

FIRST DRAFT

Silent Tom Smith had good reason to keep his past secret

In her 2001 book "Seabiscuit, an American Legend," Laura Hillenbrand re-introduced the American public to a man who had been well-known in the 1930s: Silent Tom Smith.

He was a horse trainer extraordinaire, a cowboy, hunter, ranch foreman and a convicted cattle rustler.



BOB SILBERNAGEL

That last part didn't make it into Hillenbrand's book. But his trial and those of his colleagues were reported in detail in The Daily Sentinel.

Smith was a native of Georgia who arrived in Colorado as a young man. As the 19th century ended, Hillenbrand wrote, Smith "rode out of the wilderness and into Grand Junction, Colorado ... He and his horse strayed onto the vast continuity of Colorado's Unaweep Cattle Range. He had heard that a ranch needed a foreman. He won the job and stayed for twenty years."

Well, not quite 20 years. Smith was the foreman for at least six years — 1907-1913 — of the ranch known as the Unaweep Cattle Range. It was owned in part by Dan Casement, whose father had made a fortune helping to build the Union Pacific Railroad.

The ranch's letterhead in 1907-08 listed R.T. Smith — Robert Thomas Smith — as agent.

Daily Sentinel articles indicate Casement and Smith had a falling out in the summer of 1913, and Smith was fired.

On Dec. 7, 1913, 24 head of Casement's cows were stolen, and according to court testimony, they were trailed from Unaweep Canyon through Bangs Canyon and into Grand Junction, where they were sold to meat packer Clyde Shropshire.

Through Grand Junction attorney Ben Griffith, Casement began pushing for a grand jury.

That occurred early in 1914 and in March, Smith was indicted for cattle theft, along with local cowboys Ira Mock and John Dowling. Shropshire was indicted for receiving stolen goods. Two other men, the Gordon brothers, were indicted for stealing three cows and calves from another rancher.

When the indictments were handed down, the Sentinel noted that Smith "was formerly foreman of the Casement ranch but resigned last summer. He is well known as a rider of bad horses as well as a bear hunter. His arrest caused a decided surprise."

But this wasn't Smith's first brush with the law. In 1908, he went to court for allegedly stealing a calf from another Unaweep Canyon rancher. After the trial, he wrote to his boss, Casement, "I came out all O.K."

Smith, Mock and Dowling went to trial in October 1914 for the theft of the Casement cattle. Shropshire's trial was held in January 1915. In an autobiography he wrote in 1944, Casement said the trials marked the first convictions ever for cattle theft in Mesa County.

