

Hands-on Items

7' x 16" Canvas Bedroll - This is the standard size bedroll for cowboys on a trail drive. The cowboys would roll up in the bedroll at night and pack their personal items in it by day. Usually cowboys stored their bedrolls in the chuck wagon, but sometimes they carried them on their horses.



Cowhide Playing Surface, Bag with Cards, Brand Cubes, and a Die - These items are for the game on page 69.



Comb - Even though appearances mattered not at all to the other cowboys or to the cattle, a comb would be invaluable for a trip to town where the cowboy wanted to look his best. This comb is made of wood; others might be made of hard rubber (which first made an appearance in the Civil War).

Shaving Brush – Men used shaving brushes to apply soap lather to their faces and lubricate it for shaving with the straight razor. The bristles are made from animal hair and the wood handle on this brush indicates that it is a very old item.



Lye Soap - Soap in the West was not the sweet smelling soap of today. People made soap with animal fat, vinegar, ashes, and lye. It would get you clean if you did not mind some of your skin sloughing off with the dirt! Since the cowboy usually washed in a river on the trail drive, it hardly mattered what his skin looked like after washing. Clothes washed with the lye soap fared little better than the cowboy's body.

Straight Razor – Unlike the razors of today, this razor is a single blade that folds out of a handle. Men would have to be very careful while using this razor. They would also need to sharpen it from time to time on a sharpening stone or a razor strop. Cowboys did not get to shave every day, as time did not always permit them the luxury of a clean-shaven face. They were in the saddle by 4:30am and it was too dark to see. It was in high demand, however, just before a foray into town where one might just meet a pretty girl...or any girl for that matter! This razor has been dulled for safety reasons, but students should still handle it with care.





Bag of Poker Chips and Playing Cards –

Card games and gambling formed the bulk of recreation for the cowboy, although many trail bosses and owners forbade the use of cards and dice. Often the cards came in colors different from the red and black common today and most did not reveal the numbers. You had to count the spots. The cook was the final authority on any gambling dispute between the drovers and his word was not to be questioned. In town, the cowboys played games of poker, three-card Monte, or faro. Cowboys made poker chips from clay or wood. Since clay is so fragile, many chips did not survive. Someone made these slicing a tree branch and painting the pieces, so they are quite durable.

Liniment Bottle - The rigors of the trail drive took its toll on the cowboy and no bedroll would be without a bottle of liniment to rub on sore muscles. Sometimes they would rub the liniment on their horses. Some bottles of liniment had labels that read: "One tablespoon for humans and two tablespoons for horses."



Toothbrush - While not in great demand among Westerners, some cowboys carried toothbrushes with them on cattle drives. The handle was often made of bone and tooth powder consisted of baking soda from the cook or ashes from the fire.



Knife and Fork – The cook kept most of the eating utensils in the chuck wagon, but often cowboys preferred to use the same fork and knife. This set has wooden handles

and the fork has three tines. Some forks had bone handles. This knife should not be confused with a sharp all-purpose knife used to cut leather in the event of being thrown from the horse and caught up in the rigging.



Journal - Contrary to popular belief, many cowboys had a working knowledge of reading and writing and often put their thoughts down in a journal. The journal reflected the hardships and frustrations that confronted the cowboy day after day. If you look inside this journal you can read handwritten entries from a fictional cowboy. The author based the stories on things that happened to real cowboys.

Bandana – Bandanas, also known as "snot rags," came in either silk or cotton, with the silk being preferred. Silk was cool in the summer and warm in the winter and was perfect to strain water from a creek or river stirred up by cattle. Cowboys favored bandanas that were colorful as well as practical. With all the dust from the cattle, especially if you rode in the rear of the herd (drag), a bandana was a necessity.



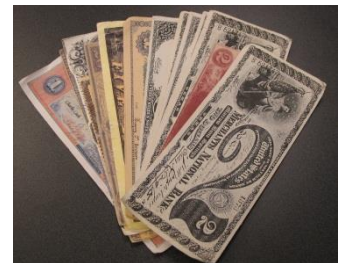
Tintype Photograph and Cardstock Photograph -

Photographs became more common after the Civil War. Itinerant photographers roamed the West including the cattle drives looking for business. It was still an expensive proposition to keep everything in focus, so it would "cost an arm and a leg" if you wanted to include legs, arms, and hands in the picture. That may be one



reason so many people sat down, stood behind someone, or stuck a hand into their coat. Note that in one picture, the boy is wearing a dress, a common occurrence in Victorian America. As boys aged they moved from dress to short pants to long pants as a rite of passage. The tintype proved to be a durable means of capturing an image and was popular with cowboys on the trail.

