

National 4-H Shooting Sports Quiz Bowl Western Heritage Study Resources

These resources are for enrolled 4-H shooting sports members and coaches for their expressed use as study materials in preparation for the National 4-H Shooting Sports Quiz Bowl. They are not to be used to train a person or persons in the use, discharge, or handling of any firearms and archery equipment.

Lesson 1 - Narrative

Introduction to the 4-H Western Heritage Project

Purpose and Goals

The 4-H Western Heritage Project is a combination of 4-H Shooting Sports and a comprehensive study of the American frontier. The purpose of this project is to provide an avenue for 4-H members and adult leaders to experience the lifestyles and cultures of the Old West from the period of 1860 - 1900 through a participatory living history approach to learning.

The shooting portion of this project is arguably the fastest paced, most exciting, and spectator friendly project in 4-H shooting sports. Shooters dressed in Old West garb compete against the clock by firing at steel or cardboard targets at various distances with period firearms such as single action revolvers, lever action rifles, and double barreled shotguns. Scoring is based on accuracy and the time that elapses between the initial buzzer and the last shot. Each missed target is penalized by the addition of five seconds to a competitor's time. During a shoot, 4-H participants travel through a series of stages in a posse (group of shooters) along with an adult range officer. Stages consist of a series of targets set up at distances appropriate for revolvers, rifles, and shotguns. The props of the stage may be as elaborate as a façade of a building, like the front door of the sheriff's office, the window of the church, or just outside the door of the jailhouse, or as simple as engaging targets over a table near a campfire and bedroll.

The historical portion of this project addresses the lack of knowledge many young people have of their own country. Many formal classrooms still rely on the traditional teaching methodologies of history education: lecture and reading the textbook. An abundance of students describe history as boring, irrelevant, and lifeless and increasingly avoid history courses as they advance through school. As a result, few young people learn or enjoy learning American history and, in some measured standards, a full 88% perform below the proficiency level. This is an alarming statistic in a democratic country so dependent on an educated and engaged citizenry.

The participatory living history (PLH) approach to history education contained in the 4-H Western Heritage Project has been shown to increase youth interest in American history while making history fun and relevant. Wearing period correct clothing, firing historic firearms, developing an Old West persona, learning the how things were made in an earlier time, and even the building façades used in a shooting stage all lend to an experience not found in the formal classroom. As some 4-H members have commented, "I feel like I'm there, I'm a part of it". Participatory living history is shown to also increase youth interest in personal family history, create opportunities to visit with family elders, encourage more reading, and open members' eyes to the diversity of the American frontier and the roles of women and minorities. American history is fascinating and true accounts of personal trials, challenges, and triumphs are more thrilling than fiction.

The overall goals of the 4-H Western Heritage Project are as follows:

1. Learning and applying the fundamentals of the safe firearm handling.
2. Place 4-H life-skill development over competition.
3. Provide an enjoyable and action oriented shooting sports activity that will attract and retain 4-H members throughout their teen years.

4-H WESTERN HERITAGE PROJECT INSTRUCTOR MANUAL

4. Create a safe and inclusive environment of learning for all 4-H participants regardless of race, gender, culture, or socio-economic background.
5. Promote a positive image of the 4-H Western Heritage Project, and 4-H in general, to the public at large.
6. Teach in a participatory living history style through the use of historically accurate firearms, clothing, and accessories while participating in the 4-H Western Heritage Project.
7. Preserve and gain an appreciation for the heritage of the American frontier within the time period of 1860-1900.
8. Instill in 4-H members an investigative interest in frontier history leading to personal research and increased knowledge of the Old West, their family heritage, and American history in general.
9. Recognize the accomplishments and importance of both men and women from a diversity of cultures and races that contributed to American frontier history.
10. Promote the 4-H Western Heritage Project and historical study to 4-H programs across the state and country.

Project Requirements

In order to participate in the 4-H Western Heritage Project, 4-H members must meet the following criteria:

1. Nine (9) years of age by October 1st of the current 4-H year - Small bore rifle only (.22 Rimfire). (Turning age 10 between October 1 and September 30 of the current 4-H year).
2. Eleven (11) years of age by October 1st of the current 4-H year - Long Gun and Sidearm (.22 Rimfire rifle, .22 Rimfire pistol, .410 shotgun recommended). (Turning 12 between October 1 and September 30 of the current 4-H year).
3. Have taken Hunters Education or had at least one (1) year of 4-H shooting sports range experience or have taken an equivalent firearms educational course and/or pass the safe firearm assessment test administered by a trained 4-H Western Heritage Project instructor. (see appendix)
4. Demonstrate the ability to safely handle firearms throughout the course of the project in the judgment of the 4-H instructor and fellow 4-H members and parents.
5. Have written permission from a parent or legal guardian to participate in this project in compliance with the Gun Control Act of 1968 and the Youth Handgun Safety Act of 1994. (see appendix)

Divisions

Class divisions for the 4-H Western Heritage Project are as follows:

- Junior - 9-11 Years Old - .22 Rimfire Rifle Only (No Pistols)*
- Intermediate – 11-13 Years Old - .22 Rimfire Rifle, .22 Rimfire Pistols, and Shotgun (.410 bore recommended)*
- Senior Rimfire – 14-19 Years Old – .22 Rimfire Rifle, .22 Rimfire Pistols, any period correct Shotgun
- Senior Central Fire – 14-19 Years Old – Central Fire Rifle, Central Fire Pistols, any period correct Shotgun

*Note: 11 year olds must indicate during registration if shooting Intermediate or Junior. **The choice must comply with your state policy.**

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Individual programs may wish to divide members into black powder cartridge shooters, smokeless powder shooters, percussion (cap and ball) shooters under the guidance of a certified black powder instructor, or other divisions of their choice as long as the general 4-H rules are followed in each case. However, shooters cannot mix central fire and Rimfire firearms in competition.

Spirit of the Game

The 4-H Western Heritage Project is guided by a philosophy referred to as “The Spirit of the Game.” Much like all 4-H events, “The Spirit of the Game” requires that members fully participate in what the project asks. This includes clothing, equipment, and ethical standards identified or implied in the rules. Participants should not look for ways to create an advantage out of what is or is not stated as a rule or shooting procedure. In 4-H, we would call “The Spirit of the Game” nothing more than good sportsmanship. Regardless of the title, a desire to immerse oneself in the project enhances the enjoyment of all. As stated in the Code of the West, members who adhere to high principles don’t need lengthy rulebooks. Reputations last longer than the memory of competitive scores.

Creating Your Alias (Old West Name)

The 4-H Western Heritage Project does not require every member to take on an alias (assumed name), but it does add a unique element to the project. If you choose to create a name to represent a character from the Old West, it must be appropriate to 4-H and repeatable to a wide audience. You can use historic names like Wild Bill or the Sundance Kid or you can use your imagination. Be careful with names that could be considered racially or ethnically offensive. Your 4-H leader, County 4-H Shooting Sports Committee, or County Extension Agent has the final say on the approval or refusal of your alias.

Developing a historical persona is required when a 4-H member is comfortable doing so. Persona creation is detailed in the Youth Activity Guide and is part of the judged interview process when competing in a state or national contest. A 4-H member’s persona should complement their chosen attire and the firearms they would or would not carry. It is important to note that while holsters may be worn to an interview, carrying firearms, holstered or in a case, is not allowed. Posters or photographs of period correct firearms for the persona are acceptable and encouraged. Some states title the interviews as “clothing interviews”, but the judges actually consider both clothing knowledge and persona development in their final scores.

Firearm, Clothing, and Equipment Guidelines

In an attempt to promote participation among all youth and adult volunteer leaders by eliminating financial barriers, the rules relating to acceptable firearms, clothing, and other equipment are not nearly as restrictive as other Western Action Shooting organizations. The use of historically accurate firearms and attire is strongly encouraged, but not at the cost of buying a complete set of period clothing or an antique or reproduction revolver, rifle, and shotgun. For financial and safety reasons, it is best if 4-H clubs provide the firearms for the project using historical guidelines in this manual. As 4-H members progress in this project, their goal should be to accumulate these items a little at a time while learning more about the Old West era through participation and personal research.

Clothing and Equipment

Young men's clothing may consist of jeans, or other cotton, wool, canvas, or buckskin pants of western styling, and a button down long sleeved shirt. Pullover "long john" type shirts with long sleeves are acceptable. Jackets, coats, or dusters of canvas, leather, or denim are permitted as are vests. Ladies clothing can include long pants as above, a skirt, or a dress. Low front tops and bare shoulders are not recommended for ladies for safety reasons. Shorts, T-shirts, tank tops, or ski or sports clothing are not allowed.

Western style boots, either laced or slip-on, are encouraged although hunting or work style boots are acceptable. Tennis shoes and sandals are prohibited. A western style hat including cowboy hats, bowlers, civil war style caps, and sombreros are encouraged. These hats can be made of straw, palm leave, felt, or wool. Otherwise, shooters can participate hatless. The use of baseball caps is not allowed.

Holsters may be worn, but no firearm or any facsimile of a firearm may be carried in the holster on or off the shooting range. Holsters and cartridge belts must be made of leather. Nylon or plastic belts and holsters are not allowed nor is the use of Velcro. Every attempt should be made to use ammo boxes, carry bags, and other equipment that would be typical of the era of 1860-1900, although plastic or nylon equipment is allowed.

Lesson 2 - Narrative

First Shot Fundamentals - Rifle

Firearms, Calibers, and Ammunition

It is recommended that .22s be used for the first few workshops while training 4-H members in safety and technique. Due to cost effectiveness, **please note that counties may choose to use .22 Rimfire rifles and sidearms throughout this project.** For safety, any firearm to be used in the 4-H Western Heritage Project or any shooting sports activity should be checked by a qualified gunsmith before shooting. It is recommended that county 4-H programs purchase all of their guns in the same caliber (i.e. two .45 revolvers and a .45 rifle). This eliminates the chance of placing the wrong caliber cartridge in a gun and helps ensure that the firearms used are in good working order.

Rifles – Any lever action, pump action, or single shot rifle chambered in a handgun cartridge is allowed. Some common cartridges are listed below. Bolt action and semiautomatic rifles are not allowed. While it is permitted to use firearms that have had “action jobs” for smoother operation, “short stroke” modifications on lever action rifles are prohibited. This rule also applies to rifles with short stroke actions installed in the factory which are prohibited. Rifles are required to operate identically to those manufactured between 1860 and 1900. Acceptable rifle sights are aperture (peep) or open sighted. No scopes are allowed.

For historical purposes, reproductions of the 1860 Henry Rifle, Winchester models 1866, 1873, and 1892, Spencer Rifles, Marlin Models 1894 and 1895, and Colt Lighting Models (pump action) are recommended. Originals in safe operating condition are certainly acceptable. Reproductions of these models are available and easily located through several distributors in the U.S. and from many local gun shops.

