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You've Got To Fake It

By Donald Hamilton
(Second of Two Parts)

In its widest interpretation, the Western story covers a period of some seventy or eighty years beginning around 1820. This earliest time is the period of the



trappers and the mountain men, of buckskin shirts and Hawken rifles. Kit Carson and Jim Bridger were the great names of this era; Davy Crockett didn't get west until it was just about time for him to die at the Alamo.

The trappers faded out in the 1840's. They were the victims of a number of circumstances, one of which was the invention of the silk hat, which put an end to the profits from beaver trapping, since there was no longer a market for the skins.

This was a wonderful twenty years to live, for those who liked it; and it's a wonderful twenty years to read about. I doubt if any group of men has ever experienced the same feeling of freedom and self-reliance. But the era has one big flaw for the writer. It has heroes by the hundreds, but it has no heroines. Except in the Mexican southwest, there were no white women around. Most of the trappers had Indian wives at one time or another, but it's hard to make red-hot romance out of these business-like arrangements, although Hollywood is right in there trying.

The next period is that of the gold-rush, starting in 1848 and '49. Throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century gold and silver were going to be discovered all over the western part of

the country, and floods of men — the women came later — were going to come after it along the old trails and new ones. Gold gave the westward migration its big start, although settlers had been drifting west over the Oregon Trail long before it was found.

Here we have the first sources of two great types of Western fiction: the gold-camp story and the wagon-train yarn. Both escape the deficiency of the previous era. They soon had women available. The first act of these women was to draw themselves up haughtily at the sight of the trappers' Indian wives — another reason why the beautiful Indian maiden has two strikes against her as a book heroine. Her love affair with her mountain man is doomed; the minute white women appear on the scene she becomes just another squaw, and if her husband sticks by her he becomes a squaw man and no longer acceptable to respectable people.

The Civil War came next; and right after that we come to the true honest-to-God Western, the cattle story. It begins in Texas with a million long-horned cattle running wild. Everybody had been too busy fighting the war to bother with them. Well, here are the cattle in Texas and markets in the east, but how to get the two together? Some bright and brave Texan said 'drive 'em, and the first trail herd was on its way.

Now let us note that except for the Indians who had followed the yearly migration of the buffalo, nobody out there had ever bothered much with traveling north and south. Everybody was going east and west, mostly west. All the big trails ran that way: the Oregon Trail, the Santa Fe Trail, and all the others. The first railroads were all east-and-west affairs; the idea was to get across the plains as quickly as possible. They were known at the time as the Great American Desert, and although the Indians had lived there for centuries, people still weren't quite sure they were fit for human habitation.

So the idea of driving north out of Texas was really quite a bold one. The man who first crossed the Red River with a herd of wild-eyed longhorns was a brave man and a man of imagination. He had rivers and deserts to cross, in-

ans and outlaws to fight — and when finally got to Baxter Springs in Kansas the farmers turned out to greet him with double-barreled shotguns. They were afraid of Texas fever spreading to their own stock.

This is the great period of the Western story, and it actually lasted considerably less than thirty years. It was a short period to have so much written about it, both true and false, but you'll have to admit it was a lulu while it lasted.

At the end of that time the buffalo were gone, the northern ranges had been stocked with Texas cattle, wiped out in the great blizzard of '87, and restocked with more profitable and less romantic types of beef imported from the east and from Oregon; barbed wire had leveled the free range; gold had been discovered in fabulous quantities in various widely scattered places that boomed and died; and the western Indians, from the Sioux in the north to the Apaches in the south, had staged their greatest battles, won them, and been defeated in the end and put on reservations. And all during that time people kept coming, coming, bringing the railroads with them. By the turn of the century it was all over and the men who had been a part of it were beginning to sigh about the good old days when you could ride all day and never see a fence.

That's the period with which the Western story deals; a period that begins with a few men in buckskin wading the Rocky Mountain streams to set their beaver traps, and ends with the country settled from ocean to ocean. It's probable that the world never saw anything like this explosion of people across a whole continent, first west with the gold and then north with the cattle.

Somehow, more than any other figure, the cowboy has become a symbol for the whole phenomenon. Maybe it should have been the trapper, or the prospector — even more probably it should have been the farmer with his plow. But the cowboy, from the very beginning, was the man who caught the imagination of the folks back east, including those who made their living in fiction. He still is. That's why we write about him.

What's Cookin'

By Leslie Ernenwein

W. R. BURNETT, author of *LITTLE CAESAR*, *HIGH SIERRA*, dozens of books, screenplays, whose recent *BRIER GROUND* is a fine western novel, has joined the Hollywood Committee of WWA. Bill's enthusiasm for the new projects, magazine and television, is incandescent. Messrs. Cox, Ballard, Hawkins and Thompson welcome him to the fold with open arms and are worrying their little minds trying to find something for him to get hoit of . . . like work.

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The Hollywood Committee would like to make it clear to WWA members that Goodson-Todman want their literary credits. Harris Kalleman does not expect nor desire screen or television credits from us.

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The term "credit" derives from the motion picture business, in which it does designate that the writer has contributed to a screenplay which has been produced and shown in theaters. Television picked up the term. As more and more published writers entered the field, it has become generic. A "credit" means that your name has been on a published or filmed piece of work.

Bill Cox reports that in talking with the San Fernando Valley distributor of paperbacks he learned that westerns are slowly coming back in that section of California. After a slump, several good "items" began to sell, notably those with a touch of sex. That is, the man said, books which acknowledge that men are men and women are after them for more than cakes and ale. That's what the man said.

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The requests for television scripts from Goodson-Todman began with a landslide and petered out. Harris Kalleman is satisfied but the Hollywood Com-