

Henry Knox

By Bill Markley

Henry Knox would have made a great fellow Western Writer of America. In fact, I'd like to think he may be a spiritual progenitor of WWA, and we his descendents. Henry didn't venture too far west, but he did have a frontier settlement, Knoxville, Tennessee, named after him. He did love books and he did love guns—big guns, cannons. He did love his country—enough to leave everything behind including his books to fight for it. Henry rose in rank from a citizen militia member to general during the Revolutionary War and later during George Washington's administration, he became our first Secretary of War. But let me tell you one story why I like Henry and why I hope you will, too. Maybe you'll want to raise a bumper to him in a Tennessee tavern next June.

Henry Knox, born in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1750, began a lifelong self-educating process at the age of nine after his father, a shipmaster, disappeared in the Caribbean. At the outbreak of hostilities with Great Britain, Henry was the owner of Boston's popular London Book Store. Henry joined the local militia, read every military book he could get his hands on, and saw his first live-fire action in the patriot defense of Breed's Hill and Bunker Hill.

In 1775, the Continental Congress meeting in Philadelphia appointed the Virginian George Washington to lead the Continental Army surrounding the British forces bottled up in Boston. The Americans had no way to force out the British.

Ethan Allen, Benedict Arnold, and the Green Mountain Boys in May of 1775, had captured Fort Ticonderoga located in upstate New York on the southwest shore of Lake Champlain just north of Lake George. Along with

the fort, they took sixty cannons.

Upon his arrival in Massachusetts, Washington met the jovial Henry Knox and immediately liked the six-foot tall, 250-pound bookish young man. Henry had been reading up on artillery and suggested to Washington that if they could get the Fort Ticonderoga cannons and place them on the heights around Boston, they just might be able to force the Redcoats to leave. Washington liked the idea and commissioned Henry as Colonel of the Continental Regiment of Artillery although they had no cannons yet. Washington gave Henry his first mission in his new capacity: go to Fort Ticonderoga and bring back the cannons. Henry agreed without hesitation even though hauling the cannons back would be a daunting undertaking over 300 miles of snow, mud, mountains, streams, swamps, frozen rivers, and trackless wilderness.

Knox set out, reached the fort in early December, and found that Lake George was not completely frozen over so he had the men load the sixty tons of cannon onto a barge and began floating them down the thirty-two-mile length of Lake George to Fort George at its southern tip. The trip took eight days rowing against strong bitter cold headwinds. Along the way, the barge sank with all the cannons. Fortunately, it sank in shallow water and the men were able to raise the barge by bailing out the frigid water. They then resumed their journey safely landing at Fort George.

The men built forty-two sleds and found eighty head of oxen to pull the cannons toward Boston. It was rough going. They had to struggle through roadless forest, cutting down trees in order to proceed forward. In some

places, they had over two feet of snow to trudge through, and in other places, they had to muscle through deep mud. The men and oxen pulled the cannons across icy streams and through swamps.

Their route crossed the Hudson River four times on their southward journey. When Knox found the ice on the Hudson River was not solid enough to support the weight of the cannons, he had workers cut holes in the ice allowing water to gush up onto the surface, freeze, and provide more support. When the ice appeared to be thick enough, they began their crossings. One eighteen-pounder (that's the weight of the cannon ball the piece could shoot) broke through the ice creating a fourteen-foot diameter hole. It took the men and an army of volunteer workers from Albany an entire day's effort to fish out the cannon. Henry named the eighteen-pounder "The Albany" in honor of the men who helped retrieve it from its watery grave.

They still had 100 miles to go. Now their route turned east through the thick Greenwoods forest then through the roadless Berkshire Mountains. They pushed and pulled the cannons up, over, and down the mountains laden with deep snow. The men cut trees and removed obstacles to create their trail up steep slopes and down into ravines. They crossed lakes, streams and swamps. Knox wrote in his journal, "It appears to me almost a miracle that people with heavy loads should be able to get up and down such hills."

