



# **ADVENTURERS OF THE WILD WEST**

An illustrated history of the early  
days of the American West







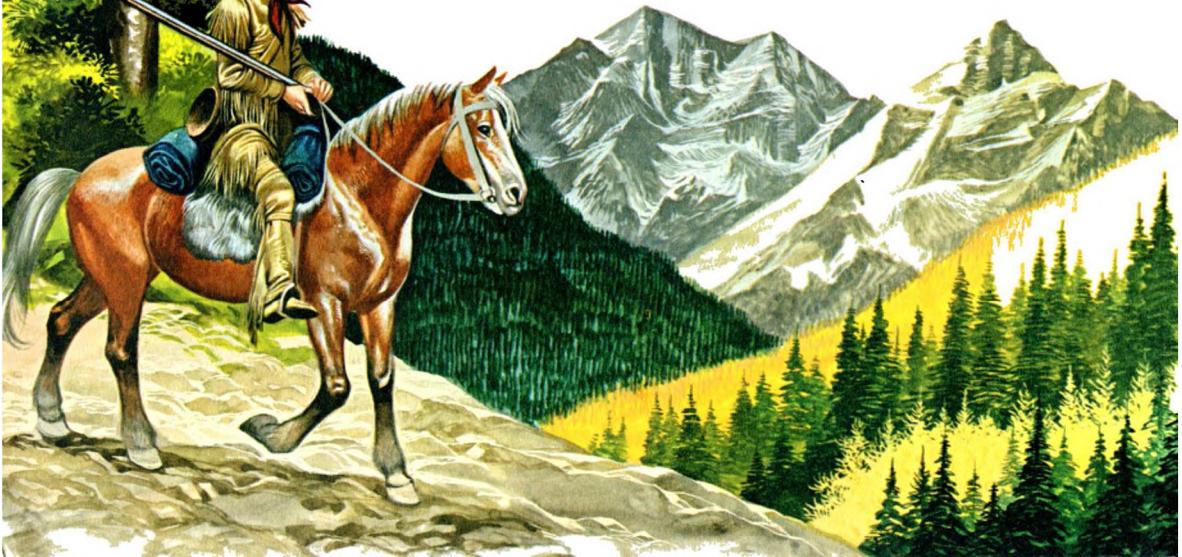




# **ADVENTURERS OF THE WILD WEST**

**Written and illustrated by  
Ronald Embleton**

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## JEDEDIAH SMITH

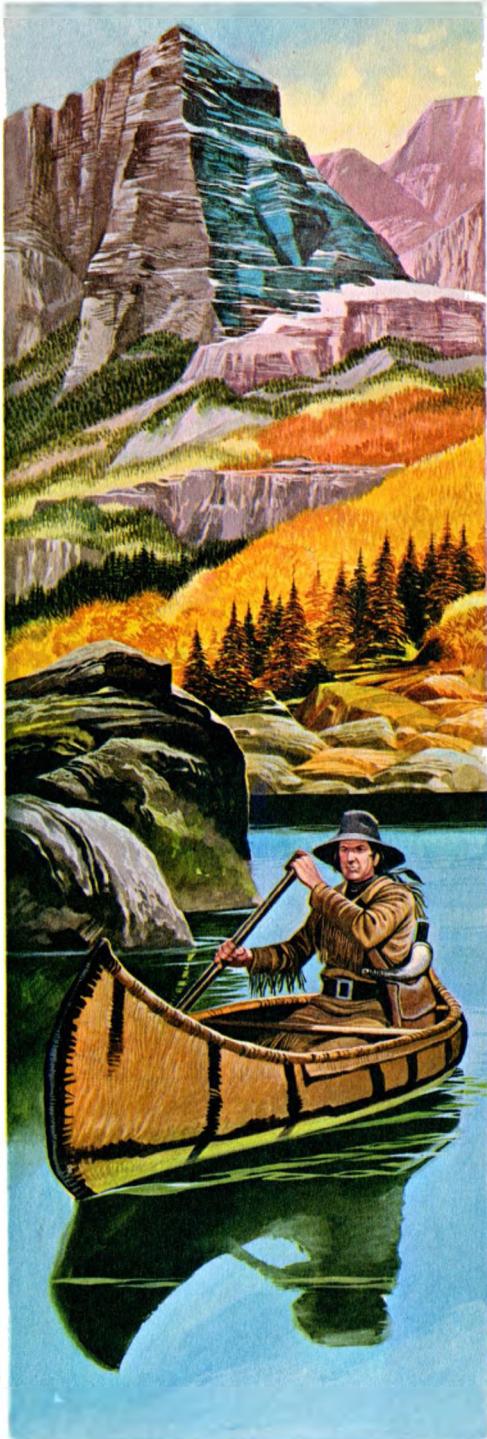


In 1803 the Emperor Napoleon ceded to the Americans his colonial territories in North America. For fifteen million dollars Congress bought the vast territory of Louisiana from the French, an area which doubled the size of the United States. The explorers Lewis and Clarke blazed the first trail across the new territory to the Western Ocean and in their wake followed the mountain men. The big fur-trading companies, anxious to exploit the new territories, sent out their expeditions to explore the great mountain ranges and winding rivers and to trap the beaver that were to be found in countless millions in the lush valleys.

Living, trading and fighting with the Indians, the mountain men were hardy, colourful characters who adopted the ways of the red men completely. They dressed in fringed buckskin and employed the same skill and cunning in battle. Like the Indians, they depended on the buffalo to supply their food and they slept wrapped in the warmth of a robe made from its hide.

Their incredible hardihood was legendary. Men like Peg-leg Tom Smith, who amputated his own leg after it was shattered by an Indian musket ball; Jim Clyman who, cut off from his companions by Blackfoot war parties in unmapped country, walked for eighty days before staggering into the safety of Fort Atkinson—a distance of 700 miles. Or Osborne Russell who, with two Blackfoot arrows in his hip and thigh, eluded his attackers and on home-made crutches hobbled one hundred and fifty miles to safety. Such a man was Jedediah Smith.

Born in the Susquehanna Valley, New York, in 1799, he was one of twelve children.



At an early age he felt the call of the great West and, bidding his family farewell, set off for the new frontiers. He made his way, like many young adventurers, to St. Louis, the largest of the frontier settlements. It was from this bustling town that the caravans of fur traders set out on their wilderness tours and where returning mountain men and Indians came with their long strings of pack-horses and mules laden with valuable furs.

The bulk of the fur trade belonged to the Missouri Fur Company but the promise of handsome profits was always attracting new speculators.

General William Ashley and his partner, Andrew Henry, decided to invest in the fur trade and they put an advertisement in the St. Louis newspapers for 'One hundred adventurous and enterprising young men to ascend the Missouri River to its source and there to be employed for from one to three years trapping for furs'.

The one hundred men were a motley crew of vagabonds, mountain men and adventurers, and among them was young Jedediah Smith.

In May 1822, he made his first trip into the mountains. The advance party, under Andrew Henry, made their base at the mouth of the Yellowstone River and were soon assembling a good store of beaver pelts, but their progress was hampered by the lack of pack-horses to transport the furs. Henry dispatched Jedediah Smith to make his way back to the main party who, under General Ashley, were coming up river in a flotilla of flat boats, and acquaint him with their needs.

Smith journeyed down the swift-flowing Missouri by canoe and made contact with the main party below the Arikara Indian villages, and it was among these Indian towns that General

Ashley decided to trade for the much needed horses.

The Arikara were a treacherous band and the General approached them with caution. He anchored his boats in midstream, leaving most of his men aboard them, while a small party went ashore to trade.

The Arikaras greeted the white men with enthusiasm and all the signs of friendship. The trade was made and the trappers left the villages with nineteen horses.

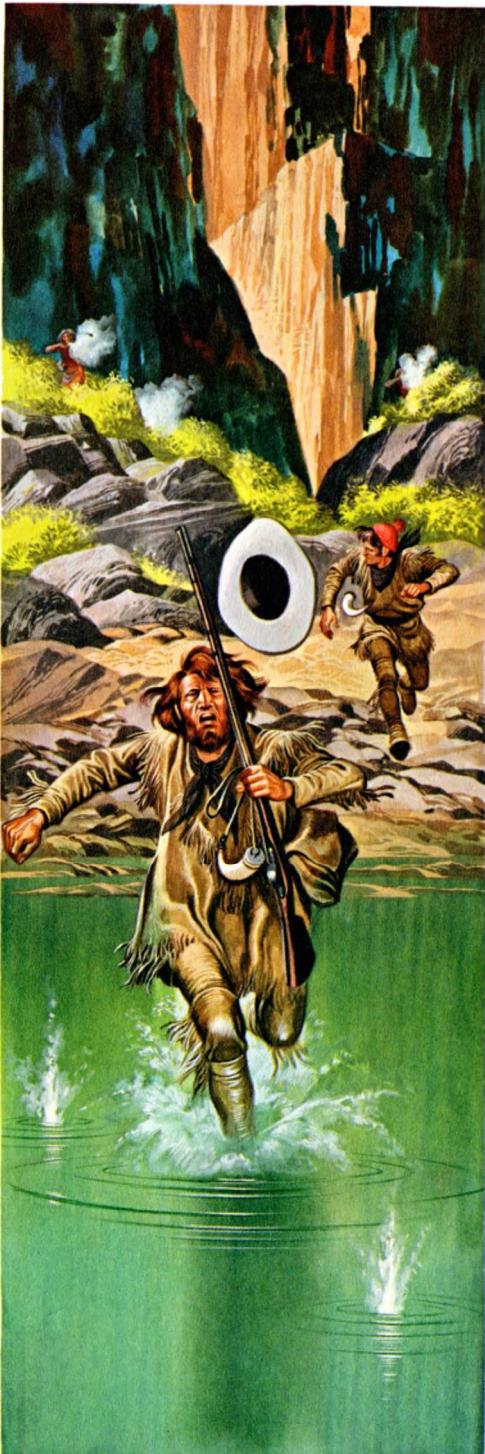
It was only when the white men had reached the river bank that the Indians showed their real intentions. A fusillade of musket balls thudded into the unwary trappers. Out in the open they were an easy target and within minutes a dozen men and all the horses were killed.

The remainder, unable to fight back against the Indians, who were concealed from view amongst the rocks and vegetation along the shore, flung themselves into the river and struck out for the boats. Only a few of them escaped, to be hauled thankfully aboard the flat boats by their comrades. Jedediah Smith was one of them. The expedition could do nothing but turn about and retreat.

Soon afterwards Andrew Henry's party was driven back by Blackfoot war parties and the whole venture seemed doomed. But General Ashley was not a man to be easily discouraged.

In September 1823, he sent Andrew Henry out once more by an overland route that gave the Arikara villages a wide berth and, recognising the qualities of leadership in Jedediah Smith, sent him out with sixteen men into unmapped country.

Among Jedediah's companions were many legendary figures of the fur trade: Edward Rose, the giant Mulatto, Wil-



liam Sublette and Jim Clyman, and the famous Indian fighter and scout, Tom Fitzpatrick.

Their route led them through the badlands of Dakota. Under a molten sky they rode through the tortured landscape, their faces blackened and cracked by the blistering sun.

In that dry inferno their water supply ran out. They took turns to fan outwards in circles in the search for water, but could find none. The waterholes had dried up.

Two of the trappers fell from their saddles. Smith buried them up to their necks in the sand to conserve their body moisture while the rest of them spurred their flagging mounts in the desperate search for water.

It was Jim Clyman who raised the shout that saved their lives. He had found a small pool and joyfully they raced back to their two companions with the life-giving liquid.

The black hills now loomed up ahead of them and the landscape changed. Ravines and mountain streams cut through the wooded landscape. Finding a trail among the high ridges and plunging chasms had the party travelling in circles in their search for a way through.

