

## The Wild West

The American Old West, also known as the Wild West, means the history, geography, people, and culture of life in the Western United States in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The American Wild West took place in the Western United States, just about anywhere west of the Mississippi River. It occurred in the early part of the 19th century and lasted until the end of the Mexican Revolution in 1920. Many conflicts were occurring as people moved further onto the lands occupied by Native American tribes. The people moving onto these lands claimed the land as their land. The Native Americans didn't believe that anyone could own land. They believed the land was there for everyone to use and enjoy.



### People in the Wild West



The American west had all sorts of people including pioneers, business people, scouts, lawmen, outlaws, gangs, gunslingers, and cowboys. Most of these people had one thing in common... they were looking for an opportunity and they weren't afraid of adventure. Many legends have come out of the Old West, but none as big as the outlaws. Some of the most famous outlaws were: Billy the Kid, Black Bart, Dalton Brothers, Curly Bill, Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid. Frank and Jesse James were famous brothers, they made a name for themselves as bank and train robbers. Some people say that they were like Robin Hood, robbing from the rich to give to the poor.

Some of the famous lawmen were: Bat Masterson, Wyatt Earp, Pat Garrett, Wild Bill Hickok, and Bill Tilghman.

Cowboys played an important role in the settling of the west. Ranching was a big industry and cowboys helped to run the ranches. They herded cattle, repaired fences and buildings, and took care of the horses.

### The Cattle Drive

Cowboys often worked on cattle drives. This was when a large herd of cattle was moved from the ranch to a marketplace where they could be sold. A lot of the original cattle drives went from Texas to the railroads in Kansas.



There were usually around a dozen cowboys for a good size herd of 3000 cattle. There was also a trail boss, camp cook, and wrangler. The wrangler was usually a junior cowboy who kept track of the extra horses.

### The Roundup

Each spring and fall the cowboys would work on the "roundup". This was when the cowboys would bring in all the cattle from the open range. Cattle would roam freely much of the year and then the cowboys would need to bring them in. In order to tell what cattle belonged to their ranch, the cattle would have a special mark burned into them called a "brand".

## Clothing

Cowboys wore special clothing that helped them with their jobs. They wore large 10-gallon hats to protect them from the sun and the rain. They wore special cowboy boots with pointed toes that helped them to slip in and out of the stirrups when riding a horse. This was especially important if they fell so they wouldn't get dragged by their horse.

Many cowboys wore chaps on the outsides of their legs to help protect from sharp bushes and cacti that their horse may rub up against. Another important piece of clothing was the bandana which could be used to protect them from the dust kicked up by cattle.



## Rodeo

The rodeo became a sports competition with events based around the daily jobs of a cowboy. Events include calf roping, steer wrestling, bull riding, bareback bronco riding, and barrel racing.

## The Cowboy Code

The cowboys of the Old West had an unwritten code that they lived by.

### Cowboy Rules

1. Never pass anyone on the trail without saying "Howdy".
2. Don't wave at a man on a horse. It might spook the horse and the man will think you're an idiot. (A nod is the proper greeting.)
3. After you pass someone on the trail, don't look back at him. It implies you don't trust him.
4. A cowboy is pleasant even when out of sorts. Complaining is what quitters do, and cowboys hate quitters.
5. A cowboy always helps someone in need, even a stranger or an enemy.
6. When you leave town, it's perfectly all right to shoot your six-guns into the air, whoop like crazy and ride your horse as fast as you can. This is called "hurrahing" a town.
7. Never try on another man's hat.
8. Never wake another man by shaking or touching him. He might wake up suddenly and shoot you.
9. Real cowboys are modest. A braggart who is "all gurgles and no guts" is not tolerated. A cowboy doesn't talk much; he saves his breath for breathing.



And finally.....

No matter how weary and hungry you are after a long day in the saddle, always tend to your horse's needs before your own, and get your horse some feed before you eat.