The Real West

The real history of the American West is a far cry from the Hollywood images of cowboys and Indians, shootouts, and pioneers crossing the plains in their covered wagons. The history of this region is a story of ancient civilizations, of migrations and expulsions. It is a story of the lust for money, of environmental destruction on a grand scale, of dry land and the battle for water rights, of war and racism and genocide, of labor struggles and violence. The settlement of the West took place during the age of the industrial revolution. Only with the construction of the railroads could its intensive settlement and the exploitation of the region's natural resources begin. Far more "pioneers" traveled to the West by train as by covered wagon.

The reality of the West is in every way just a little different than the popular imagination. Despite the "wide open spaces," or rather because of them, the West has since 1870 been more urban than the eastern half of the United States. The West is also the racially and ethnically most diverse part of the country. Most of the West's settlers arrived there in the 20th century, long after the defeat of the region's native peoples, long after the end of the trail drives. In the American West, the old and the new have always existed side by side. The first tourists were riding the transcontinental railroad across the West even before the aboriginal peoples had been militarily defeated. San Francisco was long since an urbane city while homesteaders on the plains were still living in one-room dugouts and sod houses.

Patricia Nelson Limerick, pointing out that Montana ranchers in the 1880s lived almost entirely out of tin cans, wrote, "Living out of cans, the Montana ranchers were typical Westerners, celebrating independence while relying on a vital connection to the outside world." [Patricia Nelson Limerick, The Legacy of Conquest. The Unbroken Past of the American West. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1987. p. 18] The legend of rugged individualism contrasts sharply with the dependence of the West's peoples on the federal government, for example for highly subsidized irrigation water, or the farmers on the railroads, which transport their produce to the market. The enormous natural resources of the West have been largely developed and controlled by outsiders, who had no interest in living in the West. The gold seekers in California, Nevada, Colorado, Montana, the Dakotas, and Alaska were but a colorful interlude. Industrial mining controlled by huge corporations typifies the West. Still today, outsiders, be it federal agencies in Washington or Japanese corporations, wield great power in the region.

The West is changing, but it has always been changing. The people of the West complain about the detrimental influence of outsiders, but they have always done that. Every generation mourns the destruction of their West, the real West in which they live as well as the West of their imagination. The last free Plains tribes saw a way of life end with their military defeat. But the introduction of the horse and firearms, the pressure from migrating tribes pushed west as well as trade with the Europeans and the Americans had already changed the world of their ancestors beyond recognition. The mountain men, the first outsiders, complained about the destruction of their West, yet they were the pathfinders and later the guides for those who followed them and by way of their trapping they had themselves already altered the natural balance of the West they had initially discovered. And so it has gone on from one generation to the next.

Today, many Westerners, and with good reason, look askance at the so-called "trophy homes" being built all across the West, huge houses constructed by the affluent, most of them only recently arrived or only part-time residents, which are filling up valley after valley. Many of those complaining may have only migrated to the West twenty years earlier. Westerners bemoan the destruction of small ranchers by multi-national agri-business corporations. But even the first big ranchers, beginning with Charles Goodnight, were dependent on and welcomed foreign capital.

Yes, the West is changing and the pace of change is accelerating and of course their is reason to criticize and complain and to mourn. The semi-arid land is forced to support ever more people while the natural base is being eroded. And each generation has to learn anew to live with the physical realities of the West. Old ways are passing. Old ways are always passing. The West has always been as much a myth as a reality and Westerners live in the present while always looking back over their shoulders. The West is a land of illusions, broken dreams, and legends which feed the fantasies of those who live there as well as the rest of the world.

Books about the American West

The New Encyclopedia of the American West
by Howard Roberts Lamar (Editor)

The Oxford History of the American West
by Clyde A., II Milner (Editor), Carol A. O'Connor (Editor), Martha A. Sandweiss (Editor), Carol A. O'Conner (Editor)

The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West
by Patricia Nelson Limerick
Western Music

recordings

Cowboy Songs from Folkways, Smithsonian Folkways SF CD40043
Mark Gardner & the Muleskinners, Songs of the Santa Fe Trail and the Far West, Native Ground CD: NG-CD-003
Don Edwards, Saddle Songs, Shanachie, 6025
Don Edwards, Last of the Troubadours, Saddle Songs II, Shanachie 6062.
Wayne Erbsen, Cowboy Songs of the Wild Frontier Native Ground, CD: NG-CD-400
Skip Gorman, A Cowboy's Wild Song to His Herd, Rounder CD0449
Skip Gorman, *A Greener Prairie*, Rounder CD0329
Skip Gorman, *Lonesome Prairie Love*, Rounder CD0359
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Sid Hausman, *Geronimo's Land*, Blue Bhikku Records
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Peter LaFarge, *Song of the Cowboys/Iron Mountain*, Bear Family BCD 15627, CD
Katie Lee, *Ten Thousand Goddam Cattle*, Katydid
Glenn Ohrlin, *A Cowboy's Life*, Rounder CD0420
Open Range, *High Country Cookout*
Utah Phillips, *El Capitan*, Philo 1016, LP
Rose Tattoo, *Trains, Tramps & Traditions*, Cookieman Music
Mark Ross, *Songs of the Cowboy*, National Geographic Records
Mark Ross, *Look for Me in Butte*, A Smokestack Production, CD
Tom Russell, *Indians Cowboys Horses Dogs*, Hightone Records HCD 8165
Tom Russell, *Songs of the West*, Hightone Records HMG 2501, CD
Pete Seeger, *Frontier Ballads – Vol. I*, Folkways FA2175, 10"
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Ian Tyson, *Eighteen Inches of Rain*, Stony Plain and Vanguard, 1994
Ian Tyson, *All the Good'uns*, (Stony Plain and Vanguard, 1996)
Ian Tyson, *Lost Herd*, Stony Plain, 1999
*The West*, Sony CD62727

**songbooks**

recordings of cowboy songs

Cowboy Songs from Folkways, Smithsonian Folkways SF CD40043
Mark Gardner & the Muleskinners, Songs of the Santa Fe Trail and the Far West, Native Ground CD: NG-CD-003
Don Edwards, Saddle Songs, Shanachie, 6025
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Wayne Erbsen, Cowboy Songs of the Wild Frontier Native Ground, CD: NG-CD-400
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The West, Sony CD62727
The Alaska Gold Rush

In 1897, it appeared as though history were going to repeat itself, almost half a century after the California Gold Rush. The news hit the nation like a shock wave: gold had been discovered in Alaska. In August 1896, two Indians, Skookum Jim and Tagish Charlie, and a white gold seeker, George Washington Cormack, had found gold on the Klondike River, a tributary of the Yukon. Cormack was one of those men who had always kept moving on, looking for adventure, fleeing civilization. Alaska was a last refuge for such men. Appropriately, Cormack had been born in San Francisco, the son of a "49er."

In 1741, Vitus Bering and Aleksei Tschirikow had reached the southern coast of Alaska. After having driven off the natives, Grigorii Shelekov established a base on Kodiak Island in 1784. Fifteen years later, he helped create the Russian American Company. The company founded Novo Arkhangel'sk (later renamed Sitka) and despite fierce resistance from the Tlingits, the Russians managed to establish themselves in Alaska. In 1867, Secretary of State William Seward purchased Alaska from the Russian Empire, 59,000 square miles for 7.2 million dollars. People laughed at "Seward's folly" or "Seward's icebox" and the American government proceeded to ignore the new acquisition.

On July 17, 1897, the steamship Portland docked in Seattle carrying seventy passengers with a million dollars in gold. Seattle, it is said, "went absolutely mad." Within ten days of the arrival of the ships, 1,500 people left the city for Alaska. Soon armies of mostly men from all over the country set off for the North. During the first 24 hours after the news reached New York, 2,000 people attempted to book passage to Alaska. In Chicago, 1000 people tried to book passage every day. Again, as in 1849, men - there were also women and in rare cases whole families who set off for the Klondike - left families, jobs, and businesses behind and set off for the unknown. But only a small percentage of those who set off actually arrived.

10,000 men and boys from Seattle left for the gold fields. Even the mayor resigned to go to Alaska to try his luck. Yet the population of Seattle doubled during the following four years. Of the perhaps 100,000 gold seekers who traveled to Alaska, as many as 70,000 passed through Seattle and what is more important, they outfitted themselves there. That was so was the result of an advertising campaign by the Seattle Chamber of Commerce. Rousing itself from the depression of the 1890s, Seattle concentrated on the economic possibilities presented by the gold rush and soon became the most important commercial center in the Northwest. The city transformed itself from a town to a metropolis. (Norbert MacDonald, Distant Neighbors: A Comprehensive History of Seattle and Vancouver. University of Nebraska Press, 1987. p. 47)

Those gold seekers who went overland underestimated both the distance and the harsh northern wilderness. Many perished or turned back. Most who reached the Klondike had to climb the dangerous passes in Alaska's panhandle, among them Chilkoot Pass, 1100 feet, often carrying 100 to 200 pounds of gear on their backs. Dawson, invaded by thousands of gold seekers in the summer of 1897, nearly ran out of food during the following winter. Many prospectors left and those who remained held out in one of the small boomtowns along the river. These emptied when gold was discovered in Nome in 1899. By 1900, the gold rush was already over and most of the gold seekers returned home and the era of industrial mining began in Alaska.

The rush lasted long enough, however, to disrupt the lives of the native people and destroy many of them. It also created a new consciousness of Alaska in the American mind. In 1906, Alaska was organized as a territory, but it did not become the 49th state until 1958.
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Barbed Wire

The invention of barbed wire radically altered the face of the American West, revolutionizing the cattle industry, ending the era of the open range, and fundamentally changing the work of the cowboy.

In 1867, two patents for barbed wire were taken out, one by Lucian B. Smith and one by William B. Hunt. A year later, Michael Kelly also took out a patent. It was Joseph F. Glidden of DeKalb, Illinois, however, who in 1874 invented the form of barbed wire still known today. His patent, no. 157124, was issued on November 24, 1874. All in all, over 570 patents for barbed wire were issued. After a long legal battle, Glidden won out and became the “father of barbed wire.”

At first, there was much resistance to the use of barbed wire. Many people considered it cruel to the cattle. Ranchers who owned little or no land feared it could destroy their livelihood and end the trail drives to the North, blocking their access to the eastern markets.

Initially, barbed wire was used by farmers and other landowners to protect their crops and livestock from the herds being driven overland. This led to the violence of the „Fence Cutter Wars,” when opponents of barbed wire destroyed fences.

