognition may for a time be intense, but where a contribution to society is secondary. Activities that have added to the welfare of society and to the reputation of Nebraska shall be weighed more heavily than activities primarily benefiting the individual him/herself. Sandoz was

born in Sheridan County and became nationally renowned for her work examining pioneer life on the Great Plains and the Plains Indian culture. Her works include *Old Jules*, *The Beaver Men*, *The Cattlemen*, and *The Battle of the Little Bighorn* among many others. She died at the age of 69 in 1966, and is buried on the family ranch about 20 miles south of Gordon. Activist and social reformer Grace Abbott of Grand Island and American jurist, botanist and educator Nathan Roscoe Pound, a Lincoln native, were inducted at the same time as Sandoz. Their busts are also displayed in the Hall of Fame. "The life and work of Mari Sandoz has shaped our state's identity and reputation in many ways," said State Historical Society Director Michael Smith (now retired and a Sandoz Board member) who also serves as commission secretary. "The story of the life of Mari Sandoz is a true Nebraska story. Growing up in the Nebraska Sandhills where horticulture and agriculture was not simply an occupation, but rather the core stuff of survival, Mari overcame privations and challenges that can be painful to consider today. She embodies the grit and determination that is the spirit of Nebraska," he said. Smith said that Mari was best known as the Story Catcher. "She would listen, remember and write the stories that she heard," he said.



Sandoz Society President Lynn Roper and Board member Michael Smith with Nebraska Gov. Pete Ricketts promoting nominations to the Nebraska Hall of Fame standing in front of Mari Sandoz bust in the Nebraska State Capitol building.

The StoryCatcher

The "StoryCatcher" is the title of a book by Mari Sandoz and it is the title of Helen Winter Stauffer's biography of Mari, *Mari Sandoz: The Story Catcher of the Plains*. The StoryCatcher is published four times a year by the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. The vision of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society is to perpetuate and foster an understanding of the literary and historical works of Mari Sandoz and to honor the land and the people about which she wrote; Native Americans, ranchers, farmers, and the people who settled the High Plains country. The Society hosts an annual conference, the Pilster Great Plains Lecture Series, and a writer's workshop. Additionally, the Society provides collections on loan to the Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center at Chadron State College in Chadron, Nebraska.

Address Changes

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Contributions to the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society are tax-deductible. To join the Society contact visit our website at www.marisandoz.org

Mari Sandoz

The feats, the passions, and the distinctive speech of the West come alive in the writings of Mari Sandoz (1896-1966). As the author of 23 books, including *Old Jules*, *Cheyenne Autumn*, and *Crazy Horse, the Strange Man of the Oglalas*, Sandoz was a tireless researcher, a true storyteller and artist passionately dedicated to the land. With her vivid stories of the last days of the American frontier, Mari Sandoz has achieved a secure place as one of the finest authors in American literature and one of Nebraska's most important writers. As a historian and as a novelist, Sandoz was inducted into the Nebraska Hall of Fame in 1976 and posthumously received the coveted Wrangler Award from the Hall of Great Westerners.

Honoring a Sad Piece of Our Past: Completion of the Cheyenne Breakout Monument

T.R. Hughes, 76, a long time buffalo rancher and owner of RimRock Ranch northwest of Crawford, died March 17, 2015, in his hometown Seward. T.R. worked at Hughes Brothers in Seward from 1961-1998, holding positions as project engineer, secretary/treasurer and as president from 1973-1995. T.R. and his wife Kay moved to Rim Rock Ranch northwest of Crawford in 1997 where they raised buffalo for over 20 years. They were members of the Northwest Nebraska High Country and T.R. was a long time board member of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society. He was awarded the "Spirit of Sandoz" award in 2009. T.R. donated land west of Crawford where he worked to help the Northern Cheyenne build a monument to honor their ancestors lost in the 1879 Cheyenne Breakout from Fort Robinson. The monument was recently dedicated by Northern Cheyenne Indians to commemorate where some of their ancestors suffered and died during a bloody escape in 1879. Some of the roughly 100 Northern Cheyenne who traveled to northwest Nebraska's Pine Ridge for the dedication were descendants of the Indians who made the desperate escape. They held prayer and purification ceremonies, listened to powwow singers, watched native dancers, and toured the area. They also walked more than 2 miles from the site of the breakout to the buttes and the monument made of scared pipestone and topped with the tribe's Morning Star symbol. In September 1878, after a year confined to a reservation in Indian Territory (now Oklahoma), Northern Cheyenne leaders Dull Knife and Little Wolf and about 300 men, women and children began a trek back to their homeland in the Powder River country of Wyoming and Montana. In northwest Kansas, some of the group were suspected of killing about 40 white people in raids. Soldiers captured Dull Knife and 149 other Indians during a late October snowstorm in northwest Nebraska. The captives were taken to Camp Robinson, now Fort Robinson State Park, near Crawford. The camp commander housed the Indians in an empty log cavalry barracks. After being treated well initially, the commander ultimately attempted to starve them into submission. After four days without food, water or heat, younger warriors led an escape that became known as the Cheyenne Breakout. After a running battle south across the camp's snow-covered parade ground, the Indians fled several miles west along the banks of the White River and scaled towering buttes to escape. A group of nearly three dozen Indians turned east to seek

