

Cowboys

Source A



A negro cowboy, Oklahoma c1900

Source C

May 8: Rain pouring down in torrents. Ran my horse into a ditch and got my knee badly sprained.

May 14: Brazos River. Swam our cattle and horses and built a raft and rafted out the provisions and blankets and so on over. Swam river with rope and then hauled wagon over. Lost most of our kitchen furniture such as camp kettles, coffee pots, cups etc.

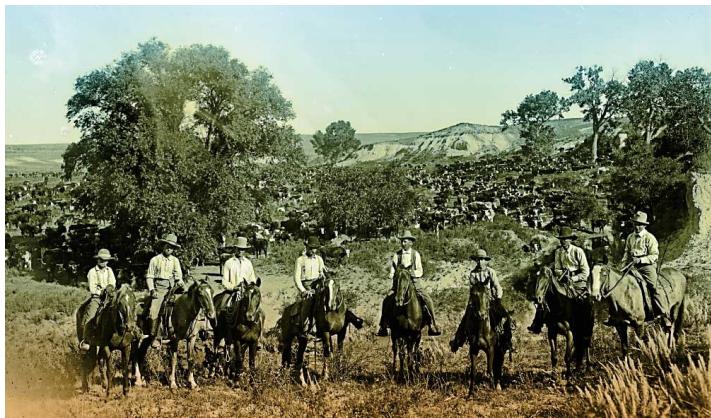
June 1: Stampede last night among 6 droves and a general mix up and loss of beeves. Hunt cattle again. Men all tired and want to leave.

June 2: Hard rain and wind storm. Beeves ran and I had to be on horseback all night. Awful night. Men still lost. Quit the beeves and go hunting men is the word - 4pm. Found our men with Indian guide and 195 beeves 14 miles from camp. Almost starved not having had a bite to eat for 60 hours.

June 19: 15 Indians came to herd and tried to take some beeves. Would not let them. Had big Muss. One drew his knife and I my revolver.

Extract from the diary of George Duffield who drove a herd of 1000 Longhorns from Southern Texas to Iowa in 1866.

Source E



Cowboys and their herd, 1882

HISTORICAL RESEARCH

© 2006 DfES for the many thousands of teachers & students who have used this resource. It is free for non-commercial use only. © Crown copyright 2006. All rights reserved.

Source B

"Not all cowboys were clean-living, hard working young men who lived a lonely life on the trail and had a good time when they came to town. Some cowboys were rotten. John Hardin was one of them...while driving 1,200 longhorns on the Chisolm Trail toward Abilene, Hardin shot two Indians, one for demanding a toll. A little further along the trail he got into a row with some Mexican cowhands. He settled that squabble by spilling the blood of five of them."

Robert Beverley describing cowboys, 1886

Source B

"While I was looking at him, this steer leaped into the air, hit the ground with a heavy thud, and gave a grunt that sounded like that of a hog. That was the signal. The whole herd was up and going – and heading right for me. My horse gave a lunge, jerked loose from me, and was away. I barely had time to climb into an oak. The cattle went by like a hurricane, hitting the tree with their horns. It took us all night to round them up...next morning we found them six miles from camp.

Charles Goodnight describing his experience of a stampede on the long drive (undated)

Source D

The typical cowboy wears a white hat, with a gilt cord and tassel, high-top boots, leather pants, a woolen shirt, a coat, and no vest. On his heels he wears a pair of jingling Mexican spurs, as large around as a teacup. When he feels well (and he always does when full of what he calls "Kansas sheep-dip"), the average cowboy is a bad man to handle. Armed to the teeth, well mounted, and full of their favourite beverage, the cowboys will dash through the principal streets of a town, yelling like Comanches. This they call "cleaning out a town."

D. W. Wilder, Annals of Kansas (1882)

REACT	What is your first impression of the sources?
IDENTIFY	Underline jobs that a cowboy does. Highlight in green positive aspects of cowboys. Highlight in pink negative aspects of cowboys.
INVESTIGATE	What information can be inferred from this source? Why? What questions do you still have about the source?
EVALUATE	How does this source's information compare with other sources about the same topic? Which are facts and which are opinions? What are the most important points from this source?

Source F

The cowboys lead lives that are full of hardship and adventure. The unbearable cold of winter sometimes makes the small outlying camps fairly uninhabitable if fuel runs short; and if the riders are caught in a blizzard while making their way home, they are lucky if they get off with nothing worse than frozen feet and faces. They are, in the main, hard-working, faithful fellows, but of course are frequently obliged to get into scrapes through no fault of their own.

Once, while out on a wagon trip, as I camped by a spring on the prairie my horses strayed off. A few miles off was the camp of two cowboys. I did not even know their names, but I told of my loss, and the day after they turned up with the missing horses, which they had been hunting for twenty-four hours. All I could do in return was to give them some reading matter; something for which the men in these lonely camps are always grateful. Afterwards I spent a day or two with my new friends, and we became quite intimate. They were Texans. Both were quiet, clean-cut, pleasant-spoken young fellows, who did not even swear. Yet, to my surprise, I found that they were fugitives from justice.

Theodore Roosevelt, Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail (1888)

Source G

The cowboy is apt to spend his money liberally when he gets paid after his long drive from Texas.

The people who own Dodge City and live there do not look with favour on the advent of these cowboys, and only tolerate them because they cannot well help themselves. They follow the annual cattle drive like vultures follow an army, and disappear at the end of the cattle driving and shipping season. It is this feature of the business that makes people dislike the Texas cattle business coming to their towns, and Dodge has already a strong element opposed to cattle coming there to be shipped.

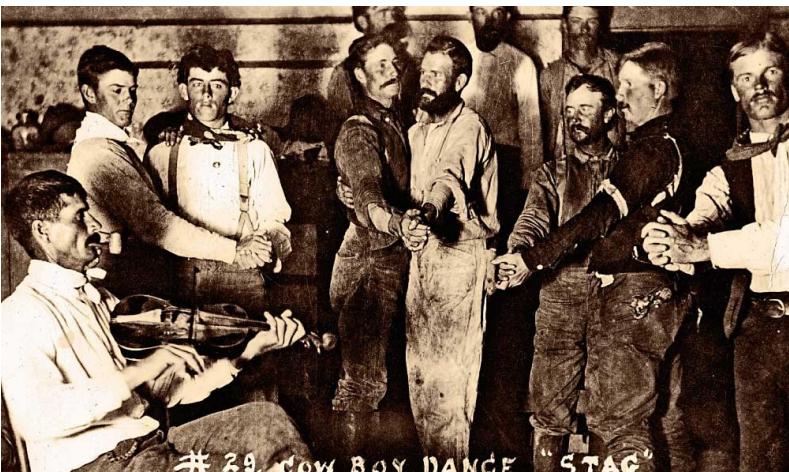
The Pueblo Chieftain (June, 1878)

Source H

We always rode something like seventy-five feet away from the cattle, and sang a song or made some kind of noise. That was done so that the cattle would not be frightened if we happened to have to ride near them suddenly. If they heard us singing or humming a tune, they knew what was coming. Also the noise we made kept the coyotes away from the herd. They often prowled around and scared the cows that had calves.

Evan G. Barnard, a strip cowpuncher interviewed in 1882.

Source I



Cowboy job advert, 1895

Source J

Stag dance, 1886.