Calibers and Ammunition – Most handgun calibers, from .22 Rimfire to .45 Colt, capable of firing a lead or lead alloy bullet at velocities under 1000 feet per second for revolvers and 1300 feet per second for rifles are permitted. These velocities replicate the black powder rounds used from 1860-1900. **The 4-H shooting sports program does not allow the use of reloaded ammunition at any national event and does not recommend reloaded ammunition at any level. It is highly recommended that only factory loaded ammunition be used.** Factory loaded ammunition marketed as “cowboy ammunition” is available in either smokeless or black powder and will meet the velocity requirements stated above. Factory reloaded (used brass) ammunition is considered a factory load. This service is offered by some ammunition manufacturers and can be about half the cost of new factory loads.

Typical cartridges of the cowboy era include .22 Rimfire, .32-20 WCF, .32 S&W Short, .32 S&W Long, .38 Short Colt, .38 Long Colt, .38-40 WCF, .44-40 WCF, .44 S&W American, .44 S&W Russian, .45 Colt, and the .45 S&W. Modern calibers such as the .357 magnum, .38 Special, and .44 magnum may be used if factory loaded to acceptable velocities and lead bullets. The use of .22 Rimfire ammunition throughout the project is by far the most economical option when compared to centerfire cartridges.

All bullets must be made of lead or soft cast lead alloy. Because of a high chance of ricochet and the damage inflicted on steel targets, no bullets made of copper, copper jacketed, or similar makeup are allowed.

Rifle loading will be done in the following sequence:

With the rifle lying on the table with the action open and empty, the shooter will close the lever of the rifle and carefully lay the hammer down on the empty chamber. At this point the rifle can be loaded through the loading gate with the appropriate number of rounds. For .22 Rimfire rifles, lay the firearm on the table with the action open and empty and the muzzle in a safe direction. Close the lever of the rifle and carefully lay the hammer down on the empty chamber. Unscrew the magazine tube rod and remove it from the magazine. Ten rounds can then be fed through the cartridge shaped opening. Once all rounds are in the magazine, replace the tube rod and secure the screw end. The use of a ten round loading block is helpful to ensure that the correct number of rounds are loaded. The rifle is then staged with the chamber remaining empty.

Lesson 3 - Narrative

First Shot Fundamentals - Pistols

Firearms, Calibers, and Ammunition

Sidearms – Any revolver in safe operating condition, including double action revolvers capable of performing as single actions, in a traditional handgun chambering is allowed (see caliber and ammunition section in rifle). Semiautomatic pistols are not allowed. Open sights are required on all revolvers. No telescopic scopes, laser or other types of electronic sight is allowed. Historic reproductions of the Colt Conversion Models (cap and ball firearms modified to fire metallic cartridges), Colt 1872 Open Top Models, 1873 Colt Single Action Army styles, Colt Bisley, 1875 Remington, Smith and Wesson American, and the Smith and Wesson Russian are recommended. Again, originals are welcome if safe and reproductions of these models are available and readily located through several distributors in the U.S. and from many local gun shops.

Important Notice to 4-H Leaders: In compliance with the Gun Control Act of 1968 and the Youth Handgun Safety Act of 1994, all 4-H members under the age of 18 must provide a signed permission form from their parent or legal guardian in order to handle and fire a sidearm. An example of this form is provided in the appendix of this document. Remember that only 4-H trained instructors can serve as supervisors in 4-H shooting sports.

Typical cartridges of the cowboy era include .22 Rimfire, .32-20 WCF, .32 S&W Short, .32 S&W Long, .38 Short Colt, .38 Long Colt, .38-40 WCF, .44-40 WCF, .44 S&W American, .44 S&W Russian, .45 Colt, and the .45 S&W. Modern calibers such as the .357 magnum, .38 Special, and .44 magnum may be used if factory loaded to acceptable velocities and lead bullets. The use of .22 Rimfire ammunition throughout the project is by far the most economical option when compared to centerfire cartridges.

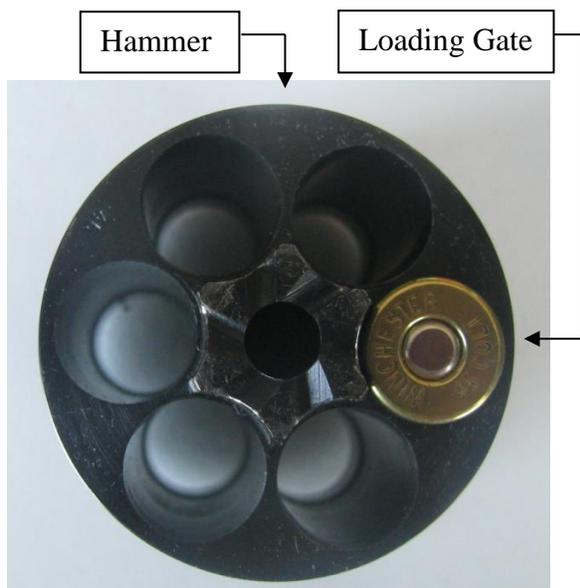
Black Powder Firearms - Black powder “cap and ball” percussion revolvers are acceptable, but only under the supervision of an instructor trained in the 4-H Muzzle Loading discipline as well as the 4-H Western Heritage Project discipline.

Cap and ball percussion revolver shooters may use round balls or conical bullets of a make similar to those of the cowboy era. No jacketed sabots are allowed.

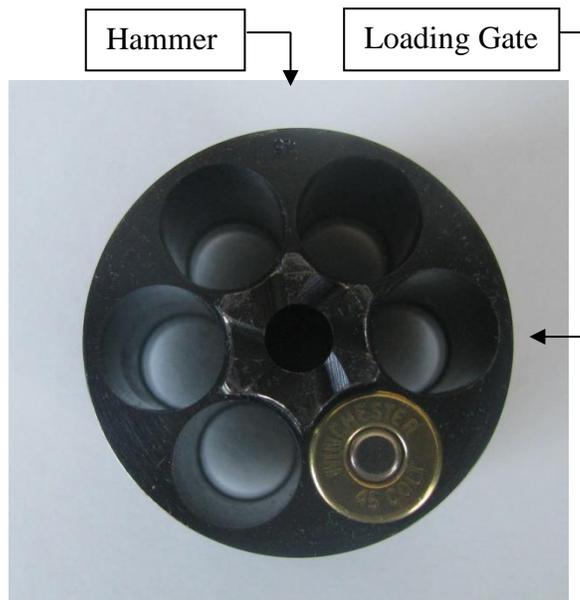
Revolvers are always loaded with the hammer down on an empty chamber. To accomplish this, the shooter will follow the following loading sequence:

With revolver lying on the loading table, the shooter will open the loading gate of the revolver and then place the hammer at the half cock position. The shooter will then load one round in the nearest chamber, then rotate the cylinder past the next chamber leaving it empty, and then load a round in the next 4 chambers. Once the last round is loaded, the shooter will not move the cylinder. Next the shooter will pull the hammer all the way back, hold it with their thumb, pull the trigger to release the hammer, and then, with their thumb, place the hammer all the way down. This procedure will ensure that the hammer is resting on the empty chamber that was skipped during the loading process. It also provides any empty chamber for the hammer to fall on if it slips off the thumb of the shooter. The loading table supervisor will make certain this procedure is done correctly before the shooter is allowed to begin the stage.

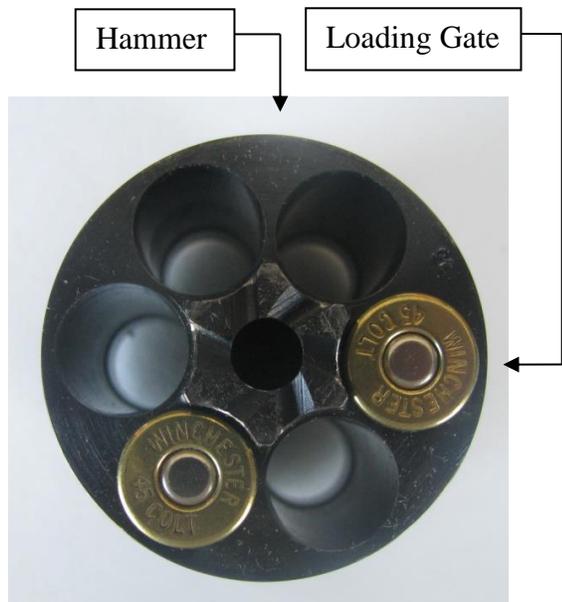
See Diagrams Below



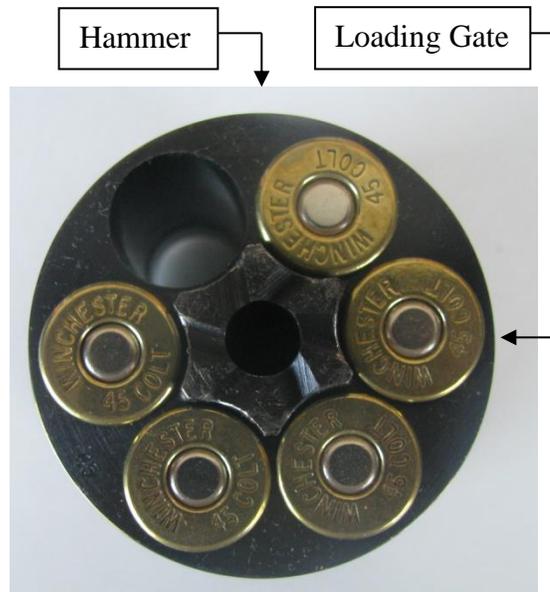
Load One



Skip One

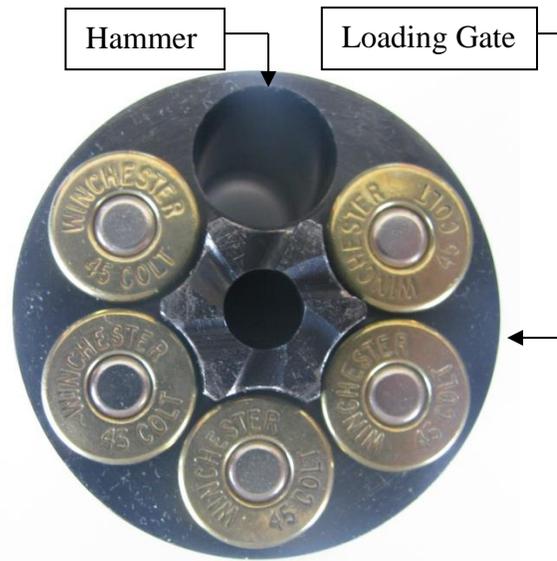


Continue Loading with
Four More Rounds



Don't Move Cylinder
After 5th Round is Loaded

Loading Sequence Continued Next Page



Cock Hammer and Let Down Easy on Empty Chamber

Confirmation that the hammer of a revolver is laying on an empty chamber is easily accomplished by visually inspecting the back of the cylinder from the side of the gun. A quick glance will reveal whether or not a cartridge case is under the hammer. Remember that the muzzle must remain pointed down range at all times.

When using a .22 revolver with a recessed chamber it is often difficult for the loading table supervisor to see the position of the empty chamber. Designating the first chamber loaded by painting a white (or orange) line on the cylinder, or marking it in some way, is **required** and greatly assists the loading table supervisor in ensuring a properly loaded .22 revolver. Take particular care with .22 revolvers that have more than six chambers.

