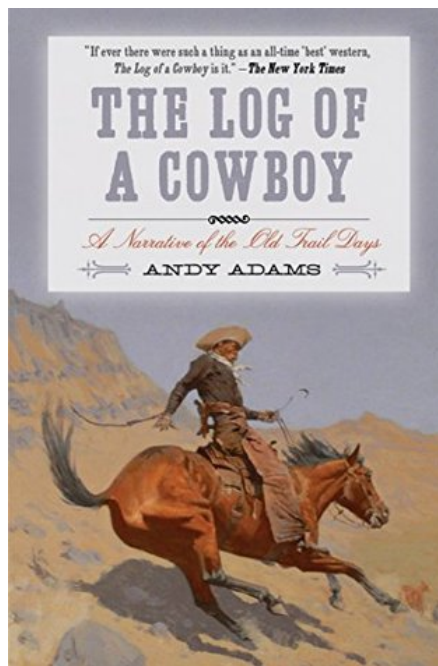




The Log of a Cowboy: A Narrative of the Old Trail Days

Andy Adams

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A true-to-life narrative of the escapades and challenges of the frontier's legendary event: the cowboy cattle drive.

The Log of a Cowboy brings to life an important, yet short-lived, piece of the American Old West. It's here that the cowboy earned his reputation and admiration, and it's through protagonist Tommy Moore that we learn of some of the challenges of the legendary cattle drive. Run-ins with Indian tribes, cattle hustlers, shoot-'em-ups, and the lure of "good whiskey and bad women," are just some of the troubles that Moore faces, all told with that classic cowboy swagger.

It's not just the thrill of adventure that makes this such a fascinating tale; *The Log of a Cowboy* is often seen as a narrative of Andy Adams's own life after twelve years in the saddle, and although some liberties were taken, it remains one of the most reliable accounts ever written, helping cement the lawless, and revered, Wild West into a national subconscious. Through Moore we learn cowboy colloquialisms like "drifting" and "cutting," the perils of stampedes, and the innate intuition of these frontier men.

Adams deftly weaves stories within a story, bringing fabled cattleman Shanghai Pierce into this literary world, spinning tales of occult sciences, hitchhiking ox, and astonishing "bear signs." Much like the Pony Express, the cattle drives of the Old West remain an essential part of American culture, and Adams's narrative helps to keep it alive through the generations.

This is a must-read for any fans of the Old West, a time when courage and adventure were all part of a day's work.

Skyhorse Publishing is proud to publish a broad range of books for readers interested in fiction that takes place in the old West. Westerns—books about outlaws, sheriffs, chiefs and warriors, cowboys and Indians—are a genre in which we publish regularly. Our list includes international bestselling authors like Zane Gray and Louis L'Amour, and many more. While not every title we publish becomes a *New York Times* bestseller or a national bestseller, we are committed to books on subjects that are sometimes overlooked and to authors whose work might not otherwise find a home.

The Log of a Cowboy: A Narrative of the Old Trail Days Details

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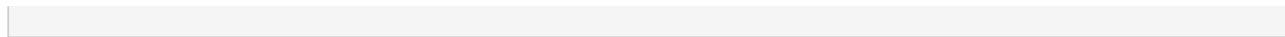
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From Reader Review The Log of a Cowboy: A Narrative of the Old Trail Days for online ebook

Kat says

I grew up watching westerns with my Dad and now live in Oklahoma, so I'm a little biased to a good western. The Log of a Cowboy was such a joy to read! It took me to the trail and immersed me. I never knew where the story was going next and enjoyed every second of it!

Henry says

If you are tired of the typical Hollywood trashy view of cowboys whoring it up while on a silly shooting vendetta, then this book is a great way to reset that stereotypical view of western cowboys created by lowbrow Californians. Andy has a very down to earth writing style that reflects his years in the cattle herding business. The Log of a Cowboy places the reader right in the middle of the birth, life, and end of cattle drive from Texas to Montana. The reader is taken into the day to day lives of driving cattle while at night we are treated to campfire stories of life experiences of each team member. The ending of this book is by far the best that I have read in a long while. This book is overall a great portal into what it was like being a true cowboy when America was built on the backs of men. This story is not for weakspirited millennial who is too easily offended.

Cecilia Deck says

I learned so much about cowboy life from reading this. The narrator's voice is delightful, but beware: The language of the times included casual racial slurs and stereotyped caricatures of native people.

