

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

The Cowboy Composite:

Theodore Roosevelt and the Birth of American Cowboy Romanticism

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By

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Abstract

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The genesis of the American cowboy figure we know today from literature, film, and television began in the latter half of the nineteenth century largely due to the efforts of admirers of the American West. This group was comprised of easterners and westerners including one particularly energetic New Yorker, Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt and other admirers of the American West, directly or indirectly, facilitated the emergence of this new mythological figure, now considered the classical western archetype: a rugged individualist who is also virile and aggressively masculine. This western figure was part of a larger myth-building construct of the American West, a romanticized, male-dominated version that endures today. Although a host of writers, artists, performers, and others played key roles in creating the cowboy standard, Roosevelt did more than any single individual to establish the cowboy as an iconic figure in American culture.

Drawing on both primary and secondary sources, this study explores how Roosevelt slowly rehabilitated the cowboy image from a villain to a heroic figure through his own writings based on his first-hand experience living with cowboys during his sojourns in the Dakota Badlands throughout the 1880s. This study also examines how

Roosevelt embraced his public image of a western cowboy and how the public perceived and accepted this image throughout his public life. The cowboy rehabilitation and transformation through the lens of Roosevelt's own cowboy image unfolded during the late nineteenth century with the ascension of TR as a public figure, a process that culminated in 1901 with his elevation to the presidency. By the time of Roosevelt's death in 1919, the American cowboy was culturally embraced by the public due in part to the public acceptance of TR as a western figure.

Understanding the rise of the romantic American cowboy begins with an exploration of recent scholarship of the American West, cowboys, and the role Roosevelt and his contemporaries played in helping transform this Western figure. This scholarship is reviewed in chapter one and includes perspectives on culture, social theory, gender relations, and nationalism. Chapter two explores the cowboy rehabilitation viewed through Roosevelt's own western publications and how the public, via the media, slowly accepted this new cowboy image as the nineteenth century came to a close. Chapter three focuses on frontier amusements, the key mechanisms through which Easterners were first exposed to and then led to embrace this new romantic cowboy image through participation in dude ranches, rodeo shows, western literature, and film. Roosevelt's influence is traced through each of these amusements. Chapter four examines how TR, his family and friends, and the public perceived his cowboy image. The final chapter looks at the legacy of the mythic cowboy into the twenty-first century.

Chapter I - Introduction

"Now look! That damned cowboy is President of the United States," exclaimed Mark Hanna.¹ The Republican Senator had just heard the news of Theodore Roosevelt's ascendance to the presidency upon William McKinley's death on September 14, 1901. His comments are not surprising. Roosevelt, throughout his multi-faceted life, established himself as historian, politician, social reformer, and soldier, but "cowboy" was the image that most of his contemporaries and the American public associated with him. The new president was arguably the most popular person in the country due to his exploits in the Spanish-American War, well-received published works on the history of the American West, work as a social reformer during the late nineteenth century masculinity movement, and his many articles and books recounting his sojourns into the Dakota Badlands where he first forged his identity as a cowboy.

The cowboy construct that Roosevelt helped to create, however, was a new composite of the Western figure. Roosevelt and other admirers of the American West, directly or indirectly, facilitated the emergence of this new mythical figure, now considered the classical Western archetype: a rugged individualist who is also virile and aggressively masculine. This Western figure was part of a larger myth-building construct of the American West, a romanticized, male-dominated version that endures today. Although a host of writers, artists, performers, and others played key roles in creating the cowboy archetype, Roosevelt did more than any single individual to establish the cowboy as an iconic figure in American culture.

¹ Edmund Morris, *Theodore Rex* (New York: Random House, 2001), 30.

Roosevelt was uniquely positioned to accomplish this feat. Like many of his Gilded Age contemporaries, he believed that the American male was losing his masculine edge as industrialization proceeded, the railroads reached the West Coast, and the frontier receded. Roosevelt saw the closing of the West as a lost opportunity for the nation to engage in conquest and for its men to assert their masculinity. This drew him, the scion of a leading eastern establishment family, to travel west. Unlike contemporaries such as the artist Frederick Remington and the writer Owen Wister, Roosevelt returned to the West frequently and worked alongside the “true” cowboys he later introduced in his writings. His experiences in the West both transformed him and enhanced his credibility with Eastern and Western audiences. These experiences, combined with his military and political accomplishments, made him a unique and attractive American figure and one of the most visible and influential individuals of the time.

His influence reached into all regions and engaged each in different ways. Easterners related to him and sought to experience “the West,” usually vicariously, before it disappeared into history. Westerners accepted and admired Roosevelt because his experiences had made him one of them. Children, targeted directly through published stories, likely viewed Roosevelt as an action hero who they dreamed of someday emulating. Unlike the popular Buffalo Bill Cody, who was born a Westerner and did much to establish the mythic cowboy in American culture, Roosevelt showed by example that an Eastern gentleman could, indeed, become a cowboy.

As Senator Hanna’s exclamation suggests, Roosevelt’s cowboy persona was already part of his public image when he became president. It was an image that he came to embrace and would happily portray in his public life. The media helped to strengthen

this image through articles, campaign literature, and political cartoons. By 1901, the general public used the cowboy more than any other image to describe him. So dominant had this image become by 1901 it was not unexpected that the grief-stricken and enraged Hanna again described TR as a man of the West, “That damn cowboy wants me to take supper with him alone, damn him.”²

For an established Easterner such as Hanna, the “damn cowboy” description captured what Roosevelt had become in the eyes of the public -- a man equally at home in the West as he was in New York society. Although TR was born into an Eastern, upper-class family, many of his peers within the patrician class viewed him as dangerous and were apprehensive of what the former Rough Rider would do as president. The “damn cowboy” figure which originated in the Dakota Badlands, became his enduring public image and, in turn, changed the depiction of the American cowboy for generations to come. His enormous popularity before, during, and after his presidency ensured that the public saw him as the cowboy he perceived himself to be. The people’s enthusiasm for the West, encouraged by Roosevelt’s own, was demonstrated through their participation in rodeo shows, patronage of dude ranches, or simply by traveling west to view the sights that TR had described in his own works. In addition, western literature increased in popularity and soon thereafter so did the number of western stories in silent films. The image of the cowboy that Roosevelt did so much to establish in the late nineteenth century lives today in the twenty-first century. For more than one hundred years, this symbolic figure has endured through popular culture and political lore, and people throughout the world continue to identify it with America and Americans.

² Morris, 36.

To comprehend the cultural significance of Roosevelt's mythical cowboy, one must understand how the cowboy figure evolved in the American West at the end of the nineteenth century. Before the revision of the cowboy image in the late nineteenth century, the cowboy was viewed, particularly by Easterners, as a negative figure. Until the mid-1880s, Western residents defined the cowboy as an outlaw, drunkard, or cattle thief.³ Western men also rejected the term "cowboy" and referred to themselves as "horsemen." Most Americans viewed the cowboy so negatively during this time that President Chester A. Arthur drew no criticism when he classified them as cattle thieves. In Victorian America, the cowboys of the West were consigned to marginal status. Unmarried and without families, they lacked the moral influence of women.⁴ In reality, they matched neither Roosevelt's heroic view nor the negative outlook prevalent during this time. The real cowboy was a common worker, frequently illiterate, often unemployed, and on the lowest rung of the community's socioeconomic ladder.⁵ Cowboys were not cattlemen but laborers, nomadic workers, and seasonal employees. As hired hands, they neither owned businesses nor made investments. Scholars suggest they were "missing out on the character-building experience of competitive capitalism."⁶ Moreover, some did steal cattle and others would flee at the first sign of trouble. Western writer William Forbis believed real cowboys were dirty, overworked laborers who "fried their brains under a hot prairie sun."⁷ Cowboy C.C. Post warned that cowboys' marginal

³ Paul H. Carlson, *The Cowboy Way* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2000.), 3.

⁴ Matthew Basso, Laura McCall, and Dee Garceau, *Across The Great Divide: Cultures of Manhood in the American West* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 153.

⁵ Carlson, 6.

⁶ Basso, McCall and Garceau, 153.

existence exposed them to social and moral shame: "The trammels of society are cast off leading to a dangerous drop into rude habits and ill-restrained language...Good breeding has to be nurtured by decency and association."⁸

The American military also held the cowboy in low esteem. Some officers in the Army considered the cowboy a bum, hooligan, and a nuisance. An army colonel expressed this commonly held view in 1874 when he said, "Although there are honorable exceptions, the majority of ranchers and cowboys are idle, shiftless, and lazy."⁹ After his first trip to the West in 1885, even Wister remarked that cowboys were "a queer episode in the history of the country"¹⁰ and "without any moral sense whatsoever."¹¹ The writings of Roosevelt and his contemporaries greatly facilitated the shift of the cowboy's image from negative to positive. In addition, the emergence of Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West shows helped change the popular conception of the cowboy from that of common laborer who lived a life of ennui and endless drudgery to that of vibrant frontier hero. Cowboys themselves also recognized the change in perception. Bruce Siberts, a cowboy who rode herd from the 1890s through the 1920s, said of the transformation: "I had a liking for the girls, but when I went into town with my rough clothes on, they wouldn't pay any attention to me...Owen Wister hadn't yet written his book *The Virginian* so we cowhands did not know we were so strong and glamorous as we were after people read the book."¹²

⁷ Carlson, 3.

⁸ C.C. Post, *Ten Years a Cowboy* (Denver: Thomas W. Jackson Publishing Co., 1898), 386.

⁹ Carlson, 15.

¹⁰ David McCullough, *Mornings On Horseback* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1981), 320.

¹¹ McCullough, 320.

¹² Basso, McCall and Garceau, 152.

Cowboys like Sieberts saw the Western figure transformed from mindless worker to a hero in the American consciousness. This transformation has also drawn the attention of cultural historians who study the West.

Scholars have viewed Roosevelt, the cowboy, and the American West, through the lenses of nationalism, expansionism, violence, and virile masculinity. They argue that men like Roosevelt believed American males had to go West to reclaim their masculinity if they and their country were to survive the challenges of the twentieth century. Indeed, Roosevelt supported a number of outdoor activities including football and boxing. As a leader in the boy reform culture movement of the late nineteenth century, he also championed the boy scouts. Some cultural historians have interpreted these initiatives as xenophobic and misogynistic. Although Roosevelt and his acolytes believed that virile masculinity had been lost in the East and could be rediscovered in the West, they also believed it could only be achieved through violence, by pitting themselves against groups who deserved to be conquered. In the West, TR perceived Native Americans, Mexicans, and other so-called unsavory characters as opponents. With the closing of the frontier, Roosevelt saw his nation's destiny across the seas in foreign lands where Americans could dominate non-white races. He believed that Americans needed to be continually tested to prove to themselves and to the world that the United States was the superior nation both culturally and militarily. In the cowboy, Roosevelt discerned the traits needed to fulfill that destiny: a spirit of self-reliance, embrace of hard work, and the willingness to engage in violent conflict.

Roosevelt's view was consistent with the Victorian era which put a high value on morals and manly behavior. This, combined with his desire to overcome physical

shortcomings caused by illness, drove him to hone his masculinity with a fervor that could almost be called obsessive. After the deaths of his mother and wife in 1884, Roosevelt went back to the West in search of change. He had already discovered and become so enthralled by the West on his first visit to the Dakota Badlands in 1883 that he had purchased a ranch. He became a hands-on rancher, immersing himself in the work of his men, and came to call himself a cowboy. Most scholars agree that the image of the virile Westerner cowboy personifies the aggressive American male.¹³

Some scholars view Roosevelt as one of several figures who influenced Western American culture. Along with TR, such contemporaries as Wister, Remington, and Frederick Jackson Turner made the case that the industrial age was destroying the rugged masculine individualism of the American male, and the only place for him to regain his masculinity was in the rapidly vanishing open spaces of the West. The young Roosevelt who went west to become a real man by transforming himself into a cowboy is the prime example of the Eastern male conversion. Some suggest it was Roosevelt who first called attention to a dilemma in American culture that metropolitan living was emasculating men while showing the relevancy of alternatives such as the West.¹⁴

¹³ For analyses of Roosevelt and the West focused on race and gender, see Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender And Race In The United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 174; Gary Gerstle, "Theodore Roosevelt and the Divided Character of American Nationalism," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 86, No. 3 (December 1999): 1280-1307; Peter Filene, *Him/Her/Self*^{3rd} ed. (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1998), 100; Anthony E. Rotundo, *American Manhood* (New York: Basic Books, 1993); Arnaldo Testi, "The Gender of Reform Politics: Theodore Roosevelt and the Culture of Masculinity," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 81, No. 4 (March 1995): 1509-1533; Michael Kimmel, *Manhood In America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997); Julia Grant, "A 'Real Boy' And Not A Sissy: Gender, Childhood, And Masculinity, 1890-1940," *Journal of Social History* vol. 37, No. 4 (Summer 2004): 834; Doris Groshen Daniels, "Theodore Roosevelt and Gender Roles," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 3, (Summer 1996): 648-665.

¹⁴ For the creations and impact of the Western American mythology by Owen Wister, Frederick Jackson Turner, and Federic Remington see G. Edward White, *The Eastern Establishment and the Western*

Other historians highlight Turner's role in the development of the mythical cowboy character as a larger cultural phenomenon that bridged the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They cite the themes he explored in his essay, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History." He postulated that the frontier liberated Americans from nineteenth century European culture, arguing that American development advanced by perpetually engaging the frontier line. Turner maintained that,

American social development has been continually beginning over again on the frontier. This perennial rebirth, this fluidity of American life, this expansion Westward with its new opportunities, its continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society, furnish the forces dominating American character... The most significant thing about the American frontier is that it lies at the hither edge of free land.¹⁵

Some scholars highlight Turner's depiction of the westward movement as a natural social evolution. They demonstrate that Turner considered the frontier an historical relic that was open to reconstruction through nostalgia for its existence. Thus, Turner's rhetoric advocates for the mythologizing of the American West and one of its primary inhabitants: the American cowboy.¹⁶ They suggest that Turner's thesis focused on aggressive masculinity as an important element in the creation of the American character.¹⁷ These historians see Turner as important in helping to build the American West myth of the late nineteenth century. Past scholarship on Turner demonstrates that his

Experience (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989) and John Pettegrew, *Brutes in Suits* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007).

¹⁵ Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt And Company, 1921), 2-3.

¹⁶ Jennifer Moskowitz, "The Cultural Myth of the Cowboy, or, How the West Was Won," *Americana, The Journal of American Popular Culture*, Volume 5, Issue 1 (Spring 2006), http://www.americanpopularculture.com/journal/articles/spring_2006/moskowitz.htm. (Accessed on April 20, 2012).

¹⁷ Pettegrew, 24.

frontier thesis "channeled the turn-of-the-century escapist attempts to evoke primitive masculinity, as seen in such broad-based developments in popular culture as the romanticization of the Wild West and the cowboy's role within it."¹⁸

Turner, however, was not the national figure that Roosevelt was, and more importantly, he was not perceived as a cowboy. Although highly regarded in academic circles, Turner was not well-known among the general public. His influence was most significant in academia while Roosevelt touched not only the world of scholarship, but also politics and culture. Roosevelt's level of visibility steadily grew from the time he went to the Dakota Territories until his death in 1919. For nearly forty years, in both his public and private life, the cowboy image remained a key element of his persona.

Roosevelt is linked to Wister and Remington because all three were Easterners who transformed themselves in the West. Born three years apart, these men were at the top of their respective professions by the turn of the twentieth century. Remington was arguably the country's leading illustrator; Wister was the author of one of the most famous novels of the early 1900s; and Roosevelt, as president, was considered the "moral leader of all the people."¹⁹ But the public viewed neither Wister nor Remington as heroic figures. Only TR was able to take the cowboy from the pages of Western lore and turn him into a flesh and blood character that he himself personified.

Other scholars of Roosevelt and the West link the two in order to illustrate a pattern of racial and gender conflict in the United States. Some have suggested that Roosevelt applied Darwinian principles to the Western tradition and constructed the

¹⁸ Pettegrew, 30.

¹⁹ White, 7.

frontier as a site of the origin of the American race, whose manhood and national worth were to be proven by its ability to stamp out competing, savage races.²⁰ Applying these principles suggests that Roosevelt was building a construct of a vigorous masculine American male who could fight anyone, anywhere, anytime and win. Roosevelt's beliefs introduced a new narrative of American Western history, one in which the cowboy, as TR interpreted him, played a central role. Roosevelt's cowboy would be seen in the worlds of tourism, entertainment, literature, and film for years to come. It would also form the core of his public image, a direct result of his own efforts. By the time of his presidency, he was depicted in political cartoons far more often as a cowboy than a socialite. The cartoons reinforce the argument that the majority of Americans accepted the twenty-sixth president as a genuine cowboy and a man of the West.

Historians have also reviewed Roosevelt's embrace of the cowboy in the context of his efforts to preserve the masculinity of American men and boys. Roosevelt's encouraging of young boys to exercise more is associated with the work of G. Stanley Hall, one of the leading psychologists in the late nineteenth century. Like Roosevelt, Hall believed young males should participate in more vigorous activities such as camping and boxing. Both Roosevelt and Hall called attention to the threat the effeminate boy/man posed to the nation. During this time, Roosevelt's written work and speeches blended the themes of manhood and racial power, and drew extended parallels between the individual

²⁰ Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender And Race In The United States, 1880-1917*; Gerstle, "Theodore Roosevelt and the Divided Character of American Nationalism;" Filene, *Him/Her/Self*; Rotundo, *American Manhood*; Testi, "The Gender of Reform Politics: Theodore Roosevelt and the Culture of Masculinity;" Kimmel, *Manhood In America*; Grant. "A 'Real Boy' And Not A Sissy: Gender, Childhood, And Masculinity, 1890-1940;" Daniels, "Theodore Roosevelt and Gender Roles."

American man and the virile American race. In particular, Roosevelt believed that masculine Americans were right to vanquish effeminate and decadent foreign countries.

His early published works such as *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman*, which detailed his adventures while hunting wildlife, and *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail* delve into the same topics but also highlight the struggle between savagery and civilization. Scholars of gender suggest Roosevelt depicted ranchers like himself fighting on the side of civilization, highlighting the triumph of their aggressive masculinity against the savages. These historians overlook, however, Roosevelt's greater ability to impact public thought regarding the cowboy and the West. They do not explore how Roosevelt's effective use of the public platform as a rising politician, combined with his own history in the West, enhanced his cultural influence.

Research on the cowboy myth and the West has also been examined through social theory. For sociologists, the cowboy represents individualist values, and those values were most completely put into practice in American market institutions. The cowboy, in the market nation, symbolizes the American character that represents market individualism, not just American individualism.²¹ One can argue that TR best represented American individuality and, as America is considered a market nation, the image of individuality carried over to this sphere.

Other scholars have connected the cowboy composite or cowboy-related figure in literature and film to Roosevelt. For example, Wister's seminal 1902 novel, *The Virginian*, was dedicated to Roosevelt. As a contemporary, Wister was inspired by Roosevelt's western exploits and he attributed his lasting friendship with TR to their

²¹ Will Wright, *The Wild West: The Mythical Cowboy & Social Theory* (London: Sage Publications, 2001), 12.

shared love of the American West. Wister recalls this friendship and his near-worship of Roosevelt:

Not many golden strokes of fortune equal the friendship of a great man. I owe it entirely to the failure of my health, and the fact that to both of us at nearly the same time came the same experience – we went West. He saw Dakota, I saw Wyoming. . . I told him how every word he had written for the *Century Magazine* about his ranch life at the Medora has absorbed me, and how few of our immediate friends could possibly know how good those articles were; he had been the pioneer in taking the cowboy seriously, and I loved what he said about that bold horseman of the plains.²²

Given their close friendship and statements like the one above, it is not a great leap to presume that Wister based the mythical cowboy character of *The Virginian* on Roosevelt. Wister's cowboy seemed to embody the vigorous American male that Roosevelt praised: a civilized white man who conquers nature and his enemies by tapping into his masculine core. In his own work, Roosevelt would often masterfully join the qualities of strength and virility to the qualities that a civilized white man must possess and, as a mature politician, built his claim to political power on the virile political persona he had created for himself.