"The community in general

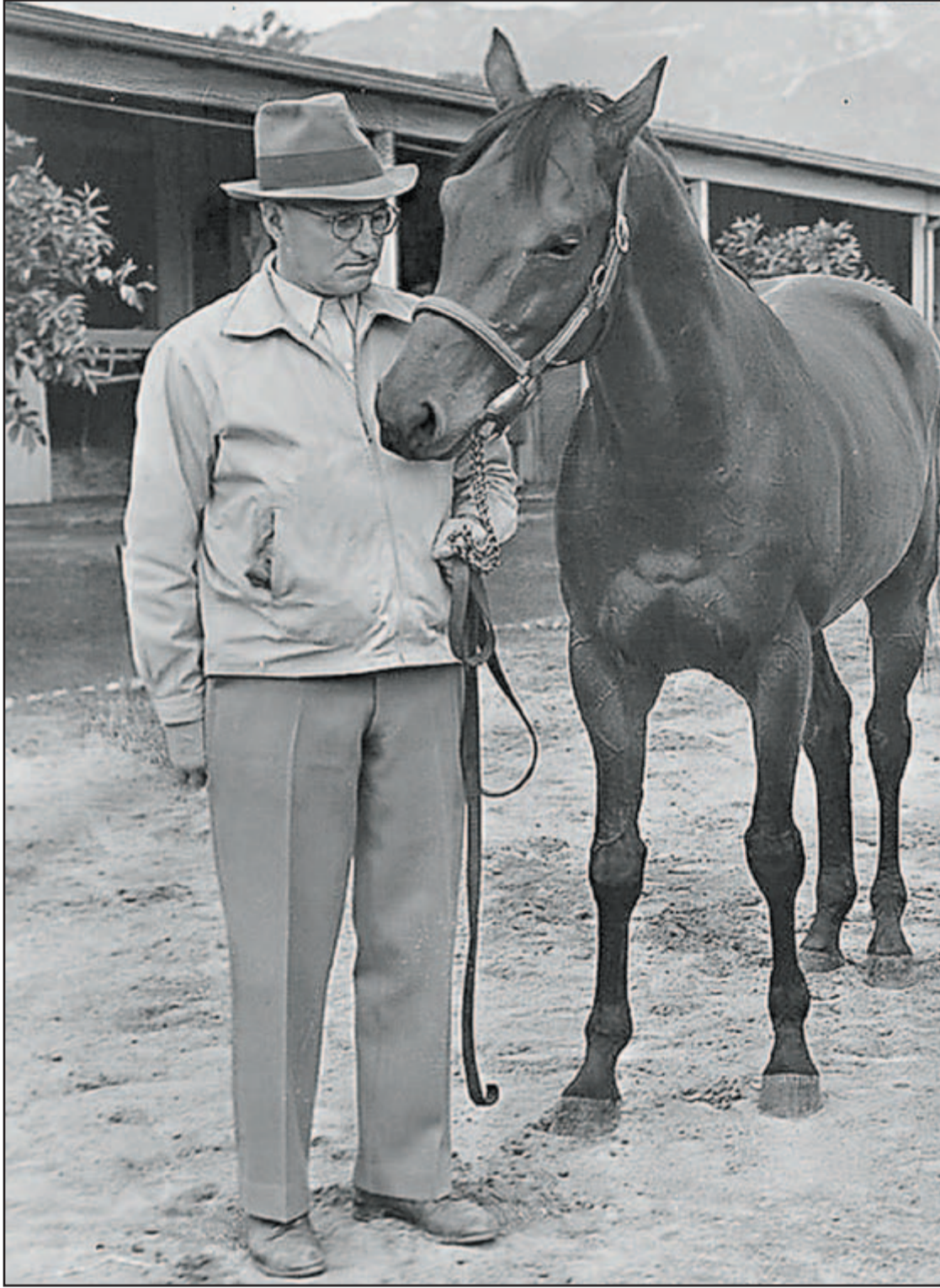


PHOTO IN PUBLIC DOMAIN

Tom Smith with Seabiscuit, the horse he took to the top of the racing world. In 1907-1913, Smith was the foreman of a ranch known as the Unaweep Cattle Range. He was convicted of cattle rustling.

was singularly indifferent to a condition which threatened its prosperity and undermined its moral standing and self-respect," he wrote. He also said the trial "brought out many dramatic incidents."

Among those incidents was testimony that "Neverslip" winter horseshoes like those belonging to Tom Smith provided distinctive tracks for authorities to follow the rustlers.

William Chelf, the star witness according to the Sentinel, reported seeing Smith, Dowling and Mack trailing cattle through Bangs Canyon on Dec. 8.

But Chelf's integrity was questioned by several witnesses, and letters sent to Casement by Griffith suggest that early in 1914, Chelf was willing to sell his testimony to the highest bidder. Casement refused to pay.

The defense produced witnesses who said Smith and Dowling participated in a cattle roundup Dec. 8-10 on Cactus Park, while Mock was in Fruita Dec. 7-9.

Smith also testified "that the real reason" Casement had fired him was that Smith and his wife and brother had

homesteaded on public land previously used by Casement.

The alibis weren't enough for Smith and Dowling. They were convicted of the thefts and each sentenced to one to three years in prison. Mock was acquitted, as were the two Gordon brothers. Shropshire was convicted of receiving stolen goods early in 1915.

How much of the sentence Smith served and what he did afterward is unclear.

Census data from 1920 shows him living in De Beque then, at the age of 41, with his occupation listed as farm manager. Smith then was listed as being married to his wife, Janet.

But by the time he was making it big in the racing world, she was not with him. During the 1920s, he worked for a traveling Wild West show as horse trainer.

By the early 1930s, he had drifted to the racing scene in Tijuana, Mexico. There he met Charles Howard, the man who eventually bought Seabiscuit and took him — with Smith's horse-training ability — to the top of the racing world.

In addition to the sources



The book "Seabiscuit: The man speaking in the photo is owner Charles Howard, not Tom Smith.

listed, information in this article came from Dan Casement documents on file at the Morse Department of Special Collection at Kansas State University. Thanks, also, to Marie Tipping for her assistance.