M.J. Johnson says

An authentic (although fictional) account of a cattle drive, written by a man who had actually been there and done it. Some of the attitudes and opinions on race etc have to be viewed within the context of the times. An excellent slice of history - recommended to anyone interested in this short though widely written about (many times inaccurately) period in the history of the American West.

Luke Parra says

I read this many years ago. As I recall, it is very true account of the early days and life on the cattle drives. Many of these came through New Mexico and many of the drovers were Hispanic.

Chris Sherman says

This book was great. Its less about being a cowboy specifically than it is about a broader unique way of life-- leaving home far behind you and striking out on a journey with a group of people. Loggers, whalers, Navy sailors, oil derrick operators. There are few occupations that isolate you to face adversity with a group of relative strangers bound only by a common skill and a will to get paid. I've experienced it and this combined with appealing characters, an ever present sense of adventure, an elegant oscillation between stress and relief made Adams's book highly enjoyable for this reader.

The other incredibly interesting aspect to this book is that it was written in real time (that is, by a cowboy in 1903 about a cowboy in 1903) so the dialogue is the real McCoy and it is fascinating from slang to grammar. Full of gems and one-line life lessons.

Spbayer says

Andy Adams was a cowboy for 12 years. In 1903, flat broke and annoyed by the plethora of ridiculous books that purported to depict the true-life adventures of cowboys, he decided to try his own hand at writing a novel. The result is a beautifully written book, filled with fascinating detail of everyday life on the trail in 1882, as a team of 12 cowhands, 1 cook, 1 horse wrangler and a foreman drive 3100 cattle from Brownsville, Texas to the Blackfoot Indian Reservation in Montana.

Ron says

Andy Adams was a prolific writer, and thanks to the University of Nebraska Press, some of this former cowboy's output is still in print. This true-to-life story of an 1882 cattle drive is his best known, and its retelling 100 years later in Larry McMurtry's "Lonesome Dove" is evidence of its importance among early works of Western fiction.

Here the protagonist is a young cowboy much like the author, who trailed beef from Texas to Montana at a time just after the buffalo herds were being extinguished from the short grass prairies and homesteading had not yet fenced in the high plains. Oklahoma was still "Indian Territory," Little Big Horn was a recent memory, and Native Americans were in the last shameful stages of being forced off the open rangeland. The railroads were snaking across the land making frontier boom towns where law and order either prevailed (Dodge) or more often did not (Ogallala), and the vast cattle herds of Texas and Mexico finally had a market and access to it.

Adams was born into this world and as a young man cowboys during the height of the cattle drive era. His book is an account of one trek, delivering 3,000 head of cattle to the Blackfoot Agency in northern Montana. For the protagonist, the initial excitement wears off once the daily routine is established, and besides the occasional stampede and wet weather, the highlights of the journey are brief visits to the cowtowns they pass along the way and the many river crossings, some of which pose enormous difficulties.

We get to know all the men in the outfit by name, and a few stand out, including Flood the foreman, McCann the cook, and the protagonist's trail mate The Rebel, who is older and wiser and something of a mentor. Other personalities emerge, primarily around the campfire on nights when the men get to swapping stories. And Adams passes on a lot of first-hand knowledge about trailing cattle, riding horses, and the day-to-day

operation of a drive. Days and nights of the routine are punctuated by episodes of another kind: a rigged horse race, in which the cowboys lose several hundred dollars in wagers, two saloon shootings, the breakdown of the chuck wagon, pulling cattle out of a boggy river, meeting potentially hostile Indians, an encounter with cattle thieves, and a long drive across a waterless expanse of Wyoming.

Reproduced from the original edition published in 1903, the text has an old fashioned look and feel that suit the subject matter and the prose style well. There are also five illustrations. I highly recommend this book to anyone who enjoyed "Lonesome Dove." Adams captures the excitement and the reality of the old West before it was romanticized and mythologized by the movies and popular fiction. As companion volumes, I would recommend Ramon Adams' "Cowboy Lingo" and "Come an' Get It," which provide much informative background on open range cowboying. With a good road atlas at hand, you're also able to follow the track of the drive across six western states, from Brownsville to the Blackfeet Indian Reservation.

Christopher Newton says

Well-written account of a cattle drive from Texas to Montana in the year 1882. For the first time I understood what cowboys actually did in addition to strumming guitars and blasting away with their six-shooters - though they do some of that too.