Some in academia have connected Roosevelt to Edgar Rice Burroughs and his fictional creation, Tarzan. Drawing on Roosevelt as a masculine model, Burroughs imbued the character of Tarzan with traits that were important to the reformers of the new American masculinity in the late nineteenth century: fearlessness, intelligence, primitivism, as well as athleticism and skills as an outdoorsman. Burroughs captures this with his description of Tarzan who, like Roosevelt, was also white and therefore viewed apart from the inhabitants of the jungle in which he thrived:

²² Owen Wister, *My Friendship with Roosevelt* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1930), 30-31.

His straight and perfect figure, muscled as the best of the ancient Roman gladiators must have been muscled, and yet with the soft and sinuous curves of a Greek god, told at a glance the wondrous combination of enormous strength with suppleness and speed. A personification was Tarzan of the Apes, of the primitive man, the hunter, the warrior.²³

Roosevelt was and remains the primary figure who helped to shape the romantic cowboy figure that we know today. In turn, the public embraced him as the quintessential cowboy during his lifetime. His writings influenced many Americans, which also led to the increase in popularity of Western literature for adults and children, higher attendance at rodeo shows, the emergence of dude ranches, and increased travel to the West.

²³ Edgar Rice Burroughs, *Tarzan of the Apes* (New York: A.L. Burt Company, 1914), 159.

Chapter II - Roosevelt and the Cowboy Rehabilitation

In 1890, the U.S. Census Bureau declared the Western frontier officially closed because the census showed that population density was less than two persons per square mile. The arrival of ranchers, homesteaders, and miners had increased the western population and led to the creation of eight new states that had been admitted into the Union by 1890. All three West Coast states (California, Oregon, and Washington) were now settled and connected to the East Coast by railroads. The gradual westward movement of American pioneers was coming to an end. Around this time, the cowboy image began to emerge as the cultural face of the West as TR, Buffalo Bill, and Roosevelt contemporaries such as Remington and Wister incorporated the cowboy into their writings, work, and art.

Roosevelt first encountered cowboys when he took his first hunting trip with his brother Elliot. The two traveled through Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and to the borders of the Dakota Territory. Roosevelt's reaction to the trip was one of pure joy and he confessed to his sister Corrine that "the climate is simply superb, and though the scenery is not very varied, there is something very attractive to me in these great, treeless, rolling plains."²⁴ Roosevelt's attraction to the frontier persisted, and, in September 1883, he traveled to the Dakota Badlands for the first time. His stay there was one of discovery and friendship. He journeyed all across the Dakotas and established life-long relationships with Western men he considered cowboys. Men such as Joe Ferris, William "Bill" Merrifield, Gregor Lang and his son Lincoln, and many others. Merrifield would

²⁴ Corinne Roosevelt Robinson, *My Brother Theodore Roosevelt* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921), 114.

later reminisce that although TR was an Easterner “he...just [seemed like] one of us.”²⁵ Roosevelt's early frontier experiences led him to tout the benefits of healthy exercise for all men. He also stated "I strongly recommend some of our gilded youth to go West and try a short course of riding bucking ponies, and assist at the branding of a lot of Texas steers."²⁶

By 1885, Theodore Roosevelt was still a restless and easily influenced young man in search of himself, seeking direction and renewed purpose.²⁷ At twenty-six years old, he was also somewhat adrift. Only a year had passed since the loss of his wife and mother. Roosevelt's father died when TR was young so he did not have an older male figure to look to for counsel. During this period, Roosevelt spent substantial time in the West surrounded by male figures who made their livings in a rough but beautiful country. The Westerners he found and befriended changed him forever. By 1890 the romantic cowboy, touted by and personified in Roosevelt, seemed to have become the perfect antidote to the closing of the West.

Roosevelt's life in the Dakotas and surrounding areas inspired him to write a series of works devoted to Western topics. He authored numerous articles, published five books, and was frequently interviewed for newspapers and magazines. There were several reasons for TR to do this including income, positive public relations for himself, and his belief that the old West was slipping into memory due to continual development and increased population. TR's writing on the West focused on hunting, ranching, and,

²⁵ Michael L Collins, *That Damned Cowboy: Theodore Roosevelt and the American West, 1883-1898* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1989), 16.

²⁶ Hermann Hagedorn, *Roosevelt In The Bad Lands* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1921), 156.

²⁷ Collins, 59.

eventually, conservation. In each case, he always put the frontier in the most positive light.

Roosevelt's first book about the West, *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman*, published in 1885, summarized his frontier experience to that point. The narrative included accounts of his initial buffalo hunt, the purchase of his first Dakota ranch, and the formation of the Little Missouri River Stockmen's Association, which he served as its first president. It also contains one of his initial analyses of the cowboy. In the first chapter he introduces the Western figure to the reader stating, "the cowboys form a class by themselves, and are now quite typical representatives of the wilder side of Western life."²⁸ Roosevelt praised the cattlemen as "sinewy, hardy, self-reliant,"²⁹ but added "they are far from being lawless as they are described..."³⁰

Roosevelt's effort to profile a typical cowboy suggests an attempt to rehabilitate and dispel negative traits of the western figure that prevailed among the public at that time.

They sometimes cut queer antics when, after many months of lonely life, they come into a frontier town in which drinking and gambling are the only recognized forms of amusement, and where pleasure and vice are considered synonymous terms. On the round-ups, or when a number get together, there is much boisterous, often foul-mouthed mirth; but they are rather silent, self-contained men when with strangers, and are frank and hospitable to a degree.³¹

Roosevelt further states that Texas men did the best cowboy work as they were "absolutely fearless riders and understand well the habits of the half wild cattle, being

²⁸ Theodore Roosevelt, *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1885), 6.

²⁹ Roosevelt, *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman*, 7.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

unequaled in those most trying times when, for instance, the cattle are stampeded by a thunderstorm at night.”³² But he is also adamant that these men could be unruly when they had been drinking and were liable to shoot their weapons randomly. Roosevelt paints a picture of the cowboy as honorable yet unsophisticated. He also describes the cowboy’s appearance and his talent as horse rider. Regarding the former he states “the cowboy’s dress is both picturesque and serviceable”³³ consisting of a “broad felt hat, a flannel shirt, with a bright silk handkerchief loosely knotted round the neck, trousers tucked into high-heeled boots, and a pair of leather 'shaps' or heavy riding overalls.”³⁴ He concludes that the cowboy has great spurs and a large revolver that complete the costume.

Roosevelt’s comparison of the cowboy’s horsemanship to eastern or southern fox-hunters is striking. He states that it is difficult to compare the horsemanship of a Western plainsman to that of an Eastern or southern cross-country rider.³⁵ Nevertheless, he contrasts them in the very next sentence when he suggests that the cowboy is superior to the other regional horseriders:

He (Eastern or southern man) would find it hard work to sit a bucking horse like a cowboy, or to imitate the headlong dash with which one will cut out a cow marked with his own brand from a herd of several hundred others, or will follow at full speed the twistings and doublings of a refractory steer over ground where an Eastern horse would hardly keep its feet walking.³⁶

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Roosevelt, *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman*, 7-8.

³⁵ Roosevelt, *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman*, 9.

³⁶ Ibid.

The descriptions of cowboys' dress and skill constitute Roosevelt's first strokes in painting the myth of the cowboy. His account of the cowboy wardrobe highlights his sense of style and practicality. By comparing the cowboy to other riders from the East and South, he suggests that the cowboy is the superior horse rider due to the skill set that was necessary in the West. This subliminal message may have spurred his readers to learn more about the Western figure as well as to be inspired by it.

The response to Roosevelt's *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman* was generally positive. One of the earliest reviews appeared in *The Critic: A Literary Weekly, Critical and Eclectic* published in September 1885. The author lauds TR's writing but notes that the life of the book lies in the "strong undercurrent of genuine enthusiasm."³⁷ "To other lovers of the West," he notes, "there is something especially charming in the way in which Mr. Roosevelt not only appears with pride as a ranchman, but effaces himself completely as anything but a ranchman."³⁸ The author adds, "one would suppose he had never seen New York."³⁹ The tone is one of admiration but also perhaps a mixture of surprise and amusement that someone so thoroughly a part of Eastern society would, apparently, exchange it all to be a ranchman. Another passage from this review describes how Roosevelt is trying to rehabilitate the cowboy in the eyes of his readers. The author cites an experience of his own with cowboys while in the Dakota Badlands:

Mr. Roosevelt bears testimony to the improved morals of the cowboys in the vicinity, and having recently passed through the tract now famous for the excitement lent by the Marquis de Mores, we can ourselves testify that the

³⁷ "Hunting Trips of a Ranchman," *The Critic: A Literary Weekly, Critical and Eclectic (1884-1885)*, (Sept. 19, 1885), 136. ProQuest, <http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.csun.edu/americanperiodicals/docview/124901559/137F621A2AB23E70684/1?accountid=7285>. (Accessed on May 10, 2012).

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

cowboys no longer shoot into the train as it glides by, but content themselves with firing above, below, and around it, satisfied with the comparatively mild excitement of knowing that the ladies in the Pullman must be frightened, even if they are not hurt.⁴⁰

Despite the author's apparent amusement, he has helped to advance Roosevelt's portrayal of the new cowboy. Such passages are significant because they sow the earliest seeds for the image of the romantic cowboy who seeks to impress women with his masculine exploits.

In *Forest and Stream; A Journal of Outdoor Life, Travel, Nature Study, Shooting, Fishing, Yachting (1873-1930)*, *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman* was called a "delightful book, full of breezy freshness of the plains, and telling graphically and entertainingly the story of the simple life of the cow camp."⁴¹ *The Grand Rapids Herald*, in a 1900 review on the re-release of the book, noted, "nothing since the Leather stocking tales has even approached the volume of Mr. Roosevelt's works offered today...not even Cooper surpasses these delightful descriptions of the pleasures of ranch life."⁴² It is clear that this work impressed the literary crowd.

Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail, TR's follow-up book, published in 1888, was a collection of articles published previously in *Century Illustrated Magazine*. It featured eighty-three illustrations by Frederic Remington, then a relatively unknown artist who

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ *Forest and Stream; A Journal of Outdoor Life, Travel, Nature Study, Shooting, Fishing, Yachting (1873-1930)*. No. 12. (Apr 15, 1886): 224.

⁴² "Hunting Trips of a Ranchman," *The Grand Rapids Herald*, August 30, 1900. America's Historical Newspapers, http://infoweb.newsbank.com.libproxy.csun.edu/iw-search/we/HistArchive/?p_product=EANX&p_theme=ahnp&p_nbid=N66X5DBVMTM0MjQ1NjQ3My43MTY2Mzk6MToxMToxMzAuMTY2LjMuNQ&p_action=doc&s_lastnonissuequeryname=21&d_viewref=search&p_queryname=21&p_docnum=7&p_docref=v2:1134357D8E5D5A58@EANX-11A5F2816BC356B0@2415262-11A5F2819D85F3F0@4-11A5F28288F05480@Hunting+Trips+of+a+Ranchman. (Accessed on May 12, 2012).

forged a life-long friendship with Roosevelt as a result of this partnership. This was a richer and more developed work than his previous book. Though Roosevelt covered the same topics, he went into more extensive detail. The cowboy again played a prominent role in his narrative, and the Western figure was more fleshed out than in *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman*. While Roosevelt again described cowboys as hardy and self-reliant, he also expanded on their readiness for any opportunity that came along and ability to make the most of it. For example, he stated, “cowboys, like most Westerners, occasionally show remarkable versatility in their tastes and pursuits.”⁴³ He then described several cowboys he knew who were able to do multiple occupations:

One whom I know has abandoned his regular occupation for the past nine months, during which time he has been in succession a bartender, a schoolteacher, and a probate judge! Another, whom I once employed for a short while, had passed through even more varied experiences, including those of a barber, a sailor, and apothecary, and a buffalo-hunter.⁴⁴

This passage illustrates Roosevelt’s growth as a Western writer. By showing the reader what he meant by cowboy self-reliance with the examples of the different jobs the two cowboys were able to do, he strengthened his ability to persuade his reader that these Western figures were extremely talented and should be held in high regard. In fact, Roosevelt was critical of non-Westerners who went to the frontier believing they could make the transition to being a cowboy without doing the work. He states “nothing can be more foolish than for an Easterner to think he can become a cowboy in a few months’ time.”⁴⁵ He elaborated:

⁴³ Theodore Roosevelt, *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail* (New York: The Century Co., 1888), 12.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Roosevelt, *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail*, 10.

Many a young fellow comes out hot with enthusiasm for life on the plains, only to learn that his clumsiness is greater than he could have believed possible; that the cowboy business is like any other and has to be learned by serving a painful apprenticeship; and this apprenticeship implies endurance of rough fare, hard living, dirt, exposure of every kind, no little toil, and month after month of the dullest monotony. For cowboy work there is need of special traits and special training, and young Easterners should be sure of themselves before trying it: the struggle for existence is very keen in the far West and it is no place for men who lack the ruder, coarser virtues and physical qualities, no matter how intellectual or how refined and delicate their sensibilities.⁴⁶

Fewer reviews of this book appeared since its contents had initially been published as a series of articles. However, after the articles were published in a single volume later in the same year, a reviewer in *Current Literature* praised the writing,

The Western sketches, which are deduced from an active, personal experience, are undoubtedly Mr. Roosevelt's best work, pervaded as they are by the exhilarating atmosphere of life in the open – vigorous, instinct with the characteristic daring, vibrant with the suppressed excitement of the life of the hunter and ranchman.⁴⁷

A reviewer for *The Morning Herald*, a newspaper in Lexington, Kentucky, wrote, “the perfect knowledge of the Western country and sympathy with the conditions of its life, which this New Yorker possesses, is one of the remarkable things that go to make up the completeness of Mr. Roosevelt.”⁴⁸ Another publication, *Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine*, suggested *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail* helped to capture for posterity Western customs that were disappearing “for with the coming of the railroad

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ *Current Literature (1888-1912)*, 1889, 10.
<http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.csun.edu/americanperiodicals/docview/124822124/137F637C2756BA61339/4?accountid=7285>. (Accessed on April 5, 2012).

⁴⁸ “Theodore Roosevelt,” *The Morning Herald*, February 14, 1897.
http://infoweb.newsbank.com.libproxy.csun.edu/iw-search/we/HistArchive/?p_product=EANX&p_theme=ahnp&p_nbid=N66X5DBVMTM0MjQ1NjQ3My43MTY2Mzk6MToxMToxMzAuMTY2LjMuNQ&p_action=doc&s_lastnonissuequeryname=24&d_viewref=search&p_queryname=24&p_docnum=12&p_doref=v2:112669C2AE095EB0@EANX-1128E26AF66965C8@2413970-1128E26CC80957B0@6-1128E27028782738@Theodore+Roosevelt. (Accessed on April 5, 2012).

and the breaking up of the large cattle and horse ranges into smaller holdings, the cowboy will pass into history, and the tales of his prowess with lariat and revolver will be told around the evening fireside as tales of long ago."⁴⁹ The publication also states, "what Mr. Roosevelt has described will tomorrow be a mere tradition."⁵⁰

All of these reviews illuminate the growing romantic symbolism of the West and the cowboy as a figure to be honored. They also highlight how Roosevelt's prose sparked and nurtured public nostalgia for the West.

Roosevelt also recounted his Western experiences in lectures and interviews and used these public platforms to express his views on a range of topics concerning the West, including the cowboy. One of these earliest examples appeared on July 28, 1884 in the *San Francisco Bulletin* where he defended the cowboy in an interview entitled "Theodore Roosevelt Comes to the Defense of Cowboys." TR tells the reporter that the cowboys are a "misrepresented class of people."⁵¹ He further states that while one must be prepared to shoot a cowboy, he lived among them without difficulty. In a passage that can be viewed as an attempt to rehabilitate the cowboy by establishing him as an equal to men from the East, he says:

If you choose to enter the rum shops or go drinking sprees with them it is as easy to get into a difficulty out there as it would be in New York or anywhere. But if a

⁴⁹ "Roosevelt's 'Ranch Life'," *Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine (1868-1935)*, 1896, 604. <http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.csun.edu/americanperiodicals/docview/137584217/137F64033A75966D08C/1?accountid=7285>. (Accessed on March 15, 2012).

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ "Theodore Roosevelt Comes to the Defense of Cowboys," *San Francisco Bulletin*, July 28, 1884. American's Historical Newspapers, http://infoweb.newsbank.com.libproxy.csun.edu/iw-search/we/HistArchive/?p_product=EANX&p_theme=ahnp&p_nbid=X67V5ETWMTMzOTM2NTY2OS4INTg4NzA6MToxMToxMzAuMTY2LjMuNQ&p_action=doc&s_lastnonissuequeryname=10&d_viewref=search&p_queryname=10&p_docnum=9&p_docref=v2:113ACFC4DAF84818@EANX-11A1C3E835515A60@2409386-11A1C3E8B7FA71C0@3-11A1C3EAC14D4080@News+by+Telegraph.+Condition+of+Trade+at+New+York+of+an+Encouraging+Character. (Accessed on June 10, 2012).

man minds his own business and at the same time shows he is fully prepared to assert his rights; if he is neither a bully nor a coward and keeps out of places in which he has not business, he will get along as well as on Fifth Avenue. I have found them a most brave and hospitable set of men. There is no use in trying to overbearing with them for they won't stand the least assumption of superiority. Yet there are many places in our cities where I should feel less safe than among the wildest cowboys in the West.⁵²

By comparing the dangers of the big city to the potential violence committed by cowboys, Roosevelt set the tone for a new way to look at the frontier men. This view was reinforced during another lecture he gave on the West, which focused on cowboys and Indians. A report on Roosevelt's defense of the cowboy, who much of the general public still viewed as a villain, appeared in the January 23, 1886 issue of *The Weekly Detroit Free Press*:

Mr. Roosevelt traces this prejudice against the cowboys to the very works in which they are supposed to be treated as heroes. It is the cowboy of the dime novel that has given to the whole species a bad name. In the frontier towns, where vice is the only amusement, the cowboy comes strong as a ruffian and a desperado; but in his native heath on the "round-up," this new champion of his finds in him the virtues of courage, endurance, good fellowship and generosity.⁵³

Through these interviews and public appearances, Roosevelt offered a new image of the cowboy using the same descriptions that would appear in later years. Traits such as courage, virtue, and heroism were highlighted in late nineteenth century literature focused on the West and are still used today to describe cowboys. A Roosevelt interview

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ "Cowboys & Indians," *The Weekly Detroit Free Press*, January 23, 1886. America's Historical Newspapers, http://iw.newsbank.com.libproxy.csun.edu/iw-search/we/HistArchive/?p_product=EANX&p_theme=ahnpdoc&p_nbid=Y5BQ52VKMTMzNTc2MjY5NS4yMjU3MDU6MToxMToxMzAuMTY2LjAuMA&p_action=doc&s_lastnonissuequeryname=2&d_viewref=search&p_queryname=2&p_docnum=18&p_docref=v2:1134307E005991B0@EANX-11ACDDB769313A20@2409930-11ACDDB798D41828@3-11ACDDB86FABEF08@Cowboys+and+Indians. (Accessed on March 12, 2012).

from July 16, 1887 went further and tied the cowboy persona to the evolving role that Western women played in the West:

She does not stand on her feet like the New York woman because she feels her influence in society, nor like the New England woman because she has been taught to think for herself, but because like all frontiersmen, she has been forced to act for herself, and, with true Western grit, she does it well. She knows how to take care of herself. She knows how to take care of cattle. She knows how to make for her children a homestead and a heritage.⁵⁴

As TR states in the article, the women of the West have come “to be as thoroughly capable of managing their affairs for themselves as if they were the shrewdest of men.”⁵⁵ Roosevelt’s commentary adapts the new cowboy composite to “hard-working women who have conquered success in the path of the cowboy.”⁵⁶ Indeed, they have done so because they exhibit the traits of the best cowboys; they are resolute, moral, independent, and masculine.

