

Stepping Out of Bounds in Billings on the Swords Rimrock Trail  
20<sup>th</sup> AVA Biennial Convention  
By Sherry Sayers

Our third convention walk in Billings will be on Friday June 9<sup>th</sup>, high above the city on the Rimrock Trail. Billings is well-known for its sandstone bluffs surrounding the city, which are known as the Rimrocks. Local residents call them the “Rims,” and we will be walking a portion of them on the Swords Trail. These rims are estimated to be 700 million years old and stretch from Columbus to Miles City. They range in height from 200 to 500 feet. Portions of the Rims in Billings are reported to have been Indian scaffold burials.

We will start at the Boothill Cemetery, an historic site that tells the interesting story of the now defunct town of Coulson, Montana. According to local lore, the Boothill Cemetery is the burial ground of Coulson, the rough cow town that preceded Billings that existed from 1877 to 1885. The site has burials as early as 1854 and it is said most of the people buried here passed away while wearing their boots, thus the name. Most of the gravesites contain unknowns, but the most popular burial is Muggins Taylor, who is known for being the scout that carried the news of Custer’s Last Stand to the world.

We will then proceed up the hill (yes, we have to go UP!) to the Rims. We are hoping to stop at Luther “Yellowstone” Kelly’s gravesite. He was a hunter and trapper in eastern Montana for many years. His real-life adventures have inspired several frontier and Old West magazine articles and advertisements, trading cards, a number of books, and even a Hollywood movie starring Clint Walker. Luther was also an author, a veteran of three wars, a trader, and a key player in scouting and taming the Wild West. There is even a Facebook page dedicated to his memory! His friends included Gen. Nelson A. Miles, who participated in the campaign that scoured the Northern Plains after Lt. Col. George Armstrong Custer's defeat at the Battle of Little Big Horn, and for whom Miles City, Montana is named; “Buffalo Bill” Cody, and President Teddy Roosevelt. Luther retired to California and died there in 1928, but his final wishes were to be buried in Montana and the Billings Chamber facilitated that wish by financing it. After numerous acts of vandalism at his grave site throughout the years, they are currently working to create the Yellowstone Kelly Interpretive Site, which we are hoping will be finished by the time of our walk.

Once we are up on the Rims, the trail will level out, and the views will be breathtaking. You can see five mountain ranges from the trail (Pryor, Big Horn, Snowy, Crazy and Beartooth). It is an out-and-back trail, but the views will be totally different, as on the way out looking toward the west, you will be able to see downtown Billings all the way out past the Yellowstone River, and on the way back, you will see some of the refineries that provide much of the work in Billings, as well as MetraPark, which is the largest event center in Montana. Concerts, rodeos, dog shows, car shows, trade shows, and much more are easily accommodated with its 10,000 seat arena, 6,500 seat grandstand, 77,400 sq.ft expo center, 28,800 sq.ft pavilion, as well as the Montana Rodeo Hall of Fame.

Be sure to take your time up on the Rims and converse with friends, old and new, on this high above-the-city adventure.