

The Unconditional Surrender of Belle Starr

The life of Myra Maybelle Shirley Starr ended February 3, 1889.

Her Hood County legend lasted slightly longer..116 years and change.

We put that to bed Monday afternoon when we found the old gal's local hide-out.

We think.

"I feel pretty confident we found the site of something," Fort Worth advertising magnate Scott Dally said.

We found the Farm Road 4 gate of the Double T Ranch. We found the bumpy dirt road, an acid test for the two pickups, Lexus SUV and Rover in the convoy. We found an ancient stagecoach stop, its rock walls and the elevated stage road. We found creeks, cacti and curious cows.

Hours later, or so it seemed, we came upon a grassy knoll. We stopped. We hiked. We glued our eyes to the ground.

We said, "Hallelujah!"

You may have read about the Belle of the Outlaw Ball in previous editions of our esteemed publication. In case you didn't, kindly allow us to refresh your memory with a few so-called facts.

Belle Starr was born February 5, 1848 to upstanding folks in Missouri. She was educated in private schools. Like many ladies on the frontier, she grew bored. In the aftermath of the Civil War, she ran off, consorted with sociopaths like the Younger brothers, and dedicated herself to a life of larceny.

She married Native American horse thief Sam Starr. She did time in Detroit, Michigan. Toward the end of her earthly stint, she took up with a colorful fowl named Blue Duck.

There are many who believe she loitered frequently in the Palo Pinto Mountains, where lawmen were loath to pursue criminals because of the traumatizing topography.

There are also many who believe Belle & Co. made a practice of visiting a segment of Hood County now occupied by Starr Hollow Ranch & Golf Club and the Double T Ranch.

Our good friend John Liles told us his father-in-law, John Moore, showed him the site of Belle's alleged dug-out several decades ago.

"We were out checking cattle in a pasture on the borderline of the Black Ranch," Mr. Liles told us for a December 18 essay, "and he (Mr. Moore) told me, 'I want to show you something.' We crawled across the fence and walked about 100 feet.

"He showed me the site. He said, 'This was one of Belle Starr's hide-outs when

John Liles (left) and Marty Leonard standing near top of Belle Starr's hide-out.