The line of trappers was strung out and making its way along a river bed in a deep ravine. Suddenly, with an enraged roar, a huge grizzly bear broke cover.

Jedediah Smith, leading his horse, was nearest to the enraged animal. Before he could bring his rifle to his shoulder the savage brute was upon him.

His companions soon killed the bear, but not before Jedediah had suffered a severe mauling.

The trappers patched up their leader's wounds and within ten days

Jedediah Smith was in the saddle again and laughingly claiming to be "the only man to have had his head in a grizzly's mouth and live to tell the tale".

Winter was closing in now and wearily the trappers struggled over the Owl Creek Mountains, lashed by gale and blizzard.

On the Wind River they found a village of friendly Crow Indians and sat out the worst months around their campfires.

In February 1824, they were on the move again but the weather was appalling. Gales made it impossible to light a campfire and they were nearly frozen by the incessant icy rain.

On the skyline loomed the great menacing barrier of the Rocky Mountains. Jedediah Smith camped his men in a sheltered valley and rode on ahead. His route led him to a great gap in the mountain range. It was South Pass.

Joyfully he rode back to his companions with the news. They were the first white men to make the western crossing of the Rocky Mountains, and once through the pass they found themselves in a rich and fertile valley teeming with beaver.

It was the Green River Valley. Never had they seen country more rich with game. By the end of the season they had a fortune in furs.

For the next two years Jedediah Smith roamed the mountain wilderness on behalf of Ashley's Fur Company, earning the company a fortune.

Early in 1826 General William Ashley, rich from the fur trade, decided to sell out his interests in the company. Jedediah Smith and two friends, Jackson and Sublette, took over.

In the summer Smith was on the trail again. With fifteen men he set off to explore the country to the south of





the Great Salt Lake. It was a barren, soul-destroying wilderness after the lush valleys of the Green River. The ground was broken and cracked, and the waterholes few and far between. The horses suffered terribly.

After a brief rest in a Mojave Indian village they crossed the cruel inferno of the Mojave Desert and toiled through the San Bernardino Mountains. On the other side of the mountains a dreamlike landscape awaited them after the terrible privations of the desert: rich grassland and forest, watered by streams that tumbled out of the mountains and teeming with beaver and game.

They had reached California.

The hunting was going well when one of Smith's men came riding into camp. Mexican soldiers were riding into the valley. California was Mexican territory and the Governor did not

take kindly to armed Americans in his territory. The fur trappers were ordered to leave by the same route they came by.

Jedediah Smith had no intention of returning through the waterless deserts.

Once clear of the Mexicans, he swung northwards and came into the beautiful San Joaquin Valley. Here he and his men hunted the beaver until his pack-horses could hold no more, and then set out for the rendezvous with his partners at the Great Salt Lake as arranged.

The long string of pack-horses set off.

Ahead of them Smith scouted the trails, looking with growing concern at the formidable barrier that stretched along the horizon directly in their path: the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

For three hundred miles he rode through the foothills of the mighty

range, searching for a pass that would lead him through to the other side, but without luck. There was only one way he could go—over the top.

His men and horses by this time were exhausted and unable to undertake such a journey. Smith resolved to leave his men to rest and recuperate while he made the crossing. He would return to them with a fresh expedition and supplies. Taking two of his men and several horses, he left the camp and toiled up through the foothills.

It took them eight days to cross the jagged peaks and then, when ragged and weary they stumbled down the eastern slopes, they saw the great wasteland of Nevada stretching out before them.

For nearly a month they journeyed eastward, eating their horses as they died under them. The sun beat down mercilessly, numbing their brains and

parching their throats.

Finally one of the last three horses stumbled and fell, spilling its rider into the dust. Robert Evans could not find the strength to get up. He crawled under the shelter of some rocks and told his companions to go on without him.

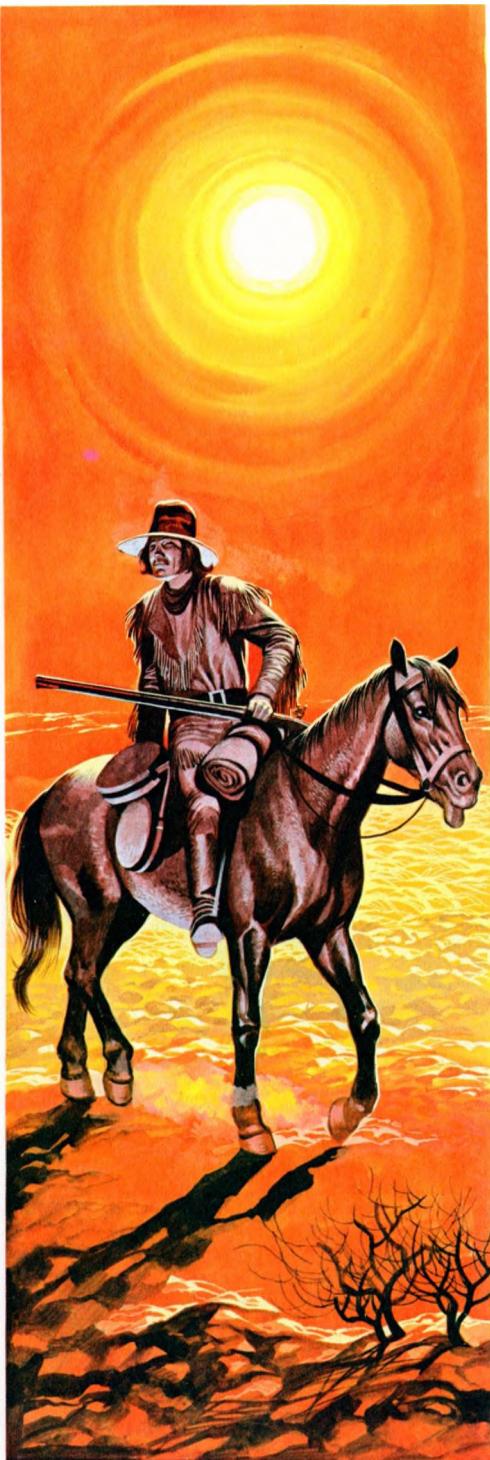
There was no arguing, all three men knew their plight. They had practically no water left.

Evans watched as his two companions rode on and disappeared into the shimmering heat haze. He never expected to see them again.

A few days later he heard shouts. With the last of his strength he raised himself up and to his amazement saw his two companions riding back. They had found a waterhole and had come back to save him from a miserable death.

In July 1827, the three men rode into





the rendezvous at Salt Lake.

Within two weeks Jedediah Smith had left once more for California. With eighteen men and two years' supplies he set out along the trail he had blazed with the previous expedition.

Disaster overtook them on the Colorado River. Smith was ferrying his supplies across the river when, without warning, Mojave Indians attacked. Ten men waiting on the bank were cut down.

Smith and his eight remaining men made the river crossing under a hail of bullets and dashed for cover.

Screaming Mojaves closed in. Smith gave the signal and a volley of rifle fire cut down the Indian leaders and took the heart out of the war party. They melted away.

The trappers waited until nightfall and then rode out into the Mojave Desert. The Indians did not follow, and Smith led his men over the long, weary trails to join up with the men left behind on the previous expedition.

It was a joyful reunion. The waiting trappers had almost given up hope. Within a few weeks the men and horses were in good shape and the expedition loaded up their horses.

Trading with the Indians, the party trapped and hunted its way northwards toward the Columbia River.

One night, while Smith and two of his men were scouting, hostile Indians moved in on his camp. The three men heard the gunfire and raced for their camp.

It was too late, the camp was swarming with Indians and they could see the sprawled bodies of their comrades. The three mountain men retreated from the scene, appalled at the fate of the men with whom they had shared so many hardships and adventures.

On August 10th 1828, they limped into Fort Vancouver to find Arthur Black, one of their party, waiting for them. He was the only other survivor of the ill-fated expedition.

In 1830 Jedediah Smith sold out his interests in the fur trade and returned to St. Louis. He was a prosperous man, but the idea of settling down did not appeal to him.

The Santa Fe Trail to Mexico was booming and great wagon caravans were travelling the route and making fortunes trading with the Mexican settlements. Jedediah joined the new venture and in April 1831 he left St. Louis with a line of covered wagons loaded with trade goods.

The trail was new to the mountain man and while crossing the Cimarron Desert they became lost. The situation became desperate when the water supply began to run out.

It was a familiar problem to Jedediah Smith. He rode out alone to find a waterhole. The stony ground reflected back the burning heat of the sun, distorting the landscape.

Shielding his eyes, Jedediah could make out the line of the Cimarron River in the shimmering light. As he came closer he could see that the River had dried out and the river bed was flaked and cracked. He dismounted and began to dig in the sand. He became aware of another presence when long shadows appeared on the ground around him. He looked up into the savage faces of the dreaded Comanches, scourge of both red and white man.

Weeks later Indians rode into a trading post in the Mexican settlements. Amongst the goods they brought were the weapons and equipment of Jedediah Smith. He died the way he had lived, courageously and fighting to the last.



# DAVY CROCKETT



Davy Crockett was born in Greene County, Tennessee, on August 17th 1786.

As a young man he soon acquired a reputation as a hunter and marksman. In 1813 he served with distinction under Andrew Jackson in the war against the Creek Indians and became a Colonel in the Tennessee Militia.

On a wave of popularity he was elected a Member of the State Legislature and in 1827 was elected to the National House of Representatives where his backwoods humour made him a conspicuous figure.

But he was a backwoodsman at heart and his overriding passion was for the lonely forest trails and the excitement of the hunt. With his dogs he would set off into the wilderness to lay in a winter supply of meat for his family and those of his neighbours.

One evening, as he was about to call in the dogs after a successful day's hunting, they suddenly picked up the scent of a grizzly bear and took off like the wind.

Davy jogged along in their wake, listening to the baying of the dogs in the distance as they gave chase. The baying changed to barking and yelping, as he knew it would. The bear would soon weary of the chase and seek refuge in a tree. Once the bear was treed, the dogs would snarl and yelp at the base of the tree until their master appeared to shoot the bear out of its refuge.

On this particular night Davy Crockett was having some difficulty locating his dogs. The light was fading fast and the ground over which he was travelling was split with fissures and crevasses. In the gloom he had great difficulty picking his way through to the excited dogs, yapping and leaping at the foot of the tree.

When he did finally arrive at the scene, he could barely make out the shape of the bear in the branches overhead. It was impossible to be sure of his shot, as the bear was just a shapeless, dark mass and it was impossible to distinguish head from tail.

The hunter took aim and fired. The dark shape did not move.

He reloaded and fired again.

Suddenly all hell broke loose. The bear was on the ground and among the dogs.

