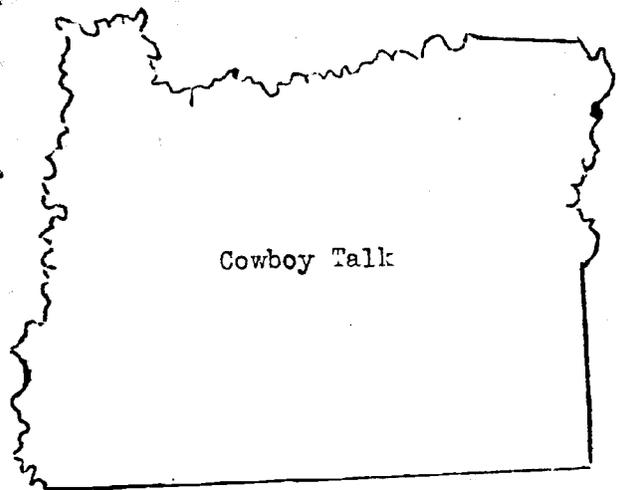


OREGON ODDITIES
AND
ITEMS OF INTEREST



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The items in this bulletin, selected from the material compiled by the Writers' Project and the Historical Records Survey of the Works Progress Administration, are representative of the significant collections being made by these nation-wide programs.

The Historical Records Survey is inventorying all sources of early Oregon history, including county and state records, town and church archives, historic cemeteries, old manuscripts and imprints, old printing presses, monuments and relics, private diaries, letters, and memoirs, historic buildings, and Indian records and lore.

The chief undertaking of the Works Progress Administration Writers' Project has been the American Guide Series of Books. In Oregon as in all other states the work includes the state Guide, designed to acquaint Americans with America and to present to the visitor the history, industry, recreational advantages and scenic attractions of the state. The Oregon Guide, now in the final stages of editing will soon be added to the list of those already published which includes Idaho: A Guide in Word and Picture; Maine: A Guide "Down East"; Massachusetts: A Guide to its Places and People; New Hampshire: A Guide to the Granite State; Washington: City and Capital; Philadelphia: A Guide to the Birthplace of a Nation; Delaware: A Guide to the First State; Mississippi: A Guide to the Magnolia State; Rhode Island: A Guide to the Smallest State; South Dakota: A South Dakota Guide; North Dakota: A Guide to the Northern Prairie State; Vermont: A Guide to the Green Mountain State.

In addition to all the state guides, interesting publications now available include American Stuff; Cape Cod Pilot; Hoosier Tall Stories; The Hopi; Italians of New York; New Orleans City Guide; Whaling Masters; Who's Who in the Zoo; and Wisconsin Indian Lore.

Publications now in preparation by the Oregon Writers' Project include the Oregon Guide, an Oregon Almanac for 1939, Old Towns of Oregon, and Fire Prevention in Portland.

(Much of this information regarding cowboy slang has been gleaned from R. F. Adams' Cowboy Lingo).

Introduced into our language through the operations of Western livestock men and a simpler form of the Spanish-American "rancho", meaning "farm", the word "ranch" designates any farm devoted to the breeding and rearing of cattle or stock. The word also means a cabin or hut, or a collection of them in which the ranchmen may live. The Spanish word "hacienda", meaning a landed estate, is sometimes used for the latter in the Southwest.

In cowboy slang, the "range" is to be distinguished from the "ranch." "Range" is open country, while "ranch" implies a fenced "range." While a "ranger" is an official or an authority, such as the famed "Texas ranger", the term "rancher" is restricted to members of the proprietor class. "Ranchmen" includes employees as well as employers.

The rider, as an employee, is a "cowboy" or "cowpuncher", whether his charges are horses or cows. There is no such thing as a "horseboy" or "horsepuncher." If a cowboy becomes a ranch-owner, he loses his title, and becomes a "rancher." If he raises cattle, he is either a "cowman", "cattlemen" or "cattle man." "Cattlemen" and "cattle man" are identical, but a "horse man" is a man who raises horses, while a "horseman" is a man who rides horses.

The various buildings on the western ranch have their particular slang names. The main house, or the home of the ranch owner, is known as the "white house" (its usual color), the "big house", "Bull's mansh", or "headquarters." The "bunk-house" is also known as the "dog-house", "dice-house", "dump", "shack" or "dive", while the "cook-shack", if it is a separate building, is spoken of as the "mess-house", "soup-house", "feed-trough", "feed-bag", or "swallow-an-git-out trough."

