

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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The term "cowboy" was closely bound to American image long before the 1990s. Rodeo claimed the image of the cowboy from the earliest contests to the latest and pledged itself to patriotism almost as early. This historical study was conducted viewing rodeo as a subculture and relating women's role in the sport in terms of both subculture and over-all American culture. Research substantiated that the cowboy remained linked to the image of America at the time the paper was researched and written. Rodeo attitudes toward cowgirls reflect the ambivalence that cowgirls and American women in general found themselves facing internally and externally.

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Rodeo Cowgirls:
An Ambivalent Arena

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RODEO COWGIRLS: AN AMBIVALENT ARENA

Introduction

The 1990s largest, most prestigious rodeo organization was the Professional Rodeo Cowboys' Association (PRCA). A governing body, PRCA made policy and enforced rules for member contestants, sanctioned rodeos, and contracted rodeo personnel. Each December, as a close to the year's contesting, PRCA held a National Finals Rodeo (NFR). The top fifteen competitors in each of seven events, calculated by money won over the past year, were invited to compete. The events were saddle bronc riding, bareback riding, bull riding, steer wrestling, calf roping, team roping, and barrel racing. Because of physical constraints, the steer roping finals were held separately. Although PRCA recognized barrel racing, an exclusively women's event and virtually the only event open to women, questions surrounded that recognition.

In 1987 Charmayne James, a barrel racer, went to the Finals with number "one" on her back, the first woman to wear the number. (Charmayne repeated this accomplishment in 1988.) To earn this honor she led all other contestants, male and female, in year's earnings in a single event.¹ She competed in one event and the relationship of that event to cowboy's events was ambivalent. Like most 1990s cowgirl competitors, she was a barrel racer. Her success would have been less noticeable ten years earlier since only recently had women won parity for barrel racing.² In the late 1980s, they earned "equal money" for contesting at

rodeos with the notable and significant exception of the NFR; "equal money" made it possible for James to earn more than any other contestant.

PRCA and Women's Professional Rodeo Association (WPRA) accommodated each other to a point but the relationship was confusing and uneasy. PRCA let the barrel race into the arena, telling the women to regulate their affairs to suit themselves. However, after James second year at the Finals as number one, PRCA contestants protested. WPRA allowed points to count for NFR standing at contests in addition to PRCA sanctioned rodeos whereas PRCA contestants could only earn points at PRCA sanctioned contests. Bowing to pressure from the cowboys, WPRA revised the criteria for qualifying for the NFR in barrel racing.³

Controversy over James' status was but one symptom of the problems between the two organizations. PRCA was condescending, defensive, or neutral by turns. After one top barrel racer expressed her thought that the sports medicine program was closed to her, barrel racing women were informed that they were most welcome at this program.⁴ Two years later, Prorodeo Sports News (PSN), PRCA's official publication, defended its minimal coverage of barrel racing. PRCA policy was that only members were given space in the newsletter - with one exception. The paper could publish articles about the past year's top fifteen barrel racers. Beginning in 1979, the publication gave last year's champion barrel racer front page status. With these exceptions "PSN does not cover barrel racing because it is not a PRCA event. Also, the women have their own

publication, as do the other affiliated rodeo organizations."⁵ In 1988, there was little mention of any woman but James in PSN; she got 12.5 inches in December and her name in a caption earlier in the year.⁶ In 1988 the official PRCA museum in Colorado Springs, Colorado, then called The Pro Rodeo Hall of Champions and Museum of the American Cowboy, followed Rodeo Association of America (RAA) established tradition and virtually ignored women. That is, their audio visual presentation, given in two eighteen minute segments, spent less than ten seconds on barrel racing. The visual image of the event was confined to a slide of a neon-like outline of a barrel racer turning a barrel.⁷ However, individual cowboys offered barrel racers more respect.

In the 1980s, some rodeoing cowboys cut back their contesting to promote their wives' barrel racing.⁸ Further, in 1981, Bud Munroe, PRCA 1979-81 Saddle Bronc Director, husband of WPRA President Jimmie Gibbs Munroe, and who became PRCA 1986 World Champion Saddle Bronc rider, said he favored a joint organization with both sexes given equal rights.⁹ In 1988 all-girl rodeos, where women rode rough stock and roped calves, were few and far between, but two women team ropers had earned enough prize money that they qualified to rope as PRCA members and one woman bull rider rode against men in that PRCA event.¹⁰

How did rodeo cowgirls get relegated to barrel racing from a larger role? The seeds for the 1990s role of women in rodeo were slow to germinate but they were sown in the early years of the sport. Cowgirls sat, desperately, on the edge

of change struggling for the survival of their roles in rodeo at the beginning of the 1950s. They could not have predicted that, by 1965, barrel racing would eclipse all other competitive arena events and all-girl rodeos would still be fighting for their survival. To examine what transpired to place cowgirls in this situation I explored the role of women in American rodeo from 1900 to 1950.

Historically and through my research, rodeo functioned as a subculture with consistent, if unofficial, rules and codes. Both in literature and in contact with contestants and supporters a consistent sense of community prevailed. Repeated references to "friends" and "family" were readily expanded upon and emphasized. Equally prevalent among contestants was the seemingly contradictory image of themselves as loners and individuals. Participants also emphasized the uniqueness of rodeo. Unlike most professional athletes, they paid their own travel and entry fees, and only the very talented few made money in the 1980s. But, they added, there was a lot of money available to the 1980s rodeo contestant as compared to his or her earlier counterpart. Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA) members and their spokeswomen (author's word), the rodeo royalty, stressed the professionalism of the PRCA contestant as opposed to the contestant of "amateur" associations. Rodeo contestants believed that rodeo set them apart from the rest of society. Yet, contests I witnessed opened with patriotic pageantry. The flag unfurled, usually from horse back, and a band, although often via recording, played the national anthem or another song laced with national pride before every performance.

The behaviors and attitudes found in this subculture were closely related to those found in the culture at large. This did not discount the definitional framework or activity which set rodeo subculture apart from American culture. However, the relationship of women rodeo participants reflected the role of women in the larger society, in which their history was obscured and they were relegated to second place at best. The cowboy image was intertwined in the American cultural self concept. The western hero of movie, television, and novel, was an image identified as particularly American. Rodeo and Wild West, as precursors of "The Western," were closely involved with this image. The image of "cowgirl" was less well known. Even the term was newer, coined at the turn of the century.¹¹

Despite the lag in language, and contrary to popular myth and legend, "cowgirls" have been around almost as long as "cowboys." Their roles included participation in the cattle drives of the 19th century,¹² as well as in rodeo and other related fields. With the growth in popularity of rodeo in the last decade of the 19th century and early 20th, women's participation in the sport became increasingly visible. Nonetheless, women were still a decided minority in the rodeo arena. Women historically competed, or gave exhibition performances, in nearly all rodeo events. Women were saddle bronc riders, steer and bull riders, and "bulldoggers," calf and steer ropers. Women contested on bucking stock in rodeo from 1896 until 1941.¹³ Both sexes contested in a variety of races, trick

riding, and fancy roping. During this period, men and women competed at the same shows and occasionally directly with each other.

The 1930s brought organization and "unionizing" to rodeo. By 1936, both labor and management sides of the sport had formal organizations. The first enduring rodeo management organization was established in 1926; the first lasting contestant organization, in 1936. In this period of widespread change in the sport, most women's events were dropped from major rodeos. Culminating this era for women, Madison Square Garden discontinued women's bucking contests in 1941.¹⁴ Cutting horse contests and barrel racing were introduced, as contract events, to the Madison Square Garden Rodeo in 1939.¹⁵ Together with trick riding (which became a female-dominated contract event), barrel racing replaced the earlier events open to women. This single race was a far cry from the variety of contests once available to rodeo cowgirls.

Barrel racing, the 1990s predominate event for rodeo cowgirls, had three distinct features beyond the physical ability of the athletes: 1. The riders had certain duties beyond those required of male contestants; they were required to dress colorfully; they were required to ride in the grand entry upon request.¹⁶ (Riding in the grand entry upon request was once a PRCA requirement of all contestants) 2. This event, more than any other rodeo event, emphasized the horse more than the rider's skill. 3. The event required no stock except for the horse the contestant provided. These features made the event a classical women's event as it stressed her appearance and down played her ability.

Understanding the 1990s situation required exploration of the overall history of the organization of the sport and a detailed examination of women's role from 1896 to 1950. Accordingly, this thesis examines the overall history of the sport, including the evolutionary period of rodeo beginning in the second half of the 19th century and the development of viable contestant organizations beginning in the years 1929-30. Another section is devoted to the women who played against this backdrop.

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RODEO: A SYNOPSIS

Origins and Growth

The brief heyday of the open range cattle era generated American myths and legends which in turn influenced American sport, literature, and entertainment. The Wild West, vaudeville, Hollywood, and New York publishing houses all nurtured the rise of the western hero. Novelist Owen Wister and politician-author Theodore Roosevelt were foremost early contributors to the myth. The range cattle industry and "cowboy" soon became entrenched in the concept of America and "The West". The cowboy of the range cattle industry became integral to our American image.¹ America exported that image, acknowledged by the widely read British periodical, The Economist:

Consider what America has given to the world and you come, sooner or later, to the cowboy. Love of freedom, individualism, restlessness, enterprise; impatience with the past, eagerness for the way forward; the culture of rights, claims and entitlements; and, on the most mundane level, hamburgers and blue jeans. Not entirely to their own disappointment, Americans realize that their image in most of the world is less Jefferson or Lincoln than Marlboro Man. As Larry McMurty, the author of "Lonesome Dove", once put it, if the old west could ever be considered over, "you might as well say that America [was] over."²

The London publication's thoughts should have surprised no American. After all, the cowboy image of America attached itself to United States presidential families beginning with Theodore Roosevelt and including the Johnsons, Fords, and Reagans.³ In turn, rodeo claimed the image of the cowboy

and scholars agreed, nearly unanimously tracing the sport's origins to the trail drive years of the Texas cattle kingdom.⁴

Although several locations claimed the first rodeo, each with some basis, the sport evolved rather than being systematically conceived and developed. In the 1880s rodeo inarguably existed in a form similar to that form it adhered to through the 20th century.⁵ Events were conducted as a contest with individuals trying to beat one another's performance; prizes were awarded for the best time or the best ride; audiences paid to watch. The Pecos, Texas, contest awarded prizes in 1882. Prescott, Arizona, organizers charged spectators admission on July 4, 1888.⁶

Wild West, a hybrid outdoor entertainment, popularized the cowboy games of the rodeo with Eastern audiences before rodeo made its way East. The most easily discerned difference between rodeo and Wild West was in how the cowboys and cowgirls earned their money. Rodeo was a contest, with contestants vying for money and prizes rather than being given a set wage. Wild West performers were contractually paid, either per performance or per season.⁷

Often the two forms intermingled, obscuring the distinctions. There were other differences between rodeo and Wild West, but contesting cowboys and cowgirls traditionally drew the line between the two on the form of compensation.⁸ While, ultimately, the Wild West served as a cornerstone to rodeo, for at least four decades the two complemented one another.

The coexistence of rodeo and Wild West promoted a way of life for the participants. Cowboys and cowgirls at the turn of the century switched from rodeo contestant to Wild West performer and back as circumstances allowed. Rodeo contestants found work in circuses and vaudeville, and later in motion pictures as well. Several factors, all primarily economic, might have accounted for their change of venue. Contestant or performer, professional cowgirls as well as cowboys, were on the road for the season. When not working, many returned home until the season began again.⁹

Rodeo and Wild West seasonal work presented financial risks that extended beyond the performer/contestant's physical talents and contract negotiating skills. As with any undertaking, the financial solvency of the employer played a critical role. Large western exhibitions occasionally encountered rough years but the onus of skipping financial obligations without legal action attached itself to the small promoter in particular. In 1916, at least one small rodeo promoter left town without first paying his employees and winning contestants.¹⁰ That year one of the largest rodeos encountered difficulties, too.¹¹ Meanwhile, technological changes which would influence the balance between rodeo and Wild West brewed.

Following World War I, American popular entertainment changed drastically. The introduction and promotion of radio and motion pictures provided new formats. The radical change in transportation represented by private motor vehicles and the dawn of America's Golden Age of Sport in the 1920s were instrumental in the demise of Wild West and the diminution of the

circus. After the war, the large Wild West shows folded and rodeo became the dominant arena for cowboy sports.¹² As the major Wild West organizations closed, participants faced the uncertainty of earning an income in rodeos or with small, often less reliable, Wild West operations. They frequently received less than the agreed upon amount.¹³

While the 1920s have been termed America's "Golden Age of Sport," rodeo contestants found the decade uneven. Rodeo drew large audiences, but the sport's management was disorganized. The financial rewards continued to couple the uncertainty of the promoter's solvency and integrity with that inherent in contesting.

In addition to unscrupulous promoters and operators who failed to pay off, cowboys and cowgirls faced other difficulties. News of forthcoming rodeos was largely spread by word of mouth. Additional difficulties included uncertain purses and inconsistent rules. Behavior demanded in one arena could constitute a disqualification in another. Judges were too often prejudiced, unfair, or not particularly well qualified. Other unpredictable factors were quality of the stock and no guarantee that an anticipated rodeo would even be held. Cowboys and cowgirls could travel many miles to find, upon their arrival, that the rodeo they came to compete in had been canceled.

Contestants actively sought remedies for their complaints. Remedies from 1910 through the 1930s included attempts to form contestant's associations and calling strikes. Rodeo contestants had little luck with either tactic in the early

years. In 1910, rodeo riders contesting at the Jefferson County (Colorado) Fair decided to organize. An association composed of bronc riders, the Broncho Busters' Union, demanded five dollars a day for contesting riders.¹⁴ The next evidence regarding organizing appeared in print in 1916. Fay Ward proposed unionizing in The Wild Bunch, a Wild West publication.¹⁵

The following year a small number of contestants struck the Ft. Worth, Texas, rodeo.¹⁶ Random strikes continued for another decade. In one case, Bill King, one of three judges in the men's bronc riding at Ottumwa, Iowa, averted the threat of a strike in 1927. The first day local judges heavily favored local contestants. The professional contestants protested, threatening to close down the rodeo unless the local judges were replaced. However, the professional cowboys wanted their own judge, King, retained. King, the cowboy judge, voluntarily resigned and all three judges were replaced, settling the matter.¹⁷ Although the Ottumwa rodeo felt pressure from displeased contestants, the first effective rodeo organization just had formed in 1926. The Rodeo Association of America (RAA) was formed that year by rodeo promoters, committee men, and managers.¹⁸ Intending to standardize rules and events with a system for championships, the leaders envisioned a core group of events conducted under uniform rules at rodeos across the nation. Rodeos which agreed to the events and governing rules would tally points won at their rodeos and award both all-around and individual event championships at the end of the year.¹⁹

With organization, the situation began to stabilize and the associated economic risks began to diminish. However, while the RAA helped improve some conditions, contestants continued to voice serious concerns with the system.

Cowboys complained about the accuracy of the standings. Because reports came in slowly and irregularly and depended on local committees' notifying RAA, keeping track of the points that determined the standings was difficult.

Nonetheless, the championship had more overall credibility than existed when individual rodeos declared their winners world champions.²⁰ Nothing mandated membership in the organization, however, and, as a result, RAA had little enforcement power.

In this setting, contestants continued to suffer biased and unqualified judges, lost entry fees, difficulty determining which rodeos would be held, purse offered, and promoters that did not pay off as promised. From the contestants point of view, the RAA decidedly left room for improvement.

Successful Organization

Increasingly, in the early 1930s talk circulated among contestants about organizing.²¹ By 1932, the "talk" took substantive form. Rodeo contestants at Denver's National Western Stock Show, Rodeo and Horse Show formed a union. The newest union wanted to raise standards of the sport nationwide. Drawing an initial membership of 95, it informally collected \$300. Directors came from Texas, Kansas, California, New Mexico, Arizona, Idaho, and British Columbia, indicating wide concern within the sport.²²

Rodeo contestants found lean years between 1929 and 1936, as severe economic depression gripped the nation. Rodeo cowboys and cowgirls were doubly affected because other people turned to rodeo either to supplement farming income or because the depression made farm jobs hard to find.²³ By 1933, they faced smaller audiences, fewer big rodeos and more smaller ones than in the previous eighteen years.²⁴ With lean times, the impact of promoters and shows that failed to pay winning contestants grew more serious. One rodeo spokesperson charged that fewer than half the shows were paying off.²⁵ Facing this situation, 104 contestants (a wide majority of the cowboys and cowgirls at New York City's large, month-long Madison Square Garden Rodeo) drafted and signed on October 16, 1933, a petition to seek government intervention. They believed bringing rodeo "under the blue eagle" of the National Recovery Administration would offer rodeo contestants and Wild West performers protection from

unscrupulous or insolvent producers. Nonetheless, they did not get the eagle's protection.²⁶ The NRA, a New Deal measure, was short-lived in any case.

Unsuccessful in securing federal regulation, contestants sought other means of protecting their interests. The new trade publication, Hoofs and Horns, urged cowboys and cowgirls to avoid shows with poor reputations, pointedly naming at least one such rodeo. Rodeo management responded; one committee called off their rodeo because they believed they might have difficulty paying off, another advertised that the prize money was in the bank.²⁷

The contestants' concerns received consideration by some committees although their 1934 association's name and origin was lost.²⁸ A newspaper account of the 1936 Fourth of July rodeo at Molalla, Oregon, hinted at continuing problems within the sport. This rodeo remained popular with contestants because ". . . the Buckaroo has always paid the Cowboys their prize money and has run all competitions with absolute fairness."²⁹

Conditions in rodeo continued to fester, undoubtedly with more debate and discussion in and around the arena. As with other labor strife, rodeo hands ultimately challenged the biggest establishment. Rodeo seasons of the 1930s concluded with two large indoor shows - The Madison Square Garden Rodeo in New York and the Boston Garden Rodeo in Massachusetts; neither were RAA rodeos. These large shows, geographically and chronologically close together, were unique for the time. The New York show ran for nearly a month just prior to the eleven-day Boston show. Between them, they brought the top people of

the sport together for several weeks, a feat both unique and important. The contestants used the opportunity to discuss professional concerns in depth.³⁰

By 1936, Madison Square Garden Rodeo in New York City and Boston Garden were the largest rodeos of their day, closing off the year much as the PRCA National Finals Rodeo did in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. One man, Colonel William T. Johnson, produced both rodeos. Unhappy with the situation in New York, a delegation of contestants approached Colonel Johnson, but found him unyielding. Anticipating similar conditions in Boston, the cowboys and cowgirls took advantage of the time provided by the New York rodeo to discuss the matter; they were ready to act when Boston opened. Their representatives met with the Colonel who remained recalcitrant. The contestants walked out enmasse.³¹

The strike provided a new area of contesting for rodeo people; never before had an organized, unified group of top contestants struck a large rodeo. Sixty-one contestants signed the petition. These and other colleagues sat out the first performance in the stands. The contestants, up against a major promoter, stood their ground and won. The Boston Garden rodeo acceded to their demands after the first performance, ending the first successful rodeo strike.³²

Nomadic rodeo contestants took twenty-six years after the first attempt in 1910 to organize themselves. Their organization followed management's RAA by ten years. As one might expect, several of the initial members of what was to be known as the Turtles had been officers of the 1932 Union formed in Denver.³³

In spite of their rough reputation, cowboys and cowgirls took a good deal of abuse before they stood up for themselves. The forces leading to the formation of the Turtles had built over a quarter of a century. A dramatic decrease in the purse, an inflexible promoter, and thirty days in which to organize for a strike at a rodeo that ran long enough for a strike to be effective, combined to bring these rodeo contestants to decisive action. Years of controversy over rights and regulations followed. In the background, the federal government for the first time looked favorably upon the efforts of labor to organize - literally, a New Deal.