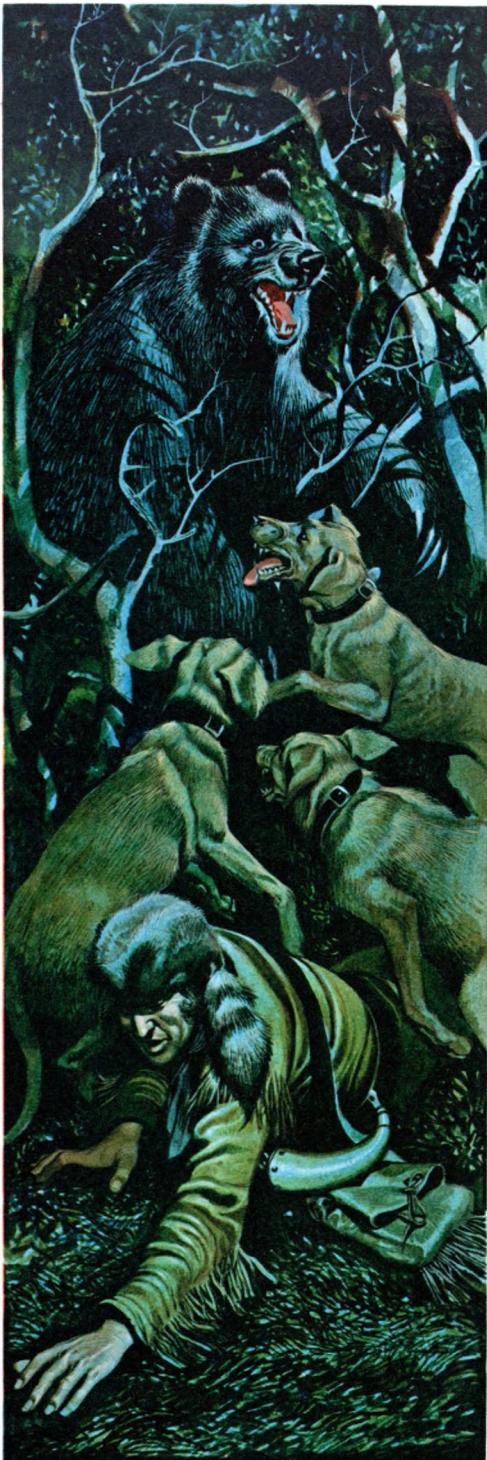
Davy Crockett stood helplessly as the yelping, snarling animals rolled and thrashed around him in the darkness. He drew his hunting knife, and dogs and bear crashed about in the undergrowth like a tornado.

It was now quite dark and Davy could see practically nothing, only glimpses of flashing teeth and eyes around him.

Suddenly the whole dark, sprawling mass disappeared into a shallow crevasse. He peered down, trying to make out the bear's shape in the fighting, snapping, seething mass of animals. He pressed the long barrel of his gun down into the black fur beneath him and fired.

The enraged bear erupted from the crevasse, the dogs clinging to him or yelping after him, and in the mêlée Davy Crockett lost his gun. On his knees he groped for the weapon amidst the flailing legs of the snarling animals but could not find it.

Once more the furious knot of animals rolled into the crevasse and this time Davy leapt in after them, determined to put an end to the chaos. He groped in the blackness for the bear and felt for its shoulder. Tangling his left hand in its fur to mark the vital spot, he plunged his hunting knife in to the hilt. The knife found its mark





and the bear slumped dead.

Wearily Davy Crockett climbed out of the crevasse and called off the dogs.

The night was intensely black. No moonlight penetrated the thick cloud layer and Davy realised that he was soaked to the skin. A fine rain was falling that he had not noticed in the mêlée.

As he stood up he felt the icy wind and knew that he was in trouble. In the dark he groped around for kindling wood, but everything was soaking wet. His hands were numb and he could feel his clothes beginning to freeze on him.

After what seemed an eternity he managed to coax a flame from the pile of wet wood, but try as he might he could not get the fire going.

Without a fire he knew he had little chance of surviving the night. The icy wind was moaning through the tree-tops and he found it increasingly difficult to move. His body was stiffening and he knew that if he could not keep his blood circulating he would freeze to death by the morning.

Some short distance away he could make out the shape of a blanched pine. It was bare and smooth to a height of about thirty feet.

Slapping his arms against his sides and running on the spot, he managed to restore himself enough to climb the tree up to its branches. Then, locking his arms and legs around the trunk, he slid to the ground. The friction warmed his limbs and body and made him feel considerably better.

All through the night he climbed the tree and slid to the ground, watched by his faithful dogs, until at last the sun rose, melting the ice and frost of the night.

Davy Crockett was near collapse from his night's efforts—but he was alive!

In 1835, disillusioned with politics, he set out for Texas, where he intended to start a new life.

It was a fateful step. Texas was now Mexican territory, but American settlers were flooding into the area.

In 1834, President Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna sent additional troops into the territory to enforce and ensure the Mexican way of life. The settlers of the little town of Gonzales were ordered to hand in their arms. The settlers protested. They needed them to protect themselves against the raiding Comanches.

The Mexicans tried to enforce the order and fighting broke out. The revolt spread and the Texan settlers resolved to elect a provisional Government and lay claim to the territory they had settled. They authorised the formation of an army and elected the veteran soldier Sam Houston, Commander-in-Chief.

In 1835 the Texans attacked and captured San Antonio, defeating a force under General Martin Perfecto de Cos. He surrendered on December 11th and was permitted to return to Mexico.

On February 22nd 1836, a sentinel in the church tower of San Fernando in San Antonio saw horsemen approaching in the distance. He watched them as they drew nearer and to his amazement saw that they were Mexican soldiers. The night before, San Antonio had been the scene of a Feria and the celebrations had gone on into the early hours of the morning.

The alarm that sounded brought the sleepy-eyed Texans who garrisoned the town from their beds. They stared out in amazement at the ominous line of cavalrymen. They were the advance guard of the Mexican army; 7,000 troops under Santa Anna were only a



short distance behind.

Hastily the Texans gathered provisions and cattle and abandoned the town, which had not been prepared for defence.

They crossed the river and took up a position in a ruined mission and hospital—the Alamo. Fortifying the position was no easy task. Earthworks were dug and a wooden stockade was erected to fill the gaps where the walls had crumbled.

The garrison were not trained soldiers and had no military organization. Their leader was William Barrett Travis and among their number were two men famous on the frontier, Davy Crockett and Jim Bowie, Indian fighter and inventor of the knife which now bears his name.

Throughout the remainder of the month, as the garrison laboured on its defences, they saw the Mexican Regiments arriving and assembling before the mission.

On March 31st, thirty-two volunteers managed to get through the Mexican lines and reach the Alamo, swelling their number to 182.

The emissaries of Santa Anna, resplendent in their uniforms, approached the mission. Behind them in magnificent array, flags fluttering in the breeze and sunlight glinting on sword and bayonet, stood the long ranks of the Mexican army.

The Mexicans called upon the handful of defenders to surrender. Undaunted by the spectacle before them, they refused.

Mexican artillery opened fire and the Texans replied by firing off their own cannons mounted on the walls.

The bombardment continued without much effect. The siege train of

Santa Anna's army had not yet arrived.

The Mexican General, growing impatient, decided not to wait but to attack at once. The Texans watched as the Mexican cavalry threw a cordon around the mission; 2,500 infantrymen arranged in four assault columns and carrying scaling ladders marched into position.

In the dawn light they heard a blood-chilling sound as the bands of the Mexican army sounded the Deguello—the cut-throat—signifying that no quarter would be given, and the great mass of troops surged forward.

The carnage was terrible as scaling ladders were thrust away from the walls by the Texans, plunging the attackers on to the bayonets of the troops beneath them. Volleys of rifle fire and grapeshot sent the assault columns reeling back, until by sheer force of numbers the Mexicans began to drive the Texans from the walls. They fell back to the mission and the hospital, and the enemy soldiers poured through the breaches and into the compound.

Travis fell outside the hospital. Davy Crockett, swinging his rifle like a scythe, sent Mexican soldiers reeling until, overwhelmed, he fell beneath their lances on the steps of the church.

Jim Bowie, critically ill in the hospital, died in his bed, pistols in his hands, as the Mexicans broke in. Only five Texans survived the massacre and they were immediately executed.

News of the battle travelled across Texas. The courage of the gallant band of defenders proved to be an inspiration to their fellow Texans. "Remember the Alamo" became the battlecry that carried the Texans to final victory and won them their independence.

*NOTICE.*

## KIT CARSON



*TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:*

*CHRISTOPHER CARSON, A BOY ABOUT SIXTEEN YEARS OLD, SMALL FOR HIS AGE BUT THICK-SET, WITH LIGHT HAIR, RAN AWAY FROM THE SUBSCRIBER, LIVING IN FRANKLIN, HOWARD COUNTY, MO., TO WHOM HE HAD BEEN BOUND TO LEARN THE SADDLER'S TRADE ON OR ABOUT THE FIRST DAY OF SEPTEMBER LAST. HE IS SUPPOSED TO HAVE MADE HIS WAY TOWARDS THE UPPER PART OF THE STATE. ALL PERSONS ARE NOTIFIED NOT TO HARBOUR OR SUPPORT SAID BOY UNDER PENALTY OF THE LAW. ONE CENT REWARD WILL BE GIVEN TO ANY PERSON WHO WILL BRING BACK THE SAID BOY.*

*SIGNED, DAVID WORKMAN.*

**S**o read the message in the *Missouri Intelligencer* of October 1826.

Needless to say, the size of the reward did not start a great search and Kit Carson went westward to build the legend that made him one of the most famous frontiersmen of his day.

From 1842 to 1846 he accompanied John C. Fremont on his exploring expeditions in California and the southwest. He fought in the Mexican War and in 1854 became Indian Agent at Taos, New Mexico. He served in the Civil War on the Federal side and was promoted to Brigadier General of Volunteers in 1865.

But it was out of the many hair-raising adventures of his early days that the Kit Carson legend grew.

In 1833 Kit Carson tried his luck with the fur companies. He joined one



of the many brigades that roamed the wilderness west of St. Louis.

One night, after a day's hunting, the weary trappers wrapped themselves in their buffalo robes and huddled near their campfires. Exhaustion had made them careless and no sentry was posted.

Stealthy Crow Indians came in the darkness and stole nine of their horses. Horses were in short supply and the loss brought the expedition near to disaster.

In the cold dawn light, Kit Carson examined the moccasin prints in the snow. There were about fifty Crow Indians in the party, but in spite of their numbers Kit Carson and eleven men set off after them. The great herds of buffalo that roamed the plains made the Indians' tracks hard to follow. At times they were obliterated completely beneath the hoofprints of the wandering herds.

But Kit Carson was a determined man and kept on the Crows' trail like a bloodhound until the light began to fade from the sky.

Ahead of them the hunters saw a stand of timber on a rise in the prairie and they decided to camp there for the night.

Luck was with them. From their elevated position they were able to see, far off in the distance, the flicker of campfires. Tethering their horses in the wood they set off on foot and crawled to within a hundred yards of the Indian camp.

There were two campfires some distance apart, and the Indians had been cautious enough to 'fort up' with a rough breastwork of logs protecting each camp.

The Crows were in festive mood, singing and dancing and acting out their successful coup of stealing the white men's horses.

Kit Carson and his men watched from their concealed positions. The firelight illuminated the scene and the hunters could see the horses tethered between the two camps. They settled down to wait.

After some hours the Indians slept and Carson motioned two of his men to free the horses. Then, by throwing snowballs at them, they drove them well clear of the camp.

Sending three of his men back with the horses, Kit Carson led the remainder towards the Indian forts.

At that moment one of the dogs in the Indian camp caught their scent and began to bark, bringing the Crows leaping to their feet. They attacked at once, but they were no match for the skilled marksmanship of the trappers. The Crows were clearly visible in the light of their own campfires, whereas the trappers were completely invisible in

the darkness around them.

The few survivors leapt clear of their fort and raced for the protection of the other Crow camp.

