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SLANG IN THE
POPULAR WESTERN NOVEL

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ABSTRACT

Slang in the popular Western novel has heretofore been poorly documented. For this study a glossary on historical principles was compiled containing more than 850 slang terms. The terms were collected from a corpus of 100 novels by authors deemed by critics of the popular Western to be the most successful and influential in the genre. The novels span a period from the dime novel Westerns of the late nineteenth century to the present.

The historical glossary shows that a special slang vocabulary has been a defining feature of the Western since its inception in the dime novels. This slang vocabulary plays a major role in creating the colorful fictional vernacular the Western has made familiar to the American public. An analysis of the terms in the glossary reveals that most of them fall within a limited number of semantic domains. The use of slang serves as a rhetorical device that highlights these domains, and by doing so helps the Western achieve a number of important literary aims: to present violence in a socially acceptable manner, to help the reader interact with the Western as they would with a game-like social ritual, and to represent the Old West as a land of boundless opportunity for the courageous individual.

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INTRODUCTION

In the following scene from The Coming of Cassidy by Clarence E. Mulford, the marshal, Harris, is surrounded by a gang of rustlers and finds an unexpected ally in cowpuncher Bill:

The marshal stepped silently to the porch and then on to the ground, his back to the rear of the hotel, waiting to be discovered. He had been in sight perhaps a minute. The cowpuncher made a sudden, eye-baffling movement and smoke whirled about his hips. Fred, turning the corner behind the marshal, dropped his gun with a scream of rage and pain and crashed against the window in sudden sickness, his gun-hand hanging by a tendon from his wrist. The marshal stepped quickly forward at the shot and for an instant gazed deeply into the eyes of the startled rustlers. Then his Colt leaped out and crashed a fraction of a second before the brothers fired. George Thomas reeled, caught sight of the puncher and fired by instinct. Bill, leaving Harris to watch the other side of the street, was watching the rear corner of the Victoria and was unprepared for the shot. He crumpled and dropped and then the marshal, enraged, ended the rustler's earthly career in a stream of flame and smoke. Tom, turning into the street further down, wheeled and dashed for his horse, and Art, having leaped behind the harness shop, turned and fled for his life. He had nearly reached his horse and was going at top speed with great leaps when the prostrate man in the street, raising on his elbow, emptied his gun after him, the five shots sounding almost as one. Art Thomas arose convulsively, steadied himself and managed to gain the saddle. Harris looked hastily down the street and saw a cloud of dust racing northward, and grunted. "Let them go--they won't never come back no more." Running to the cowpuncher he raised him after hurried examination of the wounded thigh. "Hop along, Cassidy," he smiled in encouragement. "You'll be a better man with one good laig than th' whole gang was all put together." . . . And thus was born a nickname that found honor and fame in the cow-country--a name

that stood for loyalty, courage and most amazing gun-play (1913, 170).

Rustlers, marshals, blazing guns, galloping horses, fearless cowboy heroes--this passage in which cowboy Bill (thereafter known as Hopalong Cassidy) and the marshal shoot it out with the rustlers exemplifies the fast-paced heroic action that has earned the popular Western a unique place in the hearts of Americans and made it a mainstay of popular culture in the United States.

Even in 1990, a century after the last of the great cattle drives, the typical drugstore or supermarket paperback book rack displays new Western series novels with volume numbers in the hundreds, along with reprints of classics by Zane Grey, Luke Short, Ernest Haycox, and Louis L'Amour. L'Amour is one of President Reagan's favorite authors and recipient of both a Congressional Gold Medal and the Presidential Medal of Freedom for his contribution to American literature (New York Times Book Review, June 2, 1985, p. 27). Although the heyday of prime-time TV Western series seems to have passed, the 1989 CBS miniseries "Lonesome Dove," based on the 1985 novel by Larry McMurtry, achieved tremendous popularity and critical acclaim. The Western is perhaps America's most popular contribution to world literature (Cracroft 159). Native authors in countries as diverse as Norway and Japan have produced Westerns for local consumption, most famous of which are perhaps the novels of the German author Karl May, which

feature Old Shatterhand and his Indian sidekick, Winnetou. So pervasive, indestructible, and powerful is the attraction of the Western that in the eyes of many critics it has earned the status of an American myth. Many critics also maintain that the Western deserves serious study because it offers insight into the aspirations and fears of the average American.

Since the birth of the popular Western in the dime novels of the late 1870's, countless thousands of Westerns have appeared in print. To distinguish this prolific popular genre from other novels with a Western setting, a useful working definition of the Western--the one I used to select the novels for this study--is any adventure story set in the geographical area of the great arid plains between the borders of Mexico and Canada transversed by the cattle driving routes, and taking place in the time period from the end of the Civil War to 1890, when the great trail drives had ended. Other defining features of the Western include: (1) a formulaic plot in which the hero always wins, (2) a backdrop of magnificent scenery, and (3) characteristic props like ten-gallon hats and wild horses.

Along with these defining elements, authors of Westerns have invariably used a special vocabulary to evoke the mythical realm of the fictional West; therefore a Western novel might also be defined as one that features **sixshooters, tenderfeet, and broncos.** Can any faithful

reader imagine a Western bereft of pards or grub? Although this study did not extend to parodies of the Western, this special vocabulary is such an identifying feature that such parodies would certainly have to use these terms, just as they would have the characters wear big hats and "hair pants" (wide, furry chaps). Every novel included in this study, from the naive dime novels to Larry McMurtry's sophisticated Lonesome Dove (1985), uses some of these recognizably "Western" terms.

Use of this special vocabulary helps to orient readers to the genre and to create for them the unique "voice" of the Western. In addition, through the spate of popular films and TV shows the novels have inspired, familiarity with this vocabulary has spread far beyond the segment of the population who read Westerns. While other popular genres, such as war stories and detective novels, also have special vocabularies, the Western appears to be unique in having employed a special vocabulary for over a century and for making this vocabulary so widely familiar in American culture.

The present study documents and assesses the function in the Western of one of the most important and characteristic elements of its special vocabulary, namely slang. I have collected slang from a representative sample of one hundred Western novels and presented it in a glossary arranged on historical principles, a form that gives dates

and sources for the terms and thus provides the kind of information most useful to scholars and lexicographers, and that will also be of interest to lay readers. The study will show that a special slang vocabulary has been a characteristic and defining element of the Western throughout its history. Further, this study will show that the greater part of the slang terms collected fall into a limited number of semantic domains, and that the slang within these domains performs an important rhetorical function in the novels by foregrounding elements relevant to the social and psychological significance of the Western.

The following ten semantic sets appear so consistently in the novels that they may be said to be a necessary and defining feature of the Western:

1. Violence, crime, and guns
2. Recreations of the cowboy--drinking and gambling
3. Terms narrowly related to the lifestyle and occupation of the cowboy
4. Rapid departure and travel
5. Irreverent characterizations of occupations
6. Commendation and condemnation of persons
7. Irreverent characterization of persons
8. Speech and talking
9. Derogatory characterizations of races and nationalities
10. Terms referring to or derived from Mexican and Indian culture

Slang in the Western functions as a literary device that adds rhetorical emphasis to the elements within the ten semantic sets. By highlighting these semantic domains, slang helps the Western perform the three principal functions critics attribute to it:

1. to present violence, especially gunplay, in a manner acceptable to the American public;
2. to provide a social ritual, analogous to a spectator sport, that allows a release of tensions while it reaffirms cultural values;
3. to provide an escape from the problems and limitations of an industrial, urban society.

The Western features a special slang vocabulary as one of its defining features, and the widespread popularity of the genre, along with Western films and TV programs, has made it familiar to almost every American. Yet this vocabulary has been poorly documented. The standard work on the vocabulary of the American West, Ramon Adams' Western Words (1968), is an amusing but informal hodgepodge culled indiscriminately from works of fiction, living contributors and earlier glossaries. As the following example shows, it is aimed at a popular audience and offers no dates, sources, citations or bibliography for its grab-bag of Western terms:

chuck-line rider

A name applied to anyone out of a job and riding through the country. Any worthy cowboy may be forced to ride chuck line at certain seasons, but the professional chuck-line rider is just a plain range bum despised by all cowboys (46).

Earlier glossaries, foremost of which is Melvin Van den Bark's "Nebraska Cow Talk" in American Speech, V, 1929 are chatty collections of localisms:

When the cook calls the "hands" to the "grub-pile," a meal, he is likely to yell, "Grub pile!" or "Come and get it!" Then the men are likely to say, "Let's put on the feed bag," go in and eat (75).

Peter Watt's more recent Dictionary of the Old West (1977) is likewise intended for a popular audience. Giving more detailed information about a more limited vocabulary than Adams, Watt nevertheless relies almost entirely on secondary sources for documentation:

greenhorn
also greener (see greener (1)), pilgrim. A man inexperienced in the ways of the West or of cow-work. As Gard 1954 so neatly puts it: "a man who couldn't cut a lame steer from a tree" (35).

Two scholarly sources of Western slang are provided by the second edition of the Oxford English Dictionary (hereafter OED 2) and Jonathan Lighter's monumental collection of U. S. slang, which he is currently editing for his forthcoming Historical Dictionary of American Slang (hereafter HDAS). Lighter's uniquely comprehensive collection of more than 100,000 citations encompassing American slang of all periods is probably the most extensive collection of American slang undertaken to date. The present study could not have been conducted without the diachronic perspective this collection provided; Lighter's collection provided dated citations for more than one

hundred well-documented terms on which the other standard references remain silent.

Notwithstanding the extensiveness of his collection, Lighter has pointed out the need for more thorough documentation of the slang of the popular Western novel. The inadequacy of existing documentation of this genre is evidenced by the late dates given in the OED2 and the HDAS collection for such popular terms as **gunslinger** and **owlhoot**. The OED 2 gives an earliest date of 1953 for **gunslinger**, while a citation given here shows its use as early as 1931 in a novel by Ernest Haycox. Lighter gives a 1969 date for **owlhoot**, while the present study reveals a date more than twenty years earlier, from a 1946 novel by Nye. In addition to providing more thorough documentation of slang typical of the Western, the present study also uncovered the earliest known citations for some terms not so narrowly related to the Western context, e.g. **holy smoke** (1885, previous cite 1892), and **go-getter** (1910, previous cite 1921).

In the only other study of a special vocabulary in fiction about the American West, Richard C. Poulson (1985) discusses and analyzes the representation in fiction of the speech of the mountain men, trappers and hunters who penetrated the Rocky Mountains in the first half of the nineteenth century. He demonstrates the importance of a special vocabulary in the fictional portrayal of the mountain man. Poulson comments on a need for further study

of the special language of the Western when he says that "the implication of and uses in quality fiction of literary dialect have yet to be assessed fully" (3).

Slang in the Western novels seemed an element particularly worthy of study because, according to Lighter, slang is used deliberately for its "connotations of impertinence, irreverence, or rejection of polite conventionality" (1980, 1), and therefore most clearly represents a stylistic choice on the part of a speaker or writer. In collecting the slang I was guided by the definition of slang proposed by Dumas and Lighter (1978), which specifies that to qualify as slang a term must meet at least two of the following criteria:

1. Lower the dignity of the discourse in which it occurs.
2. Imply the user's special familiarity with the referent.
3. Be ordinarily avoided in the presence of someone of higher social standing.
4. Be used in place of a well-known synonym (14).

All the criteria of Dumas and Lighter reflect some aspect of a rhetorical attempt to deliberately challenge social or linguistic convention by choosing a term counter to conventional usage (1978, 16). This definition therefore helps to exclude the regionalisms, variant pronunciations, and syntactic irregularities that also occur routinely in the Western such as reckon, ain't, and feller.

As Lighter observes, selection of slang "relies on a certain amount of admittedly subjective judgment, and no

decision is safe from challenge" (1980, 2). When in doubt about the status of a term, I consulted Lighter's collection or Lighter himself. Drawing upon his expertise, I distinguished between regionalisms such as reckon and slang terms such as ornery by considering their rhetorical force and geographical distribution. I attempted to list all terms in the novels that qualified as slang. When recording the slang on index cards, again in consultation with Lighter, I rejected slang terms clearly insignificant to the Western context such as okay and beat it. Occasionally a term that at first seemed to be insignificant proved to be so ubiquitous that its inclusion in the collection seemed justified. Such a term was lick (to beat, thrash), which I included because it appeared in so many of the novels studied. After the terms were collected on index cards, I further eliminated terms if they appeared only once and also seemed irrelevant to the Western context, for example umph, seam-squirrel, skeesicks, and spangle-roofed. Selection of terms necessarily involved some subjective decisions. In making these I tried to err on the side of inclusiveness.

Each entry in the glossary gives the lemma, the part of speech, date of earliest citation in other references, the definition, and dated citations for each term. The following is an example of this method of presentation:

gun-toter n. [OED2 1925; DA 1925] a gunfighter
 1926 Brand Blue 76: Meanest lot of gun-toters I
 ever seen. 1936 Nye No 122: There were no

customers in the Tall Bottle saloon this morning
but...two of the syndicate gun-toters.

The foundation of this study is a corpus of one hundred Westerns from the work of thirty-seven authors recognized by leading critics of the Western, i.e. John Cawelti and Russel Nye, as most popular and influential in the genre from the dime novels of the 1870's through 1987. As shown in the bibliography of primary sources, I used from five to eight novels from the works of the most important and prolific authors, i.e. Zane Grey, Max Brand, Ernest Haycox, Luke Short, Frank Gruber, and Louis L'Amour. From the works of most of the less influential or less prolific authors, I used a smaller sample, one to four novels. I tried to include for each author at least the novel most frequently mentioned by critics; then for the more important authors some novels from both their earliest and also their most recent work.

The present study consists of a glossary of the terms collected and six chapters describing the function of slang in the Western. The first chapter, a literature review, outlines the development of the popular Western as a formulaic genre, discusses its social and psychological significance, and shows slang to be a necessary element of the Western formula. The second chapter identifies and discusses the semantic sets that this study finds comprise most of the slang vocabulary of the Western, traces the origin of this slang vocabulary to the dime novels, and

shows its role in the creation of a colorful literary vernacular for the Western. Subsequent chapters show how the slang within the sets functions as a rhetorical device to foreground certain semantic domains and by doing so support the fictional aims of the Western. This study concludes that slang provides not only a uniquely effective medium through which to create a special "Western" literary vernacular, but a powerful rhetorical device to enhance elements important in the meaning the Western has for its readers.

CHAPTER 1

LITERATURE REVIEW

Throughout its development the popular Western has adhered to a basic literary formula; indeed, critics have attributed the enduring popularity of the genre to the ability of this formula to satisfy the social and psychological needs of its readers. Non-standard language, including slang, is an essential part of the Western formula.

History of the Western

During its lifetime of more than a century, the Western has evolved from the juvenile sensationalism of the dime novels to the more adult and probing Classic Westerns. Onto the original formula of heroic adventure in a wilderness setting were added elements of romance, fast-paced action, psychological complexity, and attempts at historical credibility. Successive writers have seen the Western setting as a backdrop for incredible adventures, an unspoiled domain where the American Dream could reach its highest fulfillment, a harsh Darwinian environment whose challenges would weed out the unfit and ensure that only the best individuals prevail, and a primitive society in which conflict between the individual and society could be acted out. Nevertheless, through all these changes, the Western

has adhered with amazing tenacity to a basic formula. The formula came as a legacy from the Western's major precursor, Cooper's Leatherstocking Saga, was crystallized by the dime novels, and has been perpetuated and revitalized in succeeding decades by craftsmen of popular literature.

James Fenimore Cooper. Critics such as Richard Etulain, Russel Nye, and John Cawelti unanimously recognize James Fenimore Cooper's Leatherstocking Saga as the single most important precursor of the Western (Folsom 1987, 147). Cawelti (1976) credits Cooper with creating the formula for the Western novel. Certainly Cooper's Leatherstocking Saga provided a model of setting, plot, and hero for later writers of Westerns. His use of a frontier setting, a point in space and time where civilization and wilderness confront one another, enabled Cooper to "resolve in fantasy the ideal of peaceful progress toward civilization and the impulse toward lawless freedom and aggression" (Cawelti 1976, 209). Cooper's characteristic plot, an adventure story made up of episodes of flight and pursuit, capture and rescue, figures in countless Westerns.

Cooper's Leatherstocking hero, Natty Bumppo, has the wilderness skills of the Indians, but uses them to protect the emerging civilization of the white men. He is "the extraordinary man whose double gifts of civilization and savagery make him able to confront and conquer the perils of the wilderness" (Cawelti 1976, 199). He is both gentle and

violent; he is "a reluctant but deadly hero who has violence thrust upon him by a treacherous and irreconcilable adversary" (Cawelti 1976, 208). The hero of the popular Western, patterned after Cooper's model, is a key figure because, like Natty Bumppo, his attributes enable him to unite within himself, and thus successfully resolve, the conflict between the lawlessness and violence of the wilderness and the order and peace of civilization. Later writers of popular fiction would use these same elements of a frontier setting, an adventure plot, and a transcendent hero as the basis for the popular Western formula.

The Dime Novels. From the time of its emergence in the dime novels of the 1870's, the popular Western novel has been a formulaic product whose appeal to its readers lies not in its originality or novelty, but in the ability of authors of the genre to skillfully repeat and rework familiar elements of setting, plot, and characterization. Adherence to a formula is so characteristic of the popular Western that Richard Etulain (1974) uses this feature to define the genre and to distinguish it from other novels set in or about the West. Writers of Westerns, he says,

nearly always formulate their fiction from the same ingredients: action, romance, and conflict of good and bad characters. Their plots are predictive; in their narratives the good man always wins. In doing so, he defeats his weak or evil opponents, and he is rewarded for his diligence--most often by winning the thanks of the community he saves, the hand of the heroine, or by gaining wealth (75).

The publishers of the dime novels, foremost of which was the firm of Beadle and Adams in New York, created the popular Western, and at its very inception molded it into a standardized product that would satisfy the demands of a mass market.

Industrialization, urbanization, and the spread of literacy provided a favorable environment for Erastus Flavel Beadle to issue the first of his dime novels in 1860. Beadle's major innovation was to establish "a uniform series of complete, predominantly American novels with a standardized packaging and price" (Bold 1987, 2). Designed to reach as large an audience as possible, they were sold on newsstands for ten cents each (Bold 1987, 3). As Russel Nye describes them, "they put 30,000 to 50,000 words of wild plot into a salmon-colored paper cover with a lurid illustration (1970, 201). Just as today many adults censure TV and rock lyrics, concerned contemporaries blamed dime novels for the moral downfall of young people, but Edmund Pearson (1929) defends the dime novels from charges of undue sensationalism and avers that they were "written by authors who were well up in the second rank of writers of their time," and were actually "amusingly strict in their moral standards" (8). At a time when a hardbound novel cost \$1.50 (Pearson 1929, 6), dime novels "offered stories of adventure and love at the lowest price then known" (Pearson 1929, 45), and they quickly became popular nationwide. "The standing

order of the American News Company, which handled the Beadles, was for sixty thousand copies as each new one appeared" (Pearson 1929, 46).

After 1870, dime novel publishers seized upon the Western as another saleable genre with which to satisfy the voracious appetites of their readers. Publishers of the dime novels found it most profitable to repeat previously successful fictional patterns and to provide readers and advertisers with a uniform and dependable product (Smith 1950, 91). They therefore adopted a system of "genre-oriented marketing" in which various genres, including the Western, were sold as standardized "brand-name" products (Hamilton 1987, 59). To assure the uniformity of their products, publishers and editors imposed a degree of regimentation and standardization on their writers, and writers who wanted to sell their work in this market learned to perfect existing formulas while expressing themselves with some individuality within these commercial confines. Thus, the publishers of the dime novel established the popular Western as a formulaic genre in which predictability is valued more than originality and in which "the interplay between individual initiatives and conventional patterns becomes the most dynamic element" (Bold 1987, xvi). Thus in evaluating the Western "the issue is the artistic skill with which the conventions are employed" (Hamilton 1987, 4).

In addition to establishing the Western as a formulaic genre popular with a mass audience, the creators of the dime novels made several other important contributions that shaped later Westerns. First, they recognized the unique suitability of the Great Western Plains as "a setting in which transcendent heroes, disguises, and perilous scrapes could be more believably generated because it had the quality of romantic distance" (Cawelti 1976, 213). Second, they also established the heroine as a "symbol of power and wealth" desired by both hero and villain. "Whoever wins her will acquire power and wealth to shape the world to his ideal" (Jones 1978, 142). The dime novels had to create a more refined and admirable romantic hero to replace the noblehearted but crude heroes of the earliest novels about the west because he had to be worthy of the love of this desirable heroine. Thus the dime novels made an especially important contribution by transmogrifying the typical Western hero, the Leatherstocking persona, from "an old, dialect-speaking, comic backwoodsman into a young and handsome gentleman" (Jones 1978, 45). As part of his transformation, the hero acquired the speech of a polished gentleman, so the colorful nonstandard speech typically used by the backwoodsman hero in popular novels with a frontier setting, while retained as a feature of the genre, had to be shifted away from the hero and on to the lips of his lesser companions (Jones 1978, 45).

Owen Wister. Owen Wister's The Virginian (1902), usually considered the first modern Western, lifted the genre from the yellow pages and sensationalism of the dime novels to hard-cover respectability by moving away from the lurid and improbable adventures of the dime novel and making the cowboy a national hero. Wister saw the West as more than simply a backdrop for incredible adventures; for him it represented "a social environment in which the American dream could be born again" (Cawelti 1976, 225). The West provided a fresh, unspoiled environment, free of the corrupting influences of the East, and far from those enemies of Democracy that Wister perceived "both in Wall Street and in the Labor Unions" (Wister 1902, vii).

Seeing it as a natural law superior to the legal system imposed on more civilized areas, Wister exalted the Code of the West--an unwritten, but nonetheless binding set of laws based on the principle that a man should never deliberately harm another, but neither should he ever passively submit to being harmed by another. For Wister it "embodies the community's moral will [and] also gives full weight to the importance of individual honor" (Cawelti 1976, 221). Wister's hero demonstrates his allegiance to the Code by participating in two violent illegal acts, a lynching and a gun duel. To Wister, this participation is justified because they not only satisfy the Virginian's personal honor; they protect the community as a whole.

In Wister's Western setting, away from the settled, hierarchical society of the East, "the inner spirit of man counts more than the surface manners and attitudes of civilization" (Cawelti 1976, 220). The Virginian embodies this principle of individual worth. Wister popularized the cowboy hero, portraying him as "both an exponent of natural law and of the major ideas of American society" (Cawelti 1976, 224). He envisioned the cowboy as a democratic hero "capable of providing the vigorous moral and political leadership America desperately needed (Cawelti 1976, 227).

Zane Grey. In Riders of the Purple Sage (1912) Zane Grey added elements of the romance to the Western formula and popularized the gunfighter hero. He painted a wild and vast Western landscape to serve as a sublime setting for adventures with "mythical and melodramatic overtones" (Cawelti 1976, 235). Grey further added a new dimension in the "religious-erotic treatment of hero and heroine" (Cawelti 1976, 239) and contributed the "mysterious and alienated figure of the heroic gunfighter or outlaw" (Cawelti 1976, 234). Grey qualifies as "a writer of romances in the tradition of Sir Walter Scott, Victor Hugo, and Robert Louis Stevenson (Topping 1982, 156). He made full and skillful use of the devices of the romance, "the larger than life hero, the innocent heroine, the chase, the disguise, the mistaken identity, the duel" (Topping 1982, 156).

Topping points out that in addition to being a writer in the romantic tradition, Grey was also an interesting if unsystematic social theorist who, like Wister, saw the West as a land of social regeneration.

The two fundamental components of Grey's social theory are a kind of secular Calvinism and Social Darwinism....Those whose nature was fundamentally good would, under normal circumstances, rise to the top of the social ladder, while those whose nature was evil would sink to the bottom (155).

But for Grey the winnowing process of natural selection had been undercut by the artificiality and weakness of modern civilization. In the harsher and more primitive environment of the West, "survival of the fittest is still the fundamental social law, and the basic tenor of life is determined by primitive emotions, strengths, and virtues" (Topping 1982, 155). Grey believed that a return to the western social model--Wister's "Code of the West"--could redeem American civilization.

Max Brand. Dubbed "the King of the Pulps," and perhaps the most prolific of all Western authors, Max Brand (Frederick Faust) began a prodigious career in 1918 that ultimately produced 350 book-length Westerns (Bloodworth 1982, 32). Although Brand exploited the Western formula, he never pretended to deal seriously with the actual West, which, in fact, he personally detested (Bloodworth 1982, 34). He rarely described Western settings in authentic detail or incorporated historical events. He made free use of elements from other literary genres--Classical and

Northern European mythology and legend, and gothic, mystery, and detective tales. Max Brand's novels emphasize action over contemplation or the description of settings. The most important contribution of Max Brand to popular Western fiction was his fast-paced action, which, driving the plot and permeating Brand's style, is his "most ubiquitous quality" (Bloodworth 1982, 36).

The Classic Western. The development of the contemporary "Classic Western," which paid greater attention to developing character and motivation, can be attributed to two writers--Ernest Haycox and Luke Short. In the 1930's, Haycox contributed to the evolution of the Western by seeking "to give his protagonists broader meaning, to allow them to ponder their circumstances" (Etulain 1974, 79). He provided "psychologically complex heroes" rather than mere "gun dummies" (Gale 1982, 183), and approached challenging themes such as "the nature of individual duty in the face of clashes between community selfishness and the individualistic hero" (Gale 1982, 185). Haycox also used convincing historical backgrounds to add realism (Etulain 1974, 79). Two decades later, Luke Short (Frederick Glidden), taking advantage of the financial opportunity offered by the rise of paperback originals, mixed elements of the detective story with the Western, producing plots "with an extraordinary amount of suspense and tension" (Etulain 1974, 81). Although he does not base his writings

on specific historical occurrences, Short "knows the details of Western life" and incorporates much general information on western topics, giving a realistic "feel" to his settings (Etulain 1974, 81). His portrayal of character is convincing and his plots are believable.

The "Haycox-Short Western"--or the "Classic Western"--soon became the standard for contemporary writers and dominated the market from about 1940 into the 1960's. It allowed a "richer exploration of tensions between old moral assumptions and new uncertainties of experience" (Cawelti 1976, 245). The popularity and power of this version of the Western formula "came from its ability to hold the vision of the Old West and the emergent outlines of modern America in a dramatic tension mediated by the striking figure of the hero" (Cawelti 1976, 251). The hero's violent actions are guided by his individual moral judgment and often separate him from the society he acts to protect.

Recent Developments. Although authors like Louis L'Amour carried on the conservative tradition of the Classic Western, recent Westerns have diverged in two directions. The sophisticated, ironic anti-Western, such as Thomas Berger's Little Big Man (1964), exploits the elements of the Western, but diminishes and parodies them by replacing the adventure hero with an anti-hero (Etulain 1974, 82). The self-described "Adult Western," exemplified by George G. Gilman's "Edge" series, the volumes of which are touted on

their covers as "The most violent Westerns in print," adds graphic sex and sadism to the Western elements.

Many authors other than those mentioned in the preceding brief sketch have made unique contributions to the Western. For instance, Andy Adams, one of the very few authors who had actually been a cowboy, as early as 1903 tried to counteract in his realistic fiction what he felt to be the overly fanciful literature about the cowboy, including The Virginian. B. M. Bower (Bertha Muzzy) with her popular Chip of the Flying U (1904) series has been the only woman to achieve stature as a writer of popular Westerns, a genre monopolized by male authors.

The Western remained vital because authors infused fresh elements into the formula. It moved away from the stereotyped characters and lurid plots of the dime novels to the more credible characters and plots of the Classic Western, all the while retaining the essential elements of an adventure plot, romantic setting, and transcendent heroism that seem to have made it so perennially popular. If sales figures are any indication, the Western appears to be surviving even its recent parodies and sex-and-violence exploitations.

Interpretations of the Western

To many of its critics the Western is a national myth or epic whose longevity and pervasiveness in American

society is based on its ability to fulfill various social and psychological needs. They regard the Western as a social document, "a record of America's national self-awareness" (Marsden and Nachbar 1987, 1263). Russel Nye (1970) takes a solitary stand against those who interpret the Western as a meaningful social document. He decries academic criticism, which he claims has "saddled the Western novel with hero myths, fertility rites, quests, ritual killings, and phallic symbolism, very nearly smothering it in a fog of footnotes" (303). To Nye, the Western is simply an entertaining adventure story set in an exciting period of American history, dealing with an uncomplicated society in which the old fashioned virtues of courage and integrity prevail (1970, 304). John G. Cawelti, perhaps regarded as the leading critic of the Western, rejects as reductive interpretations of the Western that attribute to it a single basic psychological or social function. He sees the Western formula as a unified, artistically constructed system of conventions through which many different needs can be satisfied.

National Myth or Epic. In the eyes of many critics, such as Robert C. Athearn (1986), this extraordinarily popular genre has earned the status of an American national epic, romance, or myth. Claiming that the Western is the equivalent of a national epic, critics point to the period of the trail drives of the Old West as the closest thing we

have to a heroic age, and to the cowboy as the American counterpart of a medieval knight (Athearn 1986, 12).

Perhaps we can better understand the perennial popularity of the Western if we regard it not merely as a genre composed of discrete works by individual authors but as one composed of "versions of one long epic tale unfolded over an extended period of time through the efforts of a number of skilled storytellers" (Marsden and Nachbar 1987, 1279).

In the idiom of medieval romance, these works may be considered to embody "the Matter of the Old West." Author Emerson Hough has said of the Old West that never again will there be another time in the nation's history "so vivid, adventurous, heroic" (Athearn 1986, 12). Its remoteness in time and space makes the Old West an ideal setting to generate heroic romantic fantasies. The vast, uninhabited, occasionally bizarre landscape afforded opportunities for heroism by isolating the individual and "forcing him to depend solely upon his own physical and psychological resources " (Savage 1979, 61). The cowboy hero resembles the knight of medieval romance, operating within

a form of aristocracy, one in which the owners represented a titled element and the ordinary hands were at least knights, mounted and ready to serve their lords. In lieu of a heraldic system, cattle brands served as coats of arms (Athearn 1986, 25).

Cawelti (1984) suggests that the Western fits Northrop Frye's definition of a romance. The Western's episodes of

chase and pursuit are the equivalent of the quest, and the final shoot-out represents the crucial battle in which the hero proves himself (96).

Social Document. Don D. Walker (1980) feels that although it does not accurately represent the historical the Western is meaningful in that it is "about" contemporary conflicts of the individual in a complex society such as freedom versus dependence, and loyalty versus law. Thus the Western provides an "objective correlative" for the existential conflicts of American society (103). One of the major problems in our complex urban-industrial society is the dwindling of the freedom and significance of the individual, and the importance of individual action is a key theme presented by the Western. William Savage (1979) states that the cowboy hero represents to Americans a "fantasy image" of the rugged individualist (61).

At the time of the rise to popularity of the Western, between 1890 and 1910, the "Progressive Era," Americans were eager to enjoy the fruits of rapidly expanding industrialism but still felt a nostalgia for their pre-industrial past and feared the loss of their freedom and individuality (Etulain 1974, 74). They experienced "the chilling conviction that freedom, space and opportunity were rapidly vanishing" (Etulain 1974, 76). They longed to "recapture a past less dominated by the city, the immigrant, the worker " (Etulain 1974, 77). In response to the specific occurrences of their

era, they embraced a literature that dealt with a region they perceived as affording "the last opportunity for democracy, individualism, and decency" (719). The rise to popularity of the Western in the Progressive Era may reflect nostalgia for a pre-industrial golden age, as did the popularity of Scott's romantic fiction at the height of the Industrial Revolution.

Indeed the dime novel Westerns that arose in the late nineteenth century, denied the rigid class structure of the east and affirmed that opportunity still existed (Jones 1978, 46). It provided "an adolescent dream society" in which readers could savor stories of heroes overcoming evil authority figures (Cawelti 1976, 217). The villains of the dime novels were often wealthy politicians or bankers who symbolize the corrupt institutions and stratified society of the East (Cawelti 1976, 214). In the conventional persecution-and-revenge plot typical of the dime Western, the hero is driven into outlawry by the corruption or indifference of a social system controlled by the rich and privileged, and the hero's violent retribution against these privileged villains is presented as justified (Jones 1978, 90). Thus the dime-novel Western "denied the rigid class structure of the East. The rise of the Western hero affirmed that the opportunity for social advancement still persisted" (Jones 1978, 46). The dime Western allowed

"vehement social criticism and simultaneously forecast a utopian future" (Jones 1978, 127).

Like the persecution-and-revolt theme of the dime novels, the revolt-and-search theme described by Max Westbrook (1980, 34) also describes the rebellion of the individual against the inadequate or corrupt institutions of society. The Western hero rejects the conventional values imposed by social institutions and goes on a lonely search for abstract value. The Old West provides the ideal setting for the revolt-and-search theme because it allows the hero the freedom to express his values through courageous individual action.

According to Hamilton, the elements of the Western formula are "closely tied to the myth of the American dream" (1987, 1), in which the individual can gain wealth and power by his own efforts. The Western provides a "testing and confirmation of key American values, especially individualism" (Hamilton 1987, 1). Two crucial elements in the Western formula permit the expression of individualism--"lawlessness and maximum opportunity for personal enrichment" (Hamilton 1987, 2).

The Western may represent an outlet for the expression of the problems of the individual in a complex industrial society, but critics see it as escapist, providing a false, simplistic resolution of rather than a meaningful confrontation with these disturbing social problems.

Etulain (1974) labels the nostalgia for the past that he feels inspired the Western as "crippling" (91). Delbert Wylder (1980) accuses the Western of dishonesty because it turns paradoxical problems into simplistic formulas (116). Martin Nussbaum sees the Western as a folk-art form that represents a revolt against modern rationalism and a return to faith in a self-sufficient hero. The Western follows "the law of the excluded middle" by reducing complex problems to simple good-versus-evil oppositions that can be resolved by the hero's violent action (Nussbaum 1960, 25). Cawelti calls the Western's synthesis and resolution of the conflict between the individual and a complex society "a literary exemplification of the principle of having your cake and eating it too" (Cawelti 1976, 229).

Freudian Drama. As well as having significance on the social level, the Western appears to function on the psychological level as a drama of oedipal conflict. The most well-known psychological study is that of Kenneth Munden (1960), who reinforces his Freudian interpretation of the Western with a case study of one of his patients, a modern cowboy. To Munden the cowboy myth represents "the wish fulfillments of the community and reflects aspects of their oedipal fixations" (127). In this analysis, the hero is the son. The villain, often older, richer, and more respectable than the hero, represents the father. Henchmen of the villain may represent siblings. In Munden's theory

the heroine, representing the mother, is often an insignificant character in the Western because the son fears his dependence on and desire for her. The mother/heroine equates with the superego in American society, in a value system in which men are beasts and women are civilizers. The gun, a phallic symbol, demonstrates the son/hero's potency, and with it he expresses both erotic and aggressive impulses towards the parents.

Game Theory. John Cawelti's (1984) theory that the Western resembles a game embraces those of the other critics who attribute significance to the Western as an epic romance, social document, or oedipal drama. He credits the Western's success to its ability to accommodate all these levels of meaning, and to disguise and conceal rather than explore these latent meanings. Cawelti (1984) defines a game as "a culture's way of simultaneously entertaining itself and of creating an acceptable pattern of temporary escape from the serious restrictions and limitations of human life" (59). He points out that the Western formula also fulfills these two functions of the game:

First, there is the patterned experience of excitement, suspense and release which we associate with the functions of entertainment and recreation. Second, there is the aspect of play as ego-enchantment through the temporary resolution of inescapable frustrations and tensions through fantasy (59).

As well as providing entertainment and a vicarious release of tensions and frustrations, the Western also shares with a

certain kind of board or field, it has clearly defined opposing players, and it follows a set of rules (67).

The setting of the Western resembles a great field or gameboard within which the action is safely confined. The era of the Western represents a "certain moment in the development of American civilization in which lawlessness was in decline before law and order" (1984, 65). Within the boundaries of this timeless epic past we can safely enjoy violence and lawlessness "without a threat to the fabric of society" (1984, 65). The vast and empty Great Western Plains provide a beautiful and dangerous field for the flight and pursuit moves that make up the action of the Western plot.

A game must have clearly defined opposing sides, and the Western has easily recognizable heroes and villains--in the old B-Western films we saw them wearing white hats and black hats, respectively. In the Western formula someone weak, the heroine or townspeople, is menaced by someone strong, the outlaws or Indians, and the hero resolves the conflict between them. In this tripartite division of characters, the heroine or the townspeople represent order and civilization threatened with destruction by the savagery of the villains. The hero has the same savage skills and capacity for violence as the villains but uses them in the service of order and civilization (1984, 69).

The participants in a game follow clear rules and value sportsmanship. The characters in the Western obey the Code of the West and practice the controlled ritual of the gun duel. The Western is "the last art form in which honor retains strength" (1984, 90). Also the "pattern of expectations" (1980, 68) set up by the Western formula reduces the action of the plot to predictable moves: "There must be a series of acts of violence to set the three-sided game in operation and to provoke and justify final destruction of the villain in such a way as to benefit the good group" (1980, 68).

The Western affirms American cultural values of faith in progress and a belief in the importance of the individual because it expresses the conviction that synthesis is still possible between social progress and success, and individual honor and independence (106). By the affirmation of cultural values a function similar to that of a social ritual:

The Western is effective as a social ritual because within its basic structure of resolution and reaffirmation, it indirectly confronts those uncertainties and conflicts of values which have always existed in American culture, but which have become increasingly strong in the twentieth century (Cawelti 1984, 100).

The Western appears to maintain its perennial popularity by providing for its readers not only escapist entertainment, but a sort of national epic or social ritual that reaffirms cultural values and affords an outlet for the

expression of their unresolved psychological and social conflicts.

Nonstandard Language in Literature

Two critics writing about nonstandard language in literature, Blake (1981) and Bridgman (1966) agree that writers of fiction cannot achieve detailed linguistic realism. Blake points out that since accurate reproduction of a dialect is often impossible and not artistically desirable, the writer incorporating nonstandard language into his work seeks to achieve verbal artfulness rather than absolute accuracy (1981, 10). Most readers will accept such representations of a language "because they are ignorant of different forms of language, and will take the author's representation as accurate if it fulfills their own rather generalized expectations" (Blake 1981, 14). Since authors are not attempting to reproduce actual linguistic behavior, they often copy their nonstandard representations from one another, so some of these representations become traditional in literature (Blake 1981, 14).

Authors attempting to produce artful representations of non-standard language want to afford readers "access to the vernacular world with its verbal ease and color, but without the distractingly irregular dialect surface" (Bridgman 1966, 61). The use of a nonstandard vocabulary can help achieve this goal. Sumner Ives points out that while representing

the pronunciation of a dialect presents a problem, the vocabulary of nonstandard speech "can be shown rather fully and with little difficulty, for the conventional alphabet will spell its forms and the meanings are relatively clear" (1964, 525). Therefore the use of nonstandard vocabulary items in literature can help create a literary representation of the vernacular without the difficulties to writer and reader that an attempt to reproduce a dialect completely would cause.

Bridgman and Blake discuss the changing role of nonstandard language in literature. Before the Civil War, Bridgman says, "genteel speech constituted a basic symbol of moral elevation and social dignity" (1966, 46), and colloquial speech was a subject of "condescending amusement" (9). Blake agrees that in the past "nonstandard language has been widely looked down on as being the appropriate language for the lowly born, the foolish and the ignorant. Hence nonstandard language has been a marker of class and comedy" (1981, 13). But Blake points out that more recently, "since people in the lower classes have been endowed with other virtues in the eyes of the educated ...some modification of the role of nonstandard language has developed" (1981, 13), and it may be used to make a political statement, or to expose the affectation of the accepted culture. Its use in literature expresses recognition of "the worth of the individual, the dignity of

common speech, and the special value of spontaneity" (Bridgman 1966, 41).

Freed of associations with clownishness and ignorance, the vernacular can have great artistic potential and expressive power (Hamilton 1987, 41). Vernacular words draw more than normal attention to themselves (Hamilton 1987, 22). Bridgman agrees: "The effect of these words--dialect, nonce, slang--is that of poetry. Carrying expository meaning they flash out with a light unique for prose" (1966, 118).

Poulson's study of the use of the mountain man's vernacular in literature (1985) supports the conclusions of Blake and Bridgman: 1) that the use of nonstandard language in literature is a literary device that does not portray actual linguistic behavior, 2) that authors copy from one another and thus make the nonstandard language traditional, and 3) that nonstandard language can have great expressive power.

Poulson points out that James Fenimore Cooper in his *Leatherstocking Saga* "created a literary dialect rather than faithfully portraying a historical argot" (84). "Leatherstocking becomes linguistically a literary figure rather than a mirror of a real speaker, which is probably exactly what Cooper intended" (83). Just as Cooper created a fictional speech for his *Leatherstocking* hero, George Frederick Ruxton, the first American author to portray

Western speech in Life in the Far West (1848), created a literary dialect for the mountain man in order to "plausibly create the characters of his mountaineers" (112). Poulson finds that Ruxton "left not true speech faithfully represented but a literary dialect far removed from actual speech" (111). Later authors writing about the mountain man borrowed from Ruxton and made the speech created by him a traditionally accepted part of the literature.

Poulson further shows that the literary speech of the mountain man has great expressive power:

Just as the long rifle is a symbol of the West, the speech of the mountain men acts as a symbol of the freedom they crave; in the speech are metaphors of their mountain experience mirrored in language (142).

The terms in Poulson's glossary reflect the mountain man's love for and mastery of the wilderness. For example, his name connotes not just someone who lives in the mountains, but a man who has the knowledge and skill to survive and travel in the wilderness (175). Those who have not acquired these skills are called "greenhorns" (170), and those unfortunate enough to live in settlements are known as "mangeurs de lard"--lard-eaters (174). The importance of his gun in the mountain man's conquest of the wilderness is dramatized by colorful terms such as "death dust" (167) for gunpowder, and "lead plum" (173) for a bullet. Thus the speech of the mountain man dramatizes his self-sufficiency and intimacy with the wilderness.

Slang in the Western

According to two critics of the popular Western, Hamilton (1987) and Westbrook (1980), nonstandard language, including slang, is an integral part of the Western.

Hamilton says:

The master formula uses a colloquial style of narration. The vernacular appropriate to the characters and their milieu is featured. The vernacular's most disreputable relatives, slang, cant, and argot, play a prominent role. Insistently nationalistic, the language boldly sets itself apart from proper English....Such a style proclaims a linguistic democracy where all are equal, and upholds democratic informality (37).

As has been discussed previously, Westbrook has identified as the controlling element of the Western the revolt-and-search theme, in which the hero rejects conventional values and established institutions and goes in quest of abstract value. Westbrook further states that because the Western must express revolt against convention, in it "to be meaningful expression must be noninstitutional" (38). As an example of noninstitutional expression, he shows how a typical Western hero reflects his disdain for conventional prescriptive norms by using slang:

Jeff Bransford, one of Rhodes' favorite heroes, is a well-educated man who can speak grammatically perfect English, but the taint of conventional achievement is removed by the fact that he can also talk slang--anytime he wants to--and talk it with equal naturalness (38).

Jeff Bransford is representative of many Western heroes who reveal beneath their rough exteriors a surprising familiarity with great literature and demonstrate an ability to switch linguistic codes. His use of slang represents an intentional break with linguistic convention that nonstandard pronunciation or syntax would not. Slang, we saw earlier, is "identifiable by the intent or the perceived intent of the speaker or writer to break with established linguistic convention" (Dumas and Lighter 1978, 11); therefore slang is a most effective way to make speech in the Western novel what Westbrook calls "noninstitutional."

Non-standard language in literature is not an accurate representation of linguistic behavior, but an artistic representation that readers accept as realistic. Readers find non-standard vocabulary items easier to understand than other features of a dialect. Authors often copy their nonstandard representations from one another, and thus make them traditional within a genre. Freed from its early associations with ignorant and comic characters alone, nonstandard language can portray lower class characters sympathetically, and by contrast expose the affectation of the accepted culture. Furthermore, a nonstandard vocabulary can have great expressive potential, and as Poulson has shown, can be especially effective in portraying the Western experience in fiction. Indeed, nonstandard language, including slang, is an integral part of the Western formula

that helps establish the Western's tone of democratic equality and irreverence for conventional institutions.

The Western must be evaluated on its own terms, as a formulaic product, or, to view it from a more flattering perspective, as many installments of one great American epic. Unlike "elitist" fiction, its virtues lie not in confronting the reader with unexpected and perhaps discomfiting themes, but in providing them, in ingeniously crafted and interesting ways, with an exciting but predictably patterned experience, analogous to that provided by a spectator sport. The basic Western formula involving a transcendent but democratic hero defeating evildoers in a romantically sublime and remote setting appears to have endured at least partly because it satisfies on many levels the social and psychological needs of its readers. Therefore, while the Western has evolved into a more sophisticated product, it has at the same time adhered with remarkable tenacity to the basic formula. Nonstandard language is a part of the successful formula. It creates a democratic and irreverent voice for the Western that, by contrast, exposes the polite conventionality of Eastern society.

CHAPTER 2

THE TRADITIONAL SLANG VOCABULARY

The slang vocabulary of the popular Western for the most part falls into ten semantic sets. The domains of these ten semantic sets represent elements that are important in the fictional presentation of the Old West as a stronghold of violence and heroic individualism.

This vocabulary is not an accurate representation of actual speech behavior but a literary artifact first synthesized in the dime novels of the late 1870's. Since that time it has been maintained and augmented by a process in which authors typically borrow their nonstandard language from one another. The slang vocabulary helps create an easily understood, colorful "Western" vernacular that readers have come to expect as a traditional element of the Western.

The Semantic Sets

After collecting slang from 100 Westerns, eliminating items that appeared only once and that seemed irrelevant to the Western context, I compiled the citations into a glossary that contained approximately 850 terms. When I arranged the citations in the glossary, patterns emerged; many terms appeared to be grouped around referents that fell into a limited number of domains. To verify this

impression, I charted the terms and found that over 75% of the terms fall into ten semantic sets in approximately the following percentages:

Violence, crime and guns	18%
Recreations--drinking and gambling	18%
Cowboy lifestyle and occupation	11%
Rapid departure and travel	6%
Occupations	5%
Commendation and condemnation	5%
Speech and Talking	5%
Fellow and Mild Disparagement	3%
Race and Ethnicity	3%
Mexican and Indian culture	<u>2%</u>
	76%

Many terms, e.g. bronco, could fit into more than one set and will be discussed later in more than one connection, but for this analysis each term was included in only one set. Of the one quarter of the terms that do not fit into the ten sets, a large number, about 40%, whatever their referents, make use of animal imagery; for instance several verbs that often appear, **buck**, **buffalo**, **bulldoze**, **crawfish**, have animal connotations. A number of other terms refer to money in some way, e.g. **blow in**, **busted**, **cartwheel** (silver dollar), **wad**. A few terms refer to romantic relationships, e.g. **spark**, **spoon**, **stuck on**, **sweet on**.

The sets that account for three quarters of the 850 terms in the glossary also include the most frequently cited terms, so they encompass an even larger percentage of all the citations collected. Of the terms most frequently cited, e.g. those having more than 15 citations, only one, **buck** (to defy or resist), which had 17 citations, does not

fall into one of the ten sets. The most frequently cited terms fall into the following sets: Violence, crime and guns - **six-shooter** (24), **pack** (a gun) (18), **lick** (to beat) (17), **plug** (to shoot) (16). Gambling - **play/make a play** (34), **tinhorn** (21). Cowboy lifestyle and occupation - **grub** (43), **cowpuncher/puncher** (37), **bronc/bronco** (30), **rustler/rustle** (29). Condemnation - **ornery** (25), **skunk** (17). Commendation - **square** (25). Travel and departure - **drift** (21). Fellow and mild disparagement - **pard/pardner** (30), **gent** (19), **tenderfoot** (18), **cuss** (17). Mexican culture - **savvy** (20). Race and ethnicity - **Greaser** (Mexican) (19).

These twenty terms might be said to form the core vocabulary of the popular Western. Some, notably **bronco**, **cowpuncher**, and **six-shooter** have become so common in American speech that, according to current dictionaries, they no longer are considered slang in the United States.

Each Western author uses slang in his own characteristic way. However, an analysis of the citations in the glossary reveals that all the authors use slang related to violence, and each of the other sets appears in the work of at least three quarters of the authors analyzed. All authors employed at least half of the ten categories, most used at least eight, and many of the major authors (Wheeler, Brand, Grey, Gruber, Haycox, Henry, L'Amour, Mulford, Nye, and Short) use them all. Therefore, it can be

said that the slang vocabulary within the ten semantic sets is a traditional and defining feature of the Western.

The following is a description of the ten semantic domains and the sets of terms that cluster around them:

Violence. The most pervasive slang in the Western involves violence--guns and shooting, killing and death, crime and violent punishment. The terms related to the gun and gunplay constitute a "gun lingo" characteristic of the Western. (It would be interesting to discover whether other genres, such as war or detective novels also have a characteristic slang vocabulary related to the gun.) Terms for a pistol abound: equalizer, hardware, hogleg, iron, Judge Colt, King Colt, Sam Colt, seven (seven shot revolver), shooter, shooting iron, six-gun, smoke pole, steel. The most common--six-shooter--appears in the work of almost every popular Western novelist from the dime novels on. Starting with the dime novels, slang verbs signifying to shoot (someone) have been part of the Western, e.g. bore, drill, drop, perforate, smoke, pot. Plug is the most widely used. Following the popularization of the gunfighter hero by Zane Grey in 1912, terms for gunfighter, e.g. gun, gun-artist, -boss, -dog, -fanner, -hand, -hawk, -slick, -thrower, -toter, leather-slapper, holster hopper, appear and proliferate. The term for gunfighter most common in the modern Western, gunslinger, makes its first recorded appearance in a work by Haycox in 1931.

Terms signifying to kill or to bury are a feature of almost every work studied, e.g. **croak**, **cross off the calendar**, **dust**, **knock off**, **rub out**, **salivate**, **salt**, **saw off**, **skrag**, **snuff out**, **wipe out**, **stop one's clock**, **set one's sun**. Plant (to bury) has been widely used from the time of the dime novels on. Two popular terms that mean to ambush and murder--**dry-gulch** and **bushwhack**--appear in the 1920's and become popular in the modern Western.

Terms for crime, criminals and punishment appear in every Western novel studied. **Calaboose**, **jug**, and, in the 1920's, **pen** substitute for jail or prison. Terms for hanging abound--**get one's neck stretched**, **necktie festival**, **necktie party**, **string up**, **swing**. The term **rustler** for cattle thief begins to appear in the dimes and persists to the present. **Road agent**, a synonym for highwayman in the dimes, still appears occasionally in modern authors. Starting in the 1940's the term **hardcase** becomes a popular way to characterize a lawless individual. Terms for outlawry and outlaw, **owlhoot** and **owlhooter**, are found first in Nye in 1936 and are used subsequently by Santee, L'Amour, Le May, and Henry. Slang related to violence is so important in the Western that authors seem to have felt the need to introduce a number of new terms to augment an already extensive vocabulary.