refuge with the Sioux at Pine Ridge, South Dakota. Soldiers discovered their hiding place on Antelope Creek in northwest Nebraska on Jan. 22. Several Indians escaped, but by the next day, soldiers killed or captured the last of the others. After Hughes' death, Sandoz Board Member Shannon Smith shared a tribute to her friend, which said, in part: "Those who knew T.R. knew of his devotion to American Indian cultures and people and particularly to the Northern Cheyenne. He donated a significant portion of his family's ranch adjacent to Fort Robinson to the Nebraska Land Trust and the Northern Cheyenne Tribe in order for there to be a permanent marker, and ultimately a magnificent interpretive center, commemorating the Northern Cheyenne Breakout that Mari wrote about so eloquently in Cheyenne Autumn. "His land was where the soldiers chased the Northern Cheyenne families after they broke out of the barracks at Fort Robinson where they had been imprisoned for months and where the soldiers tragically shot and killed so many. Most of you have driven a few miles west of the fort and seen the partially completed obelisk monument. Sometime in the last decade the Sandoz Society hosted 3 young men from the Standing Rock reservation who are descendants of the family of Crazy Horse and they came to the monument with Kim Lee and T.R. and his wife Kaye and me and conducted a moving ceremony that brought me to tears. "T.R. hosted Indian friends many, many times a year. Imagine the powerful emotion that he must have felt every day knowing he owned that land and that he had the ability to start some kind of process of reconciliation for a people who were so egregiously wronged by our nation. Toward the end of his life you all saw how tirelessly and selflessly he worked for that. "Indeed, our own Mike Smith of the Nebraska State Historical Society hosted a meeting with NSHS and Nebraska State Parks and leaders of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe and Tribal College at Fort Robinson a few years ago where we worked to figure out ways to better interpret the Indian story of the breakout and T.R. and Kaye were integral to that wonderful meeting. There were Northern Cheyenne elders who had never had the emotional strength to come to that place and T.R. and Kaye had been working for years to build up their strength to come to the fort and their land. It may be a wild dream but several of us see a day when there is an actual walking tour where you can follow the trail the Northern Cheyenne families ran from the barracks over to

Cheyenne Breakout Monument (continued)

the land T.R. has donated and then finish at the monument with a tour of an interpretive center telling the entire story of the Northern Cheyenne peoples. "I believe the society should do something in T.R.'s honor and am sure you all will agree. I hope this email can start a conversation for us all to think about T.R. and how to celebrate his contributions as one of our former board members and as an outstanding citizen of Western Nebraska. Wouldn't it be great if the board members of the Sandoz Society helped complete this stage of what will one day be a state- and nationally-recognized monument to an event that Mari devoted so much time making her follow citizens aware of."



The Mari Sandoz Heritage Society is on Facebook!

The Mari Sandoz Heritage Society has a Facebook page. Keep up to date with Sandoz Society news, events and activities by "liking" our page!

The Mari Sandoz Heritage Society welcomes contributions to our newsletter. If you have a story idea or articles you would like to share, please contact our public relations coordinator J.L. Schmidt at jlschmidt67@gmail.com



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THE POETRY OF PEOPLE AND PLACE
by WILLIAM KLOEFKORN

Keynote Address Presented at the
Mari Sandoz Heritage Society Annual Conference
"The Year of the Blizzard"
Commemorating Winter Thunder by Mari Sandoz
April 14, 2005

Sandoz Society Lecture Monographs Available

For several years, the Society produced printed monographs following the annual lectures. We have many extra copies of these monographs that can be purchased for \$2 each including the mailing cost per book.