Ted says

3 ½ stars. This book was published in 1903. The author, Andy Adams, was born in 1859 in Indiana, grew up on a livestock farm there, and eventually became a cowboy in Texas in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. He knew cattle drives from personal experience, and after leaving the horseback life, moved to Colorado and began writing fiction about what he knew best: cowboys and cattle.

I've seen it claimed in reviews here on Goodreads that Larry McMurtry used this book as a source for his Lonesome Dove series on novels, or that Lonesome Dove was a "retelling" of this.

I reckon the truth of the matter is a little different. McMurtry was very likely familiar with the book. It is called in some circles (for example, the Penguin Classics' circle) a "classic", and was very popular and well known in the early part of the last century. It could have even given McMurtry the idea of writing a novel about a cattle drive from Texas to Montana (in this case the drive terminates in Fort Benton Montana, near a Blackfoot Indian Agency – the cattle are to feed the Indians). That's about where the similarity ends.

Well, there are other things in common, I admit. Besides the herd of driven animals being a *cattle herd*, the people doing the driving are "cowboys", and their method of locomotion is "horses". They have "ropes" with which they are able to "lasso" their charges. They have a "wagon" and a "cook" that travel along with them. They do cross a *lot* of "rivers" on the way. The cattle occasionally "stampede", which is generally a "pain-in-the-ass" to the cowboys.

But there are a few differences.

The main one is that Log of a Cowboy is far more "realistic" than is Lonesome Dove – but not in a good way. The introduction by Richard Etulain (quite informative) *informs us* (told you) that the book was confused with non-fiction repeatedly by both critics and readers. And it's easy to see why. For one thing, it reads like non-fiction. There is *nothing* about the cattle drive that is not entirely believable in it. (There

actually are some things about the *cowboys* that seem downright ridiculous and very fictional, but **we'll get to that.**)

The title indicates the book is a cowboy's "log". So think about reading a ship's log. Think how that might be a good source of information about a ship's journey. Also think about how exciting that log might be. Yup, that's about how exciting a log of a cowboy might be too – and this one is just that exciting. (Think about sawing those logs – zzzzzzzzz; or falling off them – now that might be a *little* bit exciting.)

And the stories that these cowboys tell around the camp fire in the evenings? Wow, talk about long, drawn out affairs that are maybe as interesting and rousing as ... hmm ...maybe one of those logs with ants crawling on it?

Okay, so the book isn't exciting. But as I said, it does give what one would suppose is a pretty realistic notion of the nuts and bolts of a late nineteenth century cattle drive, a long one from Texas to Montana. We learn that the remuda (horse herd) included roughly *ten* horses for each rider. This indicates how often the cowboys had to change mounts in stressful situations, and how they had to plan for horses to be out-of-commission for a variety of reasons, such as losing a shoe, or becoming slightly injured.

Those pain-in-the-ass stampedes? They happen fairly often in Lonesome Dove, often play a minor role in the plot, and generally get resolved in a paragraph or two (describing what might have had to be done over a period of time perhaps stretching into several hours). In *Log* no stampede described is resolved in a paragraph. With no trouble at all I was able to find a description of a stampede which goes on for *eight pages* before all the cows, horses and cowboys are back together. So one does learn that stampedes were a real bother on a cattle drive, and the source of an awful lot of the hard work needed of the cowhands.

In a similar manner, though Lonesome Dove has a couple descriptions of very harrowing, even deadly, river crossings, aside from the tragic/dramatic bits, they also are completed without a whole lot of narrative. *Log* tells of more than one river crossing involving cattle getting "bogged" in soft bottoms or even quicksand, where page after page is devoted to a description of every detail of getting these cattle "unstuck" and across the river. Again, this is interesting, but you quickly lose sight of the fact that you're reading a novel.

The turn-of-the century sensibilities are on display here, and though not numerous, these bits of the narrative are more than a little irritating. The word "nigger" is used more than once, indeed one of the horses has that as a name; the Native Americans mentioned near the end of the story ("Indians" of course) are described mostly disdainfully; and the casual killing of a mother bear and both her cubs "was unanimously voted the most exciting bit of sport and powder burning we had experienced on our trip." Well, times were different.

And those **fictional cowboys**? The most noticeable thing is the way they talk. They all seem to talk as Andy Adams, the literary story teller, might be imagined to talk. I'll give an extended quote here, from the first page I opened to. All the talk is along these lines.