Cowboy Recreations - Drinking and Gambling. The typical Western from Wheeler to L'Amour uses colorful

synonyms for alcoholic beverages: hiccup syrup, hooch, poison, pure quill, redeye, rotgut, snakehead, snake juice, snort, tanglefoot, tarantula juice. Terms for drunkards, drinking and getting drunk also appear frequently: booze hoist, snootful, get one's skin full, hit the bottle, hoist one, go on a bat, roostered, soak, soused. These terms relate to the saloon, a traditional scene of confrontation in the Western.

Starting with the dime novels, slang that originated at the gambling table provides powerful controlling metaphors for situations and action in the Western--fourflusher for insincere or dissembling person, hole card for decisive advantage, stacked deck for deceit, cash in one's chips for to die. Any action at hand is often referred to as the play, and to take action is to make a play. Other phrases based on play occur frequently, e.g. play a cold hand, a lone hand, a high hand, close to one's belly, the house percentages, the high one, a double game, one's own hand. The term tinhorn, which signifies a gambler who plays for small stakes (Clark 1987, 233), and also refers to an inferior, false, dishonest person, is one of the most frequently used terms. These gaming terms provide a formal link between the action of the Western and the moves of a game.

Travel and Departure. Colorful verbs or phrases of motion play an important part in the Western e.g. drift, dust, fog, haul freight, hit the grit, hit one's heels, high tail, hit the trail, light a shuck, light out, pull freight, pull stakes, scratch for it, scratch gravel, sift, slope, tumbleweed, be on the dodge. The most common, appearing from the dime novels on is the Spanish-derived vamoose. These terms dramatize the moves of flight and pursuit across the vast wilderness setting that make up the plot of the formula Western.

Equality. Slang phrases that vividly undercut social differences create a rough and tumble atmosphere of democratic equality. The fictional Westerner often characterizes other men by more-or-less disparaging terms, e.g. bird, coot, cuss, duck, galoot, geezer, jasper, joker, pelican. Pard or pardner, to mean a peer, is the most frequently used.

Westerns also use slang expressions to deflate pretentious newcomers to the West who have not learned how to dress or behave appropriately, e.g. dude, greenhorn, and the most widely used, tenderfoot.

Diminishing or dysphemistic terms for occupations other than cowboy are frequently used, e.g. hard-rock boy, mucker, cow-boss, ramrod, hasher, hash-slinger, scully, swamper, lawsharp, pen pusher, percentage girl, plow pusher, sourdough, star packer, walloper (mule driver), sky pilot,

drummer, counter jumper, justice grabber. Tillers of the soil are particular targets of belittlement, e.g. greasy sacker, nester, plow pusher, sodbuster, weed bender, pumpkin roller.

Condemnation and Commendation. Terms of condemnation often involve animal imagery, e.g. buzzard, coyote, polecat, sidewinder, skunk, snake, varmint, vinegaroon (scorpion). Other common terms of condemnation are ornery, tinhorn, and yellow.

On the other hand, virtuous individuals are described with clarity and precision as white and square. Square not only describes virtuous people but justice and fairness, and to square means to make even or equal. The Code of the West is based on fairness and encourages not only respect for the rights of others but a vigorous assertion of one's own rights; therefore admirable individuals also possess a portion of some abrasive substance, e.g. salt, sand, or grit. These terms of condemnation and condemnation help establish clearly the black-and-white dichotomy of good and evil characteristic of the Western.

Speech and Talking. Because the cowboy hero is traditionally strong and silent, verbal communication is disparaged by such terms as air, gas, hot air, mouthwash, wind. To talk is to chin, chew the rag, jaw, yap, yarn. Insincere speech is characterized as bulljuice, goosegrease,

salve. An individual who talks too much or too boastfully is a big wind, blower, bravo, or loudmouth.

Racism. Disparaging slang terms for minority races and ethnic groups are frequent e.g. Mick, Nigger, Injun, Red, Reddy, Red-skin, buck (Indian man), Bohunk, Cousin Jack. The most frequently used ethnic slang in the Western refers to Mexicans--Mex and, especially, Greaser. As has been noted, white is a common form of commendation that may be seen to have racial connotations. The use of these terms is consonant with the Western's superficial treatment of ethnic and racial minorities.

Spanish and Indian Culture. A number of slang terms derived from Spanish and Indian life contribute a Southwestern regional flavor to the Western, e.g. bronco, hombre (almost always connoting a lawless or dangerous individual), lobo, loco, pasear, pronto, sabe and savvy, segundo, vamoose, medicine, powwow, warpath. The Spanish terms, especially bronco, hombre, savvy, and vamoose, are far more frequently used than the Indian terms.

Cowboy Lifestyle and Occupation. From the time of Owen Wister's 1902 The Virginian, the fictional cowboy is most often known as a cowpuncher or puncher. Terms associated with the cowboy's occupation--crip, drag longhorn, shorthorn, mossyhorn, dogie, maverick, muley, outlaw, on the prod, peel, piggin string, spook, spread, nighthawk, grub, chuck, bronco--are often used not only to describe the

cowboy's work, but metaphorically in other contexts. The terms most frequently used are **grub**, **bronco**, and **rustler**.

A number of terms associated with leather, e.g. **hell-for-leather**, **pound leather**, **pull leather**, **slap leather**, **straddle leather**, **rawhide**, seem to be associated with the cowboy's costume or equipment.

The terms associated with the cowboy's occupation are rarely used in a realistic portrayal, but to romanticize him.

Women and Sex. Terms that characterize women, sexual contact, or sexual body parts are generally absent from the traditional Western. They appear only in recent atypical manifestations such as the anti-Western or the "adult Western," and the terms encountered are those familiar to any reader of contemporary fiction.

Slang as a Literary Device in the Western

As noted by critics Bridgman and Blake, representations of non-standard speech in literature do not attempt to accurately reproduce actual linguistic behavior. Descriptions of western speech in non-fictional works confirm the inference that the familiar slang of the Western seems to be a literary artifact, rather than an accurate reproduction of linguistic behavior. This is not to say that the slang of the Western has no relation to actual linguistic behavior. From the non-fiction reports, it

appears that cowboys and other male Westerners did use much of the slang appearing in the novels, for instance tenderfoot, grub, rustler, bronco, etc.; also, that they did have a unique and colorful western speech. In J. M. Hunter's Trail Drivers of Texas, a collection of autobiographical sketches of old-time range and trail men described as "basic source material" (Dobie 108), John Lomax describes the colorful language of the cowboy. In his essay "Cowboy Life in West Texas," in which he praises "cowboy lingo" for its simplicity, strength, directness, and accuracy, Lomax gives his theory of the origin of this unique speech:

Living in isolated groups, visiting but little except among these groups, rarely going to town, shy and timid as a result of long days of solitude, the cowboy develops his own form of speech. Cowboy words, phrases and customs therefore easily become community property (Lomax 1917-20, 328).

While the slang in the novels is certainly not unrelated to the linguistic behavior described by non-fiction works, Western authors did not attempt to reproduce linguistic behavior faithfully. For example, Lomax's article on cowboy speech defines more than fifty terms related to the cowboy's occupation, but mentions only a single, notably prosaic one, "a two-gun man" (333) related to gunfighting. Analysis of slang in the novels reveals an opposite tendency--a scanty and spotty use of terms related to the cowboy's daily occupation in contrast with a rich and

continuous fictional tradition of slang related to guns and gunfighting.

That slang used in a literary context should differ from that reported in nonfiction is to be expected. For one thing, although real cowboys used a great deal of occupational slang, authors feared that readers would find such a specialized occupational vocabulary incomprehensible. Will James, one of the few Western authors who worked as a cowboy, does use occupational slang in his novels, but feels it necessary to interrupt his text to define these terms.

Plot considerations also determine the slang used in Westerns. William Savage in The Cowboy Hero claims that the demands of the fiction market turned the fictional cowboy into a gunslinger. The cowboy's actual occupation, although undeniably a challenge to his courage and endurance, was hard, dirty, and boring. The cowboy had to be "made interesting by putting undue emphasis upon his affection for and use of firearms" (Savage 38). Since, unlike their real-life counterparts, fictional cowboys rarely work, but "smoke up" the territory regularly, the Western uses much more slang related to gunplay than cowpunching.

The slang of the novels differs from that described in the nonfiction works not only in areas of emphasis, but in specific terms used within a semantic area. Philip Ashton Rollins in The Cowboy (described as "a scientific exposition" by Dobie (1952, 116)) records from firsthand

observation that Westerners, like their fictional counterparts, used a variety of terms to signify hasty departure or rapid travel. He mentions as particular favorites waltz and sail away. It is notable that, although Westerns use many slang terms having a similar meaning, these particular ones were not found in any of the Westerns studied. Even if authors were aware of the currency of these terms, they would probably have rejected them because they lack the specifically Western connotations that **vamoose** or **hit the trail** have for the reader.

Authors of the dime novels, who created the popular Western and synthesized for it a slang vocabulary, had little opportunity to observe Western linguistic behavior at first hand. Prentiss Ingraham, who actually spent time in the West with William F. Cody, the prototype of his fictional hero, Buffalo Bill, was an exception. The most widely read dime Westerns were written by authors "whose nearest acquaintance with the great plains was in White Plains, New York" (Pearson 1929, 105). Edward L. Wheeler, creator of one of the most famous heroes of the dime Westerns, Deadwood Dick, dressed in Western-style clothes and called everyone "pard," but it was rumored that "he was never in his life farther west than Jersey City" (Pearson 105). Since most of the authors of dime Westerns had no firsthand opportunity to observe and record Western linguistic behavior, they obviously acquired their

vocabularies of Western slang at second hand. It is therefore logical to assume that they relied heavily on other writers as sources. Indeed one of the most popular American writers of the time, Mark Twain, uses many slang terms that appear in the Westerns (Ramsay 1963). Many of the most popular Western slang terms, e.g. **drift**, **greaser**, **grub**, **ornery**, **pard**, **tanglefoot**, and **vamoose**, appear in the works of Mark Twain before they appear in the dime Westerns. But even Twain, who may well have been a major literary source of slang from whom early authors of Westerns borrowed, was not a native of the far West but a temporary sojourner there.

While the slang appearing in Westerns is not carefully recorded linguistic behavior, neither is it a form of literary deceit, totally unrelated to reality. It is rather an artful synthesis of terms selected and amplified to create a slang vocabulary that fulfills literary needs. The slang vocabulary facilitates the presentation of the episodes of violent action that are a necessary part of the Western plot. Also since the meaning of most of the terms is obvious from their context, readers find it easily comprehensible and congruent with their expectations of the genre.

Slang as a Traditional Element in the Western

At the same time that writers of the dime novels gave

birth to the popular Western in the 1870's they synthesized for it a special slang vocabulary. The dime novels appear to be responsible for gathering together this vocabulary because two novels from the 1860's that could be considered Westerns, Clemens' Mustang Gray and Bowen's Maid of Wyoming, use very few of the slang terms from one or two categories. On the other hand, the dime novels in this study, starting in the late 1870's, reveal an extensive slang vocabulary containing terms from all the ten categories. Many familiar slang terms appeared in the dimes and have persisted to the present. For instance, of the twenty most frequently used terms, fourteen (lick, plug, grub, bronco, rustler, ornery, skunk, square, pardner, gent, cuss, Greaser, tenderfoot, and six-shooter) appear in the dimes and persist to the present. It is significant that, despite the popular perception of slang as being evanescent, the Western has maintained a large part of its slang vocabulary intact for decades. (Lighter (1972) has also shown that slang often persists for longer periods than commonly realized.)

Using other writers as sources for their slang vocabulary, the early dime novel authors who synthesized the slang vocabulary in turn became sources for later writers. As had been noted, slang terms from the dime novels have persisted to the present. Also few terms that were common in the early Westerns have completely disappeared. For example the derisively ironic term *girl*, used for "fellow"

in direct address, disappears after 1906 only to reappear in Lonesome Dove in 1985.

In addition to the slang terms persisting from the early Westerns, new ones have been added, and these also show evidence that authors borrow from one another. When a term appears in the work of one novelist, it often spreads quickly to that of others. For instance, in the novels studied, **gunslinger** appears first in a 1931 novel by Haycox. Thereafter it is used by Grey, Nye, Raine, Gruber, Overholser, Foreman, and Gilman. The first use of **owlhoot** here recorded is by Nye in 1936; it then appears in the work of LeMay, Henry, L'Amour, Evans, and Tippet. **Dry-gulch** is first discovered in this study in a 1922 Evarts novel; it subsequently appears in the work of Raine, LeMay, Overholser, Henry, Nye and L'Amour. These three terms appear to have been invented by authors of Westerns, as previous citations cannot be found for them, even in Lighter's comprehensive collection. Western authors retain the slang of their predecessors, rarely discarding terms, and when one of them invents an apt new term, others readily adopt it. This exemplifies the process described by Blake in which authors copy nonstandard language from one another to create and maintain a traditional literary dialect specific to the genre. This copying process, along with the standardization the Western formula imposes, has helped perpetuate a conservative, familiar slang vocabulary,

which readers have come to expect as they do other traditional elements of the Western, such as the horse and the six-shooter.

The Use of Slang in Creating a Western Literary Dialect

Although they synthesized the Western slang vocabulary, dime novelists to some degree still subscribed to the prescriptive norms of the nineteenth century in which, as Blake has pointed out, genteel speech was evidence of intelligence and good morals while nonstandard language was symptomatic of villainy or stupidity. Therefore, dime novel authors sharply distinguished the speech of the intelligent, resourceful, upright, romantically eligible hero from that of the crude Western characters who surround him. Authors of dime Westerns created unbelievably genteel speech for their heroes while the speech of villains and clownish sidekicks is made grotesquely nonstandard by slang, and nonstandard syntax and pronunciation. Even eye dialect, in which normal pronunciations are misspelled, is employed to further exaggerate the crude speech of secondary characters. In Thomas Chalmers Harbaugh's Denver Duke, the Man with "Sand" (1885) the villain Centipede Sam, Death Spider of Texas, threatens "Woe to ther galoots who interfere with my lone hand" (14). In Marshall of Satanstown (Whittaker 1884), the hero's sidekicks, "men of the unmistakable Texan stamp," (27) speak in an unmistakably Texan manner: "Them's

my bronchos boys!" (5), and "We've got to do suthin' or git fooled by the Greasers, and that's what no Texas man will stand" (11). The unnaturally genteel speech of the Western hero, designed to fulfill an Eastern audience's ideal of a romantic hero, is often justified by the fact that his place of origin or social class sets him apart from his Western companions--he is often an eastern gentleman in disguise. The hero of Frederick Whittaker's 1884 Marshall of Satanstown, Top Notch Tom, even though he has adapted to western life and taught himself to be a crack shot by practicing with a mirror, was bred in the East, and so his speech is generally genteel. He is sensitive to linguistic distinctions, and gets "the deadwood" on the chief villain when, during a murderous attack on the ranch, the masked evil-doer uses bloke, a word that functions as a shibboleth enabling the penetrating Tom to identify him as a wealthy English landholder. "No one but an Englishman would call another a bloke in this part of the country. It is English slang, pure and simple, and our people have not learned it" (4).

Although hero Tom does not speak the nonstandard dialect of his Texas sidekicks, he does use one or two slang expressions; their use seems consistent with a manly but refined persona: "Let us go on the trail while it is hot" (2). "I didn't think I'd find the grit to say it" (25). Having the hero avoid the nonstandard pronunciations and

syntax of his cruder companions, while allowing him to use a small number of slang expressions constitutes a typical pattern of the dime novels.

The first popular cowboy hero, Buck Taylor, was created by dime novel author Prentiss Ingraham. In the 1891 Buck Taylor, Saddle King, Buck shows off his refined speech: "I do not intend to be bullied by any set of cutthroats" (2). The author had to be especially careful with Buck's speech because the cowboy had to be rehabilitated to make him a suitable hero of fiction:

In the 1880's the cowboy had an unsavory reputation, owing to the prevalence of public reports concerning his tacky appearance, his violent behavior, and his disregard for the peace and quiet of Sunday mornings, church socials, and family picnics (Savage 1979, 110).

Ingraham portrayed Taylor as "handsome and harmless" (Savage 1979, 111). Therefore, Taylor's refined speech contrasts with the nonstandard speech of his adversary, Tiger Tom: "See here, pards, you hain't ther men ter see a stranger chip in and use me like this, when I say I has got enough, and is willing to stand drinks and cigars all around?" (2). However although Taylor does not use non-standard pronunciation and syntax as does Tiger Tom, he does use slang: "To Fort Davis you go with me unless Mustang Dan there calls in my checks" (3). The following exchange between the hero and the villain illustrates the difference between them: Buck Taylor queries "Do you wilt, or shall I touch trigger? (3). Tiger Tom replies "I knows when I has

got enough, pard. I wilt" (3). Both use the slang term *wilt*, but the villain combines the slang phrase with non-standard syntax for quite a different rhetorical effect. Apparently slang, as contrasted to non-standard pronunciation or syntax, afforded the dime novelist a way of making a hero sound "Western" and manly, and allowing him to express a safe level of revolt against Eastern linguistic propriety without necessarily making him sound dangerous, ignorant, or foolish.

Later Western writers, apparently trying to create more believable characters, toned down both the unnaturally genteel speech of the hero and the exaggeratedly crude speech of secondary characters so typical of the dime novels. The speech of heroes of modern Westerns is often more nearly standard than that of the villains or sidekicks, but no modern hero would refer to "ruffianly bands of roadagents" (Wheeler 1879) as does Deadwood Dick. In a typical speech in a modern Western (Short 1942) a villain employs word-final nasal alveolar in place of the more "refined" nasal velar in the participle "roddin'," but he does not use the extremely distorted pronunciation and non-standard syntax habitually used by dime villains: "I'm roddin' this spread--both spreads. Tomorrow I aim to have Wallace tell you that" (128).

While modern Westerns have for the most part dispensed with the extreme and distracting non-standard pronunciations

and syntax typical of the dime novels, they have kept and amplified the slang, dropping few terms and adding many more. Slang has proved useful because, unlike nonstandard pronunciations or syntax, it allows authors to make characters, both the hero and the secondary characters, seem typically Western without making them seem clownish or subjecting the reader to the distraction caused by those dialect features. By using slang, writers could provide their readers with a colorful "Western" vernacular that they could read and comprehend easily and that would fulfill their expectations of the genre.

Slang Provides Rhetorical Emphasis to Semantic Domains

As well as helping to articulate a colorful vernacular, the use of slang in the Western novel has another, less obvious function. As has been established earlier, a nonstandard vocabulary can carry special rhetorical power, and, in the literary representation of the speech of the mountain man, has been used effectively to portray one variety of the frontier experience in fiction (Poulson 1985). In the Western the rhetorical force of slang highlights and poetizes certain elements, namely the domains of the semantic sets. By highlighting these domains, e.g. violence, drinking and gaming, aspects of social status, and good vs. evil, slang vivifies the experience of the West the genre purveys to its readers. As subsequent chapters will

show, slang dramatizes domains that are essential to the meaning of the fictional West as a violent Eden in which a transcendent hero can establish natural justice.

CHAPTER 3

GUNS AND GUNMEN

The Western plot centrally involves violence and lawlessness--crime, punishment, guns and gunmen, and every novel read for this study uses some slang related to these referents. The most important and typical slang of the Western, that referring to guns, gunplay, and gunmen, is so pervasive and diverse in the novels that it may be referred to as a "language of the gun."

Traditional terms from the dimes, such as **six-shooter**, and **plug**, have been supplemented by many new ones. For example an unprecedented number of terms signifying "gunfighter" appear in the novels after Grey's creation of the gunfighter hero in his 1912 Riders of the Purple Sage. Some of these terms, **gun artist**, **gun thrower**, and the popular **gunslinger**, appear to have been invented by Western authors to extend the range of gun-related slang.

The gun is an indispensable element of the Western because it is typically the instrument of final resolution of the plot, and it is regarded as a central symbol of masculine potency in psychological and social interpretations of the Western. The notably prolific and diverse slang that surrounds the gun highlights and dramatizes this indispensable weapon of the Western and

enhances its connotations of lawlessness, masculinity, power, and masterful skill.

The six-shooter is a uniquely Western weapon, as its history illustrates. In 1846, at the behest of the Texas Rangers, Samuel Colt produced in his New Jersey works a weapon notably more effective than the five-shot Paterson Colt revolver. Although the first Walker Colt six-shot revolver weighed about four pounds, the Texas rangers found it light enough to be conveniently used by a mounted man, so they adopted it and called it the **six-shooter** (Dary 1981, 79). In the early part of the trail-driving era, the late 1860's and early 1870's, the popular six-shooter was a cap-and-ball weapon: about 1875 the cartridge model became available. For historical authenticity the CBS TV series "Lonesome Dove" (1989) depicted characters carrying the old-fashioned Colt Walkers and Dragoons widely used about 1870. However, the lengthy and exacting process of loading these relatively clumsy weapons is virtually never described in a Western novel, partly because it would be incongruent with the fast-paced action associated with the gun. This lack of detail and historical accuracy in portraying certain fundamental aspects of the six-shooter is one indication that, although the weapon did play a part in the historic West, the novels treat it primarily as a fantasy weapon, a kind of "magic sword."

Although the six-shooter certainly played an important role in the development of the West, and was a standard part of the cowboy's equipment, memoirs of cowboys indicate that the novels have greatly exaggerated and distorted its role in the life of the cowboy. Jo Mora (1946) in his reminiscences admits that "the old-time cowboy and his shooting iron were inseparable" (48), but the cowboy often went about armed more out of a sense of propriety than from necessity. According to Mora, the cowboy's gun often became clogged and crusted with dirt and rust picked up on the trail and so was not a precision instrument. Mora further reports that he never saw any gunmen with the "magical superhuman dexterity" (46) fiction attributes to them. He maintains that the majority "would not come into the money on the pistol range" (47). Nor did he ever see anyone "fanning"--a style of shooting favored by the fictional gun artist, who operates the hammer with the side of his hand instead of pulling the trigger.

In his social history of the cowboy, Philip Ashton Rollins (1922) also observes that fiction has overemphasized the role of the gun in the life of the cowboy. Again speaking from personal experience on the range, Rollins sneers at the fact that fiction has "imposed at least two of these weapons on every storied cowboy, and at times has converted him into a veritable itinerant arsenal" (41). Rollins recalls that the cowboy, an average man with

thoughts other than murder on his mind, found the large Colt revolver and its heavy ammunition cumbersome, and did not carry more than one gun, and that only under certain conditions, which included an expectation of actual trouble with Indians, rustlers, or dangerous animals, or "a holiday visit to another ranch or to town, or else a formal call on a girl" (41).

Andy Adams' early (1903) cowboy novel Log of a Cowboy, is regarded as virtually a non-fiction work, because the author, in his youth a working cowboy, portrays the trail drive so faithfully. His hero, a novice cowboy on his first trail drive, takes his turn guarding the herd from rustlers. "The man leaving had given me a gun for company, one of those old smoke-pole, cap-and-ball six-shooters" (33). When he actually confronts armed men, his reaction is less than heroic: "I had the gun but must have forgotten what it was for, for I elevated my little hands nicely" (33).

Although the cowboy prized his gun for many reasons, the notion that he was commonly a blazing two-gun "gun artist" who could draw like lightning and pick off selected pieces of an opponent's anatomy at fifty paces is part of the "West that never was."

As Savage (1979) claims in The Cowboy Hero, marketing considerations made the fictional cowboy a gunslinger. The cowboy was "made more interesting by putting undue emphasis upon his affection for and use of firearms" (38). The

proliferation of slang related to the gun both reflects and facilitates the exaggerated role of the gun in the Western plot. Once an author commands an extensive gunfight synonymy, he finds it easier to create situations that employ the gun.

The cowboy hero's gun makes him more exciting, but his skill in handling his gun raises him to superhuman stature and enables to him to defeat seemingly overwhelming forces of evil. Nussbaum (1960) recognizes the importance of the gun in his interpretation of the Western as a folk-art form. He sees the Western as an expression of a turning away from modern rationalism and reason to "faith in a self-sufficient, earthy Western hero" (28) who reduces problems to simple good/evil oppositions, and then solves them through violent action in which the gun is the decisive element. Nussbaum says, "the gun-god leaps to earth and fuses with the hero to champion whatever cause he desires" (6).

In Jack Schaeffer's (1949) well-known Shane, a passage reveals a near-mystical union between the hero and his gun such as Nussbaum describes. Shane, the archetypal gunfighter hero, initiates young Bob into the art of gun handling. Shane urges him to think of the gun as nothing more than a tool like "a shovel--or an axe or a saddle or a stove or anything" (43). But as Shane expertly handles the weapon, Bob glimpses its special power: "With him that old

pistol seemed alive, not an inanimate and rusting metal object, but an extension of the man himself" (43). In the hands of the hero, the gun is not a mere tool, but an attribute that allows him triumph over seemingly overwhelming forces of evil.

The gun that makes the hero invincible also serves as a symbol of masculine potency and dominance. Harry Schein (1955) states flatly that "the pistol in the Western is by now accepted as a phallic symbol" (44). Indeed, Kenneth J. Munden (1958), in his Freudian interpretation of the Western formula, sees the gun as a central symbol in a ritual drama of oedipal fixation. The gun, which the son/hero wears prominently displayed, and uses with deadly effectiveness, symbolizes his assertion of sexual potency. The Western villain represents the father, but often he embodies characteristics of the mother as well as the father; for instance he is often corpulent, rather than muscular and athletic. In Munden's interpretation, therefore, when the hero shoots the villain he simultaneously fulfills both oedipal desires--destruction of the father and intercourse with the mother. Thus the unconscious oedipal wishes of the community are fulfilled in the ritual shootout of the Western. The very repetitiveness of the gun fight in popular Westerns augments the satisfaction of unconscious wishes because of what Munden terms the repetition compulsion--the compulsion to reenact again and again a

painful theme which one has not overcome or learned to live with (112).

A scene from Riders of the Purple Sage, (1912) by Zane Grey, the first popular Western writer to introduce covert, but unmistakable, elements of sex, leaves little doubt about the phallic connotations of the gun.

Jane slipped her hands down to the swinging gun-sheaths, and when she had locked her fingers around the huge, cold handles of the guns, she trembled as with a chilling ripple over all her body. "May I take your guns?" (146).

In this scene Jane Withersteen uses feminine wiles to try to disarm the hero, Lassiter, to save him from "more wickedness--more wanton bloodshed--" (147). She pleads, "Lassiter, if you care a little for me--let me--for my sake--let me take your guns!" (147). Despite Jane's seductive wheedling, Lassiter, a wiser hero than the Biblical Sampson, refuses to relinquish the source of his power. He hangs on to his guns and uses them to good effect to protect her attractive person and considerable wealth from a Mormon villain with greedy matrimonial intentions.

The Western hero's refusal to relinquish his peculiar symbol of male potency, his gun, represents one of his principal attractions. Cawelti (1984) points out that the Western hero is almost by definition "a man with a gun" (85), and explains that public admiration for gunfighter heroes springs from complex social conflicts involving the

erosion of the American male's sense of security about his masculinity:

In my opinion both the tendency to admire gunfighter heroes and the actual social incidence of violence with guns are both symptoms of a more complex cultural force; the sense of decaying masculine potency which has long afflicted American culture (Cawelti 85).

Cawelti goes on to list social trends that have undercut the male's sense of security: industrialization, urbanization, the decline of parental authority, and the increasing participation of women in the economy.

The American tradition has always emphasized individual masculine force; Americans love to think of themselves as pioneers, men who have conquered a continent and sired on it a new society. This radical discrepancy between the sense of eroding masculinity and the view of America as a great history of men against the wilderness has created the need for a means of symbolic expression of masculine potency in an unmistakable way. This means the gun, particularly the six-gun (85).

The indispensability of the gun to the Western male persona is illustrated in another scene in which the hero refuses to brook female interference. In Louis L'Amour's tribute to the six-gun, The First Fast Draw (1959), a fanciful recreation of the "discovery" of the "fast draw," the heroine notices the guns in the hero's belt and asks, "Must you always wear those?" (84). The hero, whose only hope for survival against a host of ruthless enemies is his skill with his six-shooter, gives a reply that is a remarkable distillation of stereotypes and clichés:

Would you have me ride without them, Katy?
They're as necessary to me as hairpins to you, or
the ring on your finger, more so, because they are
my life itself. I live by them, and perhaps shall
die by them, but while I live they must never be
far from my hand. There's a fine, strong feeling
in the butt of a gun, Katy, for it's a man's
weapon, but a gun is meant for death, and is not
to be treated lightly or as a toy. A gun is like
a woman or a horse, and not to be handled by a man
who doesn't understand it (84).

The significance of the gun as the symbol of the dominant
sexist male is clearly revealed here. The cardboard-cutout
woman has only the most frivolous equipment--hairpins and
jewelry--to balance against the man's powerful, death-
dealing gun. She resembles a piece of spirited livestock to
be "handled" by the skilled and knowledgeable man. He is
unmoved by her entreaties to disarm himself.

As well as being a symbol of masculine power, the gun
aids in making violence in the Western socially acceptable.
The Western must present the violence of the hero as
justified. Throughout the history of the Western, from the
time when Billy the Kid failed to achieve popularity in the
dime novels because he indulged in senseless violence (Jones
1978, 96), the violence of the Western hero has been
presented as controlled and socially justified. The
Western hero has the same savage skills of violence and
lawless individualism as the villain (Cawelti 1980, 68), but
erupts into violence "only when provoked or when some evil
threatens a weaker person" (Savage 1979, 33). The Western
hero is a hero precisely "because he has the capacity for

violence and the wisdom to know when and against whom to exhibit that violence (Savage 1979, 32). While weapons like knives or clubs might suggest uncontrolled violence, the six-gun with the ritual of the draw, represents control, skill, and detachment.

The distinctive characteristic of the cowboy hero is not his possession of a symbolic weapon but the way in which he uses it. While the knight encountered his adversary in bloody hand-to-hand combat, the cowboy invariably meets his at a substantial distance and goes through the complex and rigid ritual of the "draw" before finally consummating the fatal deed. The most important implication of this killing procedure seems to be the qualities of reluctance, control and elegance which it associates with the hero. (Cawelti 1980, 87).

In the Western novel the gun helps make killing acceptable by making shootings appear clean and practically bloodless. Savage remarks that "The gun is a fantasy device in entertainment for the very reason that people have no experience with them and do not know first hand its destructive capabilities" (1979, 55). Cawelti notes that the gun allows violence and aggression to be presented "beneath a skin of aesthetic and moral propriety" (1980, 88).

In a novel ironically titled Man Without a Gun, Hal G. Evarts (1957) presents a classic version of the gunfighter hero and the climactic gun duel. The hero, the oddly-named Rile Horn, while a teenager under the romantic influence of dime novels, practices assiduously and becomes a gunman of consummate skill:

In time he'd taught himself to shoot along with such useless showoff stunts as the border shift and fanning the hammer. He'd learned to draw, fire and put all five shots into a three-inch target at twenty-five yards in less than two seconds (122).

But Rile's deadly expertise brings tragedy when he is forced to kill a man in a gun duel, and he vows to put up his guns forever. Thus, the hero is reluctant to resort to violence. But when a wealthy, land-hungry cattle baron tries to drive him and other small ranchers off their land and brutally murders his sidekick, Sam, Rile borrows a gun from the decrepit and ineffectual sheriff. The heroine tries to stop him: "'Rile!' Jan clutched at his arm, panic in her voice. 'No. Don't'" (144). Rile must face overwhelming forces: "Man, you haven't got a chance against that outfit" (147). The villain, Tremaine, represents destructive savagery: "He doesn't think. Not any more. He's like a wild dog. Crazy killing mad" (141). Rile confronts the villain in a classic walkdown:

With one part of his mind he could see the empty land, stretching far out to the mountains, the land that belonged to no man. And he saw Tremaine moving across it like a blot, black against its brightness. Twenty-five yards. Twenty. Wait, wait, wait! And then as the two men reached the horse trough a change came over Tremaine's face and his shoulder dipped. A remembered image flashed through Rile's fury as his hand blurred down to his gun: Sam lying twisted on the rocks with cactus in his leg. He felt the worn walnut grip, the pull of leather, and then the solid bang as the single action bucked against his hand. Tremaine staggered back against the pump, firing into the dirt, and Rile shot again, saw the black shape topple sideways (156).

The skilled but reluctant hero faces the savage villain, imaged as a black blot on the Western landscape. He acts under provocation to avenge a weaker person, whose murder he recalls at the moment he pulls the trigger. The hero displays his control as he waits patiently for the villain to draw first. Through the agency of the gun, the villain, the black-clad blot on the landscape is simply eliminated--cleanly, skillfully, and elegantly.

The slang relating to the gun helps to heighten all the elements associated with it in the Western--exciting violence, masculine power, and deadly skill. The excitement slang lends to gunplay can be appreciated through a sampling of the citations for lead: "I'll sidle up agin' that shack an' fill him so full of lead he won't know what hit him!" "There were five hundred men in the country who were...anxious to feed him lead." "The skunk that tires to pull out or double cross, we sock him full of lead." "Wal pard, jerk around an' meet hot lead."

The slang connected with the gun emphasizes its aggressive potential. While the standard term "revolver" focuses on the mechanism of the gun, the popular term **six-shooter** forcefully shifts the focus to the aggressive act of shooting, which according to Munden, has such significance in the vicarious acting-out of oedipal fantasies. Many slang verbs signifying "to shoot (someone)"--are metaphors for forceful penetration, for example **bore**, **perforate**,

drill, nail, plug. These images are consonant with the role of the gun as a symbol of masculine potency, which according to various theories, is so closely connected with the gun. Indeed Lighter's collection of American slang reveals that drill, nail, and plug are also slang expressions related to sexual intercourse. Likewise related to masculine potency are connotations of erection and hardness of some slang terms for a gun--**smoke pole, shooting iron, steel, iron.**

The special names for "gunfighter" emphasize the deadly skill that enables him to use the weapon to singlehandedly defeat seemingly overwhelming opponents, e.g. **gun artist, -boss, -hawk, -slick, -slinger.**

The cowboy's gun makes him an exciting fictional figure, and the forceful, vigorous slang terms associated with the gun heighten the cowboy's aura of excitement, power, and masculinity. Western fiction also uses the gun to present killing as a socially justified, distanced, bloodless act, and the slang related to the gun further distances the violence. Paradoxically, at the same time slang heightens the effects the gun creates in the Western, it helps make the violence acceptable to readers by deflecting painful emotions of guilt, grief or horror they might otherwise experience in imagining the gun's power to wound and kill. A slang term emotionally distances its referent because the irreverent or ironic tone it imparts

discourages serious emotions. By defusing serious emotions, slang functions as euphemism.

Thus while slang helps make gunplay more exciting, it simultaneously aids in presenting violence without offending readers. Cawelti states repeatedly that the Western follows "the basic escapist principle of having your cake and eating it too" (1984, 73). The slang centering around the gun allows readers to have their cake and eat it too by heightening for them the excitement surrounding the gun, while at the same time euphemistically distancing them from painful emotions that its destructive potential might arouse.

Other kinds of slang than that associated with the gun also help to distance and depersonalize violence. For example, as will be discussed in later chapters, slang terms characterize villains as noxious animals that need to be exterminated. Also the frequent use of metaphorical slang terms borrowed from the gambling table makes the violent action of the Western appear game-like. The success of the Western depends on its making violence exciting but inoffensive, and slang provides an important aid in this challenging literary task.

CHAPTER 4

DRINKING AND GAMBLING

Drinking and gambling, two favorite cowboy diversions offered by trail towns like Abilene and Dodge City, figure prominently in the slang of the Western. Prostitutes, another source of amusement patronized by the cowboys, who were mostly young and single, does not. Little slang relating to women or sex appears in the puritanical Western. The plethora of drinking and gambling slang might lead one to imagine loose-living cowboys reveling their way through the pages of the Western. On the contrary, drinking and gambling slang in the Western serves other purposes. Drinking slang is tied to the saloon, where the Western hero goes not to soak up alcohol but to confront the villains who congregate there. Significantly, in the Western gambling slang rarely refers to actual games of chance. It serves instead as a metaphor for the game-like action of the adventure plot that helps establish a formal link between the Western and another great American cultural ritual, vicarious participation in spectator sports.

Slang that draws its imagery from liquor and drinking, while not nearly as pervasive as that associated with firearms, appears frequently enough to be recognizable as an important element of the slang that typifies the Western.

Terms for whisky abound, for example tarantula juice, bug juice, tanglefoot, forty rod, booze.

Drinking slang in the Western has associations with the saloon, because that is where the cowboy had to go if he wanted a drink. Rollins reports, "There was little or no alcoholic drinking at the ranch, for it harbored very little alcohol to drink, usually none at all beyond a small lot jealously preserved for prospective medicinal use" (1922, 172). The Western saloon was a place of legendary lawlessness where the cowboy "cut loose his wolf" after months of hardship and isolation on the trail. And indeed, fictional cowboys follow the example of their real-life counterparts by regularly frequenting the saloon; a saloon scene is an almost obligatory in the Western.

Because the educated middle class of the nineteenth century generally decried the saloon as a low resort, the slang associated with it helps establish in the Western a tone of revolt against and scorn for the stuffy conventions of polite society. However, the tone of irreverence for polite mores created by drinking slang is counterbalanced by the hero's customary abstemiousness. In fact, most of the slang related to liquor comes from the lips of secondary characters, usually villains and sidekicks drawn broadly from the local-colorist tradition. Although the Western hero often steps up to the bar, and may even feign drunkenness to deceive villains, he almost never actually

downs a whole shot glass of whisky. The Western hero pushes through the batwing doors not to indulge in dissipation but to confront the villains and display his manly virtue in a masculine public arena.

In Buck Taylor, the Saddle King, (1891), Prentiss Ingraham's cowboy hero, the first popular literary cowboy of the dime novels, triumphs in the first quick-draw gun duel encountered in this study. He confronts his adversary, Tiger Tom, in a saloon. However, later he refuses a proffered drink, insisting that he never touches liquor.

Even if he is not a teetotaler, the hero must often interrupt his drinking before he has downed a whole whisky in order to lock horns with villains. Wister's (1902) hero, the Virginian, enters the saloon prepared to confront his enemy Trampas, who drinks recklessly, and is "fillin' up" (463) to gain false courage. Meanwhile the hero and his comrades, unwilling to speak of the deadly showdown they know must inevitably occur, drink quietly:

It was a temperate health-drinking that they made. "Here's how," they muttered softly to the Virginian, and "How," he returned softly, looking away from them (464).

Before they can finish their drinks, Trampas interrupts with a challenge that leads to a deadly showdown the next day.

The famous "soda pop" episode from Shane (Schaefer 1949) shows that although the hero is man enough to drink, his manliness does not depend on drinking. Shane enters the saloon to have a drink and order a bottle of soda pop for

his young friend, Bob. But, typically, Shane never gets to enjoy his whisky. He is taunted by Chris, a truculent young henchman of the villain. Shane refuses to draw his guns, but shows that he is as handy with his fists as with his six-shooters. He thrashes the offender and thoroughly intimidates the other patrons.

A long sobbing sigh came from Chris and that died away and there was not a sound in the room. Shane never looked at the crumpled figure. He was straight and deadly and motionless. Only his eyes shifted to search the faces of the others at the table. They stopped on Red Marlin and Red seemed to dwindle lower in his chair. "Perhaps," Shane said softly, and the very softness of his voice sent shivers through Ed Howells, "Perhaps you have something to say about soda pop...." (61).

In typical saloon confrontations like this the hero publicly demonstrates his fearlessness and determination to "buck" the forces of evil. As in Shane, these confrontations often end in fist fights in which the hero shows his mettle in hand-to-hand combat. The frequent appearance of the term lick (to beat or thrash) shows that the fistfight, while not nearly as important a ritual as the gun duel, is also a standard feature of the Western, often one in which the hero shows his capacity to absorb physical punishment. While the saloon provides a convenient arena for the fistfight, the climactic confrontation, the fatal walkdown and shootout, almost never occurs inside the saloon, probably because it is considered too confined and undignified a setting for the final duel.

Although not as important a confrontational arena as the bar itself, the gaming table also allows the Western hero to confront villains and show his nerve. He is almost never portrayed as gambling merely for the usual motives of recreation or profit. When he antes up he unmasks crooks, wins back the money of an unfortunate "sucker," or pits his nerve and intelligence against the villain in a game situation. Although gambling, often reckless, was a regular part of the real cowboy's recreational visits to town (Rollins 1922, 172), the Western novel does not ordinarily allow its fictional heroes to gamble without some higher purpose. The hero of Will Henry's Who Rides with Wyatt, is described as being a capable professional gambler as well as a tough lawman; yet significantly the novel never actually shows him gambling.

In any event, actual gambling plays too small a role in the plot of the Western to account adequately for the large amount of gambling slang, which rivals in frequency that related to the gun. The slang of the card table is not confined to actual gambling situations, but pervades the Western in the form of a host of metaphors for the action of the adventure plot of the Western. The action at hand is commonly referred to as the play, and to take an action as to make a play. Tom Clark in his Dictionary of Gambling and Gaming (1987) defines a tinhorn as "a gambler who plays for small stakes, especially a noisy or boisterous one" (233).

This term, which appears with great frequency in the Western, is there applied not only to a gambler but to any self-important or deceitful individual. A **cold deck**, defined by Clark as "a pack of cards arranged in a specific order, to be used by the dealer who wishes to cheat during one hand," (46) more generally signifies any deception or imposition. An empty boaster is a **fourflusher**. To die is to **pass in one's chips**. A fated event is **in the cards**. A hidden advantage is a **hole card**. This ubiquitous gambling or gaming slang creates an underlying impression that the shaping principle of life--and thus of the Western novel--resembles the playing out of a game. As in a card game, the hero pits his skill and luck against his adversaries in a dramatic give-and-take whose rules and moves are as familiar and predictable to the reader as those of a game.

John Cawelti, perhaps the foremost critic of the popular Western genre, has elaborated a game theory of the popular Western that equates the experience the Western provides its readers with the predictably patterned experience of excitement, suspense, and release the great American spectator sports provide their fans (Cawelti 1984, 59). Both are cultural rituals that affirm the values of society and at the same time allow participants to act out repressed needs vicariously. Both have clearly delineated and recognizable sides, rules, and clear winners.

In Cawelti's model, the Western setting, in time and space, resembles a vast game board or field. As the action of a sport is safely contained within a field, the action of the Western is safely confined within a remote epic past. The introduction to the old Lone Ranger radio and television programs used to invite listeners to "return with us now to those thrilling days of yesteryear." By being transported to the presumably "thrilling days" of an epic past, the readers can savor violence and lawlessness, especially armed retribution, without feeling threatened or guilty. The preceeding chapter dealing with slang related to the gun discusses the Western's ability to portray violence as socially acceptable.

The great Western Plains, vast, beautiful, uninhabited, and dangerous, provide a field that, along with the horse, allows almost unlimited scope for the moves of the game--the episodes of flight, pursuit, capture, and rescue that make up the Western plot. The colorful slang verbs of departure and travel of the Western--slope, vamoose, hit the trail, dig, drift, skip--dramatize the freedom of movement afforded by the setting and underscore the flight-pursuit moves of the plot. The horse, because it allows free movement across and domination of the wilderness, provides the "direct tie to the freedom of the wilderness" (Cawelti 1984, 85). The term bronco, used ubiquitously in the Western to loosely designate any horse, signified "wild horse" in Mexican

Spanish. This term helps to create an aura of wildness around horse and rider and to underscore their close relationship to the wilderness setting.

Like a spectator sport, the Western both has clearly divided and delineated sides. In Cawelti's model, the Western plot is played out through a well-defined tripartite division of characters. A weak character or characters--the heroine or townspeople--is threatened by powerful villains--the outlaws or Indians. The hero intervenes. He possesses the same savage skills as the villains, but uses them to protect the forces of order and civilization represented by the heroine or townspeople.

Slang in the Western dramatizes the clear division of characters by identifying villains with mean, despicable, treacherous animals, e.g. **skunks**, **polecats**, **coyotes**, **sidewinders**, **lobos**, **buzzards**, and **varmints**. In the clear separation of good and evil characters vital to the Western formula, these animal terms leave no doubt about the innate badness of villains, who are unambiguously, inexcusably, genetically bad. No environmental or societal factors explain or excuse their actions. Animal slang labels villains as a species of pernicious "varmints" whom the hero can exterminate justifiably.

These pejorative animal terms and the numerous other slang terms related to animals, e.g. **buck**, **buffalo**, **crawfish**, on the prod, help evoke a wild West setting very

different from the civilized, urban East. The justice of the Western, in contrast to that of civilized areas, is portrayed as natural justice rather than of legal institutions. In this wild setting, where nature predominates over society, the freewheeling Western hero can intervene and use violence to enforce natural justice.

The slang of the Western likewise helps characterize the good characters unambiguously. The two terms used most frequently to describe virtuous characters denote a pure color and a precise geometric figure--white and square. White might be associated with game pieces or uniforms, and square with the divisions of a gameboard.

The characteristic lack of slang relating to women can, at least in part, be explained by the part they play in the Western's tripartite division of characters. The heroine is the helpless character whom the hero most often rescues from the villain's machinations, and since she seems to exist mostly to fill this role, Westerns are notorious for their one-dimensional portrayals of her. According to Savage the Western heroine is "as immobile as a bug in amber" (1979, 98). However, the traditional Western virtually never labels her with frivolous or diminishing slang terms such as "dame," "doll," etc. An occasional filly likens a young, high-spirited heroine to a horse, certainly intended as a flattering comparison in the Western. A very rare flossy or floozy may be uttered by a villain libeling the virtuous

heroine. Not even a "fallen woman," or dancehall girl, who may occasionally play a secondary part in the action, is a target of linguistic disrespect.

The Western eschews demeaning or dismissive terms for woman because, although she may be a cardboard figure with few attributes of a real woman, she plays several portentous symbolic roles. In Munden's (1958) Freudian interpretation the heroine represents not only the mother, object of incestuous fears and desires, but she represents the forces of the ego, order and civilization, which oppose the bestial male id. In the tripartite division of characters the heroine also represents order and civilization, which the Western hero is pledged to protect from the forces of savagery and disorder. As the representative of order and civilization, the heroine has the power to bestow wealth, success, and power on the hero. In the formula Western when the hero wins the heroine he usually gets her sizeable and well-stocked ranch too, and so earns a tangible reward for championing order and civilization--property. The heroine is "the symbol of power and wealth....She commands the attentions of both villain and hero and whoever wins her will acquire power and wealth to shape the world in his ideal" (Jones 1978, 143). Since the woman in the Western represents order and civilization, and access to power and wealth, she cannot be treated with linguistic disrespect.

Since women in the Western are portrayed as both more and less than real women, sexual relations are usually not treated realistically. Savage accuses the Western of holding up sexual immaturity as a behavioral model and portraying the cowboy as "a fighting monk" (1979, 103). Therefore virtually no sexual slang appears in the traditional Western.

The slang that uses drinking and gambling imagery serves not to portray the dissipations of the cowboy, but to emphasize his heroism, and to link the Western to a game played out between clearly defined forces of good and evil in a series of predictable moves within the confines of a vast and dangerous field.

CHAPTER 5

THE COWBOY'S OCCUPATION

The popular Western arose at the turn of the century, apparently in reaction to accelerating industrialization and urbanization. With the closing of the West came the "chilling conviction that...a land linked with freedom, space and opportunity was rapidly vanishing" (Etulain 1974, 76). The American public embraced and continues to enthusiastically embrace the Western to recapture a preindustrial past "that was less coercive, and less dominated by the city, the immigrant, and worker" (Etulain 1974, 77). For readers longing to escape the dwindling opportunities and the class and ethnic conflicts of an urban industrial society, the Old West represents a never-never land of boundless opportunity for the individual courageous enough to seize it, where wealth and education don't matter.

The occupation of the cowboy with the cattle drive and its attendant mobility is tied to the qualities of the individual that the Western exalts, and that an increasingly urban and industrialized society threatens--"independence, self-reliance, and individualism" (Dary 1981, 87). In The Virginian (1902), Wister popularized the cowboy as the American "democratic hero" (Etulain 1974, 77). The East had become worn out and corrupt, but in the West the worth of the individual still counted for more than wealth or social

position. There the American Dream, in which individual effort is rewarded, could get a fresh start. The cowboy hero ranks as true nobility in the fictional West because he embodies the ideal of the worth of the individual without the trappings of education, culture, or wealth. Wister (1902) romantically describes these new, if somewhat rough-hewn cowboy noblemen:

For something about them, and the idea of them, smote my American heart, and I have never forgotten it, nor ever shall, as long as I live. In their flesh our natural passions ran tumultuous; but often in their spirit sat hidden a true nobility, and often beneath its unexpected shining their figures took a heroic stature (38).

While the cowboy symbolizes the values the Western purveys, freedom and individualism, he was after all just "a hired man on horseback" (Athearn 1986, 23). Western fiction plays down the cowboy's working-class hired man role in an attempt to portray him as a modern knight on horseback. Despite the fact that real cowboys often preferred to say they "rode" for a "brand" rather than "worked" for a "ranch" (Rollins 1922, 93), their work was for the most part unromantically hard, dirty, and repetitive. Detailed descriptions of it, in addition to being tedious, might too clearly reveal the cowboy's working-class status.

Andy Adams, who actually worked as a cowboy, is one of the very few Western authors to pay considerable attention to the work of the cowboy, and also one of the very few authors to reveal that the cowboy was sometimes painfully

aware of his lower-class status. One of the young cowboys in Log of a Cowboy (1903) tells a poignant story of how an upper class family encouraged him to court their lovely daughter in the mistaken belief that he was a member of a prominent family. When they discovered their error, they forbade his visits in a cruel and contemptuous letter. Adams also describes how the cowboys make fun of a picture on the back of a jar of jam that shows a group of millionaires and politicians, whom the cowboys refer to as **big augers**.

However, most Westerns portray the cowboy as transcending class boundaries, and give his actual work scant attention; therefore they use little of the rich vocabulary of occupational slang revealed in cowboy memoirs such as those of Lomax (1917-20). "Carving horse" for a horse trained to cut cows from the herd, "hoodlum wagon" for the wagon used for carrying extra beds and wood and water, (Lomax 1917-20, 331), are colorful terms connected with the cowboy's work that do not appear in the fiction studied.

Some terms directly related to the cowboy's work do appear, but infrequently. For example, cowboys used the term **outlaw**, not **bronco**, to precisely describe a horse that was broken for riding but had a mean, intractable disposition. This term appears infrequently in the novels, and then only in the work of James, Santee, and Rhodes, authors who actually were working cowboys; perhaps because

readers might confuse it with the more common meaning of the term.

Many slang terms related to the occupation of the cowboy appear in the form of metaphorical references to human conflict or violence. On roundups and trail drives, *on the prod* vividly described a maddened steer seeking to gore someone or something with its horns--a formidable image, since longhorn cattle with horns more than eight feet from tip to tip have been reported (Mora 1946, 69). The term appears fairly frequently in the novels, but almost always to describe not cows but humans in a state of blind or exaggerated rage.