When they descended the eastern slopes to Westfield, Massachusetts, the residents refused to let the men pass insisting they first sample the town's whiskey and hard apple cider. Henry's men were soon in no condition to

travel any farther that day. In celebration, Henry fired “The Old Sow” a twenty-four-pounder for the benefit of the happy townspeople. (Note—I think some of these people may have been WWA members’ ancestors—just a hunch.)

After forty days, they arrived with the cannons outside of Boston in late January of 1776. With the Americans setting up cannons in position on the heights surrounding Boston, the British soon realized they could not defend the town and sailed away to Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Knox went on to distinguish himself in many battles during the Revolution. He improved the army’s artillery performance to the extent he has been called the father of American artillery. Washington’s French aide, the Marquise de Lafayette, wrote Knox’s artillery was “one of the wonders of the Revolution.” Years later President Washington appointed Henry Knox Secretary of War. Unfortunately, Henry died at the age of fifty-six when he choked on a chicken bone.

So when you attend the 2010 Western Writers of America conference in Knoxville, Tennessee, I hope you will remember to raise a glass to Henry and his love of books, cannons, and America.

*Bill Markley works for the South Dakota Department of Environment and Natural Resources. Bill is a Civil War and Frontier Army reenactor and has had the good fortune to be in five movies: **Dances With Wolves, Son of the Morning Star, Far and Away, Gettysburg, and Crazy Horse.** An avid journalist, Bill published one of his journals as *Dakota Epic, Experiences of a Reenactor During the Filming of Dances With Wolves.* He has written several magazine articles and is currently working on a nonfiction travel book. Bill was also a member of an Antarctic research team for two expeditions in 1972 and 1973. Bill and his wife Liz live in Pierre, South Dakota, and have two children, Becky and Chris.*

Destination: Knoxville

by Jason Stuart

The next WWA convention is just around the corner, and it is not too early to begin planning your trip to Knoxville. Located on the Tennessee River, and home to the University of Tennessee, Knoxville has a population of just fewer than 200,000, though the greater metropolitan area contains almost 700,000. Here are just a few of the area’s key attractions.

Cumberland Gap National Historical Park – central to the legend of the archetypal Western hero, Daniel Boone, and the subject of George Bingham’s famous painting, Cumberland Gap was one of the most important gateways to the West. This was the path traversed by the earliest settlers of the famed “Dark and Bloody Ground.” Only about ninety minutes from Knoxville, the park is a must-see for anyone interested in the history of America’s westward expansion. We hope to tour the park, as well as nearby Wilderness Road State Park in Virginia. For more information, go to: <http://www.nps.gov/cuga/index.htm>

Crockett Tavern Museum – the Crockett Tavern Museum in Morristown, Tennessee, takes visitors into the world of the King of the Wild Frontier himself. Though the original building has long-since burned, this accurate replica of John Crockett’s tavern was completed in 1958 on the site of the original, where young Davy spent many of his formative years. Tours last approximately one hour. We hope to have a barbecue on site. Visit the Museum’s website at <http://www.discoveret.org/crockett/index.html>

East Tennessee History Center – located in the heart of downtown, the marvelous East Tennessee History Center provides a wealth of information on the area’s history through its exhibits, and also has extensive archival collections for historical and genealogical research. The center will host our

annual book signing. Learn more at <http://www.east-tennessee-history.org/>

The SunSphere – not far from our hotel is this Knoxville landmark, built for the 1982 World’s Fair, featured in a memorable *Simpsons* episode, and recently restored with an observation deck that provides panoramic views of the city.

You can also cruise on the Tennessee River via the Star of Knoxville, an authentic paddle wheeler steamboat, or alongside it riding the Three Rivers Rambler, a rail excursion powered by a restored 1925 steam engine. <http://www.TNRiverboat.com/> or <http://www.threeriversrambler.com/>

Catch a piece of Americana as the Chicago Cubs’ AA affiliate, the Tennessee Smokies, take on the Carolina Mudcats in a five-game series from June 22 to June 26. Located just outside of town in nearby Kodak, Smokies Park gets you close to the action for an unbeatable price. Visit <http://tennessee.smokies.milb.com/index.jsp?sid=t553> for tickets or more information.