A circular pen built of stout horizontal wooden rails supported by posts firmly set into the ground, the "corral" is one of the most important structures on a ranch. The rails, often lashed to the posts with green rawhide, contract when dried and make the entire pen as rigid and

strong as iron. The "corrals" are made circular or with rounded corners, so that animals will not be crowded into angles and injured. A vertical, round timber is set in the center of the corral and is known as a "snubbing post." Cowboys, after roping stock, take a turn of the rope around this post, anchoring the animal securely. The fences flaring from the sides of the corral gate to shunt the entering herd into the pen are known as "wing fences." A small corral used for branding is known as the "crowding pen." Usually connecting one corral with another, the narrow boarded passage used for branding older and wilder cattle is known as a "branding chute", "squeezer", or "snappin' turtle."

The favorite seat of cowboys when watching another ride a "bronc" or unbroken horse within a corral is the "op'ra house", or the top rail of the main corral.

The rack or hitching-post in front of the ranch-house is called a "snortin'-post" or a "hitchin'-bar."

In the days of the wild and woolly West, the larger ranches established "line camps" or "sign camps." Cowboys were stationed at these outpost cabins to "ride line" or "ride sign", which meant to turn back cattle straying from the home range. They followed the "sign" or tracks of those that were missed, watched for "rustlers" or cattle thieves, and in general protected the employer's interests. The cabin in which the sign-riders lived was known as the "boar's nest."

In frontier days ranches were commonly sold "by the book", or by "book count", meaning that the ranch had been sold by listed inventory. The phrase "the books don't freeze" became a byword in the Northwest during the boom days when Eastern and foreign capitalists were eager to buy ranch interests. "Range delivery" meant that the buyer, after inspecting the ranch records and with due regard to the seller's reputation for honesty, first paid for what the seller purported to own and then rode out and tried to find it.

The ranch owner's titles in the old days included "presidente", "ramrod" or

"rod", "big auger", "old man" or "caporal." The foreman was the "top screw", "straw boss", or "cock-a-doodle-doo." However, the word "foreman" was rarely used by cowboys, the word "range boss" being the more common term. The range boss was often described as the one "running the outfit."

A "bootblack puncher" was an Easterner who went into the cattle business to "raise some T-bone steaks" for what money there was in it, while a "buggy boss" was an Eastern owner who rode around in a buggy because he did not know how to ride a horse.

The word "cowpuncher" originally applied to the men who accompanied and took care of shipments of cattle. These men carried "prod poles", sticks about six feet long with heavy handles and spikes on one end, with which they prodded or "punched" cattle into stock cars.

The cowboy of the Northwest was called a "buckaroo." Terms also used were "baquero", "buckhara" and "buckayro", all perversions of either the Spanish "vaquero" or "boyero." Variant names for the cowboy were "rañahan", "saddle-warmer", "saddle-slicker", "leather-pounder", "cow-poke", "cow-prod" or "waddie."

Cowboys who are specialists in their line have special titles. Those who inspect and repair fences are called "fencers" or "fence-riders", and are said to be "ridin' fence." The vehicle used to haul tools and material for building or repairing fences is the "fence-wagon." Cowboys who keep windmills in repair are "mill-riders", "millers" or "windmillers." Those who feed cattle in the winter by throwing hay from the stacks are "feeders" or "hay-shovelers."

Riders who specialize in pulling mired cattle from pitfalls and bog-holes are known as "bog-riders" or "pot-hole-riders." "Line-riders" are men who patrol a prescribed boundary, while "outriders" are cowboys who are commissioned to ride anywhere.

The "horse-wrangler" on a cattle ranch is usually a boy, called in cowboy slang a "button", "doorknob" or a "fryin' size." The word "wrangler" is a corruption of the Spanish word "caverango", meaning hostler.

The day wrangler in the old times was a "wrangatang", "horse-pestler", "horse-rustler", or "jungler." The "night-herder", who was called a "night-hawk", was prone to claim that he "swapped his bed for a lantern." Although the duties of the day and night wrangler were identical, the day man "wrangled" horses, while the night man "herded" them.

The "buster" or cowboy who "broke" horses was assisted by the "hazer", whose duty it was to terrorize the horse by yelling, waving his hat, and pounding the animal with a "quirt" or whip. When the horse was broken outside a corral, it was the hazer's job to keep the animal turned so that his bucking would not take him too far away. The "pick-up man" was a horseman who stood by to catch the horse if the rider was thrown.