The term *grub* ranks as the most frequently used slang term in the novels studied. Its pervasiveness may be attributable to its associations with the spartan fare, at least before the happy advent of the chuckwagon, on which the cowboy had to subsist while on trail drives. According to Rollins description (1922), the cowboy often ground his coffee beans by mashing them on a rock with the butt of a pistol, and opened his canned tomatoes by firing a pistol across the top of the can (119). Rollins extols the virtues of canned tomatoes, a traditional part of cowboy provisions:

The liquid of the can's contents assuaged thirst and counteracted the effect of the already swallowed alkali dust, while the solid vegetable wiped cross one's face would heal the bleeding cuts which that cannibalistic dust had made. A tomato might occasionally be pressed against a pony's lips for their comforting (119).

The term **grub** ties food to the challenging outdoor lifestyle of the free-roving cowboy, and the novels apply it to food in general to help portray the West as a land of rugged masculinity in contrast to the luxury-loving and effete East. This extension of a term to a broad area resembles that of another frequently used term related to the cowboy's occupation, **bronco**, which narrowly signifies an unbroken horse, but is extended to all horses to create an aura of wildness around the cowboy and his mount.

The terms related to leather, e.g. **slap leather**, **straddle leather**, **rawhide**, are associated with the cowboy's equipment and costume. Cawelti notes that the cowboy's costume exerts a fascination because its "mixture of savagery and elegance" (1984, 72) exemplifies the hero's mediating role between civilization and savagery.

Another term associated with herding cattle that pervades the novels is **rustle**. This interesting term has several levels of meaning ranging from innocuous, "to gather something up, or to bestir oneself," to criminal, "to steal cattle). Wister (1902) discusses the term **rustler** in The Virginian:

It was not in any dictionary, and current translations of it were inconsistent. A man at Hoosic Falls said that he had passed through Cheyenne, and heard the term applied in a complimentary way to people who were alive and pushing. Another man had always supposed it meant some kind of horse. But the most alarming version of all was that a rustler was a cattle thief. Now the truth is that all these meanings were right. The word ran a sort of progress in the cattle

country, gathering many meanings as it went (264-265).

One reason that the word's meaning encompasses so much territory is that Western cattle men did not draw a clear line between an enterprising individual who bestirred himself to gather up ownerless cattle and one who actually stole them. Because the Westerner knew that the original great herds were not purchased by their owners but rounded up from wild longhorn cattle that had spread across the plains, he had a more casual attitude to "acquiring" cattle than he would have towards a man's other possessions. As Emerson Hough states, "a man's horse was sacred, but his cow was not" (1907, 157). Western men ranged along a continuum from those of absolute integrity who would never rustle, to those who might help a friend rustle or who would rustle only from the rich and unpopular, down to those regarded as real criminals, who would rustle from widows and orphans, and would take "even a sheep" (Rollins 1922, 309).

The term rustle came into use in the dime novels, but was not well-known. For instance, Joseph Badger uses it to describe cattle stealers in the 1887 The Rustler Detective. In the same year Leon Lewis in The Demon Steer, a gothic tale of cattle thieves who use a phosphorescent steer and a drug-like herbal cow attractant in their depredations, refers to the villains as "a gang of stampeders (5), and to the stolen cattle as being "rushed off" (5) rather than rustled. But the term soon became standard in Western

novels because it links the cattle industry with the elements of violence and lawlessness that allow the cowboy to be a romantic hero rather than a mere hired hand.

Compared to the cowboy, the Western portrays tillers of the soil and "lesser beings who saved their money" as clods compared to the cowboy (Athearn 1986, 23). Vocations that cannot be pursued from the back of a horse are labeled with irreverent slang terms. Indoor workers are described as counter jumpers, and pen pushers. Salesmen are drummers. Farmers come in for particular attention as nesters, sodbusters, pumpkin-rollers, and weed benders. Nor are prestigious occupations requiring education spared. Those following professions or religious vocations are known as sawbones, pill-pushers, law-sharps, and sky-pilots.

The slang terms for cowboy that appear most frequently in the Western, cowpuncher, or puncher, emphasize the strong, forceful character of the cowboy and appear much more often than other terms such as cowpoke, ranny, or waddy.

Originally the cowboy was known by the same name as his Mexican predecessor, as a vaquero or some American adaptation of the term, such as buckaroo. The term "cowboy" did not become widespread in the Southwest until after the Civil War. The term cowpuncher, coined in Kansas in the 1870's (Dary 1981, 275), originally described a particular task the cowboy performed at the end of the trail drive.

When cowboys helped to load cattle aboard railroad cars, they used metal-pointed poles to prod the longhorns into stock cars. The prod poles were about 6 feet long with a steel spike on the end. The cowboys who punched the cattle with the poles began referring to themselves as "cow punchers." (Dary 1981, 275).

Even though the term originally described only one particular task that a cowboy might perform, and certainly not a notably picturesque or romantic one, punching became the accepted term for herding cattle. It applied only to cattle; horses could never be punched (Rollins 1922, 37). **Cowpuncher**, or **puncher** became widely used among cowboys, and the Western novel preferentially uses these terms, perhaps because of their forceful, assertive connotations contrasted with the diminishing or ridiculous ones of "cowboy," and later, seldom-used terms such as **cowpoke**, and **waddy**.

CHAPTER 6

CLASS AND RACE

The Western, based on the paradigm established in Wister's The Virginian (1902), portrayed the cowboy as a democratic hero and the West as the land of "individualism, democracy, and freedom" (Etulain 1974, 77). The slang of the Western helps create a classless world of unlimited opportunity--at least for the white man--while at the same time it relegates potentially disturbing minorities to an unimportant position.

The cowboy, portrayed by Wister as the natural nobleman of the West, although he may lack education and polish, has the natural abilities and the **savvy** to meet the challenges of the unforgiving wilderness. The term **savvy** denotes knowledge or understanding, but its Mexican origin and strong Southwestern flavor give it connotations of the particular kind of knowledge relevant to life in the West that can be possessed only by the experienced Westerner. Lighter defines it as "knowledge gained from one's own experience." The newcomer, no matter how rich or admired he was back East, may find to his surprise and dismay that he is classed as an inferior because he lacks **savvy**; he doesn't know how to act, dress, or survive in the West. Slang terms such as **greenhorn**, **pilgrim**, **dude**, and the most widely used and insultingly descriptive, **tenderfoot**,

contrast the newcomer to the West with the cowboy, who is at home in the inhospitable land.

The narrator of Wister's The Virginian (1902), a wealthy New York socialite on a Western holiday to regain his health, is so uninitiated in the ways of the West that his rancher host has to assign to him a cowboy nursemaid, the Virginian. "It was his lugubrious lot to accompany me in my rambles, preside over my blunders, and save me from calamitously passing into the next world" (68). The New Yorker is surprised to find that he cannot treat his cowboy attendant with the easy condescension with which he might treat a social inferior in New York, and that he must earn the Virginian's respect. Even after the Virginian and his cowboy comrades learn to regard him as something more than a freak, they never call him by any other name than the **tenderfoot**.

I was known simply as "the tenderfoot." I was introduced to the neighborhood (a circle of eighty miles) as "the tenderfoot" (68).

In the fictional West the natural worth and **savvy** of the **cowpuncher** could outweigh the wealth, education, and social position of the **tenderfoot**.

With his lack of formal education balanced by his great natural wit, the cowboy's taciturnity and ability to make a few words count is legendary. Ramon Adams (1968) says of the cowboy:

With his usually limited education he squeezes the juice from the language, molds it to suit his

needs, and is a genius at making a verb out of anything. He "don't have to fish 'round for no decorated language to make his meanin' clear," and has little patience with the man who "spouts words that run eight to the pound" (xi).

The cowboy had command of a succinct language uniquely adapted to the Western environment, and despised "chatterboxes" (Adams 1968, xii). A number of slang terms reflect scorn for verbosity, e.g. hot air, big wind, blowhard.

The Western asserts its disregard for social distinctions by applying indiscriminately to any adult male an array of unflattering slang terms signifying "man" or "fellow" such as galoot, bird, jasper, and especially gent. The terms pard and pardner, ubiquitous in the Western, denote a close associate or friend, but extend to apply to any man as shown by the oxymoronic expression "stranger pard." These typically Western terms, pard and pardner, express a relationship of absolute equality between men.

But while the Western portrayed the West as a land of freedom and opportunity, it also "weeded out the less desirables--Mexicans, Indians, and immigrants of southern European origin" (Etulain 1974, 77). Slang characterizing racial and ethnic groups, for instance Chink, Mick, Bohunk, Nigger, Redskin, Greaser, appears frequently in the Western. This might seem to belie the theory that the Western offers an escape from racial and ethnic tensions. However, the slang does not arise out of situations of overt racial

conflict, which rarely occur in the typical Western. Rather they occur in an atmosphere of patronizing tolerance based on a smug assumption of the natural superiority of the Anglo-Saxon. While it is true that ethnophaulisms are frequently found in novels of other genres in the 1920's and 1930's, and that the later Westerns tend to shift racial terms away from the lips of the main characters to those of secondary characters, the terms, especially Greaser, still appear, and portrayal of racial and ethnic minorities remains shallow and stereotyped in the novels studied.

The Western hero, as revealed by his physical description, is almost invariably of Northern European descent. Typically the Western opens with the trail-stained hero riding down from the mountains or out of the desert, surveying the starkly beautiful surroundings from eyes of icy blue or grey. With the major exception of Louis L'Amour, who often fashioned hefty brunette heroes in his own image, Western authors allot pigmented irises only to villains, heroines and others who don't count much. Even in the rare and anomalous case, for instance in Leonard Elmore's 1961 Hombre, where the hero has a Mexican or Indian ancestress (such a male progenitor would be unthinkable), blue eyes, normally recessive, emerge triumphant from the genetic mixture to signal that the heroic Nordic genotype has not suffered significant disruption. John Russell, half-breed hero of Hombre, grows up with his Apache

relatives and tries to escape both his whiteness and his heroic destiny, but eventually gives his life to protect a stranger. He is described by the narrator:

For a second we were close and I saw his eyes. They had that same tell-nothing-but-know-everything expression as Henry Mendez's eyes. That same Mexican, Indian look. Only John Russell's eyes were blue, light-blue looking in his Indian-dark face (14).

In the film version of the novel John Russell was played by the very blue-eyed Paul Newman.

Not only are the heroes of the Westerns of Northern European ancestry, so are most of the secondary characters--villains, sidekicks and heroines. Characters of other nationalities, Indians, and Mexicans, appear only as props or background, seldom assuming even the stature of villains.

The inferior position of other races and ethnic groups in the Western is graphically presented in Andy Adams' 1906 Cattle Brands. A sympathetically portrayed old cowman narrates an incident in which an Irishman is on trial for killing a Chinese. The unnamed judge, known as "the Law west of the Pecos" (presumably the historical Judge Roy Bean, whose sobriquet this was) (144), passes sentence:

He rummaged over a book or two for a few moments and then said, 'Here, I reckon this is near enough. I find in the revised statute before me, in the killing of a nigger the offending party was fined five dollars. A Chinaman ought to be half as good as a nigger. Stand up and receive your sentence....I'll fine you two dollars and a half and costs' (146).

African Americans are virtually absent from the Western in spite of evidence that there were many Black cowboys (Dary 1981, 69). The few who appear in Westerns are usually servants.

Stereotypical "good" and "bad" Indians may appear in the Western. In Badger's 1887 The Rustler Detective, the hero's "Indian pard," Red Clam, is praised for being "Red outside, but whiter than undrifted snow within" (5). Red Clam plays a more important part in the dime novel adventure than that allotted to Indians in most of the other Westerns studied. The Indian serves mainly as a prop for the adventures and heroism of the hero, and the Indian's character or situation is not developed in any depth. He is characterized as Red, Redskin, Reddy, and an Indian man is frequently referred to as a buck. A relatively few slang terms relate to Indian culture such as medicine and powwow. In Hondo (1952) Louis L'Amour portrays the Plains Indian as a noble, courageous, but safely doomed victim of destiny and white superiority:

Not one but knew he fought in vain. They saw the white men endlessly coming, their many soldiers, their many ponies, their food supply that was endless, and their many cartridges of brass. The Apache knew his hour was past. He knew the white men would take even his last land, but it was not in him to knuckle under. He would fight, sing his death song, and die. (123)

Mexicans constitute an important ethnic group of the West that did not conveniently fade away but which the Western easily relegates to the background. "You thief!

You greaser bandit!" (1928, 232) exclaims a distraught Zane Grey heroine, full bosom heaving and purple eyes ablaze. The term **greaser** for Mexican is a regular fixture in the Western from the time of the dime novels on. It is notable that the above quotation represents one of the rare times in the novels included in this study that a Western heroine uses slang. The heroine is traditionally a beacon of culture and propriety in the rude West; her lips touch slang no more than they touch whisky. That Grey would allow a heroine to use this term is an indication of its pervasiveness and acceptability.

Ironically, the Western owes its very existence to the Mexican; the cowboy inherited and adapted his cowboy culture from his Mexican predecessors. Until the arrival of the Spanish, the Western Hemisphere had no horses or cattle. Early Spanish explorers with Coronado observed the vast herds of buffalo, and reasoned correctly that the new world was ideal for stock raising. The Spanish brought horses and long-horned Andalusian cattle and, after abandoning their hunt for gold, settled down to raising stock and horses. Both multiplied amazingly in the New World, and soon herds of cattle and horses spread north from Mexico into Texas and beyond. The Mexican vaquero was never romanticized as was his American counterpart, even though there were "bad vaqueros" in Mexico who resembled the outlaws of the American West. The vaquero was considered a poor laborer

"as far down in the social order as one could get" (Dary 1981, 13). Yet from the humble vaquero the American cowboy inherited his costume--the big hat, the bandanna, and the showy, jingling spurs. From him the cowboy also learned his trade, rounding up cattle from horseback with the long rope--a method of handling cattle unique in all the world. Many technical terms related to cattle herding are of Spanish origin, e.g. ranch, lariat, reata, chaps, and lasso. In view of the importance of the Spanish heritage to cowboy culture, it is not surprising that a number of the slang terms that appear most frequently in the novels and seem most typically Western are related to the Spanish language, such as **bronco**, **vamoose**, **savvy**, **calaboose**. But, like the Indians, the Mexicans became an unwanted minority.

While many of the early Texians learned much from the vaqueros and gained respect for them, some of the later arrivals from the states did not like the Mexicans....These Texians brought their language, their ways, their beliefs, and their dreams and ambitions, and in all these respects they differed from the Mexicans (Dary 1981, 77).

Emerson Hough in his 1928 North of 36, a fictional description of an early cattle drive, regards the settlement of the West and the subsequent successful development of the cattle industry as exclusively the accomplishment of Anglo-Americans, as an extension "of the thin line of Saxon civilization" (10). Although the Mexican made an important contribution to Western culture, he too, like the Indian, is seldom dignified in the novels with the status even of an

important villain. He is portrayed as a powerless individual whose fate it is to be easily displaced by the more ambitious and purposeful American.

In one of the few instances in which Westerners and Mexicans interact significantly, Eugene Manlove Rhodes' (1909) hero, Jeff Bransford, saves a Mexican sheepman from being lynched by a group of cowmen. When two men in the group object and try to protect the Mexican, they are told that they'll just get themselves "hurtet and 'twon't do the greaser any good" (74). The wily Jeff sides with the two and saves the Mexican by outsmarting rather than outshooting the lynch mob. But the Mexican never reveals his thoughts by word or gesture; he merely acts as the mute prop who provides an occasion for Jeff's heroism.

The Western idealizes the West as the land of opportunity, and the slang that levels social distinctions helps achieve this goal. However, the cowboy hero and other important characters are almost always of Northern European descent. Other races and ethnic groups are allowed to play only a minor part in the Western, are portrayed as easily exterminated, displaced, or disregarded, and labeled with diminishing slang terms. The popular Western, although it deals with a racially and ethnically diverse region of the United States, avoids serious presentation or consideration of this diversity.

CONCLUSION

In this study for the first time the slang vocabulary of the Western, perhaps the most popular American fictional genre of the last one hundred years, has been examined in detail and treated as a coherent rhetorical entity. The accompanying glossary presents the slang of the Western novel extensively and according to principles of historical lexicography. This historical glossary shows that the Western has since its inception featured a special slang vocabulary; the foundation of it was laid down in the earliest dime novel Westerns of the 1870's. The glossary further shows that Western authors have maintained this special slang vocabulary by perpetuating many slang terms from early Western fiction, by adding new ones, and by copying newly introduced terms from one another. One reason that the special slang vocabulary has been such a durable component of the Western seems to be that its use has proved the most effective way for the Western to create for itself the unique and colorful fictional ethos it has made familiar to the American public.

Analysis of the glossary further reveals a pattern in which the referents of the greater part of the slang terms fall within a limited number of semantic domains. This study has sought to demonstrate that using slang as a foregrounding device to dramatize and highlight these

semantic domains helps the Western achieve a number of important literary aims. The slang in the domain of violence, especially gunplay, helps the Western portray violence as justified and socially acceptable. In the domain of gambling, it helps the Western perform its function as game-like social ritual that allows release of tensions without disturbing the social status quo. The slang in the domains of social class and race help keep alive in an increasingly complex and discouraging industrial society the myth promulgated by popular fiction about the Old West that the resourceful and courageous individual can determine his own fate. Taken all together, the stylistic, rhetorical, and dramatic functions of slang which this study has examined indicate the centrality of slang to the appeal of the Western.

To understand clearly the role of slang in the Western, it is helpful to recall some of the general characteristics of slang. Slang is a way to establish an often vicarious social identity; it has a group-identifying function. "The chief use of slang," says the cliché, "is to show that you're one of the gang!" (Crystal 1987, 53). William Savage (1979), in a chapter he calls "Everyman a Cowboy," discusses the ways in which millions of adult Americans, who he assures us are "no crackpots," play cowboy. They wear Western fashions, enjoy Western theme parks, and vacation at dude ranches. A more sinister manifestation of the desire

to play cowboy cited by Savage is the American affinity for guns. By creating a special slang vocabulary and making the American public familiar with it for over a century, the Western allows its many enthusiasts to feel they belong at least vicariously to a cowboy ingroup.

Flexner and McDavid (1987) identify the most effective slang as that which performs three functions: it "tells something about the thing named, the person using the term, and the social matrix against which it is used" (1987, 573). Slang in the Western certainly fulfills these criteria of effectiveness.

Slang in the Western unmistakably tells something about its referents--the things it names. For example the slang terms related to the gun such as **drill** and **plug** forcefully assert its connection to male potency and thus heighten its power as a masculine symbol. **Bronco** and **grub** suggest that in the West horses and food are different from the tame versions of these items available in the civilized East. In the West the horse becomes a wild rearing beast, and food is transformed into rugged fare devoured beside a campfire. The western **rustler** is made to seem less despicable and more enterprising than the vulgar city thief because rustler also means an individual who bestirs himself or gathers something up. **Savvy** tells that the Westerner possesses a special kind of experiential knowledge that the **tenderfoot** lacks. The latter term tells that Westerners are stronger and tougher

than newcomers from other areas. An effective slang term gives information beyond what a too-familiar neutral term can convey, and the slang of the Western does more than substitute colorful terms for standard ones; it tells more about the West more succinctly than standard language can. The semantic sets into which most of the slang falls delineate the domains that writers of Westerns want to tell us more about--for instance violence, social stratification, and attitudes toward racial and ethnic minorities.

The slang of the Western also makes a statement about the user of the slang. As has been noted, slang allows the Western characters who use it to appear to challenge polite conventions, and it identifies them as typically "Western" without making them sound ignorant or clownish.

Finally, effective slang should reveal something about the social matrix against which it is used. The best example of this function in the Western is perhaps the ubiquitous gambling slang, which suggests to the attentive reader that the social interactions within the Western closely resemble a game in which a conflict between clearly defined opposing sides will be played out in predictable moves within the confined field of a romantically remote place and time. Within this social context the reader has the same expectations he would have while attending a spectator sport: amusement, suspense, release of tensions,

and perhaps some vicarious satisfaction of his suppressed impulses.

Since slang terms often convey so many more levels of meaning than their familiar standard synonyms, they can be powerful rhetorical tools in literature. This study has demonstrated the role of slang as a literary device uniquely suited to conjuring up the Western setting and to presenting the fictional Old West as the mythical land of violence and individual opportunity so beloved by the American reader. It is tempting to speculate that slang functions similarly in other popular fictional genres--the "hardboiled" detective novel, for example. Future studies of the functions of slang in such genres would appear to be a logical next step in the continuing critical investigation of American popular fiction.

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APPENDIX

GLOSSARY

The glossary contains approximately 860 terms. The arrangement of the entries has been modeled in large part on The Dictionary of American English and the Oxford English Dictionary. The following will explain the method of presentation:

Main Entries. A main entry is a word (pronto) or a phrase (prod, on the). Single, compound, and hyphenated main entries are listed in absolute alphabetical order in the style of standard dictionaries; phrasal main entries, however, are entered under the most important or leave variable word of the phrase (on the prod, for example, appears under prod rather than under on). The word or links two forms of a main entry.

Functional Tables. An italicized abbreviation immediately following the main entry indicates either the part of speech (n., v., etc.) or some other grammatical or morphological function of the main entry (phr., etc.). An analysis of the parts of speech reveals 462 nouns, 213 verbs, 78 adjectives, 13 adverbs, 4 noun phrases, 86 verb phrases, 2 adjective phrases, and 4 adverb phrases.

Citations. The citations follow the definition they support and illustrate. The citational form includes date, author, short title (see list of sources for full titles), page, literal quotation. For example:

1955 Henry Who 6: He'll be remembered as long as western talk winds up, as it always does, on bad hombres.

Entries were looked up in The Oxford English Dictionary 2, Dictionary of Americanisms, and in Jonathan Lighter's files for his forthcoming Historical Dictionary of American Slang to find existing documentation. Ordinarily I did not consult The Dictionary of American English because its relevant entries have been absorbed into the DA or OED 2. References to the OED 2, DA, and Jonathan Lighter's HDAS collection usually do not include more than the date. Approximately 200 entries could not be found in any reference source.

GLOSSARY

ace n. [OED2 1704; DA 1927] a decisive advantage
 1879 Morecamp Live 252: Highover throw'd the ace an' I flung up my hand. 1887 Willett Sandy 2: You see that I hold the ace. 1946 Nye Breed 21: If they tangled again Lou would hold all the aces.

ace-high adj. [OED2 1878; DA 1927; Lighter 1896] also aces high preeminent, superior
 1904 Bower Lonesome 145: For all I know, yuh might stand ace-high in this game. 1910 Rhodes Good Men 48: As a man of action, he wasn't ace-high to Cassius. 1936 Nye No 44: Big Al Crick is aces high with me.

ace-in-the-hole n. phr. [OED2 1915; DA 1922; Lighter 1908] a hidden advantage
 1957 Gruber Lonesome 143: I've still got the old ace-in-the-hole, Plan Number Three.

ace up one's sleeve n.phr. [Lighter 1927] a hidden advantage
 1954 Gruber Bitter 107: Jacob Fugger had an ace up his sleeve.

air n. [Lighter 1929] empty talk
 1914 Grey Rustlers 58: Reckon that talk's a little air.

auger v. [Lighter 1928] to argue, talk at length
 1928 Haycox Guns 60: Boadley's just augering to save his skin. 1959 Nye Long 68 He was trying to auger Baines into some kind of deal. 1967 Henry Alias 16: You're going to stand there and auger it all morning.

back track n. [OED2 1724] a back trail
 1922 Evarts Settling 52: I'll take to riding with my head over my shoulder--surveying my back-track.

back trail n. [OED2 1832; DA 1924]
 1. a return trail or previous route
 1891 Ingraham Buck 5: When he...started upon the back trail, Buck Taylor rode with caution. 1906 Mulford Bar 337: Once or twice a year I gets as far as Kansas City, but I soon tires of it an' hits th' back trail. 1949 Schaefer Shane 6: He was full of news from towns along his back trail. 1960 L'Amour Sacketts 28: The vagueros were watching their back trail. 1968 Nye Lost 72: To hide them from any skulkers camped on the backtrail.
 2. figuratively, one's past
 1935 James Home 113: He's laid awake...enjoying the back trail of his memory. 1963 L'Amour Sackett 97: He might

find other dead women on that man's back trail. 1965 Foreman Mustang 6: They had to drift, staying a jump ahead of tracks scored on dark back trails.

badge packer or badge-toter n. a sheriff or marshall
1946 Nye Breed 58: Maybe the power that was back of the setup would not care for too strong a badge toter. 1955 Henry Who 104: The Pima County machine was too much for the short limits the U.S. put on its badge-toters. 1959 Nye Long 17: Every turn Howlett took brought him back to that badge toter.

bang-up adj. [OED2 1810; Lighter 1810] excellent, first class
1902 Wister Virginian 194: A bang-up meal with champagne. 1906 Mulford Bar 142: Painting some cow town in all the "bang up" style such an event would call for. 1930 Brand Destry 44: I have a bang-up good horse in my stable. 1930 Mulford HC Eagle 16: Yo're th' boss of a bang-up fine ranch! 1932 Grey Lost 104: It's just been a bang-up winter for trappin'.

bark, with the -- on adj. phr. [Lighter 1839] unrefined
1887 Willett Sandy 25: My words are words with the bark on. 1955 L'Amour Heller 17: The patrons of Hat Creek Station were men with the bark on.

baste v. [Lighter 1900] to kill
1877 Wheeler DD Prince 4: Who fired the popgun...w'at basted my old pard.

bat n. [Lighter 1846] a drunken spree
1926 Brand Blue 16: I'm up here not on a bat...but mighty quiet and sober.

batwing chaps n. pl. wide-leg chaps
1967 Nye Trigger 8: His batwing chaps were obviously new.

batwing doors, also batwings n. pl. a saloon's swinging doors
1946 Nye Breed 19: He pushed through the batwings. 1954 Gruber Bitter 43: A bullet tore through the flimsy batwing doors. 1968 Nye Lost 9: The other ranny...was headed now in long strides for the Oriental's batwings. 1976 L'Amour Where 21: The bat-wing doors behind him opened.

bean n. [OED2 1811; Lighter 1799] a piece of money
1903 Adams Log 185: Flood...had anteed up his last bean. 1931 Brand Ambush 73: Every bean...was stolen money.

bean eater n. a Mexican

1985 McMurtry Lonesome 116: Well, they're just a bunch of bean eaters.

bear grease n. a greasy hair dressing
1933 Brand False 75: 6: Skull's riders are all out there belly flat to the bar, plastered with bear grease and bad intentions.

bear sign n. [Lighter 1903] doughnuts
1903 Adams Log 280: She asked me to make the bear sign--doughnuts. 1964 L'Amour Hanging 38: Bear sign is doughnuts.

bear talk n. gruff or threatening talk
1931 Haycox Whispering 18: All I seem to hear at present is a lot of bear talk.

beat the game v. [OED2 1847] to succeed or get ahead
1926 Brand Blue 168: You're going to beat the game here and make yourself rich.

beef v. [Lighter 1899] to kill (a person)
1956 Overholser Desperate 12: I don't know nothing about how Herb Jason got beefed.

beef v. [OED2 1899; DA 1889; Lighter 1898] to complain
1922 Evarts Settling 89: No one else has done any beefing.
1932 Grey Lost 129: I was jest beefin'.

beef stuff n. beef cattle
1923 Evarts Tumble 30: We're due to help Crowfoot gather a little bunch of beef stuff tomorrow.

bender n. [OED2 1846; Lighter 1899] a drinking binge
1965 Short First 90: Where'd you get the money for this bender? 1968 Nye Lost 5: The three day bender undertaken to celebrate his recent return.

big auger n. [Lighter 1868] an important person, bigshot
1903 Adams Log 125: I reckon he's some big auger--a senator or govenor, maybe. 1941 Short Hard 55: The trouble with you is you been the Big Augur in this country too long.

big bug n. [OED2 1827] an important person
1930 Brand Destry 110: It was that big bug--that Chester Bent.

big gun n. an important person
1878 Wheeler DD on Deck 11 I'm as big a gun among the men as any of 'em.

big-hatted adj. self-important

1949 Schaefer Shane 47: He'd be darned if he'd make tracks just because some big-hatted rancher wanted him to.

big wind n. a big talker, braggart
1941 Short Hard 29: You were a tinhorn...a big wind from Texas.

bird n. [DA 1842; Lighter 1829]
1. a fellow
1922 Brand Garden 195: Those first four birds, who started the Garden, who were they? 1926 Brand Blue 12: Fulsom was a nest of pretty hard birds. 1932 Grey Lost 29: That old bird has got a haid on him. 1933 Brand False 75: 125: You're the bird they're after. 1941 Short Hard 52: Follow that bird! Find out where he's goin'! 1946 Nye Breed 27: That dark faced bird in the shotgun chaps? 1950 Raine Six 123: A stocky bird wearing an old hat. 1955 Henry Who 76: He got his first good look at the bird they had boxed. 1958 Henry Reckoning 40: Careful,...this is a real tough brace of birds. 1967 Henry Alias 33: The deputy...had lost the main bird. 1967 Nye Trigger 23: You goin' to let this bird tell you what to do.
2. a peculiar individual
1931 Brand Ambush 81: That one is a bird. 1931 Rhodes Trusty 297: Erie Patterson isn't yellow, but he certainly is a bird. 1936 Nye No 50: Ain't you got no better sense than to flirt with a bird like him?

biscuit-shooter n. [Lighter 1893] a cook
1902 Wister Virginian 5: That corn-fed biscuit-shooter.

blackjack deal n. an act of coercion
1967 Henry Alias 122: Cassidy didn't care for blackjack deals...did not function well under threat.

blanket, the n. [OED2 1859; DA 1891] Indian society and culture
1929 Haycox Chaffee 169: I went back to the blanket....I am no longer an Indian. The blanket is not for me.

blower n. [OED2 1863] a braggart
1884 Whittaker Marshall 27: Ye hain't got nothen' of the kind, ye old blower.

blowhard n. [OED2 1857; Lighter 1823] a braggart; boaster
1955 Henry Who 71: He spotted Ike for a blowhard.

blow high v. to brag
1949 Schaefer Shane 58: Chris was there blowing high about how Shane must be thirsty because he's so scared he hasn't been in town lately for his soda pop.

blow in v. [OED2 1886; DA 1899] to squander
1902 Wister Virginian xi: Half a year's pay sometimes gone in a night--"blown in," as he expressed it, or "blowed in," to be perfectly accurate. 1956 Overholser Desperate 10: He'd have blown it in a poker game or on a fine horse.

blow off v. [Lighter 1906] to release pent up emotion
1906 Mulford Bar 90: They ain't lookin' for no trouble--they just goes around blowin' off.

blow the lights out (of someone) v. phr. to kill someone
1923 Hough North 378: I gwine to blow the lights outen him.

blue pill n. [OED2 1871] a bullet
1858 Clemens Mustang 94: I...reloaded my gun, and administered a blue pill through the right eye.

Bohunk or Bohunky n. [Lighter 1903] a Central European immigrant
1957 Gruber Lonesome 31: All this land you sold the Bohunks, Mike, it was mine once. 1967 Henry Alias 109: Micks, Bohunkies and Cousin Jacks...instantly surrounded the combatants.

boiled adj. [Lighter 1886] drunk
1931 Brand Ambush 81: Now and then he got boiled.

boiled owl n. (used as an opprobrious standard of comparison)
1904 Bower Lonesome 164: He's in there now, drunk as a biled owl--the lazy old devil. 1913 Mulford Coming 331: You keep to th' brush trails...till you lose that biled owl look.

bone pile n. a graveyard
1914 Grey Rustlers 107: I'm old now, ready fer the bone pile.

boneyard n. [Lighter 1866] a graveyard
1950 Raine Six 48: He'll get planted in the boneyard.

bootblack bad man n. criminal from the city
1907 Hough Outlaw 15: The "bootblack bad man" was a...city tough gone West.

booze n. [Lighter 1325] liquor
1928 Haycox Guns 17: Them boys ought to stay off the booze. 1931 Rhodes Trusty 243: Farr is hitting up the booze. 1946 Short Coroner 97: Since when did you sit around watching her pour booze into herself. 1965 Foreman Mustang 31: Lay off the booze, and don't botch the trick! 1965 Short First 115: Who bought the booze?

booze v. [OED2 1300] to drink excessively
1957 Gruber Lonesome 11: Eleven more years of boozing...he must be something to see.

booze hoist n. [Lighter 1914] an alcoholic
1922 Rhodes Copper 60: You had a chance to be a poker fiend or a booze hoist.

boozer n. [Lighter 1606] an alcoholic
1969 Foreman Last 47: Lindsay, baron o' boozers, we killed it!

border shift n. a maneuver in gunfighting in which gun is shifted from one hand to the other.
1955 Henry Who 157: The youngster made the border shift, throwing his gun to his left hand and leveling it on Wyatt's back. 1957 Evarts Man 122: In time he'd taught himself to shoot along with such useless showoff stunts as the border shift and fanning the hammer.

bore v. [Lighter 1865] to shoot, drill (someone)
1928 Grey Stairs 174: If I'd had a gun I'd sure have bored him. 1932 Grey Lost 152: Like as not bore him, too. 1967 Nye Trigger 140: Now clear out of here 'fore I bore you.

boss adj. [OED2 1836; DA 1836; Lighter 1836] first-class, superior
1878 Wheeler DD on Deck 12 A boss gal ar' she. 1885 Harbaugh Denver 18: Nothin shall cheat me out o' ther boss bonanza. 1885 Ingraham BB's Grip 16: Stake yer animile out in this hear valley...an' he'll git boss feedin". 1914 Grey Rustlers 63: Blome an'Snecker parade themselves off boss rustlers same as gunthrowers.

brace v. [DA 1922] to defy
1946 Short Coroner 113: You brace me just once, drifter, and you're dead. 1964 L'Amour Hanging 8: One time he braced a cow-town marshall. 1969 Foreman Last 11: The three knew then they had braced a tiger.

brand-blotcher or brand-blotter n. [DA 1910] a rustler
1907 Hough Outlaw 160: The rustler, brand burner, or brand-blotcher now became one of the new Western characters. 1913 Mulford Coming 76: An' they was plumb sorry for her bein' even a li'l interested in a no-account brand-blotter like him.

brass-collar dog n. [Lighter 1859] most important individual
1959 Nye Long 77: It's you right now she's got her sights on--yesterday I was brass-collar dog! 1967 Nye Trigger 172: Frodsham's the brass-collar dog around them parts.

bravo n. [OED2 1597] a reckless desperado
1946 Nye Breed 182: There was none of that bravo stuff mixed in Lou.

breed n. [OED2 1870; DA 1889; Lighter 1870] a person of mixed race
1949 Schaefer Shane 86: What can you expect from a breed?
1954 LeMay Searchers 196: You look something of a breed.
1955 Henry Who 134: It's not the breed.

brisket n. [OED2 1789; Lighter 1785] the chest and upper abdomen in the region of the heart
1956 Overholser Desperate 97: Smith was shot and killed....He got it in the brisket. 1965 Foreman Mustang 41: It'll get you a bullet in the brisket.

bronc or bronk n. [OED2 1893; DA 1893; Lighter 1893] a bronco
1904 Bower Chip 21: We'll break loose down here with our bronks and our guns. 1920 Rhodes Stepsons 145: He went and broke a bronc backward. 1923 Evarts Tumble 243: I'd have turned back and developed into a first-rate barber or a banker in place of winding up as a bronc fighter. 1923 Hough North 105: When he clim him the damn bronc he begin high, wide and lonesome. 1930 Brand Destry 5: Steady you sun-fishin', eye-rollin', worthless bronc, you! 1936 Nye No 39: These broncs...are a little frisky. 1939 Rhodes Trusty 234: Johnny Pardee topping off a bronc. 1942 Nye Trigger 6: 'Tis misery ye'll have if you don't get that dang bronc out of my bar! 1950 Raine Six 59: So we forked our broncs and came in. 1955 L'Amour Heller 21: You fork your own broncs in this country. 1956 Gruber Big 25: I can rope a steer, break a bronc. 1959 Nye Long 100: For this kind of job a last year's bronc would serve as well as another. 1959 L'Amour First 46: A man forks his own broncs in this country. 1960 L'Amour Sacketts 12: That blond had more than a passing likeness to that bronc. 1964 L'Amour Hanging 28: He was stubborn as a hammer-headed bronc. 1965 Foreman Mustang 21: The army isn't taking broomtail broncs. 1967 Nye Trigger 9: He was so tall he could stop his bronc by dragging his feet on the ground. 1968 Nye Lost 87: I ain't sure he didn't kill them broncs himself. 1969 Foreman Last 92: I'd swear it was forty broncs an' a bear in there! 1976 L'Amour Where 101: I've even outguessed a wild bronc or two, but keep me away from women. 1978 Evans Longarm 21: You ever ride a bronc? 1985 McMurtry Lonesome 217: The only thing to laugh at was Allen O'Brien getting pitched into a pile of prickly pears by a bronc.

bronc adj. wild

1910 Mulford Hopalong 138: That ain't a bad cayuse you got there....Is it very bronc? 1914 Grey Rustlers 59: His faro game's crooked, or I'm locoed bronc. 1946 Nye Breed 186: It is sad...to see a lad of your propensities go bronc.

bronc-head n. an uncontrollable person
1969 Foreman Last 84: Woa, you bronc-heads!

bronco or **broncho** n. [OED2 1869; DA 1850; Lighter 1866] an unbroken horse
1884 Whittaker Marshall 5: Them's my bronchos boys! 1887 Badger Rustler 5: Royal, with measured strides, walked back to where the broncho stood. 1903 Rhodes Loved 4: They'll take outlaws all right, but no broncos. 1904 Bower Chip 39: He's a broncho buster from away back. 1904 Bower Lonesome 185: That's a secret that we don't tell anybody that hasn't been a cowboy for a year, and rode fourteen broncos straight up. 1906 Mulford Bar 133: The horse was only a broncho. 1906 Rhodes Sticky 21: B-r-o-n-c-o--is a Spanish word signifyin' wild. 1914 Grey Rustlers 233: They could run these scrubby broncos off their feet.

bronco-buster n. [OED2 1887; DA 1888; Lighter 1887] a breaker of wild horses
1902 Wister Virginian 28: Cow puncher, bronco-buster, tin-horn, most anything. 1904 Bower Lonesome 88: Bronco-buster? 1913 Mulford Coming 333: Don't know any other ranch that might use a broncho-buster, do you? 1934 Adams Cattle 48: He didn't hanker for any reputation as a broncho-buster.

bronc-peeler or **bronco-peeler** n. [DA 1914; Lighter 1914] a bronco buster
1904 Bower Lonesome 197: But Pink was not known all over Northern Montana as a "bronco-peeler" for nothing. 1922 Evarts Settling 35: They're bronc peelers that can ride 'em before they're broke.

bronc-stomper n. [Lighter 1935] a bronco buster
1967 Nye Trigger 8: That goddamn bronc-stomper's been throwin' his jaw around some more!

bronco-twister n. [Lighter 1916] a bronco buster
1921-26 Santee Men 74: A kid looks up to a bronco twister.

brush-jumper n. one who travels under cover of the brush, a coward
1931 Haycox Whispering 216: Yuh feather footed...brush jumper. 1933 Brand False 75: You're a brush-jumper and you run for shelter every time a stranger drops off the rim.

brush-pop v. [DA 1929; Lighter 1928] to herd stray cattle from the brush.

1955 Henry Who 5: He had about \$300 saved up from...brush-popping the Pecos pear thickets.

bucharío n. an expert rider; buckaroo
1878 Wheeler DD on Deck 1: She ar' ther most reckless buchario in ther Hills.

buck n. [OED2 1800; DA 1840] an Indian man
1903 Adams Log 136: When the lead came within a few hundred yards of the Indians, one buck...rode forward. 1906 Mulford Bar 165: We runs into a bunch of young bucks who...gave us a runnin' fight. 1922 Evarts Settling 110: He's...savage as an Apache buck. 1932 Grey Lost 62: You killed thet Kiowa buck in the very act of scalpin' the girl alive. 1946 Short Coroner 2: The buck wants to buy him a new wife. 1953 L'Amour Hondo 3: Young bucks out to lift some hair. 1954 LeMay Searchers 117: A young buck fetched it in. 1958 Henry Reckoning 25: Indian shoes....He's the old buck who makes them. 1964 L'Amour Hanging 32: There were still young bucks around hunting trouble. 1965 Foreman Mustang 78: Don Ricardo de Risa was known to have outwrestled Indian bucks on a bet. 1985 McMurtry Lonesome 490: Did you kill any more of them bucks? 1987 Dexter Deadwood 55: The buck...was desirous to make a papoose with Calamity Jane.

buck v.

1. [OED2 1861; DA 1851; Lighter 1890] to defy; resist
1885 Harbaugh Denver 4: I can buck agi'n' the lone hand, Centipede Sam, my old pard, is playin' 1922 Evarts Settling 79: It's Slade you'll have to buck. 1923 Hough North 66: You buck the law, friend? 1929 Haycox Chaffee 42: Your reputation ain't any too sweet to buck this affair. 1930 Mulford HC Eagle 107: We can't very well buck a whole roomful. 1936 Nye No 35: You ain't quite tough enough to buck the Big Three. 1941 Haycox Trail 57: You can't buck the leaders. 1949 Schaefer Shane 66: He can't buck Fletcher alone. 1955 Henry Who 48: Bucking the federal pen is a tiger none of these country hoodlums cares to get into. 1959 Gruber Bushwackers 63: You're going to buck the professional games? 1959 L'Amour First 59: It is another thing to buck a man who can and will use a gun. 1960 L'Amour Sacketts 17: This was no setup to buck. 1963 L'Amour Sackett 97: How can a man...buck a stacked deck? 1967 Nye Trigger 155: I'm buckin' a bunch of killers. 1969 Foreman Last 40: Triangle T's too much even for him to buck. 1976 L'Amour Where 112: I think the boss is buckin' a stacked deck. 1985 McMurtry Lonesome 207: But she knew that bucking Gus and the Captain was no easy thing for Jake.

2. to fire (a bullet)

1955 Henry Who 7: Johnny bucked two slugs in under his shoestring tie.

3. to draw (a gun)

1955 Henry Who 23: No-good kids who bucked a gun out just for the pure hell.

buckaroo n. [DA 1889; Lighter 1847] a cowboy
1936 Nye No 76: He regarded the battered young buckaroo before him. 1950 Raine Six 6: We're two young buckaroos calling on a lady. 1954 Overholser Violent 78: You don't think you'll ever make a buckaroo out of this nester kid?

buck the tiger v. [DA 1859] to play at faro
1906 Mulford Bar 91: Me an' him'll buck the tiger for a whirl. 1918 Grey U. P. 248: Boys, no buckin' the tiger for me to-day. 1932 Grey Lost 128: We will buck the tiger a last time. 1941 Haycox Trail 30: You bucked the tiger on the wrong night. 1955 Henry Who 6: Johnny was bucking the tiger with the last nickel in his jeans. 1958 Henry Reckoning 12: He was watching my face like a faro dealer watches the faces of the tiger buckers.

buck up v. [OED2 1890] to cheer up; make an effort
1921 Brand Seventh 199: Boys, buck up! 1926 Brand Blue 71: Buck up, Rusty...don't go down. 1929 Brand Last 62: They didn't tell him to buck up, or that this would turn out all right. 1931 Brand Ambush 195: I talked like that to buck you up. 1941 Haycox Trail 107: Buck up, my friend. 1950 Raine Six 7: We both need a little bucking up.

buffalo v. [OED2 1903; DA 1903; Lighter 1891] to intimidate
1906 Mulford Bar 355: When he had been "buffaloed" into good humor...he laughed. 1932 Grey Lost 179: They shore got me buffaloed. 1937 Haycox Sundown 174: The big fellow buffaloed the both of those boys final. 1941 Haycox Trail 31: You buffaloed the wrong man. 1955 Henry Who 3: The one thing he couldn't buffalo with a gun barrel. 1957 Evarts Man 52: You sure buffaloed the big gee-whang. 1963 L'Amour Sackett 56: Who you tryin' to buffalo? 1968 Nye Lost 167: This bugger buffaloed the...management straight into bankruptcy. 1976 L'Amour Where 171: That place has me buffaloed. 1985 McMurtry Lonesome 8: Call had him buffaloed.

buggy boss n. a man who is not a cowboy
1959 Nye Long 44: The only "buggy bosses" Howlett had got near enough to shoot at had been second-generation carpet baggers.

bug-juice n. [Lighter 1869] cheap whisky
1877 Wheeler DD Prince 4: They'll h'ist more than a barrel of bug-juice over their defeat. 1958 Henry Reckoning 15: I will buy the bug-juice.

bug killer n. bug juice
1931 Haycox Whispering 178: This bug killer of yores is either rotten poison or else yore miserable mug is double.

bull v. [OED2 1884] to move aggressively
1952 Schaefer First 134: When a thing breaks, bull into it.

bulldog v. [OED2 1842; DA 1907] to wrestle to the ground
1931 Brand Ambush 12: This here kid, that ain't to be allowed to ride no rough horses, nor to bulldog yearlings.
1931 Rhodes Trusty 268: When I bulldogged our drunk a while ago...they propositioned me to do dirt for 'em.

bulldoze v. [OED2 1880; DA 1876; Lighter 1876] to intimidate
1885 Ingraham BB's Grip 19: Buffalo Bill rode rapidly on, following the course taken by the stampeded and thoroughly bulldozed red-skins.

bull-headed adj. [OED2 1400] stubborn, heedless
1914 Grey Rustlers 92: You're only a...damned bull-headed--rustler.
1950 Raine Six 21: Duff is a drunken bullheaded fool.
1959 Nye Long 60: Bullheaded...as he undoubtedly was, the man was no fool.
1976 L'Amour Where 97: They're both too bullheaded.

bulljuice n. nonsense (a euphemism for bullshit)
1967 Henry Alias I don't need none of that bulljuice, Cassidy.

bull-necked adj. coarse, stubborn
1950 Raine Six 24: It was amazing that this bullnecked, strong jawed atavist could have fathered...Julia.

bullroom n. a common room in a bunkhouse
1935 Rhodes Proud 90: Also the big "bullroom" and two bedrooms for the cowboys.

bull-whacker n. [DA 1858; Lighter 1858] a driver of an ox team
1879 Morecamp Live 249: Now and then a rough looking fellow would come along with his pants in his boots, a slouch hat on his head, big spurs, and a postol in his belt and if he had "bullwhacker" written on him you couldn't have read it any plainer.
1879 Wheeler DD in Leadville 7: Attention seemed to be centered upon a drunken bullwhacker of gigantic size.
1903 Adams Log 129: When I was boss bull-whacker..we were always entitled toaday to unload and drive back to camp, which gave us good grass for the oxen.
1964 L'Amour Hanging 22: Hogan was a bull-whacker for the Diamond R freight outfit.
1987 Dexter Deadwood 56: Jane...had been

hired to replace a bull whacker that had come down with torpid fever.

bullypuss n. a bully
1968 Nye Lost 116: The goddamned bullypuss was all set to plug you.

bully-puss adj. having the face of a bully
1942 Nye Trigger 19: A bully-puss man with a tough-hombre manner. 1950 Raine Six 31: I'll have to bust this bully-puss upstart.

bump off v. [OED2 1910; Lighter 1907] to kill someone
1929 Brand Last 117: They'll hang you for bumping off an ex murderer. 1950 Raine Six 34: Last week you cussed me out for taking a crack at one brother; now you want me to bump off the other.

bunkie n. [OED2 1858] a bunkmate
1903 Adams Log 24: The Rebel and I were bunkies, and this choice of guards...was much better than splitting bedfellows and have them annoy each other by going out and returning from guard separately. 1921 Brand Seventh 33: Harry Fisher...had been his bunkie at the Circle V Bar ranch. 1926 Brand Blue 68: Look at that, bunkies! 1936 Nye No 78: Trouble an' me's old bunkies.

burg n. [OED2 1849; DA 1845; Lighter 1843] a town
1903 Adams Log 71: A number of the boys went into the burg. 1906 Mulford Bar 56: I'll see how long that bum hangs around this here burg. 1906 Rhodes Sticky 18: Then I rides over to the burg. 1928 Haycox Guns 48: We'll knock every damn shanty in the burg to kindling. 1967 Henry Alias 106: This burg believed it was something. 1968 Nye Lost 6: They had called this burg too tough to die. 1987 Dexter Deadwood 35: Shit, they shoot off side arms in this burg like they used it to keep time.

burn powder v. to fire a gun
1912 Grey Riders 38: They chased me...burnin' powder all the time.

bushwack v. [OED2 1866; DA 1866; Lighter 1864] to ambush and kill
1918 Mulford Bar-20 193: Here he is...givin' you a fine chance to sneak up an' bushwack him. 1922 Evarts Settling 54: It would have been so dead easy to turn the tables and bushwack him. 1937 Haycox Sundown 43: Last sheriff was bushwacked seven months ago. 1938 Haycox Man 240: I had it figured out--to bushwack and then run. 1941 Short Hard 98: He should go back to town and hunt down the bushwacker. 1953 L'Amour Hondo 164: You didn't bushwack that lady's

husband. 1957 Gruber Lonesome 53: Somebody's trying to bushwack me....Sooner or later, they'll get me. 1978 Gilman Death 77: But you were happy to do a little bushwhacking for him, uh?

bushwacker n. [OED2 1862; DA 1861; Lighter 1861]
1. a guerrilla soldier
1923 Hough North 19: Herds stole by bushwackers and desperadoes. A bunch of Missouri bushwackers who're afraid to go home, deserters, riffraff.
2. a person who murders from ambush
1936 Nye No 129: Bushwackers will operate at their own risk while I'm sheriffin' this country. 1956 Overholser Desperate 108: You're no gunfighter. You're a Goddamned bushwacker. 1959 Gruber Bushwackers 39: Guerillas, hell, bushwackers, that's all they were. 1967 Nye Trigger 45: That bush-whacker might not of left. 1978 Evans Longarm 52: I was staked out here for a bushwhacker who took a shot at me in Bitter Creek last night. 1982 Tippet Texas 58: He might take your woman but he wasn't a bushwhacker.

bust v. [Lighter 1844] to travel rapidly
1929 Haycox Chaffee 53: You better bust thataway.

bust the dust v. to travel rapidly
1928 Haycox Guns 43: My horse can travel as fast as any of theirs...but you bust the dust.

busted adj. [1837; Lighter 1836] ruined, esp. financially
1885 Harbaugh Denver 4: Will you loan a busted individual another drink. 1923 Hough North 5: I'm clean busted and for fair! 1929 Haycox Chaffee 203: I'm...busted flat. 1957 Evarts Man 36: He'd be flat busted today. 1965 Foreman Mustang 11: He wasn't getting onto a first-name or nickname stage of fellowship with a busted cowpuncher. 1930 Mulford HC Eagle 194: He's near busted, right now. 1931 Rhodes Trusty 275: Our bank is busted flat. 1959 Gruber Bushwackers 72: Busted one day, flush the next.

buzzard n. [Lighter 1669] a contemptible fellow
1878 Wheeler DD on Deck 8: You old buzzard! 1885 Harbaugh Denver 16: I'll get out o' this buzzard's nest right away. 1923 Evarts Tumble 194: Was that buzzard wearing chaps? 1928 Grey Stairs 174: The sight of the girl was too much for him, the old buzzard. 1929 Haycox Chaffee 75: Now you buzzards roll off them bunks and move back. 1931 Haycox Whispering 155: Take this buzzard...and herd him back to my ranch. 1936 Nye No 76: It wouldn't be right to let them buzzards stop his clock. 1939 Rhodes Trusty 240: If this...man gives any excuse for these buzzards to sic the law on him, he's in a bad fix. 1950 Raine Six 85: Where do you reckon that buzzard is tonight anyhow? 1965 Foreman

Mustang 154: You puffed-up son of a buzzard. 1967 Henry Alias 31: It's that raw-bone buzzard from Panguitch.

buzzard bait n. [Lighter 1851] a corpse left out in the open
1957 Evarts Man 121: Squat right here. Buzzard bait?...Can't do much else.

calaboose n. [OED2 1837; Lighter 1792] a jail
1929 Haycox Chaffee 53: Now don't you go get in the calaboose.
1950 Raine Six 98: Never was so glad in my life to get out of a calaboose. 1959 Gruber Bushwackers 68: I don't want you sleeping in Pawnee City--unless its down at the calaboose.

call n.
1. personal interest; concern; stake
1955 Henry Who 8: What's your call in it, anyhow?
2. [OED2 1840] a final word
1891 Ingraham Buck 4: You have the call pard, so I throw up my hand.

call a bet v. phr. to call a bluff or accept a challenge
1929 Haycox Chaffee 88: I left a mark on that bunch and they're callin' my bet.

call in one's checks v. phr to kill someone
1891 Ingraham Buck 3: To Fort Davis you go with me, unless Mustang Dan there calls in my checks.

call one's bluff v. phr. [OED2 1876] to confront someone
1904 Bower Chip 128: I'll just call her bluff. 1955 Henry Who 72: He wanted to ride...back into town to call Wyatt's bluff. 1959 L'Amour First 117: It would be fine if nobody called my bluff.

call one's hand v. phr. [DA 1857; Lighter 1857] to challenge someone
1914 Grey Rustlers 49: I call your hand. 1931 Haycox Whispering 30: I'm not the kind to bellyache and then lay down when my hand's called.

call one's play v. phr. to challenge someone
1930 Mulford HC Eagle 217: Somebody has got to call his play.

card n. a situation
1913 Mulford Coming 68: If yo're bettin' on that card you wants to have a copper handy.

card, high n. an advantage

1903 Adams Log 73: It's a high card in your hand to be born rich.

card, winning n. an advantage
1978 Evans Longarm 175: One day we'll meet where you ain't holding all the winning cards.

cards, read the v. phr. to evaluate the situation
1929 Haycox Chaffee 86: Blamed if I read the cards that way....They ain't that kind of folks.

card shark n. [Lighter 1842] a dishonest card player; cardsharp
1885 Harbaugh Denver 9: Lay them three card sharks out.
1956 Gruber Big 53: Pillsbury's card shark killed him. 1959 Gruber Bushwackers 67: The man's a card shark.

cardsharp n. [1884; DA 1884; Lighter 1884] a professional gambler
1879 Wheeler DD in Leadville 5: Gradner was a card-sharp, and would be likely to fleece the Spaniard. 1918 Grey U. P. 238: Red's a card-sharp. 1955 Henry Who 123: He was near as famous for a working cardsharp as for a hardcase lawman. 1957 Evarts Man 25: He'd grown abusive, complaining noisily about a tin-horn card-sharp. 1969 Foreman Last 9: He was a tinhorn cardsharp.

cards, hold v. to have advantages
1976 L'Amour Where 78: I'm holding better cards than any of them know.

cards, in the adv. ph. fated
1949 Schaefer Shane 113: I reckon it was in the cards.

card up one's sleeve n. phr. [OED2 1898] a hidden scheme
1903 Adams Log 194: He had a card or two on the side up his sleeve, by which he expected to graft onto some coin of the realm.

cartwheel n. [OED2 1867; Lighter 1855] a silver dollar
1942 Nye Trigger 40: Here's a cartwheel to bind the bargain.
1946 Nye Breed 8: Tune dug a cartwheel out of his pocket.

case ace n. [OED2 1856] a decisive advantage; an ace in the hole
1957 Evarts Man 47: I caught the case ace. 1958 Henry Reckoning 14: Let's get down to the case ace. 1967 Henry Alias 156: Cassidy held the Colt. It was the case ace.

case, have a -- on v. phr. to love
1964 L'Amour Hanging 149: I never had no case on him..., only he talked nice to me.

cash v. to die
1932 Grey Lost 285: Am I going to cash?

cash in v. [Lighter 1891] to die
1904 Bower Lonesome 164: I guess Patsy'll have to cash in; that's all. 1914 Grey Rustlers 209: He's cashed in....Sampson shot him. 1906 Mulford Bar 362: How did Trendly cash in? 1987 Dexter Deadwood 52: How come a good man like yourself would want to cash in ahead of schedule?

catamount n. a wild individual
1877 Wheeler DD Prince 3: I'm a snorter I am...a wild screechin' cattymount. 1891 Ingraham Buck 9: She war wiss nor a catamount ter handle. 1929 Haycox Chaffee 51: Let the catamount loose. He'd ought to be put under a perpetual bond. 1931 Haycox Whispering 154: Just a catamount on wheels ain't you.

catawampus n. [OED2 1840; DA 1843] a fierce individual
1920 Rhodes Stepsons 34: Two sticks and eleven catawampuses! 1968 Nye Lost 121: McCready...led...straight up to the he-catawampus himself.

cayuse n. a [OED2 1841; DA 1867; Lighter 1889] horse
1878 Wheeler DD on Deck 2 An application of spurs sent the spiteful cayuse clattering down the canyon. 1902 Wister Virginian 175: So I loped my cayuse full tilt. 1904 Bower Chip 21: We'll catch up the orneriest cayuses in our strings. 1904 Bower Lonesome 114: I don't need no cayuse t' show me the trail to a girl's house. 1906 Mulford Bar 232: Yu tried to make out that me an' Red rustled yore cayuses. 1913 Mulford Coming 64: Come on, get th' cayuses. 1921 Brand Seventh 137: Of all the ornery, thick-headed cayuses I ever see, you're the most out-beatin'est! 1930 Mulford HC Eagle 313: Our cayuses are at that little corral, acrost th' street. 1936 Nye No 23: I'd soak the country somethin' for the wear an tear on my own cayuse. 1960 L'Amour Sacketts 91: You should get a-straddle of that cayuse of yours.