Lesson 4 - Narrative

First Shot Fundamentals - Shotguns

Firearms, Gauges, and Ammunition

Shotguns – Any shotgun used in the 4-H Western Heritage Project must be in safe operating condition. Break open (single barrel or double barrel) shotguns without the use of automatic ejectors are allowed. Period correct lever action and pump actions shotguns may also be used, but cannot be loaded with any more than two shells at a time. Bolt action or semiautomatic shotguns are not allowed. Due to chamber irregularities and the high pressure generated by smokeless powder, it is not recommended to use modern ammunition in antique shotguns. Reproductions of the Colt 1878 Exposed Hammer Side by Side/Double Barrel Shotgun, the Colt 1883 Internal Hammer Side by Side/Double Barrel Shotgun, the Winchester 1887 Lever Action Shotgun, and the Winchester 1897 Pump Action Shotgun are recommended. With the popularity of Western Action Shooting, there are several sources on the market for these firearms.

Acceptable shotgun gauges include 12, 16, 20, 28 and .410 bore with #7 ½ shot or smaller pellet size. Only 2 ½ inch .410 bore shotshells are allowed. Three inch .410 bore shotshells are prohibited. Shotgun rounds must be low velocity and loaded with lead shot only with pellet size no larger than #7 ½. Low velocity, light shotgun loads are more than sufficient to knock down shotgun targets. The recoil generated by heavy shotgun loads will needlessly punish the shoulder of young shooters, cause target damage, and increase the risk of ricochet.

Lesson 8 - Narrative Setting Up The Stage

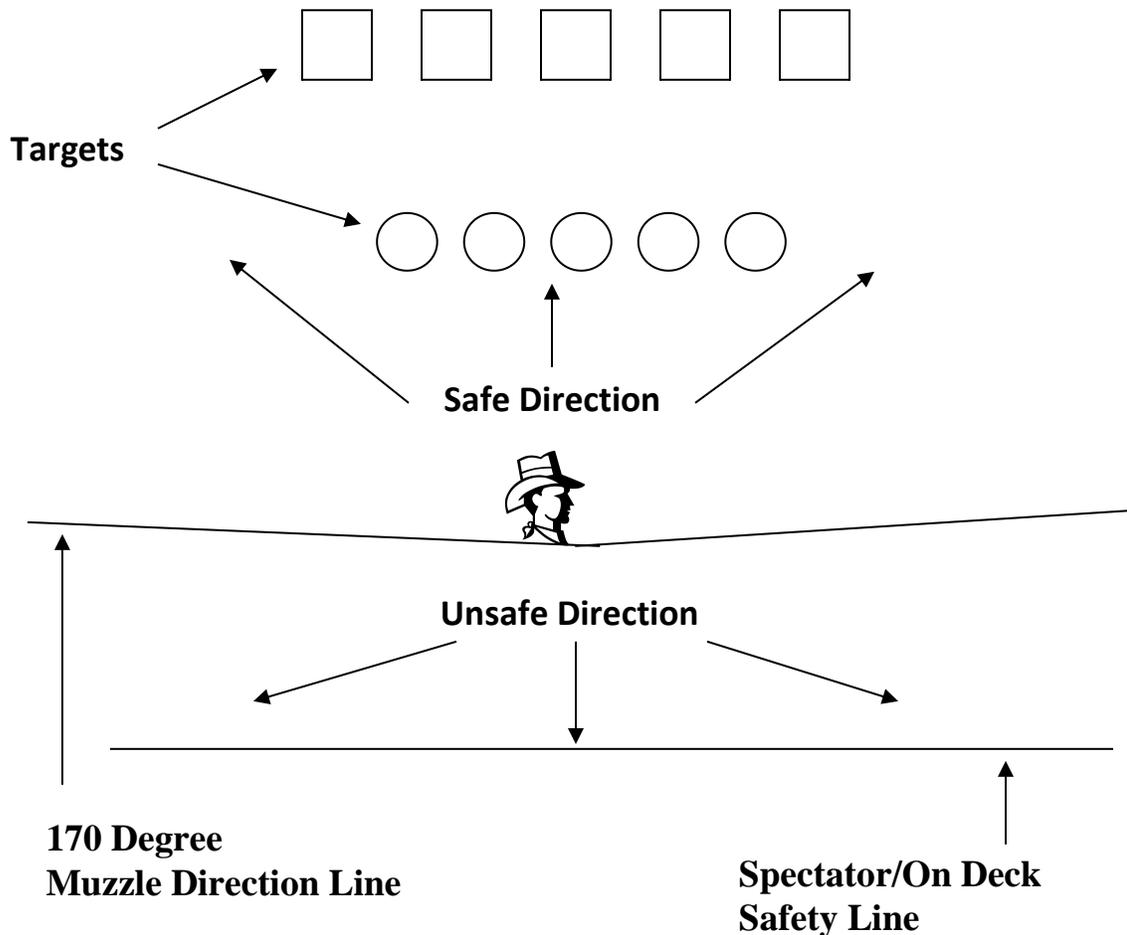
4-H Western Heritage Shooting is intended to be a safe and enjoyable learning experience. It is not a precision shooting competition. For this reason, large targets at reasonable distances are used to facilitate success. Small targets and long distances can frustrate and discourage newer shooters. Everyone wants to hit their targets. Shooters who accumulate too many misses begin to perceive the targets as too difficult to hit. Often times discouraged youth will drop out of the project due to a feeling of failure or embarrassment. Don't take the fun out of the 4-H Western Heritage Project. It only defeats the purpose.

No target in the 4-H program will be in the human form or readily perceived as a human form. Metal, cardboard, or paper targets at least 16 inches by 16 inches should be used. Reactive targets such as falling plates can enhance shooter feedback and spectator appeal. There are no "official" rules, but the following distance guidelines may help you get started:

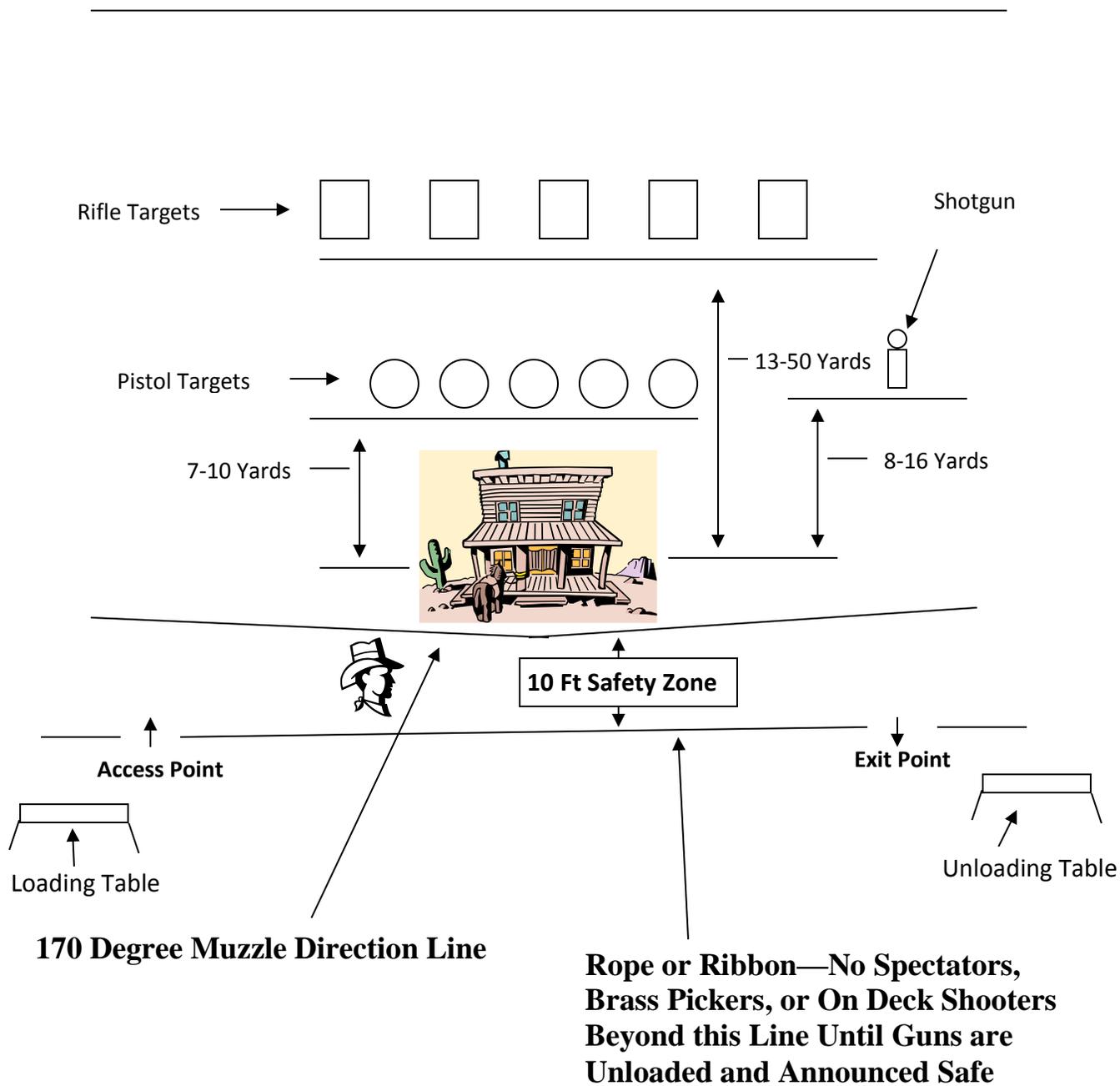
Revolver Targets – 7 to 10 yards

Shotgun Targets – 8 to 16 yards

Rifle Targets – 13 to 50 yards



Typical Target Placement



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Personnel

It is recommended that each stage be under the supervision of four (4) non-shooters which must include at least one 4-H trained adult. Their roles are Range Officer/Timer, Loading Area Supervisor, Unloading Area Supervisor, and Hit and Miss Recorder. For the sake of time, it is appropriate for the other members of the posse at the stage to pick up empty brass after the shooter has completed the stage, the firearms are made safe, and the Range Officer instructs them to do so.

Role of the Range Officer

The role of the Range Officer is to safely assist the shooter through the course of fire. Advising proper procedure and constraining the shooter from unsafe acts is expected when appropriate to minimize procedural and safety penalties whenever possible. It is also the responsibility of the Range Officer to count the rounds expended by the shooter. If the shooter does not empty their firearm (usually 5 shots in each revolver and 10 in the rifle) the range officer will order the shooter to fire their remaining rounds down range. This eliminates a gun with live rounds being carried to the unloading table. Often times, the Range Office takes on the responsibility of carrying the timer as he/she shadows the 4-H shooter. The Range Officer serving as the Timer is the most practical way to run a stage.

It is expected that the Range Officer will be the responsible party for observing and resolving all safety related matters occurring in the loading, unloading, and firing line areas. However, any shooter who observes a safety infraction not seen by the Range Officer(s) should call the infraction to the Range Officer's attention, at which time the matter will be resolved.

