

Snapshots Of Life In The Real Wild West

ATI - Mark Oliver - August 15, 2017

The American frontier holds a mythic space in our imaginations. And because of that, it's a place we envision more through the stories of the Wild West than through its actual history.

The real American frontier wasn't always as dramatic as it's made out to be in films, but it was a dangerous place, an untamed land. The settlers who traveled out West in the late 19th and early 20th centuries had to live in defiance of nature and the elements without the comforts of civilization.

Whole families would gather together in wagons and ride off into the unknown, sometimes spending months living in the carriages that pulled them westward. Men, women, and children alike would endure as they crossed over mountains, across rivers, and through deserts in search of a new home and a better life.

When they arrived, they lived in houses built with their own two hands. They had to fend for water and food on their own and set up the very infrastructures of their new towns. Some made their way by working on ranches and farms, others by trapping and trading fur, and some by toiling deep in the mines of the new American frontier.

Life was full of dangers. Sandstorms, tornados, and hurricanes plagued their ramshackle homes. The natives of the land fought to keep it their own. And when lawlessness rose its head, men had to take justice into their own hands.

The Wild West has become a legend, but the real world of the American frontier played out just a short time ago. It's recent enough that we even have photographs of the families that traveled out and the lives they made, little glimpses into life in the real Wild West.

La « frontière » américaine tient une place mythique dans nos imaginations. Aussi l'imaginons nous plus selon les histoires du Far West qu'à travers son histoire réelle.

La véritable frontière américaine n'était pas toujours aussi dramatique que les films le disent, mais c'était un endroit dangereux, une terre sauvage. Les colons qui ont voyagé vers l'Ouest à la fin du 19ème et au début du 20ème siècle ont dû vivre en défiant la nature et ses éléments sans le confort de la civilisation.

Des familles entières se sont rassemblées dans des wagons et sont parties vers l'inconnu, passant parfois des mois dans les voitures qui les menaient vers l'ouest. Les hommes, les femmes et les enfants endureraient cette vie en traversant les montagnes, les rivières et les déserts à la recherche d'une nouvelle terre et d'une vie meilleure.

Arrivés, ils vivaient dans des maisons construites de leurs propres mains. Ils ont dû se débrouiller seuls pour l'eau et la nourriture et mettre en place l'intégralité des infrastructures de leurs nouvelles villes. Certains ont tracé leur chemin en travaillant dans les ranchs et les fermes, d'autres en trappant et en faisant commerce de la fourrure, d'autres en travaillant dans les profondeurs des mines de la nouvelle frontière américaine.

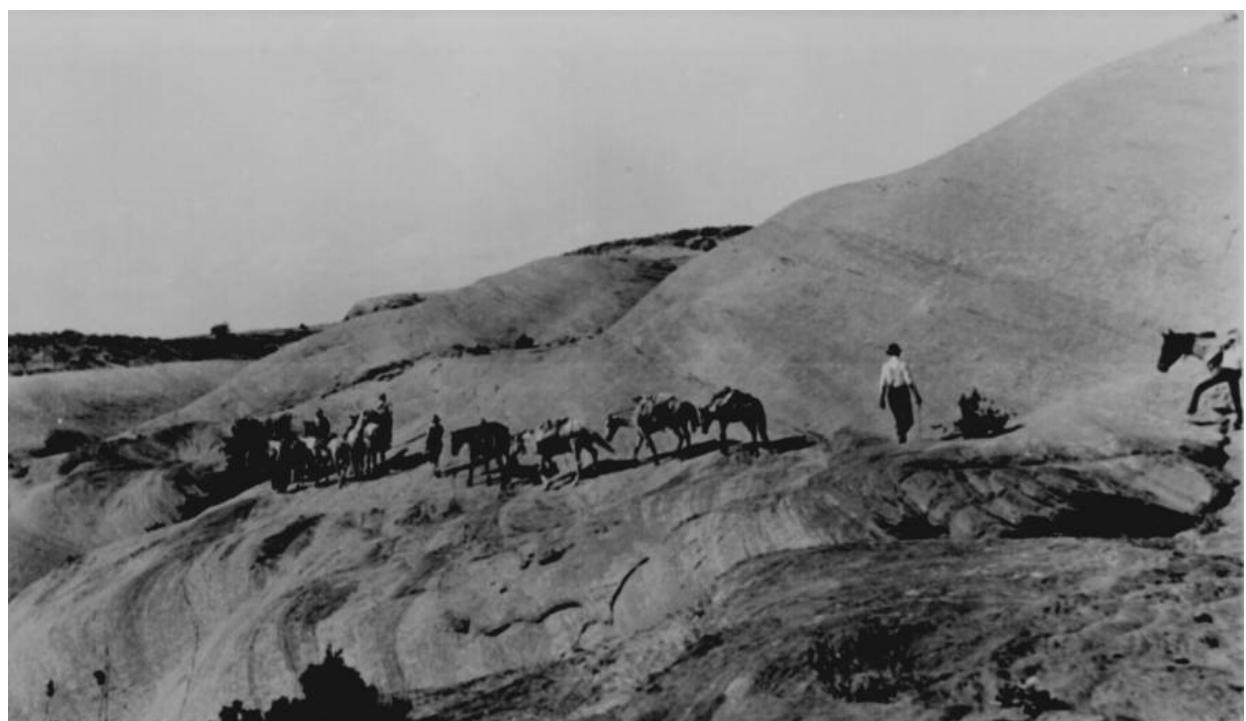
La vie était faite de dangers. Les tempêtes de sable, les tornades et les ouragans ont ravagé leurs maisons délabrées. Les indigènes se sont battus pour garder leur terre. Et quand l'anarchie se manifestait, les hommes devaient faire leur affaire de la justice.