Cherrycow n. a Chirachaua Indian
1968 Nye Lost 45: Curly Bill's Cherrycow hangout, a place that roared straight around the clock.

chew the rag v. [OED2 1885; Lighter 1875] to talk
1906 Mulford Bar 178: Over chewin' th' rag with Waffles about his hat. 1920 Rhodes Stepsons 153: You two seem more interested in chewing the rag.

Cheyenne telegraph pole n. a Cheyenne arrow
1902 Wister Virginian 167: He met a Cheyenne telegraph pole in seventy-four, and was buried.

chick n. [Lighter 1864] a fellow
1885 Harbaugh Denver 19: He killed Quartzy an' Mountain Rock, but not this mountain chick.

child n. [OED2 1850; DA 1839; Lighter 1839] a fellow
1887 Willett Sandy 13: Ef it will pay, count this child in.

chili-belly n. [Lighter 1967] a Mexican
1985 McMurtry Lonesome 125: I never liked it down here with these chili-bellies.

chin n. [Lighter 1894] a talk
1922 Rhodes Copper 111: I'd like to have a little chin with you tomorrow.

chin v. [OED2 1884; DA 1894 Lighter 1872] to talk
1879 Wheeler DD in Leadville 6: What are you chinning about?
1941 Haycox Trail 106: There was no call for you to make me cool my heels while you chinned with Mitchell.

Chinaman's chance n. [OED2 1859] least possible chance--used in negative contexts
1929 Haycox Chaffee 43: He ain't got a Chinaman's chance to get away with it. 1931 Haycox Whispering 243: Not a Chinaman's chance of anybody seein' down there to-night. 1963 L'Amour Sackett 53: I don't think you've got a Chinaman's chance...not with all that outfit against you.

Chink n. [OED2 1901; Lighter 1878] a Chinese person
1904 Bower Lonesome 259: Look at the way he was in town--hot to slaughter that Chinaman that wasn't doing a thing to him, and saying how he hated Chinks. 1906 Mulford Bar 180: Yu white-washed Chink, yu. 1928 Grey Stairs 128: The railroad buildin' has fetched the darndest lot of greasers, niggers, red-skins, chinks, gamblers and robbers an' bad wimmin you ever seen.

chip in v. [OED2 1870] to take part in the action
1887 Badger Rustler 4: Rush him too, double-durn the critter. Any more want to chip in? 1891 Ingraham Buck 2: See here pards, you hain't ther men ter see a stranger chip in and use me like this.

chips n. pl. victory
1928 Haycox Guns 93: We're licked....Chips is yours.

chips, call in one's v. phr. [OED2 1879; Lighter 1881] to kill someone
1885 Ingraham BB's Grip 13: Bill are ther kind o' pilgrim that cashes a durned sight o' checks, but don't git his own chips calt in somehow.

chips, cash in one's v. phr.

1. [Lighter 1879] to die

1938 Haycox Man 138: Ain't a thing you can do to help him....He'll cash in his chips. 1960 L'Amour Sacketts 140: When he realized how close I'd come to cashing in my chips he grew a little pale.

2. to quit

1960 L'Amour Sacketts 51: I think we should cash in our chips...and hit the trail for Santa Fe.

chips, cash (someone's) v. to kill

1885 Ingraham BB's Grip 14: Old Soft Head was cashing red-skin chips pretty lively.

chips, not buy any v. to keep out of a situation

1931 Haycox Whispering 48: The big boys back out of it and let you inherit the grief....I'm not buyin' any chips.

chips, pass in one's v. phr. [OED2 1879; Lighter 1879] to cash in one's chips, to die

1906 Mulford Bar 191: That feller you salted...passed in his chips last night.

chips, take v. to take part in the action

1942 Nye Trigger 32: I hadn't got that far when Haswell took chips.

chips down adv. ph. [OED2 1943; Lighter 1942] in a critical situation

1952 Schaefer First 218: When the chips were down you showed where you stood.

chuck n. [OED2 1850; DA 1865; Lighter 1850] food, grub

1903 Adams Log 86: Lining our flues with Lovell's good chuck. 1904 Bower Lonesome 135: I got troubles enough, cooking chuck for this here layout. 1906 Rhodes Sticky 17: They stopped his pay and his chuck. 1913 Mulford Coming 51: We'll get a fire goin'an' rustle chuck for all han's. 1920 Rhodes Stepsons 15: The Bar Cross also furnished...one chuck wagon and the chuck--chuck being grub. 1923 Hough North 62: You've et up all the chuck. 1930 Mulford HC Eagle 214: Tell him to rustle up chuck. 1931 Brand Ambush 128: We don't need that chuck, and it's all yours. 1931 Haycox Whispering 71: You see that some sort of chuck is put on the table right off. 1932 Grey Lost 179: You oughta learn somethin' about camp chuck. 1933 Brand False 75: All I need is enough food to eat, and I like my chuck plain. 1976 L'Amour Where 108: Rolly can scare up some chuck.

chuckline n. [OED2 1903; DA 1903; Lighter 1903] the circuit ridden by itinerant cowboys looking for work

1903 Adams Log He was riding the chuckline. 1921-26 Santee Men 103: I rode the chuck line clear across the state before I got another job. 1934 Adams Cattle 27: There was always a surplus of men on the range in winter. Sometimes there might be ten men at a camp, and only two on the payroll. These extra men were called "chuck-line riders." 1946 Short Coroner 39: No drifter ever bought a horse like he turned into the corral, not on chuckline handouts.

chump n. [OED2 1883; Lighter 1876] a fool, sucker
1904 Bower Chip 130: Come on; don't be a chump. 1904 Bower Lonesome 81: I was a chump, I reckon, to ever imagine yuh could. 1906 Mulford Bar 345: He never saw me at all, th' chump. 1936 Nye No 106: Don't be a bigger chump than nature made you. 1950 Raine Six 58: He had been a chump to leave here in the first place. 1968 Nye Lost 16: Every dang chump and his uncle has hunted clean on back to Cabeza de Vaca.

clodhopper n. [OED2 1690] a farmer
1879 Morecamp Live 60: And you will never be anything but a...cowboy and clod-hopper all your life. 1957 Gruber Lonesome 89: Weber's clodhoppers have been taking potshots at them.

coaster n. [OED2 1890] a steer from the Gulf Coast
1923 Hough North 8: Our grass sets'em out...heavier than them damned coasters.

cold-deck n. [OED2 1857; DA 1857; Lighter 1857] a dishonest scheme
1885 Harbaugh Denver 16: No cold deck on Don Frisco! 1936 Nye No 107: Dixon's a real cold-deck artist. 1976 L'Amour Where 85: It was a cold deck....They came to murder me.

cold-deck v. [Lighter 1884] to cheat
1941 Short Hard 149: You're considerably slicker than when you tried to cold-deck me in Dodge.

cold pack n. a cold deck
1933 Brand False 75: He had just cut in a cold pack of his own in an interesting little game.

Colt, Judge or King or Sam n. [DA 1941] a pistol
1903 Adams Log 208: I referred the matter to Judge Colt. 1913 Mulford Coming 38: Size don't make no dif'rence no more--King Colt makes 'em look all alike. 1978 Evans Longarm 223: He likely became a gun-slick in the first place when he noticed that while God created man, Sam Colt and other gunsmiths made them equal.

cooked duck n. a doomed person
1965 Foreman Mustang 63: There went a cooked duck.

cooked gander n. a doomed person
1929 Haycox Chaffee 187: Yo're a cooked gander.

cool deck n. a cold deck
1885 Harbaugh Denver 6: I never set up a cool deck on a woman.

cooler n. [OED2 1884; Lighter 1872] a jail
1929 Haycox Chaffee 89: I'll throw you in the cooler, too.
1954 Overholser Violent 184: I'll throw you into the cooler.
1956 Overholser Desperate 32: Ed Veach would throw him into the cooler every time.

coon n. [Lighter 1832] a fellow
1879 Wheeler DD in Leadville 10: Ketch that angelic 'coon, my gay, festiverous Dickey.

coot n. [OED2 1776; DA 1860; Lighter 1794] worthless person
1877 Wheeler DD Prince 3: Feller coots and liquidarians.
1887 Lewis Demon 2: The man...was known as a "drunken coot."
1929 Brand Last 124: Is the old coot to be favored in everything that he wants. 1950 Raine Six 81: Pay no attention to the old coot. 1952 Schaefer First 115: So there I was sitting beside an old coot who'd have fallen off the box if he had to dire his shot gun. 1954 Gruber Bitter 45: I want to see the old coot. 1954 LeMay Searchers 67: The old coot is just as crazy as a bedbug. 1955 Henry Who 4: A toothless old coot waiting in the son for his noon baby food. 1957 Gruber Lonesome 63: Damn us old coots, all we can talk about is the past. 1960 L'Amour Sacketts 10: I figured something was stirring in that coot's skull. 1968 Nye Lost 10: Taking time out to wonder...where the old coot had got to.

copper n. [OED 1892] a marker used to copper a bet
1913 Mulford Coming 68: If yo're bettin' on that card you wants to have a copper handy.

copper v. [OED2 1856; DA 1856; Lighter 1856] to bet that one's card will lose, figuratively, to prepare to lose
1926 Rhodes Paso 18 They've coppered every bet. 1959 Gruber Bushwackers 67: Copper your bets, gentlemen.

copper-skin n. [OED2 1840; Lighter 1840] an Indian
1887 Willett Sandy 3: If your old dad had been treated as mine was you wouldn't show much mercy to any copper-skin.

corn juice n. [OED2 1848; Lighter 1845] whisky
1906 Mulford Bar 364: Tex swaggered over to the bar: "Corn juice," he laconically exclaimed.

cotton to v. [OED2 1805] to take to
 1858 Clemens Mustang 64: As to the gals, they will be sure to cotton to you. 1918 Grey U. P. 222: Some of them didn't cotton to me. 1926 Brand Blue 20: He didn't cotton to the ways that money is made. 1930 Brand Destry 114: He...cottons to him, and that feller's his friend for life. 1958 Henry Reckoning 17: I don't cotton to it. 1960 L'Amour Sacketts 22: Folks won't cotton to you much. 1964 L'Amour Hanging 4: I didn't cotton to this stranger making me out a fool. 1969 Foreman Last 9: Mike McLean, of North Irish stock way back before the Revolution, didn't cotton to them much.

counter jumper n. [OED2 1829; Lighter 1829] a store clerk
 1877 Wheeler DD Prince 4: He had set down Redburn as a faint-hearted, dubious-couraged counter-jumper from the East. 1929 Haycox Chaffee 92: Even the counter jumpers are crawlin' into their shells.

Cousin Jack n. [OED2 1859; Lighter 1899] a Cornish miner
 1967 Nye Trigger 18: The world's largest open-pit copper mine...still going strong under the guidance of red-shirted Cousin Jacks.

cow-clerk v. to herd cows
 1906 Rhodes Sticky 16: I'm getting plenty weary of the cow-clerking.

cowpoke n. [OED2 1881; DA 1928; Lighter 1881] a cowboy
 1937 Short Marauder 99: All those thirty-dollar-a-month cowpokes. 1942 Nye Trigger 7: The place was packed with miners, cowpokes and stage-boot robbers. 1985 McMurtry Lonesome 338: Then you could whore with the first cowpoke that came along.

cowpuncher n. [OED2 1878; DA 1878; Lighter 1874] a cowboy
 1902 Wister Virginian 28: Cow-puncher, bronco-buster...most anything. 1904 Bower Chip 18: They think cow-punchers were horns. 1904 Bower Lonesome 199: When I come to this outfit t' work, I naturally s'posed yuh was cow-punchers. 1906 Mulford Bar 52: The hard-working "cow punchers" lived according to the law of the land. 1913 Mulford Coming 77: Us cow-punchers shorelike to gamble. 1914 Grey Rustlers 62: You've taken me for a no-good cowpuncher without any brains. 1918 Grey U. P. 49: He thought your pard Larry was a bad cow-puncher from the Pan Handle of Texas. 1926 Brand Blue 55: Those cowpunchers...were having their high-jinx. 1929 Brand Last 49: One thing...he gained out of his charity to the broken down sourdoughs and cowpunchers. 1930 Brand Destry 216: The cowpuncher's costume is the only perfect one for rough riding across...the Western range. 1930 Mulford

HC Eagle 79: Neither...wore the full regalia of a cowpuncher. 1933 Brand False 75: 51: I can only give you the wages of an ordinary cowpuncher. 1950 Raine Six 99: Hancock's skeptical gaze rested on the cowpuncher. 1959 Nye Long 82: A feller dressed like a cowpuncher packed them into the alley. 1964 L'Amour Hanging 6: You leave him alone, cowpuncher. 1965 Foreman Mustang 11: He wasn't getting onto a first-name or nickname stage of fellowship with a busted cowpuncher. 1985 McMurtry Lonesome 207: I ain't no dern cowpuncher.

cow-town n. [OED2 1885; DA 1885] a cattle-shipping town 1913 Mulford Coming 296: He regarded the little cow-town cynically but smilingly. 1964 L'Amour Hanging 8: One time he braced a cow-town marshall.

cow walloper n. a cowpuncher 1968 Nye Lost 160: Clee and his cow wallopers setting back...nursing up their hate.

coyote n. [OED2 1872; DA 1872; Lighter 1872] a worthless or cowardly individual 1891 Ingraham Buck 3: No plucky stranger like that one shall be set upon by a pack of cowboy coyotes who would not dare to meet him single-handed. 1903 Adams Log 196: His audience, with the exception of one skulking coyote, was deeply interested. 1906 Mulford Bar 79: Th' measly coyote! 1913 Mulford Coming 33: That coyote's brother will know I went North. 1921 Brand Seventh 25: The sneaky coyote,...he's lurin' me on. 1929 Haycox Chaffee 87: I've heard ki-otes howl before...so I won't pay no heed to yore remarks. 1930 Mulford HC Eagle 99: 313: Let them filthy coyotes hoof it out, like they made th' Kid. 1936 Nye No 181: I'd advise you, yuh weak-kneed coyote...tuh git outa range. 1941 Short Hard 154: Why should we be doin' favors for a coyote like you? 1955 Henry Who 76: Sounds like the fust one of our coyotes turning up. 1963 L'Amour Sackett 88: Some of you boys are complete coyote. 1967 Nye Trigger 201: Stay safe in town like the pack of slinkin' coyotes that you are.

coyote v. [Lighter 1857] to sneak around 1969 Foreman Last 15: A raggedy dodger and a busted tinhorn, coyoting for easy pickings.

crawfish v. [OED2 1848; Lighter 1842] to back down 1904 Bower Lonesome 171: Yuh won't crawfish on me, if I tell yuh? 1918 Grey U. P. 110: You ain't reckonin' I wanted to crawfish. 1931 Haycox Whispering 137: I'm crawfishing on my public sentiments. 1938 Haycox Man 136: You're crawfishing. 1941 Short Hard 35: Ready to beg...beginnin' to crawfish, eh? 1955 Henry Who 11: He crawfished around and backed all

the way out the swinging doors. 1978 Evans Longarm 60: The hands out front would likely crawfish back long enough for the two of them to ride out.

crimp v. [OED2 1855; Lighter 1896] to kill
1955 Henry Who 14: Crimping that crooked faro dealer puts me somewhat west of that line fence.

croak v. [OED2 1812; Lighter 1812]
1. to die
1904 Bower Chip 131: I'd have to be ready t' croak before I'd miss this chance uh dealing old Dunk misery.
2. to kill
1918 Grey U. P. 132: An' Old Miles is croaked. 1931 Brand Ambush 46: He didn't croak me because...he thought that he'd need a guide. 1932 Grey Lost 99: I wish I'd croaked him sure that day on the trail. 1950 Raine Six 150: Yet they would croak me just the same. 1967 Henry Alias 54: Get the pistol away from him....Croak him with it.

crook n. [OED2 1879; DA 1879; Lighter 1879] a dishonest person
1926 Brand Blue 19: For a crook you talk like an honest man. 1930 Brand Destry 158: If the crooks hate him, why don't they come and murder him? 1936 Nye No 58: The Big Three had tuh pick a crook for their pardner. 1941 Haycox Trail 115: I'd have slugged that damn crook if you hadn't busted him down. 1957 Evarts Man 68: I don't keep crooks on my payroll. 1967 Nye Trigger 200: That Kendall crook's the slickest blackleg in the state.

cross off the calendar v. phr. to kill
1928 Haycox Guns 74: We figured you was crossed off the calendar.

crow v. [OED2 1522] to speak boastfully
1923 Hough North 171: I'll bet they're crowing now over shooting Bentley. 1950 Raine Six 24: They...don't do any crowing but walk the straight line I've drawn.

crowbait n. [Lighter 1851] an emaciated or worthless horse
1942 Nye Trigger 40: The nag ain't much better 'n a crowbait. 1955 Henry Who 12: Waiting outside by his crowbait horse. 1958 Henry Reckoning 15: He'll stay out there all night petting and fussing with those miserable crowbaits.

crowd v. [OED2 1842; Lighter 1836] to beset, put pressure on
1885 Ingraham BB's Grip 20: I'll make a ghost of you if you crowd me. 1920 Rhodes Stepsons 28: You're crowdin' me purty

hard. 1949 Schaefer Shane 110: Do I have to crowd you into pushing leather. 1954 Gruber Bitter 98: Don't crowd me, Smith. 1985 McMurtry Lonesome 20: He came to the river because he liked to be alone for an hour, and not always be crowded.

curly wolf n. [Lighter 1918] a wild fellow
1941 Short Hard 24: I'm goin' up and get a gun and kill that curly wolf. 1954 Gruber Bitter 94: He was a real curly wolf, and it think that a coward like Wes Tancred should kill a man like that. 1959 Gruber Bushwackers 68: Fletch is a real curly wolf...used to ride with Charley Quantrell and Bloody Bill Anderson.

cuss n. [OED2 1775; DA 1775; Lighter 1775] a bothersome person, a fellow
1877 Wheeler DD Prince 3: I am three hundred ahead of this cuss. 1879 Wheeler DD in Leadville 3: It's no use o' runnin' no gauntlet ag'in that cuss. 1884 Whittaker Marshall 23: If we give up this cuss, we shall git them all off, fur I never knew an Injun to break his word, no matter haow bad they may be in other things. 1902 Wister Virginian 419: This experience has woke up that kid in me, and blamed if I can coax the little cuss to go to sleep again. 1904 Bower Chip 191: Ready fer the first darn cuss makes a crooked move. 1906 Mulford Bar 91: We better...find that ornery little cuss. 1924 Grey Wild 140: The boss of the bunch is a gray old cuss thet's been branded. 1928 Grey Stairs 33: Do you know this old gray long-eared cuss? 1930 Mulford HC Eagle 173: Let th' pore old locoed cuss alone. 1931 Rhodes Trusty 239: Persistent cuss! 1932 Grey Lost 250: You're a skeery cuss. 1937 Haycox Sundown 91: You're a funny cuss. 1953 L'Amour Hondo 74: Wintered with Pete oncet....Ornery cuss. 1965 Short First 31: It makes you a stubborn cuss with guts. 1968 Nye Lost 9: That skinny cuss in range clothes was headed now...for the Oriental's batwings. 1969 Foreman Last 97: He's an amusin' old cuss. 1978 Evans Longarm 34: I'll mosey around town and see if anybody spied the cuss.

customer n. [OED2 1589] a fellow
1918 Grey U. P. 82: An' he's shore a bad customer when he's riled. 1942 Nye Trigger 48: Graham was a hard, tough customer. 1985 McMurtry Lonesome 116: He wanted to be thought a cool customer.

cut a lick for v. to travel to
1959 Nye Long 89: Cut a lick for Star Cross.

cut dirt v. [DA 1829] to travel rapidly
1885 Harbaugh Denver 7: The coward shot an' cut dirt. 1950 Raine Six 59: He sure cut dirt for anywhere but here.

cut down on v. to level a gun at
1904 Bower Lonesome 238: I seen him cut down on the hotel China-cook just for tryin' t' sneak out. 1941 Short Hard 134: Why'nt you cut down on him? I come off without a gun!

cut into v. to take part in
1930 Mulford HC Eagle 175: You don't never want to cut into any play that I make.

cut loose one's dog v. to allow oneself to proceed without restraint
1903 Adams Log 81: Anytime that...you want to shoot me, just cut loose your dog. 1976 L'Amour Where 95: If you want trouble, just cut loose your dogs.

cutter n. [Lighter 1908] a pistol
1950 Raine Six 65: Ducret was itchin' to turn loose his cutter on us.

daisy n. [OED2 1757; Lighter 1836] a remarkable person; a prime example
1885 Harbaugh Denver 14: She'll be hyar d'rectly...thar's ther daisy now. 1885 Ingraham BB's Grip 15: You are a daisy, Ella, said Bill with a laugh at her spirited recital of her adventures. 1903 Adams Log 133: Isn't he a muzzle-loading daisy?

dead adv. & adj. [Lighter 1819] absolutely, absolute
1858 Clemens Mustang 248: I had the thing dead and must have some money. 1903 Rhodes Loved 8: And s'pose you had just dead oodles of cattle. 1904 Bower Chip 16: He'd have the old girl dead in love before he got her over the first ridge. 1904 Bower Lonesome 33: It's dead easy. 1922 Evarts Settling 54: It would have been so dead easy to turn the tables and bushwack him. 1928 Grey Stairs 206: It's daid sartin he will. 1960 L'Amour Sacketts 106: I'd timed things dead right.

deadbeat n. [OED2 1863; DA 1863; Lighter 1862] a sponger
1877 Wheeler DD Prince 7: Men from the states--lawyers, doctors, speculators, adventurers, pilgrims and dead-beats. 1957 Evarts Man 63: More than ever it baffled him, how a deadbeat like Larry Biship could have won so independent and strong-willed a woman. 1967 Henry Alias 84: A bunch of deadbeat two-bit crooks.

dead duck n. [OED2 1829; DA 1829; Lighter 1829] a doomed person
1963 L'Amour Sackett 47: Whoever shot me must have figured I was a dead duck. 1965 Foreman Mustang 41: Quit if you want to--and tomorrow you'll be a dead duck!

dead goose n. a dead duck
1957 Gruber Lonesome 130: He's a dead goose.

deadwood n. [Lighter 1851] positive evidence
1935 Rhodes Proud 172: Another man did the killing. I've practically got the deadwood on him.

deal a trick v. phr. to take an action
1928 Grey Stairs 104: If you deal the same trick again, I'll do a better job on you.

deal from the bottom v. phr. [Lighter 1918] to cheat
1922 Rhodes Copper 66: Stanley's been gettin' 'em dealt from the botton for three years. 1931 Rhodes Trusty 241: Four that'll quit 'em when they begin dealin' from the bottom.

deal off the top of the deck v. phr. to behave honestly
1928 Haycox Guns 104: You're dealing all cards off the top of the deck, understand?

dehorn v. [Lighter 1953] to render harmless
1935 Rhodes Proud 106: Here goes Maginnis, with his gun dehorned.

desert rat n. [Lighter 1907] a desert prospector
1928 Grey Stairs 170: That wanderin' desert rat? 1967 Nye Trigger 143: Tinhorns of every description, barkers, claim-jumpers, boomers, desert rats. 1968 Nye Lost 80: His guise of an ignorant desert rat was a kind of protective coloring.

dig v. [DA 1855; Lighter 1842] to depart, flee
1885 Ingraham BB's Grip 8: Mad Herckiles had dug out fer all he was wuth, an that Buff'ler Bill were hot on his tracks. 1914 Grey Rustlers 101: Take your dealer and dig--unless you want to see me clean out your place. 1946 Nye Breed 182: He might be sloping right now, digging for the tules, getting out of the country. 1968 Nye Lost 177: McCready...could dig for the tules--head for new pastures.

diggings n. pl. [OED2 1838; DA 1834; Lighter 1834] a locale or dwelling place
1858 Clemens Mustang 95: The Camanches were like enough to be prowling around 'them diggins.' 1878 Wheeler DD on Deck 11 Reckon you're a fresh 'un in these diggin's. 1914 Grey Rustlers 108: To squeal who's who round these rustler diggin's. 1955 Henry Who 192: I know that Lucky Cuss' diggins.

dirt n. [DA 18893; Lighter 1835] mischief
1891 Ingraham Buck 3: None of that dirt shall be played on that man. 1904 Bower Chip 164: I didn't think Weary'd do me

dirt like that. 1920 Rhodes Stepsons 28: When'd I ever do you any dirt. 1922 Rhodes Copper 87: I'm not afraid of them doin' me dirt. 1923 Hough North 114: That bunch of shorthorns that's come into Austin done him dirt. 1924 Grey Wild 39: I've not done you any dirt. 1932 Grey Lost 112: That fellar won't do you dirt. 1942 Nye Trigger 27: When a guy does me dirt, I pay him in kind.

dive n. [OED2 1871; DA 1871] an unsavory establishment
1914 Grey Rustlers 59: Sampson owned the Hope So dive. 1930 Mulford HC Eagle 243: The officially ungodly part of town...surrounded by saloons, dives, and gambling hells.

dodge, on the adj. phr. [OED2 1904] fleeing from the law
1921-26 Santee Men 218: I figured he was on the dodge. 1938 Haycox Man 120: It sure puts you on the dodge. 1946 Short Coroner 41: You on the dodge? 1955 L'Amour Heller 120: A life that would last until you put a bullet into somebody and had to go on the dodge again. 1957 Evarts Man 34: You on the dodge? 1959 L'Amour First 140: Who was I to think a girl like that would go on the dodge with me. 1928 Haycox Guns 77: We're on the dodge. 1946 Nye Breed 115: Weakness was a luxury no man on the dodge could afford. 1963 L'Amour Sackett 87: Up to now I've been on the dodge. 1967 Henry Alias 31: I was just your age...when I went on the dodge first time. 1969 Foreman Last 11: A hardcase on the long dodge; the kind that occasionally dropped in Penasco for a brief rest....

dodger n. [OED2 1884; DA 1879; Lighter 1879] a handbill describing a wanted fugitive
1941 Short Hard 6: No reward dodger had ever carried a full-length picture. 1946 Short Coroner 29: Let's see those dodgers. 1956 Gruber Big 28: The Union Army put out some dodgers on you didn't they? 1965 Foreman Mustang 66: The name appeared on dodger bills, along with various aliases.

dog it v. [Lighter 1915] to depart stealthily
1946 Short Coroner 58: Watch him dog it out of the country.

dogie n. [OED2 1888; DA 1888] a motherless calf
1903 Adams Log 86: Our dogies had vamoosed the ranch and were running in...different directions. 1903 Rhodes Loved 8: Never gathered anything but dead, and dogies and weak sisters. 1923 Hough North 105: Roll erlong, little dogies! 1926 Brand Blue 10: With doggies and drills. 1931 Rhodes Trusty 217: Them dogies of yours are tol'able thin.

drag n. [OED2 1861; DA 1904] a cow at the end of a trail herd
1921-16 Santee Men 97: I...was busier than a bird-dog drivin' drags. 1922 Rhodes Copper 29: I'll...drag it. So

long! 1923 Evarts Tumble 117: One man skirted either flank and two others rode the "drags" in the rear of the herd. 1932 Grey Lost 155: Weav will shore miss me when it comes to drivin' the drags. 1935 James Home: Old John B. was right along with the "drags" (slow ones). 1955 Henry Who 5: The kid was...with a piece of one of the last big trail herds...riding drag. 1964 L'Amour Hanging 7: Little time remained if we were going to catch that drag. 1985 McMurtry Lonesome 241: Them boys on the drags won't even be able to get down from their horses.

drag v.

1. to draw (a pistol)

1959 Nye Long 77: Drag your gun. 1964 L'Amour Hanging 8: He just went ahead and dragged iron.

2. [Lighter 1900] to leave, depart--also constr. with it

1938 Haycox Man 126: So drag back from the Flats. 1941 Short Hard 8: Drag it....I'll walk that door down and cut off your ears. 1956 Overholser Desperate 50: Just turn around and keep going....Drag it, kid.

draw cards v. to take action

1923 Hough North 32: Do you expect to have people show you what's in their hands before you draw cards?

drift v. [DA 1907 Lighter 1853]

1. to move, wander, depart

1904 Bower Chip 106: We've throwed in together ever since we drifted onto the same range. 1904 Bower Lonesome 73: I drifted, right before supper. 1906 Rhodes Sticky 16: Le's eat and drift. 1913 Mulford Coming 212: So he drifts on, gettin'a li'l loco by now. 1918 Grey U. P. It's a pity men like...you drift out here. 1920 Rhodes Stepsons 42: Let's drift. 1922 Evarts Settling 77: I'm drifting today....I'll likely be back before long. 1930 Mulford HC Eagle 51: You boys ready to drift along? 1931 Brand Ambush 170: Now we'll drift along. 1933 Brand False 75: 41: We'd better drift out of this town pretty pronto. 1935 James Home 29: The farther north they drifted the better. 1936 Nye No 90: Gonna let Potak...start driftin' 'em over right now. 1938 Haycox Man 119: Old Pay had always been an Indian for drifting. 1941 Short Hard 166: You can't just drift now, can you, Dave? 1954 Overholser Violent 64: Now drift, the whole kaboodle of you. 1955 L'Amour Heller 8: And King Mabry drifted. 1957 Evarts Man 15: Where you drifting from here? 1959 Nye Long 58: Git aboard that nag and drift. 1965 Foreman Mustang 6: They had to drift, staying a jump ahead of tracks scored on dark back trails. 1967 Nye Trigger 188: You better be driftin', too. 1967 Henry Alias 105: He drifted and worked, worked and drifted.

2. to cause to drift

1923 Hough North 300: I was wondering what had drifted the buffalo.

drift, on the adv. phr. wandering
1938 Haycox Man 240: I'd be a man on the drift.

drifter n. [OED2 1908] a vagabond
1946 Nye Breed 43: That gun hung drifter. 1946 Short Coroner 57: You damn tough drifters, you never learn. 1960 L'Amour Sacketts 28: I don't expect he'd like his granddaughter riding with a Tennessee drifter. 1976 L'Amour Where 57: I'm a cowhand and a drifter.

drill v. [OED2 1912; Lighter 1808] to shoot someone
1929 Brand Last 68: He's apt to drill us. He knows how to shoot! 1930 Brand Destry 159: You sent me out to keep me from drillin' him. 1933 Brand False 75: They drilled a few holes through the house to prove that they wasn't his friends. 1937 Haycox Sundown 88: Drill the son-of-a-slut! 1939 Brand Ride 128: Drill him kid! 1949 Schaefer Shane 97: He'd have drilled you...before you could have brought the gun up and pumped in a shell. 1950 Raine Six 40: Get into this and drill 'em. 1954 Overholser Violent 120: After I drill you, I'm coming after Perrin. 1957 Gruber Lonesome 38: A man who might be hidden anywhere...and might drill them as they came up blindly. 1967 Henry Alias 65: I'll drill you a third eye.

drop n. [DA 1869; Lighter 1889] an advantage, esp. of having a gun aimed at someone
1877 Wheeler DD Prince 12: I don't want them toughs to get the drop on Dick. 1884 Whittaker Marshall 22: We've got the drop on yer friends, any haow. 1885 Ingraham BB's Grip 11: As I holds ther drop on you, ye'd better be kinder discreet like. 1906 Mulford Bar 249: An agile man can mount a restless horse and not lose the drop. 1907 Hough Outlaw 8: The virtue of the "drop" was eminently respected among bad men. 1931 Brand Ambush 44: I've got the drop on you. 1937 Haycox Sundown 96: They got the drop on him. 1956 Gruber Big 90: If you hadn't gotten the drop on him, he'd have killed you. 1957 Gruber Lonesome 92: I've got the drop on you. 1958 Henry Reckoning 38: Take a drop on them and offer under gunpoint to get out a new deck and deal a fresh hand all around? 1965 Foreman Mustang 167: Rico could hold the drop on him going and coming, with the Remington '58. 1978 Evans Longarm 51: You got the drop on me and I got the drop on you.

drop v. [Lighter 1726] to shoot down
1879 Wheeler DD in Leadville 15: I only wish I could drop a few more of them. 1885 Harbaugh Denver 18: He did drop ther boss gold dragon. 1906 Mulford Bar 75: They'd drop you

before you took five steps. 1921 Brand Seventh 99: One of your gang dropped? 1928 Haycox Guns 48: I'll drop your horse and leave you on your hoofs. 1929 Brand Last 19: No one knew the whole list of the men he had dropped, or nicked, or laid away for repairs of some sort. 1937 Haycox Sundown 89: You won't get another chance like this! Drop him! 1956 Overholser Desperate 21: I'll drop your dad before you take two steps. 1959 Nye Long 19: If you had dropped them...would you come packin' them in. 1967 Nye Trigger 168: Violence was...all he'd known since dropping Joe Branton.

drop into the discard v.ph. to die
1930 Mulford HC Eagle 164: Matt was dead...an Johnny dropped into th' discard ten feet from th' door.

drop on v. to cover with a gun
1891 Ingraham Buck 2: There stood the Tiger of Texas, his right hand elevated straight above his head, his revolver in it pointed upwards, ready to drop on the man who dared attempt to draw a weapon.

drummer n. [DA 1834; Lighter 1848] a traveling salesman
1902 Wister Virginian 14: Them drummers....two Jews handling cigars, one American with consumption killer, and a Dutchman with jew'lry. 1903 Adams Log 48: Here comes this livery rig along with that drummer. 1913 Mulford Coming 392: The drummer's red face paled. 1926 Rhodes Paso 19 Wish I was a drummer. 1931 Rhodes Trusty 234: There were some whom Lewis did not know--two who seemed to be drummers. 1936 Nye No 30: Up steps a dude drummer. 1946 Short Coroner 109: A drummer sat boredly in the...lobby. 1950 Raine Six 13: A drummer passed through here and sold her a bill of goods. 1952 Schaefer First 133: That left us with only the drummer as passenger. 1959 Gruber Bushwackers 11: You're a commercial man, a drummer? 1967 Henry Alias 47: There wasn't no Kansas City drummer? 1978 Evans Longarm 57: He looks like a whisky drummer.

dry-gulch v. [DA 1930; Lighter 1930] to ambush in a deserted place; attack from cover
1922 Evarts Settling 51: They'll have dry-gulched him so far from nowhere that even the coyotes can't find him. 1950 Raine Six 48: Dry-gulch 'em, like they did us. 1954 LeMay Searchers 119: I see no least reason...why they can't gallop ahead and dry gulch us. 1954 Overholser Violent 211: Carl had probably ridden out that morning on the off chance he'd have an opportunity to dry-gulch Perrin. 1955 Henry Who 121: The fact that men had been killed knocked hell out of the original idea of dry-gulching Wyatt. 1958 Henry Reckoning 5: Some men would have regarded such office as a paid and protected excuse to dry-gulch Plummer. 1959 Nye

Long 20: If these damn' dry-gulchins ain't stopped pretty quick. 1960 L'Amour Sacketts 156: I went back to the spot where the drygulchers had waited. 1963 L'Amour Sackett 59: You don't size up like any dry-gulching killer. 1967 Nye Trigger 38: A boomtown peace officer until checked mid-stride by a dry-gulch lead.

duck n. [OED2 1857; DA 1846; Lighter 1848] a fellow 1884 Whittaker Marshall 11: We'll make it lively for those ducks on the hill yonder as soon as the moon rises. 1903 Adams Log 125: I can't quite make out this other duck. 1922 Rhodes Copper 65: These ducks, here, want to go through you. 1928 Haycox Guns 114: That dodo duck of a judge don't know what an exception is. 1952 Schaefer First 121: I looked at him and he was a strange duck. 1965 Foreman Mustang 27: If the big duck in front is Hump himself, the Boneyard's not the only thing that stinks in this game! 1967 Nye Trigger 138: He's a tall duck.

dude n. [OED2 1883; DA 1885; Lighter 1878] a soft or dandified fellow, esp. an Easterner 1904 Bower Chip 82: Probably he was the kind of man that name [Cecil] sounded like; a dude with pink cheeks. 1906 Mulford Bar 165: We stood off a son-of-a-gun that wanted th' dude's wealth. 1922 Brand Garden 110: She despised the "slick dudes" who now and again drifted into Lukin with marvelous neckties and curiously patterned clothes. 1929 Haycox Chaffee 11: They's a dude in charge that calls himself a secretary. 1931 Haycox Whispering 12: Now that these same dudes have got rich and turned honest they send up a tinhorn squawk every time they lose a calf. 1932 Grey Lost 256: I'm more afraid of that gambler dude. 1936 Nye No 30: Up steps a dude drummer an'says: Friend, what you need is a bottle of skin lotion. 1941 Short Hard 127: You don't like it, dude? 1942 Nye Trigger 58: Dude was all dressed up like a potato bug. 1955 Henry Who 9: I don't need any dude-dressed wetnurse. 1956 Overholser Desperate 58: You need more than dude duds to impress that girl. 1960 L'Amour Sacketts 100: He was a slim, knifelike man in a braided leather jacket, the most duded-up man I ever saw. 1968 Nye Lost 8: Some fat-ass dude was helping a woman from the coach. 1978 Evans Longarm 7: Now the department was filled with prissy pink dudes who looked like they sat down to piss.

dust v.

1. [OED2 1665; DA 1860; Lighter 1866] to travel quickly 1906 Mulford Bar 122: I'll make 'em dust along. 1958 Henry Reckoning 154: Get up and dust, and lie low for black ducks. 1960 L'Amour Sacketts 52: I figure we should dust out of here, come daybreak. 1964 L'Amour Hanging 29: He dusted out of there.

2. [OED2 1938; DA 1938; Lighter 1972] to kill--also constr. with off

1930 Brand Destry 152: I nigh dusted you that time, Harry.
1950 Raine Six 59: If they don't get religion right sudden we'll have to dust 'em off certain. 1963 L'Amour Sackett 111: I grabbed my six shooter and dusted them off with that.

eating irons [Lighter 1927] n. pl. eating utensils
1959 Nye Long 70: Eating irons--grab a plate and fly at it.

egg n. [OED2 1542] a fellow
1906 Mulford Bar 191: Bad eggs, an' not a-carin' how they gits square. 1929 Haycox Chaffee 87: A bunch of tough eggs come out of the woods. 1931 Haycox Whispering 74: Rather a queer egg. 1936 Nye No 35: You're a tough egg, all right. 1950 Raine Six 24: And he's a bad egg.

end of steel n. the end of the railroad, hence end of area of settlement
1946 Nye Breed 18: Lou had quit the decks of the great paddlewheelers for the greater spoils at the "end of steel."

equalizer n. [OED2 1931; Lighter 1929] a pistol
1959 Nye Long 5: The ones who had known him had called White Howlett gawd-awful sudden with his equalizer, these having in mind the loss of some loved goner.

eucher v. [OED2 1866; DA 1855; Lighter 1855] to swindle
1885 Ingraham BB's Grip 14: I got...shut off and euchered.
1885 Harbaugh Denver 20: All ther inhabitants of that region where water never freezes can't eucher this chick ov ther Southwest border.

fade v. [OED2 1848; Lighter 1898] to depart
1937 Haycox Sundown 115: This racket will be pullin' the rest of the family over here. So we fade. 1938 Haycox Man 227: Karl Gash is gone. They all just a-faded. So I faded.

fan v.
1. [OED2 1853; Lighter 1900] to travel rapidly also used with it
1902 Wister Virginian 472: Those two other parsons was a-foggin' and a-fannin' for their own safety. 1922 Evarts Settling 56: He'll have too long a lead. He'll be fanning right along. 1928 Haycox Guns 48: Hop in the saddle and fan it.

2. [Lighter 1923] to search (one's person)
1929 Brand Last 63: He went down the line of passengers and fanned them for watches and wallets. 1930 Brand Destry 102: He..."fanned" him dexterously but failed to find anything

more of interest on his person. 1933 Brand False 75: 21: Go and fan me for a Colt, if you wanta.

3. [DA 1901; Lighter 1891] to work the hammer of a revolver in rapid fire

1906 Mulford Bar 4: "Fanning" is the name of a certain style of gun play and was universal among the bad men of the West.

1930 Mulford HC Eagle 224: Walter's two hands were in action, the left fanning the hammer of the gun held by the right. 1933 Brand False 75: Instead of curving a forefinger around the trigger, the right thumb of the robber rested on the hammer of the gun....Here was a fellow who knew how to fan a revolver. 1957 Evarts Man 122: In time he'd taught himself to shoot along with such useless showoff stunts as the border shift and fanning the hammer.

fan the breeze or fan wind v. to travel rapidly

1904 Bower Lonesome 150: We're going to be naturally chewed up if we don't fan the breeze along here. 1936 Nye No 9: Fork your bronc an' fan wind.

fiddlefooted adj. restless

1946 Short Coroner 72: I've got a fiddle-foot. 1949 Schaefer Shane 9: I was fiddle footed and left home at fifteen. 1959 Nye Long 48: There's another funny thing: Tom just up and quitting overnight and going off....He never had a fiddle footed thought in his life.

filly n. [OED2 1616; Lighter 1616] a young woman

1968 Nye Lost 163: I want that paper the Peralta filly give you.

fire water n. [OED2 1826; Lighter 1817] liquor

1932 Grey Lost 30: Satana wants toknow when they drink the fire water.

flash adj. [OED2 1785; Lighter 1785] given to ostentatious display, flashy

1914 Grey Rustlers 27: You have got to get in with this gang in town. Be a flash cowboy.

flit v. [OED2 1200] to depart

1913 Mulford Coming 23: When I rid in that night I found he had flitted.

floozy n. [OED2 1911; Lighter 1909] a disreputable woman

1954 Overholser Violent 103: You ain't bringing that floozy to our dance. 1958 Henry Reckoning 95: Did you just now see a good-looking blonde floozie.

flossy n. [Lighter 1901] a young woman

1938 Haycox Man 122: The little flossy! She comes...from nothin' onto Skull.

flossy adj. [OED2 1839; Lighter 1895] fancy, stylish, attractive

1929 Brand Last 104: There was nothing flossy about that...old reptile. 1936 Nye No 50: The flossiest skirt this side of Dallas. 1955 Henry Who 61: He's hotter after that flossy gal of yours than a two-dollar Mexican popgun.

fog v.

1. [DA 1914; Lighter 1893] to travel rapidly
1902 Wister Virginian 60: Those two other parsons was a-foggin' and a-fannin' for their own safety. 1923 Evarts Tumble 36: They just came fogging down here of their own accord. 1952 Schaefer First 176: Three hours a-fogging in.

2. to pursue

1904 Bower Lonesome 169: So a bunch uh them gaudy buck-policemen rose up and fogged me back across the line. 1931 Rhodes Trusty 271: If anybody happened to catch on to Dave and go to foggin' him, his own crowd would shoot him down themselves and be in the clear. 1946 Nye Breed 177: Dashing into the desert, with half the scum of the town foggin' after you.