Role of the Loading Table Supervisor

The Loading Table Supervisor's role is to make certain that the revolvers are loaded with the appropriate number of rounds (usually 5) and that the hammer is resting on an empty chamber before the revolvers are staged and that the rifle magazine is also loaded appropriately with the hammer resting on an empty chamber. Junior rifles and Intermediate pistols are loaded by the Loading Table Supervisor. The Loading Table Supervisor also makes certain that the caliber correct ammunition is loaded into each firearm. Using a single caliber throughout the project great reduces this risk. It is the responsibility of the Loading Table Supervisor that all muzzles remain pointed in a safe direction throughout the loading process.

Role of the Unloading Table Supervisor

The Unloading Table Supervisor's role is to require the shooter to safely make safe each firearm while keeping the muzzles pointed in a safe direction. This includes observing the shooter work the action of a rifle and inspecting the chamber to be sure it is empty, asking the shooter to unload the revolvers and spin the cylinders to be certain the revolver is empty, and similarly inspecting the chamber or chambers of the shotgun. If a loaded round makes its way to the unloading table, the Unloading Table Supervisor is required to notify the Range Officer immediately. It is the shooter's and Range Officer's responsibility to make certain that all loaded rounds are expended during the stage. Once each firearm is declared safe by the Unloading Table Supervisor, the firearms may be safely carried back to the loading table or other designated area with the muzzles always pointed in a safe direction.

Loading/Unloading

All loading and unloading shall be conducted only in the designated areas such as the loading or unloading table and only when the designated area is manned by a 4-H leader. Follow the same procedures as detailed in First Shot Fundamentals.

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Senior shooters will load, stage, and unload his/her own firearms while under supervision, except for those physically challenged or inexperienced who may request assistance. Junior rifle and Intermediate pistols will be loaded by the loading table supervisor. Any misloaded firearm by the loading table supervisor will constitute a reshoot.

When shooters or adult leaders are carrying firearms to the loading or unloading table, rifle muzzles must be held in a vertical position with muzzles above the head. Revolvers must be carried by grasping around the cylinder and pointing the muzzle in a safe direction. Revolvers may not be carried by the grip or with a finger in the trigger guard.

Staging the Firearms

At no time while carrying firearms, including while staging, are fingers allowed in the trigger guard unless the shooter is on the firing line in the act of shooting. Shooters failing to observe this rule may be disqualified from competition.

All staged guns shall have their barrels pointed safely down range. All long guns staged horizontally shall be staged lying flat. If staged vertically, all long guns must be placed in a rack with a barrel notch to eliminate any chance of the gun falling over. To save time, the range officer may stage a firearm, but the shooter is allowed to reposition the firearm.

Rifles may be staged down range from the shooter with the magazine loaded, action closed, hammer down, and chamber empty.

Guns are never staged with their muzzles on the ground.

Revolvers must be staged on a flat, skid resistant surface at least 9 inches wide and 1 foot long such as a window sill or table. The skid resistant surface may be buckskin, a wool blanket, or other traditional style item. In the absence of this, carpet samples may be used.

Shotguns are always staged open with magazine and chambers empty and are loaded on the clock unless the stage begins with the shotgun in the shooter's hands. (Muzzle loading shotguns may be charged but not capped.) All empty shells must be ejected before grounding/restaging the firearm.

Shotguns with exposed hammers will be staged with hammers down, actions open and empty, and safeties on if so equipped. All other shotguns, including internal hammered double barreled, will be staged with actions open and empty with safeties on. Shooters will load shotguns when preparing to fire, close the breach, and then cock the hammers or disengage the safety.

All firearms will be staged with the trigger over a surface when staged horizontal. Triggers resting off the surface are prohibited. The 4-H shooter is not allowed to carry firearms from place to place during a stage or have pistol in their holster. This rule will prevent mishaps that may occur when a revolver is drawn from the holster or while re-holstering the revolver. No more than two rounds may be loaded into shotguns at any time. (Applies to pump or lever action shotguns)

Dry firing is never allowed and results in a stage disqualification. Dry firing is defined as the act of cocking the hammer or working the action and pulling the trigger as if to cause the gun to fire normally.

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No one other than the shooter and Range Officer are allowed in the 10 foot wide Safety Zone directly behind the firing line once the shooter is prepared to begin. If at a range with permanent loading tables in the safety zone, the Loading Table Supervisor is required to move behind the safety zone line as soon as their job is done and the guns are staged. The Unloading Table Inspector may enter the safety zone at the instruction of the Range Officer when the stage is completed. If the range is bermed on both sides of the stage and the loading and unloading tables can be positioned behind the safety zone and separated from the audience, loading and unloading may be done while a shooter is actively engaging a stage. This facilitates a faster flow of shooters through the stage, but is dictated by the layout of the shooting range.

Shooting the Stage

If no starting position is given the shooter shall stand fully erect with firearms staged, hands at the side not touching any firearm. If beginning the scenario with the shotgun, shooters may not start with ammunition in hand. The shotgun will be loaded from a bucket, a box of ammo, or a loading block placed at the shotgun's location in the scenario or ammunition may be positioned on a table or flat surface by the shooter. No ammunition is carried on the shooters person.

Changing location with a firearm during a stage, loaded or unloaded, is prohibited at all times. There is absolutely no running or walking with a loaded or unloaded firearm during the live shooting phase of the stage. Shooting position adjustment is permitted. All shooting with a particular firearm must be completed and the firearm re-staged before the competitor moves to the next part of the stage. Once the firearm is cocked, one foot must remain in place on the ground until the firearm is made safe. Participating 4-H members may not change location during a stage while in possession of any firearm.

Revolvers will be shot with a two-handed grip only with neither hand in front of the cylinder. This grip allows a shooter to cock the revolver with their weak hand wrapped around their strong hand which, in turn, is holding the gun. Unlike a one-handed grip style, the two-hand grip style does not require the hand to be opened, the thumb on the strong hand moved to cock the hammer, and the grip weakened from shot to shot. Using the two-handed grip greatly reduces the chance that the gun might slip and pivot the barrel in an unsafe direction. Obviously the two-handed grip rule does not allow 4-H shooters, under any circumstance, to fire two revolvers at the same time. A shooter shall not cock any pistol until the firearm is pointed safely down range and is actively engaged in shooting a stage. De-cocking a revolver, rifle, or external hammer shotgun may **not** be done with a live round under the hammer. De-cocking may not be done to avoid a penalty if cocked at the wrong time or position. The penalty for de-cocking is a Stage Disqualification.

Revolvers are to be re-staged with hammer down on a spent case or empty chamber at the conclusion of the shooting string. A shooting string is defined as shots from one type of firearm prior to the next type of firearm being engaged.

Long guns will be re-staged with the action open and empty with the barrel(s) pointed safely down range.

Once a pistol is cocked, the round under the hammer must be expended in order for it to be returned to a safe condition except in the case of a cease fire. Once a rifle is cocked, either the round under the hammer must be expended or the action opened in order for the rifle to be returned to a safe condition. No cocked or loaded firearm is allowed to leave the shooters hand except for a malfunction. This also means from one hand to the other. Shotgun shells may be removed, if necessary, without penalty in order to return the firearm to a safe condition.

4-H WESTERN HERITAGE PROJECT INSTRUCTOR MANUAL

All knockdown shotgun targets must be reengaged until down.

All knockdown targets (shotgun, rifle, or revolver) must fall over to be considered a hit. Special consideration is allowed for 4-H members using .22 caliber ammunition at the discretion of the range officer/project leaders.

Ammunition dropped by a shooter in the course of reloading any firearm (most likely a shotgun) during a stage or “ejected” from any firearm is considered “dead” and may not be recovered until the shooter completes the course of fire. The round must be replaced from the source as required by stage description. If the round is never fired, such as ejected from a rifle, it is counted as a missed shot.

There is no breaking of the 170 degree safety plane with the muzzle direction of any firearm at any time during the stage.

A dropped loaded or unloaded firearm ends the stage for a shooter as a stage disqualification or a match disqualification at the discretion of the range officer and/or the project leaders. The responsibility of recovering a firearm that falls on the ground lies with the adult range officer/timer or an adult posse leader only. This individual will recover the gun, examine it, clear it, and take it to the unloading table.

If a competitor has a firearm malfunction that cannot be cleared on the line, the shooter may not leave the berm/stage until the firearm has been cleared at the unloading table or if instructed by the range officer.

Refusal to follow the range officer’s direction regarding safety or procedural rules will be grounds for expulsion from the 4-H Western Heritage Project.

Cease Fire Procedure

Upon hearing the command "cease fire," or being made aware of other danger signals, the shooter will immediately cease firing and keep their firearm pointed down range with the muzzle in a downward position. On open action or a hammer down on a spent case is considered safe allowing the range officer or another adult to assist.

If the hammer is in the cocked position when a cease fire is called, the lever of the rifle must be opened or the action of a shotgun must be opened. If a revolver is cocked when the “cease fire” is called the shooter will keep their finger out of the trigger guard, keep the muzzle in a safe direction, and allow the Range Officer to assist them by placing his or her thumb between the hammer and the frame and taking the pistol to the unloading table.

When Shooting is Completed

Each shooter is required to retrieve his or her firearms with the help of the adult 4-H leader and go directly to a manned unloading table after the stage is completed. The Unloading Officer or Range Officer MUST inspect all firearms before they can be declared safe.

The range officer may invite helpers in the Safety Zone if muzzle direction allows. If muzzle are directed downrange, brass pickers and target setters must wait until the range is safe.

All rifles and pump or lever action shotguns must have their action cycled for the inspecting official. Shotguns may remain open and empty at the staging location once inspected by the

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range officer, but only if the next shooter is using the same shotgun. Pistols unloaded through the loading gate and the cylinder turned at least twice while visually inspected by the unloading table supervisor. Once each chamber is confirmed empty, the loading gate remains open the the hammer at half-cock.

All firearms can be moved, under supervision, to the loading table if used by the next shooter or cased if not used by the next shooter.

Scoring and Timing

4-H Western Heritage Shooting is a timed event and is scored in seconds beginning at the sound of the first beep from the range officer's hand-held timer and ending at the sound of the last shot. A five (5) second penalty is added to the shooter's time for each missed shot during any given stage. A ten (10) second penalty is added for unintentional mistakes termed "procedurals" and minor safety violations. The recorded elapsed time, plus penalties, of each stage are added together for a final score. Final scores are used to rank competitors from the quickest time to the longest time.

Misses – a miss is defined as the failure of the shooter to strike the intended target with a bullet or pellet from the appropriate type of firearm or not knocking over a knockdown target. Examples of this would be simply missing a rifle target while engaging with a rifle or failing to hit a knockdown target with enough force to knock it down. (At times, .22s may not have enough force to knock down some knockdown targets. Special considerations are allowed). A missed shotgun knockdown target must be reengaged until down. There is no miss penalty if a shotgun target remains standing. The penalty is the time required to reload the shotgun and reengage the missed target. Each miss results in a five (5) second penalty.

Procedural Penalty – a procedural is a mistake that occurs when a competitor fails to complete the stage the way it was designed. Examples of procedurals would include firing at a pistol target with a rifle, not following the course pattern as the range officer described (firing a sweep in an improper sequence), or failure to complete any portion of the stage. Procedurals result in a ten (10) second penalty and only one (1) can be assessed per stage.

