

SPIRIT OF THE OLD WEST

By Traci Chapman
Staff Writer

With the theme of “Mustang – 50 Years Strong,” all eyes this year are on the city’s 50th birthday, celebrating a time distinguished by man’s first walk on the moon.

But, while that’s a major milestone, it’s still pretty clear that Western Days is also about a time long before that, when Mustang was a western town, where another big ‘walk’ made it all a reality – the Oklahoma Land Run of 1889. It’s that faraway history that spurs two of the weekend’s most recent activities but two that have quickly become ingrained in the Western Days today – the chuck wagon roundup and Guthrie Gunfighters.

Each now in their fourth year at Mustang’s biggest event, both will take place near the hub of Saturday’s action, in front of Mustang Town Center. But, while many of what makes Western Days – well, Western Days – are things of the present, the historically-themed gunfights and cook-off harken back to the area’s early days, long before an October 1969 charter made Mustang official or the first Western Days made an appearance 43 years ago, Mustang Chamber of Commerce CEO Renee Peerman said.

“We have really enjoyed bringing both of these to Western Days, and we’ve had a huge amount of positive feedback from people of all ages,” she said. “They’ve become part of Western Days in a way we really didn’t expect, but it’s exciting they’ve been embraced by everyone the way they have.”

Guthrie Gunfighters are a nonprofit historical re-enactment group based, unsurprisingly, in Guthrie. Since 1993, the Gunfighters have been bringing a little bit of the Old West to a wide range of events across Oklahoma.

“Basically, our mission is to preserve Oklahoma’s early history

from territorial days to statehood by performing living history scenarios and exhibits,” CEO “Texas Bill” Kenney said.

Gunfighters’ trained re-enactors want to make history come to life for their audiences, showing them a way of life far beyond shoot-outs, Kenney said. Shows are meant to appeal to young and old alike, he said.

“Basically, if you think about it, much of what we learn about history comes from dusty old books, and there’s just so much out there for people to learn and know,” Kenney said. “We believe it’s our job to make learning that history both educational and fun.”

The Gunfighters crew interacts with festival attendees, while periodically taking the entertainment “up a notch” with a spontaneous wild west gunfight.

“That was one thing we wanted to make sure both people attending the show know, as well as anyone living around Wild Horse Park, and that’s that this could get loud,” Mustang Peerman said. “Gunfights will be going on every hour on the hour between noon and 4 p.m.”

This year’s Chuck Wagon Cook-Off begin Saturday at 5 p.m. and runs until 7 p.m. The event is sponsored by Weichert Realtors-Main Edge and will be held near Wild Horse Gardens and Market, near the southeast end of Mustang Town Center. Tickets for the dinner are available at Weichert and Mustang Chamber of Commerce.

More information about the Gunfighters is available online at <http://www.theguthriegunfightersinc.org/>. Information about these and other Western Days events can be found at www.mustangwesterndays.com/.



Guthrie Gunfighters and the chuckwagon dinner embody the spirit of the area, long before a 1969 charter made Mustang official. Both are now making their fourth appearance during Western Days’ Saturday activities.



-photos by Traci Chapman