

NEWS RELEASE

Legends of the Old West: theme of the 26th annual Kalamazoo Living History Show™

March 17-18, 2001

Annual event to attract interest from all over the Midwest

More than 8,000 re-enactors from the French and Indian through the Civil War, history buffs, collectors and the general public from 18 States and Canada are expected to attend Yankee Doodle Muzzle Loaders' 26th annual **Kalamazoo Living History Show™**. The juried, nationally recognized show is scheduled for Saturday and Sunday, March 17-18, 2001, at the Kalamazoo County Fairgrounds, 2900 Lake Street, Kalamazoo, Michigan. The show attracts over 270 of the finest craftsman and dealers of pre-1890 living history supplies and related crafts from throughout the United States.

The Kalamazoo Living History Show™ was created in 1976 to bring history alive and entertain as well as educate the general public to some of the most fascinating times in our history. Each year the focus of the show changes allowing various historical re-enactment groups, organizations and individuals, dressed in period clothing, the opportunity to host the show and share their knowledge and enthusiasm of history with all of us.

This years show will spotlight *"Legends of the Old West."* Join us as Michael and Leslie Dotson, Gary Foreman and Don Reeves share their expertise about the Old West.

- **"Buffalo Bill: Lives & Legends"** with Michael Dotson, Living History Interpreter
- **"Which Came First, The Cowboy or His Clothing"** with Don Reeves, Curator of Cowboy Collections, National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum
- **"American Cowgirl: Side or Astride"** with Leslie Dotson, Tippecanoe County Historical Association
- **"American Cowboy: Image Versus Tradition"** with Don Reeves, Curator of Cowboy Collections, National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum
- **"Legends of the Old West"** with Gary Foreman, Director of "The Real Cowboy: Portrait of an American Icon," a Production for the History Channel
- **"Panning for Gold"** - A Program for School Age Children

About the speakers:

Michael Dotson....."Buffalo Bill: Lives & Legends"

Michael Dotson of Brookston, Indiana is by avocation a woodsman and by vocation a teacher. Influenced by Roy Rogers and Gene Autry shoot-em-ups, Mike "...grwew up a dreamin' of bein' a cowboy...." Married to Leslie Martin of West Lafayette, Indiana, who owned four horses, introduced him to western horesmanship and equestrian training. Spending time at the BSR Ranch in Idaville, Indiana, fulfilled the cowboy requirement of punchin' Longhorns.

Living with their four rescued horses, several cats and Makwa, a Newfoudland, Mike and Leslie make their 11 1/2 acre, Spotted Pony Ranch, a Western oasis on the Indiana prairie. Michael boasts of a research library of several thousand books on subjects ranging from Woodland and Plains Indian Cultures, North American Fur Trade, Cowboys, Western Artists, the legendary William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody as well as an impressive collection of Lewis and Clark Expedition materials.

An Accomplished artist, Mike's works have appeared as illustrations and covers for numerous books and magazines. Besides working in the field of education, Mike is co-owner, tailor, and "tent boy" for the Chien Noir Trading Company.

"Buffalo Bill: Lives & Legends." Saddle up and ride the trails of long ago with historian Michael Dotson as he backtracks the lives and legends of the one and only William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody. William F. Cody, know worldwide as "Buffalo Bill", was a genuine American hero and legend. Born in Iowa and raised on the turbulent Kansas frontier, Cody began living the legend at a early age.

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Plainsman, scout, buffalo hunter, actor and showman best describe Cody. As he grew in popularity, so grew the myths and legends about him. Was he the consummate scout and Indian fighter so revered by military men like Carr, Forsyth, Custer and Miles? What's the real story behind his famous nickname? How did he contribute to our vision of America's Wild West? Find out the answers to these questions and much more as Michael Dotson, historian, re-enactor, and consummate scout rides the backtrail with Buffalo Bill.

Don Reeves.....“Which Came First, The Cowboy or His Clothing”

In 1979, Don Reeves became associated with the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum (formerly known as the National Cowboy Hall of Fame and Western Heritage Center), located in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. In 1997, he achieved his current standing as Curator of Cowboy Collections and became responsible for the cowboy artifacts and ranching heritage presentations. In 2000 he was named McCasland Chair for Cowboy Culture at the museum. “The American Cowboy Gallery,” an 8,000 square foot exhibition in the new West Wing, is just one of the many exhibitions for which he is responsible.

Don earned a Master of Arts degree in Anthropology from the University of Oklahoma in 1977. His list of publications include such titles as “Bringing the Law to the West” and “Native American Cowboys-Riding for the Tribal Brand”. He recently served as a historical consultant for a two hour documentary film, “The Real Cowboy: Portrait of an American Icon,” which was produced for the History Channel and premiered June 3, 2000. Through his training and background, Don brings with him a rich background in the heritage and culture of the American Cowboy.

“Which Came First, The Cowboy or His Clothing.” Traditional clothing of American cowboys reflected both their outdoor lifestyle and cultural background. On the Great Plains, the majority of these young men came from the eastern United States or Europe, and this showed in the style of their wool clothing. The Hispanic heritage of many ranches in California resulted in low-crown hats, short coats, and pants worn open below the knee.

By the 1890's commercial products like Stetson hats and Levi Strauss denim “overalls” were marketed specifically for the working cowboy. The hats were made stiffer, with fine hair felt, to hold their shape in the wind and rain. Heavy seams and copper rivets reinforced denim work pants. Custom boot makers also modified their products to suit the cowboy's needs. The toe was rounded, the heel raised, and softer tops were decorated according to the size of the cowboy's wallet. Many young men first arriving in the West would have photographs made in western dress to send home to their relatives.