Roosevelt’s Western literature also focused on individuals. He wrote a biography of Thomas Hart Benton, a U.S. Senator from Missouri, a leading proponent of territorial expansion, ambitious militarism, and a believer in the country’s Manifest Destiny. Published in 1886, the *Life of Thomas Hart Benton* helped to establish TR’s growing reputation as a serious historian and a talented writer. Scholars have suggested that the

⁵⁴ Theodore Roosevelt, “The Cattle Queens. Hard-Working Women Who Have Conquered Success in the Path of the Cowboy,” *The Wisconsin Labor Advocate*, July 16, 1887. America’s Historical Newspapers, http://infoweb.newsbank.com.libproxy.csun.edu/iw-search/we/HistArchive/?p_product=EANX&p_theme=ahnp&p_nbid=X67V5ETWMTMzOTM2NTY2OS4INTg4NzA6MToxMToxMzAuMTY2LjMuNQ&p_action=doc&s_lastnonissuequeryname=11&d_viewref=search&p_queryname=11&p_docnum=1&p_docrefer=v2:12A7AF01328A0F3C@EANX-12BAC0D023713E00@2410469-12BAC0D08E7BE2C0@2-12BAC0D2E67A2C88@The+Cattle+Queens.+Hard-Working+Women+Who+Have+Conquered+Success+in+the+Path+of+the+Cowboy. (Accessed on March 16, 2012).

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

biography presented a manifesto of ideas that the author had come to embrace while in the West and that it was the first time Roosevelt viewed American history in terms of Westward movement and the frontier experience. For example, he posited “among the chief causes” of American victory in the American Revolution were the frontier conflicts during the war and in particular the fighting in the Southwest. Roosevelt implies that the Western men were instrumental in General Cornwallis’s surrender at Yorktown:

The founders of our Western States were valiant warriors as well as hardy pioneers, and from the very first their fighting was not confined to uncivilized foes. It was they who at King’s Mountain slew the gallant Ferguson, and completely destroyed his little army; it was from their ranks that most of Morgan’s men were recruited, when that grizzled old bush-fighter smote Tarleton so roughly at the battle of Cowpens. These two blows crippled Cornwallis, and were among the chief causes of his final overthrow.⁵⁷

Although Roosevelt doesn’t discount the critical role of heroes such as George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, and Thomas Jefferson, he also believes that frontiersmen such as Daniel Morgan and Nathaniel Greene, played significant roles in winning the independence of the United States. TR’s praise of men such as Morgan and Greene indicates Roosevelt’s effort to establish a Western-origin story of the country and to suggest that the cowboys are the descendants of these revolutionary fighters.

Reviews of the biography varied. Charles Starbuck of *The Andover Review; a Religious and Theological Monthly* detected Roosevelt’s Western leanings stating, “Roosevelt thinks that Benton and the West were wise in wishing to press our territorial claims in the Northwest to the uttermost”⁵⁸ and that TR was “bitter” on the decline of the

⁵⁷ Theodore Roosevelt, *Life of Thomas Hart Benton* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1886), 6-7.

⁵⁸ Charles C. Starbuck, "American Statesmen. Life of Thomas Hart Benton." *The Andover Review; a Religious and Theological Monthly* (1884-1893) 8, no. 46 (1887): 442-442. <http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.csun.edu/docview/124359754/137F680CCF33E6DB9D9/1?accountid=7285>. (Accessed on May 19, 2012).

militant spirit in the Northeast. While giving the biography a modest positive review, Starbuck clearly recognized Roosevelt's preference for the Western man as the ideal American male. In another review by James Freeman Clarke in *The Independent*, the author states "Roosevelt devotes more space to the questions, national and social, in which Benton was interested than to the biography of Benton himself."⁵⁹ But he also praises Roosevelt for illustrating Benton's sterling reputation for "manliness, independence, honesty, energy, and loyalty to his convictions. These qualities were at first concealed by the roughness and habits of violence which belonged to him as having been brought up in the Border States, where such habits so largely prevailed."⁶⁰ Clarke discerns Roosevelt's larger theme concerning the importance of the frontier and Western men such as Benton who resided there.

In the first two volumes of *The Winning of the West*, his final Western work of the decade, Roosevelt again tied the frontiersmen of the West to the successful birth of the nation. As his publisher George H. Putnam later described in his introduction to the 1917 edition of *The Winning of the West*, "The West, the winning of which Roosevelt describes, comprised what are now described as the 'Middle States' of the Republic"⁶¹ and that "the occupation of this territory by the sturdy frontiersman, who faced the hardships of the toilsome journeys"⁶² were the people who were responsible for "the development of

⁵⁹ James Freeman Clarke, "Benton and His Times." *The Independent ...Devoted to the Consideration of Politics, Social and Economic Tendencies, History, Literature, and the Arts (1848-1921)* 39, no. 2037 (Dec 15, 1887): 1-1. <http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.csun.edu/docview/90412493/137F682ECBC2F243EE7/1?accountid=7285>. (Accessed on May 20, 2012).

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Theodore Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1917), x.

the nation."⁶³ Roosevelt described the Battle of Kings Mountain as the pivotal moment in the Southern campaign of the Revolutionary War: "The victory was of far-reaching importance and ranks among the decisive battles of the Revolution. It was the first great success of the Americans in the South, the turning-point in the Southern campaign, and it brought cheer to the patriots throughout the Union."⁶⁴ TR credited this victory to the make-up of the frontiersmen: "They had shown in perfection the best qualities of horse-riflemen. Their hardihood and perseverance had enabled them to bear up well under fatigue, exposure and scanty food. Their long swift ride, and the suddenness of the attack took their foes completely by surprise."⁶⁵ The qualities and skills of the frontiersman are recurring themes in TR's articles and books about the West. If he were to put it in today's terms, TR would say that these qualities are in the DNA of the men who opened and ruled the West -- the frontiersman, mountain man, and the cowboy -- and they are what made the country itself successful.

The Winning of the West received critical acclaim. The *Atlantic Monthly* praised Roosevelt for his "natural, simple, picturesque"⁶⁶ style and the *New York Times* said the work was written by a "man who knew his subject."⁶⁷ The *Christian Union* observed, "There is no one who could have described Indian warfare and frontier life with more

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West*, 503.

⁶⁵ Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West*, 502-503.

⁶⁶ William Frederick Poole, "Roosevelt's *The Winning of the West*," *Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 44 (November 1889), 693-700.

⁶⁷ "Pushing Their Way," *New York Times* (July 7, 1889), 11.
<http://search.proquest.com/libproxy.csun.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/94726421/137F692B5AE55B7C363/1069?accountid=7285>. (Accessed on May 20, 2012).

spirit or more sympathy than Mr. Roosevelt."⁶⁸ The article also states, "The character of the backwoodsmen Mr. Roosevelt has drawn with fidelity and sympathy which must be the outcome of his experience in the far West of today."⁶⁹ This quote is emblematic of the public's awareness of Roosevelt's exploits in the West, and the role his time there played in his writing. Historian Douglas Brinkley suggests that most of these reviews have missed that "Roosevelt had pioneered in writing a new kind of popular scientific history, melding Parkmanism with Darwinian thinking and a full jigger of Mayne Reid to boot."⁷⁰ In the late 1880s, this recognition of scientific history was not common in academic circles. However, it did influence future writers and historians such as Frederick Jackson Turner who praised the volumes. Roosevelt historians were not surprised because TR was influenced by Parkman and Reid from his childhood. He thrilled to these adventure stories in which moral, Anglo-Saxon figures were heroes and destined to dominate due to their superior intellect and strength. Despite some minor criticisms, however, the overall reception of the book was positive and helped to bolster Roosevelt's reputation in academic circles as a serious historian.

By the end of the 1880s, Roosevelt's body of literature concerning the West consisted of fifteen articles on the frontier or the cowboys who inhabited it, four books (two on his experiences in the West and the other two on the history of the West), the Benton biography, and several letters to editors of prominent newspapers. By

⁶⁸ Review 2--No Title, Christian Union, (September 19, 1889), 40.
<http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.csun.edu/docview/137086149/137F6951435602ADF2F/191?accountid=7285>. (Accessed on May 20, 2012).

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Douglas Brinkley, *The Wilderness Warrior: Theodore Roosevelt and the Crusade for America* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), 228.

comparison, his contemporaries Turner, Wister, Remington, and Buffalo Bill Cody published very little in this decade. Roosevelt was not only the most prolific writer on the West during this decade but he was also becoming an influential Western figure second only to Cody, who was already a Western celebrity due to his traveling rodeo shows.

During the next decade Roosevelt's visibility continued to grow. By 1898 he rocketed to national prominence when he led his Rough Riders to victory in the Spanish-American War. Between 1890 and the beginning of the Spanish-American War in 1898, Roosevelt wrote or contributed to eight Western-themed works. These included two more volumes of *The Winning of the West*, published in 1894 and 1896 respectively; two articles contributed to two Boone & Crockett Club's Western-themed books; a book on American heroes co-authored with Henry Cabot Lodge entitled *Hero Tales from American History* published in 1895; and two gaming and hunting books called *Some American Game* and *The Wilderness Hunter*. *The Wilderness Hunter*, published in 1893, was his favorite. He liked it "better than anything I have done."⁷¹ Roosevelt told close friend Wister, "I wanted to make the book a plea for manliness and simplicity and delight in a vigorous outdoor life; as well as try to sketch the feeling that the wilderness, with its great rivers, great mountains, great forests, and great prairies, leaves on one."⁷² The *New York Times* reviewer appeared to respond as Roosevelt had hoped, writing, "It is good reading for anybody, and people who never hunt and never will are sure to derive pleasure from its account of that part of the United States, relatively small, which is still a wilderness."⁷³ The reviewer also stated "The cowboy figures in this narrative as a rational,

⁷¹ Wister, 41.

⁷² Wister, 36.

understandable human being."⁷⁴ This quote signified the growing acceptance of the cowboy as a reputable individual, and reflects the influence Roosevelt had on the changing perception of the cowboy.

The other Roosevelt books of the 1890s all contributed to Western scholarship and TR's abiding belief that the West is where Americans could find adventure, hard work, and a vigorous lifestyle. He maintained his support for the cowboys, and shed positive light on them whenever he could. Others were also making important contributions to the American West during this decade including Turner with his closing of the frontier thesis, Remington whose art grew in popularity, and Wister who made his literary debut with stories about the West published over the course of the decade. In addition, Buffalo Bill Cody continued his Wild West Shows across the country and Europe, which ensured positive exposure for the cowboy. By 1898, Roosevelt's political career had progressed from positions in the Civil Service Commission, to the New York City police commission, to Assistant Secretary of the Navy. When war was declared on Spain in 1898, Roosevelt resigned his position in the Navy Department to participate in combat. During the four-month conflict Roosevelt became a national hero after leading the famous charge in Cuba at the head of the Rough Riders, the name the press gave to his group of soldiers. Roosevelt handpicked the men in his unit, the majority of whom were from the West.

⁷³ "Mr. Roosevelt's Americanism: The Wilderness Hunter," *New York Times*, August 6, 1893, 19. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The *New York Times* (1851-2008). <http://search.proquest.com/libproxy.csun.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/95040055/137CE28C3876B243224/2?accountid=7285#>. (accessed on July 2, 2012).

⁷⁴ Ibid.

In *The Rough Riders*, Roosevelt's eyewitness account of the war, he recounts how the bulk of the regiment were from New Mexico, Arizona, Oklahoma, and Indian Territory and "gave it its peculiar character."⁷⁵ TR said that cowboys were included within this group of Western men, and described them as "the man who wandered hither and thither."⁷⁶ Roosevelt professes his admiration and respect to these Western men of the frontier that he would often call cowboys:

In all the world there could be no better material for soldiers than that afforded by these grim hunters of the mountains, these wild rough riders of the plains. They were accustomed to handling wild and savage horses; they were accustomed to following the chase with the rifle, both for sport and as a means of livelihood... They were hardened to life in the open, and to shifting for themselves under adverse circumstances. They were used, for all their lawless freedom, to the rough discipline of the round up and the mining company. Some of them came from the small frontier towns; but most were from the wilderness, having left their lonely hunters' cabins and shifting cow-camps to seek new and more stirring adventures beyond the sea.⁷⁷

The Rough Riders contributed most to the rehabilitation of the cowboy image to date because of Roosevelt's titanic popularity throughout the country. In 1899, when the book was published, he was arguably the most famous person in the United States and he had just become governor of New York, the largest state in the union. All his public statements received national press coverage. When he said in the book, "The life histories of some of the men who joined our regiment would make many volumes of thrilling adventure,"⁷⁸ one can imagine young American men dreaming of what these stories would tell. Roosevelt's *Rough Riders* launched the Western cowboy figure into the status of cultural icon and Buffalo Bill would incorporate the *Rough Riders'* story into his own

⁷⁵ Theodore Roosevelt, *The Rough Riders* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899), 18.

⁷⁶ Roosevelt, *The Rough Riders*, 18.

⁷⁷ Roosevelt, *The Rough Riders*, 18-19.

⁷⁸ Roosevelt, *The Rough Riders*, 27.

show. In the coming years the new cowboy figure that Roosevelt helped create would be everywhere in the public eye. The closing of the West narrative was embraced culturally and the rise of the heroic cowboy in the mythological West was now at hand. This would be interpreted at the turn of the century in literature and silent film. Also, Americans wanted to experience the old West by participating in frontier amusements in dude ranching and Wild West/rodeo shows. The central figure in Americans' embracing the West and the western figure of the cowboy was Roosevelt who, more than anyone else during his time, elevated the cowboy to an American symbol.

Chapter III - The East Embraces the West

During the Gilded Age, Easterners considered the West a wild, untamed country occupied by savage Native Americans, villainous cowboys, and wild animals. It was a land of risk, but also promise. After the Civil War, droves of settlers went West seeking free land, escape from poverty, or a simply chance to start over. Two decades later, the promise of the West continued to draw those who would try to do business in mining or, like Roosevelt, in ranching. The end of the nineteenth century brought with it the completion of the transcontinental railroad and the growth of farming as an industry. The West began to lose its aura as an "unspoiled wilderness." Future president Woodrow Wilson suggested that because the land was now settled, "communities now would have to find some compensating way to make life sufficient without what he called an easy escape."⁷⁹ While he was technically incorrect --there was still free land in the West -- Wilson's concern reflected the mindset that the old West was disappearing. For those looking to capitalize on this sentimentality, the 1890s marked the beginning of what can be called frontier amusements. These offered Easterners an opportunity to directly or indirectly experience the West through Western excursions, theatrical performances, literature, and film.

The emergence and subsequent popularity of these amusements converged with the efforts of those, such as Roosevelt, Wister, and Remington, to champion the cultural significance of the West in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Although others led

⁷⁹ Robert G. Athearn, *The Mythic West In The Twentieth Century* (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1986), 14.

the development of Western tourism and theater or wrote the books and produced the films that helped the East engage with the West, Roosevelt left his stamp on each.

Roosevelt, for example, contributed significantly to the development of the dude ranch. Easterners first began to head West in larger numbers at the turn of the century to escape from city life. Roosevelt also did this, but before doing so became popular. Long fascinated by the West, he first journeyed there in 1883 after reading a letter by Howard Eaton to a friend that was published in a New York newspaper.⁸⁰ He spent his time in the Dakota Bad Lands hunting, fishing, and riding. Like others who traveled West at the time, he paid his hosts for the food, lodging, horses, and guiding services. As Western historian Hermann Hagedorn has stated, TR arrived from the East as a "New York dude."⁸¹ He was also, in accordance with the tradition of Western hospitality, a guest. TR was so taken by the frontier that he bought a ranch and struck up a friendship with the Eaton brothers. Howard Eaton and his brothers were early pioneers of dude ranching. They established their first Dakota ranch in 1879, and his letter touted the beauty of the land.⁸²

The Eaton brothers set the example for dude ranching in the late nineteenth century, demonstrating an ability to adapt and change their business model in response to both the challenges and opportunities that emerged. According to Lincoln Lang, Howard Eaton was "a born naturalist and sportsman, an artist at heart, a big broad-minded lover of

⁸⁰ Hermann Hagedorn, *Roosevelt In The Bad Lands* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1921), 8.

⁸¹ Hagedorn, 1.

⁸² Lawrence R. Borne, *Dude Ranching A Complete History* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1983), 20.

wild nature and the real in life... in many ways paralleling Roosevelt himself."⁸³ Since Lang knew both men well, the comparison is apt; both of these men embraced the western culture and each owned ranches. Roosevelt's two ranches, the Maltese Cross Ranch and the Elkhorn Ranch, remained working ranches. The Eaton brothers' ranch, however, evolved into a working dude ranch, and Lang credits them, for "their idea to take advantage of the extraordinary natural surroundings and workings."⁸⁴ The Eaton brothers marketed their ranch to young, influential Easterners who as Lang states, "would be afforded the opportunity of building themselves up both physically and mentally through direct association with the wonderful unshackled nature workings of the region."⁸⁵

When the Eatons first started to market their ranch to Easterners in 1883, they followed the Western code of providing free shelter and food to travelers. In one calendar year, the Eatons gave away 2,200 meals. However, without compensation their ranch struggled financially. As a result, they began charging lodging fees of \$10 per week in 1887 but this still did not deter travelers from visiting the ranch.⁸⁶ Their business, however, did not grow as fast as they would have liked. Many Eastern guests returned home and recounted their adventures on the open range at the Eatons' ranch. Word-of-mouth was the earliest form of advertising.

Public figures further raised the visibility of the dude ranch among Eastern audiences. Roosevelt's travels and subsequent articles inspired his friend and Harvard

⁸³ Lincoln A. Lang, *Ranching With Roosevelt* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1926), 261.

⁸⁴ Lang, 262.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Borne, 22.

classmate Owen Wister to make his own journey. Neither man was well known when he first traveled West; but between 1895 and 1905, when each enjoyed greater public exposure, the popularity of dude ranching also began to grow. As Wister's readers learned about his life as he became more popular in the 1890s due to his published works, he likely made an impact on Easterners. But it was Roosevelt who helped popularize this new frontier amusement as the next century began. After moving their ranch to Wyoming in 1904, the Eaton brothers leveraged their relationship with then President Roosevelt who became the most popular visitor to their ranch. By 1917, the Eatons' Ranch comprised more than 7,000 acres of land, 500 horses, hundreds of cattle, and accommodations for 125 guests.⁸⁷ It was the largest dude ranch in the country.