In San Antonio, Texas, John „Bet a Million” Gates organized a demonstration of the practicality of using barbed wire for controlling livestock, building a large stock pen on Military Plaza. He later became the largest stockholder in the American Steel and Wire Company. The general acceptance of barbed wire did not come until large ranches such as the Frying Pan Ranch, the XIT and the JA began fencing their borders.

The widespread use of barbed wire in the West changed the region dramatically. The wide open spaces were subdivided. Ranchers, farmers and other settlers marked off their land with barbed wire. Before fencing, free-ranging cattle could not be controlled, selected breeding was impossible and farmers had no way of protecting their fields.
Barbed wire made the more intensive and effective use of land in the West possible and with that a more dense settlement of the West. At the same time, it also made the traditional life patterns of the nomadic peoples impossible. The more private land that was fenced the more pressure was put on the remaining public land, leading rapidly to serious overgrazing.

Vitus Bering

The Danish seafarer Vitus Bering, 1681-1741, had, as leader of the First Kamchatka Expedition (1725-30), already sailed through what was to become known as the Bering Strait in 1728, establishing the fact that the Asian and North American continents were not connected, but without seeing Alaska. Leading the Second Kamchatka Expedition (1733-43), Bering himself reached Alaska. On the journey home, he and his crew took refuge on what is today known as Bering Island, where he and many of his crewmen died. The grave of Vitus Bering, who had entered Russian service in 1704 and been promoted to commander after the Great Nordic War, was found by Danish archeologists in 1991.

The Blockers

John Rufus Blocker was born on December 19, 1851 in South Carolina, the second of three sons of Abner and Cornelia Blocker. During the following year, the family settled near Austin, Texas. After attending the Texas Military Institute in Austin, John Blocker entered the cattle business in Blanco County with his older brother William B. Blocker. John Blocker made his first cattle drive to Ellsworth, Kansas in 1873. He was to spend the next 20 years driving cattle north from Texas. It was said he knew every water hole between the Rio Grande and the Yellowstone River.

In 1881, John Blocker married Annie Lane of Austin and fathered four children. At one time or another, he owned or was part-owner of ranches in four counties, among them the Chupedero Ranch near Eagle Pass. He also owned land in
Abner Pickens (Ab) Blocker, born on the family ranch near Austin on January 30, 1856, was the youngest of the three Blocker brothers. In 1876, he joined his older brother on their range in Blanco County. During the following year, he delivered 3000 steers to John Sparks in Wyoming. He spent the next seventeen years driving longhorn cattle to points as far north as the Canadian border.

In the summer of 1885, Ab Blocker delivered 2500 head of cattle from Tom Green County to B. H. Campbell, manager of the Capitol Syndicate's Buffalo Springs Division in Dallam County, who had contracted to buy cattle for the new XIT Ranch. Blocker's herd was the first to arrive at the ranch and it was Ab Blocker who devised the ranch's XIT brand.

During that same year, John and Ab Blocker drove 2500 north and together with a herd by George W. West, were held up at Fort Supply, Oklahoma as a result of attempts by Kansas ranchers to quarantine Texas herds, supposedly out of fear of Texas fever. After a number of telegrams to the federal government, the Blockers and West obtained a cavalry escort to their destination. Soon thereafter, the Kansas trails were closed for good.

From 1887, Ab Blocker attempted cotton farming, but a drought doomed the effort. In 1890, he became range boss at his brother's Chupedeo Ranch.

The last trail drive by the Blocker Brothers, in 1893, was one of 9000 cattle belonging to Harris Franklin to a buying in Deadwood, South Dakota.

In 1893, Ab Blocker married Florende Baldwin. They had a daughter. Eventually, they settled on the Chupedero Ranch.

Later, both John and Ab Blocker worked for the Texas and Southwest Cattle Raisers' Association. John Blocker helped found the Old Time Trail Drivers' Association and became its first president.

John Blocker died in San Antonio on December 1, 1927. Ab Blocker died there on August 9, 1943. They were both buried in Dignowity Cemetery.

Butte, Montana

For many years, Butte was the „richest hill on earth.” Gold, silver, zinc and above all copper for an estimated value of two billion dollars were mined in Butte. Today, the landscape is destroyed and the city stands at the edge of a huge crater, the Berkeley Pit. Reader's Digest described Butte as the „ugliest city in America.” Butte bears the scars of more than a hundred years of mining. But when, aside from small amounts of copper, mining ended in Butte in 1983, the city did not become a ghost town. The city's special history gave it strength.

In 1864, after gold had been discovered in the area several thousand miners made their way there from Virginia City. Three years later, the gold camp had five hundred residents. By 1871, after the easily-mined surface metal had been played out, only 241 people remained in Butte. 98 of them were Chinese who found gold in areas where the white miners had already given up searching. Ten years later, though, after silver had been found, Butte was Montana's second-largest city with 3,364 residents.

In the end it was neither gold nor silver but copper that was to make Butte a truly rich mining city. In 1882, copper ore was discovered in the Anaconda Mine. In the period during which the world was being electrified, Butte supplied the necessary copper. Between 1882 and 1890, copper production in Butte climbed from nine million to 130 million pounds. At the turn of the century, more copper was being produced in Butte than anywhere else in the world. During World War I, Butte produced a fourth of all the copper produced in the United States, a seventh of all copper produced in the
In 1890, 24,000 people lived in Butte and the surrounding area, half of them born outside the United States. Up to the turn of the century, the majority of these immigrants came from England (most of those from Cornwall), Ireland, Germany and Scandinavia. At the beginning of the 20th century, many began arriving from Serbia, Italy, and Finland. But Butte, like the United States as a whole, was less a melting pot than a collection of ethnic settlements. The ethnic groups had their own sections: “Corktown” for the Cornish population, “Dublin Gulch,” “Finntown.” There was also a “Chinatown,” even a “Little Lebanon” and a black section. This ethnic mix gave the city its character. Nowhere else is the Irish national holiday, St. Patrick's Day, celebrated with such gusto as in Butte, where the streets are painted green. But “St. Urho’s Day” was also celebrated in the Helsinki Bar.

During World War I, there may have been 20,000 miners and as many as 100,000 residents in Butte. No one knows for sure. There were 150 mines shafts under the city the deepest reaching 3500 feet into the earth. Working conditions were miserable. Every year, dozens of miners died underground. Those who did not die in accidents suffered from the dust to which they were constantly exposed and which led to lung infections or tuberculosis. The miners worked in three shifts and the casinos and 500 bars never closed. There were also a thousand prostitutes always ready to offer their services.

In those years, Butte was a wealthy city and the streets and the buildings reflected that fact. The city had an electric street car, an opera and an amusement park, “Columbia Gardens,” covering 90 acres. Butte liked to present itself as very cosmopolitan. Dominated as it was by the Anaconda Copper Mining Company, however, Butte was rightly considered a “company town.” Anaconda Copper was referred to simply as “the company” and it controlled not only the city but for a long time the entire state of Montana. To spread its influence, the “company” owned most of the state’s daily newspapers. In 1952, the opinion was expressed that Montana remained, “the last outpost of feudalistic journalism.”

The beginning of the 20th century saw major labor struggles in Butte, battles fought with extreme brutality. One writer described the situation in Butte:

“Capitalism in Butte was not an abstraction. It was personified in the powerful and ruthless Anaconda Copper Mining Company, and it was visible in the fine homes of the rich and well-to-do and in the shacks and boarding houses where the workers lived. It was also implicit in the sacrifices made to capitalism by the numbers of miners killed and injured in the frenzied drive to produce wealth for the chosen few.” (Jerry W. Calvert, The Gibraltar: Socialism and Labor in Butte, Montana, 1895-1920. Helena: Montana Historical Society Press, 1988, p.57.)

But the workers did not present a united front. Different unions competed with one another, the companies terrorized the workers, infiltrated their organizations and set the various nationalities against one another. The Irish were Catholics and the Catholic Church was a bitter opponent of socialism. The Finns were true followers of the radical Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). There were not only bitter strikes, but also murders and bombings. In 1911, a socialist mayor was elected, who, after years of corruption, organized an efficient city administration and improved the living conditions of the working population. In 1914, after the city, and not for the last time, had been placed under martial law due to unrest, the socialist mayor was removed from office. From December 1918 to February 1919, there was a Council of Soldiers, Sailors and Workers based on the Russian example and which was not without influence. Butte was the most militant union town in the country, the “Gibraltar” of the labor movement, but in the end “the company” retained control.

The transition from deep shaft to open-pit mining began in 1955. The Berkeley Pit gradually ate at the old downtown and the old ethnic neighborhoods. By the mid-seventies, all the shafts had been closed. This change meant the loss of countless jobs. In 1977, Anaconda Copper merged with Atlantic Richfield (Arco). During the late seventies, plans were under consideration that would have sacrificed the entire old downtown to the pit and seen the construction of a new city. But the end of the Berkeley Pit came first. It is 2300 feet deep and a mile wide. In April 1982, the pit was abandoned. On June 30, 1983, Arco announced that mining in Butte was to be suspended. At the end of that year, Arco had only fifty employees in Butte. It was the end of a legend. But Butte is still alive, its economy has diversified and it is not the “living museum” as some might think.

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Jesse Chisholm and the Chisholm Trail

Jesse Chisholm was born in Tennessee in 1805, the son of a Scottish father and a Cherokee mother. When Jesse was ten, the family traveled with the Cherokees to Arkansas and then settled at Fort Gibson, an army post in Indian territory. From 1832 on, when he marked an almost 140-mile trail for the Choctow Indians, Jesse Chisholm was a trail blazer. By the early 1850s, he was selling cattle and during the Civil War Chisholm drove cattle through Indian Territory to supply Union army posts in Kansas.

Chisholm established a trading post at Council Grove, on the north fork of the Canadian River. In 1866, he drove 600 steers to New Mexico, where he sold them to government contractors at Bosque Grande on the Pecos. During the following year, he blazed a trail to move the Wichita Indians south, using a small herd of horses, which he drove back and forth across the rivers many times, to create easier crossings. When the trail drives to Kansas began after 1867, many followed routes blazed by Jesse Chisholm.

The first herd to be driven along what became known as the Chisholm Trail belonged to O. Wheeler, who had purchased 2400 steers in San Antonio in 1867. In the early years, the trail was called simply "the Trail" or the Kansas Trail, the Abilene Trail or the McCoy Trail. The name "Chisholm Trail" was first mentioned in the May 27, 1870 issue on the "Kansas Daily Commonwealth."