3. [Lighter 1929] to shoot

1920 Rhodes Stepsons 158: We got close enough to begin foggin' lead at 'em. 1922 Rhodes Copper 18: When the umpire says Go! we'll begin foggin'--an' the man scores six hits quickest gits the money.

foot it v. [OED2 1576] to go on foot
1961 Short Desert 121: Footin' it?

forty-dollar man n. a poor cowboy
1904 Bower Chip 227: You're playing a high card for a forty-dollar man.

fork v. [OED2 1903; DA 1903; Lighter 1882] to mount (a horse)

1903 Adams Log 295: Fork that horse of yours. 1930 Brand Destry 61: Which Harrison Destry sure could fork a hoss. 1931 Rhodes Trusty 217: We're the sorriest bunch that ever forked a horse. 1932 Grey Lost 152: Fork your horse, boy. 1936 Nye No 125: I aim tuh fork a bronc tuh town an' hunt me up that sheriff. 1950 Raine Six 22: Better fork Sloan's horse and light out sudden. 1955 L'Amour Heller 21: You fork your own bronks in this country. 1956 Gruber Big 24: I think she's more man than woman, the way she forks a bronc and shoots. 1956 Overholser Desperate 73: What color horse was that yahoo forking? 1959 L'Amour First 46: A man forks his own broncs in this country. 1963 L'Amour Sackett 42: You'll fork that horse of yours and ride out of here. 1959 Nye Long 24: I'll...find out if I can still fork a saddle.

forty rod n. [OED2 1869; DA 1856; Lighter 1856] whisky
1955 Henry Who 12: His morning snort of forty rod.

four-flusher n. [OED2 1904; DA 1899; Lighter 1904] a fraud or poseur

1914 Grey Rustlers 14: They were the roistering type, hard drinkers...packing guns and wearing bold fronts--a kind the Rangers always called four-flushers. 1918 Grey U. P. 233: Jest mean, ugly four-flushers. 1926 Brand Blue 57: That four-flusher upstairs has taught him this spiel. 1926 Rhodes Good Men 76 He was a four-flusher. 1932 Grey Lost 220: You damned four-flusher 1946 Short Coroner 65: He's a four flusher. 1953 L'Amour Hondo 89: Hondo looked at Lowe with casual contempt....He knew he was a fourflusher. 1955 Henry Who 148: You goddam fourflusher!...You've bluffed your last hand with that scattergun. 1957 Evarts Man 68: You going to let the fourflusher buffalo you? 1969 Foreman Last 83: Why, you cussed four-flusher!

four-sided adj. honest, square
1960 L'Amour Sacketts 47: This here outfit is four-sided.

freeze-out n. [OED2 1856; DA 1855; Lighter 1875] a card game in which losers are forced to drop out, figuratively a betrayal of associates

1938 Haycox Man 86: You been playin' freeze-out with me a long time. 1959 Gruber Bushwackers 52: I don't care for freeze-out.

freeze out v. [Lighter 1861] to exclude
1913 Mulford Coming 84: New you cut in an' want to freeze me out.

gab n. [OED2 1790; Lighter 1790 language, talk
1941 Short Hard 18: I don't savvy his gab.

gab v. to talk
1918 Grey U. P. 222: Pard, I reckon it ain't my way to gab a lot. 1959 Nye Long 16: You wanta gab with Dollarosa?

gale n. an insincere speech
1885 Harbaugh Denver 11: What kind ov a gale is that ye'r' givin' us?

galoot n. [OED2 1866; Lighter 1812] a loutish fellow, fellow

1878 Wheeler DD on Deck 1: Sandy, ye galoot, pile yer frunt foot for'a'd, an' go in fer Janie. 1884 Whittaker Marshall 2: The darned galoots has swep' Lumpy's Ranch of the ponies and druv most of your stock in the muss. 1885 Harbaugh Denver 14: Woe to ther galoots who interfere with my lone hand. 1918 Grey U. P. 233: I reckon I was only thet long-legged, red-headed galoot from Texas. 1929 Haycox Chaffee

84: We'll maybe bust right into some wandering galoot. 1931 Haycox Whispering 42: I'd be a single galoot batchin' in a shanty full of holes. 1942 Nye Trigger 32: This Graham galoot hired me on to ride out to this Broken Bow spread and get him shut of some tenants. 1956 Overholser Desperate 74: This galoot showed up about four. 1959 Nye Long 29: Any young robustuous galoot of his dimensions. 1968 Nye Lost 6: He could remember when these pinch-faced galoots had sung a different song in his presence.

gas v. [OED2 1852; DA 1853; Lighter 1852] to talk idly; boast

1920 Rhodes Stepsons 26: Darned funny if a man can't gas a little once in a while. 1928 Haycox Guns 34: I wouldn't be gassing so much...only I figured the experience of an old hand might help. 1959 Nye Long 117: Keep gassing. I'm coming up to you. 1967 Nye Trigger 29: What were you birds gassin' about?

gent n. [OED2 1564; Lighter 1829] a fellow
1885 Harbaugh Denver 16: Mebbe some Leadville gent'll advance ther V. 1891 Ingraham Buck 2: Say gents, are it lawful fer a stranger to dome inter Trail Crossing and cut such a high figger'? 1906 Mulford Bar 62: We'll see who the gent with the grudge is. 1921 Brand Seventh 97: Gents,...I reckon you've come clean with me. 1922 Brand Garden 13: That gent is a bad hombre. 1926 Brand Blue 68: The gent is giving Rusty a fair fight. 1929 Brand Last 73: This gent...stuck up the Emmet stage. 1929 Haycox Chaffee 46: The gent is defunct. 1930 Brand Destry 25: These gents...you've said a coupla times are my peers. 1930 Mulford HC Eagle 137: Which of you gents is Bill? 1931 Brand Ambush 101: I still ain't spry enough to step out and plug a gent and...make a get-away. 1931 Brand Ride 125: Till we get her safely returned to the gent that owns her. 1933 Brand False 75: 35: It makes a gent sick to see people go nutty about some bum. 1936 Nye No 40: I'm a gent what believes in lovin' his neighbors. 1954 Overholser Violent 75: Belonged to a gent who left in a hurry. 1959 L'Amour First 47: This gent is one of those who entertained me the other night. 1959 Nye Long 15: Couple of gents who didn't make it. 1960 L'Amour Sacketts 5: Lucky for this gent. 1976 L'Amour Where 69: You the gent backed up Syd Berdue?

geezer n. [OED2 1885; Lighter 1893] a fellow
1928 Grey Stairs 93: You tight-fisted old geezer. 1928 Haycox Guns 115: For a small geezer you got a powerful lot of ideas. 1931 Rhodes Trusty 238: There's an old geezer over to the stockyards. 1932 Grey Lost 233: Don't call them geezers. They were great heroes!

get one's neck stretched v.ph. [OED2 1652] to be hanged

1967 Nye Trigger 87: You couldn't stand the thought of getting your neck stretched.

girl n. a fellow (used derisively)
1906 Adams Cattle 21: "Now girls," said Baugh, addressing Carter and the stranger. 1985 McMurtry Lonesome 8: It's a little early for you two to be quittin' ain't it, girls?

glad hand n. [DA 1896; Lighter 1895] false cordiality
1903: Adams Log 188: Every rascal of us gave old man Don the glad hand. 1957 Gruber Lonesome 17: Glad-handing people I wouldn't even talk to another time.

go south v. to be defeated or at a disadvantage
1903 Adams log 186: I'll make old Quince curl his tail; I've got him going south now. 1904 Bower Chip 19: She had us fellows going south before a week.

go whole hog v. to go all out, abandon restraint
1959 Nye Long 73: He might just as well go whole hog while he was at it.

go-getter n. [OED2 1921; DA 1920] energetic, ambitious individual
1910 Rhodes Good Men 76 He was a regular go-getter.

gone coon n. [DA 1839] a doomed person
1938 Haycox Man 71: You're a gone coon, but you don't know it.

gone goose n. [OED2 1830; DA 1830] a doomed person
1937 Haycox Sundown 99: If I pull out you're a gone goose. 1950 Raine Six 42: Make a move, Clint, and you're a gone goose.

gone gosling n. [OED2 1850; DA 1834] a doomed individual
1932 Grey Lost 41: If that bunch surrounds us...we're gone goslin's.

goner n. [OED2 1850] a doomed person
1885 Ingraham BB's Grip 16: Ef he jumps I are a goner. 1903 Adams Log 129: A sheep can die anytime he makes up his mind by simply shutting both eyes--then he's a goner. 1959 Nye Long 5: Having in mind the loss of some loved goner.

goose grease n. [DA 1836] insincere speech
1931 Rhodes Trusty 239: What was all that goose grease Elmer was giving us?

gopher n. [OED2 1905; DA 1889] a miner
1858 Clemens Mustang 236: There is no use putting two bullets into one Greaser. 1885 Harbaugh Denver 6: You kin

hang this Colorado gopher. 1967 Henry Alias 109: The yelping pack of hardrock gophers...surrounded the combatants.

gopher v. to mine
1968 Nye Lost 32: Much minin' through here? Some gopherin'.

grab iron v. to draw a gun
1960 L'Amour Sacketts 99: Sandy was grabbing iron when I swung my gun on him.

Greaser n. [OED2 1849; DA 1836] a Mexican--used contemptuously
1858 Clemens Mustang 205: There is no use putting two bullets into one Greaser. 1879 Morecamp Live 104: A peon is really a Mexican who owes another man and has to work for him till he pays him, and that is not allowed in Texas, but all poor Mexicans are called peons or greasers. 1884 Whittaker Marshall 11: We've got to do suthin' or git fooled by the Greasers, and that's what no Texas man will stand. 1887 Badger Rustler 2: The anniversary of the day when Glorious Sam teetotally chawed up the Greasers. 1887 Willett Sandy 30: I'm goin' fur that cussed Greaser. 1903 Adams Log 181: I've always had a lot of respect for a Greaser's opinion regarding a horse. 1906 Mulford Bar 129: Hopalong was amazed and for a time his ideas of Greasers staggered under the blow. 1913 Mulford Coming 127: Greasers, ma'am, is funny animals. 1918 Grey U. P. 266: Durade's a greaser. 1921 Brand Seventh 22: Captain Lorrimer was as dirty as a greaser; and like a greaser, loose lipped, unshaven. 1926 Brand Blue 26: The water put an end to the white-man's town and let the greasers' begin. 1928 Grey Stairs 29: She was a little slip of a greaser girl, like a mescal plant. 1930 Brand Destry 7: They ain't had nothin' but scared greasers and broke-down nigger help for years. 1930 Mulford HC Eagle 127: Damn'greaser's wanderin'about out here. 1932 Grey Lost 184: I see you have a lot of...greaser farm-hands. 1936 Nye No 153: I thought you was one of that greaser's gunslinger partners. 1960 L'Amour Sacketts 96: We're hunting a wounded greaser. 1967 Nye Trigger 170: I shot one of Branton's greasers and had t' cut my stick. 1976 L'Amour Where 19: He was pretty drunk one night down in a greaser's joint. 1978 Gilman Death 13: Tell you what I told the greasers, mister. 1987 Dexter Deadwood 32: It's a donation for the greaser.

greasy-sacker n. a small rancher
1959 Nye Long 40: Six months later he had...all the grass that had been supporting six of those greasy-sackers.

greenback n. [OED2 1862; DA 1862] a U.S currency note

1932 Grey Lost 61: We got a pack of greenbacks...in money belts. 1950 Raine Six 77: From the well-dressed New Yorker they took a purse well stuffed with greenbacks. 1956 Gruber Big 143: Morgan tossed in a five-dollar greenback.

greenbelly n. an inexperienced person
1955 Henry Who 124: What that greenbelly doesn't know about poker, Hoyle could be lynched for.

greenhorn n. [OED2 1682] an inexperienced person
1884 Whittaker Marshall 6: He had first come to Texas a raw Yankee greenhorn or "tenderfoot." 1887 Willett Sandy 4: You are no greenhorn. You shall have a gun, my lad. 1929 Brand Last 87: But he preferred to take on the tenderfeet, and the greenhorns. 1930 Mulford HC Eagle 87: I've seen places just as bad, with greenhorn squatters hangin' on with their fingernails. 1936 Nye No 40: Possibly an uncomfortable ride for a greenhorn. 1941 Haycox Trail 179: You damn young greenhorn. 1960 L'Amour Sacketts 60: None of us were greenhorns and we knew those men on the porch weren't knitting. 1978 Evans Longarm 198: They moved like greenhorns riding snails.

gringo n. [OED2 1849; DA 1849] a White North American
1926 Brand Blue 29: My mama...puts a curse on all gringo dogs. 1930 Mulford HC Eagle 75: Gringo sheriffs do not cross the river eento San Ignacio. 1936 Nye No 150: My daughter...married the gringo. 1946 Nye Breed 130: These gringos--I cannot talk to them well.

grit n. [OED2 1825; DA 1808] courage, spirit
1878 Wheeler DD on Deck 1: The gal's got honor left w' her grit.
1879 Morecamp Live 249: But I tell you that hoss of yourn is clear grit and no mistake. 1879 Wheeler DD in Leadville 11: It will not be safe for you to remain here, unless you've plenty of grit. 1884 Whittaker Marshall 25: I didn't think I'd find the grit to say it. 1885 Harbaugh Denver 7: When did yer loose all yer grit, Calumet? 1885 Ingraham BB's Grip 16: He looks ter hev...grit. 1928 Grey Stairs 241: She was...shore full of grit.

grub n. [OED2 1659] food
1877 Wheeler DD Prince 4: A liberal dispensation of grub, bug juice or terbarker. 1902 Wister Virginian 185: Let's get grub first. 1904 Bower Lonesome 255: You not get no grub whiles you iss too drunk to be decend mit folks. 1906 Mulford Bar 59: He's...bawlin' for his grub like a spoiled calf, long afore cookie's got th' fire goin'. 1906 Rhodes Sticky 16: Stealing the grub myself. 1913 Mulford Coming 152: I don't give a cuss about yore grub and your beds. 1914 Grey Rustlers 45: I went in Hoden's place for grub.

1922 Evarts Settling 16: Praise the grub and have a friend at court. 1922 Rhodes Copper 12: Did somebody mention the name of grub. 1923 Hough North 63: I can't look...two wagons of grub in the mouth. 1924 Grey Wild 19: We're out of grub. 1926 Rhodes Paso 20: Early for grub too. 1928 Grey Stairs 21: Take a canteen and some grub. 1928 Haycox Guns 87: Bring back some grub. 1930 Mulford HC Eagle 132: Reckon we got about grub' enough for supper. 1931 Brand Ambush 90: All you'd need would be the grub and a cook. 1931 Rhodes Trusty 292: Grub pile ready. 1935 James Home 42: What little money they might of made was spent for seed grain and grub. 1936 Nye No 69: It's gettin' close to grub time. 1937 Haycox Sundown 6: If you don't like our grub don't eat here! 1942 Nye Trigger 37: It'll be gettin' grub time pretty quick. 1946 Short Coroner 117: We can start a wagon...with the tools and grub enough to get the first two road camps going. 1950 Raine Six 122: My belly is flat as an empty mail sack....I gotta have grub. 1954 Gruber Bitter 13: Hey--how about that grub. 1954 LeMay Searchers 94: I been shooting our grub. 1955 Henry Who 80: The flunky who brought their grub over from the Can Can Chop House. 1955 L'Amour Heller 108: I got to rustle some grub. 1956 Gruber Big 28: The grub'll be beans and steak. 1956 Overholser Desperate 103: I'll bring you some grub in a couple of days. 1957 Evarts Man 66: Horn bought himself a wagon and team, a load of tools and grub. 1957 Gruber Lonesome 88: I hope the grub's good. 1959 Nye Long 70: You want this grub or don't you? 1961 Short Desert 60: So when we run out of grub I headed for here. 1963 L'Amour Sackett 76: You got any grub to spare? 1964 L'Amour Hanging 10: Let's unload and hunt us some grub. 1967 Nye Trigger 136: The squatter...attacked his grub. 1968 Nye Lost 9: Grub in the station. 1969 Foreman Last 12: Farewell to all prospects of grain, grub, and a spell of much needed rest. 1976 L'Amour Where 21: You can stock up, grub and whatever you need. 1978 Evans Longarm 80: Considering we're paying two bits a day for room and board, this grub is awful. 1978 Gilman Death 65: Outta the sack and get some grub! 1982 Tippet Texas 12: Let's go on into Encinal and get a little grub. 1985 McMurtry Lonesome 111: If you men want grub, you better go get it.

grub-hook n. hand

1959 Nye Long 59: He fastened one of those grub-hooks into the front of Howlett's jacket.

grub line n. [DA 1912] chuck line

1922 Evarts Settling 116: You can ride the grubline...till spring and get a job when work opens up. 1964 L'Amour Hanging 24: I never did like riding the grub line in snow country.

grubstake n. [OED2 1863; DA 1863] money to equip a prospector

1929 Brand Last 49: The Duster gave that old-timer fifty dollars...as a grubstake.

grubstake v. to give someone a grubstake
1932 Grey Lost 203: I don't need to be grub-staked.

guff n. [OED2 1888; DA 1888] empty talk
1926 Rhodes Paso 22 Here's some more of the same old guff.
1931 Rhodes Trusty 241: What kind of guff are you springing now? 1967 Henry Alias 71: You can choke on your own guff.

gun v. [OED2 1898] to shoot
1954 Gruber Bitter 122: You want me to gun the sheriff?

gun n. [DA 1863] a gunfighter
1955 Henry Who 63: He knew the Pima politician was not a gun. 1978 Evans Longarm 99: The territory's filled with unemployed guns.

gun artist n. a gunfighter
1913 Mulford Coming 50: Funny how bashful these gun-artists are! 1929 Haycox Chaffee 87: That gent...looks like a gun artist. 1968 Nye Lost 67: He looked around to find out what the gun artist thought.

gun boss n. a leader of a gang of gunfighters
1946 Nye Breed 26: This man was a gun boss. 1969 Foreman Last 102: The broken gun boss was running a fever.

gun fanner n. a gunfighter
1931 Haycox Whispering 154: Another slick-eared gun fanner from other parts.

gun hand n. a gunfighter
1956 Overholser Desperate 19: Runyan's got a couple of gun hands with him. 1957 Evarts Man 15: I'm not hiring gunhands. 1969 Foreman Last 40: It'll be Brokus's killers or Roone's Triangle T gun-hands. 1976 L'Amour Where 9: Gunhand...or cowhand?

gun hawk n. a gunfighter
1946 Nye Breed 139: Tune and Jack's gun hawks shooting it out.

gun hound n. a gunfighter
1969 Foreman Last 52: Those gun-hounds won't leave long's you're here!

gun hung adj. carrying a pistol
1946 Nye Breed 43: That gun hung drifter.

gun-man n. a gunfighter
1913 Mulford Coming 162: He felt a great awe steal through his fear, for here was a gun-man such as he had read about.

gun outfit n. a gang of gunfighters
1985 McMurtry Lonesome 583: Well, this is a gun outfit, ain't it?

gun play n. a gun duel; gunfighting
1906 Mulford Bar 155: When I makes a gun play she plays.
1913 Mulford Coming 237: He...maintained that the gun-play of the West was mythical and existed only in the minds of effete Easterners.

gun-shy adj. [OED2 1884] frightened of guns
1950 Raine Six 83: He's so dadgummed gun-shy he beat it to town and left us the chore to do.

gunslick n. a gunfighter
1956 Overholser Desperate 29: This is the first time he ever brought a gunslick like Sammy Blue. 1978 Evans Longarm 223: He likely became a gun-slick in the first place when he noticed that while God created man, Sam Colt and other gunsmiths made them equal.

gun slinger n. [OED2 1953] a gunfighter
1931 Haycox Whispering 160: You're one of Redmain's imported gunslingers. 1932 Grey Lost 153: You're no low-down hombre of a gun-slinger. 1936 Nye No 153: I thought you was one of that greaser's gunslinger partners. 1946 Nye Breed 121: He had beckoned a couple of his handiest gun slingers. 1950 Raine Six 48: His gun slingers killed my brother. 1954 Gruber Bitter 41: I'll fight any man with my fists, but I'm no gunslinger. 1956 Overholser Desperate 21: He's a gunslinger. 1965 Foreman Mustang 66: Here and there a hardbitten gambler, a gunslinger too wise to trap, or an out-and-out bad man not yet hanged. 1969 Foreman Last 32: To me he's a gunslinger on the make! 1978 Gilman Death 57: He might be a real hot-shot gunslinger.

gun-slung adj. armed
1969 Foreman Last 56: Her gun-slung escort of bodyguards.

gun thrower n. a gunfighter
1914 Grey Rustlers 63: Blome an' Snecker parade themselves off boss...gun throwers. 1918 Grey U. P. 173: I had a gun-thrower for a partner for years. 1932 Grey Lost 83: This is a court, not a place for you gun-throwers to clash. 1946 Nye Breed 183: The role of boot-licking gun thrower didn't fit Jess.

gun-throwing adj. gun fighting

1930 Mulford HC Eagle 20: There'll be a round half dozen of th' damndest gun-throwing hombres of th' West in this town.

gun-toter n. [OED2 1925; DA 1925] a gunfighter

1926 Brand Blue 76: Meanest lot of gun-toters I ever seen.
1936 Nye No 122: There were no customers in the Tall Bottle saloon this morning but..two of the syndicate gun-toters.

gun-toting adj. carrying a pistol

1931 Rhodes Trusty 236: I tell you this gun-toting has got to stop.

gun-tough n. a gunfighter

1969 Foreman Last 10: Three gun-toughs pitted against a broken down relic, and there they waited for a further advantage to favor them.

gutshoot v. [OED2 1878] to shoot in the belly

1955 Henry Who 145: In jail for disturbing the peace by gutshooting one Jim Hickey. 1957 Evarts Man 142: Watching her he could forget for a moment Wagon Creek and the gut-shot cows. 1978 Evans Longarm 151: You're gut-shot, you poor, dumb son of a bitch.

guzzler n. a drunkard

1969 Foreman Last 47: Burro, prince of guzzlers, what became of my last bottle:

hair-pin n. [OED2 1879; DA 1892] a fellow

1879 Wheeler DD in Lead 11: Thet's the kind o' a hair-pin Deadwood Dick is.

haired over adj. settled, developed

1967 Henry Alias 75: South Utah of his day was not all that haired over and gentled down.

haired-up adj. angry

1955 Henry Who 156: Roaring like a haired-up silvertip.

hairy dog n. wild individual

1967 Henry Alias 109: He was a hairy dog of first reputation in the street-fighting folklore.

hand n. [OED2 1600] one's advantages

1885 Harbaugh Denver 13: If I kin keep Leadville Lucy's suspicions down I kin git through with the hand I hold.
1914 Grey Rustlers 48: Any honest citizen of Linrock can now see what's plain--yours is a damn poor hand.

hand, fill one's v. phr. to prepare

1929 Brand Last 87: You've done your shooting from in front and given your man a chance to fill his hand. 1930 Brand Destry 149: Fill your hand, Lefty.

hand, full n. an overwhelming advantage
1877 Wheeler DD Prince 7: We...got ter hold a full hand ter clean' em out.

hand, high n. control
1912 Grey Riders 29: Oldrin's got a high hand here.

hand, hold a v. to be involved
1904 Bower Chip 227: It begins to look as though I held a hand in this game.

hand, take a v. phr. to take part in the action
1976 L'Amour Where 99: You'd lost this fight before you ever took a hand in the game.

hand, throw up one's v. phr. to give up
1891 Ingraham Buck 3: You have the call pard, so I throw up my hand.

hand, tip one's v. phr. to reveal one's intentions
1937 Haycox Sundown 131: I had to see him tip his hand.

handle n. [OED2 1870] a name
1877 Wheeler DD Prince 3: That is my handle, pilgrim. 1879 Wheeler DD in Leadville 11: My handle is Calamity Jane. 1885 Harbaugh Denver 6: Ther handle doesn't suit yer. 1885 Ingraham BB's Grip 11: I'd like ter know yer handle. 1906 Mulford Bar 111: I suppose she has got another handle. 1924 Grey Wild 77: Bent Manerube. How's that for a handle? 1932 Grey Lost 109: That where you get your handle? 1955 Henry Who 71: The names that...rolled out like a badman's Who's Who...came so fast he couldn't hang on to their handles. 1968 Nye Lost 5: Orberbit Johnson came by his handle from the bullet-shape gouge torn from...an ear. 1978 Evans Longarm 51: My handle's long.

hard case n.
1. [DA 1836] a lawless individual
1946 Nye Breed 130: The...hardcases grinned. 1946 Short Coroner 59: Like your neighbors, hardcase? 1954 Gruber Bitter 13: Ther're hard cases. Even if I could...get away they'd take it out on you. 1956 Gruber Big 13: Morgan caught a mere glint of his slitted eyes and knew that the man was a hard case. 1958 Henry Reckoning 8: They were both tough, hard-looking cases. 1959 Nye Long 74: The half-caught sound of Virgen's hardcase swearing. 1965 Foreman Mustang 9: There were quite a few hardcases in the Bee Hive who seriously resented Bishop's unbroken run of luck since

his arrival. 1967 Henry Alias 111: Three clean-shaven hardcases...stood watching. 1969 Foreman Last 11: A hardcase on the long dodge; the kind that occasionally dropped into Penasco for a brief rest and a fresh horse if they could manage it. 1976 L'Amour Where 32: The other man was shorter, thicker, but obviously a hard-case. 1982 Tippet Texas 14: Then you'd run into a pretty good mixture of hard cases of all kinds. 1985 McMurtry Lonesome 16: Even in the old days, when they were in the thick of it, with Indians and hardcases to worry about, Augustus would seize any chance for a dispute.

2. a pitiful person

1878 Wheeler DD on Deck 1: She must be an eccentric creature--rather a hard case, is she not? 1926 Rhodes Paso 26 McEwen was a hard case...thirst tormented him, his lips were cracked and bleeding...his face fallen in.

hardcase adj. tough, dangerous

1941 Short Hard 66: They were a hardcase crew, used to cursing and needing it. 1955 Henry Who 123: He was near as famous for a working cardsharp as for a hardcase lawman. 1968 Nye Lost 46: Curly Bill, about as hardcased a gent as ever flipped a pistol.

hard-egg n. a hard case

1926 Brand Blue 31: A saddle like that would show those hard-eggs on the Randal ranch that I was no...bluffer.

hard guy n. a hard case

1922 Brand Garden 141: There were "hard guys" who would take a chance.

hard nut n. a formidable person

1914 Grey Rustlers 115: I always had you sized up as a pretty hard nut, a man not to be trifled with. 1931 Haycox Whispering 239: Those hard nuts have got the country speckled with eyes. 1932 Grey Lost 240: There was two hard-nut outfits in camp last night.

hard-rock boy n. a miner

1967 Nye Trigger 169: He...talked mining sometimes with the hard-rock boys.

hard-shelled adj. ruthless

1936 Nye No 56: That bunch of hard-shelled land-hawks are doin' their damndest to run me out. 1965 Foreman Mustang 80: Kind of a middling decent jigger, Red, even if he was a hardshell Texan.

hardware n.

1. a gun, guns (collectively)

1924 Grey Wild 16: Packin' your hardware. 1928 Haycox Guns 18: You'd better go back and polish some of your hardware. 1936 Nye No 102: Don't never pack hardware when yuh go to visit Bast. 1955 Henry Who 6: He got his own hardware into action. 1956 Gruber Big 76: Reach for your hardware, you bushwackin' bastard. 1965 Foreman Mustang 37: Here come those hombres...mad clear through and weighed down with hardware.

2. [DA 1864] a badge

1959 Gruber Bushwackers 68: Mister...you got hardware on your chest. I got respect for the law.

hasher n. [OED2 1845] a cook

1946 Nye Breed 26: The hasher's tired eyes revealed a shopworn interest.

hash-slinger n. [OED2 1868; DA 1868] a cook

1936 Nye No 167: Got a date with that goldy-headed hash-slinger at the Santy Fe.

haul freight v. to depart

1955 Henry Who 96: Haul your freight before me and the boys fixes your wagon. 1957 Evarts Man 73: You hitch up that team and haul your freight.

hayraker n. a farmer

1954 Overholser Violent 194: I'm not afraid of...a bunch of hayrakers.

he-coon n. a man in charge

1922 Evarts Settling 9: Billie Warren is the big he-coon of the Three Bar. 1955 Henry Who 75: The old he-coon himself.

heeled [OED2 1881; DA 1867] adj. armed

1877 Wheeler DD Prince 3: Had he been "heeled" with a shipment uv Black Hills sixes, they would have enabled him to distinguish himself for superior ability. 1932 Grey Lost 158: Let's see how they're heeled before riskin' any more'n a hold-up. 1950 Raine Six 38: You heeled, Sum? Bought me a gun at Tucson. 1959 Nye Long 18: I'm not heeled.

heist n. [OED2 1927] a robbery

1967 Henry Alias 26: One of the worst-crazy breaks of outhouse luck ever to hit a bank heist.

hemp necktie n. [DA 1892] a hangman's noose

1959 Nye Long 42: You want a hemp necktie?

herd jumper n. a rustler

1931 Haycox Whispering 62: I've got good medicine for herd jumpers like you.

hiccup syrup n. liquor

1929 Haycox Chaffee 36: You and me belong on the dark side o' the street. Let's go there and get some hiccup syrup.

hide n. [OED2 1000] one's skin, life or welfare

1930 Brand Destry 153: You was...thinkin' about your own hide! 1937 Haycox Sundown 153: I will take it out of his hide. 1953 L'Amour Hondo 52: I got a crease in my hide back yonder. 1957 Gruber Lonesome 73: I'll have Eads' hide for telling you that! 1965 Short First 104: You may have saved Varney's hide.

high card adj. leading, most influential

1906 Adams Cattle 192: I was high card once with the eldest. 1929 Haycox Chaffee 12: Woolfridge is the high card dude around these parts.

highfaluting adj. [OED2 1839] having an exaggerated manner

1906 Adams Cattle 278: Jack must have pictured this claim mighty hifalutin' to that gal. 1960 L'Amour Sacketts 148: Tom was...using all that highfalutin' language he knew so well.

high tail v. [OED2 1925] to travel rapidly

1923 Evarts Tumble 263: If he believes me he'll high-tail for parts unknown. 1950 Raine Six 82: He's high-tailin' it to warn Sum. 1952 Schaefer First 155: Hightailing into the brush with a hot gun. 1957 Gruber Lonesome 148: Climb atop that horse of yours and hightail it out of here. 1967 Henry Alias 123: Brothers Tom and Bill would get in their rented rig and hightail it up to the Lucifer. 1967 Nye Trigger 92: They'll likely...high-tail it for the tules.

hitched adv. [OED2 1857] married

1936 Nye No 139: You an' me is goin' to get hitched up! 1956 Overholser Desperate 58: Gill and Bess came in for some joking about what would happen if they got hitched and ever started shooting at each other.

hit for v. [OED2 1911] to travel towards

1938 James Flint 45: We'll hit for camp.

hit the bottle v. phr. [OED2 1899] to drink excessively

1932 Grey Lost 155: Don't hit the bottle.

hit one's heels v. phr. to travel rapidly

1950 Raine Six 134: Mr. Buck was sure hittin' his heels.

hit the grit v. phr. [DA 1911] to leave, depart hastily

1941 Short Hard 16: Hit the grit. Get out of here.

hit the trail v. phr. to depart, travel
1904 Bower Lonesome 133: It's you and me hit the trail, Spider. 1924 Grey Wild 58: As soon as he gets rid of those horses, he'll be hitting my trail. 1933 Brand False 75: 51: A dozen men will be hitting the trail with their mustangs inside an hour. 1950 Raine Six 61: Hit the trail fast. 1965 Foreman Mustang 30: They would hit the trail manana. 1969 Foreman Last 46: And we give a chance somewhere to celebrate before we hit the trail.

hog v. [OED2 1884] to monopolize selfishly
1913 Mulford Coming 84: You want to hog it all. 1931 Brand Ride 145: Don't hog the trail. 1936 Nye No 28: You tryin' to hog this spread with no guns? 1955 Henry Who 38: The kid always did have a flair for hogging the middle of the road.

hog, high on the adj. phr. important
1959 Nye Long 107: Had he let Bill get too high on the hog?

hog-killing adj. [OED2 1903] exciting
1903 Adams Log 194: The boys had had a hog-killing time.

hogleg n. [DA 1920] a pistol
1950 Raine Six 28: From now on I tote a hogleg when I'm away from the ranch. 1959 Nye Long 44: I've had your hogleg and shell belt here for safekeeping. 1960 L'Amour Sacketts 2: That old hog-leg of mine went back into the holster. 1978 Evans Longarm 12: Well, that old hog leg's a heavy gun.

hog pen n. a saloon
1961 Short Desert 33: The cheap saloons called "hog pens" off the post where whisky could be bought.

hog-tie v. [OED2 1894] to tie the hands and feet together
1904 Bower Lonesome 111: I promised her you'd all be there on time, if I had to hog-tie the whole bunch and haul yuh over in the hayrack. 1918 Grey U. P. 199: You're goin' back if I have to hawg-tie you an' pack you out there on a hoss. 1923 Hough North 181: Hog-tie him and throw him in the cactus. 1924 Grey Wild 346: What're you hawg-tied for? 1963 L'Amour Sackett 55: Courage comes cheap when you've got a man hog-tied.

hog wild adv. [OED2 1904] out of control; used with go
1931 Haycox Whispering 49: I'm just thinking of the buzzards who will go hog-wild and want to shoot everybody on sight. 1942 Nye Trigger 48: He'd go hog-wild on the warpath. 1950 Raine Six 47: It won't help us any if we go hog wild now.

hoist n. a robbery
1955 Henry Who 71: The ...McLowrys handled the rustling; Stilwell...the stage hoists.

hoist v. [OED2 1611] to raise, especially one's hands
1935 Rhodes Proud 157: H'ist 'em. 1937 Short Marouder 117:
Hoist your hands.

hoist one v. to take a drink of liquor
1955 Henry Who 63: We was just hoisting one to your memory.

hole n. [OED2 1897; DA 1890] a debt, a tight spot
1903 Rhodes Loved 5: They've sure pulled me out of the hole.
1922 Evarts Settling 23: I'll pull it out of the hole. 1924
Grey Wild 257: You an' me are in a devil of a hole. 1936
Nye No 188: He's tryin' tuh squeal himself out of a tight
hole. 1937 Haycox Sundown 174: That's twice this Majors has
stepped out of a hole. 1955 Henry Who 6: He was \$275 in the
hole. 1955 Henry Who 65: You pulled me out of a bad hole.
1956 Gruber Big 104: I told you we went into the hole.

hole card n. [DA 1908] a hidden advantage
1937 Haycox Sundown 139: What's your hole card, Ben? 1941
Haycox Trail 43: When the lid blows off where's your hole
card? 1946 Nye Breed 37: Better take another look at your
hole card. 1955 Henry Who 105: Both knew what the real
stake was. And who held the hole-card on it. 1953 L'Amour
Hondo 72: He was a good man with a gun...yet suddenly he was
examining his hole card and didn't like what he saw. 1955
L'Amour Heller 56: He desperately needed a hole card and he
had none. 1968 Nye Lost 187: This unexpected...effect
might well make a man peer again at his holecard.

hole up v. [OED2 1614] to hide
1930 Mulford HC Eagle 307: Tex could picutre the three of
them, holed up safely. 1932 Grey Lost 153: You heah about
outlaws holin' up in the bad lands. 1955 Henry Who 192:
We'll hole up out at Kennedy' ranch. 1955 L'Amour Heller
64: King Mabry reached the Hole in the Wall...hunting a
place to hole up for the night. 1956 Overholser Desperate
21: Where you holed up? 1957 Evarts Man 138: Sam might know
where he's holed up. 1967 Henry Alias 49: Ain't but one
place old Leroy would hole up. 1978 Evans Longarm 32: The
found him holed up in the timber. 1982 Tippetts Texas 10: I
figure we'll hole up there for a few hours.

holster hopper n. a gunfighter
1936 Nye No 29: I'm the genuine article; a holster-hopper on
which you kin smell the powder smoke.

holy smoke exclamation [Lighter 1892]
1885 Ingraham BB's Grip 8: Holy smoke! look a thar! 1891
Ingraham Buck 12: Well, Holy Smoke! he said in a way of
exclamation. 1906 Mulford Bar 168: Holy smoke! shouted
Waffles as Hopalong won his sixth consecutive pot.

hombre n. [OED2 1846] a man, especially a dangerous one
 1913 Mulford Coming 141: Other way, Hombre! 1920 Rhodes
Stepsons 159: Always thought he was a bad hombre. 1922
 Brand Garden 13: That gent is a bad hombre. 1928 Grey
Stairs 98: Collishaw controls some bad hombres in Yuma.
 1930 Mulford HC Eagle 20: Anytime I see a two-gun hombre
 climb down to th' platform, I up and tell him to hang up his
 guns. 1932 Grey Lost 149: Pretty soon some hombre would
 come huntin' me. 1936 Nye No 22: If you ain't the hombre
 that did it, I'd like to know who did. 1942 Nye Trigger 19:
 A bully-puss man with a tough-hombre manner. 1950 Raine Six
 123: They looked like pretty tough hombres to me. 1955
 Henry Who 6: He'll be remembered as long as western talk
 winds up, as it always does, on bad hombres. 1956
 Overholser Desperate 12: Vic Toll is a tough hombre. 1965
 Foreman Mustang 37: Here come those hombres looking for
 their horses--mad clear through and all weighed down with
 hardware. 1967 Nye Trigger 8: The trio eyed the black-
 hatted hombre. 1968 Nye Lost 120: Do not threaten me,
 hombre. 1976 L'Amour Where 95: That's a mucho malo hombre.
 1978 Evans Longarm 97: Folks from Missouri don't call men
 hombres. 1978 Gilman Death 17: So best you hombres leave.
 1982 Tippet Texas 13: It was mostly occupied by some
 pretty bad hombres.

honky-tonk n. [OED2 1894; DA 1894] low class place of
 entertainment
 1941 Short Hard 100: I've known honky-tonk girls I'd sooner
 help than you. 1954 Gruber Bitter 85: Behind him...was the
 noise of a dozen saloons and honky-tonks. 1967 Nye Trigger
 143: Shanties sandwiched in between...honkeytonks and bars.

hooch n. [OED2 1897; DA 1898] liquor
 1955 Henry Who 97: The damage bill...was itemized down to
 the last...busted bottle of eight-dollar hooch.

hoof n. [OED2 1598] a foot
 1928 Haycox Guns 48: I'll drop your horse and leave you on
 your hoofs. 1931 Haycox Whispering 201: I aim to get on my
 hoofs again.

hoof v. to walk
 1942 Nye Trigger 14: With beggars on horseback and quality
 hoofing.

hoof, on the adj. alive
 If his carcass is worth that much to yuh on the hoof...he's
 yores.

hoof it v. [OED2 1641] to walk

1891 Ingraham Buck 14: I guess I'll have to hoof it for the fort, and I am not in the best condition for walking either. 1913 Mulford Coming 51: You won't have to hoof it no more, Skinny. 1914 Grey Rustlers 65: Had to hoof it to Linrock. 1930 Mulford HC Eagle 313: Let them filthy coyotes hoof it out, like they made th' Kid. 1931 Rhodes Trusty 296: Hoof it to the nearest...well.

hoosegow n. [OED2 1911] a jail
1955 Henry Who 16: He took the guns off Henry Plummer and elbowed him into the Dodge City hoosegow. 1967 Henry Alias 138: The whole thing might be done--bank, train ride, hoosegow--in no more than two days. 1978 Evans Longarm 73: I wouldn't be surprised if that jaybird in the hoosegow wasn't in on it.

horn in v. [OED2 1912; DA 1912] to intrude
1920 Rhodes Stepsons 150: If we'd only known we might have horned in. 1923 Hough North 74: Don't you come horning in. 1930 Mulford HC Eagle 79: We are...hornin' right in to plenty of trouble. 1931 Rhodes Trusty 243: We'll horn in. 1941 Haycox Trail 69: You horn in, and he's one more man on your trail. 1955 Henry Who 113: I don't necessarily figure I'm horning in on the Lord's territory. 1958 Henry Reckoning 117: They would have had their fair trail...if you hadn't of horned in. 1978 Gilman Death 35: Tait spat again, irritated at the Easterners for horning into the exchange.

horseback opinion n. a guess
1903 Adams Log 72: My sister gives it as a horseback opinion that she'd been engaged to this fellow nearly eight months.

hot air n. [Lighter 1899] empty talk
1936 Nye No 51: I couldn't help overhearin' some of the hot air them visitors of yours was spoutin'. 1941 Haycox Trail 29: You're full of hot air, which is worse than whisky.

huckleberry n. a fellow
1877 Wheeler DD Prince 7: Ninety tens, my huckleberry. 1885 Harbaugh Denver 16: I'm yer bettin' huckleberry.

hummer n. [OED2 1906] an extraordinary person or thing
1906 Mulford Bar 345: She's a hummer...a lot prettier than that picture Cowan has got over his bar. 1928 Grey Stairs 128: Yuma's a boomin' town now. She always was a hummer.

hump v. [OED2 1835; DA 1845; Lighter 1853] to hurry
1930 Brand Destry 9: Cowboy, buy yourself some spurs, and hump! 1949 Schaefer Shane 93: She got our tattered old parchesi board and she kept me humping to beat her. 1965 Foreman Mustang 24: I'll try to keep him humping.

hunky adj. drunk
1914 Grey Rustlers 57: And much as I blab when I'm hunky it's all air.

hurdy girl n. a dancehall girl
1946 Nye Breed 100: Uncouth backwoodsmen descended from the illicit unions of ruffians and hurdy girls.

hurdy-gurdy house n. a dancehall
1958 Henry Reckoning 103: Three obvious brothels, some eight hurdy-gurdy houses, eleven open-front saloons.

hyena n. [OED2 1671] a treacherous individual
1922 Evarts Settling 78: Don't you claim no relationship with me, you sorrel hyena. 1923 Hough North 181: Hyenuses runs in bunches.

icehouse n. a jail
1959 Nye Long 12: Better put 'em in the icehouse.

in the saddle adj. in control
1922 Evarts Settling 142: The law will be in the saddle for the first time in years.

Irisher n. [OED2 1807] an Irishman
1969 Foreman Last 32: Him and that old Irisher!

iron n. [Lighter 1838] a gun; shooting iron
1928 Haycox Guns 48: Knock down his iron while I pile on.
1955 Henry Who 7: That first horseman had his iron out and was lining him up, dead center. 1959 Nye Long 110: No sense weightin' yourself down with that iron. 1963 L'Amour Sackett 100: As I started to swing my horse, he grabbed iron. 1964 L'Amour Hanging 8: He just went ahead and dragged iron. 1969 Foreman Last 91: Barehanded, no irons?

Jack Mormon n. [DA 1845] a Mormon man
1967 Henry Alias 112: In walks a Jack Mormon from Spanish Forks.

jackpot n. [Lighter 1887] a predicament
1904 Bower Chip 44: That's the way Jack's schemes always pan out....Don't get me into another jackpot like that! 1929 Haycox Chaffee 141: You got into this jackpot. Now it's up to you and nobody else. 1969 Foreman Last 87: Then it's okay with you if I pull him out of this jackpot?

jag n. a drinking spree
1904 Bower Lonesome 143: Which end of a jag is this?

jasper n. [OED2 1896; DA 1914; Lighter 1928] a fellow

1926 Rhodes Paso 22 If them gay jaspers that are after me had any sense...they'd see it was no use. 1928 Haycox Guns 71: Who said them jaspers can't shoot. 1936 Nye No 31: I spent everything I had buyin' this property from that Crane jasper. 1941 Short Hard 70: Now you three jaspers just sit down on the floor. 1929 Haycox Chaffee 43: Some o' you jaspers go around the front way. 1930 Mulford HC Eagle 97: He...soon knowed who th' jasper was. 1959 Nye Long 8: He was probably about as unwanted a jasper as a man could find in a couple of days riding. 1968 Nye Lost 169: The jasper could be one of them. 1978 Evans Longarm 16: I'll jaw with that jasper you have playing the typewriter out front before I leave.

jaw v. [OED2 1748; Lighter 1885]

1. to talk

1942 Nye Trigger 33: So pretty quick I quit jawin'. 1946 Nye Breed 17: That's a Clover Cross hand there that's doing the jawing. 1968 Nye Lost 20: While they were jawin' a big storm come up. 1978 Evans Longarm 16: I'll jaw with that jasper. 1985 McMurtry Lonesome 84: He had surely jawed with Gus long enough.

2. to nag

1952 Schaefer First 120: I didn't want him jawing me when I stepped out for a little fun.

jayhawker n. [OED2 1865; DA 1858; Lighter 1865] foraging thief

1907 Hough Outlaw 344: Quantrell...border ruffian and jayhawker.

jerk v. [Lighter 1847] to draw

1907 Hough Outlaw 8: I jerked my gun and shoved it in his stomach.

jerk walnut v. to draw a pistol

1930 Mulford HC Eagle 136: I've seen you jerk walnut for years; an you never did no better than you did last night.

jigger n. [Lighter 1847] an inconsequential fellow

1965 Foreman Mustang 23: I've got to take along some jigger who knows the country down there. 1969 Foreman Last 70: That dandy jigger--Colorado Jack, I think he's called--charged in like a thundergust.

jingle-bob brand n. [DA 1890] way of earmarking cattle

1932 Grey Lost 198: The jingle-bob brand of cattle--a peculiar way of cutting the ear of a calf so that the flap would dance up and down.

John Law n. [Lighter 1906] a lawman

1931 Rhodes Trusty 224: I could set John Law on him.

joint n. [OED2 1821; DA 1887; Lighter 1897] an establishment

1906 Mulford Bar 151: He used to hang around on the outside after th' joint let out an' trail along behind th' music slinger. 1928 Haycox Guns 64: We're plumb sunk if they coop us in this two-by-four joint. 1931 Brand Ambush 91: A couple of us cut through the back of...Scar-face's joint. 1931 Haycox Whispering 16: Who'd bring money into a joint like Sundown? 1976 L'Amour Where 19: He was pretty drunk one night down in a greaser's joint.

joker n.

1. [OED2 1811; DA 1910; Lighter 1839] a fellow
1902 Wister Virginian 20: He's one of those box-head jokers. 1936 Nye No 155: By gosh, we got that joker now! 1942 Nye Trigger 28: A certain black-haired joker...that his righteous wrath should fall on. 1959 Nye Long 24: Wonder what ever became of that joker. 1965 Foreman Mustang 71: Why did this joker trade with you, at a loss to himself of a hundred horses!

