

Hi, I'm
Harriet.



TALKING HISTORY


with

Harriet and Roxanne™

Forgotten Black Cowboys

And I'm
Roxanne.
Join us for...





Our next lesson is about forgotten Black cowboys. The cowboy was the symbol of the American West. There were 35,000 cowboys who worked the ranches and rode the trails from 1866 to 1895, and twenty-five percent were Black. Let's look at these heroes of the West and the Great Plains and the life they led.

Oh Harriet, this is going to be exciting!

Please tell us more.



Sure! The American cowboy has been marketed as a white entity, and the Black cowboy story was untold. White authors wrote many stories for a White audience and therefore, usually deleted Blacks.


In addition to Blacks, there were also Hispanic, and Native-American cowboys.



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Amazing!





Where are we?

We are near one of the four famous cattle drive routes used by cowboys to bring cattle from Texas to the north. Would you like to know more about these drives?



Yes, I would.

The four cattle drive routes were: the Shawnee, the Western, the Goodnight-loving, and the most famous, the Chisholm Trail. They all began in Texas.

Let's look at the history of the cattle industry.



The Civil War changed the cattle industry. After the war, America turned its attention to settling lands in the Great Plains and the West. The unattended longhorns proliferated in Texas during the Civil War, and these free-range cattle were plentiful. Unfortunately, the market for the beef was not in the South, so the cattle had to be driven North to railroad towns to move the cattle back to eastern markets. The demand for meat made many ranchers rich. These cowboys that took the cattle on these trails were called drovers.



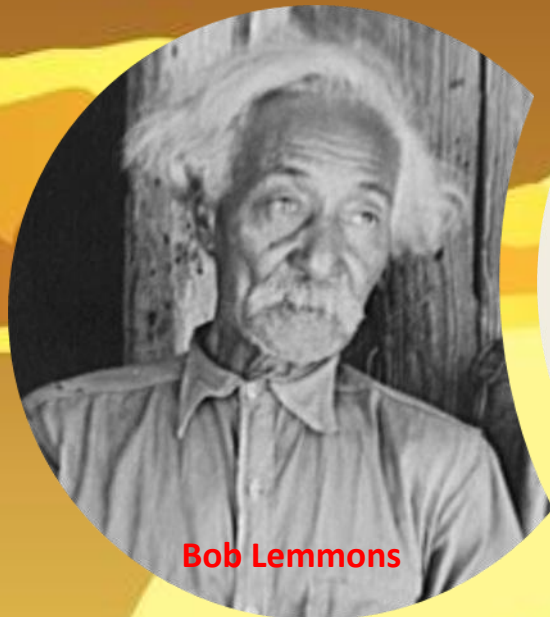


Life on the trail as a drover meant long days on the saddle and short hard nights on the ground. Cowboys had harsh weather and a lack of supplies to deal with and had to watch for Indian raids, rattlesnakes, and worse, the cattle stampede. However, most drovers were young and able to withstand the four-month trek on one of the four trails to deliver the cattle to Kansas City, St. Louis, Abilene, Ogallala, Deadwood, Pueblo, or Denver.

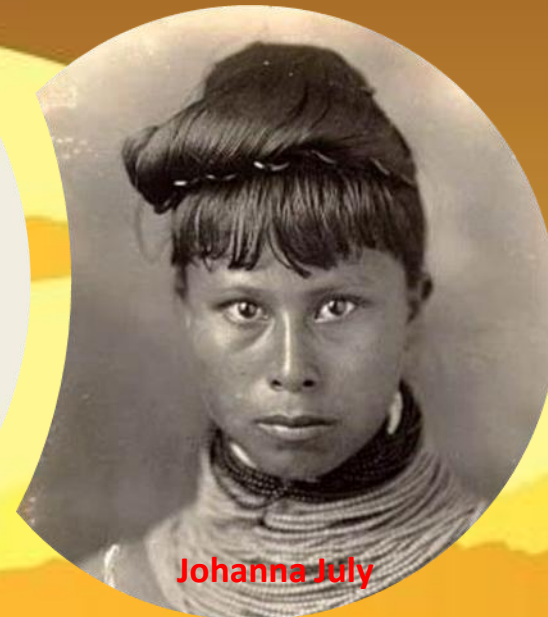


Roxanne, not all the cowboys were drovers; many worked the ranches as a wrangler who looked after the saddle horses, a cook, or top hand, and possibly later, a foreman. Let's learn about some of these men and women!





