

0. CHUCK WAGONS and BARBED WIRE - Story Preface

1. AMERICA and HER COWBOYS

2. CATTLE in the OLD WEST

3. U.S. COW TOWNS and CATTLE TRAILS

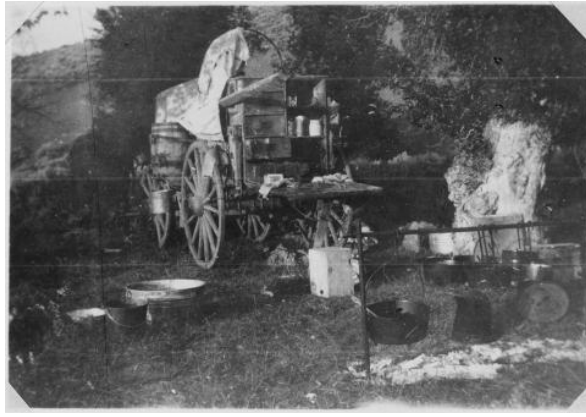
4. AMERICAN COWBOYS and CATTLE DRIVES

5. CHUCK WAGONS and BARBED WIRE

6. THE HANGING JUDGE

7. BASS REEVES - U.S. DEPUTY MARSHAL

8. BASS REEVES in ACTION



In this image we see a well-used chuck wagon. The U.S. National Archives, which maintains the image, [provides this description](#): "Two-Bar chuck wagon camped at Dry Fork of Elkhead Creek, Spring of 1907. Photo by J.H. Sizer." Click on the public-domain image for a much-better view.

Charles Goodnight, a famous cowboy who formed the Goodnight-Loving Trail with Oliver Loving, invented the chuck wagon. He, parenthetically, lived a long life (dying, on his ranch, at the age of 93) while Loving died young (after he was shot by a Comanche brave and succumbed to septicemia).

The chuck wagon, which was usually pulled by oxen, had a "chuck box" with a hinged lid. The hinged lid dropped down to become a cook's table. These wagons were a mainstay of cattle drives throughout the cowboy era.

But ... things began to change near the turn-of-the-century. Although cattlemen and their drives had transformed the fortunes of an entire region, they were quickly becoming irrelevant.

With railroad lines extending further and further across America, and refrigerated rail cars transporting fresh beef over long distances, the need for cattle drives was over by 1890. When trails and tracks became redundant, the cowboy's life on the range was doomed to end.

Further taming the west, Joseph Glidden introduced his "Devil's Rope"—otherwise known as barbed wire—in 1874. Within ten years, the widespread use of barbed wire had closed the Chisholm Trail (and drastically reduced the open routes of most of the other Western trails).

As windmills began to dot the landscape, and irrigation helped to water crops, the west changed even more. Then, in 1886, the area experienced a severe drought. With temperatures reaching 109 degrees Fahrenheit, on the prairies, crops failed.

The following year, in an extreme switch of weather, a disastrously cold winter storm struck the area. With temperatures dropping to -43° F, many cowboys died of cold and hunger.

With the heyday of cattle drives ending, a new system of raising cattle developed. We know it as "ranching."

Ranching varied, from state to state:

- In California, cowhands were called "buckaroos." Without the need to drive their cattle anywhere, buckaroos could build homes and raise families.
- In Florida, where raising cattle is still a major industry, "cow hunters" were also known as "cracker cowboys."
- In Texas, cowboys were more racially mixed than anywhere else. About twenty-five percent of them were African-Americans.

And ... in Arkansas, during 1875 ... a system of law and order finally arrived at the American frontier.

While he was President, Ulysses S. Grant appointed a new federal judge to administer justice in an increasingly wild part of the country. This man's jurisdiction would cover more than 74,000-square-miles inhabited by around 60,000 people—and—a growing number of outlaws who had flocked to Indian Territory.

The new federal judge was Isaac Parker. It wasn't long before he was also known as "The Hanging Judge."

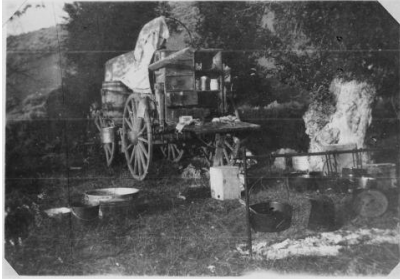
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Media Stream



CHUCK WAGONS and BARBED WIRE

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