The United Cowboys' Turtle Association, which soon dropped "United" to become the Cowboys' Turtle Association (CTA), faced several years of controversy and strife after the initial victory at Boston. Although Boston and New York were not RAA shows, the strike and the newly discovered influence of contestants worried rodeo promoters, RAA members or not. Rodeo's organized labor and management circled one another uneasily - with stiff legs and raised hackles.

Representatives of the Turtles and the RAA met at the RAA's 1937 convention early in the year and reached agreement on added money. The purse plus money collected as entry fees from contestants would comprise the prize money at RAA member rodeos. RAA claimed that, in turn, the Turtles agreed to "no trouble" for the balance of the year. All the same, the Turtles took issue with a number of rodeo committees during the year. Three of the most prominent

rodeos, Cheyenne, Pendleton, and Ellensburg, clashed with the Turtles over judging issues.³⁴

Problems ranged beyond the issue of judges. For instance, forty professional cowboys struck the Hinton, Oklahoma, rodeo in a demand for more prize money. The result, however, was that the Hinton Rodeo as well as Cheyenne, Pendleton, and Ellensburg, ran on local talent.³⁵

Reflecting the issues that had clarified within the sport over the first strife ridden year of the CTA, eight rules were proposed for 1938, double the number of 1937. The Turtle's top line, that these rules were subject to change at the RAA meeting, clearly indicated that the contestant organization tried to work with management.³⁶ On another conciliatory note, Guy Weadick, contestant and producer, outlined the problems of the past year. Weadick thought each side contributed to the difficulties and could contribute as well to settling them to mutual satisfaction.³⁷ In spite of this optimistic outlook, 1938 became another year of open disagreement between RAA and the Cowboys' Turtle Association.

A Saturday Evening Post article brought national attention to the rodeo labor issue and achieved what Weadick sought; a calmer attitude on the part of both labor and management. In January, 1939, the Pendleton Round-Up Association and the Turtles signed a five-year agreement. This reconciled issues of judges, livestock, prize money and entry fees, and non-union contestants. The Turtles returned to Pendleton in 1939.³⁸ Disputes, negotiations, and strikes

continued at other rodeos. But after years of striving, the contestants developed an effective voice which more evenly balanced the sides.

The Turtles held their last official strike in 1939 in Ogden, Utah. Serious discussion, including dissension within the Turtles itself, continued as the contestants sought common ground among themselves and with the RAA. Although the Turtles argued with one another, their ranks continued to grow from 61 original strikers to 970 members in 1939.³⁹

While the focus on labor-management relations continued within the sport, the new standards and enforceable sanctions seemed to help. In 1940, the RAA sanctioned 105 shows.⁴⁰ The Turtles' success inspired the formation of affiliated rodeo associations and the increasingly organized contestants confronted management until unrelated international events interceded.⁴¹

After the United States declared war on Japan, World War II exerted pressures on rodeo that overshadowed management and union differences. Years before, rodeo had failed to escape World War I unscathed. Contestants enlisted and Dell Blancett, prominent rodeo hand, died in the service. Bronc riders broke horses for the calvary, shortages affected the sport, and the Miller Brothers 101 Ranch show, on tour in England, had its stock seized for the war effort.⁴² However, World War II had a more profound impact on both the nation and the sport. By 1941, contestants traveled to more rodeos than ever and they traveled by automobile. Trains, trucks, and trailers transported stock. No one trailed horses by wagon any longer. Therefore, one of the most immediately and acutely

felt effects of the war was the restriction on travel, both through outright restriction and through rationing and shortages, particularly of gasoline and rubber.

One advance man and rodeo announcer recalled his travel difficulties of early 1942:

. . . pulling the big house trailer. . . . We were about 150 miles out of Houston when a tire blew out on the trailer. . . .the tires were practically new. We put on the one spare we had and proceeded on our journey, but we did not get far before we had another blowout and we had to start looking for used tires. The government had placed an embargo on the sale of new tires and as used tires were not yet under price controls, the prices were exceedingly high.

We had flat after flat and bought used tires all along the route. I bought one used tire and tube that in ordinary times would have brought about three dollars, but I paid thirty-nine dollars. I used them just thirty-nine miles when the tire and tube blew out. We arrived in Washington [D.C.] eleven days after leaving Houston and had spent about two hundred dollars for used tires. It was a trip I will always remember, and not too pleasantly.⁴³

Travel problems so impacted the sport that the Turtles searched out gas ration coupons and tires for contestants.⁴⁴ With most rodeo grounds located out of town, gas rationing made it difficult for spectators to get to the rodeo. The war-time ban on pleasure driving exacerbated this problem.⁴⁵ As the government preempted materials for the war, shortages of saddle leather and sheepskin for lining saddles also occurred. The 1943 Cheyenne Frontier Days confronted the metal shortage: there were no safety pins to attach numbers to contestants' shirts (a local laundry was the unlikely hero of the day, donating the pins).⁴⁶

Material shortages presented challenges, but the effects of the war went beyond a lack of goods. The first rodeo season of the war, 1942, found many

traditional rodeo grounds unavailable for the sport. The government pressed fairgrounds and rodeo arenas into use as interim camps for United States' citizens and residents of Japanese ancestry during the internment programs.⁴⁷ Likewise, government decree restricted the number of spectators in a zone comprising the entire West Coast, Arizona, and New Mexico. As a result, the 1943 Tacoma, Washington, rodeo turned away 40,000 spectators.⁴⁸ The 1943-44 winter rodeo in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, experienced a myriad of difficulties, one directly related to wartime restriction. The seating capacity was cut to 30 percent and the Sunday performance was canceled in response to protests from local churches. The promoter then skipped town leaving the stock contractor and contestants to finish out the rodeo.⁴⁹ Other rodeo personnel left rodeo arenas in a more reputable fashion during the war.

The military draft, coupled with defense work, dramatically altered the field of contestants. Many enlisted or were drafted into the service; others, turned down for military service because of age or old injuries, sought defense or ranch work to help the war effort. The public, however, had difficulty conceiving that the government truly regarded some veteran rodeo contestants as physically unfit to serve. The contestants themselves sounded somewhat indignant at the rejection.

Servicemen cowboys contested on leave, usually in their uniforms. However, throughout the years of the war, rodeoing became secondary for contestants in the service and in defense work. Rodeos reacted to the situation in

a variety of ways, all tinged with patriotism.⁵⁰ In 1941, before America entered the war, the number of rodeos regularly held in connection with fairs dropped by 28 percent.⁵¹ In the following years, other rodeos canceled their contests either for the duration of the conflict or, like the Pendleton Round-Up, for a year or two.⁵²

Meanwhile, rodeo promoted itself as integral to America, a part of the essence of the nation.⁵³ As Florence Taylor, writing in Western Horseman, put it:

Good citizens, anxious to cooperate fully so that the war may more quickly end, we agree that Rodeo, along with other non-essential activity, must largely wait until happier days are here again.

But Rodeo is so much more than just a sports event or money-making proposition, or mere spectacle for entertainment; it is a part of us, the American people; part of our heritage and way of life.⁵⁴

Early in 1942, the RAA urged holding local contests as a way of coping with the shortages affecting transportation and the scarcity of contestants. Rodeos met the shortage of contestants in a variety of other ways, too. Writers encouraged rodeo committees to avoid conflicting dates.⁵⁵ Fewer contests in which to participate cut down on travel and alleviated the problem somewhat, yet gasoline and rubber shortages still restricted the geographic area a contestant could cover. With more local contestants competing, this in some respects resulted in a return to an earlier era of rodeo. Cowboys classified 4F were supplemented by contestants too young for service and those too old to serve who returned to the arena, substantially altering the base of contestants.⁵⁶

The patriotic promotion achieved its end; rodeo began to be viewed as a morale booster for both the servicemen and the general population, and attendance climbed. Rodeos held near military bases encouraged service men and women to attend.⁵⁷

The sport's direct contribution to the war effort extended beyond sending contestants to ranch, factory, and battlefield. Many rodeos gave substantial percentages of their profits to the Red Cross and similar war related charities; in some cases they contributed as much as 100 percent. On the contestants' side, the Turtles invested \$17,960 of their 1943 treasury in war bonds.⁵⁸

A few months before the war ended in 1945, significant changes took place within the Turtles. A year earlier, Boston's advertising had capitalized on the historic strike and the origin of the Turtles at that rodeo in 1936.⁵⁹ Dissatisfaction, however, festered among the contestants. Everett Bowman, spokesman for the organization since its inception and long-time president, got the option of resigning or being removed. Primarily to signal a new era of cooperation, the Turtles renamed themselves the Rodeo Cowboys Association, hired a business manager, and established permanent headquarters.⁶⁰

While the CTA faced controversial and painful internal changes, a proliferation of other rodeo contestant organizations developed in the post war period. Among these were organizations for part-time, regional, youth, college students, and women contestants emerged.⁶¹

All-girl rodeos had been discussed in the 1930s and were held throughout the war and after. The Girls Rodeo Association (GRA - which became WPRA/PWRA in 1980) formed in early 1948. Throughout this period, the Rodeo Cowboys Association (which changed its name again in 1975 to Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association) persisted.

The mythic cowboy, as well as the working cowboy, was inseparable from the sport of rodeo. Although present, the cowgirl was excluded from the myth. The absence of a female image contrasts with a strong male mythic image that predated the sport. This male image of cowboy grew from twenty years of the American cattle driver, 1866 to 1887.⁶²

This made it only more poignant that the World War II period, and the development of the Girls Rodeo Association following it, were merely new signs of women in the sport. While not involved at the inception, women had performed and contested in the Wild West and rodeo arenas prior too 1900. Who was the rodeo cowgirl? Why was she assigned to obscurity behind the dust of the barrel racer?

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COWGIRLS

Early Years

While the Civil War contributed to the conditions that fed the growth and development of rodeo through the development of the Texas cattle kingdom and the trail drive years of that kingdom, the war also fostered the conditions that enlarged women's roles as they joined the work force outside the home. Although many commentators of the period encouraged women to abandon their new roles in the workplace and retreat to their homes after the war, American women played increasingly diverse roles throughout reconstruction and the Gilded Age. These changes influenced roles in leisure activities as well as work activities. Women began to participate in active sports and move into competitive athletics just after the Civil War.¹

In 1866, Vassar offered public sports for its students, and collegiate women baseball and basketball players shocked and scandalized the public of the late 1800s.² The cowgirl's situation followed the lead of this broader national scene and women joined the sport of rodeo as it grew.

There is little to suggest women were involved in the early impromptu range contests of the trail drive era but, in this respect, the Wild West presented a different story.³ Documented as a business enterprise and important to the budding sport of rodeo, the early Wild West also held importance for the future of women within the sport.

Buffalo Bill's Wild West introduced markswoman, Annie Oakley, who influenced the image of women in American popular culture in general, and rodeo in particular, for decades. Undoubtedly, the popular women's archery tournaments of the 1870s prepared the public for a woman proficient with weapons, and when Annie Oakley joined Cody in 1885, she was an immediate hit. A sharpshooter from Cincinnati, she knew nothing of cattle, horses, or cowboys. Nonetheless, she became pivotally important as the first woman in the Wild West milieu with a role beyond that of a foil for the hero. Annie needed to be rescued by no one. She achieved star billing in the show's publicity by 1886, established the role of Western heroine, and set the tone for the media's portrayal of the cowgirl through the 1930s.⁴

Other markswomen followed her in Cody's exhibition and other Wild West shows. However, several years before the cowgirl arrived in either Wild West or rodeo. Cody's Wild West introduced the first woman bronc rider⁵ in 1887 and cowgirls became a part of the "Cowboy Fun" segment of these shows.⁶ Although not the first athletes of their sex to perform in public, certainly women bronc riders of the Wild West shows introduced new elements of risk and daring for women.

The Wild West soon lost its brief monopoly on cowgirls when the women saddle bronc riders found the rodeo arena. In 1896, Annie Shaffer rode a saddle bronc for a Fort Smith, Arkansas, crowd. Thus, nine years after the first Wild

West cowgirl bronc rider, and shortly after rodeo first drew a paying public, women joined the ranks of contestants in the rodeo arena.⁷

As discussed previously, in this era, cowgirls found rodeos which offered a different selection of contests than late twentieth century rodeos. No calf roping contests, no trick riding, fancy roping or clowns graced the first Cheyenne Frontier Days or other 1897 rodeos. Instead, rodeos offered steer roping, bronc riding, and a variety of flat races, most often cowpony races, pony express races, and relay races.⁸ Eventually women participated in most contesting events.

Segregated by sex of the jockey, cowgirl races predated by a few years the arrival of other competitions specifically open to women. Cheyenne, for instance, featured steer roping, bronc riding, and pony racing at the first Frontier Days rodeo in 1897. Although cowgirl races were more universal throughout rodeo than cowgirl bronc riding or roping, Cheyenne waited until its fourth celebration in 1900 to feature a cowgirls' cowpony race.⁹

While early bucking contests often featured the animal as well as the rider, the very earliest rodeo races, as horse races in general, gave more attention to the horses and their owners than to the rider, whether cowboy or cowgirl. In that light, it was not surprising that Hanesworth failed to list the winning jockeys of these races in his history of the Frontier Days.

As the century turned, Wild West and rodeo flourished. In Wild West, the prominent role of women, which Annie Oakley pioneered with William F. Cody, expanded through other shows. Mulhall's Wild West of the turn of the century,

similar to its sister, the 101 Wild West, was predominately "Cowboy Fun." Cody's show incorporated riding acts and assorted other animal acts of many countries. As might be expected from a show featuring "Cowboy Fun", the Mulhalls from time to time promoted rodeos as well as Wild West throughout the life of their business. Such flexibility on the part of producers encouraged troupers of both sexes to move from the rodeo arena to the Wild West arena and back.

Sharpshooter Annie Oakley confined herself to Wild West and circus acts, but roper Lucille Mulhall took her talents into competition in the rodeo arena as well as exhibiting them in the Wild West. Lucille was featured in her family's Wild West with her father, Zach Mulhall, as fan and promoter. Both a trick roper and a steer roper, she gained status as the first recorded woman roper in 1902. That year she made her first competitive steer roping bid, contesting with men at the Oklahoma City Cattleman's Convention.¹⁰ Lucille exhibited and contested in a variety of shows besides the family one, in particular the neighboring Miller Brothers' 101 Ranch Show. Lucille's experience shows that versatile cowgirls changed venue along with cowboys in those early years.

Enterprising women, ill-suited to confinement in narrow roles, soon gained another foothold in Wild West. "Montana Belle" operated a combined circus and Wild West around the turn of the century.¹¹ Innovative and independent as "Belle" may have been, her stage name seems to be all that survived. However, both bronc riders and ropers of the era fared better.

Seemingly Cleo's darlings for the woman's side of rodeo, lady bronc riders received more attention from the sports' historians than the cowgirl ropers as to both who contested first and where. A rodeo legend claimed that Prairie Rose Henderson broke the contesting barrier at Cheyenne, in 1901, challenging judges who resisted her entry in bronc riding. The rules, she pointed out, failed to prohibit a woman from contesting. The legend maintained that Prairie Rose got her ride - possibly riding against men.¹²

The earliest documented example of women competing with men featured Lucille Mulhall. Lucille's debut vying with men steer ropers in 1902 was followed by her challenge of the cowboys at the El Paso Convention the following year.¹³ This expansion of women's roles took place in a sport which was itself in a dynamic phase.

Rodeo, with the flexibility of youth, continued to add new events as it developed. In 1902, two years after the Frontier Days committee provided for cowgirl pony racing, Cheyenne added trick riding as an exhibition but did not initially segregate the event by sex. Largely gymnastics performed on a running horse, trick riding's debut as a woman's event received far less attention from historians than did either bronc riding or steer roping. Even steer wrestling (bulldogging), which women performed only on contract, received more of their attention.

Women found their way into larger as well as smaller rodeos, competing in an expanding variety of events. Both women and men participated in the limited

offerings of special event rodeos. The Frontier Days' grounds held a special performance rodeo May 3, 1903, for President Roosevelt. Roping and bucking contests and four races, including a cowgirl's race, comprised the program.¹⁴

The following year another cowgirl's bronc riding debut at the Cheyenne Frontier Days received the solid documentation that Prairie Rose Henderson's fabled ride of 1901 lacked. Bertha Kaepernik¹⁵ rode broncs and entered the wild horse race within the first few years of the Cheyenne celebration. In 1904, she rode her first Cheyenne bronc in a muddy arena that the cowboys did not want to chance. The fear of being outdone by a woman served as motivation for the men; after her ride, the cowboys mounted their broncs without question. Although Cheyenne offered ladies' bronc riding as an exhibition in 1903, Kaepernik's 1904 ride was the first official cowgirl's bronc ride at the Frontier Days. The Cheyenne Tribune reported her first ride as an exhibition ride. No other women rode that day and other events separated her ride from the men's bronc riding. The account of the finals, however, stated clearly that the judges selected Kaepernik to ride against cowboys for the championship in the bucking contest. She rode broncs at Cheyenne again in 1905.¹⁶ Although Hanesworth claimed Cheyenne offered the event as an exhibition beginning in 1903, his list of champion ladies saddle bronc riders began with the year 1906, confusing the issue somewhat.¹⁷

Although roping and bronc riding were regarded as rodeo's classical events with both the public and participants, horse racing, too, was closely tied to the

sport. Here, more than in any other event, the livestock held sway. As mentioned earlier, the horses initially held the audiences' attention. However, rodeo jockeys soon gained notice. In part, this was a product of the developing diversity from straight of way racing to more complicated races. For the most part, each specialty horse race run at turn of the century rodeos required a different talent or training of the stock. Yet these horses were eclipsed by the jockeys, and the derby horses, in particular, remained unrecognized as special stock. While Roman racing horses and relay horses sometimes were untrained in their events, the derby horses were totally unbroken.¹⁸ Wilder than they initially sounded, the "derby" or wild horse race required a team of a rider and two or more assistants pitted against one horse. First, the team caught and saddled the untrained animal in the arena. Next, with help from team mates holding the horse and steadying the hastily cinched saddle, the rider mounted and rode the animal around a prescribed route. Occasionally, women participated in these derbies where, although receiving more acclaim than the stock, the riding team remained relatively obscure. Bertha Kaepernik Blancett, the bronc rider, premiered Cheyenne's Wild Horse Race for women in 1904, the year of her first documented bronc ride at that rodeo.¹⁹

Derby or wild horse race horses and their human foes were part of a hybrid event, part race, part bucking contest. Unlike bronc riding, inverse credit went to the team with a strong buckler. Instead of receiving credit for subduing a difficult mount, the team was judged solely on their time from the start of the race to the

finish. A more compliant horse sped the process, aiding the team's score. Unlike the derby horses, most other rodeo race stock had both talent and training.