As the image of the “cowboy” grew so did his wardrobe. The popularity of rodeo champions and western movie stars transformed the work clothing of cowboys into western fashion. Ten gallon hats, embroidered shirts, and brightly colored boots are recognized world wide as distinctly cowboy in origin. Don will also be presenting the session **“American Cowboy: Image Versus Tradition”** (see page 3 for program description).

Leslie Dotson.....“American Cowgirl: Side or Astride”

Leslie Dotson has ridden the range since she was old enough to get up on the horse at Smitty's Supermarket. She got her first horse in the 5th grade, a fearless steed named Pokey, and has owned horses continuously for 30 years. She has enjoyed having many different breeds, including Quarter Horses, thoroughbreds, Appaloosas, Paints, Palominos, and, of course, “mutts”. She hasn't bought a horse in years as she adopts and rescues abuse cases and horses that need re-homing. She enjoys going to rodeos, although she has not participated in one intentionally, that is. She enjoys reading about the cowgirl life and the history of cowgirls and tack.

Leslie has been associated for 25 years with the Tippecanoe County Historical Association in Lafayette, Indiana, where she is coordinator of the Midwest's largest historical festival, “Feast of the Hunters' Moon”. She is also co-owner and buyer for Chien Noir Trading Company, which is geared toward making and selling historic reproductions for historical re-enactors.

“American Cowgirl: Side or Astride.” Join Leslie Dotson, historian, re-enactor, and horsewoman as she explores the Old West through the eyes of the American Cowgirl. Learn from first-hand accounts about the hard life of the early American West's ranch wives, cattle queens, and unknown heroines.

“Cowboy-girls” roped longhorns, rode broncs, and mended fences along with their male counterparts. However, their saddles and tack, clothing and gear reflected more femininity than the cowboy's trappings. In an era when most women were content with tea parties and quilting bees, teaching school or housewifing, the American Cowgirls were years ahead in the equality movement. Humorist Will Rogers coined the term “Cowgirls” and the name has stuck like a bur under the saddle.

Don Reeves.....“American Cowboy: Image Versus Tradition”

(For bio information on Don Reeves, see “Which Came First, The Cowboy or His Clothing,” page 2.)

“American Cowboy: Image Versus Tradition.” The central character of American's colorful ranching heritage is called a cowboy or vaquero, buckaroo, or drover, depending upon his ancestry and locale. Ranch work required good riding and roping skills. Though daily chores tended to be more mundane than heroic, the cowboy's knowledge of cattle and this ability as a horseman set him apart from the miners, farmers, and other laborers on the frontier.

The working cowboy took pride in this distinction, and his equipment reflected that pride. Throughout the world, the distinctive hat, spurs, and boots of the cowboy have become icons of the American West.

The movie cowboy has long filled the public imagination with visions of gallant men riding the range and righting wrongs. There have been a series of these cinema cowboy heroes and heroines throughout the last one hundred years. So popular were these fictional cowboys that the line between the real and the imaginary cowboy has been permanently blurred in the public mind.

Gary Foreman.....“Legends of the Old West”

Gary has performed on both sides of the camera on many historical and educational projects. He was recruited as a private historical consultant, actor and stunt man for the 1991 feature film **“The Last of the Mohicans”**. He worked as a scholar on the A&E Biography series, as well as producer and historical advisor for The History Channel’s presentation of **“The American Revolution.”** He also produced and directed a documentary special on Custer, **“Betrayal at Little Big Horn”**. Some of Gary’s other productions for the History Channel include **“Frontier: Legends of the Old Northwest”** and **“Frontier: The Decisive Battles”** (a series of one-hour episodes focusing on the 18th and early 19th Century, a time when the American territory ended at the Mississippi). **“The Real Cowboy: Portrait of an American Icon,”** which premiered on the History Channel, June 3, 2000, is among Gary’s most recent accomplishments.

“Legends of the Old West” Gary will be presenting one program each day on legends of the old West including sneak previews of his newest production for the History Channel, **“Boone and Crocket: Hunter – Heroes.”**

A Program for School Age Children.....“Panning for Gold”

Throughout the show, children of school age will be given the opportunity to participate in the “Gold Rush.” After viewing a short film on the technique of panning for gold, participants will be given the opportunity to try their skill for the real thing. A special certificate along with the gold from their claim will be awarded to those fortunate enough to strike it rich at the “Lost Dutchman Mine.”

Over the years, the **Kalamazoo Living History Show™** has grown to be the largest juried event of its kind in the Midwest devoted to pre-1890 original or reproduction living history supplies and related crafts. Of special interest to the whole family, craftspersons dressed in period clothing will be demonstrating various 18th and 19th Century crafts. Turn back the clock and relive America’s days gone by. Visit with people that make history come alive! A show where historical re-enactors in period fashions from Pre-Revolutionary through the Civil War, history buffs and the general public come together for a festive weekend to buy, sell and trade. Anyone attending the show dressed in pre-1890 style clothing will be eligible for a drawing on a 4 point Witney Blanket at the close of the show each day.

The 26th Annual **Kalamazoo Living History Show™** is open to the general public Saturday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Admission is \$5.00. Children 12 years of age and under admitted free when accompanied by a parent. No strollers or cameras allowed.

For more information about the **Kalamazoo Living History Show™**, contact Larry L. Coin, Show Chairperson, P.O. Box 453, Portage, MI 49081, or telephone (616) 327-4557.

FUTURE SHOW DATES

March 16-17, 2002 • March 15-16, 2003 • March 20-21, 2004

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