Failure to place guns or ammunition at the designated position(s) is the fault of the competitor and scored as a procedural unless the competitor is able to correct the situation, unassisted, before the timer starts. Once the timer starts, no guns can be re-staged. Remember, the 4-H program does not allow members to change locations with a firearm in hand.

Minor Safety Violation – A safety violation is considered minor when the incident does not put anyone in direct or immediate danger. Examples of minor safety violations include the failure to leave a rifle action open at the end of its use during a stage, the failure to restage a sidearm at the end of a shooting string, or a live round in a gun discovered at the unloading table. Minor Safety Violations result in a ten (10) second penalty per occurrence at each stage. A Range Officer may issue a warning in the place of a 10 second penalty at their discretion as long as this decision is consistent.

Major Safety Violation – A safety violation is considered major when the incident endangers any person at the event. Major Safety Violations include an accidental discharge that impacts anywhere other than downrange, breaking the 170 degree safety rule, allowing the muzzle of the firearm to sweep anyone in the audience or on the range, dropping a gun, or any other occurrence that has the potential for personal injury. The penalty for a Major Safety Violation is disqualification from the stage or match at the discretion of the 4-H range officer present at that

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stage. With proper training and practice, major safety violations will be rare or nonexistent in the 4-H Western Heritage Project. **It is the responsibility of the adult range officer to shadow the 4-H member during the course of fire in order to be in the physical position to prevent any safety violations.**

Intentional Procedural – An Intentional Procedural occurs when a competitor purposely or intentionally disregards the stage instructions in order to obtain a competitive advantage. This may occur when a competitor feels they could take a penalty and still shoot a faster time than if they followed the proper procedure. This is considered a violation of the Spirit of the Game and 30 seconds is added to a competitor's time in addition to other penalties.

Appeals – If the competitor believes a ruling is in error, the 4-H member alone may politely appeal the decision to the group of trained 4-H shooting sports leaders present. Appeals must be made before the posse leaves the stage. The group's decision will be based solely on the rules pertaining to the safety violation and is final regardless of the size of the group.

Reshoots - Reshoots may be awarded for ammunition or firearm malfunctions if the problem is out of the control of the shooter. This rule is in place because most 4-H programs share firearms and ammunition among many shooters. Therefore, equipment becomes extremely fouled and cartridges are often provided to the shooter. If there is a range failure (failure of props, timer, or a loading table supervisor or the range officer's mistake) beyond the competitor's control, a reshoot may also be granted. On a reshoot, the competitor starts over clean, carrying only accrued safety and procedural penalties forward.

Rules of the Range

Range Safety Rules and Regulations (Adapted from the National Congress of Old West Shootists and the Single Action Shooting Society)

General Safety Rules

All participants must attend a safety meeting before shooting in any event.

Treat and respect every firearm as if it were loaded.

Always keep the muzzle of any firearm pointed in a safe direction.

All firearms will be placed on the loading table under supervision of a 4-H leader. This includes both club guns and privately owned firearms. No 4-H member or spectator will be allowed to wear firearms.

No loaded firearms except at the firing line or loading table.

All long guns will have actions open at all times except on the firing line or when in a case.

No fanning or twirling a firearm at any time.

No fast draw competition. No quick-draw at any time.

Shooters are responsible for the safe condition of their firearms. County 4-H Western Heritage Project leaders who have a concern, or are alerted to a concern by others present, may request to inspect any firearm at any time. If the firearm is considered unsafe by the 4-H range officer

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and/or a committee of 4-H Western Heritage Project leaders, it may not be used in the project until repairs are made. This decision is final.

Eye and ear protection is required for all competitors and spectators. Safety glasses with side shields are recommended. Ear muff-style hearing protectors are allowed, as are modern-designed shooting glasses.

No alcohol is allowed. No illegal controlled substances at any time. No smoking at any time.

Interpersonal Conflicts WILL NOT be tolerated. Good sportsmanship is expected at all times.

Remember to think safety first and always! Shooters and spectators are encouraged to speak up if they witness anyone handling a firearm improperly, but they must also remain courteous. If someone points out that a shooter is handling a firearm carelessly, the shooter should be grateful, not upset. It's better to be corrected than have someone get hurt.

Remember the Spirit of the Game!

One could argue that there is no other name more associated with the Old West than Colt. Colt's revolvers became so common that the title "Colt" was often applied to any revolver regardless of maker. Even though Samuel Colt would not live to see the perfection of his invention, his legend would continue to grow well after his death.



Samuel Colt Illustration courtesy www.famousamericans.net

Born in Hartford, Connecticut in 1814, Samuel Colt showed an interest in firearms, gunpowder, and invention at a very early age. When just seven years old, the young boy was found with a disassembled pistol and in the act of putting it back together. Mechanical devices fascinated him.

At age 15, Sam Colt had made good use of the tools in his father's textile mill to build a homemade electrical battery.

The battery was only a means to an end - he used it to spark the ignition of an underwater explosive in a neighboring lake. Seldom afraid to show off, Samuel had invited a crowd of spectators who were soon covered in flying mud. Most of them did not see any humor in the experience. But despite the embarrassing start, submerged explosives would play a limited, although important, part in Colt's future.

In 1830, when Samuel was 16, his father encouraged him to learn the shipping trades and placed him in service on the brig Corvo sailing from Boston to Calcutta, India. (This was after a

failed stay at a boarding school where Sam nearly burned down a building while conducting one of his experiments). It was during his time at sea that Colt is said to have first envisioned the idea for a firearm with a revolving cylinder. He carefully noted the workings of a winch-like mechanism on the ship called a windlass which was used to drop and raise heavy objects. It operated by wrapping a rope or chain around itself when turned and its position was held in place by a ratcheting arm or pawl. Inspired by this mechanical example, Samuel Colt carved a wooden model of his first revolving firearm.

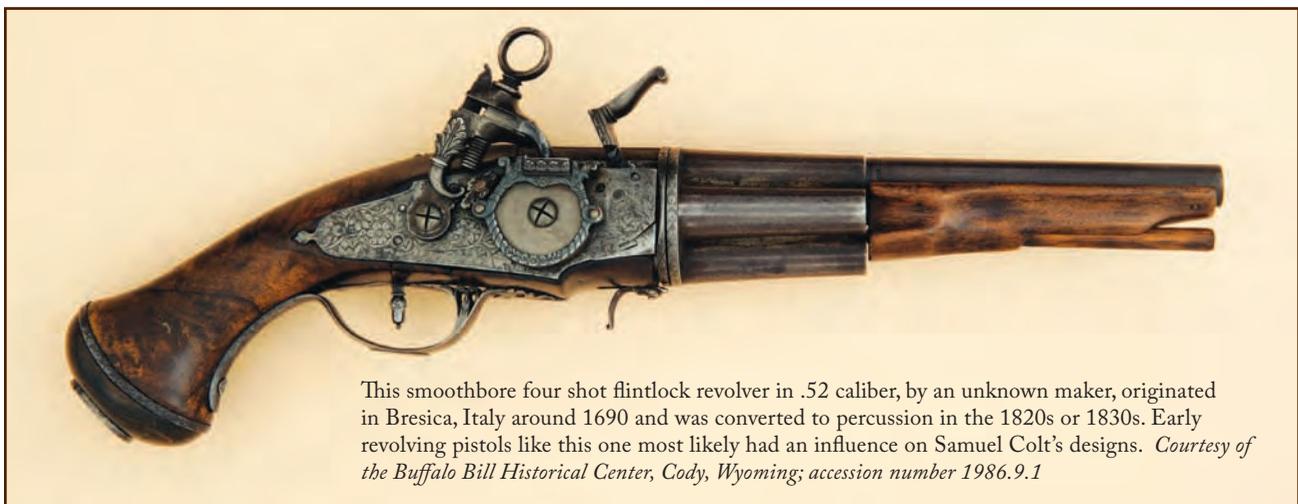
The Paterson Revolver

Once back on native soil, Samuel gathered the capital necessary to finance the production of his new invention. He also quickly began working on his first prototypes. They were anything but perfect. Some even blew to pieces when fired. But by age 18, the persistent Colt had been granted an intent to patent which protected his inventive ideas until a working model was developed. In 1835, Colt secured patents in England and France where he suspected copies would most likely be built. His first true patent in the United States was granted in 1836. Samuel Colt would have a complete monopoly on revolving firearms for the next 21 years.



Photo courtesy of Colt's Manufacturing Co., LLC.

There is little doubt that Colt was a mechanical genius, but his inventions were not as new and unique as he would have wanted his prospective



This smoothbore four shot flintlock revolver in .52 caliber, by an unknown maker, originated in Bresica, Italy around 1690 and was converted to percussion in the 1820s or 1830s. Early revolving pistols like this one most likely had an influence on Samuel Colt's designs. Courtesy of the Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, Wyoming; accession number 1986.9.1



REVOLVER OR PISTOL:

Which is it?

Revolvers can be defined as a firearm with a revolving cylinder that allows the shooter several shots before the need to reload.

For centuries, the word pistol was used to describe a handgun. Pistols were primarily single barrel muzzle loaders that had to be reloaded after each shot. Today, semi-automatic handguns are properly included in the pistol category due to their lack of a revolving cylinder.

But because “pistol” was so much a part of the language, many people refer to a revolver, or any handgun, as a pistol. The label “revolver” is actually a relatively new term. Colt did call his guns “Colt’s Revolving Cylinder Firearms”, but the Paterson was commonly referred to as a pistol — even by Colt.

When referring to the Old West era, referring to a revolver as a pistol is actually a historically correct misnomer.



When it comes to Old West guns, the Winchester name is certainly on the same footing as Colt. Winchester has been credited as producing “The Gun that Won the West”; or, as some would qualify, at least the rifle that won the West. But there is a stark contrast between the two most famous names



Oliver Fisher Winchester
Photo courtesy of wikipedia.com

in Old West firearm manufacture. Samuel Colt was an inventor and promoted his own products, while Oliver Fisher Winchester was a businessman whose engineering advancements originated from the inventive genius of those in his employ.

Born in Boston, Massachusetts on November 30, 1810, Oliver Winchester

was raised on a farm and gained a limited education. After apprenticing as a carpenter, Winchester became a master builder in Baltimore by the age of 20. At 23, he left the building trades and opened a men’s store in Maryland. He would then move on in 1848 to New Haven, Connecticut to become one of the first to mass produce factory made shirts. This business would grow into one of the largest in the country and Winchester’s industrial know-how would serve him well in the future.

With an eye for opportunity, Winchester took an interest in the fledgling Volcanic Repeating Arms

Company. Within a few years the Winchester name would become synonymous with lever action repeating firearms.

The Winding Road to the Development of the Lever Action Rifle

Like so many great inventions, the lever action rifle was the result of centuries of mechanical refinements and advances in technology. Lever action wheel lock guns are known to have been crafted as early as the 1600s. These initial attempts housed seven or more rounds of loose balls and powder in the stock. The trigger guard served as the lever and the forward and back motion would open the breech, insert a fresh ball, powder the charge, prime the pan, and wind the wheel. While inventive, the mechanism proved to be too delicate to be durable, too complicated to be practical, and too expensive to produce. Several similar examples dating from the 1600s to the 1700s can be found in European museums.