Talent and training were supplemented by other criteria for certain rodeo race horses. Breeding counted in at least one type of turn of the century rodeo race. Tamer than the derby, cowpony races were restricted to cowponies or "plug" horses as opposed to larger Thoroughbreds or other traditional track horses. These races ran a short length with one horse per rider. In the 1905 Frontier Days' Celebration, the judges disqualified three mounts from the cowgirls' "plug ponies" race. The animals were too finely bred and failed the "plug" test.²⁰

The physical appearance of the horses in the races of these years contributed to the image of rodeo and Wild West. Contestants and performers in this budding sport that blended talent and show business also built that image. Almost as soon as she joined Buffalo Bill's Wild West, the show's publicity featured Annie Oakley in buckskins and sombrero. Rodeo, however, was more relaxed regarding costuming than the highly staged Wild West.

Early rodeo cowgirls often dressed in street clothes in the arena and between 1900 and 1910 photographs showed them dressed like other women of their communities. Early women relay racers once jockeyed in bonnets and long skirts.²¹ Bertha Kaepernik Blancett's 1905 bronc ride illustrated the fashion. The horse's feet were off the ground, his back arched in mid buck. Bertha sat astride in a long, divided skirt, and light colored blouse in the style of the day. Lucille

Mulhall stood in the arena roping. Her long skirt brushed the ground and her blouse, too, was typical of the era.

However they dressed, cowgirls found themselves featured in rodeo and Wild West publicity. Wild West show publicists and rodeo promoters used the cowgirl and her image in their promotions but the independent press picked up the story, too. Some written accounts in the popular press disparaged the cowgirl, viewing her as a show girl. The cowgirls chose a gentle counterattack in 1907: May Lillie, wife of Wild West entrepreneur Pawnee Bill, extolled the virtues of riding the "bucking bronco" as an exhilarating athletic endeavor for any normally healthy woman.²²

Contestant or performer, a professional cowgirl needed to be enterprising, whether gaining entry to the arena or responding to reactions to her chosen work. In fact, Wild West was rife with entrepreneurial women in the stricter sense of the word. Lucille Mulhall took her family's Wild West show on the road. Other women organized, promoted, and performed in their own Wild West shows as well as performing in shows produced by men. Two women who followed the lead Lucille and Montana Belle established in the sport entered the field between 1905 and 1910. Julia Allen, a trick rider, joined the 101 Wild West at the 1907 Jamestown Exposition. Her contemporary, Tillie Baldwin, a Norwegian immigrant and hair dresser, discovered a cowgirl image in Will Roger's Vaudeville troupe. She joined Rogers' troupe in 1909 and the 101 Ranch Wild West the following year.²³

By that time, attire as well as skill had become part of this image. The contesting cowgirl's show apparel had changed markedly. Women in the 1910 Pendleton arena wore wide brimmed felt hats and shorter divided skirts. Contestant and performer distinguished themselves from the town's people, while rodeo royalty or court participants looked decidedly different from the cowgirl.²⁴

The difference in dress might have been deliberate on the part of the court participants since some localities viewed professional rodeo contestants as loose women. However, there was no stigma surrounding rodeo royalty early in the century. Although irrelevant to its respectability, royalty associated itself with rodeos (but not Wild West), underlining rodeo's ties to the community. This phenomena was shared with the other community fairs and festivals that gained popularity in this pre-war era of western boosterism.

Certainly, the nature of the early queen contests served as rodeo promotion. Women actively promoted rodeo benefit dances and the rodeo itself in their efforts to gain a position in the court. Queen contests also gave the rodeo press exposure months in advance of the show.

As with royalty of fairs and festivals, rodeo queens and princesses were young women, usually either from the local community or representatives from other communities. They served as emissaries even in these years, traveling to both neighboring communities and large cities 200 or more miles distant to publicize their rodeo. The selection process often rewarded hard work by presenting the crown to the woman selling the most tickets or votes. A variant of

this process was to have the women solicit a sponsorship from a business or club before they could enter the contest. A sponsor might give a ballot as a premium for a certain minimum purchase or might sell the ballots outright. Regardless of the specific mechanics, queen contests and the contestants publicized the forthcoming rodeo. After the contest, royalty and their images again were used in publicity.

Women continued to compete in the arena, too. Although who was the first woman to ride at which rodeo may never be settled, clearly women began contesting as saddle bronc riders and ropers in the rodeo arena by 1910. Their predecessors, Wild West performers, proved that audiences enjoyed watching markswomen and women on bucking stock.²⁵

As the first decade of the century closed, women moved into progressively more demanding sports in increasing numbers. Rodeo was an established sport involving cowgirls as well as cowboys. By 1910, rodeos featured women's bronc riding somewhat regularly and the horse races with women jockeying continued to be an integral part of the sport.

Of course racing, along with other rodeo events, changed over the years. During the 1910s a pony express race was a cowboy's race. Cowboy cowpony races complemented cowgirl cowpony races. Both men and women participated in segregated relay races, and occasionally raced against one another in this event.²⁶

Another popular race during these years, the Roman or standing race, likely of circus origin, required riders to jockey a team of two horses while standing with

one foot on each horse. Something of a novelty, the race ran frequently enough to be familiar to audiences, yet was demanding enough to be recorded when it was run as a contest rather than an exhibition. It was difficult to get a team of two horses who ran well in tandem, probably more difficult to find such a team than to gather three or four of the right temperament to run a relay race. Sometimes called a bareback race, the Roman race drew fewer jockeys than other featured races. This scarcity of contestants, coupled with the popularity of the event with the audience, led to occasional direct competition of cowboys and cowgirls.²⁷

The relay race also required more than one mount per jockey. It involved a string of three or four horses for each jockey, each horse to be ridden one lap of the race. Horses in any race were excitable and leaving the starting line or gate was acknowledged as the most hazardous part of horse racing in general. Relay racing exacerbated the danger with repeated changes of mount. All but one of the team of horses were required to wait while one of their fellow string members raced off only to tear back to them at breakneck speed a few minutes later. Accidents or, in rodeo parlance, "wrecks" were common.

At its first formal show in 1910, the Pendleton Round-Up offered cowgirls the chance to race. The show reported two mishaps in the cowgirl's relay race. One woman's horse began bucking and bucked her onto the track, an accident attributed to an insufficiently tightened cinch. The other incident, although not a "wreck", nonetheless illustrated problems that could come up. Venus Jones's cinch

did not fit one horse. Consequently, she resaddled another horse of her string and rode him for a second lap.²⁸

This same year the Round-Up offered a race with two barrels one hundred feet apart as a man's event. Seventeen contestants entered the race which was postponed one day but ran the next. This event appeared on the program throughout the early years of the Round-Up.²⁹ Probably offered at other rodeos as well, this men's race foreshadowed the development of a woman's event that first surfaced in the late 1920s. Despite this, the first decade of the 20th century saw cowgirls jockeying in cowpony races, relay races, and Roman or standing races.

As the second decade of the century dawned, Tillie Baldwin, Wild West rider with Will Roger's troupe and the 101 Wild West, got her initial taste of the competitive side of the sport. She entered her first rodeo in Los Angeles and won the contest. Tillie returned to Wild West for the 1912 season but abandoned that arena for rodeo in the fall. Julia Allen, who had joined the 101 two years before Tillie, made good in the rodeo arena that same year. But after four years of Wild West, her quick success in rodeo failed to inspire her to continue contesting. Rather than pursuing contesting, Allen followed the entrepreneurs before her and formed "The Julia Allen Wild West" later that year.³⁰

Although these pre-suffrage years offered many exciting opportunities, the unorthodox roles of women in rodeos and Wild West remained controversial. In an age in which only a few states allowed women to vote, women in bold, public

roles could expect negative publicity.³¹ Female orators in the suffrage and birth control campaigns faced criticism for violating their "sphere" by speaking before an audience. Participants in Wild West, variety, and vaudeville displayed skill and talent in front of an audience. Public appearances in these venues conflicted with ideas and ideals of female modesty. In this atmosphere, it was no surprise that women who appeared on stage or in an arena were subject to criticism.

When the large Wild West shows used performers as publicity, they exposed the cowgirl to press scrutiny. The attention given the professional rodeo and Wild West cowgirls had a wicked edge. In the new decade, professional cowgirls continued to have occasional public relations problems that local contestants and court candidates were spared. A 1911 article took a dim view of the Wild West cowgirl:

The girl's face, pretty in its way, was hard as nails. It spoke volumes about the trying life, . . . the irregular hours, the hard work, the wearying travel and all the rest of it. These glimpses behind the scenes are not always pleasant.³²

Further at odds with the ideals, show women appeared for financial reward. Similarly, cowgirls were in the arena, at least in part, for money. Some, such as women saddle bronc riders, were paid to contest. Often, articles treated women, and especially women bronc riders, as unique in this respect. However, cowboys, too, were salaried contestants. In 1911, Pendleton contracted Bertha Kaepernik Blancett and her husband, Dell, for \$350. For this she competed in cowgirl bronc riding, cowgirl relay race and fancy roping. Dell's contract called for competition in saddle bronc riding, bulldogging, and the wild horse race. Jason Stanley was

paid \$150 and had a more loosely structured contract requiring trick riding, trick roping, men's relay or pony express, and "other contest events."³³ Other rodeos also paid contestants. Entrants of both sexes often received a salary and sometimes a percentage of the gate.³⁴ Bertha Blancett's 1911 contract was the only money she received racing at Pendleton, since for the second straight year things went awry on the track and Blancett was thrown when she cinched her horse improperly.³⁵

Whether or not it was unusual, the practice of paying cowgirls to ride broncs at Pendleton Round-Up helped explain why Carmen Falls requested the opportunity to ride at the Round-Up in 1912 rather than simply entering. By the time she approached the Round-Up committee, Carmen had appeared in Oregon police records twice for masquerading as a man. One report was for riding with a companion on a stolen motorcycle, the other was for working as a deckhand on a Columbia River launch. Discussing her views, Carmen stated she might as well be a man since she was as capable of self support as a man was. Although the Round-Up committee agreed to cooperate, something interfered with her plans.³⁶ She did not appear in Pendleton's arena at the end of summer. The women reported as riding at Pendleton that fall were Tillie Baldwin, Bertha Blancett, and Bertha Duckes.³⁷

Tillie Baldwin had returned to the 101 for the 1912 season but left to contest at the Pendleton Round-Up that fall.³⁸ Relay racing continued to give the cowgirls a hard time at the 1912 Round-Up. May Clark's horse threw her on the

track and the following horse kicked her in the head.³⁹ Although these "wrecks" made the press, they caused no outcry against relay races. However, other politics found the Round-Up that year.

Nationwide, the initial two decades of this century witnessed increased agitation for women's suffrage and women seeking a trip to Pendleton's Round-Up were not confined to contestants, performers, and royalty candidates. Prospective bronc rider, Carman Falls, brought other "radical" Portland women with her when she approached the Pendleton committee in 1912. These women and their supporters promoted feminism and the search for equality in forms peripheral to the rodeo arena. Portland's suffragists planned a Votes for Women demonstration at the Round-Up.⁴⁰

At least one cowboy accepted their anticipated arrival. With some bemusement, he supported giving women the privilege of wearing pants and roughing it; he was lonesome on the range and he welcomed company. However, his first thought was that the suffragists had a job ahead of them.⁴¹

The traditionally female bastion of rodeo royalty was subject to challenge, too. One attempt to institute male counterparts got press coverage in Oregon. Grace Garfield Boucher, playwright and actress, proposed a Mr. Pendleton contest in 1912. The Round-Up committee continued its receptivity to feminist ideas, accepted her proposition, and printed ballots.⁴² Evidently, the idea was not a success as further information about the contest was not discovered.

Reactionary press continued to follow cowgirls and occasionally articles were patronizing. A 1913 piece, written by a city woman, concentrated on the author's concern about "pretty cowgirls" riding "bronchos".⁴³ As earlier rejoinders attest, the attitude was not lost on the sport. Direct response to particular articles was missing and indirect response was difficult to tie to any piece. Nevertheless, apologetic defense/denial and ambivalence underlaid all extended remarks by rodeo cowgirls on their roles through the 1940s.

Journalistic and popular concern probably influenced contesting rules, too. Throughout the history of rodeo's cowgirl-to-cowgirl competition, the women bronc riders generally rode under modified rules. Pendleton's rules for bronc riders in 1913 were:

Cowgirl(s) bucking contest: contestants to ride each day. Horses furnished, riders draw, ride any horse as often as judges request. Plain halter and split reins, may use helps. No fork over 15.5 inches wide.

(Cowboy(s) bucking contest): Horses furnished, riders draw, ride any horse as often as judges request. Plain halter and ...one end of rope free, chaps and spurs, no quirts, all slick. No fork over 15.5 inches wide.⁴⁴

"Split reins" allowed women to use both hands, while "one end of rope free," a new requirement for the cowboy, meant the man rode with one hand on the rope and the other hand free. "May use helps" allowed women to hobble their stirrups; "all slick" required men to ride without hobbles.

Hobbles usually provided an added sense of stability; stirrups fastened to cinches or one another had a more limited range of movement. However, there

were associated problems; the hobble strap was another piece of gear that could break. If one did, it usually threw the rider off balance - and off the horse. Other difficulties with hobbles involved the inability to get out of a dangerous situation quickly; hobbles essentially tied the rider to the horse. Complications could be serious. Sometimes a cowgirl lost consciousness in the saddle, yet remained on the horse.⁴⁵

Cowgirls also may have ridden different stock than cowboys, as well as having different rules. Disagreement is rife on this point. Eastern Oregon cowgirl Ollie Osborn's career spanned two decades. She began riding in 1913 and retired from the arena in 1932. Osborn remembered the cowgirls had something to say about the arrangements:

We went in there and we hollered for the men's bucking horses. We got 'em. We rode the same the men rode. In many a show, I rode the same horses the men did. Many shows. No they don't favor the girls a bit. If you can't make it, it's just too bad.⁴⁶

Osborn recalled that C. B. Irwin, in his shows, gave the women the same horses he gave the men:

Now you girls are bronc riders, ain't cha? When you get to New York City, I'm going to have you real top hands. I'm gonna tell you something, if you can't take it, it's too bad. You hollered for men's horses and you're gonna get 'em.⁴⁷

Problems confronting the cowgirl jockeys extended beyond horses, accidents, and their own talents. Sometimes bullying kept them off the track. Men who championed women in some ways were not necessarily beyond unscrupulous tactics to serve their own purposes. Ruth Parton's career got off to a rocky start

at the Toppenish, Washington, "Cheyenne Frontier Days Wild West Show" in 1913; C. B. Irwin, promoter, relay string owner, and Ollie Osborn's employer refused occasional incompatibilities, in this case C. B. was protecting his own interests from competition. His string, jockeyed by one of his daughters, had a better chance at the title if the competition were shut out.⁴⁸

While the original rodeo events were roping and saddle bronc riding, trick riding had been around the rodeo arena for a very long time, coming from the circus and Wild West shows to rodeo. Men and women alike participated for many years.⁴⁹ Exactly when the event became a contest is unknown; however, Vera McGinnis trick rode in competition in 1913, the year she debuted in Pendleton's relay race.⁵⁰

Sometimes cowgirls trained as hastily for contest trick rides as they did for racing or riding. Vera McGinnis didn't like the odds she saw at relay when she first started jockeying on a percentage basis. However, trick riding offered her 100 percent of her winnings. Coveting the prize saddle, she determined to learn this event in eight days. She thought she had fourth place cinched but instead came out second in her debut.⁵¹

Although, like Vera, most cowgirls branched out to participate in several events, racing was a staple event. However, rodeo racing in the daring-do spirit of the rest of rodeo was always a very dangerous event. Cowgirl jockeys rode without sense, taking whatever risks presented themselves as they sought to best the competition. Compounding this hazard, often the horses had not raced

before, and sometimes they had not been trained to race until a few days before the rodeo. Even the straight races were hazardous. Racing events at rodeos throughout this last decade before national woman's suffrage had their share of mishaps. McGinnis's most disastrous wreck involved the Utah Artillery which maneuvered across the track in the middle of an ordinary horse race. The resulting accident injured three jockeys, including Vera, and four horses.⁵²

All the reckless racing was dangerous but relay racing compounded the dangers. However, the rules changed over time in response to "wrecks" and perceived hazards. At first, Pendleton required that riders themselves change the saddle from one horse to another. Later some rodeos required an attendant to change the saddle or eliminated the change of saddle, but retained the change of horse. The second day of the 1913 Pendleton Round-Up, officials eliminated the change of saddles in women's relay because of the danger. When rodeos dropped this requirement, riders developed techniques for leaping directly from one horse to the next. Some managements decided this practice was too dangerous and inserted the rule that both the rider's feet must touch the ground between changes.⁵³

Unlike the race itself, there seem to have been no rules regarding stock ownership. However, most relay strings were owned by ranchers or rodeo stock contractors. Relay jockeys typically contracted to ride with these owners, although some jockeys furnished their own mounts. Ruth Parton, Lorena Trickey, Vera McGinnis, and Velda Tindall each owned a string or more of relay horses for part

of their careers which spanned the 1910s to the 1940s. As Ruth Parton's experience with C. B. Irwin attested, a cowgirl's owning her own string sometimes added another dimension to standing up for herself.

