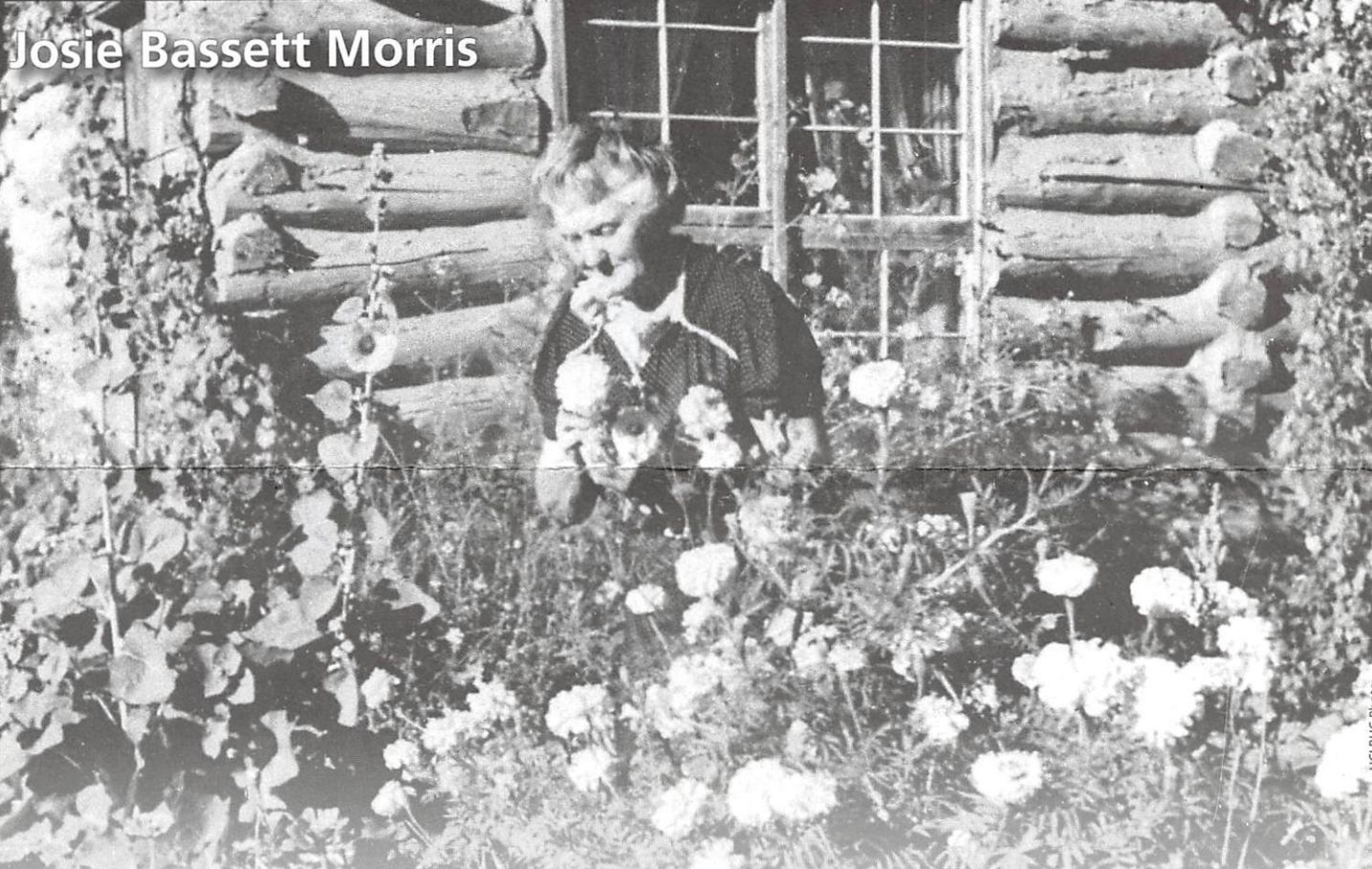




Josie Bassett Morris



Wild and dangerous, romantic and adventurous, the American West is for most people today an almost mythological world, one separated from ours by time, technology and civilization. Yet, for Josie Bassett Morris, the Wild West was a stark reality. Josie lived 50 of her 90 years in the austere, yet beautiful, landscape of her Cub Creek Ranch.

