



Legends of the West: Dodge City, Kansas

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*Includes pictures of Dodge City and important people and places.

*Profiles Dodge City's most famous residents, including Bat Masterson and Wyatt Earp.

*Highlights the history of Dodge City, as well as its forms of entertainment.

*Includes a Bibliography for further reading.

“Dodge City Town Company, Ford Co., Kansas. Inducements offered to actual settlers! Prospects of the town better than any other in the upper Arkansas Valley! Free Bridge across the Arkansas River! The town a little over one year old, and contains over seventy buildings! Good school, hotel, etc. AT & SF RR depot in town... Enquire of: R. M. Wright at Chas. Rath & Co. store or E. B. Kirk, Secy and Treas., Fort Dodge.”

Dodge City Messenger, June 25, 1874

Space may be the final frontier, but no frontier has ever captured the American imagination like the “Wild West”, which still evokes images of dusty cowboys, outlaws, gunfights, gamblers, and barroom brawls over 100 years after the West was settled. A constant fixture in American pop culture, the 19th century American West continues to be vividly and colorful portrayed not just as a place but as a state of mind. In Charles River Editors’ Legends of the West series, readers can get caught up to speed on the lives of America’s most famous frontier figures in the time it takes to finish a commute, while learning interesting facts long forgotten or never known.

The Wild West has made legends out of many men, but it has forged a lasting legacy for some of the frontier towns that hosted famous Western icons as well, and aside from Tombstone and Deadwood, no frontier town is better known than Dodge City, Kansas. In the immediate wake of the Civil War, a settlement originally developed around Fort Dodge, which had been built to protect against Indian attacks, and it became a favorite spot for the buffalo hunters on the Plains who were engaged in exterminating the bison to harm the Native American tribes.

By 1876, however, Dodge City had become a popular destination spot for cattle drives starting from as far south as Texas. With that, the town also came to symbolize everything about the Old West. Dodge City brought together cowboys, lawmen, saloons, gambling, brothels, and everything in between, creating an environment that was always colorful and occasionally fatal. Since Dodge City was on the frontier, it took awhile for the law to catch up to it; even as late as September 1876, a local paper noted, “The citizens of Dodge have organized a vigilance committee and last week the committee addressed the following pointed note to every gambler in the city; 'Sir: You are hereby notified to leave this city before 6 o'clock, a. m. of Sept. 17th, 1876, and not return here.'”

Lawmen finally became a fixture of Dodge City in the late 1870s, but as with so many other places in the West, the line between hero and villain was blurred; cowboy Pink Sims later wrote about Dodge City, “It was stated that the marshals were all pimps, gamblers and saloonkeepers. They had the cowboys disarmed, and with their teeth pulled they were harmless. If they got too bad or went and got a gun, they were cut down with shotguns.” Dodge City’s lawmen included some of the most famous men of the Wild West, including Bat Masterson and Wyatt Earp, who mixed it up in Dodge City as a deputy marshal several years before he was involved in the Gunfight at the O.K. Corral in Tombstone.

Given the way the frontier town developed, as well as the people who called it home, Dodge City was certain to hold a special place in Western lore. Legends of the West: Dodge City, Kansas comprehensively covers the history of the city, profiles the people who called it home, and highlights the attractions and events that made it famous. Along with pictures of important people, places, and events, you will learn about Dodge City like you never have before, in no time at all.

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