

# Billings Gazette

## Revenge of the Rams

No. 3 Billings Central girls take Class A semi hoops rematch over Havre **SPORTS, PAGE B1**



## Fire scar lures elk

Growth erupts prompting hunting changes **OUTDOORS, PAGE D1**



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WHERE YOUR STORY LIVES

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AMY LYNN NELSON PHOTOS, BILLINGS GAZETTE

From 1877 to 1882, Boothill Cemetery served as a burial ground for the Yellowstone River town of Coulson, the first settlement of what would become Billings.

# A fitting final resting place

## Effort to improve Coulson 'Boothill' Cemetery is underway

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An initiative to restore, improve and upgrade Boothill cemetery at Coulson Cemetery Park is underway, thanks to a group of passionate community members wishing to preserve the historic site.

Coulson Cemetery Park, more commonly known as Boothill cemetery, owned by the City of Billings, is located at the intersection of Aronson Avenue and Swords Lane. The cemetery served as a burial ground for the town of Coulson, from 1877 to 1882. It's said to have gotten its nickname from the way those interred there were said to have died, violently or suddenly, with their boots on.



Dave Wanzneried of Friends of Coulson Boothill Cemetery shows a grave marker in the Cemetery on Jan. 5.

Stories range from those that perished in battle against the Nez Pierce, to patrons who died in bar-room brawls. Others drowned and one of the interred

died falling off his horse and getting trampled on his way home from a funeral.

Historical documents have highlighted the fact that the sto-

ries of those buried there are the stories of Coulson; that the story of Billings wouldn't be complete without the stories of those early settlers.

Interest in preserving those stories and the site which holds them, has gained momentum recently, following a ground-penetrating radar study of the cemetery done in 2019 by Montana State University Billings, lead by MSUB Professor Tom Rust.

The survey of the gravesites revealed the cemetery is home to approximately 150 graves, a larger number than the first estimated total of 30-75 burials.

Efforts have been made in the past to improve the site, including a 1978 Eagle Scout project that erected rows of wooden crosses to resemble markers. The goal for the current improvement project has the long-term in mind, with more permanent structures to honor those interred there, while also

attempting to preserve the primitive nature of the site.

Plans to upgrade the park include sturdy features that can withstand the passage of time, as well as interactive technology for an engaging, educational experience. Structural features include a more formal park entry with signage, providing historical information through traditional panels, and a potential small interpretive center.

On the informational panels will also be QR codes, which if scanned with a smart phone, will bring the reader to more in-depth information about the history of the site and surrounding area. Historical information concerning the region's Indigenous population, via the QR codes, will be directed by Crow Nation Historic Preservation Officer, Aaron Brien.

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# UN aid agency warns it is collapsing

NAJIB JOBAIN AND WAFAA SHURAF  
Associated Press

RAFAH, Gaza Strip — The head of the main U.N. aid agency in the war-battered Gaza Strip warned late Saturday that its work is collapsing after nine countries decided to cut funding over allegations that several agency employees had participated in the deadly Hamas attack against Israel four months ago.

Philippe Lazzarini, head of the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, said he was shocked such decisions were taken as "famine looms" in the ongoing Israel-Hamas war. "Palestinians in Gaza did not need this additional

collective punishment," he wrote on X. "This stains all of us."

His warning came a day after he announced he fired and was investigating several agency employees over allegations that they participated in the Oct. 7 attack on Israel that sparked the war. The United States, which said 12 agency employees were under investigation, immediately said it is suspending funding, followed by several other countries, including Britain, Italy and Finland.

The agency, which has 13,000 employees in Gaza, most of them Palestinians, is the main organization aiding Gaza's population

amid the humanitarian disaster. More than 2 million of the territory's 2.3 million people depend on it for "sheer survival," including food and shelter, Lazzarini said, warning this lifeline can "collapse any time now."

The Israel-Hamas war has killed more than 26,000 Palestinians, according to local health officials, destroyed vast swaths of Gaza and displaced nearly 85% of the territory's 2.3 million people. The Hamas attack in southern Israel killed about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and militants took about 250 hostages.



FATIMA SHBAIR, ASSOCIATED PRESS

Palestinians look at their neighbor's damaged house Saturday following an Israeli strike in Rafah, southern Gaza Strip.

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