The Chisholm Trail was the main route for the trail drives from Texas to Kansas. Until 1871, it ended in Abilene, later in Ellsworth, Junction City, Newton or Wichita. The name "Chisholm Trail" was extended south all the way to south Texas below San Antonio and to the Gulf Coast. After the Chisholm Trail became so crowded that the cattle had trouble finding grass, ranchers laid out a new trail, which became known as the Western Trail, ending in Dodge City. The Chisholm was closed down by the introduction of barbed wire and a Kansas Quarantine law. In 1884, its final year, it led only as far as Caldwell, Kansas. More than five million cattle and a million mustangs had been driven along it.

Jesse Chisholm, who blazed so many trails during his life, did not blaze the one which bore his name and he never drove cattle north along it. While on a trip to his Council Grove trading post, Jesse Chisholm died of food poisoning on March 4, 1868 and was buried near present-day Greenfield, Oklahoma.
The first cattle arrived in the new world at Vera Cruz in 1521, six heifers and a bull. Twenty years later, when don Francisco Vásques de Coronado traveled north in search of the golden cities of Cibola, he drove five hundred head of cattle with him, the first cattle in Texas. Three centuries later, herds of wild cattle and horses were roaming the Southwest. Spaniards and Mexicans had created the cattle business and the culture of the vaqueros long before Americans began to enter Texas. In 1836, Texas gained its independence from Mexico and was admitted to the United States in 1845. By the 1850s, Americans dominated the cattle business. To reach the eastern markets, the cattle were originally driven to Shreveport and New Orleans. Hide, tallow, hooves, and horns were shipped to the east coast. The carcasses were discarded. After gold had been discovered in California, a half a million cattle were driven there. During the Civil War, many of the ranches were abandoned by men gone to fight and the cattle could breed without limits. The number of cattle in Texas at the end of the war was said to have increased from three and a half million to perhaps six million.

After the war, a rancher could claim all the cattle he was able to catch. But it was not an easy task to catch them, for they ran wild in the brush country of southern Texas. The animals had become savage in the fight for survival and were equipped with long and sharp horns. Yet the toughness which made them hard to capture also made them excellent animals for the trail drive. They „could walk to Hell and back again.“

The American cowboys adopted the work methods and even the dress of the Mexican vaqueros. The vocabulary of the cowboy is filled with Spanish terms: remuda, lariat, stampede, rodeo, pinto, corral, buckaroo, arroyo, chaps, hombre, coyote, chili, gringo, quiro, riata, rancho, sombrero, lasso, and others. The mustang horses used by the cowboys were descended from the horses the Spanish had brought to the new world and which had had time in the wild to adapt to the environment.

The first post-war cattle drives were to mining towns in New Mexico and Colorado as well as to reservations and military posts, but the big markets were in the densely populated states of the North. The decisive question became that of transportation. Because of the political conflicts of the previous years between North and South – no one could agree where the first transcontinental railroad should be built, there was no rail connection between southern Texas the Northeast. To transport the cattle to the Northeast by rail, they had to be driven north to the new railheads in Missouri, Kansas, and Nebraska. Between 1865 and 1890, it is said that around 40,000 cowboys drove more than ten million cattle north. Five million were shipped east, while the other five million were driven to Wyoming, Idaho, and Montana to stock the northern plains. The era of the cattle drive thus lasted just a little over two decades. When it was over, however, the cattle industry was, along with mining, firmly established as one of the two dominant economic factors on the central and northern plains.

The first cowboys were young men, still in their teens or early twenties. A great many of them were former confederate soldiers, who had seen no future in the devastated South and had found no employment there. Initially, they often wore remnants of their confederate uniforms. A smaller number of Union veterans, men who were unable to settle down, also found their way to the southern plains. It is estimated that a fourth of all the trail cowboys were Blacks. Many of them had learned to drive cattle while slaves. They received the same pay as the white cowboys, but faced racial discrimination, were not able to advance to the position of foremen and were often relegated to less high-status jobs like that of horse wrangler. Perhaps another 12% of the cowboys were Mexicans or Mexican-Americans, who likewise faced racial discrimination. During the first drives, a number of Mexican vaqueros and black cowboys were essential in order to train the inexperienced Anglos how to handle the cattle. There were some Indians among the cowboys and even a few Englishmen and Scotsmen, many of the last group outcast members of noble families, who received financial support from their families. They were known as „remittance men.“ Two-thirds of the cowboys were never willing to sign onto more than one drive.

During the drives, which could last as long as four months, the trail hands worked seventeen-hour days, seven days a week for thirty or forty-five dollars a month. Dealing with thousands of nervous cattle was always a dangerous proposition, especially in the case of a night stampede. The inexperienced cowhand had to ride „drag,“ that is, behind the herd, and eat dust all day long. The food was monotonous and the men slept out in the open, regardless of the weather. Diversions were few. Most trail bosses forbid liquor and some even gambling. They were „poorly fed, underpaid, overworked, deprived of sleep, and prone to boredom and loneliness. It is no wonder that most cowboys spent but about seven years on the range before seeking out a more settled existence in the towns of the West.“

The trip north was wrought with numerous obstacles. Rivers had to be crossed, the tribes demanded payment for the herds crossing their lands, and rustlers stole what cattle they could, often causing stampedes in order to take advantage of the ensuing chaos.

When the cowboys reached the cowtowns, Abilene, Coffeyville, Ellsworth, Hays, Wichita, Great Bend, Caldwell, Dodge City, Ogallala, or Cheyenne, all hell broke loose. After months of biscuits and beans, water and coffee, hardly a change of clothes, little sleep, and only cows and other men for company, the men were out to have a good time. After a shave and a haircut and a bath, they celebrated the end of the drive with limitless amounts of liquor, were after sex and they were armed. Aside from the merchants and the saloon owners, who saw to it that they were well-stocked with everything the free-spending cowboys might desire, the residents of the new frontier towns were not pleased by the presence of the cowboys. One Cheyenne newspaper wrote: „Morally, as a class, [cowboys] are foulmouthed, blasphemous, drunken, lecherous, utterly corrupt. Usually harmless on the plains when sober, they are dreaded in towns, for then liquor has an ascendancy over them.“ What made matters worse was the fact that the sheriffs of the cowtowns were generally from the North. The mostly unreconstructed former confederate soldiers resented them and had no intention of letting themselves be arrested by a „Yankee.“ Few of the cowboys owned their own horses and the trip back to Texas was often by steamboat and later by train with a „cowboy ticket“ provided by his employer.

Abilene had been the first of the cowtowns and its history was typical. In 1866, it had been nothing more than a little
settlement with a few log structures. Joseph G. McCoy of Chicago came to Kansas looking for a place from which he could ship the cattle being driven up from Texas to Chicago. At Abilene, he bought 250 acres for a stockyard and with the help of the governor of Kansas and the Kansas Pacific Railroad, which by 1867 had a line running to Abilene, he created the first cowtown. During the first year, 35,000 head of cattle were shipped out of Abilene and the numbers increased year for year. But the history of Abilene as a cowtown was not to be long. More and more settlers were moving onto the plains and the herds trampled their crops and carried with them the „Texas fever;“ a disease spread by ticks, which killed the farmers’ livestock. The settlers made every effort to keep the herds away from their farms and their towns. So-called „deadlines“ were pushed established that were not to be crossed by the herds and with ever-increasing settlement, the „deadlines“ were pushed further west.

Townspeople also wanted to be rid of the Texas cowboys and those who served their needs. In 1871, Texas cattle destroyed hundreds of acres of crops around Abilene, causing the farmers to call for an end to the cattle drives. Abilene became a normal town. The story repeated itself with variations in the cowtowns which succeeded it.

With the growing use of barbed wire, the era of the big trail drives came to an end and with it the cowboys of the trail drive. He was succeeded by the ranch cowboy.

Ranch cowboys continued to need many of the skills as the trail cowboys, but more of their time was spent doing farm chores: repairing fences, tending windmills, and other ranch maintenance. It was still a rather lonely job and the bunkhouse offered few comforts. Those employed in the winter often had to „ride line,” patrol the outer edges of large ranches, alone or at most with one other cowboy, chasing strays and killing predators.

Today, cattle ranchers use all-terrain vehicles and even helicopters to keep track of and control cattle, but there are still cowboys on the job and the horse remains an essential tool of their trade.

### Cowboy Songs

During a brief period of thirty or forty years, cowboys created a unique culture and their songs were a part of it. The cowboy song grew out of the peculiar life the men led. It was an isolated society of men from diverse backgrounds doing hard, dangerous, and lonely work.

Cowboys sang for their own entertainment. With drinking and gambling usually off-limits, there were precious few diversions. The men reworked old songs, adapting them to the realities of their life and their work on the prairie.

Popular songs of the era, older English and Irish as well as sailor and lumberjack songs were sung and used to make new songs needed by the cowboy.

Probably the most popular of all cowboy songs, „The Old Chisholm Trail;“ was an adaptation of Stephen Foster’s song, „Uncle Ned;“ „Bury Me Not on the Lone Prairie“ came from the English popular song, „The Ocean Burial“ or „Bury Me Not in the Deep, Deep Sea“ written in 1830 by E. H. Chapin. „Streets of Laredo“ derived from the old English broadside „The Unfortunate Rake.“ Songs such as „On the Trail to Mexico;“ „Buffalo Skimmers;“ or „A Cowboy’s Life is a Dreary, Dreary Life;“ were adaptations of songs from the lumberjacks. „Git Along Little Dogies;“ descends from an old Irish song.

Ballads were sung in camp and in the bars at the end of the trail. They might be about any topic: the cowboy’s work, the cows, his horse, his sweetheart, bad food, some well-known cowboy or desperado, or the celebrations when the drive was over. Just as in other professions, be it the shanties of the sailors or the songs of the men who built the railroads, many of the songs of the cowboys reflected the rhythm of their work. Most of the authentic cowboy songs, that is, the songs created by working cowboys, were slow, almost like a lullaby, „as slow as a horse walks around sleeping cattle at night, and the majority of them were mournful;“ Singing was a part of their job, a tool used to control the herd. One former cowboy reported: „The singing was supposed to soothe [the cattle] and it did; I don’t know why, unless it was
that a sound they were used to would keep them from spooking at other noises. I know that if you wasn’t singing, any little sound in the night — it might be just a horse shaking himself — could make them leave the country; but if you were singing, they wouldn’t notice it. The two men on guard would circle around with their horses on a walk, if it was a clear night and the cattle was bedded down and quiet, and one man would sing a verse of a song, and his partner on the other side of the herd would sing another verse; and you’d go through a whole song that way. “The night riders often sang church songs or hymns.