There are (5) five titles available: "She Doesn't Write Like A Woman" Mari Sandoz's *The Cattlemen* (B. Byron Price); "Love Song to the Plains" (Linda Hasselstrom); "Bison R Us" The Role of the Buffalo in American Popular Culture (Elliot West); The Poetry of People and Place (William Kloefkorn); and "Sandoz, Neihardt and Crazy Horse" (Helen Winter Stauffer).

See the order form insert in this newsletter or you can order online from our website using a credit card at

<https://marisandozorg.presencehost.net/shop/>

"Love Song to the Plains"



by Linda M. Hasselstrom
Keynote Address Presented at the
Mari Sandoz Heritage Society Annual Conference
April 18, 2002



Most of you noticed, and several of you sent notes and email to us...but we had a bit of an "oops!" with the mailing of our last newsletter. While your address was correct, your name was not. We apologize for the error and hopefully it will not happen again.

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Photo by Bill Peters

Predictions From the Past, Predictions For the Future

With inspiration from the past, the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society is planning its active involvement in the state Sesquicentennial celebration in 2017.

Mari Sandoz was a participant in predictions for the year 2006 which was prepared in 1956 for a time capsule to be placed in the cornerstone of KETV's new building in Omaha. She was living in New York City at the time. Sandoz died in 2006. As promised, the time capsule was opened and read in 2006.

The Society is planning its own time capsule for placement in 2017, perhaps at the Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center on the Chadron State College campus. Contributors are being solicited to include their predictions in the capsule. In addition to being Nebraska's 150th anniversary of statehood, it is also the Center's 15th Anniversary.

Some of Sandoz' predictions for the year 2006 show that she was quite a visionary in addition to being a well-published author. She wrote, in part, "I see vast semi-urban regions expanding rapidly along all the old thoroughfares of our country, particularly along the great streams. Here, where only 50 years ago Omaha stood alone, the city has now become the core of one of these newer, far-dispersed industro-residential regions. Its outlying districts have pushed westward to the Platte and up it far beyond the Forks, as earlier the city spread up and down the Missouri." Just look at the map of the Omaha metro today to see how her prediction has been fulfilled.

Of the Missouri, she predicted, "the Missouri is now one long park area, a clear and constant stream flowing between smooth green banks, their manicured neatness bred into the very grass, their landscaping of shrubs and trees and tasteful and changed to fit the season." Riverfront development is happening along the Mighty Mo in the Omaha area and other spots along the great river. Sandoz addressed the problem of long range travel and spoke of "transcontinental high speed tubes. Already passengers from either coast can reach Omaha in less than an hour. Soon the inter-continental tubes will be carrying passengers to Europe and to the blossoming regions of the new Asia with the same dispatch." She talked about land travel in "vehicles carrying their own 'antagonism fields' that make collision impossible. The incredibly clumsy airplanes of late 1956 have been replaced by automatically sustained craft speeding along controlled air lanes – craft that cannot fall, and must literally be taken down to reach the ground at all." Some of that is still fantasy, but technology has made parts of the vision possible.

She predicted harnessing of the atom and cosmic forces and the availability of water. "Now that 2007 is upon us man is at last producing water from many waste products, and soon he, like a new Moses, will be able to produce water from the rock."

The evolution of the machine age has meant machines which have "penetrated to most of the remote regions and soon almost everything that the world can produce will be available to everyone everywhere." She said that men have accepted the responsibilities for healthy body and mind. "Most circumstances once exceptional have become ordinary, now that cancer and most heart ailments have yielded as polio and tuberculosis and hundreds of other diseases have virtually disappeared long ago."

Of mental health, Sandoz wrote: "Unthinking acceptance or rejection of thing or idea, vulnerability to prejudice and superstition, mob reaction, the sudden plunge into unreason and violence, these are understood a little more clearly through the study of these deep and still not totally identified, or suspected symbols in the human mind.

Slowly, but surely, by great medical advance and by the newer explorations into this deep-lying symbolism the beds of our mental hospitals are being emptied."

Sandoz predicted that a beneficiary of these medical and scientific breakthroughs would be art. "Yet it is perhaps art, more than any other aspect of our culture, that has really profited from these new explorations. In their true expression the arts have always been rooted in the symbols common to the mind of man no matter what his degree of culture. Now, in the century of the Mind, the arts have taken on new importance, new meaning that promises very much for the future."

Given the challenges of her writing, it will be interesting to see the predictions for the next 50 years as they are compiled next year and sealed away for revelation in 2067.