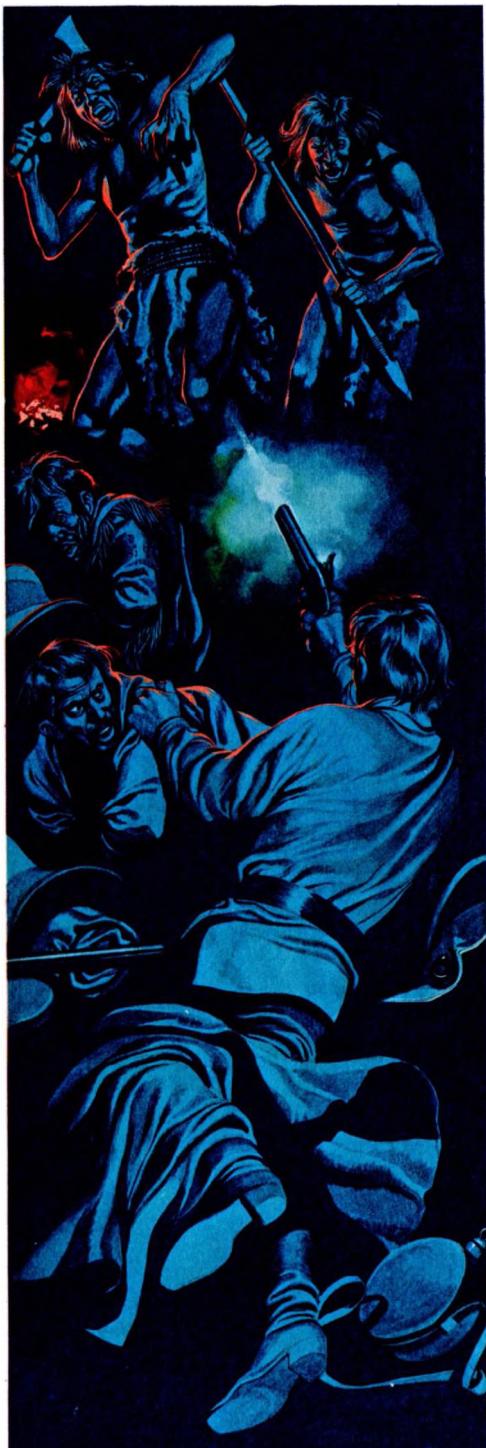
Dawn was now lighting the sky and the Crows could see the small number of their attackers. A war chief leapt over the breastwork of logs, and with a wild cry other warriors followed him.

Kit Carson and his men waited calmly as the screaming Indians bore down on them, and then they opened fire. Not one shot missed its mark and the Indians retreated in haste to their fort.

After some arguing amongst themselves, the Crows launched another attack, this time with caution. Dodging from tree to tree they forced the trappers to fall back before them.

The firing was heard by the three hunters with the horses and sent them galloping back.





The sound of the horsemen approaching decided the day. Thinking it was reinforcements, the Crows took to their heels and the trappers were able to ride back to their camp with their recaptured horses, and those of the Crows as a bonus.

In 1845 John C. Fremont was travelling westward with orders from the Bureau of Engineers. His instructions were to explore the southern Rockies and return with his reports to Congress: "In order that if military operations be required in that country the information may be at command". With him as scout rode Kit Carson.

At Klamath Lake the expedition was overtaken by two breathless riders. They bore the news that Lieutenant Gillespie and six men had been sent to warn the expedition that war had been declared between the United States and Mexico. Fearing that they would not be able to overtake Fremont, Lieutenant Gillespie had sent two of his men on ahead.

Fremont was anxious for the safety of the Lieutenant. They were in hostile Klamath Indian territory and whereas the Klamath would not attack a large force like Fremont's they would not hesitate to attack a small one like Gillespie's. Fremont ordered Kit Carson and nine men to saddle up and accompany him to ride back and meet the Lieutenant.

They came upon the party quite safe in camp for the night, and after a brief conversation and a good meal the men rolled themselves in their blankets and slept.

A soft thud woke Kit Carson and he was immediately alert. The soft scuff of a moccasin, imperceptible to most ears, sent him leaping from his blanket.

Indians were in the camp. They had crept up on the sleeping white men as

silently as mountain cats. Two men were already dead and they were now poised to strike at the sleeping figures of others.

Carson fired his pistol and an Indian toppled backwards. Shots crashed out at the running Indians as the camp came suddenly to life.

Three men had been killed. The war party had obviously been trailing Lieutenant Gillespie's party and, but for the providential arrival of Fremont and his men, would have wiped them out.

The white men remained at their posts for the rest of the night, expecting renewed attacks, but the Indians did not make another move. At daybreak they were able to saddle up and set out to rejoin the main party.

The War with Mexico forced Fremont to change his plans and he decided to return to Sacramento.

Kit Carson was ordered to ride ahead with an advance party of ten picked men to report on any large forces of Indians.

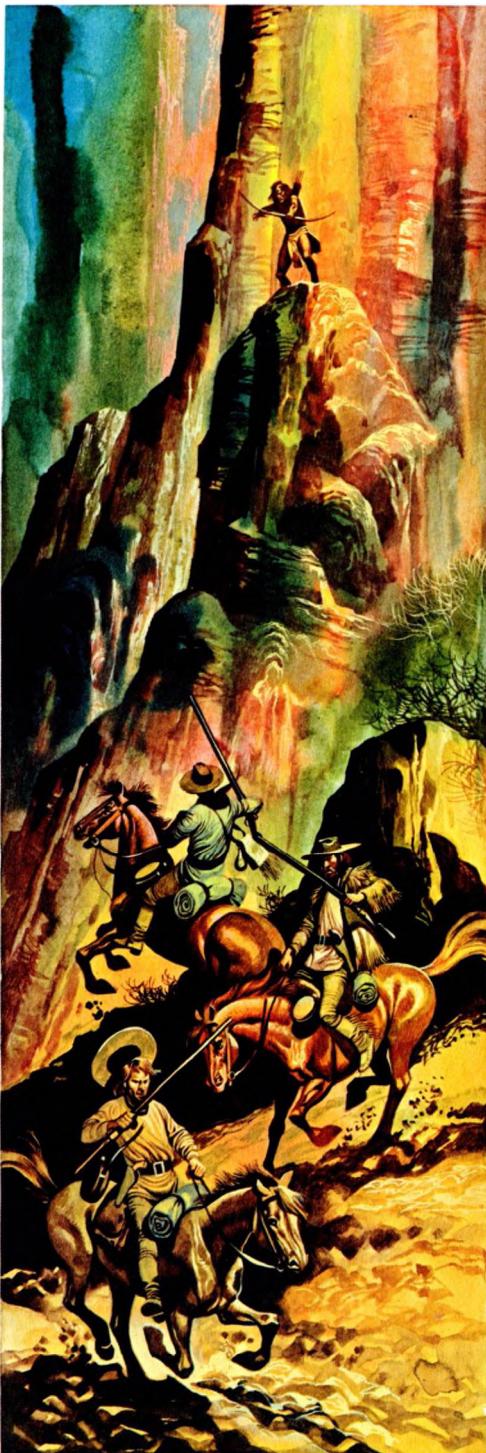
Within an hour or two Carson and his men were gazing down upon a village of about fifty lodges.

From the commotion in the camp the frontiersmen could see that the Indians were aware of their presence.

Kit Carson realised that if he sent back word to Fremont for reinforcements it would give the Indians time to organise and prepare themselves for the attack. He decided to gamble and gave the signal for the charge.

The eleven horsemen rode straight into the village, firing as they went. Through the village in a cloud of dust and barking dogs they rode, stampeding Indian ponies before them.

They wheeled about and with bullets singing around their ears galloped pell-mell back amongst the lodges.



It was too much for the Indians and they scattered in all directions. When the main body caught up, a great column of smoke was rising into the air and the village was in ruins.

When the column reached the Sacramento River a dark and narrow canyon loomed up before them.

Carson and two of his men rode ahead to scout for Indian signs. Sure enough, a war party had laid an ambush, hoping to shoot down some of the column as they rode through the gorge.

The three scouts soon flushed them out of their positions and chased them down the canyon.

One Indian alone whirled his pony into the rocks and, leaping from his back, dashed for cover. He loosed a flight of arrows at his pursuers and sent them scattering for safety.

The three white men vainly sought to drive the Indian from his hidingplace and were full of admiration for his courage. His companions had abandoned him and now he alone stood in the path of the column.

Kit Carson took his rifle and climbed up the rocky side of the gorge. He circled and crawled until he was well above and behind the Indian. He squinted along the barrel of his gun and reluctantly squeezed the trigger.

One shot rang out, echoing and re-echoing down the canyon. The Indian fell dead.

Kit Carson took his quiver and arrows and afterwards presented them to Lieutenant Gillespie.

There was no satisfaction for him in that encounter with the red man. As he said: "He was a brave Indian and deserved a better fate, but unfortunately he placed himself on the wrong path."

Of all Kit Carson's adventures there was one in particular that neither he

nor the men who shared it with him could ever forget.

It happened in the Cimarron Desert, the same dry and blistered landscape that claimed the life of Jedediah Smith, a few years earlier. Kit Carson and two companions were on a trapping expedition. They were accompanied by three Delaware Indians and a string of mules.

Ahead of them stretched a flat expanse of sun-bleached wasteland. There was no sign of life, not even a bird in the sky, as they plodded wearily on their way, coughing in their own dust.

Suddenly one of the Delawares pointed towards the horizon. They could see a smudge on the skyline, a dust cloud.

Dropping from his horse Carson put his ear to the ground. It throbbed with the distant thunder of horses—many, many horses. The hunters strained their ears and heard, very faintly at first, a sound that froze the blood in their veins: Comanches. There were two hundred of them strung out in a galloping horde and coming as fast as their ponies could carry them.

The hunters rode for their lives but their animals were in bad condition and no match for the Comanche ponies. The scalp yells and war cries grew louder behind them as the Indians gained on them. There was no cover for miles and within minutes the Comanches would be upon them.

Kit Carson acted quickly. When there was no way out for the mountain man he made his last stand by 'forting up' against his horse. The trappers dragged their horses and mules to the ground and shot them, taking cover within the circle of their bodies. Taking it in turns to fire so that some of the guns were always loaded, the six men faced the two hundred screaming horsemen.



In a swirling cloud of dust the Comanches rode a circle around the white men, showering the position with arrows. For the whole of the day the hunters held the Comanches at bay. The ground around the position was littered with the bodies of forty-two Indians when at last the sun began to set.

Kit Carson knew his enemy well. As he expected, the Indians gathered up their dead and withdrew as night blacked out the desert. They would wait for the dawn before they attacked again.

He motioned his companions, all of whom had escaped serious injury, and they followed him, stepping through the miniature forest of arrows that bristled from the ground around the position. They must put as many miles as possible between themselves and the Comanches before the sun rose.

They made their escape successfully and when dawn came there was no sign of the Indians. The desert stretched out before them, stark and empty. Great pinnacles of rock rose up out of the heat haze and cruel thorn and cactus twisted up out of the cracked and stony ground. There was no sign of water.

They hid during the day, rationing what little water they had in their canteens, and set out once more after

dark.

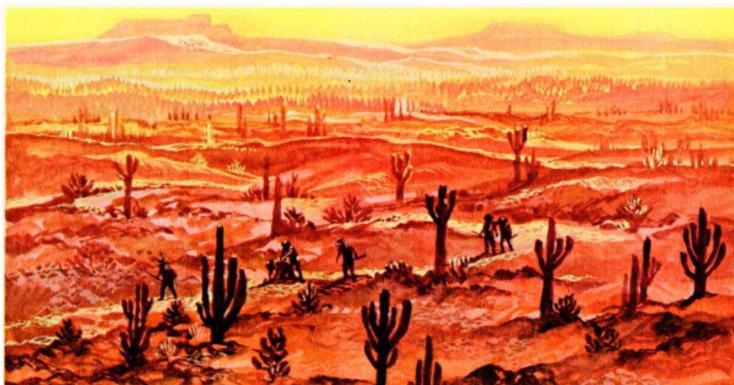
The next day they rested in what little shade they could find, scanning the horizon for signs of the Comanches. The sun burned down on them, it was like sitting in an oven. Their water was now almost gone and they could only moisten their cracked lips. It was no longer possible to rest or worry about the Comanches. They had to find water quickly or they would die.