There were of course songs sung during a roundup, while driving the cattle, and at the end of the trail. They were not necessarily quiet affairs. There were songs of bragging and of course there were obscene songs, which the cowboys loved, but which did not make their way into too many collections of cowboy songs. Ballads were also intended for camp entertainment rather than singing to the cows. Not surprisingly, as most of the first generation of cowboys were Civil War veterans, the love ballad, “Lorena,” which had enjoyed wide popularity on both sides during the war, was the most widely sung song during the trail drive era.

The amount of singing believed to be done by trail drive cowboys as well as the range cowboys in the early days may, however, be a bit exaggerated, a product of a romantic notion more than reality. Song hunters were rarely able to find former cowboys who knew more than a verse or two of any song. Jack Thorp, a working cowboy after the trail drive era, remembered: “It is generally thought that cowboys did a lot of singing around the herd to quiet them on the bed ground. I have been asked about this, and I’ll say that I have stood my share of night watches in fifty years, and I seldom heard any singing of that kind. What you would hear as you passed your partner on guard, would be a kind of low hum of whistle, and you wouldn’t know what it was. Just some old hymn tune, like as not — something to kill time and not bad enough to make the herd want to get up and run.” And he wrote: “A lot of singing on the range had nothing to do with cowboy songs as such. In different camps I encountered railroad, mountain, river, and granger songs, as well as sticky-sweet sentimental ballads like ‘Mollie Lou, Sweet Mollie Mine,’ and ‘My Little Georgie May.’”

The creation of cowboy songs was surely not a conscious process. “The cowboy hardly ever knew what tune he was singing his song to; just some old, old tune that he had heard and known as a boy. Very often familiar airs were used.” The products, Thorp wrote, “weren’t ‘cultured’ songs. Sometimes the rhymes didn’t match very well. Often the language was rough and had to be heavily expurgated for publication. But ballad-making and song-singing were living parts of cowboy life.”

Many songs about cowboys were composed in the years following the end of the trail drive and were absorbed into the oral cowboy song tradition. „Little Joe, the Wrangler“ written in 1898 by Jack Thorp, for example, quickly spread from one cowcamp to another.

Cowboy songs were not sung in groups, which might account for the loneliness expressed in so many of them. The bronco-buster and cowboy poet Harry Stephens remembers: „You’d hardly ever hear cowboys singin’ together much. Generally each one of them had such a different kind of a tune that each one would have to sing by himself. See, they all come from different places, they knew the songs different. So mostly they’d kind of recite things. Some of them boys couldn’t carry a tune less’n they pack it over their shoulders in a gunny-sack. So they’d kindly just say it or speak it off.”

Jack Thorp confirmed this, „Cowboy songs were always sung by one person, never by a group. I never did hear a cowboy with a real good voice; if he had one to start with, he always lost it bawling at cattle, or sleeping out in the open, or tellin’ the judge he didn’t steal that horse.” Instruments were few, but one trail driver wrote, „It was a poor cow outfit that did not have in its equipment at least one fiddle or banjo, and a man who could play the same. Some played well, and others not so good.” Occasionally, a fiddle player might be played to calm the cattle at night.

Even after the end of the open range, the skills needed to work with the cows pretty much remained the same, but the life of the cowboy was nonetheless changed. Many songs survived, new ones were written under the changed conditions and many of these romanticized the cowboy past. Already in the 1870s, so-called dime novels appeared popularizing a fancifully romantic view of the West. One publisher alone, Beadle and Adams, published around 2,200 titles about the West. The Virginian, by Owen Wister, became a best-seller when published in 1902. With the 20th century came the movies. The Great Train Robbery premiered in 1903 and over the next sixty years at least a third of all the movies made in the United States were „westerns.” Out of this popular hunger for the „wild west” grew the singing cowboys of the movies. But the image of the cowboy with the spotless white hat, the shining silver colt, and the guitar had little to do with the reality of the work of the cowboy of the trail drive or later the ranch.

The beginnings of the cowboy song as an identifiable musical genre came with the publication in 1908 of N. Howard „Jack” Thorp’s Songs of the Cowboy and John A. Lomax’s Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads, incidentally using nineteen songs from Thorp’s collection, two years later. Jack Thorp had been a working cowboy and was himself a composer of cowboy songs, some of which were included in his books. Lomax was a scholar. They preserved much that surely would have otherwise been lost. Because in both collections, there were few musical transcriptions, it was impossible to tell which pieces were truly songs and which were poems which had been recited to the collector. In 1920, Lomax published Songs of the Cattle Trail and Cow Camp.

The first cowboy song recorded commercially was “The Dying Cowboy” by Bently Ball for Columbia in 1919. It was followed in 1924 Charles NabeiI’s of “The Great Roundup” for Okeh. In 1925, Carl Sprague, an athletic coach, who had worked as a cowboy as a young man, recorded ten songs for Victor. One of them, „When the Work’s All Done This Fall,” which had been written by the cowboy poet P. J. O’Malley in the 1890’s, sold almost 100,000 copies and inspired other former cowboys such as Jules Verne Allen, Harry Mc Clintock, the Cartwright Brothers to record songs they had learned as young men. The original cowboy singing had of necessity been largely unaccompanied. Though some of the singing cowboys still sung a cappella, most had themselves accompanied by guitar, fiddle or harmonica. After Sprague’s „hit,” there were no further commercial successes. And most of these cowboy singers did not sing from memory, but used the versions of the songs which had been printed in the books of John A. Lomax.
In the 1930s, the term „hillbilly“ was connected with negative stereotypes, but the cowboy had a noble image, which was the seedbed from which the „western fever“ grew. Ironically, it was Jimmie Rodgers who drew attention to cowboy songs by way of his own western-flavored compositions such as „When the Cactus is in Bloom,“ recorded in 1931, and the cowboy hat he often wore. And it was Rodgers who introduced the yodel. The singing cowboys followed. Gene Autry, who began as a virtual Jimmie Rodgers imitator and made his first of over ninety films, „In Old Santa Fe,“ in 1934, was the first and most successful of them all. With Autry’s success, cowboy culture became an industry and brought forth numerous singing cowboys. Tex Ritter starred in over fifty movies, so-called „horse operas.“ Autry’s principle rival, though, was Roy Rogers, who had begun as a member of the Sons of the Pioneers, and after the end of the singing cowboy films, starred in a long-running television series. Other cowboy singers, such as Wilf Carter, known in the United States as Montana Slim, and Patsy Montana, gained popularity though they did not appear in movies. But the singing cowboys were anything but cowboys singing. Their smooth voices, the orchestral accompaniments and the fanciful songs, many written on Tin Pan Alley, made them popular, but they had nothing to do with the cowboy past.

The longest-lasting cowboy singing group is the Sons of the Pioneers, who first began singing in 1933. Their smooth harmonizing has made them the epitome of western singing.

After the Second World War, cowboy styles if not songs were all the fashion in „country and western music.“ Hank Williams wore „western“ suits and cowboy hats and called his band the „Drifting Cowboys.“ Hank Snow was the „Singing Ranger.“ Johnny Cash recorded western songs. Many „western“ singers, however, were entering the country mainstream and despite Marty Robbins’ album Gunfighter Ballads and Trail Songs and Eddie Arnold’s hit version of „Cattle Call,“ the „western“ in „country and western“ soon disappeared.

Looking back, Tom Russell remembers that there were other, less mainstream singers such as Ramblin’ Jack Elliott and Peter LaFarge who preserved the tradition of cowboy songs. Cisco Houston would also have to be added. During the sixties and seventies, interest in cowboy songs never died and led to publications of a number of song collections. Among them were: Songs of the Great American West, edited by Irwin Silber. The Macmillan Company, 1967; Songs of the American West, compiled and edited by Richard E. Lingerfelder, 1968; The Hell-Bound Train: A Cowboy Songbook, collected by Glenn Ohrlin, University of Illinois Press, 1973; Git Along, Little Dogies, by John I. White. (a collection of essays) University of Illinois Press, 1975; Ten Thousand Goddam Cattle, by Katie Lee, Northland Press, 1976. But it was not until the eighties that a „cowboy renaissance“ began to blossom.

From January 31 to February 2, 1985, the first „Cowboy Poetry Gathering“ was held in Elko, Nevada. Hundreds of cowboys and cowgirls from most western states participated, reciting new and traditional poems, singing their own and older songs. The gathering was sponsored by the Western Folklife Center, which has its headquarters in Elko.

Michael Martin Murphy played an important role, when he turned from pop music to the cowboy genre. In 1989, he convinced Warner Brothers into recording an album of western music. Cowboy Songs was a commercial success. The result was the launching of Warner Western in 1992, a label devoted entirely to western music. The first artists signed were Don Edwards, cowboy poet Waddie Mitchell, and the Sons of the San Joaquin.

Out of the cowboy renaissance, a whole subcultural infrastructure has grown up with alternative retail outlets, a strong live music scene, and grass roots marketing. Robert Redford’s film Horse Whisperer, in which Don Edwards appeared, was also a great boost.

The Western Music Association was incorporated in 1989, and sponsors the International Western Music Festival every November in Tucson, Arizona. The Association has over 160 individual performers and groups in its membership.

bibliography of cowboy songbooks

selected recordings of cowboy songs
Doan's Store (Doan's Crossing)

In 1878, John Doan and his nephew Corwin Doan established a trading post a mile south of the Red River to serve the drovers using the Western Trail. By 1881, when the cattle drives reach their peak, more than 300,000 cattle had passed by Doan's Store. By 1895, six million cattle had been through the settlement. Already in 1879 a post office had been established in Doan’s with Corwin Doan as postmaster. Soon Doan’s had a school, a hotel, a general store, a saloon and about 300 residents. But its days were numbered. In 1885, the Fort Worth and Denver Railway bypassed Doan’s and the cattle drives became a thing of the past. By 1914, the population had dropped to 30 and only the general store remained. Postal service was discontinued in 1919. Since the 1940’s, Doan’s population has been reported as 20.

The Destruction of the Buffalo

The buffalo – actually the bison and related to the European wisent – has played a decisive role in the history of the United States. When the Europeans arrived, the buffalo ranged in an area stretching from the Rocky Mountains to the Appalachians and from present-day Canada to Texas. At the beginning of the 19th century as many as 30,000,000 buffalo lived on the Great Plains. By 1860, before the slaughter began, their numbers had already been greatly reduced. By 1830, all of the buffalo east of the Mississippi had been killed. In the 1840s, it is said that the tribes sold as many as 100,000 buffalo hides to the American Fur Company. The ever-increasing number of horses were competitors for grazing land and the settlers who traveled over the plains also destroyed much grassland. Their oxen brought diseases against which the buffalo had no natural resistance. During the construction of the transcontinental railroad, large numbers of buffalo were killed in order to feed the laborers. Yet, there were still millions of buffalo. It took days for the herds to pass and they blackened the landscape for as far as the eye could see.