Rodeo life demanded grit in personal matters also. Although none made The New York Times, fights between cowgirls, including jockeys, seemed no-holds-barred contests. Vera McGinnis recalls defending her virtue in 1913, her first season on the circuit. Blanche McGaughey, a woman bronc rider and bulldogger traveling with McGinnis's companions, had taken a dislike to Vera. Although McGinnis was out-weighted by about thirty pounds, she took on the larger woman at the barn when Blanche called her a chippy to her face.⁵⁴ Personal integrity aside, winning in the arena was critical. While cowgirls sometimes were paid to appear, winning brought more money and the thrill of achievement.

Of course, cowgirl jockeys shared financial aspirations with other contestants. As mentioned earlier, some rodeos paid women to enter contests. In 1914, "mount money" for cowgirl's bronc riding was as much as \$500 and the women contested for prizes as well. Although cowboys, too, occasionally received mount money, some distinctions in the contests existed. Often women rode only once in a given performance. In the championship finals of these early years, the cowboys might have had to ride twice or more in a short span of time before the judges decided who was the best rider.

One reporter, oblivious of cowboys' mount money payments, found the Pendleton Round-Up's reasons for paying women bronc riders "very queer." Part of the Round-Up's reason was pleasing the public in the stands. The audience, the rodeo maintained, "delights at seeing men thrown" but left if a cowgirl were thrown. Another reason was pacifying the contestants and their supporters. The two classes of women bronc riders, those that rode hobbled and those that rode slick, disliked each other, each camp arguing the merits of their style. Ostensibly the women, their husbands, lovers, or boyfriends took less issue with the judge's decision if they were paid a flat fee.⁵⁵

This account also maintained that the jockeys won prize money and got nothing additional. However, at least occasionally race contestants were paid to ride. Bertha Kaepernik Blancett's 1911 contract at Pendleton specified relay racing as part of the agreement.⁵⁶

The reporter could have witnessed the standing race with Bertha as a participant, which provided additional drama. Exciting as these races were, they did not have as many mishaps reported as the relays. This may have been attributable to fewer jockeys on the track and the race being run infrequently. It had its hazards nonetheless: That year cowgirl Billy Clifford fell from her horses at Pendleton and Bertha Kaepernik Blancett finished first.⁵⁷

A more unusual venue for women surrounded the 1914 Round-Up. Although generally portrayed as an event for which Fox Hastings Wilson (born Eloise Fox) broke the sex barrier in 1924, cowgirls tackled the steers in

bulldogging at least ten years earlier. A challenge to cowgirls preceded the rodeo: Blanche McGaughey, Vera McGinnis' nemesis, would take on any woman steer wrestler.⁵⁸ Although there was no report of any cowgirl accepting her challenge, Tillie Baldwin gave an exhibition of the event that year.⁵⁹ Anita Ingles Studnick, another steer wrestler of these early years of northwest rodeo, appeared at Pendleton but may not have wrestled steers there. Ollie Osborn claimed that she and Anita wrestled steers once in Portland, Oregon, and found that enough.⁶⁰ Ollie may have quit the event, but either Anita continued or her first endeavor was well remembered; she was recalled as a steer wrestler as well as a bronc rider.⁶¹

In 1915, just a few years short of national suffrage for women, ambivalence and disclaimers of feminism continued to creep into rodeo publicity. For instance, one Wild West program described their Wild West women as:

Not of the new woman class - not of the sort that discards her feminine attributes and tries to ape the man, simply lively, athletic young women with superfluity of nerve and animal spirits, with a realization that in affairs where skill is the chief qualification she has an equal chance with her brothers.⁶²

A year later, in 1916, Teddy Roosevelt, that champion of the cowboy, voiced his opposition to the cowgirl in some arena roles:

. . . I don't like to see the girls on these bucking horses. A man is entitled to take any chance he wants to, but I don't think it's right for the girls to ride those horses. It makes me feel uncomfortable.⁶³

Roosevelt's reasoning, beyond ego-centric personal discomfort, was not recorded.

Although debate over suitable roles for women undoubtedly provoked unease, other, more immediate, concerns were at issue mid-decade. Rodeo contestants might supplement contest winnings with guarantees but some rodeos did not pay at all.

Sometimes the difficulty of making a living in rodeo was more attributable to the promoter than to the talent of the contestants or luck of the draw. A small promoter, C. L. Harris, asked Vera McGinnis to travel and trick ride with his "The Passing of the West" in the spring of 1916. Harris offered her \$100 a week for a series of rodeos through Montana. The men's rodeo events were to be open to competition. McGinnis and her husband, Earl Simpson, drove a team from Jackson Hole, Wyoming to Butte, Montana to join the show. At Butte they found that Lucille Mulhall and her Wild West show troupe and many other top performers would be riding with "The Passing of the West." By the fourth or fifth engagement, the promoter had neither a train to transport his people, nor the money to pay them.⁶⁴ Being uncertain of money in any case, cowgirls and cowboys looked for what pay there was and each participated in several events.

Bronc riding was the standard rough stock event of the early rodeo years. But bareback riding and steer or bull riding appeared from time to time, often for mount money alone, whatever the sex of the rider. The general evolution of 1990s bull riding began with steer riding as did the career of the only cowgirl contestant acknowledged in PRCA's museum. Tad Barnes Lucas started her rodeo life at fourteen with a cowgirls' steer riding contest in 1916. The two other

cowgirls bucked off, Tad stuck and won.⁶⁵ "Bull riding" in these years was often an exhibition or "mount money" event. The rules were lax and the equipment could be a saddle or a surcingle. Cowboys and cowgirls both rode under these conditions.⁶⁶

Although not plentiful, enough women were competing by 1916 for cowgirls to have contests on rodeo programs across the country. The comprehensive program of the ill-fated 1916 Sheepshead Bay Stampede included both cowboys' and cowgirls' trick riding as a contest.⁶⁷ The Pendleton Round-Up allowed women to compete with men for the All Around title from 1910 to 1916 or later and women gathered both cowboy and cowgirl points. While Pendleton promoted the All Around championship as a prize for men, Bertha Kaepernik Blancet took up the challenge and made a bid for the championship.⁶⁸

As Tad Barnes Lucas and Bertha Kaepernik Blancett honed their skills in rodeo, Florence Hughes Randolph learned to trick ride in a circus. When the circus broke up in 1917, she organized "Princess Mohawk's Wild West Hippodrome." She and her sixty employees toured the United States until liability from a collapsing bleacher bankrupted Florence and her show.⁶⁹ Other cowgirls showed their mettle this year. Ruth Parton, no longer intimidated by the likes of C. B. Irwin, won the Cheyenne Frontier Days relay race. Ruth had two strings of relay horses; she rode one and had a friend ride the other.⁷⁰ Lucille Mulhall continued her role as innovator with responsibility for the first indoor rodeo at Fort Worth in 1917.

If Lucille's show was the only 1917 Fort Worth rodeo, she joined the list of producers targeted by a contestant strike. Mildred Douglas and a group of contestant friends refused to ride for the small purse at Fort Worth. They intended to increase the purse by their actions but the 1917 show went on without Douglas and her cohorts. The 1917 strike had no adverse effect on the Fort Worth Rodeo, although women participants were in short supply throughout the sport. Fort Worth that year offered women's exhibition bronc riding and, in 1920, changed the event to competition.⁷¹

Indeed, the general shortage of cowgirl contestants presented interesting problems. When the Ski Hi Stampede in Monte Vista, Colorado, conflicted with the dates of the Fort Morgan Frontier Days, 300 miles away, in 1917 or 1918, the Fort Morgan show lost contest entries to the better financed Monte Vista Rodeo. Myrtle Cox entered as Fort Morgan's only woman bronc rider. While the event was scheduled to be a contest, Myrtle's ride turned into an exhibition.⁷²

Florence Hughes Randolph, whose career as a rodeo cowgirl began in 1919, substantiated this experience:

It took all of us to put on a show . . . so we all showed up at each rodeo, or there wouldn't have been enough for competition. There was no such thing as part of the group attending one rodeo, and part attending another."⁷³

No neophyte before the public, Randolph had spent the war years 1917 and 1918 with Barnum and Bailey. Sustaining the cowgirl's status in the arena, she won her first contest, Roman riding, against a field of fourteen men. This convinced her that rodeo was more lucrative than circuses.⁷⁴ Also at the end of

World War I, Rose Wall joined women entrepreneurs in the sport when she and her husband, "Strawberry Red" Wall, started a stock contracting business, scouting bucking stock in the northwest.⁷⁵ The ranks were not swelling, however, as Lucille Mulhall quit producing rodeos in 1919.

The years 1910 to 1919 were years of unrest in the western world as Europe first tottered on the brink of chaos, then fell into armed conflict which the balance of the west joined. In the United States and Europe, women's suffrage had become the focus of the woman's movement. Armistice came to Europe and congressional passage of the 19th amendment to the United States Constitution in 1919. Ratified in 1920, the amendment gave American women the vote.

Labor agitation continued across the western world, too, during this period. As has been shown, rodeo contestants and Wild West performers mixed it up with management. Strikes in rodeo were ineffective and seemed to be uniformly so for contestants irrespective of their sex.⁷⁶

Women's rights were still in question and that fact was reflected in events surrounding rodeo cowgirls. But to close out the decade, in 1920 Lucille Mulhall out-roped the cowboys to win the Ardmore, Oklahoma, steer roping and Tillie Baldwin began her Wild West/rodeo show.⁷⁷ Although ". . . hundreds of professional cowgirls had joined the growing circuit . . ." their numbers were not nearly as plentiful as the professional cowboys. Their relative scarcity was attested to when Cheyenne Frontier Days held no bronc riding in 1920 (near the pinnacle of the event), because there were "too few entries."⁷⁸ Rodeo cowgirls certainly felt

the effect of the suffrage movement as they found it possible to challenge cowboys as well as one another in the arena and have the audience applaud.

The Roaring Twenties

History, fiction, and film produced vivid imagery of the Roaring Twenties as a gangland and flapper party. In reality, the country defied prohibition, giving rise to the rum runner and fueling organized crime. While women's suffrage was a national right, other rights for women fared about as well as the enforcement of their old ally, prohibition.

Nonetheless, by the 1920s, Lucille Mulhall, well established as an entrepreneur, had quit producing rodeos. Although never again would a woman have a Wild West or rodeo developed to show case her talents, the 1920s saw more women building their enterprises without family backing. For instance, a few women jockeys owned relay horses. The years Lorena Trickey ran her horses at Pendleton she rode other people's horses as well. While she rode for the C. B. Irwin string in 1920, 1921, and 1922, (placing third in 1920 and first in 1921 and 1922), her own string ran first in the cowboys' pony express in 1920 and 1923. In 1924 she jockeyed her own horses to a first place relay win. Two years later press publicity anticipated her string as well as the McCarty, Irwin, and Drumheller horses racing at the Round-Up. That year her horses placed second in the cowboys' relay race. She rode in the cowgirls' relay but withdrew when she lost part of her trousers.⁷⁹ In the 1920s, Vera McGinnis rode Irwin's string of relay horses, but by 1933, she realized a part of her dream and rode her own horses to a fourth place finish at the Pendleton Round-Up.⁸⁰ Besides being popular, relay racing was also fast and dangerous.

Hard and dangerous events dominated the rodeos of the 1920s and the cowgirls accepted the challenges. However, they found the hardships imposed by irresponsible promoters less acceptable. Switching venues from Wild West to rodeo or other work and back did not necessarily solve the problem. The new work simply was not always as lucrative as it seemed to the contestants/performers when they first undertook the move. Sometimes financial agreements that seemed good broke down. Florence Reynolds and her husband John left the oil fields of Oklahoma to join Hurricane Bill and his Wild West show in 1923. The first show at Wewoka convinced Florence the pay was inadequate and they quit the show to return to the oil fields.⁸¹ While rodeo and Wild West organizers who failed to pay caused cowgirls grief, on the other hand, the shortage of cowgirls continued to pose problems for promoters, contractors, and rodeo committees.

In 1924, Fog Horn Clancy faced a situation in Texas that resembled his experience at Fort Morgan. This time his Wild West production in New Branfels overlapped a new San Antonio rodeo only thirty miles away and one evening he came up short in the woman's bronc riding. Clancy and the cowgirls, however, proved resourceful. Ruth Benson rode twice that night, once under her name and once under an assumed name. An official, who did not recognize her as the same rider, liked her ride under the pseudonym better.⁸²

Although cowgirls seemed resilient, rodeo of the 1920s presented difficulties similar to those women faced in other areas. For instance, in 1924 Mabel Delong Strickland sought the All Around title in competition with cowboys at the

Pendleton Round-Up. She had roped her steers faster than all but one man in Cheyenne earlier that year and felt her chances were good in the northwest rodeo. However, Pendleton required her to apply for the opportunity. The rodeo committee that had been open to Carmen Falls' proposed bronc ride, sponsored a Mr. Pendleton contest, and allowed women and men to compete in the same contests (all in 1912) reversed its stand. Mabel could not rope against men in the 1924 Round-Up.⁸³ Clearly, cowgirls began to find restrictions in competition with men where, little more than a decade earlier, women had successfully asserted themselves both in and out of the arena.

At odds with Strickland's experience in Pendleton, Fox Hastings Wilson began wrestling steers under her first husband's tutelage that same year. Initially a bronc rider, Fox was the best known of the small handful of cowgirl steer wrestlers. In an example of rodeo promotion's generosity with fact, she was often touted as the first, as well as the only, woman steer wrestler, despite trailing other cowgirl bulldoggers by at least ten years.⁸⁴

Although neither first nor only, Fox's participation brought attention to cowgirl steer wrestling. Cowgirl steer wrestlers had several advantages over cowboys. For instance, cowboys repeatedly twisted down the steers so that their necks would be sore before the women tackled the animal.⁸⁵ Sometimes brass balls were put on the tips of the steer's horns to keep the woman from being gouged. Although of questionable effectiveness, the cowboys occasionally used these balls on animals the men drew, too.⁸⁶

Women also drew select stock, another advantage. Fox Hastings Wilson told the story on herself:

One of the most amusing experiences I ever had was at Beaumont, Texas. I had not been bulldogging very long and was feeling pretty smart for I was being well received. There were two steers that looked almost alike, but one was 'hard' and the other was 'easy.' I was supposed to draw the easy one, but through a mistake the hard one was turned out to me. He fought so hard that he practically threw himself and I was so elated that I didn't wait for someone to come and hold him while I got up and away from him. The crowd was cheering and I was waving my hands and feeling pretty good, when all of a sudden I heard a yell and I looked back and there was that steer not two feet behind me. There was a high wire fence between the arena and the grandstand and I lost no time getting up that fence. I climbed like a squirrel, but not fast enough, for the steer caught up with me and went on down the field with the seat of my trousers hanging on his horns.⁸⁷

Bulldogging was not alone in offering different conditions for cowgirls and cowboys in this era. Cowgirl bronc riding, too, presented special rules.

Disagreement was rife concerning whether or not women rode the same horses men rode or got select stock the way the cowgirl steer wrestlers did. Gene Kreig Creed, who began her professional career in 1925, remembered receiving an unexpected edge in her ride in Cheyenne; she drew a horse from the men's string and was given an extra twenty-five points.⁸⁸ The riding options provided for women bronc riders in the 1910s continued in the 1920s but there were incentives for choosing the more difficult course and riding slick. Creed had never heard about hobbled stirrups when she first rode at Cheyenne. Offering no tips to the novice rider, the veteran cowgirls kept their knowledge of the rules to themselves. After Creed made her ride, she discovered she earned extra points for riding slick,

too. She won the women's bronc riding at Cheyenne that year and resolved to keep those extra points by shunning the straps.⁸⁹ Advantage or disadvantage, women continued to have the option of using hobbles; men did not.

As the Pendleton Round-Up demonstrated by banning mixed competition in 1924, rodeos could be quixotic regarding their treatment of cowgirls. Women were unsure of their competitive status in any rodeo arena. Cowgirls appeared conflicted in sociological aspects of their roles, too, as rodeo and Wild West women grappled with the two opposing images and the added stigma of novelty.⁹⁰ In 1925 Mabel Delong Strickland, the cowgirl who sought to challenge the cowboys at the Pendleton Round-Up the year before, was interviewed for a national magazine. She sounded much like the Wild West publicity of ten years earlier:

I don't care for these high faluting ideas for women. I don't care about mixing in the dirty mess called politics. I don't want to learn how to be half a man.

. . . . I know . . . you think I'm a paradox. But I belong in the saddle, for I've been there since I was three. I love the open, dogs, horses, a gun, the trees, flowers. Rain on the roof or any weather is like music to me. Still, I love dresses and everything that goes with them. I can't tolerate the mannish woman any more than I can stand the womanish man. I don't chew, smoke, drink or get on the front pages of New York, Chicago or Washington newspapers. In my Fort Worth home I have all I want, and my friends, both men and women, are just as human, just as sweet and dear to me as those of any other woman.⁹¹

Apparently so was roping steers. Mabel continued to rope them and Fox to wrestle them.

The safety concerns of steer wrestlers of the 1920s were demonstrated when cowboys and cowgirls both briefly replaced cowboy hats with football helmets. Throwing one's body off a horse onto a steer at thirty miles per hour was a rough business. Steer wrestlers inevitably damaged their legs stopping steers. Fox Hastings Wilson had repeated injuries, some from bronc riding, many from steer wrestling.⁹² Ten years after she began her bulldogging career she recounted her broken bones:

But during the first 18 months of bulldogging I broke three legs - No, I don't mean just that for of course I have only two, but I broke one of them twice and the other one once. The first time was at Tulsa, Oklahoma, while I was bulldogging my twenty-seventh exhibition steer; the second accident was a little more than a year later at Wichita, Kansas; and the third break was only three months after the second, in Los Angeles at the Ascot Speedway.

Some way, I always reckon time by my broken bones. I find myself saying 'Why that was just a month after I broke my leg in Tulsa' - or 'Oh, yes, I remember when that happened, it was the same summer I broke my ribs at Pendleton.

And about that time in Pendleton: I fell there in 1924 and broke three ribs at the first performance. But I had a good contract and felt I had to work, so I went on the next two days and bulldogged my steer with a 'shot' in my spine to dull the pain. I couldn't throw the management down.⁹³

Much as with rough-stock riding and racing, a few days training for trick riding continued the order of the day. Eddie McCarty and Vern Elliott convinced Gene Kreig Creed to take up trick riding a few days before the Pendleton

Round-Up in 1925:

At Pendleton, McCarty wanted me to trick ride. I never did any trick riding, but McCarty insisted. 'Fox Hastings will pick a horse and saddle for you.' Fox did and she showed me two or three tricks and I became a trick rider.⁹⁴

Similarly, Leonard Stroud gave Pauline Slovensky Nesbitt two days to learn tricks in 1927. The horse was well-trained but Pauline had to use a standard saddle with a high cantle. She learned three or four tricks - enough to get by as an exhibition rider in the rodeo.⁹⁵

Trick riding flourished in the Golden Age of Sport. By the mid-1920s this contest was taken seriously. Typically:

Each rider . . . submit(ed) a list of her ten best tricks and . . . perform(ed) twice daily any tricks called by the arena director. The rider was judged on ease, gracefulness, skill, number of straps (the more straps, the lower the score), speed of horse, and the degree of difficulty of the tricks.