Kit Carson looked at his companions as they shuffled along, dehydrated by the intense heat. They were growing visibly weaker, hour by hour. They had lost all track of time and only responded to the urgency of his voice to keep going.

They forgot how many times they heard him saying "There will be water over the next ridge" and there it was again. The ridge loomed ahead of them in their blurred vision as they dragged themselves up its slope. They gazed down and slowly realised that what they saw was not a mirage. Water, sparkling and glittering, lay before them in the valley.

They rushed forward together, stumbling and falling, and flung themselves bodily into the fresh, cool water.

They had walked a distance of seventy miles through some of the worst country in the Southwest.



# JIM BRIDGER



**J**im Bridger was perhaps the greatest of all the mountain men. It was said that he could take a stick and scratch a map of the far West in the dust more accurately than the best cartographers of his day. He knew the Indian and his ways better than any white man before or after him. "Where there ain't no Indians, there you'll find 'em thickest."

Well over six feet tall and as broad as a barn door, he was both feared and admired by the red men. A great favourite with the Crow tribe, he was at one time elected their Chief. His body bore the scars of many battles and he carried an iron arrow head in his back for three years before meeting up with Doctor Marcus Whitman, at the Green River rendezvous, who carried out the difficult operation and removed it.

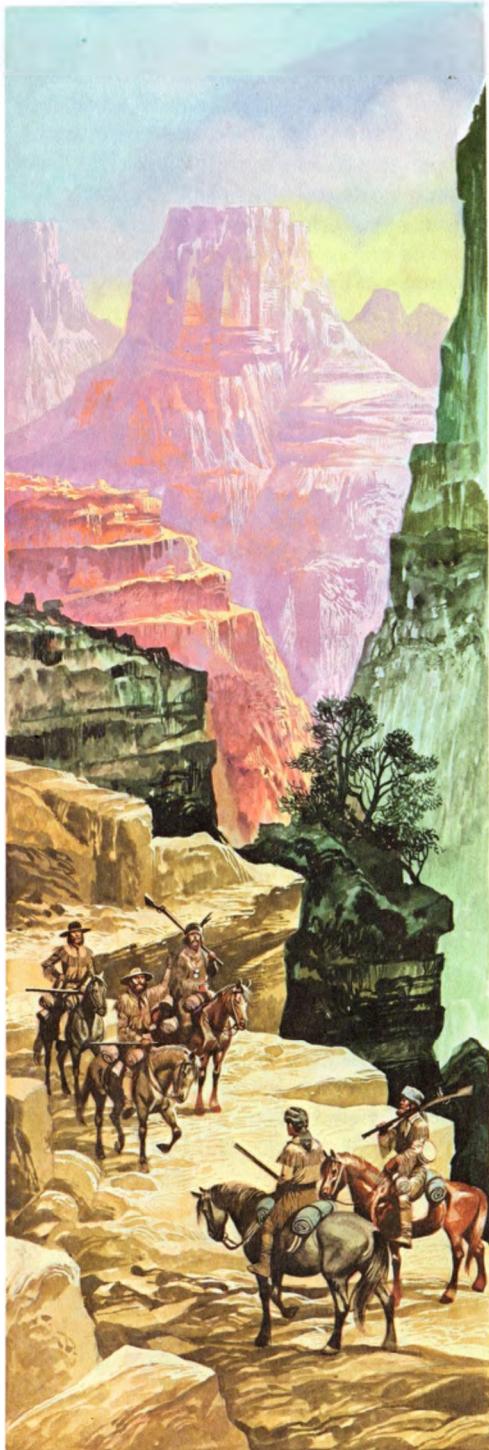
Big Jim became a rich man during the great days of the fur trade and afterwards was constantly sought out by the army to act as scout during the Indian Wars.

He was born in Richmond, Virginia, in 1804. When he was ten years old his parents died and he made his living by running a flatboat ferry at St. Louis. At thirteen he was apprenticed to a blacksmith but soon tired of the the trade.

In 1822 he saw an advertisement in the St. Louis newspapers and joined General Ashley in the fur trade. He was with Jedediah Smith on many of his journeys and was one of the party that discovered the South Pass. It was the beginning of a lifetime of wandering in the far West.

In 1826 Bridger trapped for the fur company which was run by Jedediah Smith and his partners. When they sold out, Bridger, together with three friends, Milton Sublette, Henry Frack and John Gervais, took over.

The new firm was called the Rocky



Mountain Fur Company and it prospered. Two hundred trappers roamed the Big Horn basin and the Yellowstone, keeping a steady supply of beaver skin pouring into St. Louis. There were many large brigades of trappers hunting through the Rockies now on behalf of the American Fur Company and the British Hudson's Bay Company, and although rivalry was keen amongst them they would sometimes get together and exchange stories and pass round the whiskey jug.

In July of 1832 some three hundred of them were camped in the Teton basin, together with several hundred Indians of the Nez Perces and Flathead tribes. The smoking fires of the great camp could be seen from miles away.

A small band of trappers led by Antoine Godin were making their way to the rendezvous for a well-earned rest and some convivial company when they came upon a large band of Gros Ventre Indians.

Godin and a Flathead Chief travelling with the trappers advanced to meet the Gros Ventres.

As Godin grasped the hand of their Chief in friendship the Flathead recognised the Gros Ventre as an old enemy and shot him dead.

All hell broke loose. One of the trappers managed to ride clear of the mêlée and brought Bridger with help from the rendezvous, but unfortunately not before twenty-six Indians were killed and a dozen trappers dead or wounded.

The first great highway across the plains was established by Jim Bridger and his trappers. They followed the natural trail, avoiding mountains and difficult streams and ravines, and gradually a clearly defined trail could be seen. At first it was called the Overland Trail, but later became

known as the Oregon Trail.

In the wake of the fur trappers came the traders with their pack-mules, and later there followed the hundreds of settlers in the great surge westwards, their belongings piled high on lumbering ox wagons.

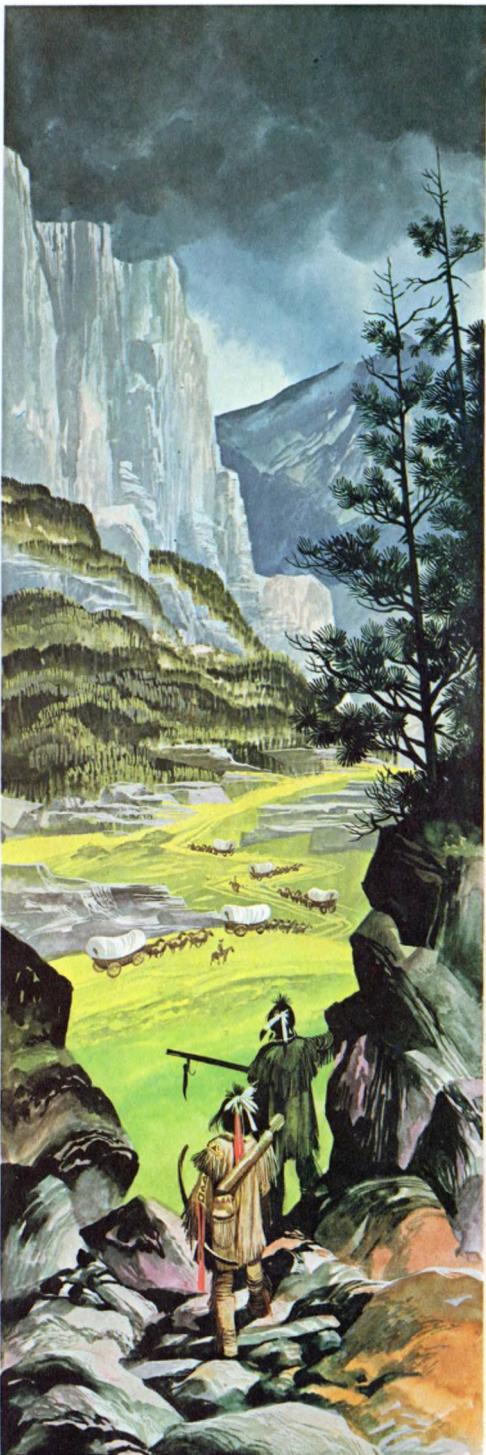
The Mormons followed the Oregon Trail in their search for the Promised Land and the great exodus of hopefuls who set out for California in 1849 plodded wearily along the same route. It stretched for nearly 2,000 miles and was a deep furrow in the ground, worn and rutted by countless thousands of feet and wagon wheels, and nearly a hundred feet wide.

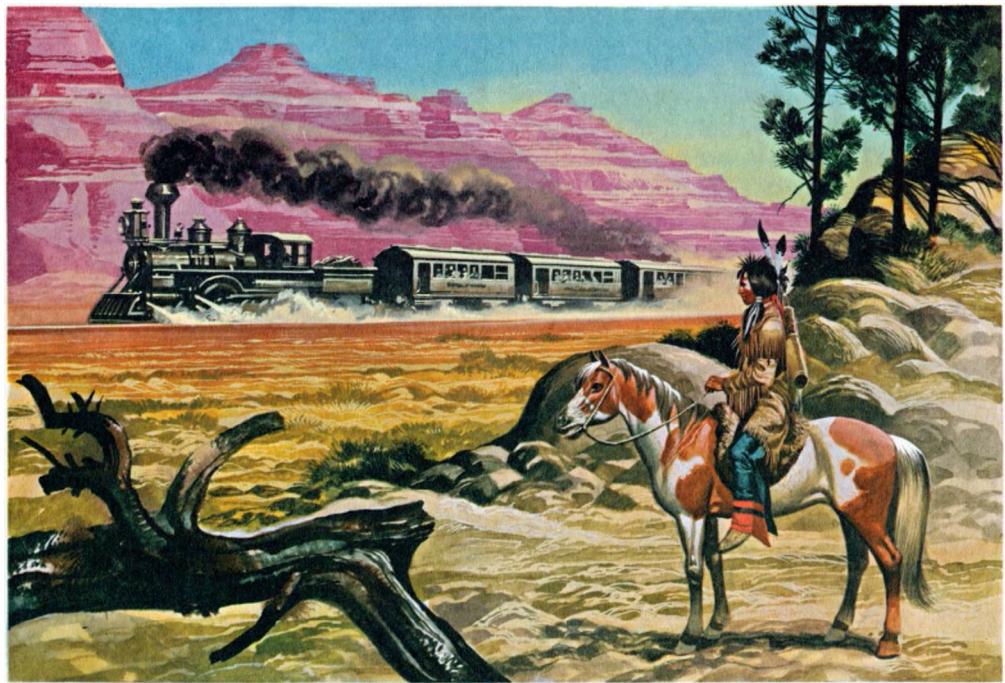
It was a sight that amazed men seeing it for the first time. Indians stared in awe and were sure that the whole of the 'countless white nation' must have passed over it and there could not possibly be any white men left in the East!

In 1843 Jim Bridger built a strong stockaded fort in the black fork of Green River and retired from active participation in the fur trade. His fort, with its blacksmith's shop and trading post, soon became a famous landmark and he had a flourishing business, trading with prospectors, trappers and Indians.

The great West was changing rapidly. Settlers were coming from Europe in their tens of thousands. Steamboats laden with immigrants and their cattle, poultry, ploughs and household goods were unloading their cargoes at Independence and Westport. From there the great wagon trains would make their slow and hazardous way along the Oregon and Santa Fe trails westwards.

At night they would run the wagons into a circle to guard against the roving war parties of Kansas and





Pawnees who followed the trains like wolf packs.

Treaties were signed with the Indians defining boundaries, but still the great tide of settlers flooded Westwards, constantly encroaching on the Indian lands. Treaties were broken and the red men took to the warriors' path—the war path.

