

COWBOY FACTS

JOB REQUIREMENTS

Had to be young, preferably male. Had to own saddle and know how to use rope. Ex-soldiers and freed slaves were welcome. Hours: sunup to sundown, seven days a week. Pay: \$25 a month. No benefits.

VITAL STATISTICS

Most cowboys were under 30; some were teenagers. Many cowboys were former slaves. Lots were Mexican. And many cowboys had fought in the Civil War.

On the average, a cowboy would ride for 7 years.

There were anywhere from 20,000 to 50,000 cowboys.

WHEN WAS THIS AGAIN?

The first Western trail drive was in 1866. The peak year was 1871, and the last major drive was in 1896.

SO WHO HIRED THEM?

In Texas, cattle ranchers wanted to get their cattle to the railroad in Missouri or Kansas, so they could ship them to Chicago, where cattle sold for 10 times as much as in the South.

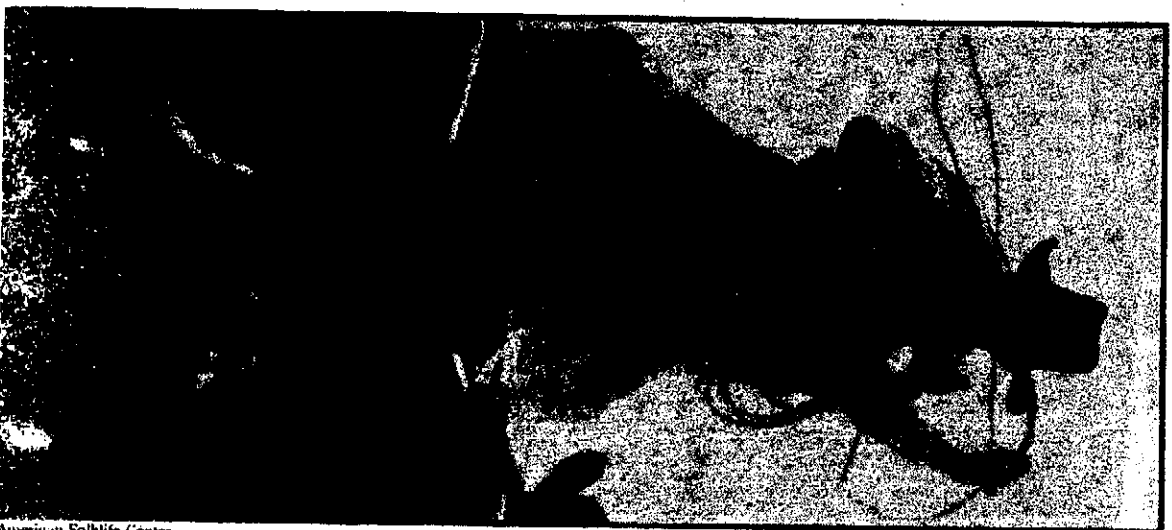
In Montana, ranchers sent their cattle to the open range for winter grazing. In the spring, they needed cowboys to get them back.

THE CATTLE DRIVE

On the trail, about 12 cowboys would drive around 2,000 cattle about 1,000 miles.

Cowboys took positions in front, back, and alongside a

The image of the cowboy as a clean, white Indian-fighter is just a lot of bull.



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herd that could stretch for a mile. They helped the cattle cross swollen streams, rescued them from mud holes, and did anything else the 700-pound animals wanted.

THE ROUNDUP

Every spring, cowboys from several ranches got together to track down cattle that had grazed all winter on the open range. They separated the different ranchers' stocks, decided which cattle were ready to go to market, and roped newborn calves for branding.

STAY ON THAT HORSE

The trail was full of dangers. Sudden noises could cause a stampede. So at night, cowboys sang to keep cattle calm. Thunderstorms and prairie fires were also mortal enemies. But the number-one cause of death? Riding accidents.

WHAT ABOUT THE INDIANS?

Most trails *did* go through Indian land. So sometimes there were disagreements, even skirmishes. Cherokee tribes taxed ranchers 10 cents for each head of cattle. And Comanches sometimes stampeded cattle and stole horses. But in general, things were pretty lame.

END OF THE TRAIL

In the mid-1870s, farmers and ranchers put up fences that blocked Western trails and ultimately put an end to the great cattle drives.

—Parker Marizes

The Western Home

Oh, give me a home where the buffalo roam,
Where the deer and the antelope play;
Where never is heard a discouraging word
And the sky is not clouded all day.

Oh, give me the gale of the Solomon vale
Where life streams with buoyancy flow,
On the banks of the Beaver, where seldom if ever
Any poisonous herbage doth grow.

Oh, give me the land where the bright diamond sand
Throws light from the glittering stream;
Where glideth along the graceful white swan,
Like a maid in her heavenly dreams.

I love these wild flowers in this bright land of our;
I love, too, the curlew's wild scream.
The bluffs of white rocks and antelope flocks
That graze on the hillsides so green.

How often at night, when the heavens are bright
By the light of the glittering stars,
Have I stood there amazed and asked as I gazed
If their beauty exceeds this of ours.

The air is so pure, the breezes so light,
The zephyrs so balmy at night,
I would not exchange my home here to range
Forever in azure so bright.