The tricks fell . . . into three categories: top work, which indicated various stands on the top of the saddle. . . vaults, which were executed by hitting the ground with the feet and vaulting back into the saddle; and drags, or strap work, which were accomplished by grasping specially designed holds on the saddle and hanging near the ground on the side or back of the horse. . . .⁹⁶

Perhaps fueled by the free running spirit of the prohibition years, racing was a premier rodeo attraction of the sporting 1920s. Little if any favor was cut to the cowgirl throughout the decade in these events. Cheyenne Frontier Days hosted spectacular relay races and 1926 held particular excitement:

Lorena Trickey, one of the top riders, lost the race on the second day when her second mount broke loose before she got into the saddle. She made a brave attempt to mount her horse, but without success. Lorena executed a roll-spin on the track at about 30 miles per hour. On another day she made a flying leap from one mount to the other but was disqualified because her feet did not touch the ground. The rules specifically stated that the rider's feet must touch the ground when changing mounts. Despite these two mishaps she won the race on the other days and on a point basis from all rides she still won the championship.⁹⁷

Although seemingly striving a bit too hard in interviews to portray a positive image, sometimes cowgirls' public image was idealized rather than realistic. The 1927 New York Times illustrated the disparity. A letter to the editor, published November 3, extolled the pastoral ideal in rodeo: "What is more wonderful than to see the girls of the plains riding fearlessly, . . . [and] the girl from Wellesley College riding with her companion of the plains?"⁹⁸ But the next day's paper took some of the gloss off the image; the contestants were in court:

Mike Hastings of Fort Worth, veteran cowpuncher . . . had extended his talents beyond punching cows and had punched Bob Belcher of Morgan, Texas, the complainant. A score of rodeo performers wearing their picturesque apparel attended the hearing.

Belcher complained that Hastings was jealous because Belcher's wife, Claire, was a more brilliant rodeo rider and roper than Hastings's wife, Fox Hastings. Hastings denied that Belcher's premise was true and said he had hit Belcher because Belcher had mistreated a young steer in Detroit.

Mrs. Belcher accused Hastings of putting oil of mustard on a steer she was "bulldogging" which caused the steer to throw her and fracture her ribs. Mrs. Belcher, it was said, was a graduate of Wellesley College and comes from Boston. These facts, it was adduced in court, were as oil of mustard to a patriotic Westerner like Hastings. Judge Dodge reduced the charge from assault to disorderly conduct and fined Hastings \$5.⁹⁹

Disagreements that reached beyond words were not confined to cowboys nor was Vera McGinnis's earlier fight with Blanch McGaughney an isolated incident. Margie Greenough recalls rumors of what had transpired before she began following the circuit in the 1920s:

I'd heard of quite a few fights before I came around. That was a pretty tough bunch there to start with. I don't think they

hesitated to use a knife, or anything, from what I hear. I think there was probably a lot of jealousy

There were so many different character types. There was one girl, Ruth Woods. She was a good bronc rider . . . she never really did dress up. But she was a real nice person. I liked her. She was my friend. She carried one of those types of knives you could pop open.¹⁰⁰

While Margie may not have witnessed them, physical battles involving cowgirls continued after she began riding. In 1929 a Pendleton Round-Up contestant settled a fight by stripping her opponent to slip and stockings.¹⁰¹

Although most contestants probably faced few physical fights with their peers, the arena presented physical hazards to every one of them. Danger, typically thought of in connection with the rough stock events, extended throughout the sport. But trick riding's hazards sometimes went unrecognized even within the sport. Pauline Slovensky Nesbitt was both a bronc and trick rider. With nine years of bronc riding experience behind her, she married rodeo clown Jimmie Nesbitt in 1929. He insisted she abandon the broncs. Pauline may not have argued with Jimmie but she voiced her opinion for others to hear:

But if you think trick riding is safer than riding broncs, you just ought to see some of the bumps and bruises I get. I bunged up a hip and cracked three vertebrae last season and I often have some skinned place. But no matter if you get hurt at the start of your run, you have to keep on till you've finished if it's possible.¹⁰²

Exhibition trick riding presented dangers, but contest trick riding brought more risk. During the contest years, cowboys and cowgirls performed daring and innovative tricks in their attempts to win the championship. At Madison Square Garden, the trick riders did a qualifying ride for the judges alone. This ride

required them to "go under the belly" to demonstrate they could perform the trick. Ironically, the Garden did not allow the dangerous maneuver to be performed before their audience.¹⁰³

As discussed earlier, the occasional practice of using hastily trained and poorly seasoned stock further intensified the danger. Regardless of how often the reality of a green, unstable horse imposed itself over the ideal of the well-known stable, hard running veteran, trick riders prized their favorites. Tad Lucas explained the ideal horse:

Of course, your trick-riding horse was very important. You needed a horse that would run fast but straight, that wouldn't shy. I've always said trick-riding horses are born, not made. The finest horses I ever had just worked right away, it didn't take long. But I've seen people work with them and work with them and work with them and never be able to trust them. A good trick-riding horse was very hard to find. You were very fortunate to find one your size with a good gait and color.¹⁰⁴

Enduring contestants in this era may have excelled in one event such as trick riding but they inevitably and regularly rode in several events. Whatever the event, rules changed and so did the reward. Cowgirls and cowboys both might be paid to perform or ride in contest as well as being eligible for prizes if they contested. While cowgirls' bronc riding was disparaged in the press for receiving mount money, virtually every other contest at one time or another had guarantees attached. For instance, in 1929 the Molalla Buckaroo paid Vera McGinnis to ride relay. This was highly unusual and undoubtedly contributed to the financial troubles of that year's Buckaroo. As a rule McGinnis and other jockeys received transportation, and room and board from the race horse owner, but saw money

only when they brought the horses in fast enough to win some. Then, they got a percentage of the purse. This financial situation lead McGinnis to diversify into other contests: bronc riding and, primarily, trick riding.¹⁰⁵ Although at mid-summer cowgirl jockeys might have been encouraged by the incentive Molalla offered McGinnis, that optimism proved unrealistic.

In the arena during these post war, post suffrage years, a few women roped and fewer cowgirls wrestled steers. By 1929, the first year the RAA point system was in effect, the main events for women competitors were saddle bronc riding, trick riding, and racing. Jockeys and trick riders earned no RAA points and, while the RAA awarded points to men bronc riders, the organization did not award points to women bronc riders.¹⁰⁶ As Bertha Kaepernik Blancett's experience in Pendleton in the 1910s illustrates, women were seldom successful collecting their due competing with men in the best climate. Official recognition was hard to come by even when cowgirls competed against one another and the RAA, the chief product of the 1920s, refused to help. Women were not forbidden to compete in RAA member rodeos; they simply were not recognized in an equitable manner.¹⁰⁷ The RAA, which sounded helpful to all aspects of the sport, was designed to coordinate dates and locations of rodeos. This might have been expected to alleviate problems the women faced because of their limited numbers, but that was not the result. Organization of rodeo, which could have been beneficial, instead, worked against the cowgirl.

While the 1920s were often thought of as an era of prosperity, parts of the economy, particularly the agrarian sector, were suffering. In rodeo, more events were expected and the contestants demanded more money. Rodeos became more expensive to produce as well as more standardized.

Facing this venue, seasoned bronc rider Bonnie McCarrol intended to retire in the fall after closing out the 1929 season at the Pendleton Round-Up. A respected contestant, McCarrol rode slick for years but switched to hobbled riding sometime before her last ride. Of course she had been thrown, as well, and was immortalized in a snapshot as she was tossed by Silver at this very rodeo. Bonnie got in trouble in her ride and the hobbles kept her in trouble. She did not retire, she died from her injuries eight days after she climbed on her mount. Pendleton shut down women's bronc riding immediately after her injury.¹⁰⁸

The October 1929 stock market crash, and the depression which followed, brought special problems to working women nationwide, and in many ways exacerbated the problems cowgirls faced in the arena. Fewer jobs were available and unemployment skyrocketed. In the 1930s social pressure discouraged women from working and proposals surfaced encouraging employers to hire men before they hired women. Some unions locked out women, refusing them membership. The rodeo arena proved rough, too, and the cowgirls continued to be concerned about the situation of the sport and about their position within the sport.

Certainly women's bronc riding faced an awkward spot by the 1930s when, to quote William Gardner Bell:

Only the big shows . . . [offer a contest for cowgirl bronk (sic) riders.] However, many . . . [others] bill exhibition bronk (sic) rides by cowgirls as a feature of their program.¹⁰⁹

Alice and Margie Greenough frequently rode in Leo Cremer's rodeos and Cremer segregated bucking stock. In contrast to Ollie Osborn's experience with C. B. Irwin's broncs, the Montana sisters maintained that the women's string was separate from the men's by the 1930s and, usually, the horses were smaller. Doug O'Donnell, who worked for Cremer explained:

We had a lotta good lady broncs. Leo never put his big horses in the lady buckin' horses. He always had lady broncs, smaller horses. He did have a heart for the women, I guess. But the boys, he didn't give a damn if they broke their neck or not.¹¹⁰

Such special treatment did not work in the cowgirls favor as the shaky finances of a mobile business only grew worse with the depression. Naturally, the concern of cowboy and cowgirl contestants alike intensified with the worsening economic conditions. But when the hard times of the 1930s cut into the rodeo arena, cowgirls had a rougher time. Although Teddy Roosevelt was paternal, he paled before the American male of the 1930s and that male's attitude, spiked with resurgent paternalism, dominated rodeo.

Organization and Adjustment

The revival and revision of an old event, coupled with an emphasis on costume, provided a new role for rodeo women. Much as the spirit of the 1930s economy fed public sentiment that opposed women in the work force, it pushed women to a peripheral role in rodeo, a role that emphasized appearance, equipment, and animal over the cowgirl's talent to an extent that had not been seen before in the arena. In the midst of the Depression, the Texas Cowboys' Reunion of Stamford, Texas, introduced the modern barrel race.¹¹¹ Over the next fifty years this event came to dominate women's participation in rodeo.

The barrel race itself was not unique to Stamford. As a man's event with two barrels 100 feet apart, a barrel race was run at Pendleton, Oregon's, first official Round-Up in 1912. Seventeen contestants entered the race which was postponed one day but ran the next. The event appeared on the program throughout the early years of the Round-Up.¹¹²

Stamford's event differed significantly from the Pendleton barrel race and many of the changes had unsettling implications. Besides restricting the race to women, Stamford renamed it a Sponsor Girl Contest. (Stamford's Barrel racers remained Sponsor Girls in the late 1980s.) As the name implies, the women were required to procure a sponsor, usually a ranch or community. The idea of a contestant riding as a representative of a ranch was not new. The early range contests had pitted the best riders and ropers of one ranch against the best of another ranch. However, this was not how the concept worked with sponsor girls.

A woman was unable to enter the contest without a sponsor and once sponsored she was escorted into the rodeo arena by a cowboy.¹¹³ Sponsorship defrayed the cost for the women and the escort served as pageantry to appeal to the depression era audience searching for pageantry and fantasy. Regardless of the intent, the effective implication was that women were to be supported and attended, in a word, dependent. Additionally, rather than being judged solely on their performance, sponsor girls were judged on their appearance and poise. Earlier, trick riders had their costumes judged but not their personality. However, the new, segregated event, evocative of dependence, shared the decade with counterpoints.

At least one of Leo Cremer's rodeos proved an exception to the general shortage of women bronc riders that prevailed through rodeo history. The 1931 Butte, Montana, rodeo had a good turnout of women contestants. Pick up rider Doug O'Donnell recalls putting thirteen cowgirls on the ground in one performance alone that year.¹¹⁴

Women in the bronc business did more than ride the animals. After Strawberry Red Wall died in 1932, Rose continued as a stock contractor operating out of Seattle and Ellensburg, Washington, and Alberta, Canada. She engaged rodeos in the Northwest throughout the 1930s and 1940s.¹¹⁵

However, nothing in the 1930s, except abolishing events, lessened the danger inherent in the traditional rodeo contests. Trick riding injuries were reported almost as frequently as the bronc mishaps. Seventeen participants were

injured at the 1933 Madison Square Garden rodeo; twelve men and five women. The women's casualty ratio was three bronc riders to one trick rider but Velda Tindall, while trick riding, was the cowgirl who was critically injured.¹¹⁶ Two more unhappy examples were Tad Barnes Lucas and Gene Kreig Creed. Tad Lucas slipped and was caught in her horses hooves, shattering her arm in three places. She had repeated operations and it took three years for the arm to heal.¹¹⁷ Gene Kreig Creed broke her back in three places.¹¹⁸ These women rode saddle broncs regularly but their most serious injuries were sustained during trick riding.

Injury sometimes deterred cowgirl trick riders, causing them to rethink their careers. Rose Davis, who started out as a trick rider and steer rider, gave up trick riding for bronc riding after she broke her leg at a rodeo in Shreveport, Louisiana, early in the decade.¹¹⁹ Shortly after Lucas's infamous wreck, trick riding became a contract event rather than a contest. This worked well for her because her injured arm made it impossible for her to develop the new routines necessary to contest but she modified many of the tricks she knew to favor her arm.¹²⁰ If injury was old hat to contestants of both sexes, so were bloomer rodeos.

The depression year of 1933 provided the first evidence of cowgirl involvement in formal organization of rodeo as contestants sought protection from shady promoters. The committee of contestants that drafted the petition to National Recovery Administration (NRA) administrator, General Hugh Johnson, included no cowgirls. However, of the eighty-four signers, ten were women. Rather than struggling performers, the petitioners were prominent contestants

who placed regularly.¹²¹ They were, after all, the ones most likely to be in the money, and, therefore, the ones most affected by a promoter's failure to pay.

This petition to the NRA unveiled another women's role in 1930s rodeo and Wild West. Alice Sisty, trick rider and stunt woman, managed Emma Manning's Wild West. News of the petition drew comment from the pair: Alice, notorious for daring stunts and association with Milt Hinkle's bloomer rodeos, transcribed and signed Emma's letter to the commissioner. Emma Manning wanted no regulations imposed on her operation.¹²² Sisty's position, however, diverged from Manning's stance over the next few years.

The object of Manning's attention recognized the tie between rodeo and Wild West and sought protection for cowboys and cowgirls working in both formats.¹²³ But her response drew a rigid line between the two forms:

. . . now this is a Wild West fair unit. . . So you see my show would not come under a Rodeo code as I pay salaries but use mediocre Rodeo performers.¹²⁴

Manning cast a deprecating eye on Wild West in comparison to rodeo, a sentiment clearly present in the sport six years later.

In the meantime, Manning's ownership of a Wild West/rodeo production might not have been quite the normal role for rodeo women, but she neither pioneered the role, nor stood alone. Florence Hughes Randolph, usually contracted as a trick rider, signed a different contract in 1934. She agreed to produce and direct the Ardmore, Oklahoma, rodeo for five years. Following Rose Wall, she became the second woman producing rodeos in the 1930s as Lucille

Mulhall had retired.¹²⁵ Obviously, if Manning's "Wild West fair unit" with occasional contested events counts as a rodeo, Florence would have been, at best, the third woman rodeo producer of the 1930s.

Of course cowgirls' enterprise of the 1930s covered traditional roles in the arena as well. Tad Barnes Lucas was a prominent cowgirl; a bronc rider, relay rider, and trick rider. She developed trick riding as a specialty and, despite serious injury, by 1935, earned \$12,000 a year primarily in that event.¹²⁶ If the point system had been recording points for women's events that year, Lucas might have topped all contestants for most winnings in one event. She certainly outstripped many of the cowboys of the 1930s in annual earnings.

However well Tad Lucas did, cowgirls continued to face a grim situation in rodeo arenas. Initially somewhat subdued when the first big rodeos discontinued cowgirl bronc riding in the late 1920s, by 1936 cowgirls were openly concerned with the disparity in opportunity for women. Alice Sisty, now writing a column in Hoofs and Horns, criticized, albeit ineffectively, the Livingston Roundup show:

Seems like when they made out the prize list they forgot the weaker sex. Looks like all there is on it for us gals is a Stetson hat to be given to the best dressed cowgirl. Your writer has already started making new flashy shirts and fancy trousers - a new hat is sorely needed.¹²⁷

In spite of threats to their sport, cowgirls put on a brave face. Alice Greenough, ranch raised rodeo cowgirl, wrote an article, published in 1937, extolling the rodeo cowgirl's physical fitness but at the expense of her city cousin.

A cow-woman takes no coddling, gets no martyr complex just because she is going to have a baby. She rides in the show up until

two months before she expects the child - and she is back in the saddle bronc-riding in contests not later than six weeks afterward. This is the reward of developing strong backs, erect posture, educated muscles. . . .

Daily routine of cowgirls is both mental and physical training. They learn this routine early and practise it by the time they can climb to a saddle. From the first it means exercise, every movement for physical betterment. No muscle goes unused in a cowgirl's body and therefore every movement she makes is graceful. . . .

I spend several hours each day in exercise; I eat lightly of nourishing foods and balance everything with salads; I wear clothes which do not bind me and retard circulation; I keep my thoughts happy. I enjoy the feeling of health which magically makes life appear as a bond between nature and myself.¹²⁸

Countering her argument for cowgirl's strength and independence in the article was the underlying concern of being physically attractive to men. Although Alice, herself, did not marry until her fifties, the bottom line in "What a Cowgirl Wants From Life" was "Mental health, physical health - partnership with the man I love."¹²⁹

By the time Alice Greenough wrote her article, the cowgirl's looks threatened to draw more attention than her abilities. Cowgirl bronc riding was on the way out. When Alice Sisty took the job of director of the 1937 Memphis rodeo she promised, "There will be girls bronc riding, too."¹³⁰ Less than a year after her column was inaugurated in the magazine, Sisty devoted a third of it to the problem:

. . . something I have wanted to say for a long time and lately several girls have asked me to mention in this column. What they want to know is why more shows do not put on either exhibition or contest bronc riding for cowgirls. It would more than pay for the cost from a box-office stand point, for audiences from New York to San

Francisco have shown that in their applause when this event has taken place.

Col. W. T. Johnson, Mayor Harmon Pery of Ogden, Utah, Milt Hinklie (*sic*), Leo Cremer, and Mr. Davis of Ft. Worth, all recognized as leading producers, know this and always feature cowgirl bronc riding in their shows. The rodeo is supposed to show the public what the cowboy has to do in his life on the range. . . . it is no more than fair [that the cowgirls] . . . be given a chance to show their skill and incidentally make a living for themselves.