Throughout the military campaigns Jim Bridger was constantly in demand as scout and guide.

Then came an event that was to change the face of the West completely and to spell out the doom of the red man—the coming of the railroad.

Soon the long ribbons of steel rails were cutting into the prairie. Goods that had once been carried laboriously on the backs of pack animals were transported easily by the great iron locomotives, belching out their clouds of steam and smoke.

To feed the thousands of workers

who toiled to lay the thousands of miles of track, hunters shot the buffalo in their millions—and the buffalo was the very lifeblood of the Indians.

Discontent among the red men was general and the United States Government found itself with one major uprising after another on its hands.

In 1863 New Mexico and Arizona had the Apache on the warpath. In Utah and Idaho the Bannocks and the Shoshones went to war. Cheyenne and Arapaho were next and in 1864 Kiowas and Comanches laid waste the settlements in Kansas and Colorado.

In 1865 Generals Sanborn and Harney made a treaty with Cheyenne, Arapaho, Apache, Comanche and Kiowa. The tribes promised that they would never again interfere with the travel routes across the plains and that peace hereafter would be maintained. In the following months Sioux and Cheyenne made the same promise.

The United States Government decided to establish a road from Nebraska northwards through Wyoming and Montana. The road, the Bozeman Trail, ran through Indian territory, and in view of the treaty the situation had to be handled with extreme care.

Invitations were sent out to the tribes involved to meet representatives of the Government at Fort Laramie. Lavish gifts were given to the Indians and they were asked to make another treaty allowing the scheme to go ahead.

One man angrily dissented. Red Cloud, Chief of the Oglala Sioux, pointed out that the scheme violated the previous treaty. It also proposed the building of forts along the route. These were to be sited in Sioux territory, and this Red Cloud would not agree to.

The delicate situation was growing tense.

At a crucial moment in the talks a

bugle was heard in the distance. A column of cavalry under General Carrington had been ordered to Laramie with instructions to build three forts along the Bozeman Trail.

Red Cloud looked upon the Government representatives with contempt. "Is this the way you make treaties—with soldiers?"

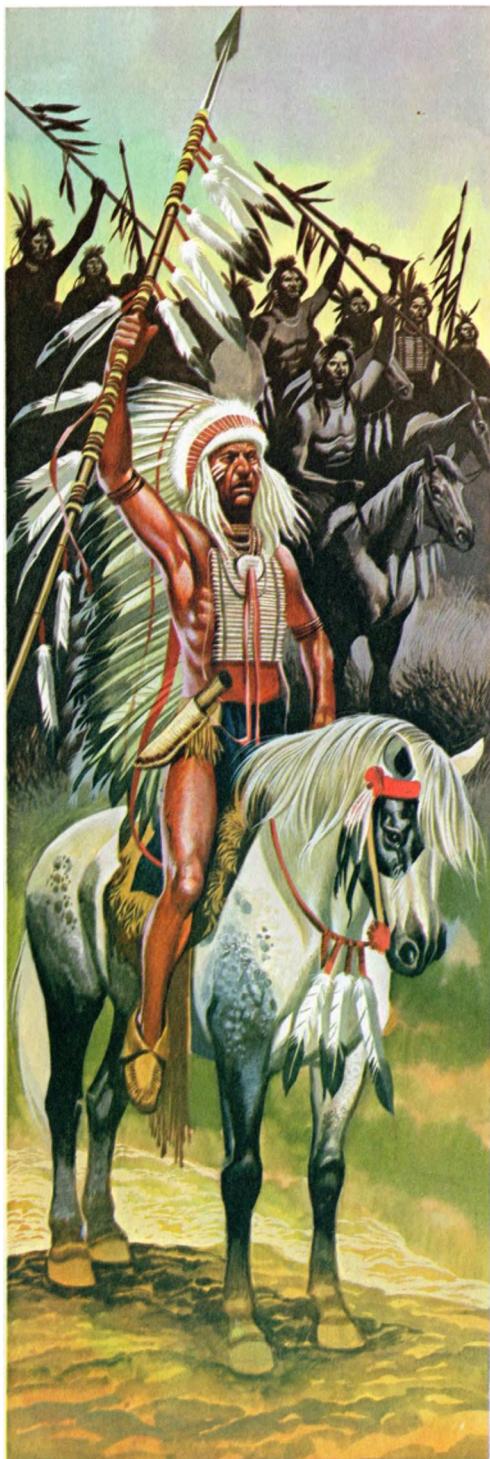
His words echoed out above the defiant yells of the Indians as they rode out of the fort and past the advancing cavalry column.

The Government representatives watched with dismay as the ill-timed column of soldiers rode into the fort and their hopes of a peaceful agreement with the Indians collapsed in ruins.

General Carrington rode up the Bozeman Trail and began to build Fort Phil Kearney.

Red Cloud was waiting for him. Every detail that left the fort was





harassed by the Indians. Woodcutting details were ambushed, road construction gangs driven back to the fort in confusion, wagon trains bringing supplies from Laramie had to run the gauntlet.

On 21st December 1866, a rider galloped into Fort Phil Kearney with the news that a woodcutting detail was surrounded by Red Cloud's Sioux.

Captain Fetterman rode out with eighty-one men to rescue them. As they came into view the besieged woodcutters raised a cheer and the Indians began to fall back over Lodge Trail Ridge.

Fetterman raised his sabre, and his column broke into the charge. Sabres flashing, they rode hell for leather over the ridge and into an armed ambush laid by the Sioux Chieftain. There were no survivors.

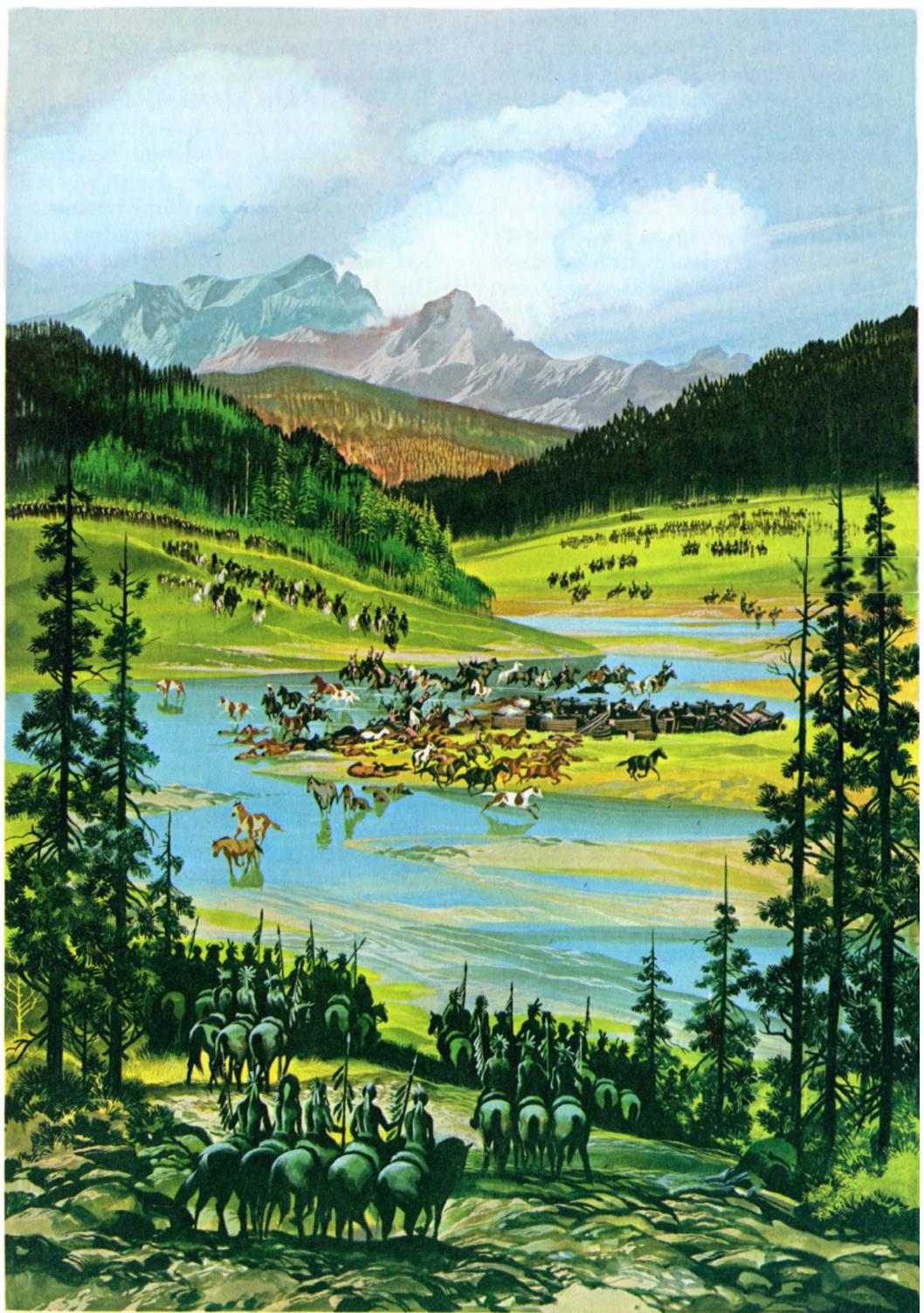
The victory brought the warriors of many tribes flocking to Red Cloud's banner, and by the summer of 1867 thousands of Indians were marauding in the vicinity of Fort Phil Kearney. Every detachment leaving the Fort had to be heavily escorted and communication with Laramie broke down.

Seven miles from Fort Phil Kearney, contractors, guarded by a troop of soldiers, were cutting timber to lay in the fort's winter wood supply. With them as scout was the tall figure of Jim Bridger.

The detail had removed their wagon boxes from the wheels and arranged them in a protective square around their supplies.

Suddenly the woods all around them were alive with Indians. The war cry was taken up on all sides as woodcutters and soldiers raced for the cover of the wagon boxes.

There were thirty-two white men, and as they looked out from their



defensive position they stared in wonder at the sight before them. From all sides hundreds of Indians were riding into view, their war songs echoing out as they took up their positions around the tiny group of white men.

It was a sight few men had ever seen; not even Jim Bridger had seen such a gathering of Indians painted for war. Nearly 3,000 warriors confronted them. They were outnumbered nearly one hundred to one!

Red Cloud raised his great feathered lance and gave a command. A great wave of Indian horsemen surged towards their enemy.

A volley of fire crashed out from behind the barricade. It was a fire so devastating that the Indians could hardly believe their eyes. Horses and painted warriors went down in tangled heaps and still the deadly fire was maintained.

Red Cloud signalled again and a fresh wave launched themselves into the attack, only to be piled in threshing heaps before the wagon boxes.

Red Cloud could not understand how such a small handful of men could have the fire power of two hundred men.

The soldiers had been issued with the new breech-loading rifles and these new weapons proved their salvation.

Red Cloud watched as his magnificent force was shot to pieces by a mere handful of men. A great sadness came over him as he saw so many brave warriors die so pointlessly. His hopes of taking Fort Phil Kearney were dashed. Beaten, the Indians withdrew.

When reinforcements from Fort Phil Kearney came upon the scene they stood dumbfounded at the sight of Jim Bridger and his men standing in the very centre of that terrible battlefield. They counted eleven hundred Indian dead. A terrible price to pay in an attempt to overcome thirty-two men.

The war dragged on, but the Indians had lost the cream of their warriors. One by one, Indian leaders began to make peace terms with the United States Government.

The Peace Commission vainly sought a treaty with Red Cloud, but he remained defiant. He sent back word that he would never talk with the white man until all forts were removed from Montana.

In the Spring of 1868 the Government abandoned its plans and the forts were destroyed. Red Cloud made his treaty with the Commissioners and settled down to a life of peace.