Le Far West est devenu une légende, mais le vrai monde de la « frontière américaine » n'a été mis à jour que récemment avec la découverte des photos des familles qui ont voyagé et vécu, nous donnant ainsi un aperçu de la réalité de cet Ouest sauvage.



A covered wagon, the vehicle of the great western migration. This family will live in their wagon while they search for a new home on the untamed American frontier.

Loup Valley, Nebraska. 1886. National Archives



A party leads their horses across the hot, slick rocks of Navajo Mountain.

Utah. 1909. National Archives



Riders stop at a Native American reservation. A dog is being roasted over the cooking pot.
Fort Belknap Reservation, Montana. 1906. *Wikimedia Commons*



An abducted child among his Apache captors. When 11-year-old Jimmy McKinn was rescued and returned to his family, he fought it bitterly, wanting to stay among the Apache.
Arizona. 1886. *Wikimedia Commons*



Real cowboys, of course, herded cows. Here, one readies his lasso as he looks out on his herd.
Genesee, Kansas. 1902. National Archives



Cowboys branding a calf.
Montana. Date unspecified. Wikimedia Commons



RATH & WRIGHT'S BUFFALO HIDE YARD IN 1878, SHOWING 40,000 BUFFALO HIDES. DODGE CITY, KANSAS
FROM A PHOTOGRAPH

A massive haul of 40,000 buffalo hides stored in a hide yard.
Dodge City, Kansas. 1878. *National Archives*



Coaches travel down a carriage road.
Pikes Peak, 1911. *National Archives*



A mountainside camp set up for miners.
San Juan County, Colorado. 1875. National Archives



John Heith, after joining in a robbery that turned into a massacre, is lynched by a mob.
Tombstone, Arizona. 1884. National Archives



Outlaw John Sontag lies dying on the ground after a shootout with a posse.
Stone Corral, California. 1893. National Archives



Buckboard wagons cross a river.
San Carlos, Arizona. 1885. National Archives



A rider in the desert refills his keg with water from a well.
Arizona. 1907. National Archives



Apaches, including the war hero Geronimo, after their surrender to General Miles. The train behind them will carry them into exile.
Nueces River, Texas. 1886 National Archives



Hauling water across the countryside.
Encinal, Texas. 1905. *National Archives*



Men gamble over a game of Faro inside a saloon.
Bisbee, Arizona. 1900. *Wikimedia Commons*



A man, at the site of a new town, looks for a lot.
Guthrie, Oklahoma. 1889. National Archives



The first blacksmith shop in town.
Guthrie, Oklahoma. 1889. National Archives



Land in a new territory is auctioned off in this tent.
California. 1904. *National Archives*



The first house built in Dodge City, a sod home built in 1872.
Dodge City, Kansas. 1913. *Wikimedia Commons*



Men outside a crude ranch play poker.
Arizona. Circa 1887-1889. National Archives



