

# Homestead America

# KAYCEE,



Elisabeth (left) and Nancy competing in a local rodeo.

# Wyoming



By Elisabeth Raff and Nancy Garcia, Kaycee Elementary School. Bryna Long, Teacher

**K**aycee, Wyoming, is a dusty little town with only 250 residents that lies in the high plains fairly close to the Big Horn Mountains. Kaycee is 40 miles from the city of Buffalo and the nearest McDonald's. It is also 60 miles from Casper and the nearest Wal-Mart. It doesn't even have a stoplight! You might miss it if you blink as you drive down Interstate 25—but you would miss a lot of American culture and history here in this little town.

### Then...

Kaycee, our town on the Middle Fork of the Powder River, came into existence with the rowdy folks who came out West. Wolf hunters, rustlers, and outlaws were among the first to come through, and many of them left their mark. The first settler was John Nolan, owner of the KC Ranch. Back then, Kaycee was nothing more than a large ranch.

The first homesteaders were ranchers and simple folks. The original plan was to first build a blacksmith shop, but the local cowboys thought otherwise. Thus, we got two saloons instead. Later, a post office, bank, blacksmith shop, livery stable, and general store were established.

Wild and rough outlaw gangs ran loose all over the area. The notorious Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid led a gang alternately known as the "Wild Bunch," the "Hole in the Wall Gang," or the "Train Robbers Syndicate." Their hideout was located about 10 miles south-southwest of present-day Kaycee. The gang was hardly feared by local people, though. Many townspeople were good friends with members of the gang, meeting up with them to play poker or pool.

The shooting of Nick Ray and Nate Champion was the major event that gave Kaycee a permanent place in history. They were

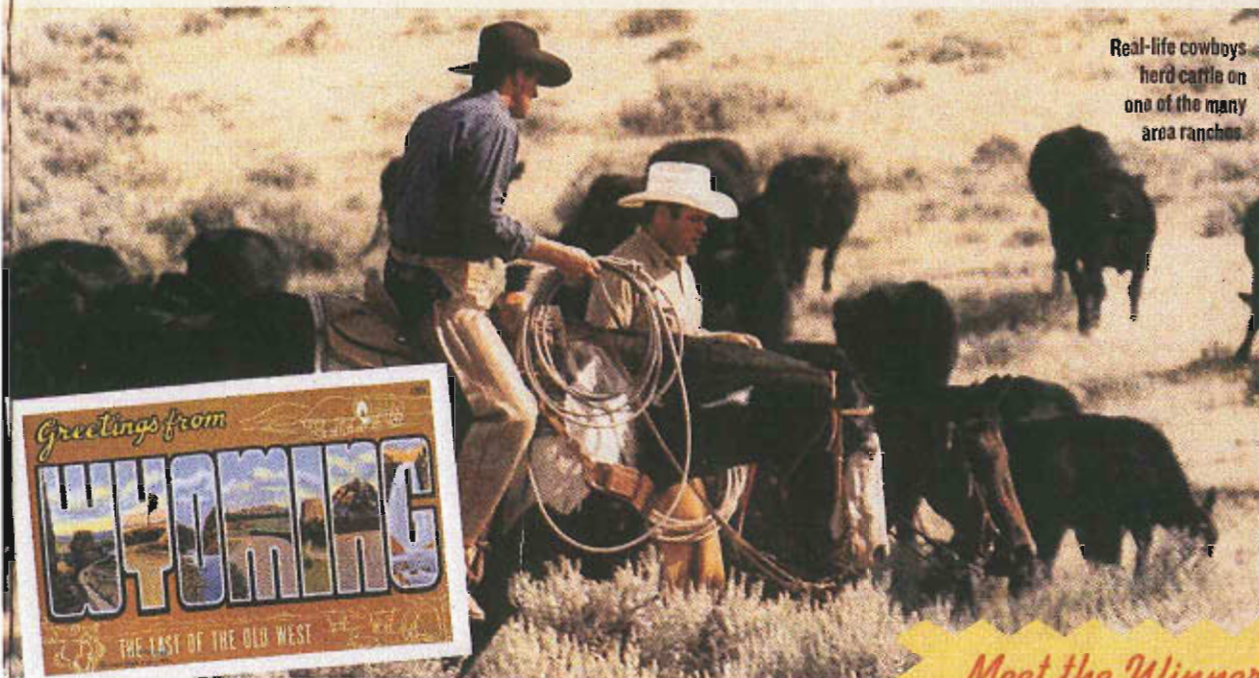
shot by the infamous "invaders" sent by the major cattle barons to destroy the small ranchers who were accused of **rustling** (stealing) cattle. This was one of the most famous of all the shootings by the invaders. In many ways, Kaycee hasn't changed much since the days of invaders and outlaws.