Paper Currency - Most money was carried in a money belt on the cowboy, but this is an example of the type and variety of bills that might have been in a bedroll. The common thought was "love and trust yer neighbor...but keep yer gun oiled!"



"Bull" Durham Chewing Tobacco - The name "Bull" does not appear on the pouch but comes from the picture of a bull on the Durham brand. "Fixins" were important to the cowboy, who often bragged that he could roll a cigarette while riding a bronco horse and not spill a bit of the tobacco. One reason vests with pockets were so important to a cowboy was that he had a place to stuff his tobacco pouch.

Matches ("Lucifers") – People sometimes called matches "Lucifers" because they smelled like sulfur. Originally, matches in the Civil War came in a "brick" of twelve and people had to break one off at a time.



Jaw Harp - Also called the "Jew's Harp" and the "Dentist's Friend" because if the harp is "twanged" the wrong way, you will crack your teeth. This instrument was common during the Civil War and in the post-war West. To play the harp, the cowboy would hold the round part and place it against his teeth. Then, he would strum the thin band in an outward motion. The position of the mouth and the force from the player's breath will affect the sound and the volume.

Shirt - The drover always carried an extra shirt, as 3,000 head of cattle kicked up a considerable amount of dust. Crossing rivers would get your clothes wet and cowboys would need a clean and dry shirt to wear. Many times they just went into the river without shirt and pants. For superstitious reasons many cowboys did not favor red shirts.





Long Underwear – Cowboys sometimes called these "long handles." They wore long underwear in summer and winter and often kept them on while crossing a deep river, which gave them a measure of modesty. People usually wore white or red "Union Suits" in the West.

Socks – Cowboys often carried extra socks in their bedrolls. These socks were usually either wool or cotton. Men who had fought in the Civil War learned that their feet would suffer if they went without socks or wore wet socks for a long period of time. This lesson applied to cowboys on the cattle drives as well. In truth, cowboys avoided walking when they could ride, but they knew the value of clean feet and clean socks.



Spurs and Straps – Cowboys used spurs to enforce commands to their horses. Depending on the drover's finances, they might have spurs inlaid with silver and cut into fancy forms such as "snake-heads" and "gal legs." Later spurs included a piece of metal that clinked against the spur called "jingle-bobs." Spur straps could be plain leather or have designs impressed into the leather.

Shotgun Chaps – The correct pronunciation of "chaps" is "shaps." These are "shotgun" chaps, which protected the cowboy from various hazards on the trail such as mesquite thorns, small branches, and rattlesnakes. Shotgun chaps were the earliest type of chaps and they are straight and narrow like the barrel of a shotgun. Some chaps had pockets, and most had fringe along the sides. Students can try on the chaps and see what it is like to walk around in them.



Cuffs - Cuffs protected the cowboy's wrist from rope burns and his shirt from becoming frayed on the ends. Many cuffs were highly decorated to reflect the individual's taste. Students may try on these cuffs.



Curry Comb – Cowboys used curry combs to groom their horses. The comb removed burrs, dirt, and other debris from the horse's coat. This metal curry comb is too rough for a human, but a horse wouldn't mind.

Horse Bit – A bit is a metal piece that attaches to a bridle and fits in the horse's mouth. If a rider tugs on the reins it puts pressure on the bit in the horse's mouth and tells it whether to turn or stop. There are many types of bits but this particular style is common in the West.





Quirt – A quirt is a small whip that cowboys use to tell horses to move. Some cowboys preferred to use quirts instead of spurs because spurs could get caught in the stirrup of the saddle. Cowboys also used quirts to drive stubborn cattle along.

Gun Holster – Firearms were essential for survival the cattle drive. Cowboys used guns to protect themselves and the herd from wild animals and cattle rustlers. Students may try on this holster with the other pieces of clothing in the trunk.



Harmonica – This musical instrument was very useful on the cattle drive. It helped provide entertainment for the cowboys and it helped soothe the cattle at night to keep them from stampeding.

Lariat – This is also known as a lasso. It has a sliding loop on one end. Cowboys would throw the rope over a running cow and pull it tight around the animal to bring it to a halt. This particular lasso is tied closed, but students can still feel the texture and the weight of the item.



Other Items

Laminated Maps – These maps show different cattle trails through early Oklahoma. You may hang them in the classroom or place them on a table for students to examine. Please do not use thumbtacks or other sharp items on the maps.