The Indians of the plains were nomads and followed the buffalo herds. Their culture and their physical existence were dependent on the buffalo. They ate the meat, used the hide to make clothing and for housing, made tools from the bones, glue form the hooves and used the tendons for their bows. The buffalo was a walking warehouse. And the role it played in their spiritual life was just as central as that played in their economic life. The importance of the buffalo for the peoples of the plains had even greatly increased after the introduction of the horses by the Europeans. The native peoples thereafter killed more buffalo than they themselves could consume so the women could prepare the hide for trade with the Europeans and Americans, acquiring with them desired objects of the white man’s culture. As long as they had this source of wealth, the peoples of the plains were undefeatable and stood in the way of white settlement of the West.

In 1870, a method was developed for making fine leather from buffalo hides. The slaughter began. The American government put a bounty on buffalo hides. The existence of the railroad made possible the killing-off of the buffalo herds by providing transportation to the eastern markets. Groups of buffalo hunters set off: two men to shoot, four to skin and a cook. The slow-moving animals were easy prey for the hunters. A good shot could easily kill 75 to 100 buffalo with just as many shots. Soon the plains were covered with carcasses, food for the wolves and the vultures, no longer for the Indians. The hides brought good prices in the East. Sometimes the slaughter approached the absurd. Trains took „hunters“ to the herds. These „hunters“ killed thousands of buffalo without leaving the train. It was called „sport.“ Soon one could walk for miles on buffalo skeletons without touching the ground.

By 1872, a half a million buffalo had been killed on the southern plains, killed only for their hides. The slaughter assumed such dimensions that in 1874, a bill was introduced into Congress making it illegal to kill a buffalo one did not eat. Both houses of Congress passed the bill, but President Grant did not sign it, so the slaughter continued. Those peoples whose existence depended upon the buffalo resisted. During the summer of 1874, Kiowa, Comanche, Arapaho and Cheyenne drove the buffalo hunters from the plains. The United States Army struck back, pursued the tribes and
saw to it that the hunters could continue their “work.” The killing increased and by the end of the decade, virtually all the buffalo on the southern plains has been slaughtered. The song „Range of the Buffalo“ in a document from that period.

On the northern plains, the mass killing of the buffalo was delayed by the strength of the Sioux. But by 1879, almost all the buffalo in Wyoming and Nebraska were dead, four years later, the buffalo in Montana and the Dakota Territory. In 1884, the last wagon of buffalo hides left Dickinson, Dakota Territory.

Later, the animals were economically exploited once more. The collection and sale of buffalo bones was good business as long as they lasted. Twenty to twenty-five dollars was paid for the bones, which were turned into fertilizer. The railroads transported settlers to the West in so-called “buffalo wagons.” For the return trip they were filled with buffalo bones. By the end of the 19th century, there were no more than a few hundred buffalo left on the North American continent.

Photographs of the destruction of the buffalo

Bob Fudge


bibliography:
Bob Fudge, Texas Trail Driver, Montana-Wyoming Cowboy 1862-1933 by Jim Russell.
Charles Goodnight

Charles Goodnight was born in Macoupin County, Illinois on March 5, 1836, the fourth of five children of Charles and Charlotte Goodnight. When he was five, his father died of pneumonia and soon his mother married Hiram Dougherty, a neighboring farmer. Charles had but six months of formal schooling. Late in 1845, the family moved to Milam County, Texas. Charles rode bareback the entire 800 miles.

When he was only eleven years old, Charles began hiring out to work on neighboring farms. At fifteen, he began riding as a jockey. Not satisfied with that work, he eventually began freighting. After his mother’s marriage to Reverend Adam Sheek, a Methodist preacher, Goodnight formed a partnership with his new step-brother, John Wesley Sheek and continued freighting until Wes Sheek married. Thereafter, he began looking after a herd of wild Texas cattle. Goodnight became acquainted with Oliver Loving and when the Colorado gold rush created a demand for beef, he helped Loving send a herd to the gold camps in the Rocky Mountains.

During these years, Goodnight had acquired skills as hunter and guide. He served as a scout and guide for the rangers under the command of Captain Jack Cureton. In December 1860, it was Goodnight who led Captain Lawrence Sullivan Ross to a Comanche camp on the Pease River, which led to the recapture of Cynthia Ann Parker, a white woman who had been living with the Comanches for more than two decades.

With the secession of Texas from the Union and the outbreak of war, Cureton’s rangers began attached to the Frontier Regiment and spent the war years chasing Indians.

In 1864, Goodnight returned to Palo Pinto County and tried to establish himself in the cattle business. The cattle market in Texas, however, was poor, so Goodnight looked to the Indian agencies and army posts in the West as markets. In 1866, with his partner Oliver Loving, Goodnight organized a drive to the West, which proved a financial success and followed a route which became known as the Goodnight-Loving Trail. For the drive Goodnight built the first chuckwagon.

After Loving’s death in 1867, as the result of a fight with Comanches, Goodnight continued the partnership with his partner’s family and drove cattle to New Mexico as well as Colorado and Wyoming.

In 1869, Charles Goodnight established the Rock Canon Ranch on the Arkansas River west of Pueblo, Colorado. On July 26, 1870, he married Mary Ann Dyer, whom he had met in Texas, where she had worked at a school teacher in Weatherford.

The financial crisis of 1873 as well as other factors led Goodnight to seek new opportunities. He found new grazing land in the Palo Duro Canyon in the Texas Panhandle and with the financial backing of John G. Adair, he established the JA Ranch, which he managed and of which he owned one-third interest.

The enterprise was successful, but in 1887, Goodnight decided to sell out. He bought land in Armstrong County and built a new house. He ran a small ranch, kept a buffalo herd, helped found the Goodnight College, invested in unsuccessful mining ventures, visited and lobbied in Congress for the Pueblo tribes.

His wife died in April 1926. On his ninety-first birthday, he married his second wife, Corinne, who was twenty-six at the time. Because of poor health, he spent his final years in Phoenix, Arizona, where he died on December 12, 1929. He was buried next to his first wife in Goodnight, Texas.

bibliography:

discography:
A Meeting between Charlie Goodnight and Quanah Parker,


“All went well until the fall of 1878, when a large band of Indians left the Territorial Reserves and headed back into Texas, ostensibly upon a buffalo hunt. They passed Fort Elliott and struck into the canyons of the Palo Duro, expecting to find game on the way. Five years before, the killing of the vast herds had got into good swing, and in spite of its serious interruption by the Indian battle at Adobe Walls in 1874, the slaughter was practically done by the winter of 1878. Disappointed at not finding game, and having many hungry mouths to feed, the Indians found and began killing JA cattle in the lower reaches of the Palo Duro.

The line riders on the east side ‘sent me a runner,’ said Goodnight, ‘stating that Indians were coming in considerable numbers. I at once mounted a good horse and started to meet them.

‘The weather was bitter cold, with snow on the ground. Before I could meet the Indians, they had entered the cañon, where they split into three bands. There being no buffaloes at this late year, they were killing cattle at a fearful rate. The Kiowas seemed to be in one band, with two bunches of Comanches co-operating. When I met the Kiowas, they were in an ugly mood, and it looked like trouble. I met one bunch of them north of the Tule, another on the Tule, and Quanah and the Comanches passed up the cañon behind me while I was after these. I followed them up, and at sundown found them making camp in the main cañon, five or six miles below the ranch. I rode up and inquired for the principal, as among them were a renegade Mexican and a captiva, a woman captive, who spoke beautiful Spanish. Designated as the capitán, Quanah, upon my asking his name, made this reply: “Maybe so two names — Mr. Parker or Quanah.” Quanah meant odor or perfume, and he was named from the fact that he was born on the prairie, among the flowers.

‘I told Quanah I wanted him at headquarters, up the cañon, for the purpose of making a treaty. He pointed out that it was late, his ponies worn, and his papooses tired, but agreed to report in the morning. In the forenoon the setting for the parley was laid. They came up, ten or twelve of the old heads and a few of the young ones. Eight or ten of the outstanding braves were selected as inquisitors. They formed a circle and the interpreter and I were in the middle.

‘“Don’t you know this country is ours?” one asked. I answered that I had heard they claimed the country, but that the great Captain of Texas also claimed it, and was making me pay for it, as they could see by the land corners they had passed. The controversy, I declared, was a matter between them and the State of Texas, and if they owned the land, I was quite willing to settle with them. Quanah said this was fair.

‘“Where are you from?” they asked. “Are you a Tejano?” Knowing their bitterness toward the Texans, and knowing that they knew little about the United States as a whole, I told them I was from Colorado — which was in a sense true. I was in a trying position, never knowing from which inquisitor would come the next question.

‘“What are you doing here?” and every face was on me.

‘“Raising cattle.”

‘“Aren’t you killing buffaloes?”

‘“No.”

‘“Aren’t you killing them to eat?”

‘“No. I have plenty of fat cattle, and buffaloes aren’t much good.”

‘Then, being suspicious, they started in to prove whether I was a Texan or not by testing my knowledge of the Western country.

‘“What are the nearest mountains?” they asked.

‘“Sierras de Ratones,” I answered.

‘Then they asked me where the Cimarron was; the Capulin; the Tucumcari. Finally they questioned me about the Pecos River, and what I had been doing on it, saying that they used to handle cattle on that stream.

‘“Yes,” I said, “you damned pups licked me once and stole my cattle.”

‘Though this was a false statement, the interpreter translated it, and they just roared. They were finally convinced that I was “no Tejano” and said they were ready to negotiate a treaty.

‘“What have you got to offer?” they asked.

‘“I’ve got plenty of guns and plenty of bullets, good men and good shots, but I don’t want to fight unless you force me.” Then, pointing to Quanah, I said:
Mary Goodnight

Mary Ann Dyer was born on September 12, 1839 in Madison County, Tennessee, the daughter of Joel and Susan Dyer. When she was fourteen, her parents took her to the Eastern Cross Timbers region of Texas. After the early death of her parents, she took care of her five brothers, later working as a school teacher to support the youngest of them. About 1864, “Molly,” as she was known to all but her later husband, met Charles Goodnight at Fort Belknap. They married on July 26, 1870 in Hickman, Kentucky. The couple had no children.