The Ramsey Plantation – a 1797 Georgian-style home originally built for early Knoxville pioneer Colonel Francis Ramsey, this house set on over a hundred acres of beautiful East Tennessee countryside has been lovingly restored and features period furnishings. See <http://www.RamseyHouse.org/index.html> for hours, directions, etc.

Between the foothills of Great Smoky Mountains National Park and North Carolina is the homeland of the Eastern Band of Cherokee, Qualla Boundary. Here visitors can experience an accurate recreation of a traditional 18th century Cherokee town, witness Cherokee artisans crafting exquisite pottery and weaving baskets in the Cherokee way, and enjoy the Museum of the Cherokee Indian, with in-depth exhibits and a superb collection of Cherokee artifacts. A bus tour to

Qualla Boundary Reservation is being planned. Visit <http://www.cherokee-nc.com/> for more information.

The Ijams Nature Center – visit this 160-acre preserve and get a taste of the area's natural habitat and wildlife. The Center boasts more than seven miles of hiking trails, including a boardwalk along the banks of the Tennessee River. <http://www.ijams.org/>

WDVX, a local listener-supported radio station dedicated to Americana, bluegrass, country, Western swing, and similar genres, is located just across the street from our hotel, in the Knoxville Visitor Center. Every weekday at noon, the station broadcasts live music, and visitors are welcome to watch the action.

James White's Fort – established in 1786 by the man who would found Knoxville a few years later, White's Fort is the most visited historical site in the city and paints a vivid picture of what life was like for the region's

first white settlers. Find out more at: <http://www.discoveret.org/jwf/index.htm>.

Cormac McCarthy is a native son of Knoxville. For fans of his tragicomic novel *Suttree*, set in the seamy underbelly of 1950s Knoxville, visit <http://web.utk.edu/~wmorgan/Suttree/suttree.htm>. Photographer Wes Morgan has traced many of the book's locations and illustrated them with contemporary images; the Web site also includes a map to many of the spots included in the novel. Another well-known Knoxville writer was James Agee. A small urban park downtown is dedicated to Agee, featuring towering magnolias, a lovely arbor, and an inscription of one of Agee's quotes: "To those who in all times have sought truth and who have told it in their art or in their living." The park can be found at the corner of Laurel Avenue and James Agee Street.

These suggestions represent just a small portion of the opportunities

Knoxville offers. See more at <http://www.knoxville.org/visitors>. Besides the chance to visit with old friends (and make new ones), we feel certain you will find plenty of reasons to attend the 2010 convention.

Make hotel reservations now at the Crowne Plaza by calling 1-877-227-6963 or visiting www.crowneplaza.com/knoxville. Be sure to mention the WWA to get the conference rate. See you in Knoxville!

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EDITOR'S SPACE *(from page 2)*

entity that provides self-publishing, for-pay editorial services, or for-pay promotional services, the entities must be wholly separate and isolated from the publishing entity. They must not share employees, manuscripts, or authors or interact in any way. For example, the publishing entity must not refer authors to any of the for-pay entities nor give preferential treatment to manuscripts submitted that were edited, published, or promoted by the for-pay entity."

The eHarlequin operation clearly crossed those lines prompting the decision by Mystery Writers of America to remove Harlequin from its approved publisher list.

In November, the Science Fiction

Writers of America also removed Harlequin from the SFWA "approved" publisher's list.

For our part, Western Writers of America allows self-published books to be entered in our Spur® Awards (and over the past 20 years more than one self-published book has been a Spur winner or finalist). Authors of self-published books may also join at the Associate Membership level of WWA. To become a full Active member, books must be published "without financial assistance of the author."

Even so, the WWA board, which planned to hold a mid-year board meeting in Albuquerque in January, was expected to discuss the eHarlequin publishing program.

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