



The Weird Wild West: Tall Tales and Legends about the Frontier

Sean McLachlan, Charles River Editors

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*Includes pictures *Includes contemporary accounts of the legends *Includes a bibliography for further reading *Includes a table of contents Space may be the final frontier, but no frontier has ever captured the American imagination like the “Wild West”, which still evokes images of dusty cowboys, outlaws, gunfights, gamblers, and barroom brawls over 100 years after the West was settled. A constant fixture in American pop culture, the 19th century American West continues to be vividly and colorful portrayed not just as a place but as a state of mind. Even for those who travel through the West today, there are plenty of traces of the old times. Ghost towns still stand in remote parts of the desert and prairie, Native American rock art still tell their mute legends, and old prospectors’ mines still dot the hillsides. Even some of the places’ names, such as Bloody Basin, Arizona and Soldier’s Hill, New Mexico, have their stories to tell. In November 2014, one lucky archaeologist at Nevada’s Great Basin National Park spotted an old rifle leaning against a pine tree; the sun and wind had weathered the wooden stock until it was as gray as the tree trunk, making it almost invisible to passersby. When the gun was examined, it turned out to be a Winchester rifle. The serial number was still legible and records showed that it had been manufactured and shipped in 1882. Some prospector or hunter had set the rifle against a tree more than a century ago and never came back for it. It had been leaning there ever since. As popular as works about the West remain today, the Wild West captured the imagination of people all the way back to the days when it really was wild. Even in the 19th century, its fame spread thanks to dime novels, travelogues, Wild West shows, and theater plays, and people were thrilled by tales of exploration and gunfights. Naturally, in the process of settling the frontier, the adventures contained countless numbers of strange stories, ranging from tales of monsters and lost mines to those about hidden cities and men coming back from the dead. It was a vast, unexplored country, and many mysteries could hide in the unmapped mountain ranges and seemingly endless plains. The *Weird Wild West: Tall Tales and Legends about the Frontier* is a collection of tales about America’s frontier that range from the possible to the downright ridiculous. Some are adaptations of old folk tales immigrants brought with them or creations of overly eager newspaper reporters, but many have their basis in fact. Along with pictures and a bibliography, you will learn about the Weird Wild West like never before, in no time at all.

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Richard Delarosa:

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