After 1900, dude ranching spread throughout the West and by the mid-1920s there were more than sixty dude ranches in Wyoming and Montana. Although there are no statistical data, dude ranching generated an estimated one million dollars in revenue for Wyoming in 1925.⁸⁸ The lack of statistics makes it difficult to draw a complete picture of the role dude ranching played in the economy, however the prevalence of advertising for dude ranches highlights the importance of tourism to western states like Wyoming. This also coincides with railroad industry officials' recognition that a large portion of their passenger business came from dude ranch guests. This increase in passenger business travel occurred in the 1880s and 1890s as the West became more popular with Easterners who had been exposed to other frontier amusements such as Wild West shows and literature. Today, Eatons' Ranch is still serving urban "dudes" and is operated by the

⁸⁷ Borne, 31.

⁸⁸ Borne, 47.

fourth and fifth generations of the Eaton family. Their association with the twenty-sixth president of the United States fueled their success and in turn made the dude ranch a very popular vacation excursion into the twentieth century and beyond. By exposing more Americans to the cattlemen who worked the dude ranches, the ranches continue to reinforce both the realities and the romance of cowboy life. All dude ranch owners, including the Eaton brothers, owe a debt to TR for helping them popularize this Western experience at the end of the nineteenth century.

The late 1800s and early 1900s also saw the rise of Wild West shows and theatrical productions related to them. The most important Wild West show figure was William F. Cody or, as he was more commonly known, Buffalo Bill. Born in Iowa in 1846, Cody moved to Kansas with his family in 1854 and quickly learned the frontier life where he served on wagon trains and cattle drives. He was also a messenger for a company that would later develop into the Pony Express.⁸⁹ He earned his nickname "Buffalo Bill" while under contract to provide buffalo meat for Kansas railroad workers. He later claimed to have killed 4,280 buffalo during his eighteen-month employment.⁹⁰ Skilled at self-promotion, he partnered with a dime novel author who published fictional stories about Buffalo Bill and his partner James Butler "Wild Bill" Hickok. These novels were then adapted into plays and performed in New York theatres where Buffalo Bill became a stage personality performing in his own plays. He claimed to have authored thirteen-dime novels during the 1870s while he acted in his own plays.⁹¹ His celebrity

⁸⁹ Joy S. Kasson, *Buffalo Bill's Wild West: Celebrity, Memory and Popular History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000), 11-12.

⁹⁰ Kasson, 11.

⁹¹ Kasson, 25.

increased in 1879 after the publication of his autobiography. When Roosevelt traveled to the Dakota Bad Lands for the first time in 1883, it was also the same year that Buffalo Bill presented his first Wild West show in which he brought his dime novels to life using his own theatrical experience. If there was one person who rivals Roosevelt in creating a frontier interpretation of the West in the late nineteenth century it was Buffalo Bill.

However, these two men differed in their portrayal of the frontier. Buffalo Bill was, first and foremost, an entertainer. His biographer Joy S. Kasson believes he was very lucky to have "experienced managers who helped him to capitalize on his natural advantages and created a publicity machine that lifted him out of the world of tawdry entertainment in the heady and exciting realm of celebrity performance."⁹² He was the first authentic Westerner to profit from the new Western myth. Another difference between the two men was that Roosevelt, through his writings, gave the public a first-hand view of what life was like on the frontier while Cody recreated that life in an artificial setting.

The Wild West show was an appealing outdoor showcase of exotic animals and performers who demonstrated their Western skills. Cody's partners called it "America's National Entertainment,"⁹³ and most Americans, including Easterners, embraced it. Newspaper reviews and accounts document this public acclaim. A typical news story states a performance was "greeted with equal enthusiasm and proved greatly entertaining."⁹⁴ *The New York Times* commented that the show had been playing already

⁹² Kasson, 63.

⁹³ Kasson, 41.

⁹⁴ "Plenty of 'Wild West' Enthusiasm A Group of Howling Savages Pursue a Defenseless Stage Coach," *The Washington Post*, June 23, 1885.

for "seven weeks and the attendance has steadily increased."⁹⁵ The article includes an account of one audience member who saw the show two seasons earlier who stood in her box to shout, "Oh! This is what I could come a hundred times to see and never tire of looking at. This is my ideal of an entertainment."⁹⁶ The article concludes that the show "affords an excellent opportunity of seeing how the Indians, cowboys, and the animals of the company pass the day."⁹⁷

These testimonials are just a sample of how the public embraced this form of frontier amusement during the Gilded Age. Americans' acceptance of this manufactured Western experience did much to alter the perception of the Western figure. With Buffalo Bill's Wild West shows and Roosevelt's western articles and books, that image began to change. Buffalo Bill and his show created a new cowboy persona that was brave, heroic, and moral. In his writings, Roosevelt highlighted similar characteristics. The public acceptance of the cowboy into a courageous figure, however, did not occur until Roosevelt's Rough Riders became heroes during the Spanish-American War in 1898. It was also at this time that Cody and Roosevelt became forever linked with the Rough Rider name.

The term "Rough Riders" did not originate with Roosevelt or the press. Cody first used it at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893 as a part of the title of his show, "Buffalo

⁹⁵ "Success at Erastina," *New York Times*, February 20, 1887. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-2008). <http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.csun.edu/docview/94620187/137F6A6AC8F2480B765/1?accountid=7285>. (Accessed May 23, 2012).

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

Bill's Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders of the World."⁹⁸ Cody employed the term to describe the class of frontiersmen associated with his "Wild West" which, Roosevelt himself stated, "made up the bulk of the regiment and gave it its peculiar character."⁹⁹

Cody or his ghostwriter further elaborates in *The Rough Riders* periodical,

The title was naturally and consistently widened to include the Cossack, Arabian, Mexican, South American, trooper and other free, fearless riders now marshaled under the leadership of the finest horseman of them all. Its transference to the First United States Volunteer Cavalry was not only a deserved compliment, but an honorable designation, whose admirable fitness there was no gainsaying or opposing. Colonel Cody first introduced the "Rough Riders" to the American public. The manner in which Colonel Roosevelt subsequently introduced them to the Spaniards has historically immortalized the name.¹⁰⁰

Roosevelt was not familiar with Buffalo Bill's Rough Riders but he stated in his autobiography that the name was adopted for his regiment because "the bulk of the men were from the Southwestern ranch country and were skilled in the wild horsemanship of the great plains."¹⁰¹ Buffalo Bill was surprised that Roosevelt had never heard of his Rough Riders but, ever the showman, he embraced TR's version of the Rough Riders and reinforced their link to him:

They were a splendid set of men—tall and sinewy, with resolute, weather-beaten faces, and eyes that looked a man straight in the face without flinching. They included in their ranks men of every occupation; but the three types were those of the cowboy, the hunter and the mining prospector. In all the world there could be no better material for soldiers than that afforded by these grim hunters of the mountains, these wild, rough riders of the plains, some of whom had served on the frontier with "Buffalo Bill," and appeared with him before millions of

⁹⁸ "The Historic Rough Riders of the Sixties," *The Rough Riders*, Vol. I. 1st Edition, 1899. <http://codyarchive.org/memorabilia/wfc.eph00007.html#!prettyPhoto>. (Accessed on June 18, 2012).

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Theodore Roosevelt, *The Autobiography of Theodore Roosevelt* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), 124.

delighted spectators, including the kings, princes and potentates of the Old World, and will again appear before you this season with added éclat.

He was also quick to claim the ownership of the name, as reflected in an interview conducted for a newspaper at the time: "You know," said Colonel Cody, "I originated the name of 'Rough Riders.' I have been calling my men Rough Riders for ten years. Why should I call them Rough Riders? Next year I am going to call them smooth riders, for they're the smoothest riders on earth."¹⁰² He did not change the name. Instead, Cody incorporated Roosevelt's Rough Riders into his own show in 1899 by including nearly a dozen of TR's men who participated in a theatrical representation of the battle of San Juan. The *New York Times'* dramatic description of the show illustrates how, at the turn of the century, Roosevelt and his Rough Riders were the most famous cowboys in the country:

The lights were turned low, giving a twilight effect, and the detachments of Rough Riders, Garcia's Cuban scouts, and infantry and cavalry came on the field, marching with a slow, weary step, the colored boys singing "There'll Be a Hot Time in the Old Town To-night." Following them were pack mules bearing cases, and some more scouts. The sentries were picketed, tents were pitched and the lights went out. Then the sun rose with a sudden and unpoetic burst of electric light, the bugles sounded, and the troops marched away to San Juan Hill, which was built on the Fourth Avenue end of the Garden. Spaniards dotted the paper mache slopes, and looked through big glasses for the American intruders. As the first of the Cuban scouts stepped stealthily on the sawdust, the Spaniards began firing from the top of the hill. The Americans rushed in and opened fire. Three regulars rushed from somewhere with a Gatling gun, which seemed powerful enough to blow San Juan Hill itself to eternity. Finally a mad rush was made up the hill, and the Stars and Stripes were planted amid cheers from the spectators.¹⁰³

¹⁰² "The Historic Rough Riders of the Sixties," *The Rough Riders*, Vol. I. 1st Edition, 1899. <http://codyarchive.org/memorabilia/wfc.eph00007.html#!prettyPhoto>. (Accessed on June 18, 2012).

¹⁰³ "WILD WEST SHOW OPENS Madison Square Garden Crowded with an Enthusiastic Audience. GEN. MILES WAS PRESENT Mayor Van Wyck and Richard Croker Also Attended — Chief Item of the Programme Battle of San Juan," *The New York Times*, March 30, 1899. <http://codyarchive.org/texts/wfc.nsp00045.html>. (Accessed on June 18, 2012).

Buffalo Bill's support helped to fully realize the image of the cowboy that Roosevelt had advanced. Roosevelt's exploits in the war marked the final stage in the rehabilitation of the cowboy's image from outlaw to the romantic hero, which endures today. Buffalo Bill's validation of Roosevelt's cowboy persona helped to further set the stage for TR to become the cowboy president in 1901.

Although the two men corresponded little, Buffalo Bill did write a glowing article about Roosevelt, which was published in the January 1902 issue of *Success Magazine*, nearly a year after Roosevelt assumed the presidency. The piece is a love letter not only to Roosevelt but also to the West and the men who lived there. He recounts Roosevelt's early trips to the West to restore his health where "he elected the arid plains and mountains of our Western country, as a likely locality wherein he might build up a constitution sturdy and strong."¹⁰⁴ Cody also makes sure to detail every cowboy task Roosevelt accomplished:

He fished in the numerous mountain streams, and lived the rough, hard life of a frontiersman. For five months, the heavens were his only canopy. He caught and killed game for his own use, saddled his mounts, did his own cooking, was his own scout, and performed his half of the night-work. The capacity to do for himself and meet men upon an equal basis -- self reliance and personal courage, -- came to him as the fruition of this and similar experiences in the Far West. I know that this democracy still influences him.¹⁰⁵

This description echoes Roosevelt's own depiction of the cowboy in his *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail* where he illustrates the cowboy's ability to handle many types of jobs and tasks. Roosevelt returned the compliment to Buffalo Bill upon the showman's

¹⁰⁴ William F. Cody, "In the West, Theodore Roosevelt Won His Health and Strenuousness," *Success*, January 1902. http://codyarchive.org/texts/wfc_per00005.html. (Accessed on June 18, 2012).

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

death in 1917. His comments, made when he accepted an honorary vice presidency in the Colonel W.F. Cody Memorial Association of Denver, which would erect a mausoleum on top of a Colorado mountain peak, includes similar language.¹⁰⁶ Roosevelt stressed Cody's unique Americanism by stating; "He embodied those traits of courage, strength and self-reliant hardihood which are vital to the well being of a nation."¹⁰⁷ These descriptions of Cody mirror those he used years earlier when he first wrote about the cowboys of the Dakota Badlands.

In the early twentieth century, Cody and Roosevelt were the two most famous people in the country. The *Idaho Daily Statesman* confirmed this in 1901 when in an article about Roosevelt it proclaimed,

If the selection of a president of the United States were left to a convention of the boys of the republic, Theodore Roosevelt would probably have a commanding advantage. It is likely he would be named by acclamation, and that Colonel William F. Cody - more popularly known as Buffalo Bill would probably have the second place on the ticket...¹⁰⁸

This statement suggests that both men were considered boy-like and both enjoyed enormous popularity among the nation's boys who represented the next generation of

¹⁰⁶ "Roosevelt Joins in Honoring Buffalo Bill Accepts Office in Association Which Will Erect Memorial Mausoleum," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 11, 1917. http://infoweb.newsbank.com.libproxy.csun.edu/iw-search/we/HistArchive/?p_product=EANX&p_theme=ahnp&p_nbid=X67V5ETWMTMzOTM2NTY2OS4INTg4NzA6MToxMToxMzAuMTY2LjMuNQ&p_action=doc&s_lastnonissuequeryname=43&d_viewref=search&p_queryname=43&p_docnum=343&p_docref=v2:110C9BFA1F116650@EANX-1165EE52B5D65940@2421271-1165EE5890073DB0@50-1165EE6757559260@Roosevelt+Joins+in+Honoring+Buffalo+Bill+Accepts+Office+in+Association+Which+Will+Erect+Memorial+Mausoleum. (Accessed on June 18, 2012).

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Roosevelt's Training for His Career. Power of Leadership Developed While He Was Still a Boy," *Idaho Daily Statesman*, August 25, 1901. http://infoweb.newsbank.com.libproxy.csun.edu/iw-search/we/HistArchive/?p_product=EANX&p_theme=ahnp&p_nbid=X67V5ETWMTMzOTM2NTY2OS4INTg4NzA6MToxMToxMzAuMTY2LjMuNQ&p_action=doc&s_lastnonissuequeryname=54&d_viewref=search&p_queryname=54&p_docnum=1&p_docref=v2:114CF38DF1A90B10@EANX-11830BAA1EC0E8D8@2415622-11830BAB7A7E5D80@8-11830BBCCD8A85B0@Rooseveltpercent27s+Training+for+His+Career.+Power+of+Leadership+Developed+While+He+Was+Still+a+Boy. (Accessed on June 18, 2012).

Americans who would be reading about cowboys and watching them in films in the years to come. The cowboy figure was popularized and made noble through the actions of Roosevelt and Buffalo Bill.

Western literature grew in popularity in the early 1900s. Although Western dime novels were successful in the nineteenth century, they didn't have the scope or the detail that Western novels would have at the turn of the century. The watershed Western novel was Owen Wister's *The Virginian*. Published in 1902, Wister's most famous work tells the tale of the un-named cowboy called "the Virginian" who battles bandits and thieves while working for the wealthy landowner Judge Henry. The story is packed with action along with accounts of harsh Western violence such as hangings and shoot-outs. It is also a story of friendship between the Virginian and the narrator, and of love between the main character and a schoolteacher. Throughout the narrative, however, winds a story of revenge between the Virginian and the evil Trampas. The drama and human traits represented in each character made for a compelling story and it became the biggest selling book in Wister's literary career. With *The Virginian*, Wister introduced the cowboy figure advanced by Roosevelt into another genre of American culture where other novelists could and did appropriate it.

The connection between Wister's hero to the cowboy persona fostered by Roosevelt can be seen in the similarities of language each uses to describe cowboys and the world they inhabited. Wister's cowboy character is a tall, lean young man who likes a good joke and occasionally a good fight, but he remains unfailingly moral and heroic, not unlike the cowboy image Roosevelt had been presenting for over twenty years.

The two men both knew and admired each other. Roosevelt wrote to Wister after *The Virginian* was published to tell him it was a "remarkable novel."¹⁰⁹ He added, "I have read it all through with absorbed interest and have found myself looking forward to taking up the book again all through the time I have been at work. I do not know when I have read in any book, new or old, a better chapter than Superstition Trail."¹¹⁰ Roosevelt's reference to the Superstition Trail chapter is notable as the two main characters (the Virginian and the narrator) were out in the mountains. During this time the narrator describes some of the visual landscapes they encounter: "It lay below us, great cup of country, -- rocks, woods, opens, and streams. The tall peaks rose like spires around it, magnificent and bare in the last of the sun' and we surveyed this upper world, letting our animals get breath."¹¹¹ This passage is strikingly similar to Roosevelt's descriptions of the country captured in his first two published works on the West. It reminded him of his own experiences along with the beauty and the expanse of the frontier. Both Wister and Roosevelt shared the opinion that this West had vanished.

In the novel's introduction, Wister called the story a colonial romance and established the cowboy figure as a character of the past: "What is become of the horseman, the cowpuncher, the last romantic figure upon our soil? For he was romantic. Whatever he did, he did with his might."¹¹² Inspired by Roosevelt, he also points to the romantic cowboy as an honorable figure: "The bread that he earned was earned hard, the wages that he squandered were squandered hard...if he gave his word he kept it; Wall

¹⁰⁹ Wister, 105.

¹¹⁰ Wister, 106.

¹¹¹ Owen Wister, *The Virginian* (New York: Macmillan, 1902), 413.

¹¹² Wister, xxi.

Street would have found him behind the times."¹¹³ Again, Wister looks to Roosevelt as his model in both words and deeds as TR fits the romantic cowboy description. Since Roosevelt was already well established as a cowboy figure in the public mind by 1902, one might assume Wister's readers were thinking of him as they read the novel.

The book became a huge success, selling more than 1.5 million copies by 1938 and inspiring four movies and a Broadway play.¹¹⁴ Wister claimed that in one year between May 1, 1928 and May 1, 1929, 33,986 copies of the book were sold.¹¹⁵ In 1930, Wister reflected on the book's success and said he appreciated Roosevelt's high praise of the novel and for the book itself, "It far surpassed my hopes," Wister recalled."¹¹⁶

Although Wister would never write another Western novel after *The Virginian*, his legacy in the genre was secure. His novel was the first serious fictional Western narrative and arguably the most influential. Wister's fictional cowboy was the first of his kind with all the characteristics of a legendary hero. *The Virginian* anticipated the work of Zane Grey as well as the Western films of Williams S. Hart, Gary Cooper, John Wayne, Clint Eastwood, and Kevin Costner. The cowboy captured by each artist reflects the characteristics of Roosevelt's cattleman and Rough Rider. His influence appears clearly in the work of Grey, who carried on the new Western novel and by filmmakers/actors in the early 1900s.

¹¹³ Wister, xxi.

¹¹⁴ History Channel, "The Virginian is Published" <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/the-virginian-is-published>. (Accessed on June 21, 2012).

¹¹⁵ Wister, *My Friendship with Roosevelt*, 106.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

Grey was a prolific writer who published sixty-one novels, fourteen full-length outdoor books, several novel-length baseball and boy stories, as well as several hundred shorter works.¹¹⁷ The majority of his novels were Western and all were successful. Grey biographer Stephen J. May suggests his success was due to TR: "Along with Owen Wister, Frederic Remington, Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, and the proliferation of the dime novel, Roosevelt probably influenced the sales of Zane Grey's books more than any other factor."¹¹⁸ May is correct in his assumption because in 1912 the former president was still the most popular figure in the country. The press frequently referred to him as a cowboy and included the title of "colonel" in acknowledgement of his Rough Rider days.

Born in 1872 in Ohio, Grey became smitten with the West at an early age due in no small part to the illustrations of Remington. Grey was a teenager in the 1880s when Remington started his career and came of age when Roosevelt and Remington's work *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail* was published. He greatly admired Roosevelt's qualities of intelligence, savvy, physical power, literary talent, and fame. Still, it is possible he didn't realize the debt he owed to TR as well as to Wister and Remington for his career. Roosevelt's influence on Grey appeared in many areas of his life including his love for hunting, fishing, the outdoors, conservation, writing, and most importantly his affection for the West.¹¹⁹ TR's persona of an aggressive, confident, and sometimes bullying person had a magnetic hold on Grey.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Zane Grey Inc, <http://www.zanegreyinc.com/company.html>. (Accessed June 21, 2012).