On American shores, inventor John Cookson of Boston was producing flintlock lever action repeating arms by the mid 1750s. His rifle was simply known as a Cookson. It can be accurately said that all of these guns were ahead of their time and constrained by the loose ball and powder they were forced to use.

A significant advancement was made in 1848 when New York inventor Walter Hunt patented a conical shaped bullet with a hollow base that contained powder held in place by a cork. The cork had a hole bored through it that would allow the powder to



This “Lorenzoni System” flintlock smoothbore rifle in .57 caliber, named for Italian gunsmith Michele Lorenzoni, was produced in the 1750s and represents one of the early attempts at creating a repeating rifle. Working the lever rotates an elaborate mechanism that deposits a ball and powder in the chamber and primes the pan. Unfortunately, a small amount of wear would cause a loose breech thus allowing gas to escape and possibly ignite the powder in the storage magazine with disastrous results. *Courtesy of the Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, Wyoming. Accession number 1988.8.1655. Photo by author.*



The 1876 Winchester

In response to criticisms regarding the lack of power of the Model 1873, Winchester created the Model 1876. Unveiled at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition of 1876, while celebrating the 100th birthday of the United States, the gun itself became known as the Centennial Model.

Hoping to provide hunters with a repeating rifle as an alternative to the Sharps, Remington Rolling Block, and other potent single shots, the Model 1876 was offered in .45-75. The bottleneck case contained 75 grains of powder and threw a 350 grain bullet. The basic design was very familiar to Winchester enthusiasts; it was simply an enlarged version of the Model 1873. Over the next eight years, chamberings in .45-60, .50-95 Express, and .40-60 were added. Winchester made a major error by building a gun that did not accept the very popular .45-70 government cartridge. The action was simply too short to cycle this straight walled case.

In an attempt to make up for not designing the Model 1876 around the .45-70 government cartridge, the Winchester Repeating Fire Arms Company drew the following comparison in their 1878 catalog along with a pitch to sportsmen: “The

success attending the sale and use of the Model 1873 and the constant calls from many sources, particularly from the regions in which the grizzly bear and the other large game are found, as well as from the plains where the absence of cover and the shyness of the game require the hunter to make his shots at long range, made it desirable for the Company to build a still more powerful gun.

Retaining all the essential mechanical elements of the former model, and adding such improvements as seemed possible, the result has been a gun carrying a central fire cartridge, capable of reloading, caliber 45/100, with 75 grains of powder and 350 grains of lead, being nearly double the charge used in the Model 1873, and about the same as that adopted by the U.S. Government.”

The U.S. government was never interested in the Model 1876, but the Canadian government did issue the rifle to the North West Mounted Police and would continue to do so until 1914. Sportsmen, on the other hand, were eager to purchase a Centennial Model. Future U.S. President, Theodore Roosevelt, claimed the Model 1876 was “the best weapon I ever had...” and he eventually acquired three of different barrel lengths or calibers.

The 1897 Winchester slide action shotgun was a close copy of the 1893, but made to handle the higher pressures of smokeless powder. The above gun has a 12 gauge bore and is in fine working order. *From the D. Cappa Family Collection on display at the Frontier Montana Museum, Powell County Museum & Arts Foundation, Inc., Deer Lodge, Montana. Will Abbot photo.*



Short Range Security

From stage coach and rail car guards to saloon keepers and lawmen facing an angry crowd, the shotgun usually served as the last shield of defense for many in the Old West. A few were manufactured with short barrels, others were sawed off, but most were long barreled hunting guns. As a means of self-defense, shotguns played a backup, but powerful, role on the frontier and often times their mere presence was enough to calm an adversarial disagreement.



As unlikely as it seems, the gun carry methods common to the Old West were slow to develop. Muskets were historically carried by hand or with a sling and handguns were, as often as not, stuffed in the pants waist, shoved in a pocket, or even carried in a boot. But then again, in the old world, few people carried firearms on a daily basis. It wasn't until the invention of repeating arms, combined with their necessity on the frontier, that gun leather as we know it began to develop.

Early Pistol Carry

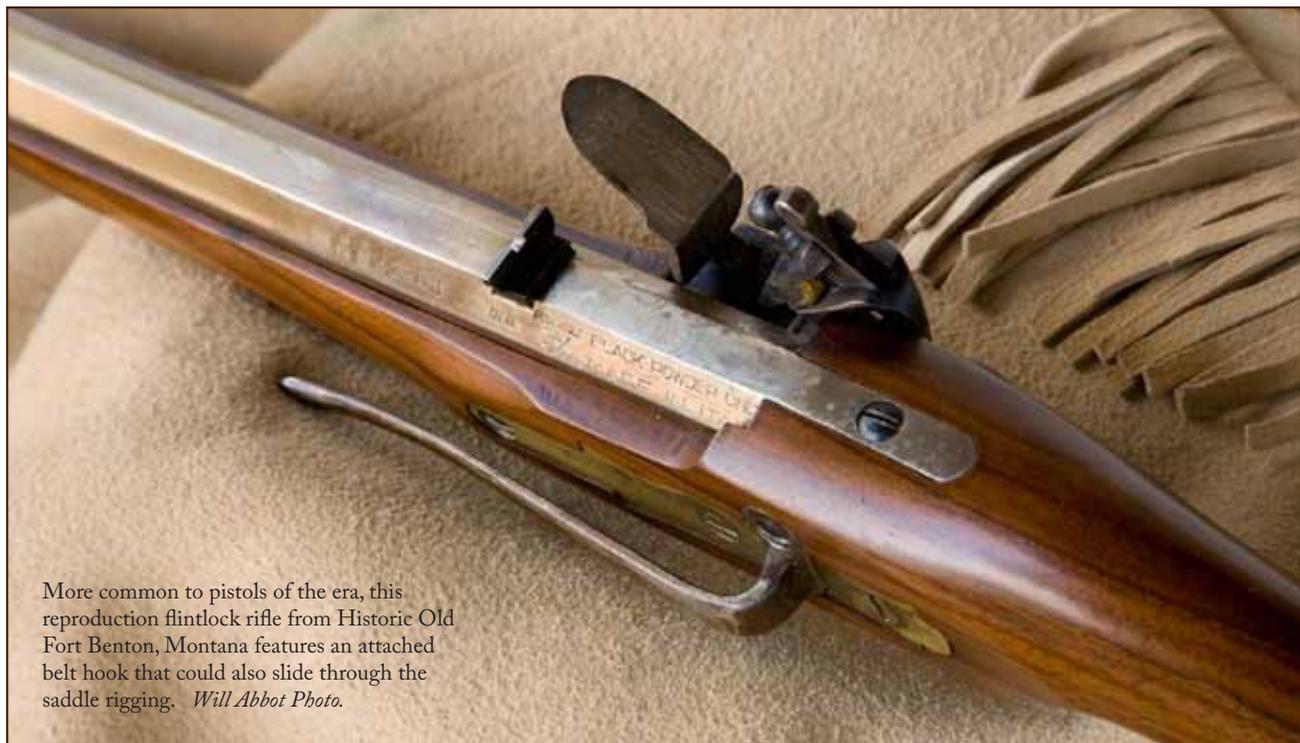
The earliest pistol holsters of the old West were of Eastern manufacture or homemade and carried westward by frontiersman, settlers, and miners. Both civilians traveling the thief ridden highways and military men commonly employed the use of pommel holsters that draped over both sides of the front portion of a saddle. These holsters completely encased the pistol and had a closure flap over the top. With a pommel holster your flintlock or percussion pistols were quite safe, secure, and protected from the elements. But if you lost your mount in a fight, you also lost your armament.

Sea going men, particularly pirates, often carried their pistols with them. Their personal carry holsters

were of two primary types. The most common resembled small bottomless buckets made of leather. The top of the holster allowed room for both the hammer and trigger guard and the narrowing, funnel-like shape restricted the gun from falling through. Since most of the gun ahead of the action protruded out the end of the holster, any barrel length could be accommodated. These holsters could be supported by a belt around the waist or fixed in place on a leather strap that was looped over one shoulder and across the chest. If spaced properly, multiple pistols could be carried on a shoulder strap. The second common method of personal carry was a pommel-style holster with slits cut in the back in order to slide over a belt or shoulder. Like the true pommel holsters, this style encased



Boots were a relatively common means of carrying concealed arms; both knives and pistols. This boot gun, made by H. E. Leman, is a percussion muzzle loading model with what appears to be a .30 caliber bore. With the purpose of providing a last means of defense, there's nothing fancy about it. *From the D. Cappa Family Collection on display at the Frontier Montana Museum, Powell County Museum & Arts Foundation, Inc., Deer Lodge, Montana. Will Abbot Photo.*



More common to pistols of the era, this reproduction flintlock rifle from Historic Old Fort Benton, Montana features an attached belt hook that could also slide through the saddle rigging. *Will Abbot Photo.*

The California Pattern

It wasn't until the 1849 California gold rush that a holster unique to the Old West was introduced. Miners lucky enough to strike gold had to arm themselves in order to keep it. Therefore, a holster that was easy to draw from while working became a necessity. New Eastern made holsters were clumsy and hard to come by and soon Western saddlers started filling the niche with designs adapted to regional needs. This new market spurred the development of the first truly Western holster; the California pattern.

The leather shop of Main & Winchester was established in San Francisco in 1849 and almost immediately began producing a line of holsters that were custom made to snugly fit a particular model of Colt's revolvers. Long bodied, slender, and closely molded around the loading lever, trigger guard, and the length of the barrel, the holsters were available in either flapped and open topped as well as right and left handed designs. Early models featured sewn in toe plugs, or caps of silver or brass on fancier models, which helped maintain the shape of the holster, but later designs were sewn through the toe. A loop of leather, either sewn or riveted to the upper back of the holster body, allowed for convenient carry on a narrow belt.

The open topped holsters were by far the favorite of those in the gold mining camps of California, Montana, and Colorado, where quickly pulling a gun could save your life. A cutout, or recurve, sloping under the trigger as well as another exposing

TIE DOWN STRAPS:

Old West holsters were largely absent of both the hammer and leg tie down straps. Original holsters were made to snugly fit the revolver they carried. This tight fit was usually adequate in keeping the revolver in place; but not always.

In his book *We Pointed Them North*, trail drive cowboy Teddy Blue Abbott put it this way when reminiscing about an unruly horse,

“He started to buck, and first my six-shooter went, then my Winchester went, and then I went, and he finished up by bucking the saddle over his head.”

A leg tie-down strap would keep the holster from riding up while drawing the gun, but wearing the bottom of the holster tied around the thigh was uncomfortable and impractical when seated either at a table or on horseback. Since fast draw duelists are mostly a creation of fiction, the use of a leg tie down strap was extremely rare.