Brewster Higley

Cowboy's New Year's Resolutions

As one who's been a cowhand
since the wildcats learned to spit,
I've made some resolutions
for the comin' year, to wit:
Resolved, to ride a shorter day
and sleep a longer night;
To never come to breakfast
till the sun is shinin' bright;
To draw a top-hands wages
when they're due or quit the job
And hunt a wealthy widow
or an easy bank to rob.
Resolved, to quit the wagon
when the chuck ain't up to snuff,
To feed no more on bullet beans
nor chaw on beef that's tough.
Resolved, to straddle
nothin' in the line of saddle mount
That ain't plumb easy-gated,
gentle broke, and some account.

Resolved, that when it blizzards
and there's stock out in the storm,
To let the owner worry
while I stay in where it's warm.
Resolved, that when it comes
my turn next spring to ride the bogs,
I'll don the bib and tucker
of my town and Sunday togs,
And tell the boss, by gravies,
if he craves to shed some blood,
Just try to make me smear 'em
tailin' moo-cows from the mud.
Resolved, that when a thunderhead
comes rollin' up the sky,
I'll lope in off my circle
to the bunkhouse where it's dry.

S. Omar Baker

Judge Lycis Gough

Gone

The Old T-Anchor Ranch is gone, and with
it the open range,
No more we'll ride the plains alone,
there's been a mighty change.

No more we'll round the circle wide, in
early Spring and Fall,
Or stamp T-Anchor on the hide and hear
the yearlin's bawl.

No more we'll trail T-Anchor herds to Fort
Reno and "Montan,"
or hear the drawling campfire words, nor
wear the trail brown-tan.

We've seen cowboys in the their prime,
and the ranch in all its glory,
Now some have crossed the line and
others bald and hoary.

May the T-Anchor Ranch in memory live
through all the coming years,
And our deeds strong courage give to
future youth and steers.

The Muster by "Australie" (Mrs. Heron) (Emily Manning) of
Australia, ca. 1800

Come, mount ye your horses, away let us ride,
For we've many a mile ere the eventide;
The cattle have strayed to the distant plain,
And we must drive them in ere we draw the rein.
So we're off, we're off, we're off,
With the stockwhip in our hand,
And oh, for the fun of a cattle-hunt
With a rollicking bushman band!

Across the gully and over the range,
With a plunge through a creek for a cooling change;
Now over a log or a rock we leap,
O'er hill and on level our pace we keep.
With a gallop, a gallop, a gallop
And a jolly song on our lips,
To the tune of the hoofs and the crashing boughs,
And the ringing crack of the whips.

See the wild young scrubbers come tearing in,
Then away they head, but the tail-mob win;
The horses swerve, and there's many a spill,
But the muster goes on with a shout and a will.
With a yeh, hallo, ya-eh!
And danger full in the face,
And a rageful charge of a snorting bull
But giving zest to the chase.

Line-Camp Christmas Letter

Inside an Old West line-camp, settin' on his lonely bed,

A cowboy wrote a letter home,
and this is what it said:

"Dear Folks: It looks like Christmas time
is comin' on again,
And I ain't wrote no letter
since the devil don't know when.

So now I thought I'd drop a line
just like I done last year,
To let you know I'm safe and well
and full of Christmas cheer.
Seems like the news ain't much to tell.

A blizzard blowin' now.
There'll be some cattle driftin',
Merry Christmas, anyhow!

I've been out ridin' most all day.
The horse I rode went lame.
The cattle sure are scattered.
Merry Christmas just the same!
Last night my waterholes froze up.
Snow sure is slow to thaw.
Some cattle lookin' porely,
Merry Christmas, Pa and Ma!

This line-camp shack has got some cracks
that let the snow sift through.
Well Merry Christmas to you, folks,
and Happy New Year, too!
Excuse this crooked writin'.
Got my hands frostbite I guess.
The cattle sure are driftin'
Merry Christmas, Frank and Besi!

Ax handle busted. Woodpile low.
Ain't got much fire tonight.
The drifts have knocked some fence line down.
I trust you're all all right.
My pot of beans boiled dry
and scorched while I was out today.
Them cows are driftin' awful.
Merry Christmas anyway!

Well folks, I've got to cut this short
and mend my busted rope.
Just thought I'd drop a little line.
You all keep well, I hope.
The cowboy life is wonderful.
Sure glad I came out West.
Give my regards to Adelaide
and Jack and all the rest.
I'm glad I ain't a cow tonight
Outside I hear 'em bawl.
Pore critters sure are driftin'.
Merry Christmas to you all!

Through progress of the railroads,
our occupation's gone;
we'll get our ideas into words,
our words into a song,
first comes the cowboy -
he's the spirit of the West;
of all the pioneers I claim
the cowboys are the best.
We'll miss him in the round-up,
it's gone, his merry shout,
the cowboy has left the country,
his camp fire has gone out.

You freighters, our companions,
you've got to leave this land;
can't drag your loads for nothing
through the gumbo and the sand;
the railroads are bound to beat you -
so do your level best,
give it up to the granger
and strike out farther west.
Big them all adieu
and give the merry shout,
"The cowboy has left the country
and his camp fire has gone out."

When I think of those good old days
my eyes with tears will fill;
when I think of the tin can by the fire
and the coyote on the hill.
I'll tell you, boys, in those days
Old-timers stood a show,
our pockets full of money,
not a sorrow did we know;
But, how times have changed since then,
we're poorly clothes and fed,
our wagons are all broken down
and horses most all dead.
Soon we'll leave this country,
then you'll hear the angels shout:
"Oh, here they come to Heaven,
their camp fire has gone out."

Ben Arnold