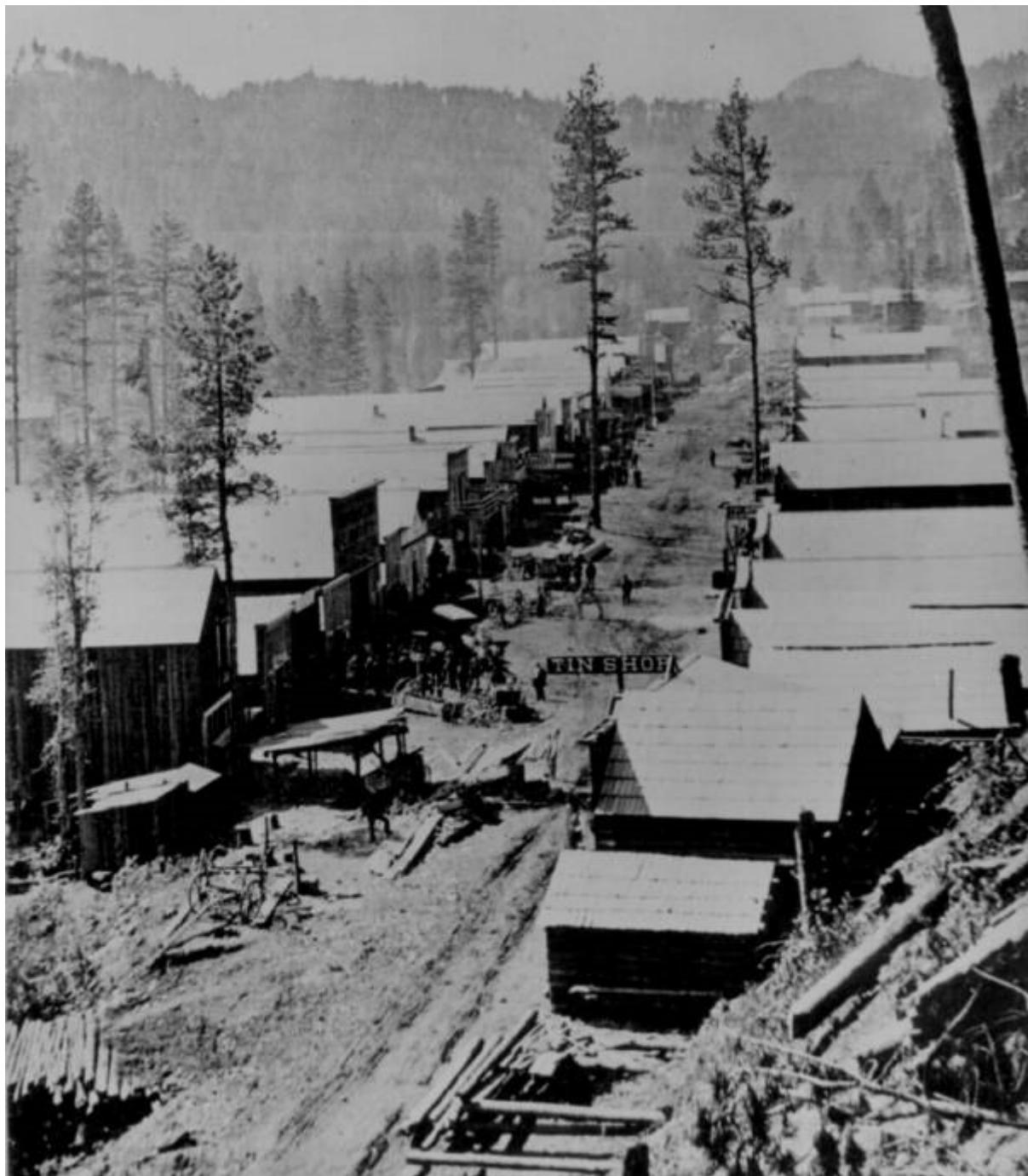
Inside a bar at the Table Bluff Hotel and Saloon.
Humboldt County, California. 1889. Wikimedia Commons



A town starts to grow. The crowd that has gathered is bidding on land that is being auctioned off.
Anadarko, Oklahoma. 1901. *National Archives*



Men lay down track for a new railroad, connecting the wild frontier with the world.
Arizona. 1898. *National Archives*



A gold rush town in Dakota.
Deadwood, Dakota. 1876. *National Archives*



A little girl feeds the chickens.
Sun River, Montana. 1910. National Archives



A family outside their home. A Native American servant holds their child.
New Mexico. 1895. National Archives



A saloon on the streets of an Old West town.
Hazen, Nevada. 1905. National Archives



The Klondyke Dance Hall and saloon.
Seattle, Washington. 1909. *Wikimedia Commons*



Typical downtown street of a town on the American frontier.
Corinne, Utah. 1869. National Archives



A cow carries seven children to school. The caption, whether in jest or in earnest, claims that carrying the children to school is this cow's "daily duty."
Okanogan, Washington. 1907. National Archives



A teacher and her students stand in front of a sod schoolhouse.
Woods County, Oklahoma. 1895. National Archives



First Water Works of Perry - Argus Bros. Photo - Oct 1893
A town gets flowing water for the first time.
Perry, Oklahoma. 1893. National Archives



Correspondent Fred W. Loring poses in front of his mule before heading back home to write about what he'd seen out west.