These well heeled gunmen typify the transitional period from cap and ball revolvers to cartridge firing revolvers (circa late 1860s to 1870s). The men to the right and left are wearing the older style narrow belts while the man in the center has advanced to a wider belt with cartridge loops. *Courtesy of the Denver Public Library, Western History Collection; call number Z-2469.*

Shoulder Holsters

Shoulder holsters gained in popularity as laws were passed to prohibit the carrying of firearms within the city limits. Residents of many municipalities had tired of the reckless antics of wild cowboys shooting out the lights. Gamblers had used hide-away techniques for decades, but by the 1880s shoulder holsters were becoming more widely used by anyone feeling a little under dressed without their gun.

The earliest designs resembled belt holsters fixed to a shoulder sling. But drawing a gun from under the armpit was difficult and sometimes took two hands. In the late 1890s, more open shoulder holsters were introduced. These featured a toe cup to secure the end of the barrel and a leather covered spring-steel clip that snapped around the cylinder. The clip was open toward the front and a sudden pull forward released the revolver when needed. A combination of both the early and later designs evolved into the shoulder holster of today.

The Buscadero Holster

Nearly every movie and television Western of the 20th century featured a hero wearing a Buscadero rig. This quick draw pattern is probably the most recognized of all Old West holsters, but was invented by the movie industry in the early 1920s to uniquely identify the good guy. Buscadero holsters were made to ride low on the hip with a back skirt that slid through a slit on the cartridge belt. Some cartridge belts were cut with a dropped tab and slit to lower the holster even further down the leg and



CARTRIDGE BELTS

A low slung gun was a rarity on the American Frontier. Cartridge belts were normally worn in a higher position above the waste. Most cowboys could touch the butt of their pistol with their elbow.

Those wishing to carry their gun a little lower simply canted the belt at a slight diagonal across their waist.



The first American settlers in Texas immediately saw the advantages of the Spanish sombrero and by the 1820s had combined the design with their traditional slouch or southern plantation hat. The result was a floppy brimmed cowboy-like hat with a high crown. Variations of this style would be popular for the next 50 years. American troops exposed to sombrero-wearing enemies while fighting the Mexican War, 1846-1848, also appreciated its cone-shaped crown and wide brim. Many examples of these hats found their way east when hostilities ended.

On the West Coast, the 1849 gold rush drew an influx of Americans to California where they mingled with Spanish ranchers. These profit seekers, particularly young men, greatly admired the Spanish style black hats with their low crowns and flat, stiff brims. Most of these hats were of medium width and were worn with strings tied under the chin to secure the hat at galloping speeds or in high winds. Most California hats were made of high quality beaver felt from Mexico or Peru and were virtually water proof. Fashionable men continued wearing this style throughout the 1850s and into the 1860s, as evident by samples recovered from the Bertrand.

Other western bound settlers wore whatever hat they brought with them including top hats, derbies, slouch hats, sailors hats, and, later, various civil war hats and caps. With very few or no hat makers in most of the early West, hats were imported from Mexico and the East Coast. During warmer months settlers often wore homemade hats of woven wheat straw, palmetto, or bear grass.

John Stetson's Hat

John B. Stetson has often been credited as the inventor of the cowboy hat. A quick skim through Civil War photos or the paintings of early explorers, however, would indicate that the wide-brimmed hat was around long before Stetson. Regardless, there's no denying that the quality and popularity of the Stetson hat made it a legendary icon of the Old West.

Born the son of a New Jersey hat maker in 1830, John Batterson Stetson learned the hatters' trade early. The No Name Hat Company had been established by his family in 1790, but as the 7th child of 12, the chance that John B. would inherit the business was very slim.



THE MANY USES OF A COWBOY HAT

Cowboys could be particular about their hat. It's been said many times that a Cowboy's hat was the first thing he put on in the morning and the last thing he took off at night.

A hat was a very useful tool of the trade. It shaded the head and neck, protected the wearer from rain, snow, and hail. It could be used to fan a fire, swat a fly,

or raised in the air to signal a friend. The high crown allowed the wearer to conceal money or important papers (thus the phrase "keep it under your hat"), or substitute for a bucket to carry water.

The famous image "Last Drop from his Stetson" on the lining of Stetson hats became the company logo in the 1920s.





This Boss of the Plains Stetson belonged to cowboy and artist Charlie Russell and is typical of style worn on the northern plains from the 1870s on. It features a horse hair hat band and a pencil rolled brim. Charlie pinned a rattle snake rattle to inside of the crown and the sweatband is stamped with the store name "Nathan & Sons, Great Falls, Montana". Charlie's boots date around 1900. *Courtesy of the C.M. Russell Museum, Great Falls, Montana. Accession numbers 991.19.478 (hat) and 999.37.1a,b (boots). Will Abbot photo.*

as John B. Stetson and Company and began reproducing the hat he had made during his stay in Colorado. Stetson christened his creation the "Boss of the Plains", and taking a substantial financial risk, sent samples to dealers throughout the West.

He could not have hit the market at a better time. The Civil War had interrupted the western cattle business for four years and post-war ranching opportunities were abundant. Furthermore, the newly established railheads in Kansas provided the means to supply the Eastern markets with all the beef they could order. The quintessential era of the Cowboy had just begun and orders for the "Boss of the Plains" poured back to Stetson in such numbers that he had to build a new factory just to meet demand.

Discontinuing all other hat styles, Stetson concentrated on the "Boss of the Plains". He offered it in several levels of quality beginning with mostly rabbit fur and increasing to 100% beaver felt.

BEAVER FOR HAT MAKERS

Europeans hat makers had been using beaver fur for felting for centuries before the Old West. With its abundant wildlife, North America served as new source of beaver pelts to replace the supply nearly trapped out of existence in Europe. The international fancy for beaver felt hats created the New World fur trade.

Western movies of the early 20th century reaffirmed America's affection for the cowboy hat. In 1922 alone, the Stetson Hat Company shaved 850,000 pounds of beaver fur from 12 million pelts. The hides were sold to make glue.

Ranging in price from \$5.00 to \$30.00, a Stetson's hat was not an inexpensive item and could run a cowboy nearly a month's wages. But buyers found Stetson's hats extremely durable and lighter in weight as the quality increased.

The Boss of the Plains left the factory in a natural color with a domed, creaseless crown wrapped with a wide silk ribbon that was tied in a flat bow on one side. The standard four inch brim was stiff. Wider brims were curled up and inward for strength, as popular in the mid 1880s, with a silk ribbon binding sewn around the edge.

Cowboys creased their hat any way they preferred. Some followed regional styles, while others let creases form naturally according to where they grabbed their hat in the wind, rain, or when taking it off. Many cowboys added a hatband of braided horsehair or leather to custom fit the crown to their head. Some would also add a leather chin strap that

Bowler was constructed by Thomas and William Bowler of London in 1849 for game officers who patrolled wooded areas for land owners. It also looked bowl-like in appearance. By the 1860s, the working class had adopted the Bowler over the top hat as their hat of choice. The Bowler was also popular with townsmen in the American West. Bat Masterson was famously photographed wearing his derby as was Butch Cassidy, the Sundance Kid, and the rest of the Wild Bunch who tauntingly mailed a copy of their photo to law enforcement.

Ladies Hats

Women's headdress styles varied greatly during the second half of the 19th century. Caps and bonnets were largely worn by women from 1860 to 1880 during a time when hats were not considered appropriate for church or formal wear. Caps can be described as small bonnets and covered the hair from near the front of the head to slightly down the back of the neck. Some caps were made of netting and held a ladies' pinned hair in a mesh bag in the back and continued over the top of the head. Other caps rested directly on top of the head and were held in place with a chin tie.

Bonnets were generally more ornate than caps. Early bonnets were long and straight from front to back and resembled the canopy of a covered wagon. Some even contained wooden slats to maintain their shape. Later in the 1870s, the fanciest bonnets began to look more like hats and, at the same time, younger women were bringing the hat back



Lace and solid black caps circa 1870s – 1880s shown with two hat pins that would fasten the cap or other hats to the wearer's hair. The white bonnet is of the same time period and is labeled Lewis Dry Goods Company, Butte M.T. *Courtesy of the Montana Heritage Commission, Virginia City, MT. Will Abbot Photo.*



MILLINERY

The term "millinery" is defined as hats and other accessories for women or the design and manufacture on women's hats. Women would visit their favorite "milliner" to keep up with the latest styles.

A "haberdasher" dealt in men's clothing and accessories.

work on the side and soon opened a shop of his own where he employed his brother Edward.

As the story goes, a Colorado cowboy, returning home from a cattle drive to the stockyards in Kansas City, entered the Hyer shop in 1875. The cowboy was wearing Civil War style boots and was looking for something better suited for his profession. He requested a custom boot with a high, slanted heel that would not slip through a stirrup, a pointed toe to more easily pick up a stirrup, and a high top with a V-shaped cut or scallop in the front and back for comfort. Hyer's creation impressed his new patron considerably and soon word of mouth advertising generated a booming business.

The Coffeyville Pattern

In a similar vein, John W. Cubine began producing a boot in Coffeyville, Kansas in 1876 that was a combination of the Wellington and military style boot. Cubine's Coffeyville pattern boots had a higher heel, slightly rounded square toes, internal pull-on straps, and a knee guard or "graft" sewn in front from a separate piece of leather. Often the graft leather was a different color; usually brown or dark red and contrasted with the black leather used in the body of the boot.

As the reputation of the boots from Kansas spread during the height of the cattle drive years, the demand was difficult for boot makers to keep up with. Good boots were hard to come by in the remote areas of the West and ordering boots by mail involved some guesswork as to size. The result was often a disappointingly poor and clumsy fit. Taking great pride in their specialized footwear, cowboys would often pay twice the price of store bought varieties just to have boots made to their specifications.

Cowboys generally wore their boots undersized. The tight fit made their feet appear trimmer and some soaked their boots in water to break them in as they dried. In the process, straights took the shape of the wearer's foot. The looped leather pulls straps on the interior of the boot shaft, or vamp, aided in putting them on, but removal could required some assistance. Later styles featured exterior pull straps called mule ears that dangled down both sides of the boot.

Even exotic leather could be had for a price and a few alligator skin boots were on the market as early as 1879. For an added flare, horseshoes, playing cards, stars, and other patterns could be stitched on the uppers. In the 1880s decorative stitching along the length of the boot shaft stiffened the uppers and prevented the no longer stylish sagging and wriggling around the ankles common to the earlier styles. In the same time frame, steel replaced the more fragile wooden shanks.



DALTON RAID

On October 5, 1892 the Dalton gang rode into Coffeyville, Kansas and attempted to rob two banks at the same time. The townsfolk were alerted and the resulting gun battle nearly wiped out the outlaws. George Cubine, nephew of boot maker John Cubine, fired his Winchester at Bob and Emmet Dalton as they retreated to their horses. They returned fire and ended George's life.

His tombstone reads:

"A precious one from us has gone
A voice we loved is stilled
A place is vacant in our home
Which never can be filled"



TOE WRINKLES

In 1903, Charles Hyer introduced stitching on the upper toe of the boot. The new decoration was called "toe wrinkles" and the design persists to this day.