2. an unpredictable individual or situation
1904 Bower Lonesome 162: Well, here's the joker, anyhow. 1955 Henry Who 102: Number six was the joker....The town marshall could put the clamp on anybody that was in his way. 1976 L'Amour Where 14: The Venables are the joker in the deck.

jolt n. [Lighter 1907] a drink of liquor

1955 Henry Who 61: He...put away three bourbons....Two more morning jolts were in order.

josh n. [OED2 1852; Lighter 1889] insincere talk

1902 Wister Virginian 18: That's straight. That's no bar-room josh.

jug n. [OED2 1841; Lighter 1848] a prison

1928 Haycox Guns 48: His son's in the jug on a warrant for murder. 1938 Haycox Man 135: There ain't twelve men on the Piute who like Skull well enough to stick Merritt in the jug for you.

jug v. [Lighter 1848] to imprison

1931 Rhodes Trusty 296: Not one will ever know why he wasn't killed or jugged. 1952 Schaefer First 187: Remember when you were jugged for disturbing the peace.

jug, hit the v. to drink whisky

1969 Foreman Last 36: He was sore at Mike, disgusted with the whole business, and was hitting the jug.

jump v. [OED2 1789; Lighter 1879] to attack by surprise

1885 Ingraham BB's Grip 6: I looks ter jump Indians hereabout at any time. 1923 Evarts Tumble 6: You couldn't hold 'em in the quarantine belt for long without getting jumped. 1930 Brand Destry 56: The Ogden boys both jumped Destry. 1931 Brand Ride 128: You pair of crooks that try to jump on a kid. 1950 Raine Six 59: They jumped me, Sum. 1960 L'Amour Sacketts 62: You had no call to jump Mr. Pritts like that. 1965 Foreman Mustang 164: They can still jump us. 1967 Henry Alias 31: Before they discover they've jumped an empty nest. 1969 Foreman Last 45: The only question is which one of 'em jumps us, where and when.

jump, on the adv. [OED2 1900] quickly
1891 Ingraham Buck 16: I put him out o' his mis'ry and that left me free ter come ter Texas on ther jump, and here I stays.

kick n. [OED2 1839; DA 1839] a complaint
1904 Bower Chip 93: But she couldn't find no kick about my cake. 1918 Grey U. P. 63: I reckon no tall kick would be a-comin if you was to call me Red. 1922 Rhodes Copper 124: Mitchell...makes no big kick, just sits quiet, a stydyin' 1926 Rhodes Paso 32: If there's any kick, there's the hide and I stand back of it. 1928 Haycox Guns 8: Keep up appearances. Otherwise some down-state reformer might raise a kick.

kick v. [OED2 1388; Lighter 1883] to object or complain
1877 Badger Rustler 5: If I am willing to run the chances you hardly ought to kick. 1887 Willett Sandy 25: Thar's no use in kickin'. 1906 Mulford Bar 169: I was beat fair an' square an' I ain't got no kick comin'. 1906 Rhodes Sticky 16: Folks come back and kick because they ain't gentle. 1914 Grey Rustlers 62: Can't kick on the luck. 1923 Hough North 118: He done it fair, and I didn't kick. 1936 Nye No 25: What are yuh kickin' about then? 1937 Haycox Sundown 52: He was too good natured to kick about it. 1941 Haycox Trail 41: Who's goin' to kick? 1967 Nye Trigger 28: If you got any kick, come to me like a man.

kick off v. [Lighter 1898] to die
1950 Raine Six 47: Anse will be the same till he kicks off and goes to hell. 1959 Nye Long 87: Both...kicked off as a result of lead poisoning. 1967 Nye Trigger 126: Gene Duncan got his comeupance an' has since kicked off.

kick up a fuss, row v. phr. [OED2 1756] to create a disturbance.
1887 Badger Rustler 4: Do I pay you for kicking up a row at a peaceable gathering? 1914 Grey Rustlers 213: Don't kick up any fuss. 1964 L'Amour Hanging 20: I never kicked up any fuss about it.

kicker n. [OED2 1892] an extra card in a hand; an extra advantage
1955 Henry Who 148: Pair of twelves with a buckshot kicker.

kinky adj. [OED2 1889] wild
1938 James Flint 79: Them snorty, kinky bays was at least getting rode.

knock off v. [Lighter 1919] to kill
1950 Raine Six 136: Let's get out of here....We'll all be knocked off if we don't.

knock over v. [OED2 1928; Lighter 1823] to rob, kill
1878 Wheeler DD on Deck 8 We kin do most anything in the way of sendin' off sinners on a long pilgrimage, or knockin' over weemin. 1955 Henry Who 89: The idea that he'd been...knocking over the local payrolls and mine shipments was pretty far out on the edge of the herd. 1959 Nye Long 94: I would hate to find out, after I'd put a slug into him, that the guy I'd knocked over had been on my side of the fence. 1967 Henry Alias 29: I aimed to knock over that bank.

knock the horns off of v. phr. to defeat
1969 Foreman Last 23: He knocked the horns offa Garrett and Allen in damn short order!

land hog n. a person who prevents others from acquiring land
1960 L'Amour Sacketts 36: He's a land hog.

law dog n. [Lighter 1889] a lawman
1929 Brand Last 45: Half a hundred...hired law dogs are hunting for me.

lawsharp n. [Lighter 1935] a lawyer
1955 Henry Who 81: "Rotten Row," Tombstone's name for the nest of lawsharps...along Fourth and Toughnut Street.

lay one's cards on the table v. phr. to be frank, open
1928 Grey Stairs 92: He has laid his cards on the table. 1957 Gruber Lonesome 98: I'm a man who believes in laying all the cards on the table. 1960 L'Amour Sacketts 184: I laid all my cards on the table....I didn't beat around the bush.

lay out v. [OED2 1891] to knock down
1877 Wheeler DD Prince 12: I guess Dick has just got layed out by two fellows in the valley there. 1955 Henry Who 61: I still don't see Carp had any...call to lay you out.

lead n. [OED2 1809; Lighter 1879] bullets, gunfire
 1858 Clemens Mustang 205: Give them...a dose of lead before we part. 1904 Bower Chip 212: Why in thunder can't a feller pump lead into 'em like he wants t'? 1906 Mulford Bar 283: They couldn't help runnin' into singin' lead! 1913 Mulford Coming 83: I'll sidle up agin' that shack an' fill him so full of lead he won't know what hit him! 1921 Brand Seventh 25: Packed that lead with him till he died. 1928 Haycox Guns 63: Save your lead till you see a target. 1929 Brand Last 8: There were five hundred men in the country who were...anxious to feed him lead. 1929 Haycox Chaffee 166: Lay lead over there. 1931 Brand Ambush 104: The skunk that tries to pull out or double cross, we sock him full of lead. 1933 Brand False 75: 27: I would have plastered you with a ton of lead, if I'd seen my chance. 1932 Grey Lost 254: Wal pard, jerk around an' meet hot lead. 1936 Nye No 40: They are the kind which loves to palaver with hot lead. 1946 Nye Breed 41: Five chunks of lead in this gun all say so. 1955 Henry Who 23: Then he'd watch him go ahead and smoke his lead into whatever targets they were blasting at. 1954 Overholser Violent 107: When they had to swap lead with a gent who wanted to kill 'em they couldn't get their guns out of their holsters. 1956 Overholser Desperate 19: To make it look tough, she threw a little lead.

lead poisoning n. fatal gunshot wound or wounds
 1956 Overholser Desperate 7: It was only a question of time until...the Rafter 3 foreman got a dose of lead poisoning. 1959 Nye Long 87: He kicked off as a result of lead poisoning.

leather n.
 1. [Lighter 1931] a saddle
 1903 Adams Log 184: We caught...a horse, clapped leather on him, and tied him behind the wagon. 1906 Mulford Bar 155: I'm about as hard-headed a puncher as ever straddled leather. 1923 Hough North 114: As square a cowman as ever crossed leather.
 2. [Lighter 1964] a gun holster
 1921 Brand Seventh 158: I never seen none do it the way you did--with your gun in the leather at the start. 1937 Haycox Sundown 149: He went quickly into the leather. 1946 Nye Breed 37: 37: The man had his gun clean out of leather. 1949 Schaefer Shane 110: Do have to crowd you into slapping leather. 1955 Henry Who 10: You see me again you'd better scratch leather without waiting for any invitations.

leather it v. to put a gun in a holster
 1953 L'Amour Hondo 78: Lowe went for his gun...Buffalo shouted, "leather it!"

leather, hell-for- adv. adj. [OED2 1889] at top speed

1926 Rhodes Paso 37 comes boilin' out here hell-for-leather.
1936 Nye No 19: I'm gonna...see what this hell-for-leather
ridin's all about. 1955 Henry Who 131: He was
riding...hell-for-sweaty leather.

leather pants adj. tough
1913 Mulford Coming 368: Who is your leather-pants friend
who don't like mutton!

leather, pound v. to ride on a horse
1906 Mulford Bar 118: Was yu poundin' leather in the other
direction.

leather, push v. to draw a pistol
1949 Schaefer Shane 110: Do I have to crowd you into pushing
leather.

leather slapper n. a gunfighter
1946 Nye Breed 165: Tune, the leather slapper--that gunsmoke
king of corpse-makers. 1950 Raine Six 38: Though a
notorious leather slapper...he was a rare type of bad man.

leg it v. [OED2 1601] to travel by foot
1950 Raine Six 19: He's legging it for safety by this time.
1958 Henry Reckoning 98: The two of them came legging it
back.

legal beagle n. [OED2 1953; Lighter 1957] a lawyer
1968 Nye Lost 56: In restraint of her old man's legal
beagle.

level adj. [OED2 1872; DA 1875] truthful
1879 Wheeler DD in Leadville 3: Thes nig's all level.

lick v. [OED2 1535; Lighter 1843] to beat, thrash
1878 Wheeler DD on Deck 12 I'll guarantee to lick the cuss
as sez so. 1879 Wheeler DD in Leadville 6: I ked lick ther
crowd, old's I am. 1903 Rhodes Loved 12: I'm dead--licked--
done for. 1904 Bower Lonesome 173: It caused me to lick
about six kids a day, and to get licked by a dozen, when I
went to school. 1913 Mulford Coming 248: I can lick him th'
worst he's ever been licked. 1918 Grey U. P. 179: I'll lick
you good. 1926 Grey Under 121: I guess I'm about licked.
1928 Haycox Guns 13: They can be fought and they can be
licked. 1929 Brand Last 142: He's licked me all my life.
1930 Mulford HC Eagle 182: Me and Panhandle can lick any two
fellers on earth. 1931 Brand Ambush 43: I've got you
licked. 1937 Haycox Sundown 196: Hell, if we were ridin'
together we'd lick the world. 1946 Short Coroner 57: You
can lick anybody. 1955 Henry Who 133: We're licked. 1957
Gruber Lonesome 75: I licked you when we were kids and I can
lick you again. 1959 Gruber Bushwackers 24: I ain't ever

been licked. 1961 Short Desert 153: That patch is a sort of badge that says nothing has got you licked. 1965 Short First 112: My old man can lick your old man.

lift v. [Lighter 1821] to steal
1884 Whittaker Marshall 21: Ye headed a mob of Greasers and Injuns to lift all the stock of the caountry. 1913 Mulford Coming 212: They won't do no more cow-liftin'. 1922 Evarts Settling 62: I'm not above lifting a few calves. 1937 Haycox Sundown 68: You're on risky ground when you have your boys lift mail sacks from stages.

lift one's hair v. phr. to scalp
1932 Grey Lost 48: The sooner his hair is lifted the better. 1953 L'Amour Hondo 3: Young bucks out to lift some hair or steal horses.

light a rag v. [Lighter 1938] to leave, depart
1941 Short Hard 16: Light a rag then....Get out.

light a shuck v. [Lighter 1919] to leave, depart
1936 Nye No 176: Anyone that ain't feelin' trigger-minded better hop his nag an' light a shuck outa here. 1941 Short Hard 16: Get out....Light a shuck. 1950 Raine Six 6: You tell him to light a shuck outa here. 1956 Overholser Desperate 40: You'd better light a shuck out of the country. 1957 Evarts Man 110: I lit a shuck. 1959 L'Amour First 97: If things look good we'll stay over, otherwise we light a shuck. 1959 Nye Long 30: He'd have taken that payroll and lit a shuck out of here. 1960 L'Amour Sacketts 25: I'd straddle my bronc and light a shuck out of here. 1964 L'Amour Hanging 65: If you boys were wise you'd light a shuck for Texas. 1967 Henry Alias 162: Let's light a shuck out of here, too. 1976 L'Amour Where 105: We'd better light a shuck.

light out v. [DA 1870; Lighter 1870] to depart quickly
1878 Wheeler DD on Deck 8 Ye had a pard...who stole a haul o' money an' lit out for parts unknown. 1879 Wheeler DD in Leadville 13: It must be our duty to steal that money, and light out. 1885 Ingraham BB's Grip 11: I'd hev gone ther same way ef I hadn't lit out. 1887 Willett Sandy 11: We orter...light out hot-foot, as soon as the weather will let us. 1928 Grey Stairs 21: Take a canteen and some grub and light out. 1931 Brand Ride 6: I'll light out faster than any old ghost ever travelled in his life. 1941 Haycox Trail 131: So I lit out. 1950 Raine Six 22: You'd better fork Sloan's horse and light out sudden. 1957 Evarts Man 33: You lit out once before. 1959 L'Amour First 10: I lit out of there like who flung the chuck. 1963 L'Amour Sackett 87: My advice is to light out. 1964 L'Amour Hanging 46: If I hadn't been so dog-tired I'd have...lit out for the hills

right then. 1967 Henry Alias 6: When...the boys lit out, they left me behind. 1968 Nye Lost 190: Git hold of her an' light out a-runnin'. 1978 Evans Longarm 76: He's either lit out for good, or her wants us to think he's lit out for good.

lingo n. [OED2 1660; Lighter 1838] speech, dialect
1879 Morecamp Live 21: He began to talk in a curious sort of lingo, that Uncle could hardly understand. 1877 Wheeler DD Prince 4: Amused at the quaint lingo of the prospector. 1906 Mulford Bar 217: He can keep still in two lingoos. 1922 Brand Garden 140: He has a lingo about flowers and trees that'll knock their eyes out. 1929 Brand Last 26: It's not likely you'd enjoy my lingo for very long. 1931 Brand Ride 64: I don't understand legal lingo. 1932 Grey Lost 188: Surely you didn't learn that lingo in Miss Delorme's school? 1935 James Home x: As far as cowboy lingo, what I've read that's called such makes me think more as coming from the slums.

lit adj. [Lighter 1928] drunk
1923 Evarts Tumble 179: I was maybe just a trifle lit.

loafer wolf n. [OED2 1878; DA 1877] a gray wolf, lobo
1930 Brand Destry 7: I'd never let you loose excepting at loafer wolves and such. 1954 LeMay Searchers 45: Seems kind of far from timber for a loafer wolf. 1955 Henry Who 57: His eyes were burning like a loafer wolf's.

lobo n.
1. [OED2 1839] a wolf
1921 Brand Seventh 10: The big print of a lobo's paw, that gray ghost which haunts the range with the swiftest feet and the wisest brain in the West. 1928 Haycox Guns 46: He ought to be sent spinning from his saddle and thresh in the sand like a hamstrung lobo. 1936 Nye No 6: Here's the four o' you yelpin' for my hide like a pack of mangy lobos. 1955 Henry Who 79: The kid...sounded nastier than a trapped lobo trying to chew his front foot off. 1957 Gruber Lonesome 1: A wolf, a giant lobo, darted across her mustang's path. 1965 Foreman Mustang 51: A notorious hardcase whose designs on the girl...were as sinister as those of a lobo stalking a lamb.
2. [Lighter 1927] a vicious person
1931 Brand Ambush 120: You worn-out old lobo. 1963 L'Amour Sackett 98: I've read his sign and itreads pure lobo. The man's a killer. 1969 Foreman Last 19: The seven cowmen's eyes said mutely that they regarded him as a dangerous lobo.

lock horns v. [Lighter 1845] to fight
1967 Nye Trigger 99: They locked horns one time las' spring.

loco adj. [OED2 1887; Lighter 1887] crazy
1906 Mulford Bar 13: Johnny was shore loco about her. 1913 Mulford Coming 212: So he drifts on, gettin' a li'l loco by now. 1929 Haycox Chaffee 37: The town heard his wild, nerve-wracking yell....He's loco. 1930 Mulford HC Eagle 85: Yo're loco! 1932 Grey Lost 215: Am I loco? 1936 Nye No 69: Where'd yuh gather in that loco notion? 1946 Nye Breed 51: Blindingly sudden Tune appeared to go loco. 1956 Overholser Desperate 47: We'd be loco to take one poison to get rid of another! 1959 Nye Long 55: Are you loco? 1960 L'Amour Sacketts 191: That man's gone loco like an old buffalo bull who's left the herd. 1968 Nye Lost 119: Johnston called himself seven kinds of loco to be larruping along with such a featherheaded plan.

locoed adj. [OED2 1886; Lighter 1885] crazed
1903 Adams Log 66: Some of them in their locoed condition, might have passed the water during the night. 1904 Bower Lonesome 199: Yuh knock-kneed bunch uh locoed sheep-herders! 1906 Mulford Bar 145: There's a locoed gang that's headin' that way. 1913 Mulford Coming 433: Yo're locoed through an' through. 1914 Grey Rustlers 59: His faro game's crooked, or I'm locoed bronc. 1922 Rhodes Copper 166: Standing to us, as you do, almost as a locoed parent. 1924 Grey Wild 51: Reckon you're locoed, Mel. 1930 Mulford HC Eagle 112: Half a dozen locoed desert rats got th' idear there was gold in the crick.

log roller n. [OED2 1864; DA 1821; Lighter 1899] a manipulative politician
1929 Haycox Chaffee 152: There was something of the glorified log roller about him.

lone hand n. [OED2 1879; Lighter 1926] a plan or action carried out by only one person
1885 Harbaugh Denver 14: Woe to ther galoots who interfere with my lone hand. 1931 Brand Ambush 13: He may work a lone hand, and he may work with a gang. 1933 Brand False 75: 28: I don't want no lone hand. 1969 Foreman Last 106: A lone hand didn't stand much whack, going against Roone's victorious mob.

lone wolf n. [OED2 1909; Lighter 1930] a person isolated from society
1937 Haycox Sundown 68: A lone wolf with the smell of smoke on him. 1941 Haycox Trail 72: You're goin' lone wolf.

lonesome n. wilderness
1926 Rhodes Paso 43 I go now into thees beeg lonesome. 1967 Henry Alias 77: Places where only the eagle perched...the high lonesomes sure enough.

long-ear n. a calf, a foolish person
1920 Rhodes Stepsons 131: Drove ahead for the...cow and her long-ear.

longeared adj. foolish
1906 Rhodes Sticky 24: You longeared crank.

long green n. [OED2 1896; DA 1891; Lighter 1891] money
1930 Brand Destry 95: You have to pasture this girl on the long green, honey.

longhorn n. [Lighter 1903] an experienced man
1903 Adams Log 195: Those old longhorns, McNulta and Lovell, got us in with the crowd. 1913 Mulford Coming 83: Longhorn'd a' shot you quick tonight.

long rope n. an intention to rustle cattle
1922 Evarts Settling 39: Salde could come into this country...with nothing but a long rope and a running iron, and be owning thirty thousand head to-day. 1935 James Home 13: The old son of a sea cook had nothing but a saddle and a 'long rope'* when he started. *Term for cattle rustling, long rope, reaching out of his territory for somebody else's cattle.

long sleep n. death
1957 Evarts Man 144: No pain for Sam. Just the long sleep.

lose one's scalp v. to be killed
1960 L'Amour Sacketts 159: You're looking to lose your scalp...but it's your hair.

loud mouth n. [OED2 1668] an indiscreet person
1956 Overholser Desperate 41: Herb Jason was a loudmouth...talking in town about Cameron Runyan got his start with a running iron. 1960 L'Amour Sacketts 75: It's that loudmouth kid.

lubrication n. liquor
1959 Nye Long 86: He had to search for lubrication before he could get any sound out.

make tracks v. to depart
1949 Schaefer Shane 47: He'd be darned if he'd make tracks just because some big-hatted rancher wanted him to.

maverick n.
1. [OED2 1867; DA 1867] an unbranded cow, a stray
1879 Morecamp Live 194: Whenever cow hunters want fresh meat they kill a maverick. 1920 Rhodes Stepsons 157: He caught young Dines stealin' a maverick of his.
2. an outsider

1913 Mulford Coming 388: I'm a sorta maverick. 1936 Nye No 13: I can tend to this maverick without no help. 1954 Overholser Violent 198: We're mavericks, both of us. 1957 Evarts Man 11: Neighbors soon had come to call the younger Horn boy a maverick. 1960 L'Amour Sacketts 12: If you want to run maverick a few more years...stay off that porch.

mazuma n. [OED2 1904; DA 1907; Lighter 1904] money
1906 Mulford Bar 128: When th' mazuma is divided up it won't buy a meal.

meat n. [OED2 1872; DA 1872; Lighter 1883] one's intended or easy prey
1887 Willett Sandy 2: He's my meat, he is. 1921 Brand Seventh 97: You ain't my meat and I ain't goin' to clutter up your way. 1929 Brand Last 43: He's my meat now.

meathouse, pull down (someone's) v. phr. to thwart, confound
1903 Rhodes Loved 7: If you ain't right up to the scratch with that money you owe me, down goes your meathouse! 1923 Evarts Tumble 60: I forgot my timidity and pulled down his meat house.

medicine n. [Lighter 1906] an action, object, person, mental state or plan that has a powerful effect or influence
1922 Evarts Settling 64: Let's have a medicine chat. 1930 Mulford HC Eagle 34: Make good medicine. 1956 Overholser Desperate 41: There was a man who was making big medicine a few years ago. 1958 Henry Reckoning 65: The Absaroka must not become involved in any big medicine dreams such as were currently disturbing the sleep of the Sioux. 1965 Foreman Mustang 97: Feared o' gardeeen sperrits! Big medicine!

medicine, bad n. [Lighter 1871] a dangerous or ominous object
1904 Bower Lonesome 61: Bert says she's bad medicine--a man killer from away back. 1932 Grey Lost 25: Firewater...bad medicine. 1942 Nye Trigger 30: He's what they call 'bad medicine' out here. 1953 L'Amour Hondo 160: You whipped me....My medicine must have been bad. 1959 Gruber Bushwackers 73: The Burke Brothers from Texas, who were real bad medicine, took over the town. 1964 L'Amour Hanging 6: Leave him alone....He's bad medicine.

Mex n. [OED2 1854; DA 1853; Lighter 1882] a Mexican
1928 Grey Stairs 174: The Mex drove off. 1936 Nye No 154: You didn't have any connection with that Mex I knocked seat-over-eyebrows. 1950 Raine Six 140: There's scalawags in this town would bump you off for a dollar Mex. 1954 LeMay Searchers 233: Got a sodbuster in here...or a Mex. 1960

L'Amour Sacketts 90: There wasn't a Mex in the place. 1961 Short Desert 15: That's what the Mex said. 1963 L'Amour Sackett 76: Howdy, Mex! 1967 Nye Trigger 11: You can't boot me out like some low pelado Mex. 1987 Dexter Deadwood 32: Bill was standing next to the Mex.

Mex adj. [Lighter 1901] Mexican
1920 Rhodes Stepsons 146: He found a Mex boy rollin' round in the street. 1930 Mulford HC Eagle 140: He can throw together some right good Mex. dishes. 1955 Henry Who 132: Mex cattle?...Didn't get no chance to try my Spanish on 'em.

Mick n. [OED2 1856; DA 1856; Lighter 1871] an Irishman
1967 Henry Alias 109: Micks, Bohunkies, muckers and Cousin Jacks.

mockey n. [Lighter 1936] a wild mare
1921-26 Santee Men 86: The range was full of wild mockeys (wild mares).

money bags n. [OED2 1818; Lighter 1871] a rich person
1936 Nye No 10: Don't tell me...you is scared of a mutton-faced crowd of money bags. 1941 Short Hard 55: You're just another money bags that's got too big for his pants.

moniker n. [OED2 1851; Lighter 1911] a name
1929 Haycox Chaffee 150: He done put his moniker on a flock of buildin's. 1959 Nye Long 73: What's your monicker?

moon v. [OED2 1848] to mope
1959 L'Amour First 152: There's no sense mooning around over him.

moons n.pl. infatuation
1914 Grey Rustlers 66: I had a pretty bad case of moons over the little Langdon girl.

mosey v. [OED2 1829; DA 1829; Lighter 1837] to go
1904 Bower Lonesome 135: Somebody's got to mosey in here and peel the spuds. 1918 Grey U. P. 70: Mosey over to thet camp doctor or you'll never need one. 1929 Haycox Chaffee 87: Mosey, and don't come back. 1952 Schaefer First 134: Meantime us drivers'll be moseying right along. 1965 Foreman Mustang 187: We better mosey, though. 1978 Evans Longarm 13: Am I free to mosey on? 1985 McMurtry Lonesome 350: Jake's moseying along.

mossy horn n. an old cow
1923 Hough North 1: He owned many thousand head of long-horned cattle, from calves to mossy horns.

mountain dew n. [OED2 1885; Lighter 1826] whisky

1887 Lewis Demon 17: He held up to view a bottle of whisky....Mountain dew, eh?

mouthwash n. insincere speech
1936 Nye No 13: Don't give me no more of your psalm singin' mouthwash.

mow down v. [OED2 1836] to kill
1959 L'Amour First 117: It would be an invitation for them to mow me down.

mucker n. [DA 1899; Lighter 1918] a miner
1955 Henry Who 41: The camp's total population was over 6,000, with better than ninety percent of that being muckers and bull prod drillers. 1967 Henry Alias 109: Hardrock gophers, and muckers...instantly surrounded the combatants.

mug n. [OED2 1904; Lighter 1904] face
1902 Wister Virginian 168: Why you surely ain't the man to mind ugly mugs. 1914 Grey Rustlers 194: If she takes that bungled mug of yours in her lap, you can be sure you're loved. 1929 Haycox Chaffee 86: Git yore greasy mug outen my sight. 1931 Haycox Whispering 155: How would you like a nice belt in the mug. 1946 Nye Breed Funny thing about faces--take that dark fellow's mug. 1954 Overholser Violent 201: How'd a man with a mug as ugly as yours ever rope a pretty wife.

mug, open one's v. phr. [OED2 1820] to talk
1914 Grey Rustlers 59: You're afraid to open your mug about Sampson.

mule-skinner n. [OED2 1870; DA 1870; Lighter 1937] a mule driver
1949 Schaefer Shane 48: Mule-skinners...made regular trips into the valley freighting in goods. 1965 Foreman Mustang 6: Freighters and mule-skinners made a knuckly crowd. 1985 McMurtry Lonesome 218: He had known a woman mule skinner in Montana who had worn pants.

muley n. [OED2 1573] a hornless steer
1903 Adams Log 25: There were a number of muleys among th cattle...Being hornless, instinct taught them to be on the defensive.

nail v.
1. [Lighter 1893] to shoot
1885 Ingraham BB's Grip 9: If the spook, or human, or whatever it is, keeps on practicing, he will nail me yet. 1902 Wister Virginian 358: Aha! nailed you anyway! 1906 Mulford Bar 203: He promptly nailed the marksman. 1921 Brand Seventh 38: Had they nailed the stranger? 1929 Brand

Last 33: His enemies heard where he was and gathered to nail him. 1930 Brand Destry 246: I nailed him. 1964 L'Amour Hanging 46: Nailing him with the first carefully aimed shot, and killing him dead. 1976 L'Amour Where 105: I think they intended to nail us, too.

2. [Lighter 1873] to strike

1965 Foreman Mustang 17: A tinhorn cheaply flung an empty bottle that barely missed nailing him on the ear.

3. [Lighter 1897] to catch, capture

1914 Grey Rustlers 216: I've got you nailed--all the proofs.

1922 Brand Garden 40: I'm starting out to nail a thousand-to-one shot. 1932 Grey Lost 106: If we nailed that train of beaver skins, we'd never have to work again.

necktie festival or necktie party n. [OED2 1871; DA 1871; Lighter 1891] a hanging

1904 Bower Lonesome 177: I'll have an invite to a neck-tie party someday. 1906 Mulford Bar 366: How'd he look as th' leadin' man in a necktie festival? 1931 Brand Ride 130: Give this couple a necktie party. It saves a lot of time and trouble...and we don't like to overwork the judge. 1954 LeMay Searchers 196: This is an invite to a neck-tie party. 1978 Evans Longarm 32: Dragged him into town for a necktie party.

nest v. [OED2 1918] to settle

1964 L'Amour Hanging 20: They take it mighty unkind for anybody to go nesting on their water.

nester n. [OED2 1880] a farmer

1913 Mulford Coming 356: He...hates sheep, barb' wire an' nesters as bad as I do. 1920 Rhodes Stepsons 130: Nester cattle. 1922 Evarts Settling 8: The nesters streamed westward on all trails. 1935 James Home 32: Nesters have a way of edging in. 1941 Short Hard 69: I'm only a nester over on Blue Crick! 1950 Raine Six 63: Without pity he had harried nesters from the water holes they had homesteaded. 1954 Overholser Violent 78: You don't think you'll ever make a buckaroo out of this nester kid?

1964 L'Amour Hanging 52: Ranchers...didn't take favorably to nesters of any kind. 1967 Nye Trigger 126: The big washout...put me outa the cattle business an' made a bean-eatin' nester of me.

nig n. [OED2 1818; DA 1828; Lighter 1838] a black person
1879 Wheeler DD in Leadville 3: Thes nig's all level. 1884 Whittaker Marshall 4: And some was like Injuns, and some like common, no 'count nigs.

nigger n. [OED2 1786; Lighter 1689] a black person

1877 Wheeler DD Prince 7: Shoot the accursed nigger. 1885 Ingraham BB's Grip 9: And he has killed pale-face, red-skin,

Chinee and nigger ever since. 1887 Willett Sandy 3: I ain't a nigger and I ain't a sojer. 1903 Adams Log 234: You'd make a fine second mate on a river steamboat, driving niggers. 1918 Grey U. P. 49: They'll bury the nigger tomorrow. 1923 Hough North 105: You better engage in prayer, nigger. 1926 Brand Blue 45: A nigger boy come out and took the heads of the horses. 1930 Brand Destry 58: In this family...niggers ain't fired, I thank God. 1931 Rhodes Trusty 241: But you know what happened to the ten little niggers standing in a line? 1932 Grey Lost 28: Creik, the damned nigger, wants some slaves to beat. 1938 Haycox Man 122: A kid out o no 'count nigger-poor family. 1950 Raine Six 27: I had nigger luck. 1955 Henry Who 66: I just don't aim to be your nigger no more.

night hawk n. [Lighter 1899] a cowboy herding cattle at night; a nocturnal person

1904 Bower Lonesome 218: I betche yuh won't see no horses t'day--ner no night-hawk, neither. 1922 Evarts Settling 44: She fell asleep with the crooning voice of the nighthawk drifting to her ears. 1923 Evarts Tumble 90: The night hawk held the cavayado on good grass somewhere down the bottoms and the voice drifted faintly to Carver as he sang to while away the lonely hours. 1929 Haycox Chaffee 77: It was late. A few night hawks loitered along the building. 1931 Haycox Whispering 46: One of these nighthawks was shuffling up the stairway. 1959 Nye Long 100: The pair who had stood the last trick as nighthawks rode off in the direction of camp to get their breakfasts.

nighthawk v. to rustle

1938 Haycox Man 135: Skull's been bothered too much by men nighthawkin' its range.

nip n. [Lighter 1736] a drink of liquor

1956 Overholser Desperate 74: I've had a nip or two, but I don't never get drunk.

oil up v. [OED2 1737; Lighter 1870] to get drunk

1930 Mulford HC Eagle 137: Oil up on me. 1954 Overholser Violent 108: He [talked] after he got oiled up pretty well. 1955 Henry Who 24: Before the kid could get oiled up to the trouble mark.

old horse n. old fellow--used in direct address

1878 Wheeler DD on Deck 3 See hayr, old hoss! 1887 Willett Sandy 24: Don't be too sart'in of that, ole hoss. 1955 Henry Who 29: I'll bring you up to date, old horse.

old-timer n. [OED2 1888] an old person, old settler

1904 Bower Lonesome 167: Yuh shouldn't judge a man by his clothes. old-timer. 1913 Mulford Coming 378: So yo're a

old-timer, hey? 1922 Rhodes Copper 56: Come again, old-timer. 1926 Brand Blue 83: Give me the low-down and confess, old timer. 1928 Grey Stairs 127: You're spry for an old timer. 1930 Brand Destry 37: You have friends, too, old timer. 1930 Mulford HC Eagle 178: Here, old-timer. 1931 Rhodes Trusty 222: Anything gnawing on you, old timer? 1932 Grey Lost 141: You speak my mind, old timer. 1938 Haycox Man 114: Shannon was an old-timer and knew the country inside out, and the ways of men. 1958 Henry Reckoning 55: I want to tell you something, old-timer. 1969 Foreman Last 48: What would you know about that, old-timer? 1978 Gilman Death 61: It was the old-timer who spoke. 1985 McMurtry Lonesome 354: I don't necessarily keep up with every old-timer who ever shot at an Indian.

on the fight adj. ready for a fight
1904 Bower Chip 121: Chip...was rapidly nearing that state of mind which is locally described as being "strictly on the fight."

on the jump adv. hastily
1930 Mulford HC Eagle 319: You boys would have to come out on th' jump. 1938 Haycox Man 135: If Meritt's on the jump, I'd have a hell of a time catchin' up with him.

on the wing adj. fleeing from the law
1930 Brand Destry 153: Him that grabbed the money was pretty much on the wing. 1959 Nye Long 12: When it boils down to me or a pair on the wing, I generally figure to make sure it ain't me.

one spot n. an ace
1930 Mulford HC Eagle 95: I can cut a higher card than you can, aces bein' one-spots.

open one's head v. to talk
1920 Rhodes Stepsons 43: Do you suppose I'd ever have opened my head about it?

opry seat n. top rail of the corral
1985 McMurtry Lonesome 138: Pea had already climbed up to what they called the "opry seat"--the top rail of the corral--to watch the proceedings.

ornery adj. [OED2 1816; DA 1899; Lighter 1896] mean
1878 Wheeler DD on Deck 12 I'll show ye, directly, ye ornery cuss! 1902 Wister Virginian 151: He could take just little old o'rn'ry frawgs and dandy 'em up to suit the bloods. 1904 Bower Chip 21: We'll...catch up the orneriest cayuses in our strings. 1904 Bower Lonesome 43: Ornery little brute, to get familiar with his schoolma'am. 1906 Mulford Bar 91: We better...find that ornery little cuss. 1913

Mulford Coming 24: He is too ornery an' downright cussed for any human bein'to worry about. 1920 Rhodes Stepsons 33: Mr. Hales is thinkin' some of buying that ornery...horse of mine. 1921 Brand Seventh 137: Of all the ornery, thick-headed cayuses! 1922 Rhodes Copper 312: Then that ornery Nig horse kicked me in the head. 1926 Brand Blue 7: The ordinary pavement walker is ornery. 1930 Brand Destry 152: You ornery, low-lifted son of mis'ry. 1930 Mulford HC Eagle 17: Damn yore ornery hide. 1931 Rhodes Trusty 223: A nice new jail and it full all the time, but never a man for anything really low-down and ornery. 1932 Grey Lost 152: He was an ornery hombre. 1936 Nye No 28: They do run pretty ornery hereabouts. 1953 L'Amour Hondo 74: Ornery cuss. 1954 Gruber Bitter 104: Older was about the orneriest man who ever lived. 1954 Overholser Violent 91: I don't think he'd know how to keep the ornery boys in line. 1957 Evarts Man 11: Neighbors soon had come to call the younger Horn boy a maverick, an ornery little hellion and worse. 1959 L'Amour First 113: Ornery most of the time, but...he'll take you from here to yonder with less water and less food in more heat than any horse you ever saw. 1960 L'Amour Sacketts 72: I was feeling ornery as a stepped-on baby. 1963 L'Amour Sackett 82: Not even a Sackett could be so downright ornery. 1964 L'Amour Hanging 116: I'd done my job...pulling ornery steers out of bogs. 1978 Evans Longarm 17: Ornery pissant, ain't he? 1985 McMurtry Lonesome 378: It's too bad Call's ornery about women.

outlaw n. a mean horse

1903 Rhodes Loved 4: They'll take outlaws alright, but no broncs. 1921-26 Santee Men 169: The rough string is made up of broncs and old outlaw horses that the average cow-puncher can't ride. 1938 James Flint 13: They'd be used for "snubbing" the outlaws while being saddled.

over the hump adj. dead

1967 Nye Trigger 124: Some damn skunk had sent her brother over the hump.

overplay one's hand v. to overextend, overreach one's self

1929 Haycox Chaffee 81: He'll overplay his hand pretty soon.

owl-hoot v. to become a fugitive from the law

1936 Nye No 163: I ain't got much love for owl-hootin' it over the country for the rest of my days.

owlhoot n. [Lighter 1969] an outlaw

1946 Nye Breed 135: The inevitable end of an owlhoot rider. 1954 LeMay Searchers 91: That's what your owl-hoot friend saw. 1968 Nye Lost 64: The big trouble with owlhoots was

they generally played for keeps. 1978 Evans Longarm 128: He said I was a wanted owlhoot who deserved a good hanging.

owlhooter n. an outlaw

1942 Nye Trigger 7: Galeyville was...a boom silver camp and owl-hooter hang-out. 1946 Nye Breed 53: I've yet to see the owlhooter that ever done anybody any good. 1954 LeMay Searchers 108: She meant owl-hooters of course--a term applied to hunted men, who liked to travel by night. 1968 Nye Lost 65: Arizona was largely an owlhooter's paradise.

owlhoot trail n. [Lighter 1969] outlawry

1936 Nye No 160: He felt no longing for the Owlhoot Trail. 1967 Henry Alias v. The facts, the places, the personalities that first sent him along the owlhoot trail. 1976 L'Amour Where 13: You can go on the owlhoot...ride the outlaw trail until somebody shoots you. 1982 Tippetts Texas 94: I reckon we'll have enough money we could get off the owl hoot trail for a good little while.

owls hoot, hear the v. phr. to be an outlaw

1921-16 Santee Men 219: Whatever Jones was wanted for wouldn't bother the old man any, for he'd heard the owls hoot himself.

pack v. [OED2 1890; DA 1890; Lighter 1901] to carry, esp. a gun

1904 Bower Lonesome 86: Law abiding citizens are not supposed to "pack" a gun. 1913 Mulford Coming 239: Not only did every man of that section pack a gun, but Crawford, himself, packed one. 1914 Grey Rustlers 148: You've packed a gun and you've used it. 1918 Grey U. P. 70: Why in hell don't you pack a gun? 1921 Brand Seventh 25: Packed that lead with him till he dies. 1924 Grey Wild 88: If Chess had been packing a gun--there'd have been blood spilled. 1928 Grey Stairs 104: Somebody said you were still packing a bullet. 1930 Mulford HC Eagle 204: There are some things I might be scared of: but they ain't nothin' that is flesh an' blood, and least of all, any thin' that packs a gun. 1932 Grey Lost 190: He packed two guns. 1935 James Home 14: He don't dare go back to Texas and pack the same name he did there. 1936 Nye No 102: Don't never pack hardware when yuh go to visit Bast. 1937 Haycox Sundown 122: If I pack a gun it will be to bust this whole damned thing up. 1953 L'Amour Hondo 79: I was lucky he wasn't packin' a gun. 1954 Overholser Violent 75: Don't figure on packing it, son. There's two things Jim don't like for a man to have when he's working. Whisky's one. A gun's the other. 1957 Evarts Man 15: Why should I pack a gun? 1959 Nye Long 88: What was the stranger packin'? 1964 L'Amour Hanging 10: That gun you're packin...is the handle that will open a grave for you on Boot Hill. 1976 L'Amour

Where 183: He had started packing two six-shooters when he rode shotgun on the stage.

pack the star v. [OED2 1890] to be a lawman
1941 Haycox Trail 47: Never make my mistake, which is to pack the star when your day is done.

Paddy n. [Lighter 1855] an Irishman, often derisive
1918 Grey U. P. 349: Me boy, nithin's shure when yez are drillin' with the Paddies.

pain killer n. [Lighter 1933] liquor
1906 Mulford Bar 262: Red's got a few remarks...about yore pain killer.

palaver n. [OED2 1735; Lighter 1774] a discussion
1906 Mulford Bar 192: He'd give a century for five minutes palaver with him. 1928 Haycox Guns 108: Let's ride and cut this palaver. 1968 Nye Lost 65: In that guarded palaver they'd been having.

palaver v. [Lighter 1851] to hold a discussion
1885 Ingraham BB's Grip 15: I am not one to palaver. 1936 Nye No 40: They are the kind which loves to palaver with hot lead.

pan out v. [OED2 1868] to result
1885 Harbaugh Denver 9: Ther cards may pan out well for you; but they're no good ter Amazon Alf. 1922 Evarts Settling 15: It's hard to tell just how it will pan out. 1931 Brand Ambush 71: How does the place pan out?

panther spit n. [OED2 1941; Lighter 1931] liquor
1931 Haycox Whispering 19: Let's have another drink of this here panther spit.

paper-collar n. a white-collar worker
1987 Dexter Deadwood 22: That was a class of paper-collars Charley would like to have studied--reporters.

paradise fluid n. liquor
1885 Harbaugh Denver 19: Waltz forth yer paradise fluid.

pard n. [OED2 1872; DA 1850; Lighter 1865] a partner, friend, fellow
1877 Wheeler DD Prince 7: Where's your pard, the one that got salted last night. 1878 Wheeler DD on Deck 5 I denounce you all as mutineers, and you no longer are pards of mine. 1885 Harbaugh Denver 2: Ther pard's been murdered! 1885 Ingraham BB's Grip 11: Look a-hair, stranger pard, is yer pokin' fun at me? 1887 Willett Sandy 13: Sandy Bill...was seated by the fire with his "pard." 1891

Ingraham Buck 2: What does yer mean, stranger pard? 1906 Mulford Bar 198: Why didn't yu say yu was a pard of Buck Peters? 1914 Grey Rustlers 209: Say, Pard, I've got to rustle. 1918 Grey U. P. 44: Me an' my pard was the fust white men in these hyar hills. 1924 Grey Wild 16: What's eatin' you pards? 1928 Grey Stairs 15: I'm Merryvale,...Adam's pard these long four years. 1932 Grey Lost 19: Our red pards are aboot to move. 1957 Gruber Lonesome 21: We weren't exactly pards. 1967 Nye Trigger 122: I'm a little worried about that pard of yours. 1987 Dexter Deadwood 7: This is a historic day, pards.

pard in with v. to associate with
1887 Badger Rustler 2: Durned ef I reckoned on hevin' to pard in with red niggers.

pardner n. [OED2 1795; DA 1795] partner, friend, fellow
1877 Wheeler DD Prince 4: Pardner, I shall leave you here for a few days. 1878 Wheeler DD on Deck 1: I will, pardner. 1887 Badger Rustler 2: You want to mind, pardner. 1906 Mulford Bar 186: I'll call my pardner down to keep house. 1913 Mulford Coming 309: Come on, pardner. 1922 Rhodes Copper 25: Your pardner's feeling plenty bad enough without that. 1926 Rhodes Paso 36 You sent your pardner for the doctor. 1930 Mulford HC Eagle 262: I'll team up with you an' yore pardner. 1935 James Home 30: He came back with a long haired pardner. 1936 Nye No 55: You lookin' for work...pardner? 1946 Nye Breed 26: 'Fraid you're slantin' your talk at the wrong gent, pardner. 1955 Henry Who 124: Fill me in pardner. 1959 Gruber Bushwackers 66: Here you are, pardner! 1959 Nye Long 15: Who you got there, pardner? 1967 Nye Trigger 173: This...squirt's talkin' pardners.

pasear n. [OED2 1840; DA 1840] a walk, trip
1928 Haycox Guns 53: What was Nick and you doing over thataway? Just a pasear. 1931 Rhodes Trusty 241: The Packsaddle men are all on a big pasear down in Mexico. 1955 Henry Who 79: Let's take a little pasear over to the jailhouse. 1967 Nye Trigger 141: We was thinkin' of takin' a little pasear ourselves. 1968 Nye Lost 54: The tricky part of this pasear is just up ahead.

pass out v. [OED2 1869; Lighter 1871] to quit
1887 Willett Sandy 3: You had the first draw...and you've got a full. I reckon I'd better pass out.

pasteboard n. [OED2 1859; Lighter 1828] a playing card
1877 Wheeler DD Prince 1: The gambler uttered a curse, and dealt out the pasteboards. 1885 Harbaugh Denver 9: The accursed pasteboards burn my fingers. 1955 Henry Who 6: He...saw the house slicker shifting the pasteboards on him.

paw n. [OED2 1605; Lighter 1821] a hand
1878 Wheeler DD on Deck 11: Thar's my paw--grab it! 1906 Rhodes Sticky 16: I sure hope I get my paws on this city job. 1913 Mulford Coming 80: Put up yore paws! 1921 Brand Seventh 56: He took the slender hand of the other in his big paw. 1936 Nye No 136: Get them paws up, polecat! 1942 Nye Trigger 10: There's my bum paw. 1959 Nye Long 18: Get them paws up. 1967 Nye Trigger 26: There were traits in Tommy not too well excused by the fact of a mere bum paw. 1968 Nye Lost 165: Keep those paws plenty still!

pay dirt n. [OED2 1857; DA 1856] rock containing precious metal
1920 Rhodes Stepsons 140: The probable limit of pay dirt. 1960 L'Amour Sacketts 130: He's pawing pay dirt right out of the ground.

peel v. [Lighter 1922] to break wild horses
1921-6 Santee Men 179: I...hit 'em for a job a-peelin' broncs.

peeler n. [OED2 1894; DA 1902] bronco buster
1922 Evarts Settling 142: There'll be enough out-of-job peelers riding grub line to rebuild the whole place. 1929 Haycox Chaffee 29: You're comin' back to my outfit as peeler again.

pen n. [OED2 1884; DA 1884; Lighter 1865] penitentiary
1922 Rhodes Copper 125: You goin' to break him out o' the pen? 1923 Evarts Tumble 74: It's the pen if they cinch you. 1930 Brand Destry 281: You passed me into the pen for six years. 1931 Rhodes Trusty 270: And now you can send the whole bunch to the pen. 1933 Brand False 75: 117: I'll have you in the pen for your share in it. 1950 Raine Six 33: You mean he's broke outa the pen. 1955 Henry Who 128: Bucking the federal pen is a tiger none of these country hoodlums cares to get into. 1965 Short First 100: In his day he sent many a man to the pen.

pen pusher n. [OED2 1911; Lighter 1908] a clerical worker
1929 Haycox Chaffee 11: They's a dude in charge that calls himself a secretary...a pen pusher.

percentage girl n. a barroom girl
1941 Short Hard 51: They shouldered into...a big saloon...A percentage girl threw her arms around Wallace's neck.

perforate v. [Lighter 1836] to shoot
1921 Brand Seventh 129: Joe would shoot the wolf-dog, and Silver Waldron would perforate Dan Barry. 1935 James Home 12: Some of 'em use with wimmen [language] would either make

you want to hunt a hole for shame or perforate their slick hides with a forty-five.

petticoat n. [OED2 1600; Lighter 1897] a woman
1946 Nye Breed 11: If I did [work]...it wouldn't be for no petticoat.

piggin string n. a short rope for tying down cattle
1921-6 Santee Men 157: She come alive and started chewin' on the piggin string. 1938 James Flint 29: The roper...with his "piggin string" (short tie-down rope) soon had him tied to stay.

pig-tail n. [OED2 1886; Lighter 1871] a Chinese man
1879 Wheeler DD in Leadville 6: Ef she didn't shake a hull trick o' cards out o' thet pig-tail's sleeves.

piker n. [OED2 1872; DA 1872; Lighter 1899] a small bettor, a miser
1910 Rhodes Good Men 76 I didn't think you were a piker. 1922 Brand Garden 194: I'm going to give you something to show I'm not a piker. 1929 Brand Last 136: I've seen enough pikers and quitters to know the real people when they come in my way. 1941 Short Hard 144: There's a twenty-thousand dollar reward on your head....Is that all? Wallace is a piker. 1956 Gruber Big 143: We'll see where the pikers are. 1957 Gruber Lonesome 23: Never saw such a piker game.

pile n. [OED2 1741; DA 1872; Lighter 1899] a fortune
1878 Wheeler DD on Deck 2 We staked our claim, an' made our pile. 1887 Lewis Demon 2: I would risk my pile that he's on his way to Kingfisher Creek Station. 1913 Mulford Coming 309: I lost my pile.

pilgrim n. [OED2 1841; DA 1841; Lighter 1863] a newcomer to the West, a tenderfoot
1878 Wheeler DD on Deck 2 Deadwood may need us to quell some row, or do a suffering pilgrim good. 1879 Wheeler DD in Leadville 3: Thet's w'at I sed, Pilgrim. 1885 Ingraham BB's Grip 8: That mad pilgrim is a goer. 1904 Bower Lonesome 171: You're not the pilgrim you look to be. 1929 Haycox Chaffee 12: She's from the territorial capital...a sorter pilgrim. 1936 Nye No 7: If hot air was dollars, pilgrim, you'd be a millionaire. 1937 Haycox Sundown 12: Keep your voice down, pilgrim. 1938 Haycox Man 68: Just wanted to please the pilgrims. 1960 L'Amour Sacketts 36: Don Luis is no pilgrim. 1964 L'Amour Hanging 111: Tom Gatty was no pilgrim. 1969 Foreman Last 28: And that's the jackpot that you'd steer an unsuspecting pilgrim into, like me! 1978 Evans Longarm 158: What's your play pilgrim. 1987 Dexter Deadwood 36: We could make Indian fighters of these pilgrims.

pill thrower n. a doctor

1904 Bower Chip 129: It's a cinch he don't know about that pill-thrower back in Ohio.

pistol-pusher n. a gun fighter

1936 Nye No 176: Thinks he's the only pistol-pusher in these here parts.

plank v. [OED2 1824] to bet

1877 Wheeler DD Prince 3: What will you plank on that?

plant v.

1. [OED2 1855; DA 1885; Lighter 1871] to bury
1885 Harbaugh Denver 2: We'll give her brother a decent planting. 1885 Ingraham BB's Grip 11: I'd like to plant the whole lot, he muttered glancing toward the Indians slain by the madman and himself. 1891 Ingraham Buck 11: We put for the hills, planted our dead, and the men disbanded after leaving the range. 1906 Mulford Bar 242: What friends you have left will have to tote you off an' plant you. 1926 Brand Blue 191: When I die, I want to be planted down here by the side of Sour Creek. 1930 Mulford HC Eagle 42: The whole town will turn out to plant th' tinhorn. 1936 Nye No 115: That fella's goin' to make you more trouble 'fore he gets planted. 1959 Nye Long 23: They're waiting to find out if they're going to have to plant him. 1967 Nye Trigger 114: The first swivel-eyed shorthorn touches a gun is goin' to get Mister Frodsham planted! 1968 Nye Lost 26: Six plantin's they've had already up there an' that don't count the ones dropped in gulches. 1985 McMurtry Lonesome 573: We'd plant 'em. Shoot them and sell their cattle.

2. to shoot

1931 Brand Ride 128: Drill him....Plant him between the eyes

play n. [OED2 1868; Lighter 1897] an action

1903 Adams Log 205: My bunkie was heart and soul in the play. 1906 Rhodes Sticky 20: Our play is to get back to our fire-side. 1906 Mulford Bar 185: Th' white men won't stand fer no play like that. 1913 Mulford Coming 194: Many of Hopalong's most successful and spectacular plays had been less carefully thought out beforehand than this one. 1922 Evarts Settling 20: Old Cal Warren had some definite notion when he framed this play. 1928 Haycox Guns 71: Why ram into another play like that? 1931 Brand Ambush 102: What's his play in this here? The double cross? 1938 Haycox Man 74: It knocked them out of the play. 1946 Nye Breed 42: It tickled Wilkes plenty when he heard of this play. 1949 Schaefer Shane 54: I never pegged Shane for a play like that. 1950 Raine Six 47: He won't back Dan Duff's crazy play. 1955 Henry Who 8: Where's your play in this? 1955 L'Amour Heller 39: It was a fool play, starting into that

country in the dead of winter. 1956 Gruber Big 89: I still say it was a fool play. 1958 Henry Reckoning 33: My lead play was to lay a line of clear tracks straight away from Sun River. 1960 L'Amour Sacketts 99: Smartest play I ever saw. 1967 Henry Alias 50: He had neglected to locate Mike Cassidy's weapons, assuming they were hung up out of the play. 1969 Foreman Last 20: You pulled a fool play on those two. 1976 L'Amour Where 87: But he had the play, and it was like him to push. 1978 Evans Longarm 81: Her midget husband ignored her play.

play, make a v. [OED2 1899; Lighter 1887] to take an action

1902 Wister Virginian 188: Trampas made an awful bad play then. 1906 Mulford Bar 192: He didn't make that play again. 1914 Grey Rustlers 55: He made that play...just for a chance to rant against your father. 1921 Brand Seventh 158: Partner, that sure was a pretty play you made. 1922 Brand Garden 194: I've made my play...and I don't holler because I've lost the big stakes. 1929 Haycox Chaffee 150: Think they'll back me up in any play I make? 1930 Mulford HC Eagle 41: Yore best play would be to hunt him up an' get him talking. 1931 Brand Ride 131: The kid here made a bright play. 1931 Rhodes Trusty 224: I tried to force him into a ranikiboo play at Line Camp. 1937 Haycox Sundown 151: He made a poor play and he knew it. 1941 Short Hard 35: For one desperate second Dave was tempted to make his play. 1946 Nye Breed 57: He had made a play that had not come off. 1954 Gruber Bitter 143: Go ahead, Gorey! Make your play! 1956 Overholser Desperate 107: I hoped he would make his play then...because the cabin was dark and he might have trouble seeing me.

play a cold hand v. phr. to act underhandedly
1887 Badger Rustler 5: He's playing a cold hand for the Falcon Ranch.

play a double game v. phr. to cheat
1885 Harbaugh Denver 6: Ef you ketch me playin' a double game, bore my brain-box with a forty-four.

play a high hand v. phr. to act to the limit of one's abilities
1904 Bower Chip 227: You're playing a high hand for a forty-dollar man.

play a lone hand v. phr. to act alone
1891 Ingraham Buck 2: You talks big fer a feller as plays a lone hand. 1923 Hough North 316: He mostly plays a lone hand.

play big luck v. phr. to be lucky

1904 Bower Lonesome 282: Irish was sure playing big luck when she did marry Spike.

play hell with v. phr. to disrupt
1937 Haycox Sundown 170: You have played hell with everything. 1957 Gruber Lonesome 100: A fight with his wife sure plays hell with a man.

play into someone's hand v. phr. to cooperate with someone
1891 Ingraham Buck 3: You played into this stranger's hand tonight ag'in' a friend.

play it close to one's belly v. phr. to act cautiously
1950 Raine Six 47: The thing to do is play it close to our bellies.

play one's cards, hand v. phr. to act
1913 Mulford Coming 134: I'm most proud, ma'am to play my cards as I get them. 1930 Brand Destry 154: The rest of 'em are gunna play their hand together, and close to the chest!

play one's own cards, hand v. phr. Look after one's own interests
1928 Haycox Guns 37: I ain't recognizing nobody's right to telling what I should do! From now on I play my own hand. 1929 Haycox Chaffee 19: He's playing his own cards, which may not be mine. 1950 Raine Six 22: You were playing your own hand tonight, and you can't shove the blame off on us.

play possum v. [OED2 1832] act as if dead
1930 Brand Destry 246: He might be playin' possum. 1960 L'Amour Sacketts 30: The fallen man may be playing possum. 1967 Nye Trigger 167: Frodsham had only been playing possum.

play the high one v. phr. to take decisive action
1929 Haycox Chaffee 97: Those boys are down to trumps. Aim to play the high one tonight.

play the house percentages v. phr. to act cautiously
1955 Henry Who 77: Not being out to make a hero of himself, he played the house percentages.

plow pusher n. a farmer
1938 James Flint 61: Some plow pusher...had lost a mare.

plow under v. to kill
1967 Nye Trigger 167: A gun man...would gain fame by plowing him under.

plug n.
1. [Lighter 1890] a thug

1929 Haycox Chaffee 150: With...all those hired plugs gone it wouldn't be hard to buck Woolfridge.

2. [OED2 1860; DA 1860; Lighter 1872] an inferior horse
1920 Rhodes Stepsons 35: Do you think that little old plug of mine will suit you? 1931 Rhodes Trusty 222: Fork that fat plug of yours. 1952 Schaefer First 128: I wouldn't use it [whip] with those plugs I'd been driving. 1958 Henry Reckoning 69: I got a blind-eyed black and another plug. 1967 Nye Trigger 96: An old...plug that looked about ready for the glue factory.