Email Bob Silbernagel at bobsilbernagel@gmail.com.

2015 THIS WEEK IN THE LEGISLATURE

DENVER — On Wednesday, the Legislature's Joint Budget Committee will receive the all-important revenue forecast, on which the following year's annual spending plan is based. The big news to look for is whether revenues for the current fiscal year, which ends June 30, will exceed revenue limits under the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights, triggering a refund to taxpayers.

■ **Today:** The Senate State, Veterans & Military Affairs Committee will hear SB91, a bill introduced by Sen. Ray Scott, R-Grand Junction, to cut in half the eight-year time builders must hold insurance to cover construction defects.

■ **Tuesday:** The Senate Local Government Committee will debate HB1008, a measure to allow agricultural land to retain that designation under property tax assessments after a natural disaster, when the land temporarily can't be used for crops or grazing.

■ **Wednesday:** The House State,

Veterans & Military Affairs Committee will hear HB1237 to require prepaid postage to be on all mail-in ballots.

■ **Thursday:** The House Business Affairs & Labor Committee will hear three measures, HB1276, HB1274 and HB1231, which are part of a bipartisan package of workforce development measures. The bills center on workforce training, career pathways for students and enhanced unemployment benefits.

■ **Next week:** With the March revenue forecast in hand, the six-member bipartisan Joint Budget Committee will begin to finalize its figure setting for all state agencies.

All floor action and committees can be watched or heard on the Legislature's website at www.leg.state.co.us. Check that website to see which measures are available for remote testimony, and how to register to speak.

— Charles Ashby

Symphony accepting used band instruments for school programs

THE SENTINEL STAFF

Reminding residents in the fictional town of River City, Iowa, about the power a few trumpets had on the fabled walls of Jericho, professor Harold Hill explained how children at the turn of the last century could be saved from temptation by the redeeming influence of music.

None would be able to resist "the glitter of crashing cymbals, the thunder of rolling drums, (and) the shimmer of trumpets," Hill told a crowd gathered in the first act of Meredith Wilson's play, "The Music Man."

More than 60 years later, the electric thrill generated by "76 Trombones" is still enjoyed by nearly all who hear it. Without the brass and timpani, however, there can be no music or chance at redemption.

That's why Bringing Music to Life, a new nonprofit organization, is asking Coloradans to donate gently used band and orchestra instruments at any one of 17 locations around the state, including the Grand Junction Symphony office, 414 Main St.

Donations will be taken from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through

Friday until March 28 when the drive ends, according to a news release.

"This program positively impacts local students and helps keep the arts alive in Colorado," spokeswoman Lauren Cameron wrote in an email to The Daily Sentinel.

Studies show music improves a student's listening skills, creative thinking, self-discipline, self-esteem and team spirit, according to Steve Blatt, founder and executive director of Bringing Music to Life.

Donated instruments will be repaired and awarded to deserving school music programs at the beginning of the 2015-2016 school year, said Cameron, a manager at Colorado Public Radio, which is promoting the drive.

Cash donations are also being accepted to offset the cost of repairing and refurbishing the instruments, Blatt said.

Title I schools with a majority of students receiving free or reduced-cost lunches are encouraged to apply for instruments now through March 31. Download the application and learn about the program at bringmusic.org.

The Daily Sentinel (ISSN 1445-8962)
Published every morning at 734 S. Seventh Street, Grand Junction, CO 81501.
Periodical Postage paid at Grand Junction, CO.
Carrier home delivery prices: 13 weeks - \$45.89, 26 weeks - \$86.84, 52 weeks - \$150.80.
Weekend delivery packages: Wednesday thru Sunday - \$140.40, Friday thru Sunday - \$93.60, Saturday & Sunday - \$59.80, Sunday only - \$59.80.
Weekend delivery includes the following dates in 2015: Nov 26.
Single Copy: \$.75 daily and \$1.50 Sunday.
Mail (USPS): \$5.00 per week, \$260.00 per year. *POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Daily Sentinel, P.O. Box 668, Grand Junction, CO 81502.