There is no event for the girls to contest other than bronc riding, so if a show fails to have that there is nothing for them but to go on a diet. So we are asking Mr. McCargar, who is Secretary of the R.A.A., to please do something in their behalf.¹³¹

How did cowgirls fare with the RAA and the fledgling CTA? After the Turtles organized in 1936, true standardization began in the sport; the CTA encouraged competitive events and discouraged exhibition and mount money rides in what it designated as standard events.¹³² Bull riding, promoted as a standard event by the CTA, replaced steer riding and mount money bull riding. The old exhibition and mount money rides in other events died as the cowboys' union brought pressure on rodeos to conform to the CTA standards.

On the other hand, the RAA did nothing in response to the cowgirls' request for more bronc riding. The women had difficulties with the new contestant organization as well. Cowgirls were at the Boston rodeo and the 1936 Turtle petition's wording, "undersigned cowboys and cowgirls," provided opportunity for their direct support, but somehow, irrespective of their concerns, no cowgirl signed the petition. The November 6, 1936, rules kept the open introductory wording, specifically including contestants of both sexes.¹³³ The lack

of the cowgirls' signatures on the first Turtle strike document was unexplained, but a harbinger of the situation that developed in the years ahead. In fact, the proposed rules for 1938 omitted the word "cowgirl" and its related pronouns.¹³⁴

Indeed, women bronc riders became a point of controversy in the CTA within two years of its founding. In the January 1938 issue of Hoofs and Horns that included the year's proposed rules, Guy Weadick, in his article taking both management and contestant sides of the sport to task, brought up the question of "the ladies of the rodeo world." RAA rodeos billed cowgirls as world champions, yet RAA had no point system and often the women so billed were riding exhibition. Weadick promoted a system that would appropriately recognize the cowgirl.¹³⁵

However, not all of the old guard was as supportive as Guy Weadick. At Fort Worth's Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show Rodeo of 1938, the cowgirl's bronc riding was the last point of disagreement between the rodeo and the Turtles. The rodeo had met the other demands but refused to agree to this point. Asked to mediate the dispute, Fog Horn Clancy urged the manager to offer "as little or as much as he wished" of the woman's bronc riding. The cowgirls got a token two exhibition rides at the last performance, CTA members saved face, and the rodeo went on.¹³⁶

This unreassuring result forced the women to continue working together to preserve their livelihood. The cowgirls managed some organization independent of the cowboys; by May 1938, they had presented minimum financial requirements

for exhibition rides to the Cleveland Rodeo. Both RAA and CTA responded with confusion.

RAA President, Judge Maxwell McNutt, reacted harshly: Mount money should not be paid in any case and " . . . lady bronc riding is a dangerous feature, better dispensed with."¹³⁷ James Minotto and Everett Bowman, in behalf of the Turtles, concluded that the women had asked to be honorary members but had:

. . . no vote or say in the Cowboys' Turtle Association as far as our business is concerned. . . . as far as the Cowboys' Turtle Association is concerned, we will not help the cowgirl bronc riders fight their battles, and if the cowgirl bronc riders see fit to strike a show or refuse to work for any reason whatever, it does not mean that the cowboys' Turtle Association is going to back them up in such a dispute. . . . they will have to stand on their own feet and sit in their own saddles. . . . it is entirely up to . . . the cowgirl bronc riders to straighten out their difficulties.¹³⁸

The women had a different view of their status within the Turtles. Peggy Long, their representative, stated their position:

The Cowgirl Bronc Riders joined the C.T.A., not as honorary members but as members in good standing. We have paid our dues and have membership cards certifying the same.¹³⁹

Cowgirls fared poorly with both organizations. Understandably, RAA's McNutt offended them with the suggestion of abolishing their bronc riding. The women argued with his conclusion regarding the safety of cowgirl bronc riding, too. Long pointed out the indisputable fact; "all riding events at a rodeo are dangerous." Cowgirls, like other participants, signed a release whether on contract or in a contest when they entered a rodeo. There was no special liability to a

rodeo offering women's bronc riding.¹⁴⁰ Here was another point of controversy for the Turtles to deal with in their second year of operation.

The CTA meeting in Ogden that July (1938) took up the question but the answer only gave the cowgirls marginal status. Cowgirl bronc riders had membership but no vote in "the Cowboy's C. T. A." Instead, cowgirls could vote when the cowgirls' bronc riding was scheduled as a contest at an approved rodeo and a judge for the event was elected.¹⁴¹ Consequently they had fewer opportunities to vote as fewer cowgirl bronc riding contests were held and there was no route within the Turtles through which to bargain for the event.

The cowboys had given the women marginal support at one rodeo, but, over all, the charged atmosphere in this era of change worked against the cowgirl. The previous fall, as well as in 1938, the Turtles were locked out of the Pendleton Round-Up and the rodeo ran on local talent and others willing to cross the Turtles.¹⁴² A few national contestants bucked the union and rode at boycotted rodeos, usually under pseudonyms; one nationally known cowgirl was among them at the Pendleton Round-Up. Although in 1924 the Round-Up Board refused Mabel Delong Strickland's request to rope against the cowboys, faced with the Turtle dispute the Pendleton rodeo was not above using women.¹⁴³ Without the guise of a pseudonym, Isora DeRacy, cowgirl calf roper, roped against men at the Pendleton show in 1937.¹⁴⁴ CTA was aware of strike and boycott violators. As women were few enough in the arena to stand out, Deracy's roping at Pendleton undoubtedly was noticed.

Other cowgirls, as discussed earlier, regarded themselves as Turtles by 1938. Many of the Turtle's policies and regulations affected the cowgirls although the cowgirl bronc riders had restricted voting rights and no direct voice in most of these regulations. The search for uniformity in particular adversely affected the rodeo cowgirl. Uniform policy became uniform confinement or uniform exclusion for women. A good example of this was bull riding.

Bull riding, until the 1930s, was often an exhibition or "mount money" event. Frequently, too, it was steer riding rather than bull riding. Cowboys and cowgirls both rode under this arrangement.¹⁴⁵ Bulls gradually replaced steers. For a while rodeos used range bulls, but in 1922 the Ft. Worth rodeo introduced cross-bred Brahma bulls and in 1936 Brahmas replaced the steers and range bulls in Cheyenne.¹⁴⁶ The Turtles urged the inclusion of bull riding, not steer riding, in rodeos as one of their recognized events.

Cowgirls changed to the tougher, more intimidating stock along with the cowboys but cowgirl bull riding was an exhibition where, in the past, women had ridden steers in competition as often as not. As bulls replaced steers and cross-bred Brahmas became the standard stock, the sport grew uneasy with women contesting in this event. When Dorothy Gaskill died at Phoenix in 1940 from injuries received riding a Brahma bull, the rodeo trade magazine, Hoofs and Horns, discouraged bull riding. "Few girls attempt to ride Brahmas, and it is a practice to be discouraged by rodeo managements."¹⁴⁷ The theme became recurrent. A few months later the editor protested again: "Betty rides bulls

sometimes, too, as exhibition, but we wish she wouldn't - it's too dangerous for girls."¹⁴⁸ Exactly why "Ma" Hopkins, the magazine's editor and a former Wild West cowgirl, thought bull riding too dangerous for women and not for men remained unexplained.

Dress, which long had been important to the professional rodeo contestant and especially to the professional cowgirl, gained recognition as part of competition in the barrel race. Sponsor girls were soon referred to as "Southwest Society Girls" and "Texas Glamour Girls."¹⁴⁹ One source maintained Stamford determined the winner solely on the fastest time in the race.¹⁵⁰ However, in 1938 Stamford awarded points as follows: personality 15 percent, riding togs and equipment 15 percent, riding ability 30 percent, conformation and appearance of horse 10 percent, mount's equipment 10 percent, mount's performance 10 percent. Sponsor girl contestants sent to New York's Madison Square Garden Rodeo again were judged on appearance and personality as well as performance.¹⁵¹

In spite of the dismal outlook of 50 percent of the barrel race being judged on things other than their performance, the cowgirls had a ray of hope when some help came from the Turtles. The CTA meeting in Ogden in July 1938 eased matters somewhat and the Cleveland Rodeo, which had focused the discussion in 1938, paid the cowgirls mount money to ride in 1939.¹⁵² Although Pendleton and Cheyenne both quit offering cowgirl bronc riding at the start of the depression, other rodeos continued the event as exhibition or contest.¹⁵³ However, by 1940, Madison Square Garden rodeo, once the crown of the season for contesting

women bronc riders, reduced the event to an exhibition. Contract or contest, 1941 was the last year Madison Square Garden rodeo offered the event.¹⁵⁴

Bronc riding was a classic rodeo event and, as the last women's contest event to parallel the men's events, the forces behind the contest's demise were important. Four acknowledged reasons were: the danger of the event as manifest in death of contestants; fights, arguments, and general poor sportsmanship among contesting cowgirls; economics of the depression and World War II, and, finally; that the CTA wanted to see the women's role in rodeo changed or abolished. Each argument had a basis.

The demise of women's bucking events was most often attributed to quarrels of contestants and partners with judges, and to fatal injuries. Ironically, cowboy quarrels among themselves, with the public, and with judges were more often recorded, and seemed more numerous and more serious, than quarrels involving women. Men were killed in the arena with no discussion of discontinuing their events. Both men and women have been charged with murder; however, only men murdered or physically intimidated judges.¹⁵⁵

Officially, the Pendleton Round-Up used danger as the reason for discontinuing cowgirls' bronc riding. Danger of the event had drawn notice for several years. As early as the 1910s, people expressed concern about the cowgirl's safety riding broncs. Although some women were killed, many more men died saddle bronc riding. Both men and women were seriously injured. Women died from accidents in other events, too. In tumultuous 1938, disaster struck

Cheyenne's cowgirl relay race. Veteran jockey, Reva Gray, was tied with Della Shriver for first place and the coveted Denver Post trophy when she wrecked. Gladys Pattison was injured and Reva was killed.¹⁵⁶ Cheyenne failed to consider dropping the race.

The most frequently voiced unofficial reason for the demise of cowgirls' bronc riding was lack of sportsmanship on the part of the women. Women quarreled with each other and with men at least occasionally; sometimes their partners quarreled. When these quarrels became public, they threatened the romantic image of rodeo.

Although cowgirls' fights among themselves seemed vicious, their fights with cowboys were sometimes deadly. Lorena Trickey stabbed her paramour. Cora Leo McFadden Rodman (Leo Rodman) shot a rancher in self defense and Lucille Richards killed Frank Y. Dew, a rancher affiliated with the Houston rodeo. At trial, each of these was ruled self-defense and all three cowgirls were acquitted.¹⁵⁷

Women did quarrel, they fought, and, at least in retrospect, they questioned some judges' decisions.¹⁵⁸ The frequency and vociferousness of open challenges and poor sportsmanship on the part of the cowgirls was open to question. One source that alleged women's sportsmanship as a cause for discontinuing women's bronc riding referred more often to men being quarrelsome and rowdy, and gave only one passage to the cowgirl's sportsmanship. While some sources claimed some women reviled judges who gave them a poor score, there was no evidence of cowgirls physically intimidating judges.¹⁵⁹

Three veterans of the era presented interesting views regarding the demise of women's bronc riding as a contest. Reba Perry Blakely, cowgirl bronc rider of the 1920s and rodeo historian took a dim view of official chivalry as the force behind abolishing the contest. Blakely maintained that while Bonnie McCarrol's 1929 death was an excuse for the Pendleton rodeo to discontinue the event; economics was the true motive. The depression closed in on the nation the month following McCarrol's death and rodeos and stock contractors felt the weight of the stock market failure. Blakely was convinced dropping the event allowed contractors to cut back on their horses and related costs, thereby saved rodeo committees stock and purse costs. World War II created a similar effect as transportation became increasingly difficult for stock contractors. That, she believed, contributed further to the demise of woman's bronc riding.¹⁶⁰

Willard Porter and Milt Hinkle, both with a contestant's background, shared the view that the demise of women in the arena was largely a product of the cowboys within the Turtle organization. Rodeo historian Porter stated the opinion briefly:

Then, following World War II, the men in control tossed the women out, preferring all-male contests and claiming that preference spilled over into the grandstands.¹⁶¹

Porter's perception was succinct. The men in charge directly or indirectly tossed the cowgirls out. However women were out of competition in traditional rodeo events before the end of World War II and the cowgirls lost support more slowly than Porter's interpretation implies.

Coincidental with the decline of the image of Wild West, the traditional women's contest events became exhibitions, closer to the Wild West category than to traditional rodeo. Women's contests at this point had become few and far between and cowgirls were riding largely on contract within rodeos by the mid-1930s. At this time, the CTA began pushing rodeos for inclusion of a minimum of four events from the CTA's list of standard events; this list excluded women's bronc riding, trick riding, trick roping, and races. Then, too, conformation with CTA standards left less room on the program for women's contests.

The concentration of women in contracted exhibitions followed the decade of the 1920s in which the rodeo cowgirl served as premier rodeo promotion in the press. The publicity evolved badly for women seeking a career in the arena. The ambivalence apparent when cowgirls found it necessary to emphasize their femininity and housekeeping talents ultimately cost them a high price in the rodeo arena. The sponsor girl was very much a part of this.

World War II

The sponsor girl rode into the Madison Square Garden rodeo and the cowgirl bronc riders had their last round of contesting just prior to the Nation's involvement in World War II. As discussed earlier, rodeos felt the bite of the war from necessities to niceties. The cowgirls, as other women in America, faced dramatic changes in stateside affairs during the war. Among these changes, the shortage of workers created by the sudden demands of the war pulled cowgirls out of the arena along with their male counterparts.

At some rodeos, sponsor girl contests were cutting horse contests or even a roping, at others they were the barrel race. The contest aspect, however, was largely peripheral. The Sponsor Girls were to dress flashy and promote the rodeo. Fern Sawyer, one of the first Madison Square Garden Rodeo glamour girls who returned to the Garden Rodeo for several years recalled the situation:

I went to the rodeo at Madison Square Garden after they cut out the women's bronc riding. I came in right on the tail of that. After 1941, the girls [bronc riders] were contracted. They called us glamour girls or something and they hired us for color. We rode barrels and rode in the grand entry. And we were paid to do it. I thought it was real silly. I liked the bronc riding.

I felt real bad because Tad Lucas and Florence Randolph and all those great cowgirls I admired so much were back there. They were my idols. They weren't too nice to us at first, because they felt we were amateurs. Some of the glamour girls could hardly ride. Here the rodeo knocked out a good event to bring in a bunch of little old girls who weren't supposed to be anything. I don't blame them; I would have felt the same way. But they were always nice to me. I could ride real well, so they accepted me. . . .¹⁶²

Although the cowgirls' response to the demise of the bucking contests at the large rodeos has been portrayed as pacifistic resignation, this was not the case. Shortly after New York's Madison Square Garden rodeo discontinued the event in 1941, all girl rodeos were initiated in Texas. In 1942 Hoofs and Horns reported, on the authority of cowgirl bronc rider and rodeo promoter, Vaughn Kreig, that the first all girl rodeo was scheduled for September 3-5 in Paris, Texas.¹⁶³ Subsequent discussion in the publication revealed that all women shows were held in Texas earlier that year. Fay Kirkwood staged an all girl rodeo at Bonham, Texas, June 26-28. Some considered Kirkwood's show a Wild West. Rodeo or Wild West, promoter Fay traveled to New York that December to arrange all girl shows in the East.¹⁶⁴

In spite of the new opportunities, some cowgirls were compelled to leave the arena for war work. For instance, seeking adventure, Dorothy McDonald left the ranks of office workers to ride broncs in the 1930s, but by April 1943, the worker shortages of the war caused her to return to her typewriter.¹⁶⁵ Cowgirls found other war work as well. Tad Lucas and Reba Perry Blakely joined ranks with Rosie the Riveter building airplanes and steer wrestler Fox Hastings Wilson worked at a service station, changing tires as well as pumping gas.¹⁶⁶ Hoofs and Horns and other magazines featured articles on women ranchers and women ranch hands as war workers. Bronc riders Margie and Alice Greenough bore the magazines out: They would ride in Tulsa and Fort Smith but were uncertain where else. Alice wrote Ethel Hopkins, editor of Hoofs and Horns, "We have sure been

rough hands at home this winter. Looks like we will be on the round up wagon a lot this year" The Greenough sisters passed up Madison Square Garden that year as women's bronc riding wasn't offered and gas was hard to get. In the past they had ridden broncs regularly at this rodeo.¹⁶⁷ The homefront for the rodeo cowgirl gave them opportunities for a variety of other non-traditional jobs. However, at least two rodeo cowgirls were discontent with defense work on the home front. Western Horseman told of one who decided to join the service when her husband faced induction. He failed his physical but she and cowgirl Jean Burnett served with the WACs.¹⁶⁸

The concept of sponsor girl contrasted with the idea of war work, but men fell victim to the lighter side as well. WACS attending the 1943 Butte, Montana, rodeo picked Ray Ham as the best looking cowboy. An embarrassed Ray fit the picture of rodeo royalty no more than Mr. Pendleton had thirty-one years earlier.¹⁶⁹

The importance of the large Eastern rodeos' discontinuation of womens bronc riding was softened by opportunities for cowgirls as war workers and other new opportunities. For example, both the Sacramento and the San Francisco rodeos scheduled women's bronc riding contests in 1944. References to them as "the first bon a fide contest for the female of the species ... in this locale" indicated women rode for prize money.¹⁷⁰ Earlier, following Vaughn Kreig's lead, Faye Kirkwood, and Nancy Binford, Wilma Standard inaugurated the concept of all girl rodeos in Southern California in the 1940s.¹⁷¹ The turbulent war years saw the

demise of cowgirls contesting rough stock, trick, and relay riding at large rodeos, the early surge of barrel racing and the sport, as well as the nation, preoccupied with the war.

By the war's end in 1945, California rodeos were promoting a variety of women's ropings. Golden State cowgirls team roped in mixed teams and in competition with men as well as competing in calf roping. Cowboys' Amateur Association (CAA) rodeos introduced cowgirl's breakaway roping to encourage women contestants. Although new to California, the event in which the calf was roped but not tied was already popular in Texas.¹⁷²

While not new to the state, neither were cowgirl rodeos common. An all girl show, seemingly with contracted performers, rehearsed in Southern California in 1947. By early summer the prospects for the show were shaky. Jerry Armstrong reported: "The outfit's backer, promoter, title and even the show personnel and stock are ever changing."¹⁷³ While 1947 was a land mark for women's rodeo, Texas, not California, made it significant.