Embracing the Freedom of the Frontier

In an effort to move people into the newly acquired territory of the American West, the United States Congress passed the Homestead Act in 1862. Born in Arkansas in 1874 to educated and wealthy parents, Josie was only three years old when she and her mother—ambitious, independent, strong-willed Elizabeth—and her mild-mannered father, Herb, packed their belongings and made the journey west. They homesteaded in an area called Brown's Park, only 40 miles from the Cub Creek site that Josie homesteaded independently later in life.

As a child in Brown's Park, Josie contributed her part of the household and ranch chores. Once these duties were complete, young Josie was free to play in the surrounding wilderness with her four siblings. The children grew up having an intimacy with and dependence on the natural environment, forming values based on hard work and resourcefulness. Josie's family hosted many guests in their home, including some outlaws like Butch Cassidy, which fostered in Josie a strong sense of hospitality, generosity and community.

Challenging Cultural Norms

The women of Josie's family were not only pioneers of the west, but also represented a progressive style of womanhood. Josie married five times, and divorced four husbands in a time when divorce was very rare. With her strong will, charm and independence, Josie garnered rumors throughout most of her life. Women were respected if they could work alongside the cowhands and run an efficient ranch, yet were still expected to be feminine. Although criticized by some, Josie was admired for embracing such a remote and rugged lifestyle with poise and grace.

Here she built her own cabin and lived for over 50 years. She shared her home with her son Crawford and his wife for a time; grandchildren spent summers working and playing alongside Josie at her ranch.

With no money to buy property, Josie decided in 1913 to homestead along Cub Creek outside the town of Jensen, Utah.

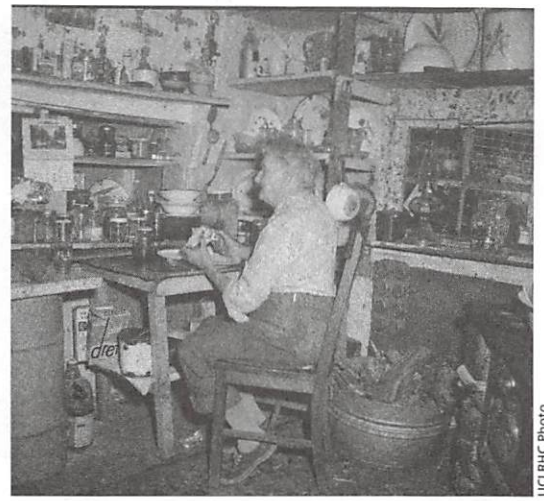


The Pioneer West in the Modern Age



UCLRH Photo

Overalls were much better suited than dresses for the variety of chores at the Cub Creek cabin.



UCLRH Photo

The now bare cabin walls were once covered by cheery wallpaper and held shelves of fine china.

Raised on the frontier, Josie lived into the modern era of electronics. For friends and acquaintances in the 1950s, Josie was a link to a world past. During Prohibition in the 1920s and into the 1930s, Josie brewed apricot brandy and chokecherry wine. After a lifetime of dressing in skirts, she switched to wearing pants in her later years. She was tried and acquitted twice

for cattle rustling when she was in her 60s. At the age of 71, in an ambitious move to revive a profitable cattle business, she deeded her land away and lost all but the five acres where her cabin still stands.

In December of 1963, the legendary Josie suffered a broken hip while at her cabin; she died of complications on June 1, 1964.

Josie's Homesite Today

Today, Josie's cabin would be considered a modest structure. It is hard to imagine this place as a hub of activity, a site where one individual poured heart and soul into endless hours of chopping wood, cooking meals, milking cows, entertaining guests, and tending the chicken coop and vegetable garden.

Take a moment to sit in the shade of the trees surrounding Josie's cabin – trees she carefully planted to provide the shade and fruit necessary for survival in a harsh environment. Walk the short trails to Box or Hog Canyon where Josie penned her livestock; the wooden fences still stand. Listen for sounds of deer or game birds that could contribute to an evening meal.

Look closely at the walls and envision a bed where Josie slept through bitter cold nights. Breathe in and imagine the rich aroma of Josie's homebrewed coffee and homemade biscuits. Envision how it would have been to be a guest at the generous hostess' table.

Imagine living in this place for over 50 years without plumbing or electricity and very few neighbors. For some, this cabin would feel uncomfortable and isolated. For Josie, it just felt like home.



Approximate floor plan -not to scale- of the current cabin, built in the 1930s, located at the end of Cub Creek Road within Dinosaur National Monument.



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