Attention Dare to Care Auto Customers It's March Madness!
Plus anyone else who likes saving money on car maintenance and repairs
If you would like to take advantage of the unbeatable savings from this year's Savings Plan, make sure you sign up by April 1st. Remember, you're always welcome at Dare to Care whether you choose our Plan or not. Go to daretocaregi.com or stop by our facility at 2914 North Avenue for more information.

Brown's Shoe Fit Co. Selected Men's Athletics 1/2 OFF!
"Better Shoes Since 1911"
YES, We Have... asics
Your locally owned store and remember parking in the back.
425 Main St. • 242-7690
Mon. - Fri. 9:00 - 6:00
Sat. 9:00 - 5:30
NOW OPEN SUNDAY! 11:00 - 3:00

BLOTTER COMPILED BY SENTINEL STAFF

Juvenile drinking suspected

A weapon was fired into the air Saturday in the area of 415 1/2 29 1/2 Road, creating a risk of bodily injury or death.

Juveniles contacted at the address were issued summonses on suspicion of underage consumption of alcohol and released to a parent or guardian.

According to Grand Junction Police Department:

- A false identity was used March 2 to forge payroll checks in excess of \$5,000 for personal gain.
- Shana Monter, 30, and Darby Willis, 56, were arrested March 7 at 2809 North Ave. and released on summonses on suspicion of theft of property valued at less than \$300.
- Kyle Balingit, 22, was arrested Wednesday

at 1102 Belford Ave. and released on a summons on suspicion of reckless endangerment and prohibited use of a weapon.

■ Two juvenile males, ages 14, were arrested Thursday at 2736 C Road and released on summonses on suspicion of possession of marijuana.

■ Items valued at less than \$300 were stolen from a vehicle near the 2300 block of Logos Drive on Wednesday.

■ Joel Salgado-Rodriguez, 18, and a 16-year-old female, were arrested Thursday on suspicion of shoplifting from a business at 2881 North Ave. and released on summonses.

■ Paul Lavadie, 45, was booked into Mesa County jail Thursday on suspicion of harassing and menacing with a knife and causing a person to fear for life at 1240 Ute Ave.

■ Joseph Earle, 18, and Christopher Cunningham, 19, were arrested Friday on suspi-

cion of shoplifting at 2545 Rimrock Ave. and released on summonses.

■ Daniel Brown, 29, was booked into Mesa County Jail on Friday on suspicion of shoving someone, causing alarm and causing damage to property valued at less than \$750 in the 2700 block of B 1/2 Road.

■ David Guilles, 21, was booked into Mesa County Jail on Friday on suspicion of false imprisonment and harassment in the 900 block of North Avenue.

■ Julian Galindo, 27, was arrested Sunday in the 600 block of Main Street on suspicion of striking a police officer, causing alarm and knowingly using coarse and offensive language.

■ Brian Marble, 22, was arrested Sunday at 436 Main St. on suspicion of first-degree assault and disorderly conduct, after he allegedly struck someone with a bottle, causing injury.

All contents copyright © 2015 The Daily Sentinel. All republication rights are reserved. Material in this publication may not be published, broadcast, rewritten for broadcast or publication or redistributed directly or indirectly in any medium.

HOW TO REACH US - 242-5050

CIRCULATION
Subscription and delivery questions:
242-1919 or (800) 332-5833

ADVERTISING
Retail advertising.....256-4289
Classified advertising.....242-1313

NEWSROOM
Managing editor256-4252
City desk.....256-4213

Features and entertainment.....256-4224
Sports.....256-4203
Commentary.....256-4236



We're wearing jeans for charity at The Daily Sentinel. Ask me how you can help!
we've got heart!
The employees of The Daily Sentinel have joined together to adopt a local non-profit organization/charity of the month. We want to help raise awareness and badly needed funds for these organizations that are dedicated to helping people in our community.
MARCH JEANS FOR CHARITY ORGANIZATION:
MESA COUNTY LIBRARY FOUNDATION'S DIGITAL CREATION STUDIO
The next step in the expansion and improvement of the Central Library is The Digital Creation Studio. The studio will bring the power of cutting-edge technology to library users. One of the first digital projects, Veterans Remember, will record and digitally preserve the recollections of Mesa County war veterans. The Digital Creation Studio is expected to cost \$752,500, and the Foundation seeks to raise \$200,000 toward this cost.
Please join with us and send your tax deductible donation to:
Mesa County Public Library Foundation
P.O. Box 3668, Grand Junction, CO 81502