The Binford sisters and Thena Mae Far staged an all girl rodeo in 1947 in Amarillo. Erroneously, this rodeo usually was credited as the first all-girl rodeo.¹⁷⁴ Within seven years the Amarillo rodeo was termed "epoch-making," a much more accurate claim.¹⁷⁵ What happened in Amarillo to give this rodeo the status it gained?

On the surface, the Amarillo rodeo looked like a small, regional rodeo with women competitors. Contestants were predominately Texans; Rae Beach was the

only California cowgirl. The total of thirty-one entrants broke down geographically to twenty-one from Texas, five from New Mexico, four from Oklahoma, and one from California. The contest events were largely timed events; specifically calf roping. Bareback bronc riding was the single competitive rough stock event and saddle bronc and bull riding were exhibition events.¹⁷⁶

The geographic imbalance was surprising considering California CAA's encouragement of cowgirl ropers. Likely contributing factors were the distance to the rodeo and the shortage of fuel and tires that continued after World War II.

Controversy at the four performance rodeo developed around rules rather than the sex of the contestants. A calf roping incident upset many contestants. One contestant took advantage of her calf's fall and neglected to stand him and flank or leg him before the tie. The judge ruled that the lack of official rules allowed her time to stand.¹⁷⁷

At the Pecos, Texas, rodeo earlier in the year, the idea of a cowgirl association had been discussed. By the Amarillo rodeo in September, the women had several months to consider the idea. The controversial calf roping score provided the impetus to coalesce the organization. A group of contestants met and formation of the Girls' Rodeo Association (GRA) began. In San Angelo, Texas, that November, the women signaled their intentions to expand and affiliate with RCA.¹⁷⁸ The Women's Professional Rodeo Association (WPRA), the successor of the Girls' Rodeo Association, officially recognized February 1948 as the date of formation.¹⁷⁹ The Midland, Texas, rodeo of June 3-6, 1948, was the

first major rodeo GRA worked under the new organization; GRA approved its members to work the girls' events.¹⁸⁰

The Amarillo rodeo, while not generating the formal papers, nonetheless was the birth place of the Girls' Rodeo Association, which classed the Amarillo Rodeo as epoch-making. This gave Amarillo the status for women contestants that the Boston Garden rodeo and the formation of the Cowboys' Turtle Association had for the sport as a whole. Within and through the organization, women made decisions and reached agreements that shaped their participation in the sport for the next forty years.

Although the introduction of Brahma cross bulls reduced cowgirls' opportunities to compete in bull riding, these bulls changed the role of the rodeo clown. Originally a distraction during lulls in the action, clowning changed as bull riding evolved. The clown became integral to an event where the rider had no other assistance leaving the animal after the ride. Appearing light hearted to the crowd, the bull baiter distracted the bull from the rider.

Women engaged in the clown acts, too. All-girl rodeos had cowgirl clowns; the best known was Dixie Reger Mosley. Although rodeo producers had grown increasingly reluctant to have women ride bulls, Vern Elliott asked Tad Lucas to clown at the 1949 Denver Stock Show. Lucas enjoyed the work and, subsequently, clowned for thirteen performances at the Kansas City Rodeo. Juanita Gray, another trick rider, once tried her hand at clowning, too.¹⁸¹ In spite of these cowgirls, the role of rodeo clown and bull fighter remained overwhelmingly male.

One might have been tempted to ascribe all-girl rodeos and the women's overall participation in the 1940s to World War II. Through the resulting shortage of male contestants, the war smoothed the path for an idea that was heard first during the Golden Age of Sport. However, Nancy Binford revealed other factors: Her motivation for founding the GRA was ". . . that girls, no matter how skilled they might become, could not compete on equal footing with men in rodeo events."¹⁸² Whether Binford meant that women lacked the physical ability or recognized that the CTA was not about to include women was unclear. While the former was open to debate, hindsight established the latter as true.

If all-girl rodeos were not a new idea, neither did the idea originate in Texas. The idea first surfaced in the mid 1920s. Joe Cassidy, a steer roper, voiced his thoughts of all-girl rodeos at a social gathering of contestants at the Salinas, California, rodeo headquarters.¹⁸³ Promoter Milt Hinkle had talked about the idea over the years but did not follow through.¹⁸⁴

Ironically, some writers treated GRA as the first exposure of women to rodeo, rather than part of a continuum. Life, the national magazine, began its article on "All-Girl Rodeo" with an erroneous paragraph:

For years at Texas rodeos the cowgirls never had a chance to show their stuff. They were allowed to compete in only one or two tame events while the cowboys drew all the glory and the richest prize money bronco-busting and riding wild Brahma cows bareback.¹⁸⁵

Western Horseman, a magazine that covered rodeo cowgirls regularly, had an equally misleading opening to its article on the GRA which ran the month after the Life report:

When grandmother was a girl and decided to go for a horseback ride in public, she put on her riding habit and her boyfriend gallantly took her foot in his hand and lifted her into her side saddle. Today, when granddaughter goes for a ride. . . she will easily and gracefully swing into the saddle astride and be ready to go. . .

These freedom loving granddaughters have done something else grandmother did not do. They have successfully invaded the rodeo arena, that spot that for years has been the undisputed world of the cowboy. Only the top hands had dared to pit their strength, courage and skill against the brute strength of wild rodeo stock. But these modern cowgirls use skill to replace any lack of strength.¹⁸⁶

Bertha Kaepernik Blancett was still living so she could not turn over in her grave.

Although not denying the historic cowgirl, the first authoritative history of rodeo, published in the late 1940s, characterized her as "not particularly welcome" in rodeo.¹⁸⁷ While an inaccurate statement for the 1910s and 1920s, this reflected the spirit of the depression and post-war years, the spirit Binford sought to escape when she helped found the GRA.

In 1948, the year of its incorporation, the GRA gained affiliation with the cowboys' union, now renamed RCA.¹⁸⁸ As a benefit of the affiliation, RCA agreed to allow cowgirls barrel racing at RCA sanctioned rodeos.¹⁸⁹ However, there was no provision for other, more traditional, GRA events at RCA rodeos. This set the scene for division within the GRA.

Throughout the sport there was good natured rivalry between contestants specializing in rough stock events and those competing in timed events. However, the situation for the cowgirls was somewhat different. The agreement between the RCA and the GRA led to a situation that distinctly favored barrel racing over other women's events. By 1950 barrel racing was the most contested woman's rodeo event, with hundreds of contenders. The year's champion was an eleven year old who won \$3,665.82 (a thousand more than the previous year's GRA all around cowgirl won in the event).¹⁹⁰ The fastest growing contest in rodeo, barrel racing clearly dominated the women's sport.

The barrel race developed as a woman's event in the 1930s, an era in which the American public looked for glamour in entertainment as diversion from the reality of the great depression. The glamour girls gained exposure against the back drop of World War II and a nation still pursuing diversion. When rodeo emphasized patriotism and American tradition, the image of the sponsor girl gave the nation, with its women at work in defense industry and other vital jobs, a counterpoint: she was largely ornamental and her primary activity in the rodeo arena was racing.

Although barrel racing was certainly a product of the 1930s and 1940s, the seeds for the sponsor girl came from traditional rodeo. The emphasis on dress came from the professional cowgirl, renowned for flashy, image evoking costumes. In the 1920s and 1930s a cowgirl's outfit cost \$100 to \$175 and the cowgirls tried

to vary their costumes from performance to performance. Barrel racing institutionalized the costuming practices initiated decades earlier.

Closely aligned with costuming of the sponsor girl, the new role also played to the queen concept, long a part of rodeo. Finding a sponsor required an approach similar to the queen contests earlier in the century, in which women campaigned for votes. The original sponsor contest at Stamford, which rated contestants on appearance, possessions, and skill, was, in fact, a queen contest. The Stamford contest introduced the barrel race element to this and tied the event to another historic rodeo contest, the race, which was traditionally segregated. Rodeo races and trick riding both relied heavily on the horses as did the barrel race; the barrel racer's horse got 80 percent of the credit for any success.

Not only did the mount's importance increase but, significantly, the horse's ownership and care changed. While trick riders often owned their horses, they also frequently borrowed mounts. On the other hand, race horses typically were owned by stock contractors or people who maintained a racing stable. In contrast, barrel horses usually had one rider. Most often the rider had one or two horses she exclusively rode. Typically, she or her family owned and cared for these animals. The financial burden for purchase and maintenance shifted to the cowgirl; the producer furnished no stock for the barrel race.

Barrel racing represented significant change in the arena. As Fern Sawyer acknowledged, the change was not universally welcomed. The traditional cowgirl

contestants did not like the upstarts. By 1950, too, resentment of the sponsor girl had spread to the men. A cowboy trick rider complained to Jerry Armstrong: ". . . directors and contractors will knock me down to sign up some glamour girl in tight pants."¹⁹¹

Reports indicative of the split between barrel racers and women rough stock riders surfaced in 1950. For the first three years of its life, the GRA awarded its all-around title based on money won at sanctioned sponsor contests at RCA rodeos, calf ropings and barrel races as well as at its approved all-girl rodeos. In 1950, the GRA changed the rules for their all-around title; only points won at all-girl rodeos would count toward this title. The change evened out the contest for the rough stock riders and Jackie Worthington, a top contender for the previous three years, won the 1950 title. Worthington contested on bareback, bulls, roping, cutting, and the barrel race, but she was primarily a rough stock rider.¹⁹²

Conclusion

Throughout the history of rodeo, the role of the cowgirl reflected the larger American society. The rodeo cowgirl, contrary to the prevailing view of subsequent sports writers, was welcome in the arena as an athlete and all-around hand of the 1910s and 1920s. On a national scale in the 1910s, activist women gained acceptance sufficient to win suffrage for all women. The 1920s presented a mixed scene. Although very popular, cowgirls found themselves losing ground in some areas. At least occasionally the blow was dramatically swift such as Pendleton's discontinuation of cowgirl bronc riding.

In the 1930s the cowgirl and the American woman had harder going and their roles shifted. As rodeo, with organization, emphasized itself as a sport rather than entertainment, cowboys shut out the cowgirls. The women who had never shook the brand of appearance found themselves shut out of contests, relegated to the lot of contract performers, one got the sense, of being Wild West (entertainment), rather than rodeo (sport) at a time when sport was to rule the arena and Wild West had become tainted.

Although, like most wars, World War II called women to the work force, by 1950, American women had retreated to the sidelines as cheer leaders and homemakers. In rodeo, the flashy, quintessential female, barrel racer was the dominant cowgirl. Her financial earnings were greater than the other cowgirl contestants, and her event was the one most often presented. Significantly, she contested for prize money that was less than that offered in any of the standard

cowboy events and barrel races were offered less frequently than the standard cowboy events. Her event was the cheapest rodeo event for the contractor as it required no stock from that quarter; and it was the most expensive for the contestant. Whereas, in preceding eras, cowgirls were diversified, the official RCA sanction of the barrel race in 1948 solidified the very dominant position of the barrel racer and fast turned contesting at other events into a secondary pursuit. The cowgirl of 1950, poised at the arena gate, was a barrel racer.

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10. Roach, The Cowgirls, 85.

11. Clancy, "Memory Trail," Hoofs and Horns (hereafter HH) Oct. 1942: 7.
12. Authors who did not cite Hinkle credited Henderson as the first woman bronc rider. However, according to the Wyoming Historical Society, Prairie Rose Henderson was not mentioned in the reports of the 1901 Frontier Days Celebration. (Letter to Mariam Johnson of Salem Public Library from Ann Nelson of Wyoming Historical Society.) Hinkle, "Cowgirls" 40; Patrick Dawson, Mr. Rodeo: The Big Bronc Years of Leo Cremer, (hereafter Mr. Rodeo) (Cayuse Press: Livingston, MT, 1986), 51; Deaton, "The History of Rodeo" (M.A. thesis, University of Texas Austin, 1952), 96; Clifford P. Westermeier, Man, Beast, Dust: The Story of Rodeo (hereafter Man, Beast, Dust) (NP: World Press, 1947), 83; Ernest Tooke, "Moments in Prorodeo: Early Day Women in Prorodeo," PSN 4 Apr. 1984: 27; Arthur Chapman, "Rodeo Dollars," World's Work July 1931: 30.
13. Ol' Waddy, "Steer Roping Champions of Yesteryear," WH Dec. 1952: 26-27; Clancy, Fifty Years 13, 15-16; Bailey C. Hanes, Bill Picket, Bulldogger (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1977), 58.
14. Hanesworth, Daddy 42-43.
15. Bertha Kaepernik Blancett's maiden name appeared under at least three spellings. Illustrating the difficulties of researching women's history, some authors missed the fact that Blancett and Kaepernik was one person. The spelling Kaepernik was given by Ann Nelson of the Wyoming Historical Society and Willard Porter of the Rodeo Historical Society. That was the spelling I used.
16. Hanesworth, Daddy, 47; "Fun in Full Swing," The (Cheyenne) Wyoming Tribune 2 Sept. 1904: 6; "Brennan is Champion Rider of the World," The Tribune 6 Sept. 1904: 4; Clancy, "Memory Trail," HH May 1942: 6.

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17. Hanesworth, Daddy, 44, 165.

18. Vera McGinnis, Rodeo Road: My Life As a Pioneer Cowgirl (hereafter Rodeo Road) (New York: Hastings House, 1974), 28.
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20. "Sam Scovill is Champion," Cheyenne Daily Leader 6 Sept. 1905: 2.
21. Rusty Johnson, "Cowgirls of Yesteryear," WH July 1966: 22-23; Virgil Rupp, Let 'er Buck! A History of the Pendleton Round-Up (hereafter Let 'er Buck!) (Pendleton: Pendleton Round-Up Association, 1985), 6, 10-11, 15, 166; Roach, The Cowgirls, 128, 131.
22. Glenn Shirley, Pawnee Bill (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1958), 167.
23. Clancy, "Memory Trail," HH Jan. 1944: 3.
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25. Sarah J. Blackstone, Buckskins, Bullets, and Business: A History of Buffalo Bill's Wild West (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 68.
26. Virginia Rowe Terrett, "(Mrs.) Ridin', Ropin', Wranglin' Rodman," WH Nov. 1949: 22; "Rider is Injured at Molalla Show," Salem Oregon Statesman 6 July 1937: 4.
27. Roach, The Cowgirls, 123-124.
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29. 29 Sept. 1910: 5; "Westward Ho Parade Grand Success Despite Rain," EO 1 Oct. 1910: 1; "Schedule of Competitive Events" EO Round-Up Special Edition 24 Sept. 1914: 8.
30. Herbert H. Maddy, "Eastern Rodeo Chat," HH Apr. 1942: 6; Clancy, "Memory Trail," HH Dec. 1943: 6.
31. Sarah Wood-Clark, Beautiful Daring Western Girls: Women of the Wild West Shows (Cody, WY: Buffalo Bill Historic Center), 6.

32. "Odors Lead You to the Lot," Baltimore Evening Sun 20 Apr. 1911 (in Sarah Wood-Clark, Beautiful Daring Western Girls: Women of the Wild West Shows (Cody, WY: Buffalo Bill Historic Center), 6.
33. "Competitive Events," EO 11 Sept. 1914: 2; "A Glimpse Behind the Scenes at the Round-Up," EO 24 Sept. 1914: 2; Rupp, Let 'er Buck!, 18; E. N. Boylen, Episode of the West: The Pendleton Round-Up, 1910-1951 (hereafter Episode) (Pendleton, OR: Boylen, 1975), 5.
34. Roach, The Cowgirls, 99.
35. "Range Riders Cope in Frontier Sports" (Portland) Oregonian 18 Sept. 1911: Pendleton Library Round-Up Scrapbooks. (hereafter PLRUSB)
36. "Girl to 'Bust' Broncos," Portland Oregonian 27 June 1912: PLRUSB.
37. "Tacomans See Bronchos Buck and Girls Ride," Tacoma (WA) Tribune 28 Sept. 1912: Pendleton Library Round-Up Scrapbooks (hereafter PLRUSB); "Spurred Creatures of the Corral Buck Many a Cowboy Off," Portland Oregon Daily Journal 27 Sept. 1912: 4.
38. Clancy, "Memory Trail," HH Jan. 1944: 3.
39. "Girl Thrown in Pendleton Relay," Seattle Post Intelligencer 28 Sept. 1912: PLRUSB.
40. "Suffragists Will Round-Up Cowboys," North Yakima (WA) Herald 31 Aug. 1912: PLRUSB.
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45. "Three girl riders in Mishaps at Rodeo," New York Times (hereafter NYT) 17 Oct. 1932: 22.
46. "Don't Fence Me In."

47. "Don't Fence Me In."
48. Reba Perry Blakely, "Ruth Parton, Early Day Cowgirl," Rodeo News Apr. 1977: 22, 26; Charles Wellington Furlong, Let 'er Buck: A Story of the Passing of the Old West (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1923), 67, 70; Hanesworth, Daddy, 164; Clancy, Fifty Years, 81.
49. "Candy Coverdale," WH Apr. 1964: 38; Jerry Armstrong, "Picked Up in the Rodeo Arena," WH July 1964: 95; Sally Gray, "Florence Hughes Randolph," The Quarter Horse Journal 23 (Mar. 1971):42-50; Don Bell, "The Trick Ridin' and Ropin' Howells," WH Nov. 1981: 130-131; Don Bell, "Juanita Gray: A Life-long Entertainer," WH Jan. 1982: 76-80; Jan Beasley, "Billy Keen Remembers," WH Mar. 1981: 18.
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51. McGinnis, Rodeo Road, 41-46.
52. McGinnis, Rodeo Road, 7-9, 145-7; Roach, The Cowgirls, 107.
53. "A Glimpse Behind the Scenes at the Round-Up," EO 24 Sept. 1914: 2.
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55. "A Glimpse Behind the Scenes at the Round-Up," EO 24 Sept. 1914: 2; Rupp, Let 'er Buck!, 18.
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Wood-Clark, Beautiful Daring Western Girls: Women of the Wild West Shows (Cody, WY: Buffalo Bill Historic Center), 6.