Jim Bridger remained on the plains until 1870 and was by this time a famous man.

He had met Ned Buntline, a short story writer who had published a number of stories about the frontiersman. They were so popular that the *Adventures of Jim Bridger* was published every week. His name became a household word.

In 1871 he retired to a farm near Santa Fe. He had witnessed the end of an era. Soon the buffalo would all be gone and the great prairies fenced and cultivated. The days of the Frontiersmen were numbered.

# WILD BILL HICKOK



James Butler Hickok, Wild Bill, was born in Illinois in 1837. In 1855 he went to Kansas and became a stagecoach driver on the Santa Fe Trail. Stories of his adventures were soon being told in the saloons of the frontier towns and his reputation as a plainsman and pistol shot began to grow.

These were wild and violent days in the West. There was no law enforcement and arguments were often settled with pistols. Inquests were held and if it was decided that the victor of the duel had acted in self-defence then it was considered 'a faire and square fight' and the survivor was allowed to go on his way. In this manner many acquired a reputation as a 'fast gun' and their prowess made them legendary figures.

In 1861 the United States was torn asunder by Civil War, and Wild Bill joined the Union Army. He served as a sharpshooter, scout, and as a spy. In this latter capacity Wild Bill was ordered by General Curtis to infiltrate the Confederate Army of the Southern plains.

Hickok travelled to Kansas City and bought a horse, then he set off out on to the plains. He rode southward through Kansas into Arkansas and there enlisted in a Confederate Regiment.

He pretended to be a patriot from Austin in Texas and slipped convincingly into regimental life. But all the while he was observing and collecting information until at last he had a complete picture of the army of General Price, the Confederate Commander.

Wild Bill was anxious to rejoin his own men, but opportunity to escape did not present itself. Instead the Confederate Army was ordered to

move out and were soon moving into positions along the banks of the Sandy River. Only a hundred yards away was the Union Army under General Curtis.

Wild Bill was in a tough spot. If he tried to cross the river he would come under the fire of both armies. He had important information for General Curtis, but how to get it to him?

As he sat on the river bank trying to think out some solution, one of the Confederate sentries called out to his Union counterpart on the opposite bank. He answered and they began to chide one another.

Before long a number of soldiers of both armies had joined in and were exchanging good-natured banter.

One of the Union soldiers offered to exchange some coffee with the Confederates for tobacco. The Confederates laughingly agreed and suggested they meet on the neutral ground of a little island in the middle of the river.

Wild Bill saw his chance. He recognised the Union soldiers as Missouri Cavalry, his old outfit, and there was a good chance that they would also recognise him.

He joined the little group of Confederates and met the Union soldiers on the island.

He was right—the Missouri Cavalrymen did recognise him, but before they could utter a sound he hurriedly spoke. "Now, yanks, let's see your coffee—no burnt beans, mind you, but the real stuff. We Texans know the real article." It worked, the Missourians realised that Bill wanted to make them aware of his presence in the Confederate lines, and after the exchange was completed they returned to their lines and immediately sent word to General Curtis.

The General warned his sentries to be on the lookout for Wild Bill when he

crossed the river and to be sure not to shoot at him by mistake.

The plainsman knew that the Union side of the river was safe, but he had to find some way of allaying the suspicion of the Confederates when he made his dash for freedom.

The opportunity came unexpectedly during the next mealtime. One of his Company, a sergeant, was bragging of his courage and daring in battle.

Wild Bill listened for a while and then a bold plan formed in his mind. "If you're so brave I'll bet you that I'll ride closer to the Union lines than you'd dare."

The challenge took the Sergeant by surprise, but the soldiers around the campfire took up the challenge and jeered at his reluctance to accept.

Bill had chosen his man well. He could not back down in front of the men. He had no choice but to accept the challenge.

Before long the Confederate soldiers were making bets on who would ride closest to the enemy, and the two men mounted their horses and rode down to the river bank and out into the shallows.

Behind them the Confederate soldiers raised a cheer and Bill eased his horse into deeper water.

The sergeant was suddenly suspicious. No shots had come from the Union side. He realised that it was a trick and reached for his pistol. Bill fired first and the Sergeant pitched from his horse. Grabbing the reins of the two horses Wild Bill launched himself into deep water and held onto the bridles of the two animals as they struck out for the far bank.

For a moment the Confederates were stunned, and then suddenly they realised what was happening. They opened fire and spouts of water shot up

around the swimming man and the bullets splashed and skimmed around him.

From the far bank the Union soldiers opened fire to cover his escape. For several minutes the river was churned to foam by the whizzing bullets but, miraculously, Wild Bill reached the bank and scrambled to safety.

When the war ended in 1865 Wild Bill went to Springfield, Missouri. There was still a great deal of enmity between veterans of the returning armies and shootings were frequent. Several ex-Confederate soldiers saw Wild Bill in a saloon in Springfield and set out to provoke him into a fight. Hickok refused to be goaded into action and left the saloon.

The following morning, when crossing the town square, he saw the same group waiting for him.

The ringleader, Dave Tutt, strode out into the square and barred the plainsman's way. A crowd had gathered and they watched with baited breath as Tutt aimed his pistol.

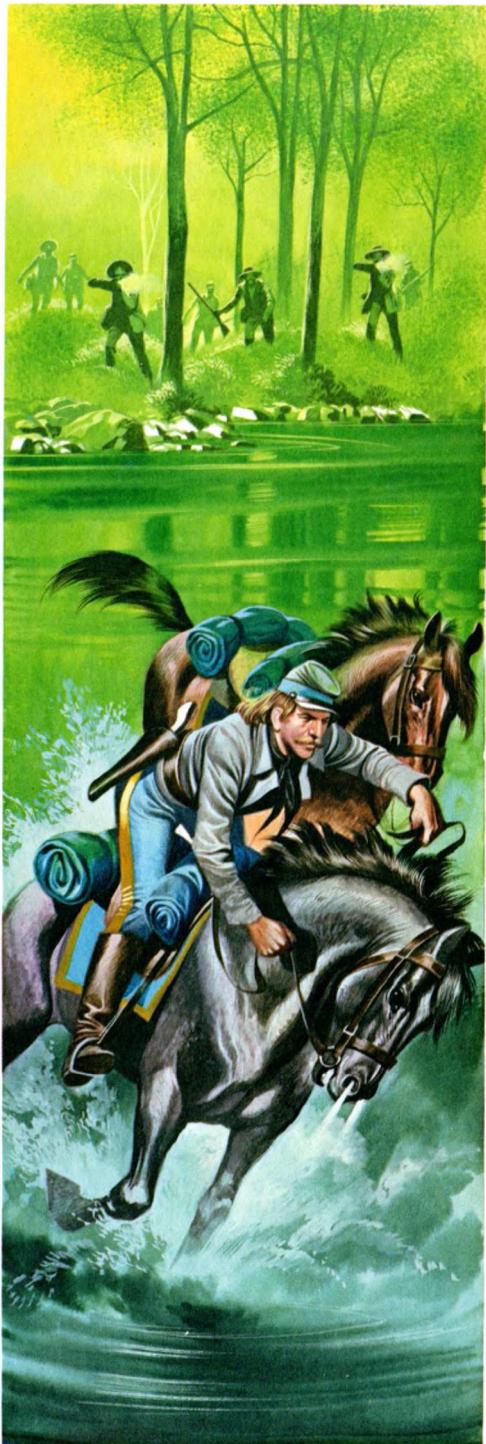
Wild Bill, fifty yards away across the square, drew his pistol and fired. The two shots crashed out as one. A bullet hummed harmlessly over Wild Bill's head but Tutt staggered back and fell to the ground.

Hickok turned and confronted the rest of the group. "Aren't you satisfied, gentlemen? Put up your shooting irons or there'll be more dead men here."

The men put up their guns. All agreed that it had been a fair fight and that it was foolish indeed to try to settle an argument with Wild Bill Hickok with a gun.

In the following years Bill played an active part in the Indian wars and scouted with distinction for Generals Custer, Hancock and Sheridan.

But civilisation was rapidly catching



up with the Wild West! Thousands of immigrants were turning the wilderness into farmlands. Farmers clashed with cattlemen who wanted free range for their animals. Booming mining towns made wagons and stagecoaches carrying bullion a target for outlaws.

Respectable citizens of the frontier towns wanted an end to the violence and a peaceful way of life for their families. Quarrels and gunfights in the streets were everyday occurrences as rowdy cowboys rode into towns after months in the saddle, driving the great cattle herds up from Texas to the railheads of Kansas and Wyoming. They spent their hard-earned pay in the saloons and gambling houses and were the prey of gamblers and tricksters.

The towns began to hire 'fast guns' to become Town Marshals and put an end to the lawlessness. Many of them became famous. Men like Wyatt Earp, Bat Masterson, Joe Mason and Wild Bill Hickok were among those who began to bring law and order to the Wild West. It took a brave man to wear the tin star and confront a mob of outlaws in the Main Street.

Sometimes the Marshal's reputation as a gunfighter would be enough to deter the wildest desperadoes, but often a gunbattle was the only way to settle the matter.

Wild Bill Hickok was Sheriff of Fort Riley, Marshal of Hays City and later Marshal of Abilene in Kansas.

It was a grim life for any man. His reputation as a gunfighter became a menace for him. Gunmen would seek

him out, convinced that they could beat him to the draw, and many tombstones outside the frontier towns testified to the fact that they failed. "Shot by Wild Bill Hickok" became a familiar inscription.

Gradually, law and order came to the West. The great cattle drives came to an end and fences began to creep across the prairies. The Indians were being pushed onto the reservations and the great buffalo herds had been destroyed. Wild Bill drifted for a few years, trying his hand in Buffalo Bill Cody's touring show and in gold prospecting in the Black Hills.

In August 1876, Wild Bill was playing poker in Cool Mann's Saloon in Deadwood City, South Dakota. At the table with him were Captain Massey, a Missouri riverboat pilot, Charlie Rich and Cool Mann.

While the game was in progress a man entered the saloon and approached the bar.

Wild Bill had his back to the bar and had just picked up his cards. The man, Jack MacCall, drew his revolver and shot Wild Bill in the back.

The assassin was later arrested and ultimately died on the scaffold for his crime.

The death of Wild Bill created a sensation in the newspapers and journals. The cards he was holding in his hand at the moment of his death were three eights and two aces. In the game of poker that arrangement of cards was thereafter known as 'dead man's hand'.

# BUFFALO BILL CODY



William Frederick Cody, the last of the Frontiersmen, was born in 1846. Buffalo hunter, pony express rider, Union Army scout, he also served as scout with General Custer in the Indian wars and in 1883 he organised his famous Wild West Show and took it on a very successful tour of the U.S.A. and Europe.