¹¹⁸ Stephen J. May, *Maverick Heart: The Further Adventures of Zane Grey* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000), xvi.

¹¹⁹ May, 32.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

The love of the wilderness that Grey shared with Roosevelt is reflected in the writing of both men. This is displayed in Roosevelt's first Western work, *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman* and in Grey's novel, *Last of the Plainsmen*.¹²¹ His writing process was strikingly similar to Remington's approach to his art. Both men were avid researchers. Remington would live in cattle camps and army forts throughout the West where he would sketch and gather first-hand observations.¹²² Grey would do the same throughout his lifetime, traveling all over the West in search of story ideas. Like Grey, Remington relied on direct observation, personal experience, and visual accuracy, which resulted in an extensive body of work that conveyed romanticism.¹²³ Interestingly, both men, to a certain extent, owed their careers to Roosevelt. Remington's first important professional "break" came with the assignment to illustrate Roosevelt's series of articles for *Century Magazine*, later published as *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail*. Grey capitalized on a genre that was gaining public acceptance due in no small part to the popularity of Roosevelt. Grey was able to cater to the cowboy culture founded by Roosevelt. He took the cowboy further by making him even more appealing than the hero in *The Virginian*.

Grey's watershed novel, *Riders of the Purple Sage* published in 1912 is widely considered the quintessential Western classic of all time. While Wister's detractors complained that *The Virginian's* hero was a cowboy without cows, Grey's cowboys actually herded cattle. He also described the hardships and characteristics of these men.¹²⁴

Grey's cowboys were sweaty, bone weary, and had saddle sores from riding

¹²¹ May, 36.

¹²² May, 41.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Athearn, 168.

uncomfortable ponies.¹²⁵ They also were prone to get drunk and would occasionally use profanity. By introducing realism, Grey represented the West as he imagined it had existed or what he had seen of it.¹²⁶ Still, Grey's description of the cowboy character Lassiter was similar to both Roosevelt and Wister's cowboys as shown in this passage from *Riders of the Purple Sage*:

Jane, greeting him, looked up into a face that she trusted instinctively and which riveted her attention. It had all the characteristics of the range rider's--the leanness, the red burn of the sun, and the set changelessness that came from years of silence and solitude. But it was not these which held her, rather the intensity of his gaze, a strained weariness, a piercing wistfulness of keen, gray sight, as if the man was forever looking for that which he never found.¹²⁷

Here we see the same use of the words "leanness," or "sinewy," that Roosevelt often employed. Also, the cowboy's look of loneliness and weariness from living on the open land is the same as Roosevelt's grim but stoic looking frontiersman. Grey's cowboys contained core elements of the Roosevelt cowboy composite. They outlasted weaker men, and at the same time they offered moral, social, and even political lessons to the frailer specimens, usually from the East. This more realistic version of the cowboy was enormously successful. *Riders of the Purple Sage* has sold more than two million copies proving that the new romantic cowboy of the old West was now widely accepted culturally. By the time of Grey's death in 1939 sales of his novels exceeded 17 million copies.¹²⁸ Following Grey, there would be other Western novelists including Louis L'Amour who would use the same cowboy composite throughout the twentieth century,

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Athearn, 168-169.

¹²⁷ Zane Grey, *Riders of the Purple Sage* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1912), 7.

¹²⁸ Payson Rim Country, "The World of Zane Grey - Alive and Well in Payson," <http://www.paysonrimcountry.com/WesternHeritage/ZaneGreyHistory.aspx> (accessed on June 24, 2012).

cementing the romantic Western figure for generations to come. These writers would also see their work expand into a new medium, film, that would present this Western character in ways that books could not.

With the advent of silent films in the early twentieth century, it was only a matter of time before the first Western film would emerge. Although the Edison Company's *Cripple Creek Barroom* debuted in 1898, most film historians consider 1903's *The Great Train Robbery* to be the first narrative Western film.¹²⁹ In twelve minutes, it tells the story of a train-robbery, escape, and subsequent retribution of a gang of outlaws.¹³⁰ It starred Gilbert M. "Broncho Billy" Anderson who played three different roles, including the bandit. The film was originally advertised as "a faithful duplication of the genuine 'Hold Ups' made famous by various outlaw bands in the far West."¹³¹ The plot was inspired by a true event involving four members of George Leroy Parker's (Butch Cassidy) "Hole in the Wall" gang. The bandits forced the conductor to uncouple the passenger cars from the rest of the train and then blew up the safe in the mail car to escape with an estimated \$5,000 in cash.¹³² While the movie depicted the violence of the West, it did not represent the Rooseveltian moral cowboy figure to counter it. However, Anderson would go on to star in many silent Westerns as Broncho Billy that showcased him in the heroic Western figure that Roosevelt and his peers promoted.

In Broncho Billy, Anderson portrayed the archetypal cowboy who would later evolve in the interpretations of John Wayne and Clint Eastwood. The classic Westerner,

¹²⁹ Athearn, 179.

¹³⁰ Peter Flynn, "The Silent Western as Mythmaker," *Image*, Issue 6 (February 25, 2004), 2.

¹³¹ Filmsite.org, "Western Films," <http://www.filmsite.org/westernfilms.html>, (accessed on June 24, 2012).

¹³² Ibid.

Broncho Billy was a rugged plainsman, aligned with society out of sympathy for the weak, but nonetheless a product of the landscape in which he functioned.¹³³ His character often started off bad but would redeem himself in the end. In films such as *Broncho Billy and the Baby* (1907), and *Broncho Billy's Marriage* (1915), Billy routinely found religion and love -- but not before defeating the villain in either a saloon-bar brawl, a shootout, or some other feat of strength and wit. He would be deemed "civilized" only after he had proven himself a man by defeating whatever obstacle was laid in front of him.¹³⁴ Though these portrayals reflect some of the cowboy characteristics that Roosevelt described in his own writings, Anderson's character did not possess all of the qualities of Roosevelt's cattlemen or the Rough Rider. Anderson's career spanned ten years (1907 to 1917), during which he starred in nearly five hundred films.

The next significant silent cowboy screen star was William S. Hart. Although not as popular as other silent cowboy stars, Hart was unquestionably authentic. He rejected the wild theatrics of many of his contemporaries and portrayed a pure frontiersman by showcasing a stark, realist style.¹³⁵ Throughout his twelve-year career, Hart played a cowboy character similar to Anderson's Broncho Billy. Like Broncho Billy, Hart's characters were still rough but contained some of the characteristics of the cowboy that TR wrote about. Hart admired Roosevelt and once heralded him for being "for America first, last and all time."¹³⁶ He also made a self-conscious attempt to emulate the former

¹³³ Flynn, 3.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Flynn, 4.

¹³⁶ Andrew Brodie Smith, *Shooting Cowboys and Indians: Silent Western Films, American Culture, and the Birth of Hollywood* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2003), 172.

Rough Rider in 1918 by volunteering to lead a troop of American cowboys to fight overseas in World War I.¹³⁷ His unwillingness to alter his stock character, despite competition from more spectacular and showy Westerns, led to the demise of Hart's film career. His final Western, the 1926 film *Tumbleweeds* is considered to be his best. The film, epic in scale, highlights the closing of the West theme that Roosevelt, Wister, and Turner championed as it tells the story of the demise of its cattlemen.¹³⁸

Hart's cowboy characters are similar to Wister's austere protagonist in *The Virginian*, which is a morality tale of a sturdy and stoic hero defending the weak in a lawless land.¹³⁹ However, Hart did not fully engage the frontier masculinity that mythmakers like Wister and Roosevelt embraced. He owned many of their books, but only accepted their Victorian aspects such as Anglo-Saxonism and patriotism.¹⁴⁰ He rejected the level of violence that was portrayed in Wister's novel, especially cowboy versus cowboy aggression. He even challenged Wister on his depiction of cowboy life in *The Virginian* because it did not mirror Hart's own childhood on the frontier.¹⁴¹ In Hart's view, the basic honor of white men in the West would have stopped the kind of infighting among them that Wister portrayed. Nevertheless, Hart did believe in the romanticized West and its cowboys, and conveyed his feelings as seen in a letter he wrote to cowboy artist Charlie Russell, "When I look at these mountains and plains out here and then at

¹³⁷ Smith, 172.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Peter Stanfield, *Horse Opera: The Strange History of the 1930s Singing Cowboy* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 36.

¹⁴⁰ Smith, 172.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

your pictures which speak as no language can of a whole race that is forever gone -- I feel a great deal."¹⁴² TR could easily have expressed the same sentiment while at his beloved Dakota ranch, as could Remington while researching out West. Whether Hart knew it or not, he was influenced by TR even though he may have disagreed with some aspects of Roosevelt's frontier masculinity.

Another popular silent cowboy star was Tom Mix. His pre-film history is steeped in mystery as he claimed to have fought in the Spanish-American War, served as a Texas Ranger, and taken part in the Philippine insurrection before launching his career in motion pictures. Nonetheless, Mix was considered a natural cowboy. In his first six years in the industry, from 1911 until 1917, he was featured in more than a hundred films.¹⁴³ Made at the height of his popularity, such films as *The Daredevils* (1919), and *The Lone Star Ranger* (1923) exhibited the fast-paced, good-natured adventure stories that Mix did extremely well. Mix was certainly not the serious cowboy that Hart was since he was a performer who came out of the Wild West show. Because of this, some film historians do not take him as seriously as they do Hart. He wore colorful costumes and his films featured sensational stories and violent action. They abounded with gunfights and horseback chases, but also included romance and humor.¹⁴⁴ While Mix did portray a version of the austere cowboy films such as *Rainbow Trail* (1925) and *The Untamed* (1920), he was more Buffalo Bill than Theodore Roosevelt. Mix was the precursor to the singing cowboy stars of the 1930s. Although different in approach, both Hart and Mix

¹⁴² Stanfield, 38.

¹⁴³ Flynn, 5.

¹⁴⁴ Stanfield, 36.

were popular with movie audiences. Indeed, Mix earned \$15,000 per week at the height of his career.¹⁴⁵

Douglas Fairbanks was the one silent cowboy actor whose roles somewhat matched Roosevelt's own life in the West. Before his swashbuckling vehicles of the 1920s, Fairbanks made some significant cowboy films between 1915 and 1919 including *Manhattan Madness* (1916), *Wild and Woolly* (1917) and *The Knickerbocker Buckaroo* (1919) that feature the enthusiasm and appeal of a star in his ascendancy.¹⁴⁶ Usually playing an Eastern, aristocratic youth seeking only excitement and romance, Fairbanks fused comedy and action while employing the West as a metaphor for freedom and adventure where all young men must go to prove their manhood and find true love.¹⁴⁷ Since Fairbanks played very few cowboy roles during his career, his contribution to the Western genre has often been overlooked due to the fame of his more famous swashbuckling characters such as Zorro. Nonetheless, his cowboy characters are similar to Roosevelt in that TR too was an aristocratic Easterner who went West for adventure in order to prove his own manhood. This was not coincidental. Fairbanks was an outspoken admirer of Roosevelt and the philosophy of men living a a strenuous life.

As Fairbanks became a cinema icon, he leveraged his celebrity and began to promote his version of the strenuous life in general interest magazines. In his very first article he used Roosevelt as a model for staying young through “stunts” that "defy

¹⁴⁵ Stanfield, 41.

¹⁴⁶ Flynn, 6.

¹⁴⁷ Flynn, 6.

‘dignity’... the accelerator of age”¹⁴⁸ Building on the success of these articles he goes on to publish ghostwritten books that furthered his message in support of the new American masculinity. In one book, he echoed Roosevelt’s rationale for physical exertion: “[Rome] was ruined by too much civilization. The sinews of the nation became soft and flabby from too much contentment, too much ease and luxury, and decay set in. I sometimes fear that we are facing a similar plight.... I see it [exercise] as the great antidote for the softening and demoralizing effect of too much civilization”¹⁴⁹ Fairbanks extended Roosevelt's reach into popular culture by solidifying the romantic cowboy figure as the ideal American and by incorporating the importance of an active life into a message aimed at national audiences.

The early cowboy film stars brought to life the cowboys seen in the literary works of Wister and Grey. Both authors' seminal works were adapted into movies. Tom Mix portrayed Grey's Lassiter in *Riders of the Purple Sage* (1925) and Wister's *The Virginian* was filmed multiple times throughout the twentieth century. The first adaptation was a silent version in 1914, but the more influential film was the 1929 version starring Gary Cooper in the title role. In all there have been four movie versions, a television version and series of *The Virginian*.

The frontier amusements of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries -- dude ranching, Wild West shows, Western literature, and the early silent Western films all depicted the West as something of the past. The region itself became a mythical place and the cowboys who lived there became mythic, almost god-like figures. Cody, Wister,

¹⁴⁸ Gaylyn Studlar, *This Mad Masquerade: Stardom and Masculinity in the Jazz Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 45.

¹⁴⁹ Studlar, 46-47.

Remington, Grey, and their artistic descendants were powerful figures in the reimagining of the American West and the cowboys who resided there. It is possible that Wister might never have written *The Virginian* had Roosevelt not inspired him. Remington might not have achieved his status as the greatest Western artist of his era if Roosevelt had not given him a career boost by choosing him to provide illustrations for his second Western publication. Grey, who was influenced by all of them, might have written very different novels. Only Buffalo Bill Cody's career arc would be unchanged. It is likely, however, that the image of the cowboy would not be what it has become today in American culture. Cody was first and foremost an entertainer. If Cody remained the sole influence on the cowboy image in the culture, we would be left with a performer who executes daredevil stunts, not the cowboy who tended actual cattle and worked on ranches as Roosevelt did. Because of Roosevelt, the cowboy was transformed from an almost cartoonish figure to one that is entirely original in America and is heroic, moral, and masculine. Roosevelt achieved this because the public, political peers, family, and close friends perceived him as a cowboy, a perception he fostered and shared.

Chapter IV - Roosevelt As Cowboy: Perception Becomes Reality

Roosevelt's ability to rehabilitate the cowboy and establish him as an American icon began when he first perceived himself as a peer among cattlemen in the Dakota Bad Lands. When his own perception of seeing himself as a cowboy was also shared in the eyes of those same cattlemen, his friends, political peers, the general public, and in all segments of the print media, the process was complete; he had become forever bound to the image of the noble cowboy. In turn, this romanticized version of the cowboy found its way into all corners of the culture aided by the visibility TR enjoyed during and after his rise to the presidency.

Roosevelt may have seen himself as a cowboy before anyone else did. Before he left New York in 1883 to go to the Dakota Bad Lands for the first time, he sat for a picture wearing full cowboy regalia. The photograph captures TR exactly as he was: an Easterner dressed in the crisp, new costume of a cowboy, as what he himself would later call a "dude." Although he earned the respect of the cowboys who worked his ranches during subsequent trips, he found it more difficult to be taken seriously by the larger community of Westerners. Hermann Hagedorn, who wrote one of the seminal accounts of Roosevelt's time in the West, interviewed many of his Western friends and acquaintances. He points out that most men considered TR "Somewhat of a joke"¹⁵⁰ and that he was the only man other than Gregor Lang, father of Lincoln Lang, to wear glasses. His glasses drew scorn from the cowboys because they were, as Hagedorn states, "...large and round, making him, in the opinion of the cowpunchers, look very much like a curiously nervous and emphatic owl. They called him 'Four Eyes', and spoke without

¹⁵⁰ Hagedorn, 101.

too much respect, of 'Roosenfelder.'"¹⁵¹ One cowboy described Roosevelt's appearance as "A slim, anemic-looking young fellow dressed in the exaggerated style which newcomers on the frontier affected, and which was considered indisputable evidence of the rank tenderfoot."¹⁵²

Their perception of Roosevelt changed in the early summer of 1885 when he stopped in Mingusville, Montana for some food after a long day of searching for strays on the open range. A drunken gunslinger interrupted TR's meal at a local saloon and ordered him to buy everyone drinks, saying, "Four eyes is going to treat."¹⁵³ Roosevelt, who was a seasoned boxer at Harvard, quickly subdued the cowboy and finished his meal without further interruption. As Roosevelt recounts in his autobiography regarding his potential assailant, "He was not a 'bad man' of the really dangerous type, the true man killer type, but he was an objectionable creature, a would-be bad man, a bully who for the moment was having things all his own way."¹⁵⁴

News spread quickly in a "country of few happenings and much conversation," Hagedorn recalled.¹⁵⁵ This was the kind of story that residents of the Dakotas liked to hear, and from that day Roosevelt went from "Four Eyes" to "Old Four Eyes."¹⁵⁶

"Roosevelt was regarded by the cowboys as a good deal of a joke until after the saloon incident. After that it was different," said Frank Greene, a local official at the Northern

¹⁵¹ Hagedorn, 101-102.

¹⁵² Hagedorn, 102.

¹⁵³ Jenkinson, 65.

¹⁵⁴ Roosevelt, *The Autobiography of Theodore Roosevelt*, 79.

¹⁵⁵ Hagedorn, 154.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

Pacific, many years later.¹⁵⁷ This moment was a watershed; it marked the first time that the Westerners started to view TR as one of their own. The following December in Bismarck's *Weekly Tribune*, Roosevelt was publicly referred to as a cowboy for the first time: "Theodore Roosevelt, who was a great reformer in the New York Legislature, but who is now a cowboy, pure and simple calls a meeting of the stockmen of the West Dakota region...Mr. Roosevelt like the West."¹⁵⁸

The meeting of the stockmen reflected Roosevelt's growing stature among his Western associates. He called the meeting of ranch owners in order to form an organization that would protect their businesses collectively. The stockmen chose him to lead the new organization even though he was one of the youngest ranchers present and had the least experience. He'd proven himself on his ranch and in the bar in Mingusville. He was direct, he was fearless; he spoke well, was sure of himself, and, in the language of the Bad Lands, "He didn't take backwater from any one."¹⁵⁹ Hagedorn summed up the gist of his interviews with those who knew TR: "He was self-reliant and he minded his own business; he was honest and he had no axe to grind. The ranchmen no doubt felt that in view of these qualities you might forget a man's youth and forgive his spectacles."¹⁶⁰

The more time Roosevelt spent in the Dakotas, the more people there came to respect, and then like him. A cowboy named Dutch Wannigan, who worked on TR's ranch, said of Roosevelt, "He struck me like a sort of rough-an' ready, all around

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Hagedorn, 222-223.

¹⁵⁹ Hagedorn, 223.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

frontiersman. Wasn't a bit stuck up -- just the same as one of the rest of us."¹⁶¹ Dakota rancher Frank Roberts described TR as "rather a slim-lookin' fellow when he came out here, but after he lived out here...his build got wider and heavier...he got to be lookin' more like a rugged man."¹⁶² Lincoln Lang, one of TR's closest friends in the Dakotas, recalled that Roosevelt was always ready for any cowboy task. He describes a trip in his memoir, *Ranching with Roosevelt*: "Throughout the trip Roosevelt asked for and received no favors... Riding circle twice a day, often taking the outer swing, taking his turn on day-herd or night-guard, helping with the cutting out operations, branding calves, and so on..."¹⁶³ Lang adds,

...he was in the saddle all of eighteen hours per day, throughout the trip, like the rest of us, frequently riding well over a hundred miles within the twenty four hours. After the novelty of the experience had worn off, I do not think he liked it any better than the rest for at best it was grueling hard work, combined with the acme of personal discomfort. But it was work that must be done.¹⁶⁴

Lang was among those in the West who perceived TR's potential as a leader. Another was his father, Gregor, who said upon meeting Roosevelt, "There goes the most remarkable man I ever met. Unless I am badly mistaken the world is due to hear from him one of these days."¹⁶⁵ The younger Lang goes on to suggest that the West was critical in TR's rise to prominence: "Thus, it has always seemed to me that the germ of greatness born in him, thrived, blossomed, grew to maturity in the congenial wild nature

¹⁶¹ Hagedorn, 258.