Originally applied to imported cattle, the word "tenderfoot" later was attached to people new to the western cow-country, as were also the characterizations "greener", "juniper" and "shorthorn." A green hand was sometimes called a "lent", just as in the South a cotton-picker was called a "lent-back." A "chuck-eater" was an Easterner who had come out West to learn ranch work. A "tenderfoot" in "store-made" cowboy clothes and devoid of ranch experience was a "mail-order cowboy", and one who was flashily dressed was a "swivel dude."

A cowboy old in the ways of the West was called a "rawhide", and was sometimes said to be "alkalied" or "bone-seasoned."

In cowboy slang a "cow crowd" was an "outfit", or unit of cowboys.

When a cowboy was fired without having a horse to ride away, he was "set down" in cowboy parlance. Such an act often led to gunplay.

The cowboy's costume has also its slang terms. "Chaps", or riding pants made of goatskin with the hair out, were called "angoras"; those made from sheep pelts were called "woollies", and those from bearskins, "grizzlies." Leather chaps made with wide, flapping wings, such as those worn in Texas, were "bat wings" or "buzzard wings." In the Old Northwest,

plain leather chaps were fringed and were so tight that they had to be pulled on like boots. Such chaps were called "shot-guns."

Cowboys never used the word "trousers", but always spoke of "pants" or "britches."

The cowboy's hat, usually his pride and joy, was called a hat in the Northwest, although in the Southwest it was designated as a "sombbrero." It was often called a "Stetson" or a "John B." after its famous maker. Other slang names were "ten-gallon hat", "hair-case", "conk-cover" and "lid."

High-heeled and not particularly well suited for ranch work, except for his saddle the cowboy's boots were usually the most expensive items in his equipment. Often costing more than two months' salary, the most popular boots were made by hand and commonly called "custom makes." Those with flapping, pull-on straps at the top were "mule ears", and the short-type boots of later years were "pegwees."

Spurs in cowboy slang were called "hooks", "gut-hooks", "galves", "grappling irons", "can-openers" and "pet-makers." The "buck-hook", a curved piece added to the side of the spur frame, was used to hook into the side of a plunging horse. The "shank" of most spurs turned downward to allow the "buck-hook" to catch without interference by the "rowels" or wheels.

The cowboy's bed was made of blankets and "parkers", "suggans" or "soogans", which were heavy comforts often pieced from old overcoats, pants and the like. If stuffed with feathers, the bed was a "hen-skin." Carried rolled in a tarpaulin or "tarp", beds were called by such names as "lay", "hot roll", "velvet couch", "shake down", "crumb incubator" or "flea trap." When a cowboy divided his bed with another he was said to "split the blanket" or "cut the bed." To "spool his bed" or "roll the cotton" was to roll up his bed and pack it for moving to another camp.

The cowboy carried his personal belongings, his "thirty years' gatherin'", in his "war bag", "war sack" or "poke."

Always the most valuable piece of his equipment and often costing more than the horse he rode, the cowboy's saddle was his workbench, his home and even his pillow. Today, saddles are sometimes sold for more than \$2,000. Hand-tooled by master craftsmen, inlaid with gold or silver and sometimes jeweled, the cowboy's saddle was associated with its owner even after death, and the saying, "He's sacked his saddle", meant that he had passed on the "long trail." When it was said that a puncher had "sold his saddle", the phrase meant that he was broke.

Western saddles were identified under the general terms of "cow saddles", "range saddles", or "stock saddles", while in the East such saddles were called "Mexican saddles", "cowboy saddles" or "Western saddles." The earliest Western saddles had large, flat "horns" on the pommel and were short, flat and clumsy. Such saddles were slangily called "dinner plates." The saddles of the 1880's were called "apple horns", because their horns were approximately round and about the size of an apple. After the 80's saddles improved and became adapted to certain particular uses. Variations in the saddle "tree" or frame created special names, and today the various types of saddle include the "Brazos", "California", "Nelson", "Frazier", "Oregon", "Visalia", "Cheyenne", "White River", "Ellensburg" and "Hamley."

The cowboy's bridle, his "headstall", or "bridle head", was composed of a "crown piece", "brow-band", "throat-latch", with a "check-piece" on either side. Sometimes the bridle was called a "freno."

Cowboy slang names for the rope include "line", "clothes-line", "string", "hemp", "manila", "whale line", "lass rope", "twine", and "cat-gut." A rope with an unusually large loop was called a "community loop", a "cotton patch loop", "Mother Hubbard loop" or a "Blocker loop." The "Blocker loop" got its name from John Blocker of Texas, a famous roper who used a large loop which was turned over when thrown and went over a steer's shoulders, picking up the animal by both front feet.