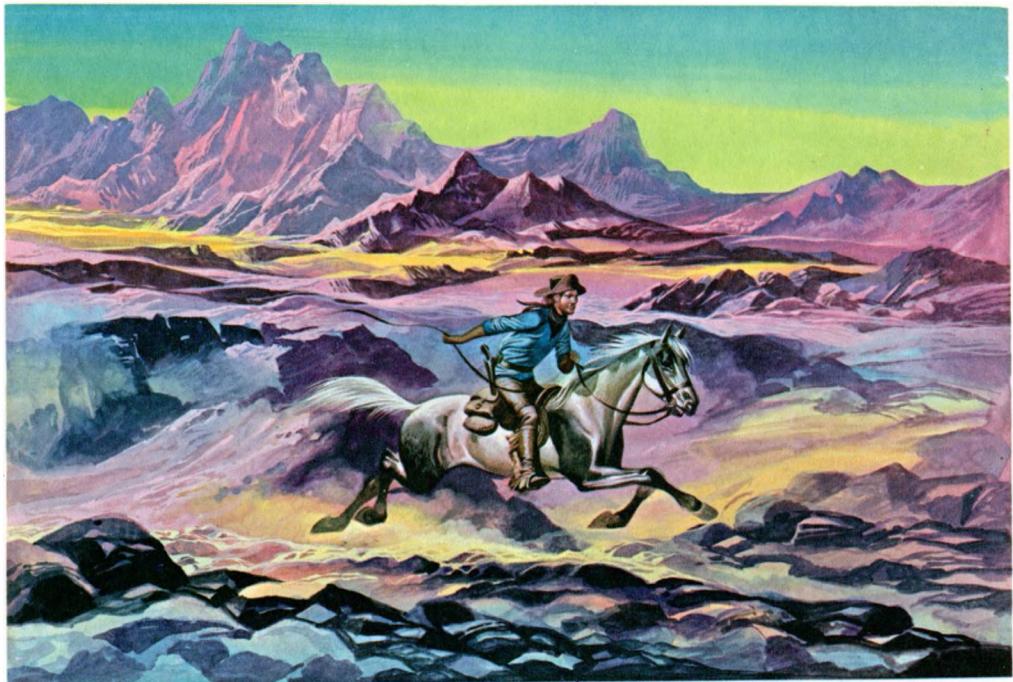
In 1890 he took part in the Battle of Wounded Knee, the last great fight of the red men and their last desperate attempt to halt the great flood of civilisation that was to engulf them completely.

In 1857 Buffalo Bill, then 11 years old, approached the Trading Company of Russell, Majors and Waddell. The huge company had 6,250 wagons in their employ, 75,000 oxen and nearly 8,000 men. Their business reached all the frontier posts in the North West and their wagon trains reached as far south as New Mexico.

A kindly wagon master, Lewis Simpson, took a liking to the boy and signed him on as an extra hand. Buffalo Bill's education had begun.

On his journeys he saw and became familiar with the Indian tribes of the plains. He saw the vast bison herds that blackened the prairie to the horizon and could take two days to ride through. He learned to use both rifle and pistol and became a skilled horseman. He met the great Jim Bridger and wintered at his fort. Before long he could "read the signs of the prairie" and was as skilled a tracker as any Indian. He also fought the first of his many battles with the Indians.

In 1859 he returned to his home and at the request of his mother attended school. It was the longest period of schooling he ever had. He stayed for two and a half months and then ran off to prospect for gold in Denver.



He had no success and when he heard that the newly established pony express mail service needed riders, Buffalo Bill travelled to Julesburg and was hired.

The pony express runs called for great courage and superb horsemanship. A string of stations was established along the mail routes about 15 miles apart and each was well stocked with horses. The pony express riders were expected to cover the ground between stations in one hour, leap onto a fresh horse and ride to the next station. It was a fast and efficient service, but gruelling for both horse and rider. Few men could endure the pace for long.

The pony express was short-lived. With the coming of the railways and the telegraph, the pony express was no longer necessary, and Buffalo Bill began hunting for the Kansas Pacific Railroad.

The buffalo hunters employed by the railroads to provide meat for the track-laying gangs were a colourful band and there was a great rivalry among them for the title of champion buffalo hunter of the plains.

Billy Comstock, chief of scouts at Fort Wallace, Kansas, had the reputation of being a great buffalo hunter and it was decided that a match should be staged between him and Buffalo Bill Cody to see who was the more skilled.

The hunt took place twenty miles east of Sheridan and a special train had been laid on to carry a hundred ladies and gentlemen who made the journey specially to see the shooting match.

The buffalo were plentiful and it was decided that the two men should make a 'run' into the herd, each man shooting as many of the animals as possible.

Mounted on their favourite horses, the two men began the run. Buffalo Bill's technique was to get the stamped-

ing animals running in a circle while the shooting was going on. Comstock, on the other hand, rode with the stampeding animals, shooting and re-loading as fast as he could. After the first run it was discovered that Buffalo Bill dropped thirty-eight buffalo in a neat circle while Comstock had killed twenty-three over a distance of three miles. At the end of the day Bill Cody had killed sixty-nine animals and Comstock forty-six.

At first the hunting of buffalo was principally for the railways, to provide food. In 1871 leather factories in the east discovered methods of handling buffalo hides. Before, they had not been considered commercially profitable, as a dry bull buffalo hide weighed up to fifty pounds and was as stiff as a board. But the railways made shipment of the heavy skins possible, and their value soared.

Before long, swarms of buffalo

hunters were roaming the prairies shooting the animals indiscriminately.

From 1872 to 1882 over a million hides were shipped eastwards each year until the prairies were strewn with the rotting carcasses and bones.

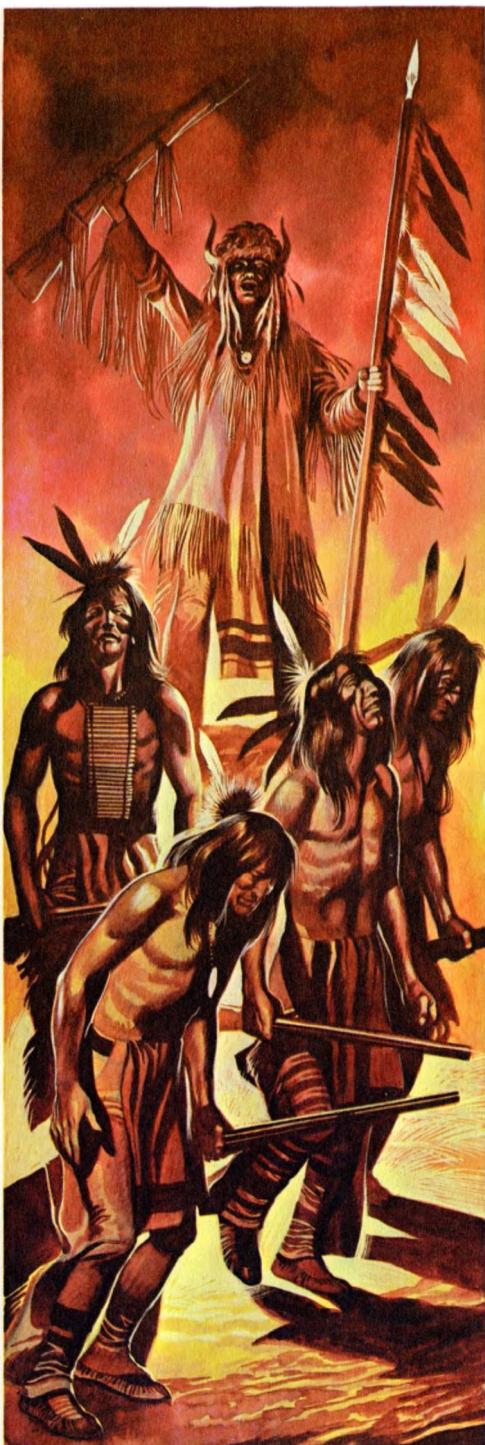
With the disappearance of the buffalo the very lifeblood of the Indians had gone. Fertiliser factories offered five dollars a ton for the bones and in 1874 the Santa Fe railroad alone carried 3,500 tons of bones out of Kansas and Colorado.

The Indians watched as the white man encroached more and more into their territory.

Then, in 1875, prospectors found gold in the Black Hills, the sacred hills of the Sioux. White prospectors came flooding in and the war drums began to sound.

The Army was sent in. General Crook was fought to a standstill at the Battle of the Rosebud in June 1876, and in





July came the news that General Custer's command had been wiped out on the Little Big Horn.

The victory was a brief one. Reinforcements were soon scattering the Sioux and the army relentlessly hunted down the divided bands.

Buffalo Bill was with Colonel Carr's Fifth Cavalry who tracked the band under the Sioux Chief Yellow Hand into the Black Hills. In the fight that followed Cody fought and killed the Chief in hand-to-hand combat.

By 1877, dispirited and defeated, the Sioux were being herded into the reservations.

Buffalo Bill left the plains to take his Great Western Show on the road, a journey that was to take him to England to perform before Queen Victoria, and to Europe to stage his show before many Royal patrons. He had but one more small part to play on the fast-vanishing frontier before the days of the Wild West came to an end.

In 1888 a Piute Indian named Wovoka began to have visions. During the eclipse of the sun he went into a coma and was taken up to the world of the Great Spirit. There he saw all the red people who had died and he learned that if his people abandoned the ways of the white man their hunting grounds would be returned to them. The Great Spirit gave him a dance to give to his people. The dance would make magic and bring back to the earth all the Nations of Indians. The magic would become stronger and the buffalo would return.

Wovoka told his people of his vision and the Piute began to dance. It was the Ghost Dance and this new religion with its message of hope was to sweep through the tribes, now living in degradation on the reservations.

Soon the Ghost Dance was being performed by the Cheyenne, the Shoshones, the Utes and the Bannocks. Before long the Sioux were responding to the new religion with a fervour that worried the authorities. Then came news that Sitting Bull, war leader of the Sioux and the man who had defeated Custer, had adopted the new religion.

General Nelson Miles needed to handle the situation with delicacy. To send troops to arrest Sitting Bull might provoke a general uprising.

Instead he asked Buffalo Bill Cody to see the Chief and talk with him. He also gave him the authority to arrest the Chief, if necessary.

Sitting Bull had a cabin near the Standing Rock reservation and around it his followers were gathered. The Military Commander at nearby Fort Yates was opposed to any interference and he delayed Buffalo Bill while seeking to have the warrant for Sitting Bull's arrest withdrawn.

Meanwhile the reservation agent had decided to take matters into his own hands. He ordered forty-three Indian police to surround the cabin and arrest the Indian leader.

It was a disastrous move. Sitting Bull's followers tried to stop the arrest and in the fracas the great Sioux Chief was killed.

The news spread like wildfire. Indians began to gather on Wounded

Knee Plain. Many were wearing Ghost Dance shirts, buckskin shirts covered with magic symbols that they believed would protect them from the white man's bullets.

The military authorities ordered Major Whitside and the Fifth Cavalry into action and they took up positions near the great camp. They trained a battery of Hotchkiss guns on the Indians and waited.

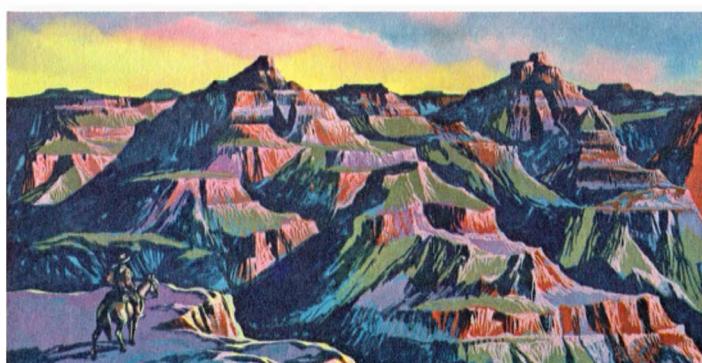
During the night Colonel Forsyth rode in with troops of the Seventh Cavalry and in the morning they disarmed the warriors.

Tension was mounting. Warriors in their Ghost Shirts began to defy the soldiers, shots rang out and the soldiers began to retreat. The Hotchkiss guns suddenly opened fire and began pouring shells onto Wounded Knee Plain at the rate of fifty a minute.

The camp disintegrated under the thumping explosions. Over two hundred Indians and sixty soldiers lay dead. The surviving Indians fled.

With the failure of the Ghost Dance Rising, Wovoka's great vision died and with it the hopes of the Indian.

Buffalo Bill Cody died in 1917 in Denver, Colorado. He was buried on top of Lookout Mountain, overlooking the great plains that were once the Wild West. He was the last of the Frontiersmen.









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