Loring was killed by Apaches less than 48 hours after this picture was taken.

San Bernardino, California. 1871. National Archives



A Pony Express rider on horseback.
1861. National Archives



Cowboys herd cattle across a river.
Missouri. 1910. Wikimedia Commons



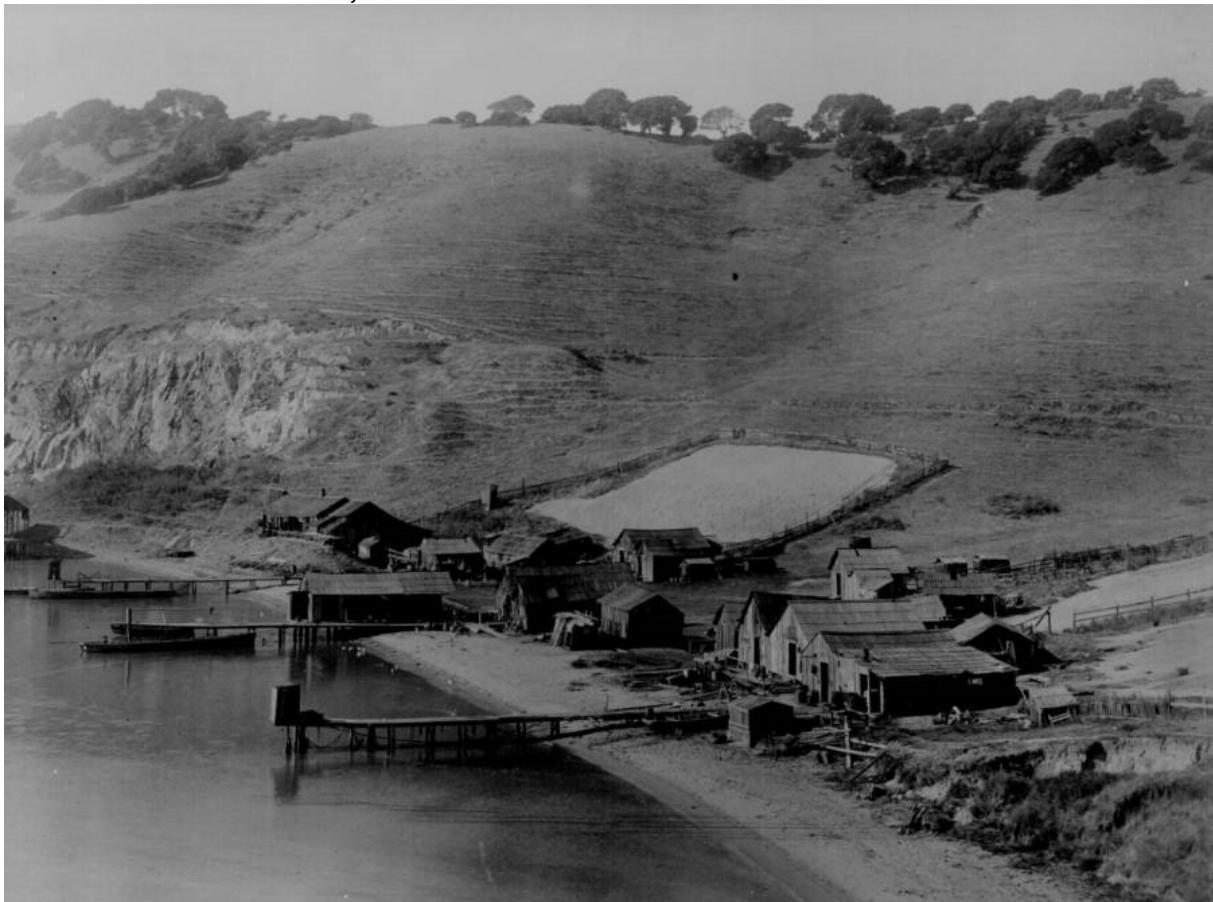
A group of trappers and hunters outside their cabin.
Brown's Basin, Arizona. 1908. National Archives



Mine workers coming out of the mine shaft.
Virginia City, Nevada. Circa 1867-1888. National Archives



Men cork champagne at the Buena Vista Vinicultural Society.
Sonoma, California. Circa 1870-1879. National Archives



A fishing camp set up by some Chinese settlers of the American frontier.
Point San Pedro, California. 1889. National Archives



Shoshone tribe members dance on a Native American reservation while soldiers look on.
Ft. Washakie, Wyoming. 1892. National Archives