Mary and Charles Goodnight made their first home near Pueblo, Colorado, where Goodnight had established a ranch. Three of his wife’s brothers worked on the ranch, one with one-fourth interest in the herds.

Drought and the panic of 1873 caused the Goodnights to return to Texas. With the backing of Englishman John Adair, the Goodnights established the JA Ranch in the Palo Duro Canyon in the Texas Panhandle. The couple initially moved into a two-room cabin, Mary Goodnight being the only woman on the ranch. As doctor, nurse, mother and sister, the “Mother of the Panhandle” cared for the young men who worked on the ranch.

Even when other women moved into the area, Mary often went six to twelve months without seeing another woman. She hat three pet chickens given to her by a cowhand.

In 1887, the Goodnights moved to Armstrong County. Mary helped establish the Goodnight College in 1898. She died in April 1926.
The Hobo

Hoboes are a part of American mythology, and they are part of American reality and have been from the beginning to the present day. They are sometimes called tramps or just plain bums. Even before the coming of the railroads, there had been men who roamed around the country offering their services in various places. They were often craftsmen. In such a thinly populated country in which the scattered small settlements could hardly support craftsmen, these travelers were most welcome. Many of them were adept at more than one trade, as they could not have supported themselves with just one.

With the growth of the railways, it became easier to overcome the great distances of the American continent. The real history of the hoboes, though, began after the Civil War. When the war ended, countless former soldiers had had their homes and their earlier lives destroyed. Their livelihoods no longer existed, their health was ruined. Many had known no other life than that of a soldier. The reconstruction and expansion of the railway network demanded a large workforce. There were jobs everywhere for men willing to follow the job.

Then, in the 1870s, economic depression struck. During earlier economic crises the problem of unemployment had remained a local affair. Now, thousands of unemployed men were drifting around the country and the best means of transportation was riding free on the rail lines they themselves had built.

The movement of settlers from the East to the West was not, contrary to legend, accomplished only be covered wagons. The American West was settled in the industrial age and trains carried most of the new settlers, many of them riding without a ticket.

In times of economic crisis, the number of hoboes has always increased. When, during the last quarter of the 19th century, a million rail workers lost their jobs, a great many of them became virtual nomads. Again in the 1930s, after railroad construction had passed its peak and with the railroad companies suffering under the Great Depression, countless railroad workers again became unemployed.

Hoboes traveled back and forth across the country looking for work, and when the economy took an upturn, many of them remained on the freight trains. For many, traveling around became an addiction, once they had started riding the trains, they could never stop. A lifestyle developed. Some hoboes considered their lifestyle a profession or perhaps rather a calling. Their craft had to be learned and for beginners it was not easy. A hobo had to have a map of the entire American rail network in his head. He had to learn where and how to hop a freight without danger and which towns were antagonistic when hoboes showed up. Hoboes had to be able to ride anywhere on a freight train, on the bottom, the top, outside, inside, in or on every sort of car. Hoboes preferred to ride boxcars, but they also rode couplings and hung onto ladders, to which they had to tie themselves in case they fell asleep. When they rode on top of the cars, they not only had to fight the wind, but also the hot ashes which could burn their clothes, causes scars or even blind them.

A hobo culture developed with its own vocabulary, songs and poems. In 1899, two businessmen in Britt, Iowa had the idea of organizing a hobo convention to attract attention to their town. On August 22, 1900, the first Hobo Convention took place. To this day, hoboes and the curious gather there. There was a newspaper, the Hobo News and even hobo colleges, the most successful in Chicago, the hub of the American rail network.

The life of the hoboes was, however, anything but romantic. It was hard and full of danger. The railroad police or the local police came down hard on them. Almost all of them spent time in local jails. In the winter or in the mountains, they could easily freeze to death. The road bred a raw brutality. Among the “brothers” there were plenty of men who were willing to take a life without qualms. Most carried knives for self-defence. Needless to say, riding the trains was in and of itself dangerous enough.

Though these nomads have always been looked down upon and even feared by most people, they have been, during various periods, almost a necessity for the American economy. On the big construction projects in the West, in the woods and in agriculture, large numbers of workers were needed for the short term. In the days before mechanization hoboes were welcome during the wheat harvest. Hundreds of men arrived with every train. The railroads, which earned well transporting wheat, looked the other way and let the hoboes ride. But the minute the harvest was completed, the hoboes were expected to disappear. The hoboes were the moveable proletariat of the West and had to be able to do all sorts of work, be it cutting trees, picking apples, driving a team of horses, building dams, laying track, harvesting wheat or begging in order to survive.

The Great Depression created an army of 14 million unemployed men in the United States. The number of people riding the freights increased dramatically. They were now not only migrant workers by choice or escapists with wanderlust, but rather desperate people who saw no other way out. Many young people were also drawn to the trains. For many, it remained but a brief episode. Others became addicted and spent the rest of their lives on the rails. These were often young people unable to find work and who saw no future in a middle class life or who did not want to become a burden on the family. It was not until the outbreak of World War II that the number of hoboes was drastically reduced. Those who remained were the men who could not or did not want to adjust to a normal life.

Today, there are still hoboes traveling in America, though it is becoming ever harder on them. Many who would have ridden the rail in the past now have cars, but the wanderlust, the life without a home is the same. The hobo is a product of the American way of life, the size of the American land, the brutality of the American economic system, also of the American myth of freedom and movement. In everyday life there is no place for him, he is even feared, yet for the American psyche he seems to be a necessity, the last free man.
When the 20th century began, the period of the westward movement was over. Americans had reached the Pacific coast and symbolically the limits of opportunity. For men who were restless, there was no more wilderness as a refuge when society had nothing more to offer them. There were numerous men, among them many immigrants, who wandered from job to job, from place to place, often traveling on freight trains.

In Chicago in 1905, a coalition of radicals, among them „Big Bill“ Haywood of the Western Federation of Miners and the socialists Daniel DeLeon and Eugene V. Debs, founded the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), soon known as the „Wobblies.“ (It is said the name „Wobby“ came from the Chinese workers when they attempted to pronounce „IWW.“) The IWW was a means of channeling the dissatisfaction of these unattached men. It was for the most part hoboes, former cowboys, sailors, loggers and homeless farm laborers who carried the red IWW membership card. For many, their identification with the international working class was a substitute for ties of family and religion. The goal of the IWW was the OBU (One Big Union), a huge single union. The Wobblies were uncompromisingly against capitalism and did not want to fight for a little bit more of the world’s wealth. They did not want a bigger piece of the pie; they wanted the whole pie. The idea was to call a single general strike in the whole world. Such a strike would break the back of capitalism and the means of production would then be transferred to the hands of the workers.

The IWW’s first important victories were their free-speech campaigns, in which they fought against unscrupulous labor exchanges. These labor exchanges offered a job for a fee, usually at some distant place. When the man got to the place where they were supposed to find work, they discovered that others were already there, the position having been sold to several men. Some of the employers worked together with the labor exchanges and fired the new men after a week so that the carousel kept turning. In many towns, the Wobblies were forbidden to speak out against these practices in the streets. That transformed the battle into one for freedom of speech. The special tactic the IWW employed in this campaign was first developed in Missoula, Montana, where Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and her husband Jack Jones had come to organize migrant laborers who worked in the woods. With great success, six Wobblies were conducting meetings in the streets. The city council banned such public meetings. The Wobblies were determined to protest against this ban, which they considered unconstitutional. Soon four of them were arrested. The other two sent out a call for help. In the September 30, 1909 edition on the Industrial Worker, they asked for help. Every person willing to fight against the „tyrannical oppression of the police“ should come to Missoula. And they came, usually in freight trains. In the boxcars, on the boxcars and under the boxcars, they poured into the city. One stood up, began to speak and was immediately arrested only to be followed by the next. Soon the city jail was full and the city used the basement of the fire house as a provisional jail. The Wobblies always held their meetings just before mealtime so the city would have to feed them. Professors at the university supported the protestors. Senator Robert La Follette, leader of the Populist Party defended the Wobblies in a speech in Missoula. Soon Missoula’s taxpayers had had enough. Keeping so many people locked up was becoming too expensive. The city surrendered and the IWW used this method in free speech campaigns in other cities.

Between 1919 and 1923, the IWW had about 100,000 members, but by that time the union was already teetering. After the United States entered World War I in April 1917, the IWW became the object of merciless repression. During the summer IWW headquarters as well as the houses of members were raided. Truckloads of IWW documents and literature were confiscated for use as evidence in future trials. By December, all IWW leaders were in jail. In 1918, 105 Wobbly leaders were charged with incitement to riot; 92 of them, among them „Big Bill“ Haywood, were convicted. The trial broke the union’s leadership. During the twenties, more than 5000 Wobblies were arrested by individual states. „Big Bill“ Haywood fled to the Soviet Union in 1921 to help build the first socialist state.

Haywood became a member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, learned Russian and married a Russian. In an afterword to the East German edition of his autobiography, one can read: „Haywood was welcomed by the Russian masses and the leaders of the Communist Party as a tried and true fighter for the liberation on the working class.\n
Wherever he went, he was met with enthusiastic applause. With pride he wore the medal which was awarded to him as a revolutionary hero and which rested on his breast when he lay in his casket. (William D. Haywood, Unter Cowboys und Kumpels. Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1980. S. 336-337. It had been originally published in New York in 1929 under the title, Bill Haywood’s Book.) Haywood died on May 18, 1928 in the Kremlin hospital. A part of his ashes were placed in the Kremlin wall, a part were laid to rest in the Waldheim Cemetery in Chicago, near the remains on the victims of the Haymarket riot. By the end of the 1920s, the IWW was beaten. It still exists today with its headquarters in North Sheffield Street in Chicago, but it is but a shadow of its former self.

IWW in internet

JA Ranch

The JA Ranch had its beginnings in the summer and fall of 1876, when Charles Goodnight drove 1600 longhorn cattle from Pueblo, Colorado to the Palo Duro Canyon in the Texas Panhandle. There he established the Home Ranch.

While back in Colorado to make arrangements for his wife to join him in Texas, he met John G. Adair, an English aristocrat interested in going into the cattle business. Adair agreed to furnish the capital needed to build up the ranch. They traveled to the Palo Duro in May 1877 with 100 Durham bulls and provisions. A five-year contract was signed which provided that Adair receive two-thirds of the property and the profits, Goodnight one-third. Goodnight borrowed the money he needed to invest from Adair at 10% interest and received a salary of $2,500 a year.