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66. Hanesworth, Daddy, 87; Jerry Armstrong, "Picked Up in The Rodeo Arena," WH Dec. 1948: 45.
67. Clancy, Fifty Years, 61, 62.
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71. Roach, The Cowgirls, 99, 101.
72. Clancy, Fifty Years, 81.
73. Sally Gray, "Florence Hughes Randolph," The Quarter Horse Journal 23 (Mar. 1971): 50, 51; Ollie Osborn.
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77. Westermeier, Man, Beast, Dust, 84; Clancy, "Memory Trails," HH Jan. 1944: 3.
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79. Boylen, Episode, 41, 42, 43; "Paddy Ryan First," EO 29 Sept. 1924: 7; "Record Time is Feature," EO 1926: 2.
80. Boylen, Episode, 43, 60.
81. Cleo Tom Terry and Osie Wilson, The Rawhide Tree: The Story of Florence Reynolds in Rodeo (hereafter The Rawhide Tree)(Clarendon, TX: Clarendon Press, 1957), 35-40.
82. Clancy, Fifty Years, 168.
83. "Mabel Strickland, Wonder Rider," EO 19 Sept. 1924: 6.
84. "Fox Wilson: World's Only Woman Bulldogger," HH Dec. 1934: 13; "Rodeos: Deadwood Days of '76," HH Sept. 1934: 12; Clancy, "Memory Trail," HH Mar. 1940: 4; _____, Fifty Years, 135.
85. Roach, The Cowgirls, 122.
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89. Virginia E. Fernandez, "Gene Creed: Champion Cowgirl," HH Aug. 1937: 15; Riske, Magnificent, 86, 87; Tooke, "At the Top of the List," 22.
90. Bob Becker, "The Rodeo: Cowboys and Girls from Western Plains Who Risk Lives in Thrilling Feats Are Amateurs, Competing Only For Prizes," Popular Mechanics Aug. 1926: 200.

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95. Mary Cates, "Pauline Nesbitt, Trick Rider," HH Mar. 1939: 13.
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97. Hanesworth, Daddy, 103.
98. Joe Mitchell Chapple, Letter, NYT 3 Nov. 1927: 26.
99. "Rodeo Row Leads to Court," NYT 4 Nov. 1927: 21.
100. Dawson, Mr. Rodeo, 54-55.
101. Blakely, "Bill McAdoo, Famous Bronc," Rodeo News June 1979: 20.
102. Cates, "Pauline Nesbitt, Trick Rider," 13.
103. Jean Allen, "Acrobat on Horseback: The Trick Rider," WH May-June 1948: 27.
104. Jordan, Cowgirls, 212.
105. "Parades To Be Big Feature of Show Tuesday Has Special Attractions," Molalla (Oregon) Pioneer 27 June 1929: 1; McGinnis, Rodeo Road, 212.
106. "Cowgirls at the Madison Square Garden Rodeo," HH Nov. 1936: 19.
107. "Cowgirls at the Madison Square Garden Rodeo," HH Nov. 1936: 19.
108. Tex Sherman, "Chuck Wagon Chatter," HH Sept. 1934: 10; "Don't Fence Me In"; Roach, The Cowgirls, 112; Riske, Magnificent, 126, 128; Hinkle, "Cowgirls," 40; Rusty Johnson, "Cowgirls of Yesteryear," WH July 1966: 124, 125.
109. William Gardner Bell, "Rose Davis: Cowgirl Bronk Rider," HH July 1936: 14; Clancy, "Memory Trail," HH May 1942: 6. H. Baskas's taped interview

with Ollie Osborn also mention the change of women's saddle bronc riding from contest to exhibition.

110. Dawson, Mr. Rodeo, 52.
111. Deaton, "The History of Rodeo," 31; Terry and Wilson, The Rawhide Tree, 199; Texas Cowboy Reunion, "Cowgirl Sponsors' Information and Prize List," (Stamford, TX: 1989).
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113. Deaton, "The History of Rodeo," 30, 32; Texas Cowboy Reunion, "Cowgirl Sponsors' Information and Prize List," (Stamford, TX: 1989).
114. Dawson, Mr. Rodeo, 51.
115. Blakely, "Frank Woods: Early Bronc Rider," Rodeo News July 1977: 19;_____, "Buff Brady, Jr. - Last of the Early Roping Aces," Rodeo News Dec. 1977-Jan. 1978: 27; Sherman, "Chuck Wagon Chatter," HH June 1934: 8; "Renton Rodeo," HH July 1940: 14.
116. "Horse Tramples Cowgirl at Rodeo," NYT 24 Oct. 1933: 3.
117. Sherman, "Rodeo News," HH Mar. 1934: 12; Jordan, Cowgirls, 201, 209, 210.
118. "Madison Square Garden Rodeo," HH Dec. 1940: 12; "Cowboys' Turtle Association," HH Apr. 1941: 12.
119. William Garner Bell, "Rose Davis: Cowgirl Bronk Rider," HH July 1936: 14.
120. Jordan, Cowgirls, 209-212.
121. "Rodeo Riders Seek Code to Insure Pay," NYT 19 Oct. 1933: 23; "Petition to General Hugh Johnson," Rodeos and Wild West; Consolidated Unapproved Code Industry File; Records of the National Recovery Administration, Record Group 9; National Archives, Washington, D.C.
122. Emma Manning, Denellen, N.J. to Sol A. Rosenbladtt, Washington, D.C., 1933 Nov. 15; Rodeos and Wild West; Consolidated Unapproved Code Industry File; Records of the National Recovery Administration, Record Group 9; National Archives, Washington, D.C.

123. The National Recovery Administration's proposal to put both Wild West performers and Rodeo contestants under the circus code when codifying industry recognized the historic connection with that entertainment form as well. William A. Farnsworth, Washington, D.C., to Emma Manning, Dunellen, NJ, 18 Dec. 1933; Rodeos and Wild West; Consolidated Unapproved Code Industry File; Records of the National Recovery Administration, Record Group 9; National Archives, Washington, D.C.
124. Emma Manning, Dunellen, NJ, to Sol A. Rosenbladt, Washington, D.C., 1933 Nov. 15; Rodeos and Wild West; Consolidated Unapproved Code Industry File; Records of the National Recovery Administration, Record Group 9; National Archives, Washington, D.C.
125. Sherman, "Chuck Wagon Chatter," HH June 1934: 8.
126. "Broadway Cowboys," Time 21 Oct. 1935: 53.
127. Cal Curly, "Girl Champion Bronc Rider," WH July 1954: 15.
128. Alice Greenough, "What a Cowgirl Wants From Life," Physical Culture May 1937: 51.
129. _____, "What a Cowgirl Wants From Life," 93.
130. Alice Sisty, "Rodeo Ramblings," HH Oct. 1936: 19.
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132. Stout, "Rodeo History: Tucson: A Typical Rodeo," Prorodeo Inside June 1978: 14.
133. "Cowboys Turtle Association," HH Dec. 1936: 25.
134. "Cowboys Turtle Association: Proposed Rules," HH Jan. 1938: 19.
135. Guy Weadick, "What Are Rodeos Doing?" HH Jan. 1938: 14.
136. Clancy, Fifty Years, 221-222.
137. "Girl Bronc Riders Are 'On Their Own' Say the Turtles," HH May 1938: 18.
138. "Girl Bronc Riders Are 'On Their Own' Say the Turtles," HH May 1938: 18.

139. Peggy Long to Judge Maxwell McNutt, Letter, "Cowboys' Turtle Association," HH July 1938: 9.
140. _____, to McNutt.
141. _____, "Letters to the Editor: Cowgirl Bronc Riders Are Now Turtles," HH Sept. 1938: 12.
142. Boylen, Episode, 54, 55; Rupp, Let 'er Buck!, 55, 56.
143. "Mabel Strickland, Wonder Rider," EO 19 Sept. 1924: 6.
144. The Pendleton paper reported DeRacy as though she were roping against men. E. N. Boylen referred to her as "World Champion lady steer roper" who gave a "three day exhibition of steer roping." Further, Boylen gave the date as 1914. The newspaper accounts for 1914, however, did not mention DeRacy, but that Lucille Mulhall, in exhibition, out-roped the men at Pendleton on Sept. 24, 1914. The National Cowgirl Hall of Fame and Western Heritage Center (NCHF) gave DeRacy's years in rodeo as the 1930s and 1940s. The photograph Boylen supplied showed a cowgirl in long, side buttoned pants, a style of the 1930s. Her name in these accounts was spelled Izora and Isora; Deracey, DeRacey and DeRacy. The NCHF uses the spelling Isora DeRacy. I concluded that Boylen's date was in error, that DeRacy roped at Pendleton in 1937 and I used the spelling Isora DeRacy (Young). "Amateur Cowboy' Events Speeded Up on Second Day," EO 17 Sept. 1937: 2; EO 18 Sept. 1937: 8; Boylen, Episode, 28; "Beats Buckaroos at Steer Roping Yesterday," EO 25 Sept. 1914: 1; "Honorees," Side Saddle 1987: 37.
145. Hanesworth, Daddy, 87; Jerry Armstrong, "Picked Up in The Rodeo Arena," WH Dec. 1948: 45.
146. Theodora L. Goebel, "Things Haven't Changed': The Legendary Yakima Canutt Reminisces," WH Sept. 1981: 136; Willard H. Porter, "The American Rodeo: Sport and Spectacle," American West July 1971: 61; Hanesworth, Daddy, 87; Jerry Armstrong, "Picked Up in The Rodeo Arena," WH June 1953: 20-21.
147. "Dorothy Gaskill," HH Apr. 1940: 15.
148. Ethel "Ma" Hopkins, "This and That," HH Jan. 1941: 2.
149. "The Mayor Basks in Texas Glamour," NYT 10 Oct. 1939: 19; Clancy, Fifty Years 224-226.

150. Deaton, "The History of Rodeo," 32.
151. "Cowgirl Sponsors At Stamford," HH June 1938: 15.
152. Herbert H. Maddy, "Cleveland Rodeo," HH June 1939: 14.
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154. Clancy, "Madison Square Garden Rodeo," HH Oct. 1940: 9.
155. Roach, The Cowgirls, 125, 126; Hanesworth, Daddy, 147; Riske, Magnificent, 89.
156. Claire Thompson, "Cowgirl's Comments," HH Sept. 1938: 10; "[Cowboys' Turtle Association] Composite Membership List [1937, 38, 39] 40-41," Prorodeo Hall of Champions and Museum of the American Cowboy, Colorado Springs.
157. Riske, Magnificent, 16; Virginia Rowe Terrett, "(Mrs.) Ridin', Ropin', Wranglin' Rodman," WH Nov. 1949: 47; Herbert S. Maddy, "Eastern Rodeo Chat," HH Feb. 1942: 6.
158. "Don't Fence Me In."
159. Dawson, Mr. Rodeo, 54.
160. Riske, Magnificent, 89.
161. Willard H. Porter, "Rodeo: Still Roping 'em In!," Portland Oregonian 12 June 1988: T2.

162. Jordan, Cowgirls, 230, 232.
163. Hopkins, "This and That," HH Nov. 1942: 2.
164. Jordan (239) placed Kirkwood's rodeos in 1947 as well as calling them as Wild West shows. I found no other mention of Kirkwood's shows in 1947. It was certainly possible that she continued to produce her all-girl shows, however her earliest shows were produced in 1942. Hopkins, "This and That," HH Oct. 1942: 2; Helen Clancy Hammerschmidt, "Eastern News," HH Dec. 1942: 4.
165. ____, Hammerschmidt, "Eastern News," HH Apr. 1943: 6.
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167. Hopkins, "This and That," HH Nov. 1944: 2; ---, "This and That," HH Jan. 1944: 2; "CTA Turtle News," HH June 1943: 7.
168. Armstrong, "Collegiate," WH Mar./Apr. 1943: 52-53; ---, "Collegiate," WH May/June 1943: 44.
169. ____, "Collegiate," WH Nov.-Dec. 1943: 45.
170. ____, "Collegiate," WH September/Oct. 1944: 6.
171. Cal Curly, "Girl Champion Bronc Rider," WH July 1954: 15.
172. Armstrong, "Collegiate," WH Sept./Oct. 1945: 12, 13.
173. ____, "Collegiate," WH Mar./Apr. 1947: 9; ____, "Collegiate," May/June 1947: 11.
174. Smith, "The Girls Rodeo Association," WH July 1953: 12; Willard H. Porter, "Panhandle Cuttin' Horse Gal," WH Sept. 1952: 37; Jordan, Cowgirls, 236; Tooke, "At the Top of the List," 23.
175. Curly, "Girl Champion Bronc Rider," 15.
176. "Girls Rodeo Association: The Beginning," Hoofs and Horns, Magazine of the American Cowboy Apr. 1979: 26.

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178. _____, "The Girls Rodeo Association," 12; "As Heard Over the Mike," The BuckBoard Nov. 1947: 3.
179. Women's Professional Rodeo Association, 1987 Official Rule Book (Blanchard, OK The Women's Professional Rodeo Association, Inc., 1987), forward.
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182. Pollyanna B. Hughes, "Chaparral Racers," WH Dec. 1963: 123.
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186. Frank Reeves, "Rodeo Cowgirls," WH July 1949: 14.
187. Westermeier, Man, Beast, Dust, 83.
188. Cal Curley, "Girl Champion Bronc Rider," WH July 1954: 14.
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APPENDICES

GLOSSARY

All-around - All-around award was given to the contestant winning the most money in two or more events at a rodeo or over the season. Occasionally rodeos or rodeo organizations required competition in more than two events to qualify for the all-around.

Bareback riding - An event in which a bronc was ridden with a simple leather rigging with a leather handhold cinched around the horse. The rider held onto the rigging with either or both hands depending upon which rules were enforced. Historically, referred to as "mane hold contest." The term bareback ride or race referred to roman ride/race without a saddle.

Barrel race - Race of horseback contestant around a series of barrels. (1990s standard was a three barrel pattern. The two barrels to the side of the arena were circled first, then the barrel at the far end of the arena. The run finished with a long dash from the far barrel back across the finish line. This was run one horse at a time, fastest time wins.)

Bloomer rodeo - Rodeo which failed to pay winning contestants or contract performers.

Bronc - Bronc, bronco, bronk, broncho were each correct. A bucking horse. The horse the bareback or bronc rider attempted to ride.

Bronc riding - (Saddle bronc riding) Original bronc riding contest of range, Wild West and rodeo. A regulation saddle was required after about 1920. The reins were attached to a halter. In 1990 could refer to either bareback bronc riding or saddle bronc riding. Use in this paper is the historic sense, i.e., saddle bronc riding.

Calf roping - roping, from horseback, a calf weighing up to 350 pounds.

Chutes - Enclosures that held and/or released livestock.

Cinch - Saddle strap that passed under horse and fastened on other side to hold saddle to the horse. Also used as a verb meaning to secure the cinch strap.

Day money - The amount of prize money paid to the winners of each go-round.

Flank - A calf was flanked when grabbed by the loose hide at the flank, lifted and flopped down to be tied by the calf roper. See leg.

Flank strap - A sheepskin lined strap passed around the flank of a bronc and pulled snug as the animal leaves the chute.

Go-round - A complete turnover of contestants in one event. The number of go rounds varied from one to four or more.

Ground money - When all contestants in an event failed to qualify, producing no winner the purse and entry fees for that event were split equally among all the entrants.

Hazer - On a second horse, a hazer rode from the chute with his steer wrestler to "lane" the steer in a straight line, preventing it from turning away from the wrestler's horse.

Hobbled stirrups - Stirrups connected by a leather thong or rope beneath a horse's belly.

Leg - A calf was legged down when a roper, after dismounting, grabbed a foreleg, lifted it and pushed the calf off balance. (see flank)

Mount money - Money paid when riding, roping, or bulldogging as an exhibition and not for competition.

Mugger - One who subdued a cow for a partner who roped and milked the cow in the wild cow milking contest.

Pickup rider - Mounted rider with three jobs: 1) assist the rider in getting off the bronc; 2) remove the flank strap from the bronc; and 3) lead or drive the horse from the arena.

Pony express race - Race required change of horse but no change of saddle. Changes could be made without the rider touching the ground. Often two horses were used. First and third lap run by horse A; second and fourth lap by horse B.

Producer - Individual who ran a rodeo. Role and responsibilities vary from rodeo to rodeo. Producer might be responsible for renting the arena, paying expenses, and collecting gate receipts.

Relay race - Race required change of horse and sometimes change of saddle.

Rodeo - Sport evolving from work with horses and cattle. Contestants were most often paid only if they won rather than for appearing.

Roman race/ride - Race/ride in which rider stood on the horse's back with the reins in the rider's hands. Roman riding could be done on either one or two horses, and sometimes as many as five abreast. Also referred to as standing race.

Rough stock - Another term for bucking stock - horses, steers or bulls.

Standing race/ride - See Roman race/ride.

Steer wrestling - Also known as bulldogging. Contestant rode alongside a running steer, jumped from his saddle to the steer's head, stopped the animal and twisted it to the ground with head and all four feet pointing in the same direction.

Stock contractor - The person or outfit who provided stock for a rodeo. The contractor typically furnished all rough stock, the roping calves and steers and the steers for steer wrestling.

String - Group of horses. Rough string - bucking herd; relay string - group of three or four relay horses

Timed event - Event run for the best time, such as calf roping, steer roping, bull dogging, and barrel racing.

Turtle - A member of the Cowboys Turtle Association.

Turtles - Rodeo cowboys of the Cowboys Turtle Association or the association itself.

Wild horse race - Three unmounted contestants would catch a wild horse, saddle him and ride him across the finish line.

Wild West - Exhibition of a variety of events including, but not necessarily limited to, rodeo-like events in which participants were paid to display their talents and generally not awarded prize money.

ACRONYMS

CAA Cowboys' Amateur Association - Largely California based contestant organization supportive of CTA/RCA. Once contestants earned a certain amount of money, they could no longer contest in sponsored rodeos but were encouraged to join CTA/RCA.

CTA Cowboys' Turtle Association, first successful contestant organization. Formed in 1936 as United Cowboys' Turtle Association, the organization was renamed Rodeo Cowboys' Association and, later, Professional Rodeo Cowboys' Association.

GRA Girls' Rodeo Association, formed in 1947 to organize women contestants. Later became WPRA/PWRA.

NFL National Finals Rodeo, rodeo open to top fifteen money winners in each event. Closes the season and, often, determines championships for the year.

NIRA National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association, PRCA affiliated group sponsoring and competing in college rodeos.

PSN Prorodeo Sports News, bimonthly publication of rodeo news including listings of scheduled and approved rodeos. Official PRCA newspaper.

PRCA Professional Rodeo Cowboys' Association, largest, most prestigious contestant organization in 1990s. See CTA.

PWRA Professional Womens' Rodeo Association, parent cowgirl organization, originally GRA. PWRA serves as the umbrella for WPRA (see below). The PWRA side of the organization was barrel racers.

RAA Rodeo Association of America, rodeo management organization formed in 1926 and functioning with member rodeos by 1929. First successful rodeo organization.

RCA Rodeo Cowboys' Association, see CTA.

UCTA United Cowboys' Turtle Association, short-lived name of CTA. See CTA.

WPRA Women's Professional Rodeo Association, the all-girl rodeo branch/affiliate of PWRA.