Annual Sandoz Conference Set for October 14th

The *Battle of the Little Bighorn*, Mari Sandoz's last book – published after her death in 1966 – will be the theme of this year's Mari Sandoz Conference on October 14 in Chadron. The conference, to be held at the Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center on the Chadron State College campus, is later this year because of scheduling conflicts. Sandoz used her unique story-telling skills to explore the mindset and experiences of George Armstrong Custer and his compatriots during the era of the Indian Wars. Conference sessions address: Sandoz's contribution to this well studied topic; the experiences of his family members; the worldviews of his Native American adversaries; the legacy of Custer from a multi-ethnic standpoint. Registration and morning sessions will be held at the Sandoz Center beginning with registration at 8:30 am (MST). A noon luncheon will be held at the college Student Center and afternoon sessions will resume at the center. The Conference is open to interested parties, but registration is required. The Pilster Lecture, on Thursday, October 13, is free and open to the public. When Sandoz enthusiasts gather, the discussion is always lively. Although scholars might present some sessions, this is not a scholarly symposium. Anyone who enjoys reading and wants to learn more about the author, her books and the topic is welcome. The one-day format allows for interaction with other attendees and with the speakers. One of the popular sessions, the round-tables, discusses a book written by Mari Sandoz. Each year, the committee suggests reading, re-reading or brushing up on a specific book, but participants are welcome to listen as well. Through this event, the Sandoz Society fulfills its vision to perpetuate and foster an understanding of the works of Mari Sandoz; and to honor the land and the people about which she wrote: Native Americans, ranchers, farmers and the people who settled the High Plains. So come, put on your jeans and boots and learn with us. The day begins with the basics, a discussion of "Indian Wars 101: Mari Sandoz and the Fog of War." The speaker is Kent Blansett from the University of Nebraska at Omaha. The session chair is Matthew Rama, Lakota Language Initiative Director, Thunder Valley CDC, Pine Ridge, SD. "Draft by Draft: The Battle of Sandoz & Her Big Horn Manuscript," will be delivered by Sandoz Board Member and Blansett's wife, Elaine Nelson, also from the University of Nebraska at Omaha. The session chair is Kathleen Kirsch, Chadron State College. Sandoz Board Member Dan McGlynn of Omaha will discuss the good Custer, "Tom Custer: In The Shadow of A Giant." Session chair is Christopher Steinke,

Sandoz Society Board Member, Department of History, University of Nebraska-Kearney. The noon luncheon will be held at the Chadron State College Student Center and feature presentation of the 2016 In The Spirit of Mari Sandoz Award, the Sandoz Scholar, networking and conversation. Conference sessions resume at the Sandoz Center at 1:45 pm (MST) with a panel discussion on "Teaching Custer." Panelists: Drew Folk, Oklahoma State University; Matthew Rama, Lakota Language Initiative Director, Thunder Valley CDC; Pine Ridge, SD, Shannon Smith, Wyoming Humanities Council, Laramie, Wyoming; will discuss George Armstrong Custer, a familiar name and a controversial figure 150 years after his death. Custer is celebrated as an Indian fighter, decried as an ineffective commander, and villainized as a part of the colonial occupation of Native American lands. The panel, moderated by Sandoz Society Board Member Kinley Hadden of Gordon, will explore the mythology, current attitudes, and lasting impacts of his presence on the Great Plains and address how educators approach that legacy. "Native Lens on the Battle of the Greasy Grass" will be the final panel of the day. A panel of Native Americans will address the issue and provide a unique perspective on what is also known as the Battle of Little Bighorn in 1876. Eight years earlier, the United States made a treaty with the Sioux Nation that confined them to a reservation and promised that the sacred Black Hills would forever be part of the reservation and closed to white settlement. In 1874, Custer led an expedition that verified the presence of rich gold deposits there and prospectors began to trespass on Indian land and stake illegal claims. In the summer of 1876, the U.S. Army deployed troops to the Black Hills to trap a group of roaming Sioux and force them back to the reservation. Custer's Seventh Cavalry and his Crow Indian allies were to coordinate operations. But on the morning of June 25, Custer found an Indian village and decided to attack on his own. The cavalry was overwhelmed and more than 200 troops, including Custer, were killed in what many called Custer's Last Stand. Donovin Sprague and Guss Yellow Hair will be our panelists. Sandoz Board Member Holly Boomer, Colorado Northwestern Community College, Rangely, Colorado, will moderate the session.

**The Mari Sandoz Heritage Society
would like to thank the Dawes
County Travel Board for their
sponsorship of this event.**



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