Bob Lemmons



Johanna July

Bob Lemmons (b. 1848) was the horse whisperer and an excellent mustanger. He disapproved of how other cowboys captured mustangs by running them in circles to exhaustion. Instead, he infiltrated the herd to take control away from the lead horse to bring the herd back to the ranch. Lemmon's process took longer, but the horses were not exhausted. Lemmons made enough money to buy his own ranch. The U.S. Army hired Johanna July (b. 1857) as a translator and a horse trainer. Johanna was a Black Seminole cowgirl who broke horses by leading them to the Rio Grande, grabbing the mane, and riding them until they were too tired to buck her off. Both people were very significant in the taming of the west.




Bose Ikard



Charlie & Laura Willis

Bose Ikard (1843-1929) was a close friend and right-hand man to two cattle barons, Charles Goodnight and Oliver Loving. These three cowboys were drovers on the Goodnight-Loving cattle trail. This friendship was the basis for the fictional book, *Lonesome Dove* as well as the series *Lonesome Dove*. Charlie Willis (1847-1930) was born a slave and known as a bronco buster and cattle drover on the Chisholm Trail. Willis began breaking horses at 18. He wrote the famous song, "Good-bye Old Paint" that was about his horse. Both men were exceptional black cowboys.



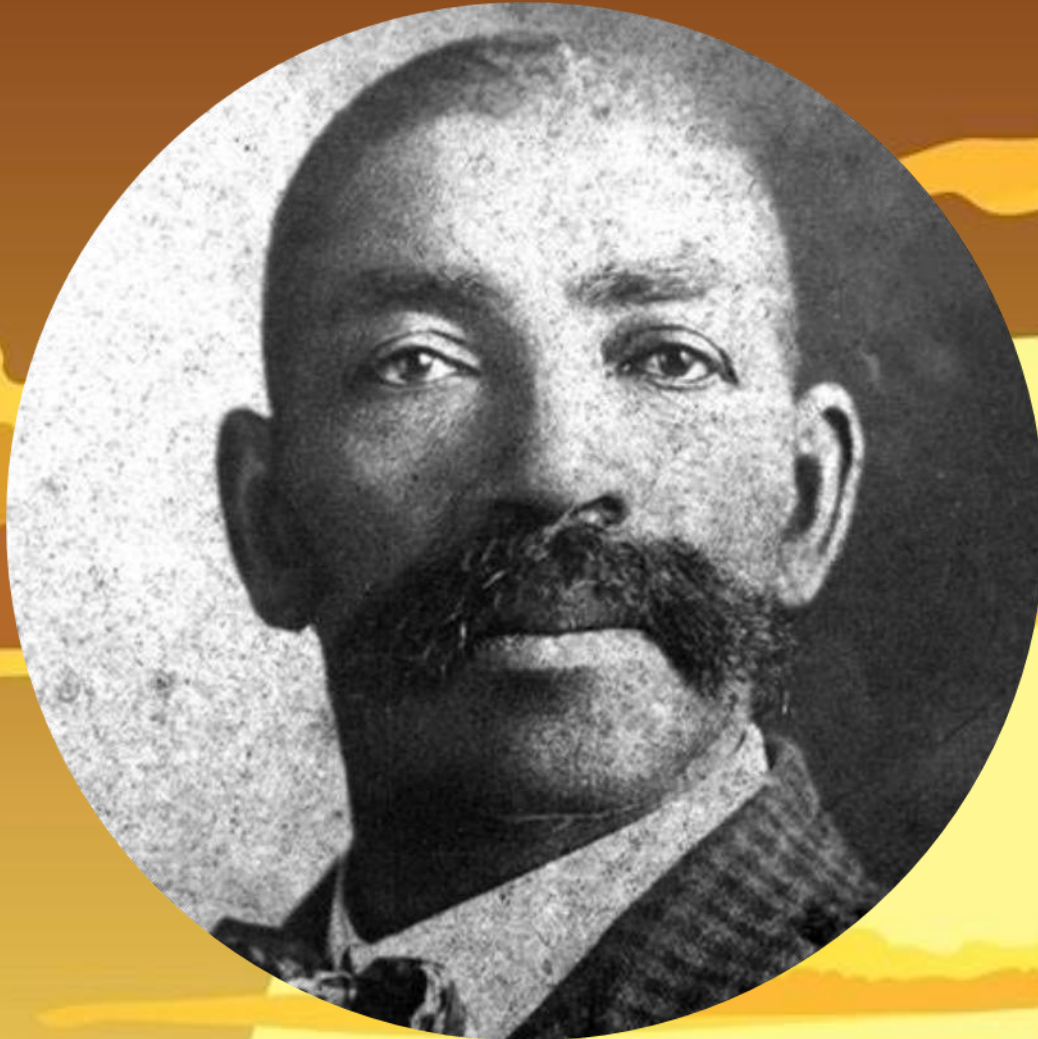
Wow, Harriet this is exciting information. Do you have anymore Black cowboys and cowgirls to share?