3. [Lighter 1906] a bullet

1934 Adams Cattle 150: Just then I got a plug in the shoulder.

plug v. [OED2 1870; Lighter 1885] to shoot (someone)
1879 Wheeler DD in Leadville 13: If they do not begin before I wave my hand, plug them. 1906 Mulford Bar 66: Plug h--l out of them. 1914 Grey Rustlers 105: Ain't somebody goin' to plug this Ranger. 1913 Mulford Coming 54: I dunno why he plugs Lanky. 1918 Grey U. P. 131: Sandy'll plug Old Miles in just another minit. 1921 Brand Seventh 95: By God, Mat's plugged. 1923 Hough North 181: Ef he tries to get out plug him. 1928 Haycox Guns 42: Decoying him towards town...and then plugging him. 1931 Brand Ambush 43: I ain't gunna plug you. 1932 Grey Lost 240: For Gawd's sake plug him. 1936 Nye No 162: If yuh had plugged that ornery sidewinder, yuh'd have all yuh could do a-dodgin' possees. 1949 Schaefer Shane 97: You'd have made him plug you just so I'd have a chance to get him. 1952 Schaefer First 157: Get out of the way and let me plug him. 1956 Overholser Desperate 27: Did you expect us to stand there and get plugged like fish in a barrel. 1959 Nye Long 23: Had to plug a short sport. 1968 Nye Lost 107: You should of let me plug him.

plugged adj. [OED2 1888; DA 1923; Lighter 1912] worthless

1906 Mulford Bar 150: Fer a plugged peso I'd strew yu all over th' scenery! 1913 Mulford Coming 7: For a plugged peso, I'd stay with you. 1950 Raine Six 47: They made a bunch of Anse's scalawags look like plugged nickels. 1963 L'Amour Sackett 38: My life wasn't worth a plugged two bit piece. 1968 Nye Lost 65: A careless man's life wasn't worth a plugged nickel.

plug-ugly n. [OED2 1856; DA 1891; Lighter 1885] a thug
1950 Raine Six 96: A bunch of yore plug-uglies...have needed killing for a hell of a long time. 1968 Nye Lost 158: With that hardnosed plug-ugly wanting to know where his claim was.

plunk n. [OED2 1891; DA 1891; Lighter 1885] a dollar

1920 Rhodes Stepsons 84: This old rooster, he held out for two thousand plunks.

poison n. [OED2 1805; DA 1805; Lighter 1835] liquor
1885 Harbaugh Denver 3: Waltz up ter ther counter an' nominate yer favorite p'isen. 1937 Short Marauder 193: Pour me out a bottle of that poison. 1938 James Flint 12: The bartender deputy set up the "poison." 1985 McMurtry Lonesome 100: Davie, bring your poison.

polecat n. [OED2 1598] a worthless person
1926 Brand Blue 63: You treacherous polecat! 1936 Nye No 136: Get them paws up, polecat! 1942 Nye Trigger 27: What them polecats overlooked was that I might make some trouble myself 'fore I quit. 1946 Nye Breed 131: I don't make deals with polecats. 1967 Nye Trigger 13: I can't abide to see that stripe of polecat annoying a woman.

pony up, or pony across v. [OED2 1824; DA 1824; Lighter 1837] to pay up
1879 Wheeler DD in Leadville 6: Pony up and refund Cordova every cent you have won from him. 1967 Nye Trigger 119: We might be able to scare the kid into ponying across. 1968 Nye Lost 60: The slippery son could live like a lord if he got enough chumps to pony up in that fashion!

pot v. [OED2 1860; Lighter 1865] to shoot
1923 Evarts Tumble 78: And pot me as I step out. 1906 Mulford Bar 119: I ain't a-goin'to let yu pot me. 1922 Evarts Settling 82: If I get potted...those boys won't be left in the lurch. 1967 Nye Trigger 171: For pottin' a Mex?

powwow n. [Lighter 1907] a discussion
1903 Adams Log 137: Flood opened the powwow by demanding to know the meaning of this visit. 1906 Mulford Bar 215: We better hold a pow-wow with th' foreman. 1918 Grey U. P. 269: Big pow-wow. The directors roaring again. 1932 Grey Lost 114: Trappers...like nothin' better than a powwow around the campfire.

prod, on the adj. [OED2 1904; DA 1903; Lighter 1903] enraged
1903 Adams Log 80: The family was on the prod bigger than a wolf, and there was no use reasoning with them. 1923 Hough North 90: We got six cows on the prod, follerin', the cook cart, so's the cook he's afraid to get offen the seat. 1926 Rhodes Paso 27 Glad he didn't get on the prod. 1929 Haycox Chaffee 37: Perrine on the prod--watch out! 1930 Mulford HC Eagle 115: You shouldn't go on the prod like this, Henry. 1931 Haycox Whispering 39: And if that damned fool is figurin'to get on the prod I'll yank him back into the bushes. 1935 James Home 3: The cow being on the "prod"

(fight) as they usually are when bogged down. 1936 Nye No 112: What's got you on the prod? 1950 Raine Six 17: Don't get on the prod, Dan. 1960 L'Amour Sacketts 15: He'd come through that door sure enough on the prod an' pawin' dust. 1965 Foreman Mustang 6: Soldiers from the fort swaggered on the prod. 1985 McMurtry Lonesome 358: With Gus on the prod, anything could happen.

proddy adj. [Lighter 1947] on the prod
1935 Rhodes Proud 76: They sure felt proddy.

pronto adj, [OED2 1850; Lighter 1912] adv. quick, quickly
1923 Hough North 234: You vamose pretty damn pronto! 1924 Grey Wild 10: You take your horses and pack, and get out, pronto. 1926 Brand Blue 175: They left pronto. 1928 Grey Stairs 124: I'm on my way pronto. 1930 Brand Destry 115: If shame can't shut you up, my hand'll pretty pronto do it! 1930 Mulford HC Eagle 117: Pronto! barked Panhandle. 1931 Brand Ambush 82: The arguments, they stop real pronto. 1932 Grey Lost 223: So we rode up pronto. 1933 Brand False 75: 41: We'd better drift out of this town pretty pronto. 1942 Nye Trigger 7: He lost all interest pronto. 1950 Raine Six 79: The only way is to arrest the guilty parties pronto. 1967 Nye Trigger 15: I got the name of bein' a pronto hombre--quick to anger an' quick to draw.

pull or pull off v. [OED2 1915; DA 1916; Lighter 1911] to commit esp. a criminal act
1929 Haycox Chaffee 37: Pretty soon he'll pull off somethin'. 1931 Rhodes Trusty 256: Nobody would think of you pulling a job for our crowd. 1967 Henry Alias 44: This owlwing business...was every bit as easy to pull off as the little cowboy had said it was.

pull bog v. to pull out a cow stuck in the mud
1935 James Home 3: Whoever it was has never "pulled bog."

pull down on v. [OED2 1854; DA 1883] Lighter 1914] to draw a gun on
1967 Henry Alias 33: It would serve to remind him not to pull down on the outlaw at handgun ranges.

pull freight v. [OED2 1895] to depart
1902 Wister Virginian 206: He did not take himself off to other climes--pull his freight casual. 1928 Haycox Guns 82: Time for us to pull freight then. Back to saddles.

pull in one's horns v. phr. to retreat
1946 Short Coroner 117: O'Hea'll pull in his horns. 1960 L'Amour Sacketts 15: You could just see his horns pull in.

pull leather v. [OED2 1916] to hold on to the saddle

1930 Mulford HC Eagle 109: You two boys had easy pickin' tonight but there's a couple of fellers that are due in right soon that'll make you both pull leather, an' sweat like hell.

pull stakes v. [DA 1640] to depart
1920 Rhodes Stepsons 100: Pull stakes and go where the women cease from troubling. 1928 Haycox Guns 115: I pulled stakes. 1930 Mulford HC Eagle 98: We'll stay around for a few days, an' then pull our stakes. 1954 Gruber Bitter 102: I'm pulling up stakes in a couple of weeks.

pull the rope on v. phr. to hang someone
1963 L'Amour Sackett 56: Who wouldn't pull the rope on a woman-killer.

pumpkin roller n. [Lighter 1936] a farmer
1985 McMurtry Lonesome 578: Them punkin' rollers.

punch v. [OED2 1885; DA 1890; Lighter 1894] to herd cattle
1904 Bower Lonesome 87: Punching cows--in Northern Montana. 1913 Mulford Coming 68: When do I start punchin' yore eight cows, Boss? 1942 Nye Trigger 10: Been a long time since I punched any cattle. 1964 L'Amour Hanging 4: I'll punch cows. 1976 L'Amour Where 57: I punched cows on the range in Texas with the son of an English lord.

puncher n. [OED2 1870; DA 1870; Lighter 1887] cowboy, cowpuncher
1906 Mulford Bar 117: Yu acts like yu never saw a real puncher afore. 1906 Rhodes Sticky 17: As adequate a set of punchers as ever throwed a loop. 1913 Mulford Coming 175: To part with it [horse] would be to lose his mark of caste and become a walking man, which all good punchers despised. 1926 Brand Blue 137: Mayabe you had a mite of help handling the punchers. 1929 Haycox Chaffee 111: The boat rose and dropped with a force that knocked the puncher flat on his face. 1930 Brand Destry 61: No puncher worth his salt ever rode so slantin' as that. 1930 Mulford HC Eagle 15: Much obliged, Bub, said the puncher. 1931 Brand Ambush 19: He would show the punchers on the place what he could do. 1931 Brand Ride 125: You don't quite understand the ways of a good puncher, Red. 1931 Haycox Whispering 5: Two gangling punchers...gathered themselves together. 1931 Rhodes Trusty 241: The three punchers that you expect to quit. 1936 Nye No 118: Me an'...my punchers was down lookin' over some syndicate cattle. 1941 Haycox Trail 29: He was close by the redhead puncher. 1941 Short Hard 30: [He] looked like a leaned-down and broke puncher. 1942 Nye Trigger 16: Three or four punchers strolling up from the corrals. 1946 Nye Breed 16: His mind kept...returning to the two punchers.

1946 Short Coroner 30: I don't want a nosey, sorehead puncher stirring them up. 1955 L'Amour Heller 8: They buried the tough puncher on a windy hilltop. 1960 L'Amour Sacketts 15: That blond puncher had been ready to buy himself a piece of any fight there was left. 1963 L'Amour Sackett 57: It was that stock-built puncher.

pure quill n. fine liquor

1931 Brand Ride 147: That's good old pure quill. A drink like that is worth ten bottles of the swill they sell for redeye. 1969 Foreman Last 29: Ol' Texas talk, pure quill, an' high time we heard it!

pushbroom jockey n. a janitor

1967 Henry Alias 84: Happen I wanted to be a pushbroom jockey, I could have...got paid for shoving out the sawdust and the dead flies.

push daisies v. [Lighter 1891] to be buried

1931 Brand Ambush 92: There's a dozen or so that...I would just as soon see pushing the daisies.

put a brand on v. phr. to marry

1954 Gruber Bitter 16: If I was a woman's man, I'd put my brand on that. 1956 Gruber Big 51: I'd better put my brand on you right now.

put out of business v. to kill someone

1902 Wister Virginian 32: Why, we put him out of business, I told you. He died last night.

put under v. [OED2 1879] to kill someone

1967 Henry Alias 118: You mean to put him under. I didn't say that. We're not killers.

putty adj. weak

1950 Raine Six 80: Who the hell wants to be friends with a putty man?

putty-livered adj. cowardly

1929 Haycox Chaffee 75: It won't hurt me none to send some of you lousy, putty-livered coyotes to hell.

raise the dust v. to create a disturbance

1904 Bower Lonesome 42: You couldn't raise any such dust with yours. 1969 Foreman Last 24: I'd like to know what's going on here now that's raising the dust.

raise hell v. to create a disturbance

1922 Evarts Settling 79: Now you've gone and raised hell. 1928 Grey Stairs 167: You'll be worse off if you raise hell

an'spoil my game. 1930 Brand Destry 12: Who's raising hell and busting the laws in this here community.

raising n. a hanging
1878 Wheeler DD on Deck 12 Hurray! a road agent raisin'.

rake (in) v. [Lighter 1887] to earn
1885 Harbaugh Denver 4: Ain't thar a lot o' men in Colorado who'd like ter rake in thet reward. 1902 Wister Virginian 194: He raked a million out of Los Angeles real estate.

ramrod n. [DA 1880; Lighter 1905] a ranch foreman
1941 Short Hard 132: Before I walk out of here behind your ramrod. 1946 Nye Breed 17: That dead fellow, Teal, was the Clover Cross ramrod. 1959 Nye Long 51: He's the Star Cross ramrod. 1969 Foreman Last 102: Mike McLean now was the acknowledged ramrod, gun boss of the crew. 1978 Evans Longarm 32: He's the ramrod of the Rocking H.

ramrod v. [Lighter 1949] to supervise a ranch
1955 L'Amour Heller 46: He had been hired to ramrod a tough cow outfit. 1956 Overholser Desperate 155: Runyan won't send another man like Toll to ramrod Rafter 3. 1965 Short First 14: Who ramrods his spread?

range hog n. a land-grabber
1936 Nye No 33: Range hogs were out of fashion, and the Big Three should be made aware of the fact.

range tramp n. saddle tramp
1967 Nye Trigger 82: I'm no range tramp.

ranny n. [Lighter 1925] a cowboy
1904 Bower Lonesome 199: You're a hot bunch uh rannies--I don't think! 1928 Haycox Guns 30: They'd be pretty bold to run [for election] any rannies. 1936 Nye No 29: As a fast-shootin' ranny, I'm the genuine article. 1942 Nye Trigger 11: The ranny that moves 'em gets a range boss's job. 1955 Henry Who 10: He didn't know who this big ranny was. 1959 Nye Long 59: I never did figure much of anything gets changed by two rannies pounding the stuffing out of each other. 1968 Nye Lost 9: The other ranny...was headed now in long strides for the Oriental's batwings.

rat killer n. liquor
1968 Nye Lost 108: Johnston dug out his spare bottle of rat killer and stoked his courage.

rattler or rattlesnake n. a treacherous man
1953 L'Amour Hondo 81: Hangs out with that rattler Phalinger. 1954 Overholser Violent 76: We've got a few rattlesnakes hereabouts, crawling ones and two-legged ones.

rattlesnake milk n. liquor

1954 Overholser Violent 64: You've been drinking rattlesnake milk.

rawhide v. [Lighter 1907] to criticize, ridicule, annoy
1937 Haycox Sundown 146: No man ever rawhides me, friend Majors!
1950 Raine Six 79: Don't rawhide me. I'm trying to figure what's best to do.
1956 Overholser Desperate 59: Gil had never been able to take any rawhiding.
1965 Short First 56: If we can rawhide Forbes a little, it might help.
1978 Evans Longarm 202: He might get rid of 'em by rawhiding their leader every chance he got.

red n. [OED2 1587; DA 1808; Lighter 1860] an Indian
1877 Wheeler DD Prince 1: We will admit that the reds are not of saintly origin.
1923 Hough North 171: I've got a few red friends.

reddy n. an Indian
1932 Grey Lost 114: Mean-lookin' runt of a reddy.

redeye n. [OED2 1819; DA 1819; Lighter 1858] liquor
1921 Brand Seventh 21: Red-eye he ordered, and seized bottle and glass.
1922 Brand Garden 13: I might rustle you a flask of red-eye.
1926 Brand Blue 59: They'd had a little too much red-eye.
1929 Brand Last 90: Silas Wrack, the great fighter of Indians and redeye.
1930 Brand Destry 8: Don't help yourself to no more redeye.
1931 Brand Ride 147: A drink like that is worth ten bottles of the swill they sell for redeye.
1953 L'Amour Hondo 69: I owe you a jug of redeye.
1978 Evans Longarm 8: Some of the fancier saloons were charging as much as a nickel a shot for redeye.

red nigger n. [Lighter 1846] an Indian
1887 Badger Rustler 3: Skin out, you red nigger.

red-skin n. [OED2 1699; Lighter 1845] an Indian
1878 Wheeler DD on Deck 11: Either red-skins or road agents, I predict.
1885 Harbaugh Denver 7: Tom supplied a few particulars the red-skin overlooked.
1885 Ingraham BB's Grip 6: I'll call if I run upon any red-skins.
1887 Badger Rustler 5: Nothing but a stray red-skin.
1887 Lewis Demon 8: Colonel Vann led the way to the spot where he had left the...redskins.
1887 Willett Sandy 3: I...go fur a red-skin's sculp whenever I see a chance to git it.
1891 Ingraham Buck 4: The Saddle King momentarily dismissed the prisoner from his mind and devoted his attention to the red-skins.
1918 Grey U. P. 192: That redskin won't niver scalp a soldier of the U. P. R.
1924 Grey Wild 187: I hear he's not so...indifferent toward red-skin flirts.
1932 Grey Lost

45: Some white redskins gettin' the redskins drunk! 1987
Dexter Deadwood 56: Think of that redskin.

ride herd on v. to control
1960 L'Amour Sacketts 186: He's riding herd on a grudge
against you.

right bower n. [DA 1850; Lighter 1893] a right hand man
1885 Harbaugh Denver 19: Centipede Sam, one of his own band,
his "right bower," had done it all. 1931 Haycox Whispering
39: He's useful to me....a right bower. 1939 Rhodes Trusty
240: Charlie Bird, the right bower...is a little dried up
old herring.

road agent n. [OED2 1867; DA 1863; Lighter 1863] a
highway robber
1879 Wheeler DD in Leadville 13: The execution of a real
live road agent was quite a treat. 1885 Harbaugh Denver 2:
And all this in a region where the road-agents' "stand an'
delivers" were frequently heard. 1950 Raine Six 77: A third
road agent had appeared. 1952 Schaefer First 157: He plans
for dirty killing even the meanest kind of decent road agent
wouldn't touch. 1955 Henry Who 71: He'd had to take over
the rustling and sort of let up on the road-agent work for a
spell. 1967 Henry Alias 71: He was a roadagent, rustler or
bank heister like the rest of us. 1967 Nye Trigger 14:
Hague was twirling a gun by its trigger guard in the manner
made famous by Curly Bill Graham the time he dropped the
marshal at Tombstone. The road agent's spin!

roadster n. road agent
1958 Henry Reckoning 158: George Shears is a roadster and
horse-thief specialist.

rod n. a ramrod
1906 Rhodes Sticky 17: The old Rod had resigned because
things didn't go to suit him. 1920 Rhodes Stepsons 25: The
rod tells me you are for Engle.

rod v. to ramrod
1941 Short Hard 128: I'm roddin this spread. 1959 Nye Long
39: Ain't he still roddin' your spread? 1967 Nye Trigger
33: Not much sense to a fella roddin' a spread unless he's
got the owner's confidence.

roll n. [OED2 1846; DA 1836; Lighter 1887] an
accumulation of money
1904 Bower Lonesome 169: I had a fair sized roll so I took
the home trail back to Minnesota. 1914 Grey Rustlers 60:
I've got a little money....I've been adding some to that
roll all the time.

rooster n. [OED2 1885; Lighter 1876] a fellow
1932 Grey Lost 87: Texas roosters that'd rather shoot than eat turkey. 1956 Overholser Desperate 22: If you two roosters want to kill each other, go out into the street to do it.

roostered adj. [Lighter 1973] drunk
1950 Raine Six 10: Some of the younger buckaroos..., especially if they happened to be roostered, might resent his presence and take it as a challenge.

rope v. to acquire
1954 Overholser Violent 201: How'd a man with a mug as ugly as yours ever rope a pretty wife like her.

rotgut n. [OED2 1633; DA 1819; Lighter 1863] cheap liquor
1906 Mulford Bar 56: He ain't no bum when you gives him rotgut at a quarter of a dollar a glass. 1936 Nye No 170: There's still a dozen fellas layin' around here lappin' up rot-gut. 1946 Nye Breed 19: The place smelled of rotgut and cheap cigarette smoke. 1950 Raine Six 76: He whipped himself standing at the bar drinking rotgut. 1959 Nye Long 42: Those miners are pretty stirred up....and plenty of rotgut, it wouldn't take much.

rub out v. [OED2 1848; Lighter 1847] to kill
1887 Willett Sandy 30: We two are bound to be rubbed out yar. 1950 Raine Six 22: If you had killed Sloan you would have been rubbed out within a week. 1955 Henry Who 162: The rustler clan would not overlook an opportunity to rub me out.

rubout n. a murder
1942 Nye Trigger 10: It's not a rub-out I'm hiring you for.

ruckus n. [OED2 1890; DA 1907] fight, disturbance
1930 Mulford HC Eagle 19: I wasn't right set ag'in bein' missin' durin' that ruckus. 1937 Haycox Sundown 54: I kind of wondered...why you made that ruckus in the saloon. 1941 Short Hard 136: He waited there...hearing the rukus over by the corrals. 1950 Raine Six 47: I may be in a jam already from killing Shonsey in the rookus this morning. 1954 Overholser Violent 80: We've had all the ruckusing we're going to have for tonight. 1956 Overholser Desperate 51: I don't know what the ruckus was over, but...they looked like they'd tangled with a painter. 1968 Nye Lost 126: Having been several years since that ruckus...he might remain unremembered. 1982 Tippetts Texas 142: If I...cause a ruckus, I ain't going to be allowed to...have whisky and smokes.

ruction n. [OED2 1825] a disturbance

1906 Mulford Bar 122: They'll...raise a ruction if I don't show up. 1930 Brand Destry 58: Then don't raise a ruction because you got indigestion.

run a sandy v. to perpetrate a dishonest scheme
1941 Short Hard 15: They're running a pretty cagey sandy on Bruce McFee. 1950 Raine Six 21: Are you runnin'a sandy on me?

running iron n. [DA 1894] an iron used to falsify brands
1907 Hough Outlaw 162: Cow owners were...forbidden to trace a pattern with a straight iron or "running iron." 1922 Evarts Settling 39: Slade could come into this country...with nothing but a long rope and a running iron, and be owning thirty thousand head to-day. 1956 Overholser Desperate 41: Herb Jason was a loudmouth...talking in town about Cameron Runyan got his start with a running iron. 1969 Foreman Last 38: You remind me of when I started out with only a rope an' a runnin' iron. 1978 Evans Longarm 210: He wasn't packing that running iron for fun.

rustle v.
1. [OED2 1872; DA 1846; Lighter 1862] to bestir oneself
1903 Adams Log 236: It takes a range-raised horse to run cattle; one that can rustle and live on grass. 1913 Mulford Coming 363: His mother went an' died up in Laramie, an he must shore 'nuff rustle up there an' bury her. 1914 Grey Rustlers 62: Gotta rustle home....I've a ranch to work. 1918 Grey U. P. 131: Let's rustle...We want to git out of this country quick. 1920 Rhodes Stepsons 148: Adam Forbes is not the man to rustle like that in this broiling sun unless he was worked up about something. 1924 Grey Wild 16: Seems a habit of riders--rustling in on my camp to eat. 1926 Grey Under 82: It dobeat hell how that boy can rustle along with a pack outfit. 1928 Grey Stairs 188: Pile in, an' we'll rustle. 1932 Grey Lost 19: Pack light and rustle. 1935 James Home 47: He didn't believe in feeding range stuff much, they get too fat and...it sure spoils 'em from rustling.
2. [OED2 1844] to gather up, find
1904 Bower Lonesome 33: I'll gamble I can rustle something to put on. 1913 Mulford Coming 51: We'll get a fire goin' an' rustle chuck for all han's. 1914 Grey Rustlers 61: Just rustle the money in sight. 1918 Grey U. P. 34: Sure, an' I rustled some biscuits. 1920 Rhodes Stepsons 127: Rustle a can and boil you some coffee. 1922 Brand Garden 13: I might rustle you a flask of red-eye. 1928 Grey Stairs 34: Let's rustle some wood. 1931 Rhodes Trusty 242: The old man will rustle himself two or three dogs and chase the varmints out. 1932 Grey Lost 178: Rustle wood, build two fires. 1955 L'Amour Heller 108: I got to rustle some grub. 1964 L'Amour Hanging 19: I'll rustle up some mitts. 1965

Short First 118: I've sent the girls home, but we'll rustle up something. 1978 Evans Longarm 123: You rustle up some grub or you rustle apples as a kid, you don't rustle cows, boy. You steal 'em.

3. [OED2 1902; DA 1893; Lighter 1893] to steal, esp. cattle 1906 Mulford Bar 60: I'd shore look nice askin' the boss if he'd rustled my whisky. 1922 Evarts Settling 92: Rustling is about the hardest thing in the world to prove. 1936 Nye No 45: So you've hired that scurvy, rustlin' Tranter. 1937 Haycox Sundown 140: That fellow...will rustle you blind if you move into the south fork. 1957 Gruber Lonesome 17: Rustling--on Lobo? 1976 L'Amour Where 5: They rustled cows until they grew big enough. 1985 McMurtry Lonesome 81: Augustus had not expected that Call would be satisfied to rustle Mexican cattle forever.

4. to rob someone by stealing his cattle

1914 Grey Rustlers 61: Any new feller buyin' stock in Pecos these days will be rustled quicker'n he can say Jack Robinson.

rustler n.

1. [Lighter 1887] an active person

1887 Badger Rustler 4: I'm Royal Hart, a rustler and a hustler by name and occupation.

2. [OED2 1882; DA 1882; Lighter 1884] a cattle thief

1887 Badger Rustler 19: With a few of my lads I run up against a gang of the rustlers. 1902 Wister Virginian 263: What is a rustler? It was not in any dictionary, and current translations of it were inconsistent. 1906 Mulford Bar 44: He was an adept at following the trails left by rustlers. 1907 Hough Outlaw 160: The rustler, brand burner, or brand-blotcher now became one of the new Western characters. 1913 Mulford Coming 53: I was shot up by a li'l runt of a rustler an' left to die. 1914 Grey Rustlers 48: Linrock's a nest for rustlers! 1922 Evarts Settling 93: The only way to convict a rustler right now is to kill him and swear that you run up on him changing a brand. 1932 Grey Lost 172: Are you a rustler and a horse-thief. 1935 James Home 31: He held his cattle too when the rustlers got thick and sort of organized. 1942 Nye Trigger 38: I don't to be mistook fo' no rustler. 1950 Raine Six 35: He was a rustler and an outlaw. 1957 Evarts Man 22: This man's no rustler. 1957 Gruber Lonesome 17: It's rustlers. 1964 L'Amour Hanging 50: You're right in the middle of the rustlers. 1967 Henry Alias 71: He was a roadagent, rustler or bank heister like the rest of us. 1960 L'Amour Sacketts 84: Some of those fur thieves and rustlers...will go too far. 1969 Foreman Last 28: A vile nest of gunmen, outlaws, rustlers and worse! 1978 Evans Longarm 123: If I was to admit I was a rustler--all right, a cow thief named Jones, would you believe me. 1985 McMurtry Lonesome 13: The moon was in the quarter--what they called the rustler's moon.

rustler's brush n. an iron used to alter the brand on stolen cattle

1967 Henry Alias 10: "the rustler's brush," the so-called straight or running iron with which a good arroyo artist could reburn almost any brand into almost any other brand.

sabe v. [OED2 1850; DA 1850; Lighter 1851] to know, understand

1903 Adams Log 72: Girls you know, sabe each other that way. 1904 Bower Chip 21: We'll...have a real, old lynching bee--sabe? 1906 Mulford Bar 49: Yu straddles that four-laigged cloud-burst an' yu gets these, sabe? 1965 Foreman Mustang 31: I sabe that, yeah. 1967 Nye Trigger 68: I sabe you all right!

saddle bum, tramp n. a poor, itinerant cowboy
1941 Haycox Trail 32: You damned saddle bum. 1941 Short Hard 58: She's Miss McFee to a saddle bum like you. 1955 L'Amour Heller 113: What could he offer? He was a saddle bum. 1956 Overholser Desperate 66: A saddle bum headed for Tucson would never wander into Dillon's Park.

saddle tramp n. a saddle bum
1946 Short Coroner 60: You and that saddle tramp are as good as in the pen now. 1954 LeMay Searchers 93: The average saddle tramp never got a letter in his life. 1959 Nye Long 7: He was a cowhand, not trying to catch on, content to ride chuck line and be thought a goddam saddle tramp. 1965 Foreman Mustang 73: Look at them--a notorious gun fighter and a saddle tramp!

salivate v. [Lighter 1877] to kill
1877 Wheeler DD Prince 4: That made me all the more determined you should salivate him. 1879 Wheeler DD in Leadville 6: Refund Cordova every cent...or I'll salivate you just so sure's I'm Calamity Jane. 1936 Nye No 144: They were trying to salivate this fellow. 1967 Nye Trigger 171: I salivated one of 'em.

salt v. [DA 1840; Lighter 1877] to shoot, to kill
1877 Wheeler DD Prince 3: You must salt that card-sharp, or I'll certainly salt you. 1906 Mulford Bar 191: Th' feller you salted...passed in his chips last night. 1936 Nye No 123: We salted Smith away in town this morning. 1958 Henry Reckoning 14: Cain used it to salt Abel away.

salt n. spirit
1941 Short Hard 62: Let's give him the "icebox"....Maybe it'll take some of the salt out of him.

salty adj. [OED2 1938; Lighter 1878] spirited, to be reckoned with

1941 Haycox Trail 6: Those wild and salty riders who rode up the trail from Texas. 1955 Henry Who 5: This...migration of the kid's began...in some pretty salty company. 1955 L'Amour Heller 41: He's salty. Has he really killed so many men? 1956 Overholser Desperate 5: Rafter 3 had numbers besides being a plenty salty outfit. 1963 L'Amour Sackett 42: Macon is the saltiest man with a gun in this country. 1964 L'Amour Hanging 14: Duster Syman was a pretty salty character.

salve n. [Lighter 1908] an insincere speech
1969 Foreman Last 97: Save the salve!

sand n. [OED2 1867; DA 1875; Lighter 1883] spirit, courage, nerve

1885 Harbaugh Denver 16: Rube hadn't ther sand to go back on it even with death at his door. 1887 Badger Rustler 3: The Open Hand boys is the boys fer money or sand. 1906 Mulford Bar 155: He's got sand to burn. 1907 Hough Outlaw 10: He had sand. 1913 Mulford Coming 158: If you ain't got the sand to go through with it, say so. 1914 Grey Rustlers 64: If you show anything like a lack of sand it's all bluff. 1941 Short Hard 23: McFee spat contemptuously. He looked pretty sandy. 1946 Nye Breed 34: She had sand...a courage compounded of things seldom seen in a woman's character. 1954 LeMay Searchers 117: He's got worms in his craw where the sand should be. 1955 Henry Who 3: But that never had the sand...to mix into it like the kid. 1956 Overholser Desperate 18: Some men have a quality that makes them stand and fight....It's not just the sand in a man's craw. 1960 L'Amour Sacketts 137: Maybe all your sand run out. 1985 McMurtry Lonesome 74: At sixteen she had been so pretty it took your breath, and smart too--a girl with some sand.

save one's bacon v.phr. [OED2 1664; Lighter 1664] to save one's life

1914 Grey Rustlers 65: I got into the brush in time to save my bacon. 1936 Nye No 121: Bast had unintentionally saved his bacon. 1946 Nye Breed 177: You let out a shout that saves my bacon. 1959 L'Amour First 119: He's hoping something will happen to save his bacon. 1960 L'Amour Sacketts 184: You might as well tell me and save your bacon.

savvy v. [OED2 1785; DA 1878; Lighter 1850] to know, understand

1902 Wister Virginian 401: You think you are wise, but there's a lot of things you don't savvy. 1904 Bower Lonesome 124: When he gets the thing figured out, in six months or a year, and savvies it was a put-up job from the start, somebody'll have it coming. 1913 Mulford Coming 41:

You bust some records or I'll bust you, savvy? 1914 Grey Rustlers 81: He savvied your game all right. 1918 Grey U. P. 127: Savvy, Old Miles? 1924 Grey Wild 25: I savvy, Bud. 1926 Brand Blue 36: You savvy? 1928 Grey Stairs 97: I'm smart enough to savvy. 1930 Mulford HC Eagle 39: I want you all to savvy this one thing: obedience to th' leader. 1931 Brand Ride 125: You don't savvy a real rider. 1932 Grey Lost 185: I savvy. 1935 James Home 116: Austin's idea of better saddle stock...didn't get to savvy the cow so natural. 1941 Short Hard 18: I don't savvy his gab. 1969 Foreman Last 15: Tail off back the way you come! Savvy that? 1978 Evans Longarm 33: I'll scoot out the back way and circle in while you mind the store, savvy?

savvy n. [OED2 1825; DA 1870; Lighter 1841] intelligence, knowledge gained through personal experience
1923 Hough North 7: I ain't got much savvy outside of cows, ma'am. 1956 Overholser Desperate 30: He had both savvy and guts. 1964 L'Amour Hanging 43: I had cow savvy. 1967 Nye Trigger 172: He ain't got the right kinda savvy. 1976 L'Amour Where 16: I only hope you've got gun savvy and the brains you need to back it up.

saw off v. to kill
1941 Haycox Trail 57: In my time I sawed off many a man.

sawbones n. [Lighter 1847] a physician
1942 Nye Trigger 57: All thought of the old man's being a sawbones was completely crowded from his mind. 1967 Henry Alias 147: You should have been a sawbones...then you could have croaked people legal. 1987 Dexter Deadwood 259: Get me a sawbones.

scalp n. [OED2 1849] life
1922 Evarts Settling 81: Every man's out after your scalp. 1930 Brand Destry 55: They jus' nacherally insisted on havin' my scalp.

scaly adj. [OED2 1793] treacherous, untrustworthy
1878 Wheeler DD on Deck 7: Bullwhacker was pretty generally regarded as a scaly customer to tackle. 1903 Adams Log 57: There's several things that look scaly.

scorpion n. a worthless person
1935 James Home 14: After calling Gat a few cuss names and winding up on such as "pigeon-toed scorpion."

scratch for it v. to depart
1938 Haycox Man 74: You fellows scratch for it.

scratch gravel v. to travel rapidly

1877 Wheeler DD Prince 4: We'll have to scratch gravel or them up-range "toughs" will follow us.

scrub n. [Lighter 1871] an inferior individual
1903 Adams Log 73: I've seen girls walk right by a dozen good fellows and fawn over some scrub.

scully n. scullion
1914 Grey Rustlers 59: I was surprised to hear some scully say Sampson owned the Hope So dive.

see the dodo bird v. to see the elephant
1958 Henry Reckoning 150: We have been there and back together and there is no doubt but what we saw the dodo bird.

see the elephant v. to enjoy the attractions, have fun
1903 Adams Log 203: In Dodge in '82 it took money to see the elephant. 1950 Raine Six 6: Got to see the elephant once in a while.

segundo n. an assistant, second in charge
1903 Adams Log 11: I have little hope of ever rising to the dignity of foreman, said our segundo. 1923 Hough North 30: I was talking with your segundo. 1941 Short Hard 65: There was no segundo for Wallace trusted no man other than Cord. 1965 Foreman Mustang 42: They'd be hot after a certain troubleshooter, not to mention his redheaded Texas segundo. 1965 Short First 36: Cole thought of the slow, reliable, and sturdy qualities of...his segundo.

set (someone's) sun v. to kill someone
1953 L'Amour Hondo 160: I'd have set your sun for you. You'd never have seed another morning.

seven n. a seven shot revolver
1877 Wheeler DD Prince 12: Two extended hands clasped objects, whose glistening surface suggested that they were "sixes" or "sevens."

shag v. [Lighter 1930] to go hurriedly
1967 Henry Alias 83: You had best shag on down there.

sharp n. [OED2 1840; Lighter 1878] an expert or dishonest person
1877 Wheeler DD Prince 3: Curse the luck, exclaimed the sharp, slapping down the cards. 1904 Bower Lonesome 241: And I ain't claimin' t' be no Jiu-jitsu sharp. 1931 Haycox Whispering 177: Some o' you sharps would steal the rings offen your mammas' dead fingers. 1931 Rhodes Trusty 255: Heavens to Betsy, how they'd raise the roof, them sharps, if

they could lay hands on a few anecdotes by Little John...about Robin Hood.

sharper n. [OED2 1681] a sharp
1952 Schaefer First 121: A bunch of sharpeners...had dropped a tree across the road.

she-stuff n. female cattle
1923 Evarts Tumble 87: The she-stuff and all stock younger than two-year-olds being allowed to scatter once more on the range.

shindig n. [OED2 1861; DA 1873; Lighter 1848] an exiting event, brawl
1953 L'Amour Hondo 79: I didn't know whoall was in that shindig...I wanted no part of...a brawl. 1959 L'Amour First 9: Right after the first shindig I decided I'd bought myself a ticket on the wrong train. 1960 L'Amour Sacketts 113: It was quite a shindig.

shine up to v. [Lighter 1954] to court, ingratiate oneself with
1932 Grey Lost 205: If I wasn't such a no-good hombre I'd shine up to her. 1954 Overholser Violent 42: The Ferguson boys...want to shine up to her but I'd kill them before I'd let her marry one of them. 1956 Overholser Desperate 32: I can't think of nothing better than shining up to our girls.

shiner n. [OED2 1760; Lighter 1851] a coin
1887 Willett Sandy 13: I know you've got some shiners, and I'd like to see the color of 'em.

shooter n. [OED2 1812; Lighter 1860] a gun, a gunman
1885 Harbaugh Denver 12: Mebbe yer better lower yer shooter. 1985 McMurtry Lonesome 583: He thinks he's a shooter.

shooting iron n. [OED2 1775; Lighter 1845] a revolver
1866 Bowen Maid 59: Ye're luggin' around tew many shewtin' irons for yer own comfort. 1877 Wheeler DD Prince 6: Shutin'-irons--rewolvers--patent perforatin' masheens. 1878 Wheeler DD on Deck 13: Put up your shooting iron. 1913 Mulford Coming 262: That's a fine shooting-iron, stranger. 1926 Brand Blue 166: Come out with your shooting irons. 1929 Brand Last 47: What was his best job with shooting irons? 1955 Henry Who 76: The lad...didn't mean to have...shooting irons lifted off his hip. 1956 Gruber Big 21: Ain't you carryin'a shootin' iron. 1959 Nye Long 120: It could be damn' rough if they bust in here and catch us with our shooting irons empty. 1982 Tippetts Texas 108: That ain't the way a rancher wears a shooting iron.

shoot off one's face v. phr. to speak carelessly

1904 Bower Lonesome 241: But don't go shootin' off your faces. 1928 Haycox Guns 71: You'll get climbed for shooting off your face like that.

shoot off one's mouth v. phr. [OED2 1864; DA 1864] to speak carelessly or opinionatedly

1904 Bower Chip 220: Dunk's a great hand to go around shooting off his mouth about things he has no business to buy into. 1906 Mulford Bar 195: He jest shot off his mouth a little. 1924 Grey Wild 18: Hope you'll overlook the way I shot off my mouth last night. 1967 Henry Alias 75: Not that a boy...had any excuse for shooting off his mouth in grown-up company.

shoot straight v. [Lighter 1930] to tell the truth
1930 Mulford HC Eagle 101: Yo're shooting straight, friends.

shorthorn n. [DA 1944; Lighter 1873] a no account
1942 Nye Trigger 34: He's a fish-bellied shorthorn. 1967 Nye Trigger 114: The first swivel-eyed shorthorn touches a gun is goin' to get Mister Frodsham planted! 1968 Nye Lost 163: You...know what kin happen to any sidewindin shorthorn that goes outa his way to cross up a feller.

short sport n. an insignificant person
1936 Nye No 105: I don't aim to do no more stoolpigeonin' for a short sport like that dang Dixon. 1941 Haycox Trail 25: You're squawkin' like a short sport.

shotgun chaps n. tight chaps
1946 Nye Breed 27: He was a type Tune knew, with his shotgun chaps and that blue bandana.

show one's hand v. phr. to reveal one's intentions
1937 Haycox Sundown 131: One more man has got to show his hand.

shut of, get v. [OED2 1733] to get away from
1923 Evarts Tumble 294: I'm about to get shut of you before you cinch me for another. 1955 Henry Who 193: There was no law against his getting the hell shut of the O.K. Corral in a tall hurry. 1958 Henry Reckoning 98: I've been given twenty-four hours to get long shut of Bannack. 1959 L'Amour First 146: I'm getting shut of this place. 1964 L'Amour Hanging 28: I want to get shut of this country.

side v. [OED2 1613] to assist, accompany
1903 Rhodes Loved 9: Guess I'll just side you fellows. 1931 Rhodes Trusty 217: Want to side me? 1946 Nye Breed 129: One of the gun toughs siding him slid forward. 1950 Raine Six 50: I'll side you, boy. 1958 Henry Reckoning 58: JWhy did you have to pick me to side that rolling-eyed idiot?

1965 Short First 54: He had chosen Toby to side him. 1967 Henry Alias 48: I'll side you.

sidekick n. [OED2 1906; DA 1904; Lighter 1911] a companion, assistant
1936 Nye No 10: I knocked the tar outa that feller...and his sidekick. 1967 Nye Trigger 141: We're Trouble's little side-kicks. 1978 Evans Longarm 34: By the way, your young sidekick's pretty good.

sidekicker n. [Lighter 1907] a sidekick
1933 Brand False 75: 87: It's his sidekicker.

sidewinder n.
1. [DA 1875] a rattlesnake
1936 Nye No 114: We prefer our sidewinders with buttons on 'em! 1946 Nye Breed 40: Wilkes...came out of his chair like an uncoiling sidewinder. 1960 L'Amour Sacketts 189: Chico Cruz, deadly as a sidewinder, stood posed and negligent.
2. [Lighter 1976] a dangerous person
1930 Mulford HC Eagle 219: He knew the old side-winder at his side. 1950 Raine Six 47: He's still a damned old sidewinder. 1953 L'Amour Hondo 79: That sidewinder from the Pass roped him in. 1959 Nye Long 68: How do you figure these boys'll feel having a sidewinder sharing their blankets that just got done murderin' one of their buddies. 1967 Nye Trigger 12: Sidewinders is a species best stepped on. 1968 Nye Lost 75: To back down...left him feeling like a belly-crawling sidewinder. 1976 L'Amour Where 19: Met an old sidewinder named Emmons.

sidewinding adj. treacherous
1968 Nye Lost 163: You...know what kin happen to any sidewindin shorthorn that goes outa his way to cross up a feller.

sidey n. friend, companion
1903 Adams Log 133: Did you ever notice, old sidey, how hard this ground is?

sift v. [Lighter 1907] to travel, to depart
1906 Mulford Bar 130: If yu ever sifts up my way drop in an see me. 1913 Mulford Coming 23: What business has he got, siftin' out like that an' makin'me chase after him? 1929 Haycox Chaffee 103: Come on--let's sift. 1931 Haycox Whispering 31: Let's sift. We'll be back in time for the show.

simolean n. [OED2 1896; DA 1896; Lighter 1876] a dollar
1913 Mulford Coming 182: Two simoleons; all I've got, every cent. 1953 L'Amour Hondo 78: I'm out almost a hundred simoleans.

six n. [Lighter 1877] a six-gun
1877 Wheeler DD Prince 4: Harry Redburn kept...a cocked "six" in either hand, ready for an emergency. 1954 Overholser Violent 76: You ever handle a six?

six-gun n. [DA 1912] a six-shot revolver
1904 Bower Chip 18: They think we're holy terrors that eat with our six-guns beside our plates. 1922 Rhodes Copper 90: Old Pete is one wiz with a six-gun. 1936 Nye No 125: Big 3 is used to dealin' with sixgun yankers. 1946 Short Coroner 57: You're pretty handy with the six-gun. 1956 Gruber Big 137: Wild Jack is mighty handy with a six-gun. 1965 Foreman Mustang 190: Rifles or six-guns, take your choice. 1978 Evans Longarm 11: Old Jim had died in Deadwood damned near five years ago, but they still had him tearassing around after folks with a sixgun in each hand.

six-shooter n. [OED2 1844; DA 1844] a six-gun
1877 Wheeler DD Prince 3: The youth laid a six-shooter on the table in front of him. 1885 Harbaugh Denver 4: Mountain Rock came forward...keeping his dark fingers at the triggers of a brace of six-shooters. 1885 Ingraham BB's Grip 14: I...emptied my six-shooter into him. 1887 Willett Sandy 3: There stood Collins...confronting him with a loaded six-shooter. 1903 Adams Log 48: They're a heap like a six-shooter--wear them all your life and never have any use for them. 1904 Bower Chip 18: There's Sweet Young Things, that faint away at the sight of a six-shooter. 1904 Bower Lonesome 244: A long-legged figure they knew well dashed down the street to them, a waving six-shooter in one hand. 1906 Mulford Bar 20: Billy...laid the refractory six-shooter on the table. 1907 Hough Outlaw 142: A Vigilante covered him with a six-shooter. 1913 Mulford Coming 13: He was brought to his senses very sharply by the jarring, crashing roar of the six-shooter. 1930 Mulford HC Eagle 28: Blowed all to hell with a six-shooter. 1931 Rhodes Trusty 260: In the dark, a six-shooter beats any rifle. 1935 James Home 114: Six-shooters handy and hand on their rifles. 1950 Raine Six 17: Bill Cottrell slipped the six-shooter from the holster at the disturber's hip. 1954 Gruber Bitter 68: A man...was emptying a six-shooter at a board target. 1956 Overholser Desperate 133: He'll call the court to order by pounding the butt of his six-shooter on the desk. 1959 Nye Long 20: Vaguely put away his six-shooter. 1960 L'Amour Sacketts 90: A dusty, dirty lot...loaded down with six-shooters and bowie knives. 1963 L'Amour Sackett 111: I grabbed my six-shooter and dusted them off with that. 1964 L'Amour Hanging 35: He was said to be a handy man with a six-shooter. 1968 Nye Lost 106: A six shooter. Handiest thing we've found for settlin' claims. 1969 Foreman Last 19: Among them were saddle guns; no six-shooters hung in

sight. 1976 L'Amour Where 69: Canavan gripped his six-shooter. 1985 McMurtry Lonesome 64: If it's just his six-shooter he's cleaning on it you oughtn't to complain.

sixty-dollar man n. poor working cowboy
1929 Haycox Chaffee 55: A sixty dollar man has mighty poor sense to be thinking about her kind of woman.

sizzler n. an exceptional fellow
1969 Foreman Last 38: You're the sizzler who put the crick in Garrett's neck, eh?

skin v. [OED2 1876; Lighter 1882] to hurry
1887 Badger Rustler 3: Skin out, you red nigger. 1929 Haycox Chaffee 78: Skin down to the other side of the street and block it.

skin full, get one's v. [OED2 1788] to get drunk
1930 Mulford HC Eagle 235: The boys are gettin' their skins full.

skip off, out v. [Lighter 1882] to depart
1885 Ingraham BB's Grip 14: When I got back Crazy Grizzly and the Indians had skipped off. 1891 Ingraham Buck 3: I'll see that you don't skip while I am not watching you. 1952 Schaefer First It's not right to skip without saying a little something to friends. 1928 Haycox Guns 115: When a scrap gets too hot for me I skip. 1936 Nye No 87: He skipped out with...quite a bit.

skirt v. to associate with a woman
1969 Foreman Last 72: Colorado Jack stampeded out herd while you went skirtin' with the Brokus wench!

skrag v. to [Lighter 1929] kill
1906 Mulford Bar 62: Skragged from behind, d--n them!

skunk n. [OED2 1841; DA 1840; Lighter 1847] a worthless person
1884 Whittaker Marshall 12: Ef those were all the skunks we had to tackle to-night, I'd be in favor of goin' back and wipin' them out. 1887 Willett Sandy 3: The little skunk...I ort to hev wiped him out. 1903 Adams Log 197: Stand up you measly skunk, so I can see you. 1906 Mulford Bar 156: Some hip-pocket skunk would plug me afore I could wink. 1914 Grey Rustlers 57: That was a hell of a biff Snell gave you, the skunk. 1920 Rhodes Stepsons 48: Skunk--but no fighting fool. 1921 Brand Seventh 96: Why, you bob-tailed skunk! 1924 Grey Wild 86: You couldn't believe this skunk. 1926 Brand Blue 166: I've mixed with some low-down skunks, but you're the lowest. 1930 Brand Destry 54: They call me a yaller skunk. 1930 Mulford HC Eagle 237: Walters was a damn

skunk. 1931 Brand Ambush 104: And the skunk that tries to pull out or double cross, we sock him full of lead. 1931 Rhodes Trusty 223: The skunks that have been doing the dirty work. 1933 Brand False 75: 22: I dunno that I wanta be touched by any one of the seven skunks that'll let one crook stick 'em up. 1936 Nye No 52: The dirty skunk. 1963 L'Amour Sackett 88: No decent man would ride for a skunk like that. 1967 Nye Trigger 124: Some damn skunk had sent her brother over the hump. 1987 Dexter Deadwood 293: I will be there in the bar when this skunk-lover comes in.

sky-pilot n. [OED2 1883; Lighter 1887] a clergyman
1906 Mulford Bar 60: This here whole yearth's wrong, just like that cross-eyed sky pilot said. 1918 Grey U. P. 243: Ruby called me a fool--crazy--a sky-pilot. 1936 Nye No 177: You got that epidemic what the sky-pilots refer to as "religion." 1942 Nye Trigger 129: Do you want I sh'd send fer a sky-pilot or do you reckon to make port unshrived?

slab-sided adj. [OED2 1817] thin
1906 Mulford Bar 59: Every time I...don't drink it all in town some slab-sided maverick freezes to it. 1920 Rhodes Stepsons 80: You mangy, moth-eaten, slab-sided, long, lousy, lop-eared parallelipedon. 1926 Brand Blue 155: They was going along pretty slab-sided, as if they'd been...where the forage wasn't any too fat. 1930 Brand Destry 116: Sort of slab-sided and all fell in togethers. 1950 Raine Six 123: Was one of them a long slab-sided guy thin as a rail?

slant eyes n. [Lighter 1936] a Chinese person
1987 Dexter Deadwood 97: The upstairs girls who paid him to run errands, the slant eyes.

slat-sided adj. slab-sided
1936 Nye No 133: That slat-sided, grinnin' chessy-cat of a Smith'll sing another tune!

slick n. [Lighter 1893] an unbranded animal
1922 Evarts Settling 51: After they leave the cows they're slicks, fair game for the first man puts his rope on them.

slick adj, adv. [OED2 1825] smoothly
1920 Rhodes Stepsons 144: Seein' you happened along so slick. 1930 Mulford HC Eagle 89: We allus did work slick in double harness. 1931 Brand Ambush 82: The youngster made as slick a draw as you ever seen. 1955 Henry Who 121: It didn't go so slick for the others. 1959 Nye Long 85: How'd you know...to fit that tune so slick to your need?