Goodnight went to work buying choice pieces of land in the canyon. He was a stern employer and allowed no gambling, whisky or fighting, but he was always able to find hands. From the beginning, he worked to improve the quality of the JA stock.

By the time their contract expired in 1882, Goodnight and Adair had acquired 93,000 acres of land and were interested in purchasing more. The ranch turned a profit of $512,000 and the contract was renewed for a second five-year period.

When John Adair died in 1885, his widow Cornelia continued the partnership with Goodnight. By that time, the ranch had grown to 1,325,000 acres.

In 1887, when the contract expired, Goodnight decided to sell out, though he remained manager until 1888.

With the coming of the railroads, the JA began selling excess pasture to settlers. In 1891, a school was opened at the Palo Duro community near the ranch headquarters. Over the years, the size of the ranch was reduced as former employees took up ranching on land that has previously belonged to the JA.

Cornelia Adair died in December 1921, leaving the largest part of the JA property to her son from a first marriage, Jack Ritchie and his heirs. The JA Ranch is still in operation today and is still owned by the Ritchie family.

Photographs of the JA Ranch in 1908

bibliography:
Will James

Will James was born as Joseph Ernest Nephtali Dufault in Quebec on June 6, 1892. He began drawing at an early age and as a young man, he traveled to the United States. James became a drifter, worked at various jobs, served in the army and sold some of his drawings. In 1920, he married Alice Conradt and two years later his first book, *Bucking Horse Riders*, was published. His most well-known work, *Smoky*, appeared in 1926, his fictional autobiography, *Lonesome Cowboy*, four years later. His books were made into movies and Will James gained fame. By the time of his death in 1942, he had written and illustrated 23 books. His last years were spent in Montana, at his ranch in Pryor Creek and his home in Billings.

Will James in internet

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Longhorn Cattle

The longhorn cattle of Texas developed over the centuries from the cattle brought by the Spanish and later mixed with northern European breeds brought in by American settlers. By the time of the outbreak of the Civil War, a cattle industry had developed in Texas, but it was disrupted by the war. During the war years, the number of cattle in Texas grew to as many as five million.

The longhorn cattle were products of the principle of the „survival of the fittest.“ They were the products of the harsh landscape and climate of Texas. They had lank bodies and slender legs. They could run almost as fast as a horse and often had more endurance and their long horizontal horns made them dangerous. They were wild animals and living free had made them tough enough to survive blizzards, drought and storms. They required little water. The bulls with their horns measuring six feet and more from tip to tip were especially aggressive.

The great number of cattle in Texas depressed the market, but good prices could be had in the East and the North. So Texas cattlemen began the difficult job of rounding up the wild cattle and driving them north to railheads in Kansas, from which they were transported to the markets.

Even before the war cattle had been trailed to New Orleans and California and even as far as New York City, but only after the war did the era of the great cattle drives begin when the Abilene railhead opened in 1867.

The Texas longhorns were ideal animals for the trail. Their hardiness allowed them „to walk to hell and back.“ They lost very little weight during the long trips. In fact, they often put on weight. They naturally stuck together, which made it easier to control them. On other hand, they carried ticks and diseases which did not effect them, but were harmful to other breeds.

The longhorns were the cattle which stocked the endless grasslands of the West left empty after the destruction of the bison. But with the coming of barbed wire, which made systematic breeding possible. The longhorns were threatened by efforts to „improve“ beef quality through cross-breeding. By 1900, the pure-bred longhorn was as rare as the buffalo.

From 1927, however, efforts were made to preserve the longhorn breed. Nostalgia played a role in these efforts, but so did economics. The tough breed created by the nature of south Texas came to be recognized as a gene reservoir. That is, their genes can be used to „improve“ breeds created by the cattle industry. The longhorns are tougher and more fertile than modern breeds, can survive in marginal areas and enjoy greater longevity.
Oliver Loving

Oliver Loving was one of the earliest of the Texas trail drivers. Born in Kentucky in 1812, he had migrated with his family to the Texas Republic, not long before it entered the United States. In 1850, he was granted 640 acres of land in Collins County, not far from the small town of Dallas. Soon he was rounding up wild Spanish cattle and driving herds east to the markets in Shreveport and New Orleans. In 1858, with his neighbor John Durkee, Loving drove the first herd through hundreds of miles of Indian-controlled territory to Illinois to supply the northern market. The venture was a financial success. In 1860, he took the first herd to Denver, after the discovery of gold had created a market for beef there. Because of the growing tensions between North and South, Loving was jailed by northern sympathizers in Denver. Only with the help of his friend Kit Carson was Loving freed.

During the summer of 1861, Loving returned to Texas and spent the war years supplying beef to the Confederate forces. When the war ended, however, he was left with $150,000 of worthless Confederate cash. He was in his fifties and father of nine children. Loving began to build herds around his ranch in Palo Pinto County.

After the war, Charlie Goodnight decided to leave Texas and take a herd with him. Knowing the trails due north were likely to be overcrowded, he decided to turn west to New Mexico and then north to the Colorado gold fields. Oliver Loving heard of the plan and offered to go with Goodnight. Goodnight was an excellent guide and Indian fighter and Loving knew how to handle cattle on the trail.

On June 6, 1866 Goodnight and Loving left Texas with 2000 mixed cattle and eighteen men. The route which Goodnight had chosen was hard and dangerous. The worst stretch was the 81 miles across the waterless, treeless Llano Estacado (the Staked Plains). There was no water, but the Comanches and the Apaches moved there freely. The cowboys drove the herd three days and nights without sleep until they reached the Pecos River. When the cattle smelled water, the cowboys lost control of them. The animals broke into a run and plunged down the banks of the river, many drowning as one piled on the other.

Although the plan was to drive the herd to Denver, when they reached Fort Sumner in the New Mexico Territory, they discovered the army was willing to pay top price for steers to feed the 8500 Navajos who were being held there. Goodnight and Loving received the enormous sum of $12,000 in gold. Loving took the remaining cows and calves on to Denver while Goodnight returned to Texas to put together another herd. Loving returned to New Mexico and Goodnight met him there. Here they formalized their partnership with a handshake. The trail they had taken became known as the Goodnight-Loving Trail.

After again selling their herd, they returned to Texas to prepare a drive for the year 1867. But the competition had heard of Goodnight’s and Loving’s financial success and other herds were being put together to be driven west. Likewise, the tribes who frequented the Llano Estacado had gotten wind of what was going on and knew it would be easy to stampede and steal whole herds.

During the 1867 drive, the Goodnight-Loving herd was stampeded and the men had to fight off Indians. Oliver Loving was afraid they might not be the first to reach Fort Sumner and decided to ride ahead with a partner, “One-Armed-Bill” Wilson. Fearing Indians, the rode at night and hid during the day. On the fourth day out, Loving felt it safe to travel by daylight, but they were attacked by Comanches. Loving was shot in the wrist and the torso and, convinced that he was dying, sent Wilson to inform Goodnight and his family.

When Goodnight arrived at the spot where Loving had been, he found neither his partner nor any Comanches. Loving had slipped away and reached Fort Sumner. There Goodnight found him. Loving, however, died of his wounds. The post doctor hesitated to amputate Loving’s arm and when he finally did so, he did a poor job of it. Before Loving died, he asked Goodnight to continue the partnership two years so that Loving’s family would be left without debt. He also begged not to be “laid away in a foreign country.” Goodnight gave his word. Loving died at age 54 and was buried at Fort Sumner.

Some months later, Goodnight returned to the Fort, had Loving’s body exhumed and encased the coffin in a box made of pounded-out oil tin cans, loaded it on a wagon and took it back to Loving’s family in Weatherford, Texas.

Top
The Mann Gulch Fire

On August 5, 1949 at about 12:30, a fire was discovered in a narrow canyon known as Mann Gulch, on the Missouri River north of Seeley Lake, about 20 miles north of Helena, Montana. It was a hot, windy day with a high in Helena of around 90° F. A crew of 15 smoke jumpers, many of them veterans of World War II, set out from Missoula, a hundred miles west of the fire. Between 3:50pm and 4:10pm they jumped over the fire. Crew chief was R. Wagner „Wag“ Dodge. The DC-3 which dropped the equipment had problems and scattered it over a large area. The radio was broken. Not until about 5 o’clock did the men finish gathering their equipment. At that point, they did not yet feel threatened by the fire.

Around 3 o’clock, the wind shifted directions and increased in velocity. Dodge had put the river at their backs as an escape route. Now the men pulled back toward the river. At 5:40, they still sensed no danger. But a combination of wind and intense heat caused a blow-up. The fire jumped from one side of the canyon to the other and cut the crew off from the river. At 5:45, the men realized that the escape route to the river was blocked.

The men began to run up the gulch. Dodge ignited a rescue fire in tall grass and called to the crew to enter his fire. They considered him crazy and continued to run uphill. Dodge lay down in the hot ashes of his fire and only seconds later the main fire roared over him. The wind was so intense it picked him up off the ground three times. At 6:10, Dodge could get up and walk about.

Only two others survived the fire, Robert Sallee and Walter Rumsey. Sallee was just 17, a year blow the minimum age for smoke-jumpers. For both of them, it had been their first jump.

The Mann Gulch fire is the subject of Norman Maclean’s book Young Men and Fire. Five years after the fire, Wagner Dodge died of Hodgkin’s Disease.

Mexican Immigrants

The large landowners in California were once extremely powerful. They were in possession of huge tracts of land, in some cases Spanish land grants. In 1915, the California legislature determined that 310 people owned four million acres. Since the 1870s, the large landowners have been employing whole armies of migrant workers for minimal wages to bring in the harvest. First, it was Chinese laborers, then Japanese and Filipinos. Finally, Mexicans made up the largest part of the harvest workers. In some years, as many as 200,000 people crossed the border, many of them lured by unscrupulous agents. Hiring these „illegals“ had many advantages for the landowners. They had no legal rights, could be blackmailed and, when their usefulness had ended, they could be sent away. The housing provided for them
consisted of tent camps, or they lived in shanty towns.

With the coming of the Depression, the Mexicans were no longer needed. The Dust Bowl and the Depression drove the „Okies“ to California, where they worked in the harvest and replaced the Mexicans. The owners were not afraid to use violence to keep their harvest workers under control and prevent the unions away from gaining a foothold in the fields. Okies were hated by the Californians.

During the Second World War and the years following, labor was short and the Mexican fields hands (baceros) were brought back. Still today, the „illegals“ play a decisive role in agriculture.