Woolies

A more sensible variety of chaps for the Northern Plains called “woolies” were worn extensively throughout the colder months. Otherwise known as “hair pants”, woolies were essentially shotgun chaps made of animal hides with the fur facing the outside. Woolies could be made from the fur of angora goats, domestic sheep, llamas, bison, bear, wolf, mountain lion, and even seal and leopard. But they did have their short comings. Most, except sealskin, absorbed moisture and become heavy and uncomfortable in a cold rain; not to mention smelly. If cut too high, annoying knots of fur would form between the rider’s leg and the saddle and, if working in a brushy area, the hair was soon full of twigs and burrs. For much of the year, cowboys in the north left their chaps in the wagon and wore wool breeches with extra fabric sewn into the inner thigh and crotch for reinforcement. In frigid weather, however, woolies were indispensable.

Batwing Chaps

Some cowboys claimed they could put their shotgun chaps on or take them off without removing their boots and spurs. While possible, it couldn’t have been easy. Chap makers in the 1890s began offering designs that closed along the outer back of the leg by a series of buckles and straps. Shortly thereafter, hooked snaps and rings were popular closures. Both methods improved taking the chaps on and off and provided some ventilation on warm days.

In the first decade of the 1900s, the new strapped or hooked closure system led to the development of an overlapping outer edge that extended well past the back of the leg. These chaps with wide flapping edges were dubbed “buzzard wings” or “batwings”. The batwing label stuck and 20th century rodeo riders embraced the design by embellishing them with conchos, studded patterns, colorful edges, fur, fancy leather work, or nearly anything imaginable. Flamboyant and often gaudy, batwings didn’t attract a large patronage by working cowboys. Most held onto their shotgun chaps rather than risk spooking an unruly range horse with a batwing flapping wildly in the wind.

From Lifestyle to Myth

As the century closed, what was once born of necessity became fashionable. Dude ranches, silent movies, and then films with sound called “talkies” all contributed to the romantic image of the cowboy. Hat makers, boot companies, and leather workers took advantage of the popular icons of the West and created fashions that were never worn in early periods but appealed to movie goers nonetheless. Thankfully, today’s mover makers and authors have become more and more concerned with authenticity and it is possible to find works portraying some historical accuracy. 🌿



CHAPS

The name chaps (pronounced “shaps”) is derived from the Spanish word chaparreras or chaparejos meaning leg armor or leather breeches.



Working cowboy and rodeo competitor, Billy Cramer was the bronc riding champion at Cheyenne Frontier Days in 1899. Photographer C. D. Kirkland took this image of Billy wearing bearskin wooly chaps in his Cheyenne studio. Wooly chaps were commonly worn by early rodeo cowboys. *Courtesy of the Denver Public Library, Western History Collection: call # X-21939.*



These men's three button drawers can be dated from the 1880s to early 1900s by the elastic ankle cuffs. Interestingly, they still have a tie string waist. *Courtesy of the Montana Heritage Commission, Virginia City, Montana. Will Abbot Photo.*



UNION SUITS

Initially marketed to women, the Union Suit first began to appear in the late 1860s and quickly became popular with men. Rather than a separate top and bottom, the Union Suit was a “union” of the two. A trap door or hatch in the seat made trips to the outhouse easier. Cotton was a favorite, but some were made of wool blends. Colors included natural, gray, or, the most popular, red. Tie strings around the ankles and wrists were replaced with elastic in the later decades of the 19th century.



Underwear and Socks

Underwear was usually referred to as underdrawers or simply drawers and was made of cotton, silk, wool, or a mixture of these materials. Drawers from 1860 to around 1880 were waist high with three to four buttons in the front and a tie string in the back for snugness. Most extended down to the ankle and were also held in place with tie strings. Shorter drawers could be worn in the summer months, but still extended below the knee with a button fastener at the bottom on the cuff.

Undershirts were long sleeved, absent a true collar, and buttoned loosely at the neck. By the 1880s, elastic cuffs secured the sleeves undershirts and replaced the tie-strings in drawers.

The basic sock pattern hasn't changed much from the beginning. After all, the human foot hasn't changed much either. Socks worn in the Old West were the same as those worn anywhere else. Some could be knitted, but most were sewn from wool, cotton, or wool/cotton mix fabric and came in various colors to the liking of the wearer. Like today, quality was usually indicated by price and related to the fabric used and its thickness.

Trousers

Men's trousers of latter half of the 1800s were high waisted, featured a button-up fly, and had no belt loops. An adjustable strap in the small of the back was used to cinch the pants tight and buttons were sewn to the waist to attach suspenders. Front pockets were common and opened at the top. Side seam pocket openings were more prone to losing their contents while on horseback. The legs of most trousers were baggy, but became more tailored toward the end of the century. A second, reinforcing layer of material was often applied to the inside of the legs and seat to the benefit of those spending a lot of time in the saddle.

Wool was the preferred material for trousers and came in any assortment of patterns and colors. Most men worn dark colors in blue, black or brown and narrow pinstripes running down the leg were popular. Other fabrics included corduroy, duck, and cotton jeaning or denim. Northern cowboys generally felt canvas pants were for miners and farmers and stuck with wool. Even when duck and denim came more acceptable, wool was still the predominate material used on the range and remained so until the late 1890s and early 1900s. Miners, farmers, and common laborers adopted duck and jeaning early on as did many cowboys in southern brush

country. At the same time, homemade clothing was still an economical option for married men or those living close to their mother or a sister.

A northern cowboy favorite was the California pants named by their place of manufacture at the Oregon City Woolen Mills, in Oregon City, California. California pants were made of tightly woven, heavyweight, pure virgin wool and preshrunk to keep their size and shed water. Colors varied from light buckskin to darker grays in solids or with interwoven plaid designs. Early patterns were snug in the waist and baggy in the leg, but later evolved to a looser waist after 1900 and were available into the 1950s.

Vests and Coats

Originally called waistcoats, vests were established as outerwear in the 1820s and were most often worn under a coat. Early vests were cut straight across the bottom and later featured decorative points below the button line. Most were made of wool and some had back panels of polished cotton for comfort. The greatest advantage of wearing a vest was the easily accessible pockets, most had two or four, which came in handy for mounted men.

The most common coat of the Old West period was the frock coat which has become immortalized by its frequent appearance in Western movies. The frock coat has its origin in the early 1800s and became increasingly popular as the century progressed. Most were at least knee-length and some nearly touched the ground. The front of the coat buttoned to the waist and the double breasted version was often referred to as the Prince Albert after the husband of Queen Victoria who popularized the coat in England. But the primary identifying feature of the frock coat was its seam around the waist and flared skirt below. This provided for a very tailored look with a narrow waist and broad shoulders.

Beginning in the 1880s and into the turn of the century, the sack coat began to replace the frock coat for formal wear. Sack coats were cut for a looser fit and were designed much like today's single breasted suit jacket. The sack coat featured high lapels and buttoned close to the neck. The hems were normally rounded in front and about finger length with no seam around the waist.

The morning coat gained popularity about the same time as the sack coat and also contributed to the decline of the frock coat. Named for the gentleman's

Frock Coats throughout the period of 1860-1900. Although not attributed to an exact year, these black wool frock coats represent progressive changes in design. The first is a very smart looking coat and is identified as the oldest of the three by the severe gapped front at the waist and a shoulder seam well off the shoulder and across the shoulder blade area on the back of the coat. The second is slightly newer and also has a dropped shoulder seam, but does not have an extreme gap at the waist. The third coat is the newest and is designed with a shoulder seam closer to the top of the shoulder line. It is also much longer in length extending near the knee, has no gap at the waist, buttons tight to the neck, and features a banded collar with no lapels. *Courtesy of the Montana Heritage Commission, Virginia City, Montana. Will Abbot Photo.*





Looking rather big-eyed and well armed with his 1886 Winchester rifle, Bozeman area resident, Buckskin Charlie Marble is appropriately nicknamed. Fringed buckskin clothing transitioned from a necessity to a fashion statement in the last few decades of the 1800s. *Courtesy of the Gallatin Historical Society Pioneer Museum Bozeman, Montana.*

showman. Buffalo Bill Cody was rarely seen without at least a buckskin jacket and George Custer fancied the rugged frontiersman look as well.

Of course Native Americans had used buckskin for centuries and also later catered to white buyers. White tailors picked up the craft and made buckskin shirts, pants, jackets, and coats from normal clothing patterns and simply added traditional fringe. Some were even machine sewn. As the century was coming to a close, tourists created a demand for buckskin to satisfy their fascination with the West.

Bandanas

A silk scarf in the form of a cravat around the neck was established formal wear for gentlemen, but no one invented more uses for the bandana than the Old West cowboy. A bandana, or neckerchief as some called them, could be used as a mask in dusty wind and kept some of the flying dirt out of cowboys noses and throats. This mask, however, did little to conceal the wearers identity and was not used as often by bandits as legend would lead one to believe. But they did come in handy as a pot holder when the skillet handle got too hot or to screen the neck when the sun was at your back. Wrapped tight around the neck in cold weather, a bandana keeps the throat warm and the wind from going down your neck or can even be tied high over the ears to fight off frostbite. Other uses include a makeshift bandage,

This beautifully made and ornately embroidered buckskin shirt from 1875 was worn by Pat Tucker, frontier scout and author of "Riding the High Country". True to the fashion of the day, it features a buttoned front that extends to the midsection. Fringe is present in the main seams and a small pocket is also sewn on each breast. *Courtesy of the Montana Historical Society, Helena, Montana; (X1960.09.01). Will Abbot Photo.*



a blinder for a wild horse, and even an attractive accessory if tied formally with a vest and coat.

Bandanas were made of silk or cotton. Silk was the preferred material for both comfort and status, but cotton was less expensive and readily available. Red was a popular color as was blue and there was no limit to the printed patterns to be had.

Suspenders

Suspenders, referred to as galluses by cowboys and braces by the English, could be made from cotton, leather, or elastic. English inventor Thomas Hancock patented elastic in 1820 and it was used immediately in clothing. When elastic was used in suspenders it was usually in the form of a short strip in the back, thus, keeping the cotton portion snug. Due to the back cinch in the trouser of the day, suspenders were not required to keep the pants up. Cowboys complained that suspenders were uncomfortable and restrictive and many chose not to wear them. Original pictures from the 1860-1900 period, however, show that some cowboys wore them and some didn't. Like all clothing, personal tastes varied.

LEVI STRAUSS AND COMPANY

In 1853, Levi Strauss, at the age of 23, left New York to expand his family's wholesale dry good business in the bustling Gold Rush market in California. Once in San Francisco it became evident that the local miners were in need of an extremely durable pant. Using materials he had brought with him, young Levi fashioned heavy brown canvass trousers with the typical high waist of the era, suspender buttons, back waist cinch, straight legs, button fly, a watch pocket, and one pocket on the right rear. His success was immediate. When the canvas materials ran out, Strauss switched to denim.

Copper pocket and stress point rivets were added and patented in 1873 in partnership with a Nevada tailor who was using Strauss fabric to outfit miners in the Reno area. In 1886 a leather patch was sewn to the waist with an embossed two horse design and in 1890 the famous lot #501® first appeared. Belt loops were added in 1922, but suspender buttons were not dropped until the 1940s. The rivet patent expired in 1909 and only then were competitors like Montgomery Ward, Sears, and Carhart allowed to adopt the practice.