¹⁶² Clay Jenkinson, *A Free and Hardy Life: Theodore Roosevelt's Sojourn in the American West* (Washburn: The Dakota Institute Press, 2011), 45.

¹⁶³ Lang, 185.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Lang, 119.

atmosphere of the Bad Lands, surrounding itself as with a protective armor of rawhide which would thereafter enable it to withstand the assaults of the world."¹⁶⁶

The dude-turned-cowboy made his public debut after he went back East to New York in 1884. When reporters from two St. Paul newspapers interviewed Roosevelt during his journey East, they found him to be transformed physically and confident in his abilities as a cattleman. The *St. Paul Pioneer Press* reporter described Roosevelt as, "Rugged, bronzed and in the prime of health,"¹⁶⁷ and noted that "There was very little of the whilom dude in his rough and easy costume..."¹⁶⁸ The *St. Paul Dispatch* reporter elicited this observation from Roosevelt: "Yes, I am a regular cowboy, dress and all... I am as much as a cowboy as any of them and can hold my own with the best of them. I can shoot, ride, and drive in the round-up with the best of them."¹⁶⁹ These interviews marked the introduction of TR to the public as an Easterner transformed by the West. They also mark one of the earliest occasions when Roosevelt publicly claimed membership in the fraternity of cattlemen.

Dr. Victor Hugo Stickney, a Dakota friend of Roosevelt, invited TR to deliver the 1886 Fourth of July address to Stickney's town of Dickinson. Roosevelt accepted and rode in a freight train with *Bad Lands Cow Boy* editor Arthur Packard. Roosevelt's address, considered to be his first great national speech, expressed his faith in America, but also made clear to his audience how much he had changed due to his experiences living in the Dakota Bad Lands. "I am, myself, at heart as much as a Westerner as an

¹⁶⁶ Lang, 310-311.

¹⁶⁷ Jenkinson, 45.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Hagedorn, 308-309.

Easterner," TR declared. "I am proud, indeed, to be considered one of yourselves."¹⁷⁰

After hearing the speech in which Roosevelt espoused the need for a good government,

Packard said to TR that he would someday become president of the United States.

Roosevelt replied, "If your prophpecy comes true, I will do my part to make a good one."¹⁷¹ As the Langs had done before him, Packard appeared to recognize TR's innate leadership ability as well as his ability to win over reserved Westerners.

The following month, Roosevelt volunteered his services to the military after tensions flared between the United States and Mexico. As anti-Mexican feeling within the border states increased, Texas called up regiments for a possible conflict. Roosevelt, who would offer his services twelve years later in the war against Spain, wrote the Secretary of War offering to lead a regiment of cowboy soliders and told him his men were eager to fight. "The cowboys were all eager for war, not caring much with whom," Roosevelt declared."¹⁷² They were fond of adventure and to tell the truth they were by no means averse to the prospect of plunder."¹⁷³ Roosevelt also reached out to the territorial governor of the Dakotas to gain support for a regiment. The governor declared,

Mr. Roosevelt would tender to the government the services of an entire regiment of cowboys, under his command. At a recent visit here he was assured of two companies of Dakota cowboys to accompany him. Mr. Roosevelt has been the captain of milita in New York, and no better man could be found to lead the daring cowboys to a seat of war and no commander would have more effective troops.¹⁷⁴

The tensions between the two countries soon eased without any conflict, and for

¹⁷⁰ Jenkinson, 71.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Hagedorn, 414.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Hagedorn, 414-415.

the moment Roosevelt missed his chance for military glory. But this episode in Roosevelt's life shows how, in the decade prior to the Spanish-American War, he was willing to lead a group of cowboys into battle because he saw himself as a cowboy. It appeared his fellow Westerners shared this vision.

In the fall of 1886, a twenty-eight year-old Roosevelt accepted the Republican nomination for mayor of New York. Though they realized TR was not enthusiastic about running for mayor, his campaign handlers used his cowboy image to attract voters. This approach anticipated his future campaigns for governor and president in which he was called the "Rough Rider" and "Cowboy President." At a gathering of New York Republicans assembled to formally nominate him, Roosevelt was introduced by banker Thomas C. Acton who declared,

You are called here to ratify the nomination of the youngest man who was ever nominated for Mayor. I knew his father. He was a staunch Republican. Mr. Roosevelt is the law and order candidate. He will enforce law and order. Don't you make a mistake on that. He is young and vigorous, and can do everything that you want. He is young and able to do it. If you elect him, the city of New York will never regret the cowboy of Dakota. Elect the cowboy of Dakota the next Mayor.¹⁷⁵

After his nomination, the press frequently referred TR as the "Cowboy Candidate." The *World* reported before a Roosevelt speech that TR "swept into the Grand Opera-House not unlike a cowboy into a border town."¹⁷⁶ Roosevelt also used the language in his own campaign speeches. He quipped to one audience, "As the cowboy vote is rather light in this city I will have to appeal to the Republicans."¹⁷⁷ The Westerners

¹⁷⁵ Roger L. Di Silvestro, *Theodore Roosevelt in the Badlands: A Young Politician's Quest for Recovery in the American West* (New York: Walker & Company, 2011), 230.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

who had finally embraced him by 1886 were equally estatic about Roosevelt's campaign.

The *Sioux Falls Press* claimed TR as one of their own:

The nomination of Theodore Roosevelt as the Republican candidate for Mayor of New York City is something in which Dakota people have taken an even greater interest than the desire that the Nation's metropolis should have clean and efficient government. Theodore is a Dakota cowboy -- owner of a ranch out in the bad lands region -- and has spent a large share of his time in the Terriorty for a couple of years. He is one of the finest thoroughbreds you ever met -- a whole-souled, clear-headed, high-minded gentleman.¹⁷⁸

Not just TR himself but Easterners and Westerners were now claiming Roosevelt as a cowboy. Roosevelt would lose the mayoral election, but he gained something that was highly valuable -- a lasting image as a Western cowboy that he would continue to exploit throughout his career. The campaign of 1886 was a turning point as Roosevelt tried on the metaphorical cowboy costume for the first time. From that day forward he never took it off.

Throughout his public life, Westerners continued to embrace Roosevelt as one of their own. Their readiness to claim him increased as he ascended in politics. As early as 1888, Roosevelt was proposed as a possible vice-presidential candidate. The endorsement came in an article that appeared in the *Daily Inter Ocean* on January 28, 1888. The anonymous writer, a self-described cowboy, argued that TR should be considered for vice president on a Republican ticket headed by Robert Lincoln, son of President Abraham Lincoln. He proposed Roosevelt over more established names such as fellow New Yorker and diplomat Andrew D. White. The author pointed to Roosevelt's particular qualities and his very active, if short, public life:

¹⁷⁸ Di Silvestro, 231.

He has mingled more with the people, fought harder in legislative councils, played larger parts in nominating conventions, and has done more campaigning, successful and unsuccessful, than his scholarly friend. He cares little for defeat, and is indifferent as to his political future. He has never been a politician in the objectionable sense of that word and says he never will be. He is a favorite with his party and liked by independents.¹⁷⁹

The author wrote he would “modestly suggest Lincoln and Roosevelt”¹⁸⁰ at the top of the 1888 GOP presidential ticket and maintained that Roosevelt was already held in high esteem by Westerners and in fact was considered one of them.

Easterners also began to see Roosevelt as a cowboy, although as Senator Hanna’s reaction to TR’s impending presidency later showed, they were not universal in their approval. Again, their perception was rooted in how Roosevelt described himself and his experiences in the West first to friends and associates, later to others. In a letter he wrote to Henry Cabot Lodge during his 1884 trip to the Dakotas, he described a fifteen-mile ride through sub-zero temperatures to bring in a buck: “My cattle are looking well -- and in fact the Statesman of the past has been merged, alas, I fear for good, into the cowboy of the present.”¹⁸¹ It is doubtful at this point that he anticipated how his experiences on the range might benefit him in the political arena. Indeed, he thought his political career was over and was seriously considering living out his life in the Dakota Territories. TR’s

¹⁷⁹ “Talk About Lincoln. Letters from Republicans as to the Most Available Candidate for President,” *Daily Inter Ocean*, January 28, 1888. America’s Historical Newspapers, http://infoweb.newsbank.com.libproxy.csun.edu/iw-search/we/HistArchive/?p_product=EANX&p_theme=ahnp&p_nbid=X67V5ETWMTMzOTM2NTY2OS4INTg4NzA6MToxMToxMzAuMTY2LjMuNQ&p_action=doc&s_lastnonissuequeryname=67&d_viewref=search&p_queryname=67&p_docnum=1&p_docref=v2:11499A3E9CB040E8@EANX-119F0021655EE118@2410665-119F0022155A4B18@8-119F0025F8A74BC0@Talk+About+Lincoln.+Letters+from+Republicans+as+to+the+Most+Available+Candidate+for+President. (Accessed on April 4, 2012).

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Henry Cabot Lodge and Theodore Roosevelt, *Selections From the Correspondence of Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge, 1884-1918, Volume 1* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925), 27.

comment does reflect, however, his willingness to immerse himself in his Western venture and his enthusiastic embrace of all it entailed including a new label, “cowboy.”

The following year Roosevelt wrote another letter to Lodge from the West in which he shared his growing confidence in his skills as a cattleman and rancher: "I have been three weeks on the roundup and have worked as hard as any of the cowboys; but I have enjoyed it greatly. Yesterday I was eighteen hours in the saddle - from 4 A.M. to 10 P.M. -- having a half hour each for dinner and tea. I can now do cowboy work pretty well."¹⁸²

Roosevelt's sharpening cowboy skills and his love of the frontier made little impression on Lodge who, nevertheless, respected his life long friend and acknowledged his achievements, often with a sense of humor. Lodge recalled one of his first encounters with TR in 1884, "Theodore is one of the most lovable as well as one of the cleverest and most daring men I have ever known."¹⁸³ A few months later his affection for Roosevelt appeared to have grown, "The more I see him, as the fellow says in the play, 'the more & more I love him."¹⁸⁴ The differences in each man's preferences and personality show, however, in exchanges that concern all things Western. For example, TR asked Lodge to support a former Rough Rider on an Immigration Commission. Lodge replied: "Of course, if Murphy is a former Rough Rider, there is nothing more to be said. I understand that that demonstrates at once his character and fitness, and possibly, that he has been in jail, but nevertheless he shall have my support."¹⁸⁵ Roosevelt, in turn, teased Lodge about

¹⁸² Lodge and Roosevelt, 30.

¹⁸³ John A. Garraty, *Henry Cabot Lodge A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), 87.

¹⁸⁴ Garraty, 87.

¹⁸⁵ Garraty, 223.

his lack of Western outdoor skills such as horsemanship. "Cabot didn't mind having the newspapers say that he was head of the kitchen cabinet," TR once remarked, "but he was frantic with fury when they said that he was learning to ride, so as to go out with me."¹⁸⁶

This banter, often conducted in company, reinforced TR's connection to the West and all that went with it, including the cowboy image. As a senator from Massachusetts and scion of the Eastern establishment, Lodge's word carried weight with his peers and beyond. Lodge and friends like him, such as Brander Matthews, John Burroughs, and Owen Wister, all writers, provided multiple paths into the culture for TR's version of the cowboy and of himself as one of these men of the West.

In an 1894 letter to Matthews, Roosevelt criticized novelist Hamlin Garland's article in *Harper's Weekly* regarding the poor conditions of logging camps. Roosevelt took aim at Garland by writing that these conditions "...might be distressing to an over-civilized man"¹⁸⁷ like Garland but for man like himself, who went West and lived in places similar to those Garland described, he found the campsite to be "...first-rate place, very comfortable, very warm, with an abundance of good food, and often pleasant company."¹⁸⁸ In this letter Roosevelt explains that he and men like him found the camps welcome comfort after days or weeks of unrelenting work. Roosevelt states,

...but for my own pleasure this year when I was out on the antelope plains I got into a country where I didn't take my clothes off for ten days. I had two cowpunchers along, and the quilts and bedding, including the pillows which they had, were quite as bad as those Garland describes in his logging camp; yet they both felt they were off on a holiday and having a lovely time...I have worked hard in cow camps for weeks at time, doing precisely such work as the

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Laurence J. Oliver, *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt and Brander Matthews* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1995), 89.

¹⁸⁸ Oliver, 89.

cowpunchers, and I know what I'm talking about.¹⁸⁹

This critique of Garland highlights the ways in which TR continued to align himself with the cattlemen of the West. It also reflects the high value he placed on hard work done outdoors; such work, he implied, builds a man into a more masculine, commanding figure with no need for artificial diversions: "I didn't play; I *worked*, while on my ranch. There is a great deal of toil and hardship about the out of door life of lumbermen & cowboys."¹⁹⁰

Years later John Burroughs, the well-known naturalist and writer, journeyed to Yellowstone in 1903 with then President Roosevelt and observed the mutual affection between TR and his frontier friends. Burroughs captured this in scenes like this one from his two-essay volume *Camping & Tramping With Roosevelt*:

At some point in the Dakotas we picked up the former foreman of his ranch and another cowboy friend of the old days, and they rode with the President in his private car for several hours. He was happy with them as a schoolboy ever was in meeting old chums. He beamed with delight all over. The life which those men represented, and of which he had himself once formed a part, meant so much to him; it had entered into the very marrow of this being, and I could see the joy of it all shining in his face as he sat and lived parts of it over again with those men that day. ...[Roosevelt] wanted to forget the present, and to live only in the memory of those wonderful ranch days, -- that free, hardy, adventurous life upon the plains. It all came back to him with a rush when he found himself alone with these heroes of the rope and the stirrup.¹⁹¹

Burroughs' narrative mirrored the image and even echoed the language that, by this time, had become so closely tied to Roosevelt. His reference to TR's "hardy, adventurous life" matches the terminology that Roosevelt used in his articles and books

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ John Burroughs, *Camping & Tramping With Roosevelt* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Company, 1907), 13.

about the West. Like Lang, Burroughs believes that Roosevelt's experiences in the Dakotas and surrounding areas made him the man he became: "Had he not gone West, he said, he never would have raised the Rough Riders regiment...and unwittingly have made his rise to the presidency so inevitable. There is no doubt, I think, that he would have got there some day; but without the chain of events above outlined, his rise could not have been so rapid."¹⁹²

Roosevelt himself seemed to believe this which could further explain his attachment to the West and willingness to adopt and promote the characteristics of the people he met there. In his *Autobiography* published in 1913, TR credits the people of the West with his transformation, "I owe more than I can ever express to the West, which of course means to the men and women I met in the West. They soon accepted me as a friend and fellow worker who stood on equal footing with them, and I believe the most of them have kept their feeling for me ever since."¹⁹³ Roosevelt would reflect on his Western days throughout his political life. In 1900 visiting the Dakota Badlands in a campaign stop for President William McKinley, Roosevelt said "It was here that the romance of my life began."¹⁹⁴

While president in 1904, his conversation with Senator Albert Fall of New Mexico recalls how much the West meant to him: "Do you know what chapter in all my life...looking back over all of it...I would choose to remember, were the alternative forced upon me to recall one portion of it, and to have erased from my memory all other

¹⁹² Burroughs, 15.

¹⁹³ Theodore Roosevelt, *The Autobiography of Theodore Roosevelt*, 76.

¹⁹⁴ Jenkinson, 31.

experiences? I would take the memory of my life on the ranch with its experiences close to nature and among the men who lived nearest her."¹⁹⁵ This may have been Roosevelt's definitive endorsement of life in the Dakota Bad Lands. In 1910, in a speech dedicating a library in Fargo, North Dakota Roosevelt stated, "I never would have been president if it had not been for my experiences in North Dakota."¹⁹⁶ All of these remarks demonstrate the strong connection Roosevelt developed and secured with the West.

The perception of Roosevelt as cowboy extended to members of his family who also helped to share and reinforce it in their own published work. In her book of recollections, TR's sister, Corinne Roosevelt Robinson, presented a perspective on the changes she saw in her brother, both physically and in his ability to understand the mindset of a typical cowboy. She writes, "...he turned gladly to the new life of the West, and became, through his absolute comprehension of the pioneer type of the cowboy and the ranchman, not only one of them from a physical standpoint, but also one of them from the standpoint of understanding their mental outlook."¹⁹⁷ In the late summer of 1890, Robinson ventured to the Dakota Bad Lands and was struck by the ease with which her brother interacted with the cowboys who worked for him: "The relationship between my brother and his men was one of honest comradeship but also absolute respect, each for the other, and on the part of the cowboys there was as well, toward their 'Boss', a certain reverential attitude in spite of the 'man to man' equality."¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Corinne Roosevelt Robinson, *My Brother Theodore Roosevelt* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921), 123.

¹⁹⁸ Robinson, 142.

While peers and family could and did reinforce the perception of Roosevelt as a kind of “cowboy in chief” or a leader who embodied the best qualities of hard working, independent, adventurous cattlemen along with a powerful intellect and personality, the general public came to associate TR with the cowboy by reading the pages of newspapers and magazines. These periodicals documented both Roosevelt’s personal transformation from Easterner to cowboy and the transformation of the cowboy from a questionable character to heroic figure. During Roosevelt’s initial sojourns in the early 1880s, for example, the small Dakota newspaper, *Bad Lands Cowboy* described Roosevelt as “the young New York reformer”¹⁹⁹ who was in “full cowboy regalia”²⁰⁰

By 1904, the Roosevelt cowboy image had gone beyond the costume and was so much a part of his public persona that references to it, both favorable and critical, can be found in articles or cartoons published throughout the country in publications. Throughout his presidency, Roosevelt's cowboy image would be used for nearly any topic including both foreign and domestic matters. As a result, the cowboy’s arc, through the lens of Roosevelt, can also be followed in the press.

¹⁹⁹ Edmund Morris, *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt* (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1979), 276.

²⁰⁰ Morris, 276.



HOW TO MILK THE BEEF TRUST

(The Democrats regarded the Garfield report on the Beef Trust as very inoffensive, and found political reasons.)

From the World (New York)

By conducting a search within the archives of a single newspaper, the *New York Times*,²⁰¹ it is possible to observe the development of the public's association of Roosevelt with cowboy characteristics. Similarly, articles, advertisements, cartoons and other pieces in the *Times* depict the evolution of the cowboy from rapsallion to American symbol. From the early to mid-1880s, for example, the paper's coverage of TR was minimal and consistent with his position in New York society. Appearances focused on society news (Harvard graduation, social events, births, family news, marriage, deaths of his wife and mother), and his early forays into politics. In 1885 and 1886, the paper

²⁰¹ With an estimated circulation ranging from 40,000 to 70,000 during the 1880s to 1890s, The *New York Times* was not the largest paper in New York or in the nation during this period. It does offer the advantages, however, of having been in print continually during this period and offering a robust archive. Finally, the paper is New York-based, as was Roosevelt, and provided consistent coverage of him before, during and after his presidency.

featured reviews, advertisements, and articles that highlighted Roosevelt's *Century* articles and books about his experiences in the West including dispatches from regional newspapers that illustrated Roosevelt's exploits and confidence among the cowboys and ranchers of the Dakotas. An 1885 feature, for example, recounted Roosevelt's encounter with a grizzly bear, which he shot while hunting with a cowboy. Another described Roosevelt's arrival in a logging camp. He was wearing a straw hat because the hat he normally wore while working out West had been damaged when a "bucking Mustang stood on my head." By the latter half of the decade, writers began to link the characteristics Roosevelt portrayed in his books and in articles to his qualifications for public office. A brief editorial note that appeared in 1886 along with an article from the *Sioux Falls Press* described how a young TR prevented the hanging of thieves by his fellow cattlemen: "When Theodore Roosevelt interfered to prevent his cowboys from hanging a couple of cattle thieves whom he himself took to court and had tried and imprisoned for their crime, he showed the spirit with which he would administer the laws -- with justice, courage, and energy."²⁰²

From 1892 on, Roosevelt's publishing and political activities led to an increasing number of articles, advertisements, commentaries or other documents that linked him to the West. His interests in the importance of masculinity, cowboy characteristics, and American ideals converged in reviews. One, which appeared following the publication of *The Wilderness Hunter* in 1893, conveys admiration for Roosevelt's brand of Americanism, which is distinct from "that of the old-fashioned Fourth of July orators."