I sure do! The next cowboy is Nat Love. He has an interesting story.

Nat Love (1854-1921) was born into slavery in Nashville, Tennessee. He worked for the Duval Ranch as a mustanger. It was his job to bring horses from Old Mexico to Texas. According to some historians, Nat wrote his autobiography and embellished his unusually adventurous life. The book was published in 1907 and is considered one of the best accounts of a cowboy's life.

The Duval Ranch was a large cattle operation. Love was a drover and rode the Kansas Trail to Dodge City regularly. Later Love accepted a position at the Pete Gallinger Ranch in Arizona, where he drove cattle from Texas to the Great Plains to railheads in Kansas, Nebraska, and the Dakota Territory.





Bass Reeves (1838-1910) was a former slave from Arkansas who became a U.S. Marshall in 1875 in the vast area of Oklahoma before it became a state. During the Civil War, he became an excellent marksman with a rifle and pistol. He and his native American assistant brought thousands to justice and even arrested his son. Mary Fields (1832-1914), known as "Stagecoach Mary," was the second woman and first Black woman to be hired by the U.S. Postal Service at 60. She was 6 foot tall, rugged, carried a gun, and was beloved by the community in Cascade, Montana. She did not conform and was a symbol of Black female empowerment. Reeves and Fields were essential in taming the wild west.

Roxanne, this is Britt Johnson (1840-1871), a legendary Black cowboy from the West Texas frontier who was a slave of Moses Johnson and a foreman on his ranch. Johnson had a lot of freedom as the foreman of the ranch. Kiowa Indians killed Britt's son and kidnapped his wife and two daughters in the Elm Creek Raid in 1864. Johnson searched the summer, looking for his family throughout Texas. A lone Comanche helped him find his family. After they were reunited, he started a freighting business with three other blacks between Weatherford and Fort Grim. A Kiowa war party attacked their wagon, and although Johnson fought valiantly, killed him.





The 1956 movie, *The Searchers*, starring John Wayne as Britt Johnson, was about a man looking for his family. It included the actual event of Brett using his dead horse as cover from the Kiowa Indians.

Wow! This is amazing.



Thank you,
Harriet!

Jim Perry (1858 – 1918) was a drover who helped Bring the first longhorns to the XIT Ranch (“Ten in Texas”) and erected fencing on this largest fenced ranch in the world. Jim branded cattle, broke wild horses, and was known to be a spectacular roping cowboy.

Perry was mainly revered as a ranch-house cook and a chuck wagon cook. A cowboy would make \$30 a month, but a cook would earn anywhere from \$35 to \$60 a month. The success of a ranch was built on the fact that the cowboys were well-fed.

Jim also improved the cattle stock through breeding and introducing additional breeds to the herd. Perry’s reputation included his ability as a rider, roper, bronco buster, musician, and the best cook of all the ranches. The fact that he was an excellent fiddler made him a favorite with the other cowboys too.





Bill Pickett



Jessie Stahl

As smaller ranches replaced cattle empires, cowboys found new occupations in rodeos and Wild West shows. Bill Pickett was a master ranch hand who invented the art of bulldogging at rodeos. He would chase down a steer, grab its horns, bring him down and bite the steer's lip. Jessie Stahl was the best-known saddle bronc rider of the rodeos. Jessie was known for holding on to the reins with one hand and holding his hat in the air. Jessie was known for excellent control, strength, and agility. He achieved national fame for his efforts at rodeos.

Harriet, thank you so much for sharing this lesson about some of the cowboys and cowgirls that made America great!

Please come back soon for more **Talking History with Harriet and Roxanne.**





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