

Tall Tales from the Wild West

from Daniel R. Mott Assistant District Commissioner District 23

The West - How tough was the West? I'll tell you. In a local paper from a frontier Texas town in the 1840's comes a description of a day's activities: two street fights, one hanging, three men ridden out of town on a rail, a quarter race, some turkey shooting, a gander-pulling, a match dog fight, a rousing sermon by a circuit rider who afterward ran a foot race for applejack all around, and, as if this was not enough, the local judge after losing his year's salary at poker and horsewhipping a person who claimed he didn't understand the game, went out and helped lynch his grandfather for hog stealing. And this all happened on a Sunday.

Too Much Talk - Two cowpokes had punched cattle together for years, and one time they out on a long haul. Each day, the two men would get up, ride off in different directions to corral the herd, and at the end of the day's trek they'd cook dinner and go to sleep. Day after day this continued. One night as they were about to fall off to sleep they heard a bellowing noise coming from the cattle.

"Bull," said the first one.

"Sounds like a steer to me," said the other.

The Next day they delivered the cattle to their destination and the first cowboy saddled up his horse to depart.

"Leaving?" asked the other cowboy.

"Yep. Too much argument to suit me," came the reply.

A Cowboy's Comforts - A cowboy's life was rugged, and out on the range he had known few pleasures. There was once this man from back East who thought he would fancy the life of a cowpoke, so he joined up for a cattle drive. The first night, as the men were bedding down, someone tossed him a piece of wood. "Here enjoy this," he said. "Tomorrow we're hitin' the plains an` you cain't git no kind of pillow out there." They say the fellow gave up and went home the next day.

No Complaints - You know the rules in a cow camp when they have no regular cook. When anybody complains about the chuck, they have to do the cooking. One cowboy broke a biscuit open and he says, "They are burnt on the bottom and the top and raw in the middle, and as salty as all get out, but shore fine, just the way I like them.

A Scared Crow - Shotgun Charlie believes in the worth of scarecrows. He told me that for some years he had one that terrified crows throughout Nash County. In fact it worked so well that one crow brought back the corn it had stolen three days before.

Saddle Song:

My home is my saddle,

My roof is the sky;

The prairies I'll ride

Till the day that I die.

What the Cowpoke Saw - See, I was ridin' along the Blackfoot Ridge on a roundup of some strays and I looked down and saw comin', hell-bent, from the south a train doin' sixty miles an hour, sure. The I looked to the north and there was another train goin' even faster on the same track headin' straight for the other one. It looked like they were goin' to meet right at the curve of the track.

"What did you do?" asked another cowhand.

"Nothin'."

"You mean, you didn't try to stop them or signal them some way?" asked another man.

"Nope. Didn't think of that."

"Well what in the world were you thinking about?" cried still another.

"Well, not much, I guess. But I was thinking it was sure one strange way of running a railroad."