"You certainly never experienced the tender passion," said Fox Quarternight to our horse wrangler, as he lighted his pipe with a brand from the fire. "Now I have. That's the reason why I sympathize with these old beaus of the bride. Of course I was too old to stand any show on her string, and I reckon the fellow who got her ain't so powerful much, except his veneering and being a stranger, which was a big advantage. To be sure, if she took a smile to this stranger, no other fellow could check her with a three-quarter rope and a snubbing post. I've seen girls walk right by a dozen good fellows and fawn over some scrub. My experience teaches me that when there's a woman in it, it's haphazard pot luck with no telling which way the cat will hop. You can't play any system, and merit cuts little figure in general results."

Lonesome Dove dialogue it surely ain't. To me the really interesting question about this long jumble of cowboy references ("snubbing post", "three-quarter rope") and rather formal grammatical structure, laced with presumably turn of the century phrases ("on her string", "which way the cat will hop", "cuts little figure") is: *could this be the way at least some cowboys really did talk in those days?* I suppose it's possible, but I have no idea how one would find the answer to that question.

So, the talk, although striking my ear as certainly not what I would expect from the mouth of a cowpuncher, could be just as accurate as the descriptions of the cattle drive details.

But one thing I'm pretty sure of is that the descriptions of the cowhands' visits to the infrequent towns along the trail leaves out something. To hear Adams tell it, the main attractions of having a day (and night) in places like Dodge City or Ogallala was gambling and (maybe) a bit of something to drink. A brothel? Never mentioned. So here, at any rate, we do know that this is a fictional account, even though the "fiction" is perhaps forced by an early twentieth century publisher's prudery (or maybe the author's prudery, who knows).

I did enjoy this book enough to finish it, even though sometimes I felt like I was being pulled along behind a horse with a rope around my neck. If you're looking for a real *novel* of 19th century cattle drives, look elsewhere. If you want the real low-down on what these drives were like, this will likely be satisfactory.

Rose says

If you want to know what the old West really was like, read this! This is a true story written by a man who lived in those times and saw it all happening. No random gunfights, no brothels, no outlaws. Just hardworking men who relax hard too. These are also very good boys; you don't catch them messing around with loose women. One cowboy finds a can with a picture of Regency period ladies dining. "Them old gals had oughtta be ashamed to dress like that!" He exclaims. This book also brings to life the aftermath of the war, as some of the cowboys are Confederate veterans. The whole book is a must read for people who want to know the reality behind their Westerns.

Sharon says

It took me awhile to get into this book as I at first found the narration rather dry. But the further I got into it the more I appreciated it's honest representation of what life on a cattle drive of the old west must have been like. Without the flourish of a western novel, but rather a real picture of the daily life and tribulations of a cattle drive in the 1880s. I ended up thoroughly enjoying it.

Annette says

Andy Adams (1903, 1981). The Log of a Cowboy: A Narrative of the Old Trail Days. Time-Life Books Inc.[return]Set in the late 1800s, Adam's tale is often listed as the best account of cowboy life ever written. The author condensed a dozen year's work experience in the saddle into this book about a five-month cattle drive - - delivery of three thousand head from the mouth of the Rio Grande river (near Brownsville) in southwest Texas to government buyers at the Blackfoot Indian Agency in northwest Montana. Written over a

hundred years ago, the account brings vivid images of a dozen cowboys traveling with the outfit's cook / cookwagon, horse wrangler and trail boss to complete their long journey. Along the way they face rain flooded streams, experience night-time stampedes, encounter threatening Indians, ward off cattle rustlers, cross expanses of drought-ridden plains, and visit the rough-shod trail towns of Ogallala and Dodge City. The true-to-life story emphasizes the bond between trail mates who share campfire stories and tall-tales, get taken in a rigged horse race, and become honor-bound to back one another in cowtown gunfights. I highly recommend the book to anyone interested in the authentic history of the old West. One cannot mistake this book's influence on the more contemporary Lonesome Dove by Larry McMurtry, and though offensive today can tolerate the author's name of Nigger Boy for a favorite horse. lj (Feb 2011)

Cindy Winder delong says

I enjoyed this book. I found it fascinating and interesting. I loved learning how different things were without our modern technology. I was sad when the book ended, I wanted it to continue so that I could learn what a train ride was like and how the reunion with their families went. The version I read was free for my Nook. The formatting and copying were poor quality but I was still able to understand most of it. I would have enjoyed it more if I had read a copy with better formatting and editing.

Geoff Sebesta says

Cowboys running around doing cowboy things. This guy had the virtue of having been there, and some of the stories are quite good. Some of them are quite racist. Man, a lot of these old cowboy writers were racist.