Apaches deliver hay to American settlers.
Fort Apache, Arizona. 1893. National Archives



An Indian Training School teaches blacksmithing.
Forest Grove, Oregon. 1882. National Archives



Judge Roy Bean's courthouse, which doubled as a saloon.
Langtry, Texas. 1900. National Archives

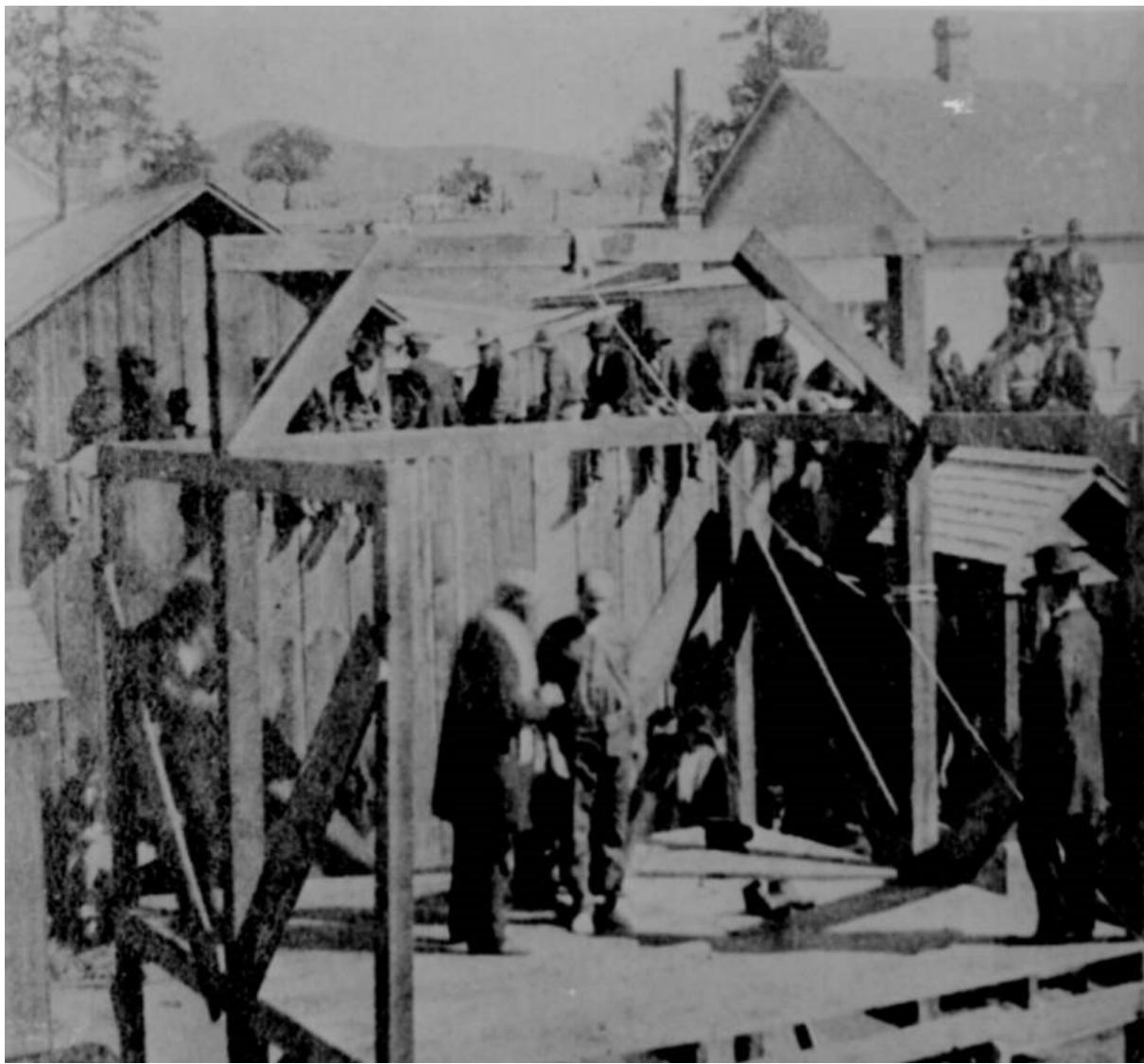


Cheyenne natives, after trying to escape from their reservation and return to their homeland, are held prisoner.

Kansas. 1879. Wikimedia Commons



A sand storm moves across farmland.
Midland, Texas. 1894. National Archives



The execution of a man on the gallows.
Prescott, Arizona. 1877. National Archives



U.S. Deputy Marshalls pose with the clerical force.
Perry, Oklahoma. 1893. National Archives