slick adj. [OED2 1807; Lighter 1917] clever, sophisticated, dishonest

1914 Grey Rustlers 58: I've heard you was slick. 1922 Brand Garden 110: She despised the "slick dudes" who now and again drifted into Lukin. 1923 Hough North 44: There must have been a band of skinners and slick hunters working our range. 1928 Grey Stairs 174: Larey...thought he was so slick. 1931 Brand Ambush 99: I could see how the slick fox had put me behind a wall. 1931 Brand Ride 190: Slick, ain't he? 1932 Grey Lost 87: Senor, you mucha sleek. 1933 Brand False 75: 40: Don't you worry about me, brother, when it comes to being slick. 1941 Short Hard 149: You're considerably slicker than when you tried to cold-deck me in Dodge. 1942 Nye Trigger 33: He's a pretty slick pumpkin. 1950 Raine Six 69: This pay-roll money might...be yours if you are slick about it. 1959 Nye Long Counterfeiters...Those two were about as slick as they come in that line. 1967 Nye Trigger 199: Wallabye's pulled it off, the slick talkin', thievin' snipe. 1968 Nye Lost 119: The slickest bamboozler since Yellow Hair Custer.

slicker n. [OED2 1900; DA 1900] a cheat
1955 Henry Who 6: He saw the house slicker shifting the pasteboards on him. 1960 L'Amour Sacketts 98: I had to slicker them into thinking something else.

slick eared adj. slick
1929 Haycox Chaffee 12: La-de-da ladies and slick eared gents.
1931 Haycox Whispering 154: Another slick-eared gun fanner from other parts.

slide v. [Lighter 1856] to depart
1877 Wheeler DD Prince 12: If you're ready, we'll slide.
1930 Mulford HC Eagle 313: You slide outa here an' get to th' horses.

slide chips out against v. to oppose
1902 Wister Virginian 151: Victoria'd get pretty nigh slain sliding chips out against Elizabeth.

sling a gun v. [Lighter 1934] to handle a gun
1942 Nye Trigger 43: Where'd you learn to sling a gun like that?

slippery adj. [OED2 1555] deceitful, slick
1938 Haycox Man 123: You're a little slippery for me. 1967 Nye Trigger 176: Them two is slipprier 'n slobbers. 1968 Nye Lost 60: The slippery son could live like a lord if he got enough chumps to pony up in that fashion!

slope v. [OED2 1859; DA 1830; Lighter 1839] to leave in a hurry

1878 Wheeler DD on Deck 2: She had sloped w' another galoot.
1906 Mulford Bar 223: Slope along an' don't be scared; I'm
with yu. 1913 Mulford Coming 216: His wife sloped with a
better-lookin' man. 1931 Haycox Whispering 43: Let's slope.
And better hurry. 1946 Nye Breed 182: He might be sloping
right, digging for the tules. 1967 Henry Alias 31: I'll
slope out of this here shed on old Spook.

slow elker n. a rustler

1957 Evarts Man 22: To throw the fear of God into slow-
elkers, they hired men like Ora Sloat.

slug n. [OED2 1622] a bullet

1929 Haycox Chaffee 103: Ride around and holler at them boys
sendin' slugs into the breeze. 1941 Short Hard 129: Before
you put a slug in my back, though, you better make sure what
it'll get you. 1950 Raine Six 19: That slug was sent to my
address. 1959 Nye Long 94: I would hate to find out, after
I'd put a slug into him, that the guy I'd knocked over had
been on my side of the fence.

smoke n. [OED2 1905; DA 1910; Lighter 1914] performance

1942 Nye Trigger 27: You watch my smoke an' get educated.

smoke v. [OED2 1926; Lighter 1956] to shoot

1904 Bower Chip 21: We'll break loose down here with our
broncs and our guns, and smoke up the ranch in style. 1956
Overholser Desperate 102: If I rode into Rafter 3, they'd
smoke me out of my saddle. 1967 Nye Trigger 134: We didn't
do no smokin'

smoke eater n. an overeager individual

1931 Haycox Whispering 171: Some of you smoke eaters forget
that these hills make perfect shelter for the wild bunch.

smoke out v. [OED2 1593] to force out of hiding

1958 Henry Reckoning 15: It was another attempt to smoke him
out.

smoke pole n. [Lighter 1902] a revolver

1903 Adams Log 33: The man leaving had given me his gun for
company, one of those old smoke-pole...six shooters. 1936
Nye No 29: Can you use that smoke-pole you're totin'?

smoke up v. [Lighter 1899] to become dangerous

1931 Haycox Whispering 19: Didn't I tell you things was
smokin' up hereabouts.

snake n. an untrustworthy man

1904 Bower Chip 136: I'd know that long-legged snake ten
miles away. 1921 Brand Seventh 65: D' you think I'm a
plain, low-down, murderin' snake? 1922 Evarts Settling 80:

Every man would have quit the Three Bar like a snake. 1930 Mulford HC Eagle 109: Damn' ambushin' snake. 1967 Nye Trigger 69: Miss Rosalee...ain't partial to gettin' mixed up with snakes.

snakehead n. [Lighter 1931 ref to 1870's] cheap liquor, said to have a snake's head as an ingredient
1954 LeMay Searchers 196: He's full of snakehead...I can smell it on him.

snake juice n. [OED2 1890; Lighter 1931] liquor
1968 Nye Lost 28: He went scurrying off to dig up his snake juice.

snakes, kill one's own, stomp one's own v. phr. to take care of one's own affairs
1950 Raine Six 48: Kill yore own snakes, Duff. 1956 Overholser Desperate 105: I'll let Blue stomp his own snakes.

snaky adj. [Lighter 1907] treacherous, esp. a horse
1904 Bower Chip 134: The drawing...demonstrated the manner in which a particularly snaky broncho had taken a fall out of Jack Bates. 1920 Rhodes Stepsons 22: Them outcasts was sure snaky. 1937 Short Marauder 7: If they get snaky with me, you're a dead man. 1938 James Flint 65: Twelve head of the fat snaky bays was cut out and put into another corral.

snapshot n. [OED2 1925] a shot made without taking careful aim
1914 Grey Rustlers 93: I could more easily have killed him than risked a snapshot at his arm.

snifter n. [OED2 1884] a drink of liquor
1952 Schaefer First 121: Come on and have a snifter with us.

snootful n. [OED2 1918; Lighter 1908] enough liquor to make one drunk
1957 Gruber Lonesome 100: Go downstairs and get yourself a snootful.

snort n. [OED2 1889] a drink of liquor
1955 Henry Who 12: He sashayed in for his morning snort.

snuff one's lights v. to kill someone
1959 Nye Long 30: A dozen men would swear he'd been getting their lights snuffed. 1967 Nye Trigger 157: Giving Smith--an expert rifleman--the chance to snuff Duncan's light.

snuff out v. [OED2 1930] to kill someone
1929 Brand Last 29: It nearly snuffed him out to laugh like that.

soak n. [OED2 1820; Lighter 1854] a drunk
1922 Evarts Settling 31: Back off from the pine slab, you Three Bar soaks. 1946 Nye Breed 20: Three shabby old soaks by the end of the bar. 1956 Overholser Desperate 64: Borrowing money to loan it to a whiskey-making old soak...is the stupidest thing I ever heard. 1985 McMurtry Lonesome 355: Because you're hired to keep the peace and these old soaks have been disturbing it.

soap-boxer n. [OED2 1922; DA 1913] a reformer
1967 Nye Trigger 171: Bonanza's a up-an'-comin' town...if the soap-boxers would leave it alone.

sodbuster n. [OED2 1922; Lighter 1914] a farmer
1931 Haycox Whispering 178: Hit this you sodbuster. 1935 James Home 38: No sod buster would be fool enough to come to his country to farm the big benches that was on his range. 1941 Haycox Trail 177: From a sodubster....From the meek of the earth. 1954 LeMay Searchers 85: He would have traded places with the lowest sodbuster...if only he could have had four walls, a stove, and people around him. 1956 Gruber Big 171: You're selling plows to the sodbusters. 1957 Gruber Lonesome 29: These were the farmers, the sodbusters.

soddy n. [OED2 1877; DA 1877] a sod hut
1956 Gruber Big 10: A man...crawled out of one of the soddies. 1985 McMurtry Lonesome 583: I wonder if them soddies will get that roof fixed before the next rain?

son-of-a-gun n. [Lighter 1820] a fellow
1906 Mulford Bar 70: Locoed son-of-a-gun. 1928 Grey Stairs 33: That son-of-a-gun mule has stood there in his tracks all night.

soogan n. [OED2 1907] bedding, blankets
1904 Bower Lonesome 212: Pink unrolled his "sooguns"...and went straight to sleep. 1935 James Home 18: I got to hitting the 'soogan*' at about the end of the 'grave yard shift every night. *Quilts, bedding. 1938 James Flint 45: We'll hit for camp and the soogans. 1957 Evarts Man 54: What's she [picture of a girl] doing in your sougan?

sourdough n. [OED2 1898; DA 1902; Lighter 1890] a prospector
1929 Haycox Chaffee 146: Once a sourdough, always a sourdough....It's ten years since I left the Klondike. 1929 Brand Last 10: We had done the Klondike together years back, so you can imagine how it was when two old sourdoughs like us got together. 1931 Brand Ambush 127: This is one of them hard-boiled old sourdoughs.

soused adj. [OED2 1902; Lighter 1854] drunk
1967 Henry Alias 114: The soused cowboy you saw being dumped into that mine wagon is the same one that broke this here horse.

spark v. [OED2 1807; DA 1787; Lighter 1859] to court
1903 Adams Log 72: It seemed a number of the boys had sparked the bride in times past. 1959 L'Amour First 68: Could be he was sparking some woman. 1978 Evans Longarm 88: I ain't sparking the widow. 1985 McMurtry Lonesome 151: I sparked Maude Rainey once upon a time.

spill v. [OED2 1917; Lighter 1917] to reveal
1929 Haycox Chaffee 54: I wouldn't spill any of this dope to Luis Locklear. 1931 Haycox Whispering 143: I thought he was a-goin' to shoot me when I spilled the news. 1936 Nye No 105: Spill your information. 1956 Gruber Big 99: You called me here for a reason. Spill it.

spill the beans v. phr. [OED2 1919] to reveal information
1926 Brand Blue 19: Now start going and spill the beans. 1936 Nye No 156: I got the sheriff muzzled so's he won't spill the beans.

splice v. [OED2 1751; Lighter 1836] to marry
1926 Brand Blue 92: They was to splice her to a rich young don. 1932 Grey Lost 87: Splice them proper an' bindin'.

split the breeze v. phr. to travel rapidly
1904 Bower Lonesome 176: We'd just pick out a drifter and split the breeze.

spook v.
1. [OED2 1935; DA 1867; Lighter 1926] to frighten
1938 Haycox Man 26: How'd you get spooked up. 1954 LeMay Searchers 273: Seem kind of easy spooked...don't they? 1955 Henry Who 146: I can catch me a couple of them before Ike's had time to spook them. 1960 L'Amour Sacketts 133: I was gettin' spooked. 1961 Short Desert 106: If I walk around the wagons I'll spook somebody and they'll take a shot at me. 1965 Foreman Mustang 125: Five hundred spooked horses should do a better job, charging down this pass, h'm? 1967 Henry Alias 74: I don't let it spook me none. 1978 Evans Longarm 5: His friends joshed about a man his size spooking livestock. 1978 Gilman Death 57: What crazy fool fired off a gun and spooked the critters?
2. [Lighter 1928] to become frightened
1985 McMurtry Lonesome 240: Two of the wild heifers spooked.

spooky adj.
1. [OED2 1854; DA 1926; Lighter 1925] frightened

1922 Evarts Settling 99: I'm getting spooky. 1935 James Home 28: It had been a spooky outfit of men, who drove their stock by night...and dodged the main trails. 1938 Haycox Man 91: Always a spooky man, he had grown more wary. 1959 L'Amour First 145: I never liked this place; makes a man spooky. 1964 L'Amour Hanging 34: I'm so spooky that if anybody was to come prowlin' around I'd be apt to strart shootin'. 1969 Foreman Last 46: The critters 'll be spooky, hard as hell to handle.

2. [Lighter 1968] frightening

1978 Evans Longarm 10: That mysterious smell was sort of spooky. 1967 Henry Alias 24: Spooky as sin, riding alone down that empty street.

spoon v. [OED2 1831; Lighter 1914] to make love to

1902 Wister Virginian 112: He's spooning our schoolmarm! 1914 Grey Rustlers 53: George wants to spoon. 1926 Brand Blue 92: You wre what you call spooning, no?

spooney adj. [OED2 1836; Lighter 1843] lovesick

1878 Wheeler DD on Deck 4 The idea of me talking so spooney! 1914 Grey Rustlers 53: He's spoony. And when he...tries to kiss me, I hate him. 1926 Grey Under 214: We're packin' that spoony couple away from home for a spell.

sport n. [OED2 1897; DA 1856; Lighter 1899] a fellow

1885 Harbaugh Denver 20: The big desperado-sport...laughed till the mountains were filled with the echo. 1885 Ingraham BB's Grip 15: She had fallen in love with some young sport. 1887 Badger Rustler 4: It isn't a goose-hair bed you'll drop on...lightly cried the yellow-haired sport. 1904 Bower Chip 49: She's a howling sport then. 1942 Nye Trigger 37: Come on sport. 1959 Nye Long 23: Had to plug a short sport.

spread n. [OED2 1927; DA 1927] a ranch

1935 James Home 13: He's been good since he come north and built this spread. 1936 Nye No 107: The Big Three is goin' to get this spread or bust a gut tryin'. 1942 Nye Trigger 45: Four thousan' bucks for a spread worth more than double that! 1950 Raine Six 29: You have a nice spread. 1954 Overholser Violent 20: He's got a big spread. 1956 Overholser Desperate 86: Your spread isn't the hot spot. 1959 Nye Long 69: Right now I wouldn't give a dollar for this spread. 1967 Nye Trigger 28: Not on any spread I'm bossin'. 1976 L'Amour Where 83: He runs that spread. 1978 Gilman Death 13: The Big-T spread's ten miles northwest of here.

square adj.

1. [OED2 1646; Lighter 1859] honest, trustworthy

1878 Wheeler DD on Deck 2: He claims to hev cum frum New York, an' ar' one o' ther squarest galoots I ever fell in

wi'. 1885 Harbaugh Denver 6: I want yer ter be squar' with Calumet Tom, anyway. 1885 Ingraham BB's Grip 16: I does know yer to be a squar' man. 1902 Wister Virginian 108: She's square, not takin' a man's gift when she don't take the man. 1904 Bower Lonesome 226: They're square--and stand at the top. 1906 Mulford Bar 97: He was a "square" man and the best sheriff the county had ever known. 1913 Mulford Coming 7: He believed this foreman was as square as he was game. 1923 Hough North 100: You'll have to say sentence on this man we-all thought was...a square Texan and a good man. 1924 Grey Wild 201: You've never been anything but fair and square. 1922 Rhodes Copper 140: The sheriff's a square man. 1932 Grey Lost 266: I'm just bein' square. 1942 Nye Trigger 33: The old man seems a pretty square sort. 1967 Henry Alias 14: I like your daddy. He's square.
 2. [OED2 1591; DA 1804] even, fair
 1877 Wheeler DD Prince 9: He'd consent to do the squar' thing by us. 1884 Whittaker Marshall 11: If I git a squar' chance at him; this time I'll shoot to kill. 1887 Lewis Demon 2: I do not see as anyone can prevent you from getting square with the whole tribe. 1891 Ingraham Buck 15: Though I tell you that there will be war to the knife between us, I promise you it shall be open and square on my part. 1906 Mulford Bar 141: He wished to get square with Hopalong Cassidy. 1921 Brand Seventh 63: Give me a square chance and I'll tackle Vic Gregg alone. 1922 Brand Garden 139: Isn't it what you'd call a fair bet? The squarest in the world. 1930 Mulford HC Eagle 240: Lord give Tom Walters a fresh deck, a fair cut, and a square deal. Amen. 1933 Brand False 75: 13: He loved a square deal as he loved danger. 1938 Haycox Man 28: I don't think it was quite square. 1937 Haycox Sundown 97: He never played square with Dad. 1957 Evarts Man 27: So let's call it square.

square v. [OED2 1853; Lighter 1900] to make an equable settlement

1904 Bower Lonesome 133: You've got to come back and square yourself with Annie. 1907 Hough Outlaw 10: I...told him we would square with him if we had made any mistake. 1914 Grey Rustlers 102: We'll square up after the show. 1922 Evarts Settling 72: Accounts are all squared off between us now. 1923 Hough North 77: My world and my life for it...till all these things are squared. 1928 Grey Stairs 66: She took the blame. She squared you with everyone. 1932 Grey Lost 281: You squared one debt. 1956 Gruber Big 96: I've squared things around town....No one holds a grudge. 1965 Foreman Mustang 19: Fifteen hundred dollars ought to about square it.

square, on the adj. [OED2 1667; Lighter 1812] honest, trustworthy

1914 Grey Rustlers 62: I'm not drunk, and I'm on the square.
1922 Evarts Settling 20: He's on the square. 1967 Nye
Trigger 7: I can overlook a good many shortcomings if a man
is on the square.

square shooter n. [OED2 1914; DA 1934; Lighter 1914] an
honest person
1929 Brand Last 139: One doesn't find square shooters every
day.

squaw-man n. white man who lives with an Indian woman
1924 Grey Wild 13: Squaw man! All because I befriended a
Navajo girl. 1932 Grey Lost 255: He's a squaw-man shore.

stack a deck v. phr. [OED2 1964] to cheat
1913 Mulford Coming 205: They stacked the deck clever; but
Providence cut it square. 1936 Nye No 167: I ain't a right
good gent to stack a deck on.

stack a trick on v. phr. to rely on
1879 Wheeler DD in Leadville 3: Ye can stack yer trick on
him every time.

stack the cards v. phr. [DA 1825] to perpetrate a
deception
1887 Willett Sandy 24: This child don't like the way the
keards were stacked ag'in us. 1932 Grey Lost 205: Don't you
never think I stacked the cairds?

stacked deck n. an unfair opposition
1963 L'Amour Sackett 97: How can a man...buck a stacked
deck. 1976 L'Amour Where 112: I think the boss is buckin' a
stacked deck.

stake one's pile v. phr. to bet
1878 Wheeler DD on Deck 10 I'll stake my pile she's all
square.

stand pat v. [OED2 1890; DA 1903; Lighter 1914] to remain
inactive, hold one's ground
1937 Haycox Sundown 61: "Sall right. Stand pat. 1956
Overholser Desperate 152: Stand pat, I said. 1960 L'Amour
Sacketts 174: Once an issue was faced he would stand pat.

star packer n. [Lighter 1965] a lawman
1946 Nye Breed 28: Stoke's star packers had asked no
more...than to get their gunsights lined on Tune. 1959 Nye
Long 110: It was the...star packer, Hawley.

star-toter n. a lawman

1936 Nye No 65: He did not know where to look for the star-toter.

star-wearer n. a lawman

1955 Henry Who 75: One had gone to Wyatt, the other four to some brother star-wearers.

steel n. [Lighter 1902] a revolver

1902 Wister Virginian 29: He has handed Trampas the choice to back down or draw his steel.

stick-up n. [Lighter 1902] a robbery

1942 Nye Trigger 16: Another durn stick-up.

stiff n. [OED2 1859; Lighter 1820] a corpse

1878 Wheeler DD on Deck 12 I haven't been able to get a straight bead on her...or she'd a bin a stiff afore this.
1959 Nye Long 19: He said to put these stiffs on ice.

stop one's clock v. phr. to kill

1936 Nye No 5: I'll stop his clock. 1950 Raine Six 34: Unless a welcoming committee stops his clock.

straight n. truth

1930 Brand Destry 153: Lefty, it's the straight!

straight adv. [OED2 1894; Lighter 1883] honestly

1885 Ingraham BB's Grip 2: Yes, talkee straightee, Buffalo Billee muchee goodee...man. 1937 Haycox Sundown 137: Man can play straight with his friends, can't he? 1941 Haycox Trail 108: Fight him. But do it straight.

straight grain adj. honest

1949 Schaefer Shane 8: A bad one's poison. A good one's straight grain clear through.

stretch one's neck v. phr. [OED2 1595; Lighter 1928] to hang someone

1923 Evarts Tumble 253: And right after I speak my piece they'll cast a ballot to stretch your neck a foot long.
1933 Brand False 75: 125: They wouldn't stretch my neck, Jim.

string up v. [OED2 1727; Lighter 1887] to execute by hanging

1879 Wheeler DD in Leadville 13: We'll be strung up like that bandit was. 1884 Whittaker Marshall 22: We mou't as well string ye up naow, as any time. 1891 Ingraham Buck 12: If I am taken to the Fort I will be strung up as the man you accuse me of being. 1913 Mulford Coming 280: I told him more'n once that he'd get strung up some day. 1950 Raine Six 22: This town is liable to string you up for shooting a woman. 1959 Gruber Bushwackers 40: We'd have had to string

up every man in about four counties. 1959 Nye Long 19: Let's string him up an get it done with. 1967 Nye Trigger 169: They'd strung Russian Bill and Sandy King--a couple of Curly Bill's long-riders.

stuck on adv. [Lighter 1906] fond of
1902 Wister Virginian 80: I'm regular getting stuck on Em'ly.

stuffed Stetson n. a worthless person
1937 Short Marauder 100: We sit here...protectin' the spread of a big stuffed Stetson. 1941 Short Hard 29: Would I help a stuffed Stetson like McFee that's put a price on my head.

sucker n. [OED2 1838; DA 1831; Lighter 1831] a victim, dupe
1877 Wheeler DD Prince 1: If more than one of 'em don't get their fingers burned when they snatch Deadwooded Dick baldheaded, I'm a Spring Creek sucker. 1913 Mulford Coming 176: S-u-c-k-e-r is my middle name--an' I'm busted. 1931 Haycox Whispering 206: That sucker horsed himself outa bed this mornin' and tried to walk. 1936 Nye No 38: It did kinda look like I was aimin' to play you for a sucker. 1937 Haycox Sundown 152: I have just made a sucker play. 1938 Haycox Man 23: You were a sucker to take Isham's drink. 1941 Haycox Trail 71: I don't waste time with suckers. 1941 Short Hard 34: A sucker's trap. 1946 Short Coroner 70: All right, I'll be a sucker. 1959 Gruber Bushwackers 52: It isn't losing the money that makes me so damn mad, it's being a sucker. 1959 Nye Long 25: If that sucker kicks off-- 1963 L'Amour Sackett 53: I always was a sucker for lost causes. 1967 Henry Alias 153: See what the suckers have brought along to put in the pot. 1967 Nye Trigger 142: The sucker showed hard money. 1968 Nye Lost 27: He was someway being set up for a sucker.

sunk adj. [OED2 1922] doomed
1928 Haycox Guns 64: We're plumb sunk if they coop us in this...joint. 1929 Haycox Chaffee 99: If they start a play they're sunk. 1931 Brand Ambush 108: You're dead...you're sunk. 1931 Haycox Whispering 36: Another five feet and yore sunk. 1967 Nye Trigger 199: We're sunk!

swamper n. [OED2 1907; DA 1907] a man of all work esp. in a saloon
1941 Haycox Trail 70: From the averted glance of the swamper...he understood how it would be. 1959 Nye Long 28: A swamper was sweeping off the walk in front of Kelly's. 1965 Short First 14: I'm in a class with a saloon swamper. 1968 Nye Lost 6: He didn't want to wind up swamping saloons.

swampie n. a swamper

1967 Henry Alias 84: A chance to be a runny-nose general store swampie.

sweet on adj. in love with
1914 Grey Rustlers 213: It concerns the lady you're sweet on.

swell v. [OED2 1812] to appear affluent
1929 Brand Last 25: You've got enough money to swell around.
1982 Tippet Texas 22: Think you can come swellin' 'round here and ever' body's gonna lay down and kiss yore boots.

swing v. [OED2 1816; Lighter 1877] to execute by hanging, to be hung
1877 Wheeler DD Prince 7: He shall swing in mid-air. 1878 Wheeler DD on Deck 12 Reckon you'll have to swing. 1952 Schaefer First 159: Now let's swing him. 1929 Haycox Chaffee 87: I'll see 'em swingin' in the breeze. 1946 Nye Breed 45: If you don't want to swing you better pick up that pistol. 1958 Henry Reckoning 157: I regret most my part in the swinging of the little red-haired man. 1967 Nye Trigger 169: Hague...was shortly taken to admire the rafter from which the two outlaws had swung. 1978 Evans Longarm 231: I'll never swing for it.

tail, curl ones v. phr. to admit defeat
1903 Adams Log 186: Before this game ends, I'll make Quince curl his tail.

tail in a crack, have one's v. phr. have a difficult problem
1950 Raine Six 27: Looked like I had my tail in a crack, me not having a gun with me. 1956 Overholser Desperate 96: He had his tail in a crack,...wanting to sell but scared to say so. 1959 L'Amour First 12: I'd have my work cut out for me without traipsing off to town,...and maybe getting my tail in a crack.

tail straight up n. phr. [OED2 1917; Lighter 1853] angry, combative
1930 Mulford HC Eagle 32: I'm headin' West, with both guns oiled an' my tail straight up.

tail: tie a knot in one's tail v. phr. to torment someone
1936 Nye No 63: Did yuh tie knots in the tails of any of its important citizens.

tail: tuck one's tail under v. phr. to admit defeat
1965 Foreman Mustang 161: Then why don't you tuck your tail under and run?

tail: twist one's tail v. phr. to torment someone

1902 Wister Virginian 199: He...claimed he'd twist Saynt Augustine's Domingo tail for him. 1929 Haycox Chaffee 37: He's twistin' his tail to make himself mad.

tall adj. big, great
1955 Henry Who 48: In a tall hurry.

take care of for keeps v. phr. to kill
1956 Gruber Big 197: You wanted a man taken care of for keeps!

take the long sleep v. to die
1928 Haycox Guns 97: Some more boys has got to die...take the long sleep.

tanglefoot n. [OED2 1890; DA 1859; Lighter 1859] bad liquor
1878 Wheeler DD on Deck 3: I...never swaller tanglefoot wi' a galoot I don't know. 1906 Mulford Bar 60: Ask Buck where yore tanglefoot is. 1958 Henry Reckoning 10: My feelings...were as uncomplicated as a four-finger peg of Montana tanglefoot.

tank town n. [Lighter 1938] small town
1941 Short Hard 148: Write me a receipt...so I can show it to the next tank-town sheriff that throws down on me for stealin'.

tarantula juice n. [OED2 1861; DA 1861; Lighter 1875] (strong drink) coffee or liquor
1878 Wheeler DD on Deck 2 A genial face reddened by..."tarant'ler juice," especially his nose. 1967 Henry Alias 74: Grizzly tossed them [coffee grounds] into his mouth and chewed them up....Tarantula juice.

tell n. [OED2 1864] a conversation
1931 Rhodes Trusty 269: From his tell yesterday, his patience is pretty well given out.

ten-gallon hat n. a high-crowned hat
1942 Nye Trigger 47: He was crimping his ten-gallon Stet hat. 1967 Nye Trigger 64: Ten-gallon Stet hats showed through the dust.

tenderfoot n. [OED2 1881; DA 1849; Lighter 1863] a newcomer to the West
1878 Wheeler DD on Deck 8: Some speculator would...hoodwink some fresh arrival--generally known as a tenderfoot. 1884 Whittaker Marshall 6: He had first come to Texas a raw Yankee greenhorn or "tenderfoot." 1885 Ingraham BB's Grip 2: Inside are two ladies, a tenderfoot from the East, a soldier and a Chinese heathen. 1902 Wister Virginian 68: I

was not called by my name...I was known simply as "the tenderfoot." 1904 Bower Lonesome 180: His pink-and-white prettiness...branded him unequivocally in their eyes as the tenderest sort of tenderfoot. 1906 Mulford Bar 166: The tenderfoot...sporting a new and cheap sombrero and also a belt and holster complete. 1913 Mulford Coming 143: There's two tenderfeet up on that ledge, with their sister. 1924 Grey Wild 51: The last of the sextet...was a tenderfoot they named Captain Bunk. 1928 Grey Stairs 49: The minute I seen him I knowed...he was shore a tenderfoot. 1929 Brand Last 87: But he preferred to take on the tenderfeet, and the greenhorns. 1930 Mulford HC Eagle 125: We ain't tenderfeet, an' we don't look it. 1931 Brand Ambush 80: There was not the air of the tenderfoot about him. 1932 Grey Lost 93: What would...tenderfeet do against a big force of Injuns? 1936 Nye No 102: If you was half a man...yuh'd tote a gun 'stead of ridin' round the country like a durn tenderfoot! 1937 Haycox Sundown 54: You ask a lot of questions, which is the mark of a tenderfoot. 1950 Raine Six 77: We got a tenderfoot hillbilly with us today from Kaintucky. 1955 L'Amour Heller 20: An Eastern face, an Eastern man, a tenderfoot. 1959 Nye Long 70: As happy as a gather of tenderfoot trappers convened to get the hide off a skunk.

thirst parlor n. a saloon

1913 Mulford Coming 25: He...dismounted before Quiggs' saloon, which was the really "high toned" thirst parlor in the town.

throw v. [Lighter 1912] to draw (a gun)

1914 Grey Rustlers 59: I'd throw a gun on him just as quick as on any rustler in Pecos. 1918 Grey U. P. 173: You can throw a gun? 1924 Grey Wild 84: He didn't seem eager to throw his gun so I had to beat him. 1932 Grey Lost 242: Throw thet gun you're packin', so my borin' you won't look so bad.

throw a wide loop v. phr. be influential

1957 Evarts Man 27: The man you're going to marry throws a wide loop in this country.

throw down v. [DA 1898; Lighter 1880] to draw or aim a gun

1907 Hough Outlaw 11: I threw down on him, and he answered by smashing me in the face. 1931 Rhodes Trusty 222: He'd yank his old forty-come-odd and throw down on Albert. 1941 Short Hard 148: I can show it to the next...sheriff that throws down on me. 1955 Henry Who 34: He threw it down in the western sense, by dropping its worn butt to his hip and firing point blank from there. 1959 Gruber Bushwackers 93: He...fired at Jethro, just as the latter was throwing down for his second shot. 1967 Nye Trigger 134: Those that won't

go, throw down on. 1968 Nye Lost 68: Nothing moved or...he'd have thrown down for sure. 1982 Tippet Texas 39: Goddam you to hell, throwing down on me!

throw lead into v. phr. to shoot
1946 Nye Breed 46: Yappin' won't kill him. Throw your lead into him.

tinbadge n. a lawman
1959 Nye Long 13: The thing that really graveled him was the notice of what that tinbadge was letting him in for.

tinhorn n. [OED2 1885; DA 1885; Lighter 1887] a gambler who plays for small stakes; an inferior, false, dishonest person

1902 Wister Virginian 28: What's he? Cow-puncher, bronco-buster, tin-horn, most anything. 1903 Adams Log 185: A tinhorn lawyer...thought he could recover their value. 1913 Mulford Coming 304: I ain't shakin' han's with no dogs or tinhorns. 1929 Haycox Chaffee 40: You're a damn tinhorn gambler. 1930 Mulford HC Eagle 42: It'll be enough unless some tin-horn gets th' Kid into a game. 1931 Haycox Whispering 12: They send up a tinhorn squawk everytime they lose a calf. 1931 Rhodes Trusty 249: I am seriously considering being a professional tinhorn. It seems silly to work. 1936 Nye No 169: He habitually wore the black, funereal garb of a tinhorn gambler. 1941 Haycox Trail 24: A tinhorn sport! 1941 Short Hard 20: The lyin', robbin', perjurin' tinhorn! 1942 Nye Trigger 28: Do you think I'm a-scared of them tinhorns? 1949 Schaefer Shane 16: Look at his clothes! He's just a cheap, tinhorn--. 1955 Henry Who 125: Any tinhorn can win and grin. 1956 Gruber Big 52: This tinhorn just killed Curly Meeker. 1957 Evarts Man 25: He'd grown abusive, complaining noisily about a tinhorn card-sharp. 1959 Gruber Bushwackers 92: Come on out and fight, you cheap tinhorn! 1959 Nye Long 99: That tinhorn won't earn the damned grub he swallows! 1960 L'Amour Sacketts 22: Reed Carney was nothing but a tinhorn. 1965 Foreman Mustang 17: A tinhorn cheaply flung an empty bottle. 1967 Nye Trigger 22: Better tell these tinhorns you've had enough. 1969 Foreman Last 9: He was a tinhorn cardsharp, at present badly down at the heel due to bad luck or the bottle.

tin star n. a lawman's badge
1955 Henry Who 95: I don't see no tin star on your chest no more. 1958 Henry Reckoning 96: Guess who's got himself pinned back of a little tin star.

top dog n. [OED2 1900; Lighter 1938] the most important, leading individual
1937 Haycox Sundown 70: One of us is top dog. Him or me. 1955 Henry Who 42: Wyatt got his visit from...that top dog ten percent. 1960 L'Amour Sacketts 107: They weren't

worried none...for they'd played top dog so long. 1976
L'Amour Where 5: I'll be top dog on one of those ranches.

top hand n. a skilled cowboy
1978 Gilman Death 36: Was top hand of the Big-T. 1985
McMurtry Lonesome 101: The day before he had been a tophand,
but what did that mean anymore.

top screw n. [Lighter 1933] a cowboy foreman
1967 Nye Trigger 16: Top screw had the say as to who was
hired an' fired.

toss one down v. to take a drink
1952 Schaefer First 118: Come over and toss one down with
me.

tough n. [OED2 1866; DA 1884] a thug
1879 Wheeler DD in Leadville 4: Some drunken tough, who is
speedily lugged off by the...sheriff. 1931 Haycox
Whispering 11: Who's goin' to run this country, the roughs
and the toughs or the ranchers.

tough nut n. [OED2 1862; DA 1862; Lighter 1953] an
intractable person
1932 Grey Lost 34: You might run into more lousy redskins
and tough nuts out there. 1935 Proud 30: I've heard a great
plenty about what a tough nut you are. 1950 Raine Six 59:
That tough nut Randy back again. 1967 Henry Alias 113: This
toughnut feller was a drifter.

touch iron v. to draw a gun
1956 Gruber Big 160: Touch iron, Mister.

trail v. to follow one's meaning
1955 Henry Who 129: You trailing me any better now?

trail-boss n. a foreman on a trail drive
1965 Foreman Mustang 23: I've got to take along some jigger
who...can trail-boss a band of horses that size.

trail-up v. to follow
1967 Henry Alias 55: Hot winds in winter are always trailed-
up immediate by hard freezes.

trick n. a series of actions
1930 Mulford HC Eagle 69: I'd just as soon start right now,
an' run th' whole trick. 1965 Foreman Mustang 31: Lay off
the booze, and don't botch the trick!

trigger happy adj. [OED2 1943; Lighter 1944] overeager to
use a gun

1960 L'Amour Sacketts 159: There's apt to be one in the crowd who's trigger happy. 1985 McMurtry Lonesome 111: If you're that trigger-happy, no wonder you're on the run.

trump n.

1. [OED2 1762] a fine person
1884 Whittaker Marshall 12: Don't shoot him boys!...That boy's a trump.
2. [Lighter 1872] an advantage
1885 Ingraham BB's Grip 2: As you hold trumps in this game,...up goes my hands. 1922 Evarts Settling 94: This...device is Slade's trump card.

trump v. to kill

1891 Ingraham Buck 3: The man who plays false, I trump with a bullet in his heart.

tules n. [DA 1838] brush, wilderness

1946 Nye Breed 182: He might be sloping right now, digging for the tules, getting out of the country. 1967 Nye Trigger 92: They'll likely...high-tail it for the tules. 1968 Nye Lost 177: McCready...could dig for the tules.

tumble v. [OED2 1846; DA 1877; Lighter 1911] to realize the truth

1914 Grey Rustlers 58: You tumble, Jim. 1926 Brand Blue 139: The whole gang would tumble to the fact I was a dud, so far as guns was concerned.

tumbleweed v. to wander

1930 Mulford HC Eagle 142: Tumbleweedin' from one job to th' next. Sorta driftin' careless-like.

turn tail v. to retreat

1957 Evarts Man 154: You think I'd turn tail now?

two-bit adj. [OED2 1888; DA 1904; Lighter 1980] cheap, of little value

1913 Mulford Coming 310: I'll kill a li'l time at a two-bit game, though. 1924 Grey Wild 195: Your two-bit partner...and your skunk foreman...are to blame for that. 1928 Grey Stairs 94: What do I care for these two-bit hang-dog fellows? 1938 Haycox Man 137: The little people, the two-bit ranchers...didn't count very much and never would. 1946 Short Coroner 69: There was a legal way to shove a tottering, two-bit outfit...over the brink into ruin. 1956 Gruber Big 76: You're not jinxing me with your two-bit bet. 1967 Henry Alias 84: A bunch of deadbeat two-bit crooks. 1978 Evans Longarm 29: Just a two-bit crossroads. 1985 McMurtry Lonesome 71: This town was a two-bit town when we came here.

two-gun man n. a gunfighter who uses two guns
1913 Mulford Coming 90: He was being shot to pieces by a two-gun man, the like of whose skill he had never before seen or heard of.

two-spot n. [OED2 1896; Lighter 1896] an insignificant individual
1950 Raine Six 79: You'll be s two-spot in this town the rest of your life.

vamoose v. [OED2 1827; DA 1844; Lighter 1846] to go, leave
1877 Wheeler DD Prince 5: I am a friend and your cruel captors have vamoosed. 1885 Harbaugh Denver 19: We'll tap Poker Phil's bottle before we vamoose this silver ranch. 1902 Wister Virginian 85: Things do not please me here just now and I am going to settle it by vamosing. 1903 Adams Log 86: Our dogies had vamoosed the ranch. 1903 Rhodes Loved 4: All washed away--vamoosed! 1913 Mulford Coming 350: You take it an' let him vamoose. 1923 Hough North 234: You vamoose pretty damn pronto. 1929 Haycox Chaffee 91: Mosey t'ords the front door....Vamoose. 1932 Grey Lost 44: Nary sign or sound of them Injuns....Vamoosed. 1941 Short Hard 16: Get out. Vamoose. 1965 Foreman Mustang 188: I put a dent in the major's skull--it meant a quick vamoose. 1969 Foreman Last 86: Move you psalm-singin' nurse maids! Vamoose!

varmint n. [Lighter 1903] a worthless fellow
1877 Wheeler DD Prince 7: Ye infernal smooth-faced varmint. 1885 Ingraham BB's Grip 13: Gov'mint will promote him fer riddin' the kentry of sich a vermint as you be. 1903 Adams Log 209: Good whisky and bad women will be the ruin of you varmint's yet. 1931 Rhodes Trusty 242: The old man...will chase the varmint's out. 1942 Nye Trigger 35: With all these varmint's that's ridin' the hills, a man can't risk goin' around unarmed. 1978 Evans Longarm 76: I never saw the varmint.

vinegaroon n. [OED2 1853; DA 1853] (a scorpion) an unpleasant or dangerous person
1942 Nye Trigger 143: Curly Bill an' his vinegaroons. 1950 Raine Six 12: What's eatin' you, you old vinegaroon? 1968 Nye Lost 160: A feller couldn't help worrying with a vinegaroon like that damned Weminuche camping on his shirttail. 1969 Foreman Last 27: Sold off the horses an' paid off the hands, after the old vinegaroon's funeral.

wad n. [OED2 1890; DA 1814; Lighter 1871] a roll of money
1906 Mulford Bar 370: He sported a wad this morning. 1922 Brand Garden 19: A hundred dollars--my whole wad. 1913 Mulford Coming 183: I shore lost a wad playin' faro. 1922

Rhodes Copper 170: Get into business. Get a wad. 1926 Brand Blue 7: My wad was so thick that I could paw at it for six months. 1985 McMurtry Lonesome 294: I'll be glad to keep tabs on Lorie while you run into town and lose your wad.

waddy n. [OED2 1897; DA 1897; Lighter 1893] a cowboy
1920 Rhodes Stepsons 22: Tell all these day-herder waddies that if any of'em want to write letters they can slip into the wagon. 1936 Nye No 11: Plumb overrun with bullyin' moneybags an' weak-kneed waddies. 1985 McMurtry Lonesome 37: What would the high figure be, for some big rank waddy who couldn't even spell.

wag one's jaw v. to speak
1936 Nye No 108: The dude's jaw was waggin' real earnest.

walloper n. a mule driver
1968 Nye Lost 9: The old walloper sniffed when Johnston slouched through the bar's open doors.

warbag n. [OED2 1820; DA 1897] a bag for personal belongings
1904 Bower Lonesome 97: Late that night Weary, his belongings stuffed hurriedly into the suit-case he called hjis "war-bag," started home. 1913 Mulford Coming 232: Lemme chuck my war-bag through that door an' I'm ready. 1955 Henry Who 83: He...started packing his warbag.

warpath, go on the v. [OED2 1897; DA 1808; Lighter 1869] to take violent action
1891 Ingraham Buck 14: I would not know just how to meet a woman on the warpath. 1903 Rhodes Loved 7: If you and Pat was to get on the warpath and go gunning for each other. 1930 Brand Destry 10: Harry Destry went on the warpath. 1938 Haycox Man 126: If Merritt's on the warpath he may go to pot-shootin' again. 1942 Nye Trigger 48: He'd go hog-wild on the warpath. 1950 Raine Six 46: He did not intend to go on the warpath. 1967 Nye Trigger 56: He's bound to hit the warpath anyway.

war sack n. [Lighter 1922] a warbag
1904 Bower Chip 55: He drew out a bundle which...he probably have called his "war sack."

waste v. [Lighter 1960] to kill
1906 Rhodes Sticky 23: The horse drags you till you waste him.

wave the hat v. to greet from a distance
1967 Henry Alias 6: "Waving the hat" was an outlaw term. It referred to the common practice when strangers met in that

desolate land. Rather than ride in close where either might recognize the other, and so be able to make subsequent identification under oath, the travellers waved their hats in exchange of distant reassurance before resuming separate, distant ways.

weasel n. [Lighter 1833] a sneak
1913 Mulford Coming 47: He's a shore 'nuff weasel, all right. 1956 Gruber Big 102: They're a bunch of weasels.

weed bender n. a farmer
1946 Nye Breed 121: Another weed bender...had been shot on his doorstep.

weed packer n. a farmer
1935 James Home 31: He held his range against the weed packers' sheep.

weed raiser n. a farmer
1938 James Flint 62: That weed raiser had suffered some losses.

wet v. to treat to drinks
1913 Mulford Coming 28: Reckon it's my treat; you wet last th' other time.

whang strings n. strings that fasten a holster to leg.
1946 Nye Breed 24: Tying the whang strings that hung from his holster.

wheel n. [OED2 1807; DA 1807; Lighter 1896] a silver dollar
1906 Mulford Bar 60: I paid twenty wheels for that.

white adj. adv. [OED2 1877; DA 1865; Lighter 1868] decent, honest
1885 Harbaugh Denver 12: Don Friscokin treat a prisoner white when he wants ter. 1887 Badger Rustler 5: Red outside, but whiter than undrifted snow within. 1902 Wister Virginian 251: To have to...let a stranger tell you that you're a hawg and a swine just after you have acted in a way which them that know the facts would call pretty near white. 1903 Rhodes Loved 7: It wouldn't be white of me to sell cartridges to Pat. 1904 Bower Lonesome 228: You're the whitest bunch. 1906 Mulford Bar 129: He smiled...as he realized that he faced a white man. 1906 Rhodes Sticky 18: Mr. Wolf...declined to partake of any interest; which was pretty damn white of him, when you stop to consider the style of nose he wore, and shows what climate will do. 1913 Mulford Coming 20: Yo're all right, Cassidy; yo're a white man. 1921 Brand Seventh 46: Stranger,...you're white. Damned white. 1922 Evarts Settling 41: Thanks....That was

real white of you. 1924 Grey Wild 16: The Piutes are pretty white. 1926 Brand Blue 69: He's a white man! 1929 Haycox Chaffee 40: This is a white man's country. Gentlemen play poker hereabouts, not card sharps. 1930 Brand Destry 153: I didn't want to harm Fitzgerald none. He's white. 1937 Haycox Sundown 177: I was a white man once, when I came here.

white livered adj. cowardly
1902 Wister Virginian 399: I know I'm white livered. 1903 Adams Log 192: Surrender....Not to you, you white-livered s--- of a b---. 1924 Grey Wild 346: You're a white-livered liar. 1931 Rhodes Trusty 293: Get up, you white-livered hound.

whizzer n. [Lighter 1920] a dishonest scheme
1904 Bower Lonesome 239: When you try to run a whizzer like that, you can put me down as being from Missouri. 1922 Rhodes Copper 26: It's might easy to run a whizzer when you've got the onlyloaded gun in camp. 1969 Foreman Last 99: He'll try a whizzer if he sees a chance.

whoop-up v. [Lighter 1878] to disturb
1907 Hough Outlaw 181: He killed a desperado who was "whooping-up" the town in customary fashion.

whoppy-jawed adj. talkative
1942 Nye Trigger 31: That whoppy-jawed range boss...rapped his gun barrel across my head.

wild bunch n. a herd of wild horses or a group of wild people
1923 Evarts Tumble 57: And I don't want to see him go over to the wild bunch.

wilt v. to surrender
1891 Ingraham Buck 3: Do you wilt, or shall I touch trigger?

wind n. [Lighter 1878] empty chatter
1955 Henry Who 117: Save your wind.

wind-jam v. [Lighter 1902] to blabber
1913 Mulford Coming 178: Don't take no harm in my fool wind-jammin', stranger.

wind trap n. mouth
1885 Harbaugh Denver 5: Close yer wind trap.

windbag n. [Lighter 1855] talkative person
1946 Nye Breed 137: All I find is a goddam windbag!

windy adj. empty

1942 Nye Trigger 13: Unless you counted the windy tale the horse-hunter had spun. 1968 Nye Lost 173: He'd made some pretty windy boasts.

windy n. [Lighter 1918] a tall tale
1931 Rhodes Trusty 240: Just exactly what...Farr meant by that windy about somebody paying for water for them dogies.

wipe out v. [OED2 1861; Lighter 1847] to kill
1884 Whittaker Marshall 9: We'll git wiped aout. 1887 Willett Sandy 3: I ort to hev wiped him out.

wolf n. [Lighter 1911] a predatory person
1885 Harbaugh Denver 13: Try that, my whitewashed wolf.
1913 Mulford Coming 266: If any two-laigged wolf plugs my war-bonnet he'll be some sorry. 1931 Haycox Whispering 61: Why not throw overboard every damned last scruple I've got and turn wolf?
1937 Haycox Sundown 186: Ben's a wolf with long ears. 1950 Raine Six 39: Come out and take yore medicine, you damned wolves. 1955 Henry Who 76: The...lad was a kinky wolf from the Chiricahuas...and didn't mean to have any burrs pulled out of his tail. 1969 Foreman Last 95: Crafty old wolf's tied you right to him, body and soul.

wolf, bigger than a adv. in an exaggerated manner
1903 Adams Log 80: The family was on the prod bigger than a wolf, and there was no use reasoning with them.

wolf, turn loose one's or cut loose one's v. [Lighter 1845] to turn lose one's anger
1922 Evarts Settling 72: I'd have...told Waddles to turn loose his wolf. 1950 Raine Six 66: He may order Ducret to cut loose his wolf and shoot us down from ambush. 1954 Overholser Violent 119: As soon as we get paid...we'll cut our wolf loose. 1956 Overholser Desperate 32: He'd go to town about once a month and turn his wolf loose.

wolf bait n. [Lighter 1967] an infirm animal
1967 Henry Alias 16: Leg up on that pot bellied wolfbait of yours.

wooden overcoat n. [Lighter 1873] a coffin
1887 Badger Rustler 19: I had abandoned all hopes of a more comfortable future than a wooden overcoat underground.
1950 Raine Six 72: You'll talk yourself into a wooden overcoat. 1963 L'Amour Sackett 91: The next thing they measured me for would probably be a wooden overcoat.

woolly adj. [OED2 1885; DA 1891] primitive
1923 Hough North 395: We're just from Texas and we're wild and woolly.

woolly n. [Lighter 1922] a sheep
1922 Rhodes Copper 59: And the second dark night
some...cowboys run off your herder and stampeded your
woolies over a bluff. 1936 Nye No 60: It'll take years to
get the sheep-stink off that range once Smith puts woolies
on it. 1956 Overholser Desperate 47: Open the gates to one
damned woolly and they'll pour in.

yap v. [OED2 1907] to talk
1928 Grey Stairs 171: If you yap it'll go bad with you.
1931 Rhodes Trusty 260: Thought you was going to keep up
that yap all night. 1946 Nye Breed 46: Yappin' won't kill
him.

yarn v. [OED2 1812] to hold conversation
1967 Henry Alias I yarn with the teller about the weather.

yegg n. [OED2 1903; DA 1901; Lighter 1902] a criminal
1929 Brand Last 14: Nobody much comes to church except the
yeggs and gamblers and...such. 1930 Brand Destry 97: What
yegg would waste his time on a safe like that?

yellow adj. [OED2 1924; DA 1896; Lighter 1926] cowardly
1879 Morecamp Live 258: That other yellor rascal must have
scooted when he seen how things was going. 1884 Whittaker
Marshall 12: Rest come; heap yellow men. 1914 Grey Rustler
64: If you're going to pretend a yellow streak, what else
will I think? 1921 Brand Seventh 20: D' you think that I'm
yaller? 1928 Grey Stairs 207: He's yellow clear through.
1929 Brand Last 49: You've never been a sneaking, yellow
crook. 1930 Brand Destry 46: The yaller dog's out and
around agin! 1930 Mulford HC Eagle 201: I never saw a white
man turn yaller as quick as you did. 1931 Rhodes Trusty
296: Erie Patterson isn't yellow, but he certainly is a
bird. 1932 Grey Lost 226: Have they made you show yellow?
1949 Schaefer Shane 51: Scared, eh. Yellow. 1954 Gruber
Bitter 72: Harpending said with a sneer, "Yellow, Bailey?"
1967 Nye Trigger 201: Were you born yellow natural? 1976
L'Amour Where 157: I think you're yellow. 1985 McMurtry
Lonesome 246: You went and got married and the next thing
you know you turned yellow.

yellowback n. a dime novel
1967 Henry Alias 160: Ned Buntline yellowbacks.

yellow bellied adj. [OED2 1930; Lighter 1866] cowardly
1923 Hough North 317: I'll have to cut out a beef for these
yellow-bellied friends of ours. 1954 Gruber Bitter 142:
Look who's talking...the yellow-bellied coward who shot Sam
Older. 1976 L'Amour Where 157: All of you...are a bunch of
yellow-bellied double-crossers.

yellow belly n. [Lighter 1928] a coward
1963 L'Amour Sackett 56: You yellow bellies will have to
live with it for the rest of your days.

yellow-livered adj. [Lighter 1919] yellow
1936 Nye No 185: You yellor-livered pup! 1957 Gruber
Lonesome 91: His yellow-livered son.

VITA

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After moving to Tennessee and raising two children, she entered The Graduate School of The University of Tennessee where she was awarded a Master's degree in English in 1982. She then accepted a teaching assistantship and began study towards a Doctorate, which was awarded in August 1990.