

## *US History Cowboy Dictionary*

### **A**

**amigo, n.;** friend, pard, compadre.

**arroyo, n.;** a dry creek or river bed, watershed channel, or canyon.

### **B**

**boot-scoot, v.;** daince.

**brain tablet, n.;** a smoke, cigarette.

**buckaroo, n.;** a cowboy (used by them northeastern boys), comes from the Spanish term, "vaquero".

Note: You'll want to be mighty careful who you call a "buckaroo" in Texas, some of us don't like it.

**bush-up, v.;** what cattle do to hide from cowboys.

### **C**

**caballo (ca·va·yo), n.;** Spanish for horse.

**cayuse, (cai·use), n.;** TexMex for a horse.

**calf crop, n.;** calves produced by an outfit; usually measured by the seasonal ratio or percentage of newborn calves to cows.

**chaparral (sha·pa·ral), n.;** dense thicket or area of terrain with heavy undergrowth.

**chaps (shaps), n.;** leggin's, leather coverings for the legs. Derived from Spanish word, "chapaderos". Riles me up to no end when I hear folks callin' 'em "chaps" (with the "ch" sound). They're chaps (with an "sh" sound)! Chap is what the sun an' wind does your face or the saddle does your rump. Don't ever forget it - especially if you're a-ridin' for my outfit.

**chinks, n.;** (now this one's with a "ch" sound), short chaps that are usually fringed and extend to just below the knee. I like 'em when I'm a-shoeing a horse.

**chips, n.;** cow or buffalo manure; usually dried in the sun and used as fuel for fire to warm your bones or cook your grub when wood ain't handy.

**chuck, n.;** meal, food, grub.

**chuck-box, n.;** a box with a hinged cover to store food and is usually located on the back of the chuck wagon. The cover, when opened can be used as an eating or work table.

**chuck-eater, n.;** is the name applied to a young feller from back east who comes out to learn the game.

**chuckwagon, n.;** a wagon used on cattle drives or roundups to carry food, camp gear, etc. The center of all social gatherin's on the trail.

**cinch, n.;** strap that goes under a horse to secure the saddle.

**cinch-up, v.;** to tighten the cinch with the latigo. Also used for "brace yourself" or "get ready for a rough ride".

"Code of the West" - a gentleman's agreement. An enigmatic set rules we cowboys "just know", adhere to an' are plumb serious about. They are the code by which we live, work, get-along an' survive.

**compadre, n.;** see "amigo" or "pard".

**cookie, n.;** camp cook, "cusinero", "coozie".

**cookie duster, n.;** moustache.

**coozie, n.;** See "cusinero" and "cookie".

**corral rope, n.;** was used to make an enclosure for the horses at night, being spread about the bushes.

**cowpoke, n.;** stockyard worker, cowboy, drover.

**cow horse or cowpony, n.;** a horse trained to cut an' work cattle.

**cow-puncher or puncher, n.;** feed lot, auction or working cowboy (synonymous with cowboy or cowpoke).

**crow-hop, v.;** stiff legged jumps made by a horse in lieu of bucking.

**curry him out, v.;** means to rake a horse up and down the sides with spurs.

**cusinero, n.;** (Sp.: coo·see·nea·ro) cook.

**cuttin'-horse, n.;** the favored of all cow ponies, used for separating one or a lot of animals from a larger herd.

### **D**

**dally, n.;** tie, secure, wrap (as a rope to the saddle horn).

**dinero, (dee·nea·ro) n.;** money, pay, wages - what cowboys spend all month a-makin' and the first Saturday night of every month a-loosin'.

**dogie, (dough·gee), n.;** deriv. fm. dough gut; (it ain't doggy, it's **d←gie**) a calf with no mamma that walks around bawlin' all the time; also, a poet who writes free verse.

**draw, n.;** dry river, creek, or stream bed. v.;; to quickly remove one's shootin' iron or six-shooter from it's holster as in a deadly contest or self defense.

