

Out of the Archives

a newsletter from the Washington State Archives

November 2016



Whitman County Rancher Turned Hollywood Legend: Yakima Canutt

by Patrick Williams, Imaging Services Manager

This is the amazing story about a man who grew up in rural Penawawa, Whitman County Washington, competed in rodeos and eventually became a stuntman and actor during the great Western movie boom in the 1930s and 1940s.



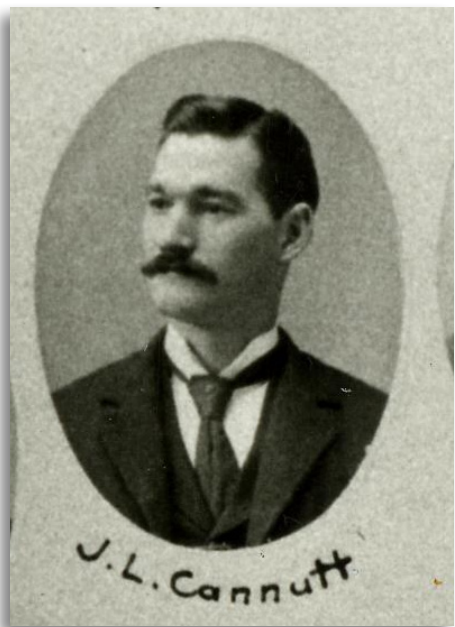
Yakima doubling for John Wayne in Stagecoach.

Enos "Yakima" Canutt was born in Whitman County in 1895 to rancher and State Representative John L. Canutt.

He learned the skill of bronco riding in the expanse of Eastern Washington ranches, competing in rodeos around the West and eventually became a world champion in 1917. Here is a photo of Enos in the 1919 Calgary Stampede courtesy of the University of Calgary Archives.



Yakima competing in 1919 Calgary Stampede rodeo. Photo courtesy of the University of Calgary Archives.



John L. Canutt's (misspelled in photo) 1897 House portrait.

His rodeo competitions eventually led him to Hollywood where he was hired to perform stunts in silent movies. He even befriended John Wayne and became an integral resource for stunts that are in historic movies like *Stagecoach*, *Spartacus*, *Gone With the Wind* and *Ben Hur*.

He has over 250 stunt credits, and over 100 acting credits working with some of the most important actors of his time. He was even recently featured on the PBS [History Detectives](#) where a saddle of his was found in Idaho and his rodeo career became a focus of their research.

Always the cowboy, he never forgot where he came from and gave back to the profession that brought him fame. He is shown in the photo on the right as the Grand Marshall at the 1983 Whitman County Fair.

He passed away in 1986 and was buried in Valhalla Memorial Park Cemetery in Hollywood, California, alongside many of early Hollywood's most famous actors. He received an honorary Academy Award in 1967, was inducted into the National Cowboy Hall of Fame in 1976, the Stuntmen's Hall of Fame, the Pro Rodeo Hall of Champions, and he has a star featured on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