²⁰² Editorial article 6 -- no title. (October 31, 1886). *New York Times* (1857-1922), 8. <http://search.proquest.com/libproxy.csun.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/94411949/137F6DFFF4721E1BB9B/4?accountid=7285>. (Accessed on June 30, 2012).

Instead, “the eagle does scream in his speeches or his books.”²⁰³ The writer declares, “Mr. Roosevelt’s Americanism shows itself...in its preface [where] he expresses the opinion that of no other qualities by a nation can atone for the lack of that vigorous manliness which the case cultivates.”²⁰⁴ He goes on to praise Roosevelt’s writing using terms that could just as easily have been used to describe the manly, heroic cowboy who appears in books and films from Wister’s *The Virginian* to Clint Eastwood’s film, *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly*:

The chase of the elk, the cougar, the white goat, and the wapiti is described with no lack of picturesque detail, and a simplicity and vigor of style that stirs the blood of the reader. There is not a trace of affectation in Mr. Roosevelt’s account of his hunting adventures. He is a good shot and proud of it, but he does not boast of his skill.²⁰⁵

When Roosevelt formed and led the Rough Riders, he ensured that the cowboy image would follow him in the pages of the *New York Times* throughout his presidency to his death even though relatively few of the stories, advertisements or other pieces that mentioned his name actually contained the word, “cowboy” (See Table 3-4).

The newspaper also provides a lens through which to view the evolution of the cowboy figure presented to the public. New York was then, as it is now, the nation’s largest city and the heart of the East. While this New York audience would likely view the cowboy differently than the reader of a paper such as the *Grand Forks Herald* in the

²⁰³ "Mr. Roosevelt's Americanism," (August 6, 1893). *New York Times* (1857-1922), 19. <http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.csun.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/95040055/137F6E1A6F7A39E987/1?accountid=7285>. (Accessed on June 30, 2012).

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

Dakota Territory, *New York Times* readers were representative of the audience served by the country's larger newspapers during the late 1800s and early 1900s.

In the early 1880s, most *Times* articles containing the term “cowboy” also included words like “murder,” “arrested,” or “desperado.” Other terms frequently associated with “cowboy” included “drunk” and references to gaudy clothing and boots. These words paint a picture of the cowboy as criminal, “wild,” out of place in civilized society, independent, more willing to take than to ask for something, a hard drinker, hard worker, quick to shoot, violent, or lawless. Some of these descriptions have survived and have been derogatorily used in the twenty-first century. A look at a sampling of headlines alone indicates the negative associations that dogged the cowboy during the early-to-mid 1880s: “Murderers Put to Death,” “Indian and Cowboy Troubles,” “Two Cowboys Sentenced,” “Hanging a Murderer,” or “Cowboys Worst in a Fight.” One article pins the label of “cowboy” on the President of the Del Rio Railroad who the writer accuses of issuing worthless stock by misrepresenting the value of his business. The writer argues, “Mr. Palmer is evidently a good fighter; he is what we should call, if we had him down in Texas, or New-Mexico, or Arizona, a ‘cowboy.’ But, as he is up here, he should go into partnership with “Billy” -- William Henry V [Vanderbilt] -- issuing tissue paper for the public to invest in.”²⁰⁶

Yet, thanks to shows like Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show and dime novels, cowboys also appeared as adventurous and appealed to the imagination of old and young. A story published in 1885 in the *Times* describes the efforts of a wealthy New York banker to locate his eleven-year-old son after the boy ran away to be a “cowboy

²⁰⁶ "Uncle Rufus Hatch Again," (October 23, 1882). *New York Times* (1857-1922), 5. <http://search.proquest.com/libproxy.csun.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/93988374/137F6E3B448571ED65F/1?accountid=7285>. (Accessed on June 30, 2012).

detective.” His midnight flight across the country on a train was attributed to the influences of a novel found in his school desk. In the novel, a young “cowboy detective” found his father’s killers and “carved them into mincemeat.” The story reported that two detectives were seeking the boy hoping to earn the \$10,000 reward.²⁰⁷

In the business pages, cowboys were not romanticized. They were presented by some as a source of labor for cattle ranchers or would-be cattle ranchers. One article published in 1883 describes cowboys as property of the company in the same way that the cattle were part of the inventory.²⁰⁸ In their way, however, writers covering the ranching business may have helped to elevate the cowboy or, if nothing else, distinguish good ones from bad ones. A review of the book *Herding in the West* published in 1885 included a passage that suggested cowboys were changing with the times and that there were regional differences among the population of cattlemen as a whole:

As to that much written about individual, the cowboy, he says: “Formerly the man who shouted loudest, galloped hardest, and was quickest in drawing his ‘gun’ was considered the most dashing cowboy; if he had come upon the Texas trail and had failed to kill his man he was held to have wasted his opportunities. But times are changing. It is only in the South, for instance in Arizona, where the term cowboy is equivalent to desperado; in the North the men on the ranges are as good as any class of American.”²⁰⁹

²⁰⁷ "Banker Shepards Son," (February 4, 1885). *New York Times* (1857-1922), 3. <http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.csun.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/94288366/137F74331C33BB0A89B/1?accountid=7285>. (Accessed on June 30, 2012).

²⁰⁸ "Cattle and Cowboys," (December 26, 1883). *New York Times* (1857-1922), 4. <http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.csun.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/94120114/137F7443808336498A4/1?accountid=7285>. (Accessed on June 30, 2012).

²⁰⁹ "Herding in the West," (March 2, 1885). *New York Times* (1857-1922), 3. <http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.csun.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/94313404/137F74F1F581D39419A/1?accountid=7285>. (Accessed on June 30, 2012).

The book and the review appeared after the publication of Roosevelt's series of *Century* articles and the subsequent book developed from them, all illustrated by Remington and widely publicized. The ennobling of the cowboy in the pages of the *New York Times* appears to have begun. It continued in 1886 and beyond with feature articles such as, "Postmen of the Plains,"²¹⁰ a detailed account of the trials encountered by men who nevertheless persisted in their mission to carry mail to those parts of the West not served by trains. Small pieces inserted into the general notes columns such as "Press Points" also advanced an image of the cowboy that Roosevelt would have recognized and approved: "The cowboy does not care whether his associate belongs to the aristocracy of the cities or not. If the blood happens to be blue it must be red all the same. If one lacks courage, muscle, or endurance he is pushed to the wall whether his father is a millionaire or a pauper."²¹¹ These and other pieces like them highlighted the independence, self-sufficiency, and resourcefulness of the cowboy while others like "A Noted Cowboy Killed" (October 9, 1890), laud the heroism of "good" cowboys who go after "rustlers and desperadoes."²¹²

References that could be considered negative or condescending to cowboys did continue in the paper through the late 1800s and early 1900s, but the number of documents containing the word "cowboy" published during this period numbered only

²¹⁰ "Postmen of the Plains," (June 6, 1886). *New York Times* (1857-1922), 11. <http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.csun.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/94414203/137F7504A535AF73CE1/1?accountid=7285>. (Accessed on June 30, 2012).

²¹¹ "Press Points," (1886, Dec 09). *New York Times* (1857-1922), 4. <http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.csun.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/94402640/137F7520839720DA620/1?accountid=7285>. (Accessed on June 30, 2012).

²¹² "A Noted Cowboy Killed," (1890, Oct 09). *New York Times* (1857-1922), 1. <http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.csun.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/94402640/137F7520839720DA620/1?accountid=7285>. (Accessed on June 30, 2012).

around 350 (See Table 3-3). The period from 1886 through the late 1890s saw a dramatic increase in the number of documents that contained the word “cowboy” (see Table 3-3). A large proportion of these placed the cowboy in a nostalgic and decidedly more attractive, if tamer, light. For weeks at a time, the paper offered advertisements, reviews, or feature articles connected to Buffalo Bill Cody and his Wild West Show. New books and magazine articles about the cowboy or the West were also captured in the pages along with small humorous pieces such as one about a race between a cowboy on a horse and a man on a bicycle in Central Park.²¹³ By the 1900s the cowboy referenced in the *New York Times* most often was associated with entertainment, travel, art, literature, or, perhaps most significantly for the future of the iconic American cowboy, Roosevelt’s Rough Riders.

The paper covered extensively the so-called, “Cowboy Regiment,” formed and led by Roosevelt in 1898, as did most of the press throughout the country. Although the name “Rough Riders” was first introduced to the general public by Buffalo Bill Cody in his entertainments, it sparked a new respect before and during the Spanish American War. Coverage of this group helped to elevate the stature of the cowboy as a uniquely American hero. A long feature article by W.J. Rouse that appeared in June, 1898, presented the public with a cowboy that had it all: toughness, bravery, unconventionality, a sense of honor and competence drawn not from military academies but from his own experience:

They are not roughs by any means but they are rough, nevertheless, and will play rough when they get the chance at the enemy. They don’t know a great deal

²¹³ "Cowboy and Bicyclists," (1886, Jul 13). *New York Times* (1857-1922),8. <http://search.proquest.com/libproxy.csun.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/94443066/137F753A1BB2D4398B7/1?accountid=7285>. (Accessed on June 30, 2012).

about the manual of arms, as practiced by the American army...But they can handle a Winchester with a swiftness and deadly precision that is astounding, and what they can't accomplish with that weapon their heavy six-shooters will take care of...Some of them weigh close to 250 pounds; others won't tip the beam at over 100. But the little fellows, grizzled by years of exposure on the Western frontier, are as tough as pine knots and can shoot as fast and as straight as a man who weighs three times as much.²¹⁴

The print media of the time also provides insight to the relative influence of Roosevelt on the development of the romanticized American cowboy compared to others who were in a position to shape public perception of the West and its cattlemen. Cody, Remington, Wister, and Turner have all been credited with influencing the American view of the frontier and the life of the cowboy. Of these four, Cody, Remington, and Wister were covered most in the daily press as Turner, an historian, moved mainly in academic circles. A search of the *Times* and two other databases suggests that although references to Cody, Remington, and Wister appeared frequently in the media, these men were not in a position to impact as wide or as general an audience as was TR.²¹⁵

Although both Remington and Wister accounted for a small portion of results in one or both time periods, the findings suggest that TR and Buffalo Bill enjoyed a wider degree of press and public attention across the country including reporting of their

²¹⁴ W. J. Rouse, (1898, Jun 19). Article 6 -- no title. *New York Times* (1857-1922), SM6. <http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.csun.edu/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/95568079/137F758440F25C86C67/1?accountid=7285>. (Accessed on June 30, 2012).

²¹⁵ The search and subsequent analysis should not be confused with an attempt to adapt the principles of a "reach and frequency" analysis used in the advertising and media sectors. Instead, the search was conducted by applying a limited number of search terms to three databases of archived periodicals and newspapers that do not appear to overlap and comparing the results. The three print media databases utilized were Proquest American Periodicals Database. <http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.csun.edu/americanperiodicals/productfulldescdetail?accountid=7285>; Proquest Historical Newspaper Database, The New York Times, <http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.csun.edu/hnpnewyorktimes?accountid=7285>; America's Historical Newspapers, http://infoweb.newsbank.com.libproxy.csun.edu/iw-search/we/HistArchive?p_product=EANX&p_action=timeframes&p_theme=ahnp&p_nbid=H65N58PRM TM0MDE2MjAxOS4yMTcwMjg6MToxMToxMzAuMTY2LjMuNQ&p_clear_search=yes&d_refprod=EANX& (Accessed between May 12-June 21, 2012).

activities in smaller, regional papers. As shown in Tables 3-1, and 3-2, Buffalo Bill accounted for 64 percent of all appearances in the *New York Times*, periodicals and total American Historical Newspapers (AHN) database combined. TR accounted for 31 percent; Frederic Remington, 4 percent; Owen Wister, .05 percent (all figures rounded). In the period from 1892-1920, Roosevelt's percent of the total rose to 83 percent, Buffalo Bill's dropped to 11 percent, Remington accounted for 3 percent; Wister's rises to nearly 3 percent and Turner accounts for a negligible amount. When looking at the regions represented by the American Historical Newspapers Regional subset, however, the dynamic changes. Buffalo Bill leads the results from this group in the period from 1879-1891, accounting for 78 percent of the total results while TR accounted for just fewer than 18 percent. In the later time period, Roosevelt dominated with nearly 87 percent of the results.

**Table 3-1
Number of Documents Containing Name of Each Man, 1879-1891**

	Roosevelt	Buff. Bill	Remington	Wister
New York Times	503	405	48	0
Proquest Historical Databases: Periodicals	471	420	95	16
American Historical Newspapers	480	2195	54	10
American Historical Newspapers Regional Subset	242	1080	44	10

**Table 3-2
Number of Documents Containing Name of Each Man, 1892-1920**

	Roosevelt	Buff. Bill	Remington	Wister
New York Times	8922	1012	365	370
Proquest Historical Databases: Periodicals	6386	709	763	1136
American Historical Newspapers	43,828	6142	901	823

	Roosevelt	Buff. Bill	Remington	Wister
American Historical Newspapers Regional Subset	16,926	2045	509	557

The visibility of the word “cowboy” increased dramatically from one period to the next, suggesting a growth in interest in the subject and the availability of material. As shown in Table 3-3, the total number of results associated with a simple search on the term of “cowboy” more than quadrupled from the earlier time period to the later. Increases were particularly dramatic in newspapers. Results from the *New York Times* more than quadrupled. Results from the AHN database increased a bit more than six times from the earlier period to the later. This suggests that the public’s interest in or awareness of cowboys not only grew during this time but was national in scope.

**Table 3-3
Number of Documents Containing Term “Cowboy”**

	1879-1891	1892-1920
New York Times	352	1966
Proquest Historical Databases: Periodicals	1245	1718
American Historical Newspapers	5971	32608
American Historical Newspapers Regional Subset	345	974

As shown in Table 3-4, only three of the four men were linked with the term “cowboy” in any kind of document published during the period from 1879-1891. This number increased to four in the later period (Table 3-5), however both Cody and Remington continue to be associated with the term significantly more often than either Roosevelt or Wister. Buffalo Bill accounted for nearly half (47 percent) of the results

from the period 1879-1891 (excluding AHN subset). Remington, however accounts for 41 percent during the same period while TR accounts for less than 13 percent. In the later period, Remington surges to 55 percent of the total, followed by Buffalo Bill with 24 percent and TR with 16 percent. Wister accounts for nearly 6 percent during the period from 1892 to 1920. The rise in results from one period to the next is consistent with the trends in the general visibility of each man and the subject, “cowboy.” The higher association of Cody and Remington with the term reflects the focus of each man on his respective field. Roosevelt, on the other hand, was, during the earlier period, also active in society, politics, and publishing. His association with the word "cowboy" dramatically increased from 1892 to 1920, but these were also the years of the Rough Riders, his ascendancy to the presidency, and his post-presidency years during which he remained a public figure.

**Table 3-4
Number of Documents Containing Name + Cowboy 1879-1891**

	Roosevelt	Buff. Bill	Remington	Wister
New York Times	6	62	43	0
Proquest Historical Databases: Periodicals	30	37	96	0
American Historical Newspapers	18	104	36	0
American Historical Newspapers Regional Subset	11	45	26	0

**Table 3-5
Number of Documents Containing Name + Cowboy 1892-1920**

	Roosevelt	Buff. Bill	Remington	Wister
New York Times	99	162	331	17
Proquest Historical Databases: Periodicals	130	84	771	93

	Roosevelt	Buff. Bill	Remington	Wister
American Historical Newspapers	272	509	628	65
American Historical Newspapers Regional Subset	116	156	225	22

The results of the searches for “Rough Rider,” with and without the names of each man, show the strongest link with Roosevelt. Although the term is frequently found in the same articles as the name "Buffalo Bill," it is Roosevelt who seems to have developed a “brand” around the term. The dramatic rise in articles searched using only the term “Rough Riders” shows that its use mushroomed from 1892 to 1920.

Table 3-6
Number of Documents Containing Term, “Rough Riders”

	1879-1891	1892-1920
New York Times	9	1788
Proquest Historical Databases: Periodicals	24	1081
American Historical Newspapers	28	12617
American Historical Newspapers Regional Subset	17	4241

Table 3-7
Number of Documents Containing Name + “Rough Riders” 1879-1891

	Roosevelt	Buff. Bill	Remington	Wister
New York Times	0	4	0	0
Proquest Historical Databases: Periodicals	2	0	0	0
American Historical Newspapers	0	0	0	0
American Historical Newspapers Regional Subset	0	0	0	0

Table 3-8
Number of Documents Containing Name + “Rough Riders” 1892-1920

	Roosevelt	Buff. Bill	Remington	Wister
New York Times	244	106	8	1

	Roosevelt	Buff. Bill	Remington	Wister
Proquest Historical Databases: Periodicals	230	31	107	9
American Historical Newspapers	893	387	329	7
American Historical Newspapers Regional Subset	384	125	163	2

In sum, the results captured in the AHN subset analysis indicate that all figures enjoyed national reputations. Although both Remington and Buffalo Bill Cody appear to have stronger associations with the term “cowboy,” neither commands the general press for any subject in the way that Roosevelt does, particularly from 1892-1920. Searches of periodicals within the three databases, along with Internet searches, suggest that while all five figures were often featured in the leading news, literary, arts, and outdoor magazines of the day, each can be found in others that appeal to more general audiences or to particular audiences based on age (youth magazines), gender (women’s magazines) religion (Christian, Quaker publications) and general interest (*Life, Saturday Evening Post, Puck*).

The perception of TR as cowboy played a critical role in the evolution of this figure to a heroic symbol that was quintessentially American. The change in public perception began with the change in TR’s perception of himself and his conviction that his experience as a rancher and cowboy fed his later success. The skills he developed as a hunter, rancher and cowpuncher were equalled by his communication skills. His story, his image, and his language were seized by friends, family, and the press, all of whom helped to share them with the general public. Cody, Remington, and, later, Wister, could and did influence the public image of the cowboy in both the U.S. and abroad. The careers of all three, however, benefited to varying degrees by association with Roosevelt or, in Cody’s case, the “Rough Riders” who were featured in his shows after the Spanish

American War. None of these individuals could likely match the impact of Roosevelt whose rise to the presidency ensured a level of national and international visibility they could not achieve.

Roosevelt's ascendancy stemmed from many factors, including personality, innate leadership ability, connections, energy, and timing. However, he and others attributed at least a portion of his political success to his time in the West. The story of his conversion from dude to Westerner followed him from the early interviews in Minnesota on his way back from the Dakotas to his obituaries and beyond. As he ascended, he took the image of the cowboy with him. One of the cartoons published at Roosevelt's death portrays him sitting on his horse waving as he is ready to ride off into the West. Created by J.N.

