

Hands-on Items



Bandana – Bandanas, also known as "snot rags," came in either silk or cotton, with the silk being preferred. Silk was cool in the summer and warm in the winter and was perfect to strain water from a creek or river stirred up by cattle. Cowboys favored bandanas that were colorful as well as practical. With all the dust from the cattle, especially if you rode in the rear of the herd (drag), a bandana was a necessity.



Shirt - The drover always carried an extra shirt, as 3,000 head of cattle kicked up a considerable amount of dust. The drovers wanted a clean shirt available on the off-chance that the cowboy would be sent to a settlement (few and far between) to secure additional supplies. Crossing rivers would get your clothes wet and cowboys would need a clean and dry shirt to wear. Many times they just went into the river without shirt and pants. For superstitious reasons many cowboys did not favor red shirts.

Cuffs - Cuffs protected the cowboy's wrist from rope burns and his shirt from becoming frayed on the ends. Many cuffs were highly decorated to reflect the individual's taste. Students may try on these cuffs.



Long underwear – Cowboys sometimes called these one-piece suits "long handles." They wore long underwear in summer and winter and often kept them on while crossing a deep river, which gave them a measure of modesty. Long underwear also provided extra warmth. People usually wore white or red "Union Suits" in the West.



Quirt – A quirt is a small whip that cowboys use to tell horses to move. Some cowboys preferred to use quirts instead of spurs because spurs could get caught in the stirrup of the saddle. Cowboys also used quirts to drive stubborn cattle along.

Spurs & straps – Cowboys used spurs to enforce commands to their horses. Depending on the drover's finances, they might have spurs inlaid with silver and cut into fancy forms such as "snake-heads" and "gal legs." Later spurs included a piece of metal that clinked against the spur called "jingle-bobs." Spur straps could be plain leather or have designs impressed into the leather.



Gun holster – Firearms were essential for survival the cattle drive. Cowboys used guns to protect themselves and the herd from wild animals and cattle rustlers. Students may try on this holster with the other pieces of clothing in the trunk.

Shotgun chaps – The correct pronunciation of "chaps" is "shaps." These are "shotgun" chaps, which protected the cowboy from various hazards on the trail such as mesquite thorns, small branches, and rattlesnakes. Shotgun chaps were the earliest type of chaps and they are straight and narrow like the barrel of a shotgun. Some chaps had pockets, and most had fridge along the sides. Students can try on the chaps and see what it is like to walk around in them.



Trade Books

Duncan, Hall. *The Wild Adventure of Oklahoma Joe's 10-Gallon Hat*. 2007.

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Gibbons, Gail. *Cowboys and Cowgirls, Yippee-Yay!* New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 1998.

Teague, Mark. *How I Spent My Summer Vacation*. New York: Scholastic, 1996.

Whitney, Lousie Doak and Gleaves Whitney. *B is for Buckaroo: A Cowboy Alphabet*. Chelsea, MI: Sleeping Bear Press, 2003.