The Twentynine Palms Historical Society and the Desert Institute at Joshua Tree National Park Present the 2nd Friday Old Schoolhouse Lecture:

Friday, September 12, 7 pm

Harlem Rides the Range: Murray’s Dude Ranch and the African American Homesteaders of Bell Mountain

From the 1930s until the 1950s, Murray’s Ranch boasted the distinction of being “the only Negro dude ranch in the world.” Located in the African American homesteading community of Bell Mountain, California, the ranch offered black Angelenos both a respite from racism and a place to live out their frontier fantasies. Surrounded by the striking landscape of the Mojave Desert, Murray’s also served as the setting for a series of all-black cast singing cowboy movies starring jazz heartthrob Herb Jeffries. This lecture will explore the rich history of the Bell Mountain community, the dude ranch that made it famous, and the films that enshrined it in myth.

Jennifer Thornton is a Ph.D. candidate in Public History at the University of California, Riverside. She received her Master’s degree in Public History from UC Riverside in 2012, and completed her Bachelor’s degree in Anthropology and Spanish at Grinnell College in 2002. Prior to graduate school, Jennifer was an archaeologist and worked on historic and prehistoric sites throughout the American Southwest. Her current research explores the intersections of race, place, and leisure in Southern California. As a public historian, she is interested in preserving the buildings and places that speak to the diverse history of the American West.

The lecture will be held at the Old Schoolhouse Museum, 6760 National Park Dr., 29 Palms, Friday, September 12, 7 pm; $5 at the door
Optional dinner with the speaker at 5 pm at the 29 Palms Inn, contact Marion to RSVP for the dinner at 361-1202 or desert29palms@yahoo.com
For lecture info, contact the Desert Institute: 760.367.5535 or desertinstitute@joshuatree.org