

Local author will speak on 150 year-old Hungate family massacre



Flo Tonelli

He may be a philosopher, historian, college professor, author, and an animated story teller, but Jeff Broome is really just a kid at heart.

Growing up his favorite game was cowboys and Indians, his favorite movies and television programs, Westerns. As he grew up he read everything he could on the West and became extremely interested in the heroes and villains of the Indian Wars. His serendipitous reading through Western history books has taken him on an unexpected life journey.

“I wanted to know everything,” he said, and remarkably Broome seems to remember stories from every book he ever read. His expressive story-telling reflects the enthusiasm of the boy that’s still inside. A sought after speaker, he’ll often wear his blonde buckskin jacket to speaking events. The jacket is an exact replica right down to Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer’s buttons.

The more Broome read, the more he realized the battles between United States troops and the plains Indians started in Colorado, Kansas and Nebraska and climaxed at the Battle of Little Big Horn.

A fifth generation Coloradan, Broome graduated from Arapahoe High school and received a master’s degree in philosophy from Baylor. For several years, he worked as a chaplain and director of adult rehab for The Salvation Army and for four years was the detention counselor at the Arapahoe County Jail. He began teaching philosophy at Arapahoe Community College and received his Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Colorado in 1998. Twenty-seven years later, he is the longest tenured faculty member at ACC.

To gather information for his books, articles and presentations, Broome travels to Washington to research files in the National Archives and treks the open fields of the West with a metal detector searching for artifacts. He’s published two books from his Western research. His first, *Dog Soldier Justice* published in 2003 has been recognized by the University of Nebraska as a “Bison Book,” meaning it has been designated a Western History classic. He also published *Custer into the West* and dozens of journal and magazine articles including one on the 7th Calvary and Wild Bill Hickok recently published in “Wild West” magazine. Broome is working simultaneously on three additional books. The one closest to completion is *The Denver Road: Indian Raids along the Trails to Denver, 1864-1869*.

Broome, who lives in the southwest foothills, will tell a story that's closer to home on January 31 to Roxborough Historic Society's members and guests. He'll describe an event that took place near Elizabeth on June 11, 1864. The account has fascinated and repelled people since it occurred almost 150 years ago. Twenty-nine-year-old Nathan Hungate and his wife, Ellen, along with their two young daughters were scalped and horribly mutilated by Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians. Neighbors brought the remains to Denver where they were placed on public display. Coloradans quickly rose up in anger toward the Indians and demanded reprisal. Many historians believe that event was the catalyst that led to the Sand Creek massacre later that fall.

Broome challenges that idea in his book-in-progress, *The Denver Road*. In it, he places much of the blame on several Indian raids on the Platte Road in Nebraska. More than fifty pioneers were killed during a short period in August. His theory is that those travesties, along with the Hungate murders, triggered the revenge killing of many innocents at Sand Creek.

Broome will speak at the Roxborough Community Center, 6237 Roxborough Drive, at 7 p.m. on January 31 and will sign copies of his books for those interested in purchasing them. The public is invited but seating is limited. To make a reservation or for more information, contact roxhistory@msn.com or aftonelli@comcast.net