**dude, n.;** fancy dressin' city-slicker; not considered complementary by cowboys (by us Texas boys, anyway).

## E

**ear-mark, n.;** notch or notches, tears, missing portions, or cuts in calf's ear for owner identification and recognition. Also, what cowboys do with their teeth to one another during brawls on Saturday nights.

## F

**frijoles (free·ho·lees), n.;** beans (usually pinto or "red" beans). Mainstay of the cowboy appetite. Also known as "musical fruit" - you figger it out.

**fixin' (fix·in), adv.;** forthwith, immediately, straight away, without further adou. This is probably the most significant word in the cowboy's lingo. "I'm fixin' to fix the fence." Cowboys have been "fixin'" to do things since the first cowboy was knee-high to a grasshopper. (Procrastinators have given this word a bad rap.) v.;; **fix;** to repair. n.;; **fixin's;** used interchangeably with condiments, side dishes, trimmin's, makin's, etc.

## G

**galves, n.;** another word for spurs.

**gatherin', v.;** musterin' the herd or, n. a muster of folks.

**gelding, n.;** a castrated horse; horse used for working.

**gringo, (green·go), n.;** Tex-Mex and cowboy lingo for Caucasian (white) male - considered non-defamatory, unless tone of voice indicates otherwise, or is preceded with the English or Spanish equivalent of "no-good" or "low-down, or both.

## H

**hackamore, n.;** a halter with reins and no bit

**header, n.;** the cowboy who ropes a calf's head for branding or in rodeo competition; works in unison with a heeler.

**heeler, n.;** the cowboy who ropes the back legs of calf for branding or in rodeo competition; works in unison with a header.

**hog-tie, v.;** tie legs with a piggin'-string, as with immobilizing a hog.

**hombre (om·brae), n.;** used interchangeably for man, male, mankind, or human being. Not to be confused with "homey".

**hondo (on·dough), n.;** the 'eye' at the front-end of the rope through which the other end passes to make a loop.

**hood, n.;** camp cook's helper.

**hooks, n.;** spurs.

**hoolihan, n.;** loop of lariat tossed with a backhand flip, as with ropin' horses.

**horse wranglers, n.;** the cowboys in charge of the horses and rustled wood for the cook. During the old drives it was not uncommon for a man to change mounts six times a day.

**hull, n.;** saddle.

## I

## J

**"John B.", n.;** hat; more specifically, a Stetson hat.

## K

**kack, n.;** saddle

## L

**lariat, n.;** originally a 60' rope of hand-braided leather thongs. Now, used interchangeably with "maguey", "rope" and "lasso".

**lasso, n.;** see "rope" and "lariat".

**latigo, n.;** leather strap attaching cinch to saddle.

**"Lineback Dunn", pn.;** Dunn horse with a black line running down its back.

**lingo (lean-go), n.;** fm the Spanish ligua (tongue). Language, dialect, or terminology said to be specific to person or group.

## M

**maguey (ma-gay, also ma-gee) n.;** a preferred 'grass rope' made from the fibre of the agave plant; usually made by hand. Used interchangeably with "rope", "lariat", "lasso". To learn more, visit this page by Bernard S. Mason, at the Inquiry Net website.

**maverick, n.;** an unbranded (owner unknown) bull or steer ranging wild.

**mohado (mo-how), n.;** term referring to an illegal alien from Mexico - considered non-defamatory, unless tone of voice indicates otherwise.

**morral, n.;** the feed bag that hangs from a horse's head out of which it eats.

**mountain oysters, n.;** calf testicles (usually deep-fried) served for human consumption. Goat fries and turkey fries have also been referred to by this term.

## N

**nester, n.** squatter or sod-buster; a farmer who homesteads open range ranchlands.

**night-guard, (or "rider"), n.;** assures herd security at night and keeps check on herd disposition.

**night horse, n.;** the one that is tied up at night and used to rustle the other mounts in the morning

## O

**outfit, n.;** a group of people associated in some activity; esp. the hands, ramrods and bosses on a working ranch or otherwise involved in a similar activity. v.; to rig, prepare or set-up for task(s) ahead.

