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Ridgway, Colorado Now Has *True Grit* Walking Tour

The Ridgway Area Chamber of Commerce now offers a one-hour walking tour commemorating the filming of *True Grit*. In the movie, Ridgway is depicted as Fort Smith, Arkansas.

John Wayne, who played a crusty, one-eyed U.S. Marshal in the 1969 blockbuster hit, thought Rooster Cogburn was his best role since Ethan Edwards in *The Searchers* 12 years earlier. Apparently Academy judges agreed, awarding Wayne his only Oscar for the performance.

Tour attendees visit nine sites within a two-block area in downtown Ridgway: the railroad depot, gallows, livery stable, mortuary, Chen Lee's place, the courthouse facade, True Grit Cafe (built in 1986 as a tribute to John Wayne and *True Grit*), the saloon and the grocery.

For years the jail wagon has been situated on the southwest corner of highways 62 and 550 to welcome visitors to Ridgway. Although its location does not allow inclusion in the walking tour, visitors are encouraged to pose with the relic for a photo opportunity.

A plaque at each location describes its relevance and conveys interesting or unexpected details. For example, the gallows plaque wording reads:

After finding the mortuary closed with the undertaker gone to the triple hanging, Mattie joins the enthusiastic crowd to watch. The gallows was erected just west of this sign. Although he was not listed in the credits, Jay Silverheels, who played Tonto in the 1949-1957 Lone Ranger TV series, was the middle one of the three condemned men.

The plaques contain a QR code and a map. Smartphone users who scan the code land on a Chamber website movie page about *True Grit* locations outside of town and information about the movie and others made in Southwestern Colorado. The site map accommodates residents and visitors who prefer a self-guided tour.

Two locations in Ouray not on the tour also have plaques. The *True Grit* interior courtroom scenes were filmed at the Ouray County Courthouse. The Outlaw Restaurant, Wayne's evening getaway for playing pool and enjoying a libation, proudly displays a gift from John Wayne—a Stetson he wore in the movie.

Dave's Mountain Tours (970-728-9749, davesmountaintours.com) utilizes Swiss Pingauzers to transport visitors to remote *True Grit* sites—Last Dollar Road, Owl Creek Pass, Katie's Meadow and the snake pit.

Walking tour participants meet their guide at the Ridgway Visitors Center (150 Racecourse Rd, just west of the intersection of highways 550 and 62) Fridays at 10:45 am from May to October. Admittance is \$10 for ages 12 and above. (Children are free.)

A group of six or more may request a tour anytime throughout the year.

The Ridgway Chamber expresses its gratitude and appreciation to Jenny Cheek and Larry Harley, the Weaver Family Foundation, the Colorado Tourism Office and the Ouray County Ranch History Museum, whose funding and support made the *True Grit* heritage plaques a reality.