### Now...

We have tamed down a bit, but our culture and lifestyles are still centered around cattle and sheep. We no longer rustle cattle, but most of us are still ranchers who raise cattle and sheep.

Many cowboys and cowgirls rodeo. In fact, more National Finals Rodeo bronc riders, including Chris LeDoux, have come from Kaycee than anywhere else.

Two famous events in Kaycee are the "Deke" and the Shepherders Rodeo. The Deke Latham Memorial PRCA (Professional Rodeo Cowboy Association) Rodeo is open only to



Real-life cowboys herd cattle on one of the many area ranches

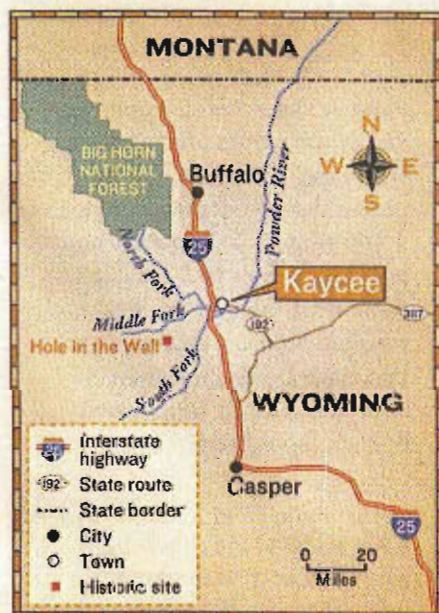
professional rodeo cowboy athletes. The Deke always has a barbeque, street dance, art show, poetry ball, and parade accompanying the two-day festival.

The Shepherders Rodeo was brought to Kaycee by fun-loving Basque shepherders. [The

Basques come from the Pyrenees, where they live on both sides of the border between France and Spain.] The rodeo in Kaycee has events ranging from sheep riding to sheep roping and is open to everyone.

It is great growing up in a tiny town like Kaycee, because you know everybody in the community. If you call the wrong phone number, you have a 99 percent chance of getting somebody you know. If you finish high school here, your graduating class is unlikely to have more than 14 people. You don't have to try out to play sports because there are often just enough players for a team, with few in reserve.

If you were to stop in to get a cup of coffee at the general store, you would definitely get an old-fashioned welcome. Kaycee is the perfect picture of a small Western cowboy town. **JS**



## Meet the Winners

What is most interesting about your hometown? In our November 10, 2003, issue, we asked you to tell us. And you did! Hundreds of students sent us reports about their hometown.

We promised to publish the winning entry. Here it is—a report by Elisabeth Raff and Nancy Garcia about their hometown of Kaycee, Wyoming. We hope you enjoy reading about this “small Western cowboy town.”

We received many outstanding reports, including these runners-up:

- **Louisville, Kentucky:** Sixth-grade students of Mrs. Natalie Androla, Mrs. Susan Sherman, and Mrs. Debbie Zangari, St. Margaret Mary Catholic School
- **Medina, Ohio:** Eighth-grade students of Ms. Paula Hadgis and Ms. Susan Scalia, A.I. Root Middle School
- **Setauket, Long Island, New York:** Mrs. Ellen Young's and Ms. Pamela DeHayes's class, Setauket Elementary School
- **Walnut Ridge, Arkansas:** Ms. Linda Pierce's class, Walnut Ridge Middle Level School