**outlaw, n.;** a bandit; also a contrary horse.

## P

**pard, n.;** also, pardner, derived from partner. See "amigo" and "compadre".

**piggin'- string, n.;** a short piece of rope used to 'hog-tie' a calf's legs

**polishin' beltbuckles, adv.;** daincin'.

**pooch, n.;** a dessert given cowboy on the range or going up the trail. Made from tomatoes, bread and sugar, and when dished out to the "chuck eaters" with the remark, "Your pay is raised."

**powders, n.;** orders; "Go and get your powders from the boss," means "the boss wants to see you."

## Q

**queer, adj.;** unusual, strange, not normally encountered.

**quien sabe (kin sau-vy), ?.;** Spanish for "Who knows?" also used as, "Nobody knows."

## R

**ramrod, n.;** ranch or trail foreman, usually the first or second in charge in most outfits. The person responsible for getting the work done.

**ramuda (ra-mooda), n.;** herd of horses.

**"Ride for the Brand", adv.;** bein' loyal to your outfit.

**ridin' drag, v.;** behind the herd - eatin' dust.

**ridin' flank, v.;** alongside the herd.

**ridin' point, v.;** head of the herd.

**rig or rigin', n.;** specific materials or implements for usual duty; as a saddle and tack for ridin' a horse. v.; provide, dress-out or prepare for task(s) ahead.

**rode hard an' put-up wet, ?.;** exhausted, obviously fatigued.

**rope, n.;** strand of intertwined and twisted fibers, or strips of hide, etc. 30 to 60 feet in length. Cowboy's main general purpose tool and labor saver. See also "maguey", "lariat", "twine" and "lasso"

## S

**savvy, v.;** from the Spanish word "saber"; to know or understand, get the idea.

**section, n.;** land measurement of one square mile, 640 acres.

**shootin' iron, n.;** pistol, handgun, six-shooter.

**singe'n hair, (hard "G" sound), v.;** branding calves.

**six-shooter, n.;** see shootin' iron.

**snoose, n.;** snuff.

**sod-buster, n.;** see "nester".

**sombrero (som·brea·ro), n.;** hat.

**sougan, n.;** quilt, bedroll. Usually three quilts and a cotton pillow. Also called a "velvet couch" or a "hot roll."

**spool your bed, v.;** means to roll your "sougan" or bed roll.

**stampede, n.;** an out-of-control, runaway herd.

**stringin' a whizzer, v.;** telling a windy (lie or tall tale).

**sunning his sides, v.;** to pitch or buck. A pitching horse weaves from side to side as well as up and down.

**swallowed his head, v.;** horse is said to have "swallowed his head" when he unexpectedly begins to pitch.

## T

**tack, n.;** a cowboy's working gear.

**tally-book, n.;** journal or notebook used to keep track of livestock counts.

**top-screw, n.;** a ranch hand who has been on the ranch for years and knows the business of that particular ranch from top to bottom. See "Waddie", another name for the same individual.

**trailing cattle, v.;** taking cattle on an extended trip from one place to another.

**turn the pack, v.;** an expression for a horse throwing its rider.

**twine, n.;** rope, lariat, lasso.

**twine-twirler, n.;** a roper, one who ropes.

## U

## V

**vaca (baca), n.;** cow.

**vamos (ba·mos), v.;** means, "Let's go", or "We go".

**vamoose (baa·moose), v.;** cowboy lingo for "vamos".

**vaquero (ba·keh·ro), n.;** one who tends cattle. Spanish for "cowboy".

## W

**waddie, n.;** working cowboy (this word ain't used much in Texas).

**wild-rag, n.;** bandana (used by the northeastern boys).

**windy, n.;** incredible story, tall tale.

**wrangler, n.;** one who tends the ramuda. Also, used interchangeably with "cowboy".

**wrestlin' pots 'n pans, v.;** reference to the duties of a hood or coozie.

## X

## Y

## Z