Palo Duro Canyon

The Palo Duro Canyon (Palo Duro means „hardwood“) lies south of Amarillo, in the Texas panhandle. The canyon is sixty miles long, has an average width of six miles and has a depth of up to 800 feet from rim to floor. The canyon was a favored camp site for pre-historic peoples as well as Indian tribes, the pre-horse Apaches and later the Kiowa and Comanche. The Indians were finally driven from the canyon by the United States Cavalry under the command of Colonel Ranald S. Mackensie in 1874. Two years later, Charles Goodnight founded the first ranch in the panhandle, the JA. In 1933, the state of Texas established the Palo Duro Canyon State Scenic Park, which attracts half a million visitors each year.

bibliography:
Cynthia Ann Parker

Cynthia Ann Parker was the daughter of Lucy and Silas M. Parker. She was born around 1825 in Crawford County, Illinois, but while still a child moved with her family to the headwaters of the Navasota River in what is today Limestone County, Texas. The family established a settlement around church of Elder John Parker, the head of the Primitive Baptist Church in Texas. What became known as Fort Parker was surrounded with substantial walls for defence.

On May 19, 1836, the fort was attacked by a force of Comanches, Kiowas and Caddo. Forty residents of the settlement were killed. Of her immediate family, only she and her brother John survived. They were among the five who were taken captive. The other four were eventually released, but Cynthia Ann remained with the Comanche for a quarter of a century.

She was given to a Comanche couple, who raised her as their own daughter. She soon forgot her white past, including the English language, and became a Comanche. She married a prominent warrior and Comanche chief, Peta Nocoma, and gave birth to two sons, Quanah and Pecos, and a daughter, Topsannah. Contrary to Comanche custom of the time, her husband took no other wife. She rejected efforts to get her to return to white society, among them by her brother John Parker.

On December 18, 1860, a Comanche camp at Mule Creek, a tributary of the Pecos River, was attacked by Texas Rangers led by Lawrence Sullivan Ross. Most of the Comanche were killed, but three were captured. Among them was a white woman, who could not speak English, with her infant daughter. Isaac Parker identified her as his niece. She did not want to return to white society. In the belief that her husband had been killed and on the condition that the military interpreter Horace P. Jones would bring her sons to her, she accompanied her uncle to Birdville. While passing through Fort Worth she was photographed. Her hair is cut short, a Comanche symbol of mourning. On April 8, 1861, the Texas legislature granted her land and $100 a year child support for five years. Isaac and Benjamin Parker were appointed her guardians.

Cynthia Ann Parker died of influenza in 1870 and was buried in the Fosterville Cemetery in Anderson County. Even in death, she found no peace, yet in the end returned to her Comanche family. In 1910, her son Quannah Parker had her reinterred at the Post Oak Cemetery near Cache, Oklahoma. Later, her body was again moved to Fort Sill, Oklahoma. There, just three months after her reburial, the first-born son she had never seen again and who had taken her family name, was buried next to her.

bibliography:
Quanah Parker (ca.1845-1911) was the son of Chief Peta Nacona. His mother was Cynthia Ann Parker, a white woman captured in a raid on Parker’s fort in 1836 and adopted by the Comanches. In 1860, she was recaptured on the Pease River by white soldiers and returned to white society, against her will. Her husband was killed in the same engagement. Quanah never saw his mother again, but later adopted her family name.

The Quahada Comanches had refused to attend the Medicine Lodge Treaty Council (1867), which provided for confinement on a reservation in exchange for food and instruction in farming. The Quahada Comanches became fugitives on the Llano Escadato (Staked Plains).

Quanah’s mistrust of the Medicine Lodge Treaty was entirely justified. The federal government defaulted on the obligations of the treaty. Rations were insufficient or not forthcoming at all, gun-running and liquor-trafficking by whites went uncontrolled and unpunished and whites stole the tribal cattle. The Indian agents, Quaker missionaries, did their best but received no cooperation from the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The army refused to fulfill the provisions of the treaty and between 1872 and 1874 professional buffalo hunters based in Dodge City, Kansas killed off the herds on the Cheyenne-Arapaho Reservation. The tribes were in a desperate situation. Comanche medicine man Isa-tai called for a sun dance, which had never been a part of Comanche culture. At the dance, he and Quanah recruited warriors for an inter-tribal alliance aimed at driving from the plains the buffalo hunters and hide traders, who were perceived as the greatest threat. In March and April 1874, a new trading post was established about a mile north of the adobe ruins of Bent’s old post. By the end of the spring, between 200 and 300 buffalo hunters were in the area and trade at the new post was booming. On June 27, 1874, Quanah led 700 Comanche, Cheyenne, Arapaho and Kiowa warriors in a raid on the new trading post, where 28 hunters and one woman were housed. In an initial skirmish, three whites were killed and as many as seventy Indians were killed or wounded. The warriors thereupon laid siege on the post. The “Battle of Adobe Walls” was a disaster for the tribal alliance. The superior weapons of the hunters defeated them, costing 15 warriors their lives, while the hunters suffered only one self-inflicted accidental death. Quanah himself was wounded. The military campaign which followed became known as the Red River War. The tribes were defeated in the face of overwhelming odds, but Quanah’s band was neither defeated or nor captured. On June 2, 1875, he surrendered his band of 100 warriors, 300 women and children and old men and 1400 horses at Fort Sill in present-day Oklahoma. He had reached the conclusion that there was no alternative to surrender. They moved to the Kiowa-Comanche Reservation in southwestern Oklahoma.

In 1878, Quanah Parker made a treaty with cowman Charles Goodnight, who had helped capture his mother. In 1880, he had become presiding judge over the Kiowa-Comanche-Apache and the Wichita-Caddo reservations. By the late 1880s, Quanah Parker had become the leading representative of the Comanche after having negotiated grazing leases with white ranchers using Comanche land. Quanah was an assimilationist. He learned English, represented his tribe in Washington, called President Theodor Roosevelt his friend and even invested in a railroad, the Quanah, Acme and Pacific. Quanah urged the development of the ranching industry and became a successful and wealthy rancher himself. He encouraged the building of schools on reservation land and sent his own children to school. He lent his influence to keeping the Ghost Dance Movement out off the reservation.

Yet Quanah Parker refused to conform entirely. He kept his seven wives, maintaining a twenty-two-room house for them and his about twenty children. He refused to part with his long braids and rejected the Christian Church. Quanah was a member of the Native American Church and is said to have introduced and encouraged the use of peyote among the Oklahoma tribes.

In 1901, the federal government broke up the reservation into individual holdings and opened the “surplus land” to settlement by whites, who soon outnumbered the tribal members.

While visiting the Cheyenne reservation, Parker became ill on February 11, 1911. He Parker died on February 23, 1911. At his funeral, he was dressed in Comanche regalia and was said to have been buried with a large sum of money. He was buried next to his mother. After his grave was plundered four years later, his remains and those of his mother were reburied at Polk Oak Mission Cemetery. Due to the expansion of a missile base, they were again removed, in 1957, this time to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, where he had laid down his arms so many years before.
**Sharps Buffalo Rifle**

The rapid decimation of the buffalo by hunters was made possible by the Sharps Sporting Rifle, an improved version of a weapon patented by Christian Sharps in 1848. The rifle could safely handle the larger cartridges needed to kill the buffalo at great distances. Its improved sighting increased accuracy and the weight of the octagonal barrel prevented overheating. The new Sharps rifle had a dramatic effect on the history of the Great Plains and surely made a larger contribution to the „taming“ of the West than either the Colt or the Winchester.

**Tumbleweed**

The tumbleweed is almost synonymous with the American West, yet it is a relatively recent import. Its native habitat was the arid steppe of the Ural Mountains. It was first reported in the United States in Bon Homme County, South Dakota in 1877. Apparently Ukrainian farmers had inadvertently brought it with imported flax seeds. It spread quickly and by 1900 had reached the Pacific Ocean. Known as the „Russian thistle“ or „wind witch,” the tumbleweed breaks off near the ground and rolling with the wind spreads its 250,000 seeds. It thrives in disturbed soil such as agricultural fields, ditches, irrigation canals and road shoulders. It does well in salty and alkaline soils. The destruction of the native grasses and the agricultural transformation of the West facilitated its spread. Like the Dust Bowl, it was/is an environmental disaster caused by the destruction of the native ecosystem of the West. It ruined the existence of many farmers. One North Dakota legislator suggested building a fence around the state to prevent the spread of tumbleweed.
XIT Ranch

In 1879, the legislature of Texas appropriated three million acres to finance the construction of a new state capitol, which was to be the biggest in the nation, surpassing in size even the nation's capitol. On November 9, 1881, the old capitol burned to the ground, adding to the urgency to the plans for a new capitol. During the following year, Mathias Schnell of Rock Island, Illinois accepted the contract for the new capitol in exchange for the land. Three fourths of the interest in the land was transferred to Taylor, Babcock and Company of Chicago, which organized the Capitol Syndicate, in which the leading investors were Charles B. Farwell, John v. Farwell, Col. Amos C. Babcock and Col. Abner Taylor. The state capitol was completed in 1888 at a net expense of $3,244,543.45 for the Syndicate.

In order to make use of the unsettled land, the syndicate established the XIT Ranch. To secure the capital necessary to finance the development of the ranch, the Capitol Freehold Land and Investment Company was formed in London, attracting investors such as the Earl of Aberdeen and Henry Seton-Karr, a member of Parliament.

Ab Blocker drove the ranch's first herd of 2,500 cattle from Fort Concho to Buffalo Springs, where it arrived on July 1, 1885. It was Blocker who suggested the name and brand for the ranch, because the brand would be difficult for rustlers to alter. At its peak, the XIT employed 150 cowboys, had 1000 horses and ran 150,000 cattle. Every year, 35,000 calves were branded. The entire ranch, which was 200 miles long and 40 miles wide, was fenced, a task which required no less than 6000 miles of barbed wire. 325 windmills and 100 dams had to be constructed to provide water for the cattle, an effort which was not always successful, many cattle dying from lack of water.

Due to the high expenses of running the ranch, the XIT operated without profit for most of its existence. Toward the end of the 19th century, the complaints from investors led to the beginning of a gradual sell-out of the ranch. The last XIT cattle were sold on November 1920 and thereafter the ranch lived from land sales. The last parcel of XIT land was sold in 1963.

bibliography:
The Real West was an American historical television series hosted by Kenny Rogers which first aired on A&E cable television from 1992 to 1995. One of A&E’s highest-rated series, it prompted parent company A+E Networks to create The History Channel to show reruns of The Real West and other new original programming, primarily documentaries. The Real West on IMDb. The Real West at TV.com.
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