"Ding" Darling, a Pulitzer-Prize winning cartoonist, the image depicts the president in death as the American public viewed him in life, a cowboy.



After Roosevelt's death in 1919, a myriad of public tributes to him appeared. Leonard Wood's homage to the former president summed up his impact on the country: "He was the most inspiring, and consequently the most dominant, figure in our National life since Lincoln. The youth of the country turned to him; he was its ideal."²¹⁶ Wood had served as the personal physician to Presidents Grover Cleveland and William McKinley. He met Roosevelt in 1898 when TR was serving as the Assistant Secretary of the Navy and their friendship endured until Roosevelt's death. His belief that Roosevelt was the country's ideal youthful masculine figure is important as it suggests that his rugged personality, perfected in the West, was what many children were sought to imitate. By 1919, the figure of the American romantic cowboy appeared in literature, movies, and amusements. Given Roosevelt's popularity and all he accomplished to rehabilitate the cowboy, it would not be surprising if the public, including children, thought first of TR when they thought about cowboys.

²¹⁶ Frederick S. Wood, *Roosevelt As We Knew Him* (Philadelphia: The John C. Winston Company, 1927), 480.

Conclusion - The Legacy of Roosevelt's Cowboy

The legacy of the romantic cowboy that Roosevelt created is complex. While today's version retains basic components of the image put forth by Roosevelt, it also reflects the changes in American culture throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century. While Western literature continued to sell in the twentieth century, it was film that took center stage for portraying the West and the cowboy to a mass audience. During the 1930s, B Western singing cowboy film stars such as Gene Autry and Roy Rogers reached their zenith in popularity. The screenwriters based the B Westerns on a fictional history that put the stars at the center of the story. Historical events such as the Civil War, the Pony Express riders, and the cattle drives were featured in the plot but not necessarily with any regard for historical accuracy. As Western historian Albert B. Tucker states, "Although the content may have been foggy on historical accuracy, the event itself, the B Western, had historical impact on the viewers as if the events actually happened as the films portrayed."²¹⁷

The characters that Autry and Rogers played were moral and honest. Hollywood fan magazines credit Autry's appeal due to his simplicity, sincerity and warmth.²¹⁸ Morality and honesty were always key components in Roosevelt's cowboy. However, the singing cowboy featured an added characteristic that did not exist at the turn of the century in cowboys such as *The Virginian* or William S. Hart. Western movie historians have argued that during the 1930s and 1940s, the film industry became the last real employer of cowboys, who in turn became the inspiration for the next generation of

²¹⁷ Carlson, 195.

²¹⁸ Stanfield, 151.

cowboys.²¹⁹

The strong, stoic cowboy archetypes such as John Wayne and Gary Cooper were popular during the golden years of Hollywood. From *Stagecoach* to *True Grit* for Wayne, and from *The Virginian* to *High Noon* for Cooper, the cowboys they portrayed were similar to the cowboys of Wister and Roosevelt. When Cooper did stray, however, he seemed to enhance the cowboy figure. His performance in *High Noon* was heralded as one of his greatest. In the 1952 film, Cooper's recently retired Marshall Will Kane character must choose between staying with his Victorian Quaker wife who disavows violence or going back to town to stop a gang of criminals out for revenge. This character embodies the tension between Victorian values and the Western masculine prototype of the mythic West. Western film cowboys were not often portrayed in this manner, however, such depictions did lead to more conflicted Western characters over the next decade. *High Noon* was also atypical in that it featured no chases, gunfights, or memorably scenery. The film won Cooper an Academy Award and is today considered a film classic.

During the 1960s at the height of the Vietnam War, Clint Eastwood's spaghetti Westerns were popular among audiences. Films such as *The Good, The Bad & The Ugly* and *A Fistful of Dollars*, showed a gruff and eccentric character in Eastwood's The Man With No Name. His character delivered a unique brand of justice and was often a vigilante. While elements of the Roosevelt/Wister/Grey cowboy are still there -- the strong, silent type who knows how to use a weapon if need be -- the unorthodox brand of justice he metes out is different. These movies reflect the culture of their era, particularly

²¹⁹ Carlson, 196.

its uneasiness with law enforcement and the use of power. By the late twentieth century, cowboy movies once again featured some of the same cowboy traits of old. From *Dances With Wolves* to *Tombstone* to *Unforgiven*, all of the lead characters display the traits of the traditional moral Western figure. Though these Western figures might have more shades of grey and ambiguity, their common humanity and proclivity for doing the right thing and defending the downtrodden remains the same as it did in Roosevelt's era, leaving the romantic cowboy figure largely intact.

The cowboy image and terminology have also been used by government officials at all levels since the days of Roosevelt. President John F. Kennedy called his domestic policy agenda the New Frontier. Henry Kissinger, secretary of state during the Nixon and Ford administrations, once told a journalist that he liked to act alone because Americans admired that quality. He then used as an example the cowboy riding into a small town, sometimes even without a pistol, "because he doesn't go in for shooting. He acts, that's all: aiming at the right spot at the right time, a Wild West tale, if you like."²²⁰ Kissinger's boss, President Richard Nixon once urged Americans to leave Vietnam only "as a cowboy, with guns blazing, backing out of a saloon."²²¹ These metaphors employed by public officials are evidence that the solitary, resolute cowboy figure has permeated the vernacular of American culture.

In his public life Roosevelt used the cowboy image to his advantage portraying himself as a moral and heroic figure. Political monikers such as the "Cowboy President" and the "Rough Rider" were employed frequently during his presidency. After Roosevelt's death in 1919, the cowboy image that he helped create lived on and was used

²²⁰ Athearn, 268.

²²¹ Ibid.

throughout the twentieth century by public figures such as politicians and celebrities. Most of his successors in the White House did not use the Western image, but some chief executives did for political and public relations purposes. One of the first to do so was Calvin Coolidge, who was a young man when Roosevelt was president. While vacationing in the West, Coolidge often wore massive chaps and a Tom Mix style cowboy hat.²²² He also rode an electrically operated horse at the White House to stay fit.²²³ Some in the public approved of Coolidge's image while others believed it was a publicity stunt. Whatever one thought, it is clear that Coolidge was taking the Roosevelt template to improve his own standing with the American people.

President Lyndon Johnson, a Texan who owned a cattle ranch and wore a Stetson hat, also embraced the symbolism of the cowboy. Historian Melody Webb suggests "his old-fashioned patriotism, unwavering loyalty, belief in people, love for the land, and celebration of hard work came from the frontier."²²⁴ When Johnson assumed the presidency, the ranch became the first Western White House. He used it for a variety of purposes, from meeting with advisors to hosting foreign dignitaries.²²⁵ Most Americans initially embraced Johnson's cowboy persona, but as the war in Vietnam escalated, his popularity plummeted.

Ronald Reagan used the cowboy image more effectively than any other president since Roosevelt. As a former Hollywood actor who had starred in six Western movies, hosted a television program entitled *Death Valley Days*, and enjoyed spending time

²²² The Autry, "Cowboys & Presidents," <http://theautry.org/cowboysandpresidents/presidents.php#>.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Melody Webb, "Lyndon Johnson: The Last Frontier President," *Journal of the West* 34 (April 1995), 73.

²²⁵ The Autry, "Cowboys & Presidents," <http://theautry.org/cowboysandpresidents/presidents.php#>.

riding his horse and chopping wood at his Santa Barbara ranch, he transmitted the romantic cowboy image successfully during his presidency. Capitalizing on his association with playing a cowboy in the movies, Reagan ran successfully for governor of California in 1966. When Reagan was elected president in 1980, cowboy mania swept the country from movies and television to sports and leisure. He portrayed himself as a moral and fearless leader who could stand up to the Soviet Union and console a grieving nation during the Space Shuttle Challenger disaster. Reagan's critics also labeled him as a reckless cowboy who could start a nuclear war. However, the failure of this critical characterization to gain traction with the public demonstrates how resilient the cowboy image had become. As biographer Garry Willis has observed, "Reagan forcefully reinscribed the traditional association between the cowboy and nationalism into America's consciousness."²²⁶

The most recent president to embrace the cowboy image was George W. Bush. Like Johnson, he used his Texas ranch as his Western White House. There he donned his boots and cleared brush on his property. Like Reagan, he dressed and acted the part with his hat, jeans, and bravado. However, his critics maintained he was a fake cowboy. Unlike Roosevelt, whose public perception was that he genuinely tried to help all Americans during his public career, Bush, was seen as superficial by a majority of Americans.

Bonnie Wheeler, a medievalist who teaches at Southern Methodist University, suggested in 2004 while Bush was president, "Our president is neither a knight nor a cowboy. He doesn't believe in taking care of the little guy, nor does he have the restraint

²²⁶ Garry Willis, *Reagan's America* (New York: Penguin, 1988), 96.

or dignity of the cowboy."²²⁷ This disapproval of Bush is the polar opposite of the criticisms that Roosevelt received during his presidency, which came primarily from big business due to TR's progressive philosophy. If the cowboy myth of being a moral, resolute individual willing to protect the weak is the Roosevelt standard, then Bush can be viewed as someone who did not live up to that standard. A resident of Bush's hometown, Midland, Texas remarked, "I'm in Midland lots, and I haven't seen a Midland cowboy yet. Bush and [Dick] Cheney are not cowboys by any stretch of the imagination. Cowboys are silent types, remote but genuine, with serious integrity and caring. They are a bit rough and work hard, and they don't want to call attention to themselves the way George W. Bush kind of does."²²⁸ From Coolidge to Bush, post-Roosevelt presidents have used the romantic cowboy image with varying degrees of success. All, however, are seen through the prism of Roosevelt, who was the only legitimate cowboy to become president. The others used the cowboy to portray a positive image of their overall character. Because the cowboy was seen as an authentic American figure in the twentieth century, each president tried to integrate the Western figure into his own personality. As we continue to appreciate the romantic cowboy in the twenty-first century, public figures will continue to leverage the Western figure as long as the public continues to embrace it.

It has been suggested that the American public cared little that real cowboys might have been thin because of poor diet, celibate because low wages prevented them from marrying, and injured beyond repair and thus unable to perform other types of

²²⁷ Erik Baard, "George W. Bush Ain't No Cowboy," *The Village Voice* (September 21, 2004), <http://www.villagevoice.com/2004-09-21/news/george-w-bush-ain-t-no-cowboy/>. (Accessed on July 2, 2012).

²²⁸ Ibid.

physical labor.²²⁹ This may be true because myths are often embraced precisely because they skirt the truth. Instead they help to create the glamorous or unexplainable. The truth about the real cowboys of the mid-to-late nineteenth century is as complex as other historical subjects. The real cowboys were a mixture of races, creeds, and ages. All craved the one thing that most Americans who came West were looking for: a better life.

Though some cowboys did make a better life for themselves, others did not and would often fall into lawlessness and crime. The majority, however, endured a hard, strenuous existence that yielded few opportunities. Perhaps Roosevelt saw all of this when he lived in the Dakota Bad Lands but chose to ignore it because he saw cowboys collectively as noble and heroic. Since he lived with these men, he may have believed it was his duty to share their story and at the same time help create a new American figure. If that was his intention, he succeeded. Today the cowboy is viewed as the quintessential American – a romantic figure from a mythic past.

²²⁹ Carlson, 206.

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Appendix

Background

The public perception of Theodore Roosevelt was driven to a large extent by print media, the only form of media available at the end of the 1800s and the beginning of the 1900s. A literature search would yield information about his general visibility, the strength of his link with the West or cowboys, and would provide insights into his ability to impact the public perception of the cowboy. Similarly, a search would provide insight into the ability of other key figures -- William Cody, Frederic Remington, Owen Wister, and Frederick Jackson Turner -- to impact public perception of the cowboy over the same period. Finally, it would be possible to gain a sense of the place cowboys held in the public eye and how that changed during the late 1880s and early 1900s.

The searches were focused on two time periods to allow comparison of changes that occurred between the formative years of TR's public life (1879-1891) and the years of his rapid ascent, his presidency, and through his death (1892-1920). The results are defined by the number of discreet documents including editorials, articles, features, advertisements, notices, announcements, obituaries, etc. containing the terms (See below for full list). No attempt was made to establish the number of times the terms themselves appeared. The primary objectives of the analysis were to capture and compare the number of results that would establish 1) the general visibility of each figure, or the prevalence of articles in which he appeared in the press for any reason; 2) the visibility of the term "cowboy," 3) the association of the term "cowboy" with each figure; 3) the visibility of the term "Rough Riders" for any reason; and, 4) association of the term "Rough Riders" with each figure.

Secondary objectives were to gain insights to audiences reached based on the type and location of publications most often associated with each figure, within the limits of the databases. For this analysis, a subset of fourteen newspapers was selected to reflect distinct regions of the country

The goal of this research is also to quantify, as much as possible, the potential for each man to influence public perceptions of the cowboy. Available data do not support the adaptation of a "reach and frequency" analysis used in advertising. It is possible, however, to simply count and compare the number of documents yielded when searching selected databases using specific terms.

Assumptions

An analysis of print media available during the targeted time period will provide insights to the visibility of TR and each of the other men, the level of public exposure or interest

in each and the degree to which each is associated with the term, “cowboy” or related terms.

The selected time periods should reflect the critical years in TR’s public life, the years between 1880 and 1890 (his rise to national attention) and 1891 to 1920 (his rise in politics, his presidency and the years until his death in 1919).

While no single database can provide a complete offering of all issues of all publications available during the targeted time periods, three used in combination offer a sufficiently robust sample to make comparisons.

Objectives

Primary:

- To capture and compare the number of documents in available publications associated with each man in key print publications from 1879 to 1920.
- To capture and compare the number of documents that include each man and the term “cowboy” and related terms in key print publications from 1879 to 1920.
- To gain context by capturing and comparing the number of appearances featuring the word, “cowboy” and related terms from 1879 to 1920

Secondary

- Gain insights to the audiences reached based on the type and location of publications most often associated with each figure, within the limits of the database
- Gain a sense of size of audiences through circulation figures for selected publications, where available
- To observe the association of TR with terms that link him to the West and the image of the cowboy but may not feature the term “cowboy.”

Approach

Searches were conducted using three databases of regional and national publications available from 1879-1920. Each search was conducted for two distinct time periods in order to compare changes that occurred between the formative years of TR’s public life (1879-1891) and the years of his rapid ascent, presidency through his death: (1892-1920).

Search terms were simple and aimed at addressing particular associations:

Search Goal	Search Terms Used	Rationale
General Visibility of TR vs. BB, FR, OW, FJT	“Theodore Roosevelt” “Buffalo Bill” “Frederic Remington” OR “Frederick Remington” “Owen Wister” “Frederick Jackson Turner”	The position and visibility of each man in print influences coverage and their ability to contribute to the image of the cowboy in the culture
General Visibility of “cowboy”	“Cowboy”	The degree of coverage given cowboys indicates level of attention this figure commands as well as the public perception of the cowboy
Association of each figure with the term “cowboy”	Name of figure (see above) AND “cowboy”	By capturing the number of written pieces that combine each man’s name with the term “cowboy” we can observe which is most frequently linked
General Visibility of the term “Rough Riders”	“Rough Riders”	The term “rough riders” was coined before TR’s regiment was formed and, in many articles of the time, was interspersed with the term “cowboy.” By observing the general use of the term “rough riders,” we can gauge the shift in its use before and after TR’s ascent in public life
Association of each figure with the term “rough riders”	Name of figure (see above) AND “rough riders”	By capturing the number of written pieces that combine each man’s name with the term “rough riders,” we can observe which is most frequently linked
General Visibility of term, “ranchman”	“ranchman” NOT “cowboy”	Ranchman typically refers to ranch owners. By capturing the appearance of this term, we gain a sense of how often it was used with or without TR

Search Goal	Search Terms Used	Rationale
Association of TR with term, “ranchman” as opposed to “cowboy”	“Theodore Roosevelt” AND “ranchman” NOT “cowboy”	TR was strongly linked to the West and his work with cattlemen through his experiences and writings on ranching life, which contribute to his credibility and ability to influence the image of the cowboy. By capturing the appearance of “ranchman” only, we also gain insight to his impact on the number of articles about ranching.

Sources:

Print Media Databases

I used three databases that do not appear to overlap and included a wide variety of periodicals and newspapers available throughout the country during the time periods studied. These are listed below along with a link to a description of each database.

To get a sense of how articles/results were distributed geographically, a subset of publications within the America’s Historical Newspaper database was selected to reflect all regions of the country. The publications were selected based on their importance in their markets, location, and the availability of issues in the database.

Note: *The Chatauquan: A Weekly News Magazine* was eliminated from the search of periodicals although it featured many articles by and about Theodore Roosevelt and to a far lesser extent the other figures. Examination of the results showed them to include hundreds of results that did not include Theodore Roosevelt’s name.

Proquest American Periodicals Database.

<http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.csun.edu/americanperiodicals/productfuldescdetail?accountid=7285>

Proquest Historical Newspaper Database, *The New York Times*,

<http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.csun.edu/hnpnewyorktimes?accountid=7285>

America’s Historical Newspapers, http://infoweb.newsbank.com.libproxy.csun.edu/iw-search/we/HistArchive?p_product=EANX&p_action=timeframes&p_theme=ahnp&p_nb_id=H65N58PRMTM0MDE2MjAxOS4yMTcwMjg6MToxMToxMzAuMTY2LjMuNQ&p_clear_search=yes&d_refprod=EANX&

http://infoweb.newsbank.com.libproxy.csun.edu/iw-search/we/HistArchive?p_product=EANX&p_action=timeframes&p_theme=ahnp&p_nb

Arrivals and departures of ships in domestic and foreign ports
 Advertisements
 Includes both display ads and classified ads
 Front Page
 Only items appearing or beginning on page one of an issue
 Maps
 Birth Notices
 Matrimony Notices
 Death Notices
 Cartoons
 Illustrations

 AHN Subset

Publications in AHN Subset

Region	Newspaper	Location	Circulation 1880*	Circulation 1920*
East	Philadelphia Enquirer	Philadelphia, PA	10,000	189,194 (weekly) 350,634 (Sun)
	Trenton State Gazette	Trenton, NJ	2,000 (daily) 7,000 (Sunday)	10,920
South	Macon Telegraph	Macon, GA	NA	20,983 d 18,086 w
	Times-Picayune	New Orleans, LA	3,000 (Times) 10,000 Picayune	76,171 d 93,360 w
Midwest	Daily Inter-Ocean	Chicago, IL	16,000 (daily) 84,000 (weekly)	Gone in 1914
	Kansas City Star (Includes Kansas City Times)	Kansas City, MO	7,000 (daily) 34,560 (weekly)	424,803d 213,753w
Southwest	Dallas Morning News	Dallas, TX	5,000 at founding in 1885	58,185
Northwest	Idaho Statesman	Boise, ID	500 (M, Th, Sat) 1,000 weekly	14,687 d 14,205 w
	Morning Olympian	Olympia, WA	Founded in 1906	1,185
West Coast	Riverside Daily Press	Riverside, CA	NA	4,689
	San Francisco Evening Bulletin	San Francisco, CA	11,741	86,900

Region	Newspaper	Location	Circulation 1880*	Circulation 1920*
	San Diego Union	San Diego, CA	1,055	26,655 (daily) 20,000 Sunday
Territories	Bismarck Tribune	Bismarck, ND	1,440	4,165
	Grand Forks Herald	Grand Forks, ND	NA	14,977d 10,772 w

* Source for Circulation Data: Rowell and N.W. Ayers & Sons American Newspaper Directory, http://www.loc.gov/rr/news/news_research_tools/ayersdirectory.html