

The Cowboy's Code

The lack of written law on the frontier made it necessary for the cowman to frame some of his own guidelines on how to conduct himself, thus developing a rule of behavior which became known as the "Code of the West." These homespun laws, being simply a gentleman's agreement to certain rules of conduct for survival, were not written into statutes, but were respected on the range. Because there was no law, pioneers who lived in and settled the west were bound by these unwritten rules which centered on hospitality, fair play, loyalty, honesty, a deep respect for the land, and a rock solid work ethic.

Though the cowman might break every law of the territory, state and federal government, he took pride in upholding his own unwritten code. His failure to abide by it did not bring formal punishment, but the man who broke the code became, more or less, a social outcast.

In subsequent years, many versions of these frontier guidelines for behavior have been recorded under a variety of titles. Some of these include The Code of the West, Gene Autry's Code of Honor, Cowboy Code of Ethics, the Lone Ranger's Creed, and Roy Rogers Riders Club Rules.

The basic tenets of these codes are surfacing more and more in our interaction with others lately. We think that's a good thing, so we decided to post a version of it here for your consideration and perhaps adoption. One of the more recent versions of the code, as listed below, was taken from James P. Owen's book, *Cowboy Ethics: What Wall Street Can Learn from the Code of the West*.

Code of the West

1. Live each day with courage.
2. Take pride in your work.
3. Always finish what you start.
4. Do what has to be done.
5. Be tough, but fair.
6. When you make a promise, keep it.
7. Ride for the brand.
8. Talk less and say more.
9. Remember that some things aren't for sale.
10. Know where to draw the line.

The 5th annual National Day of the Cowboy is July 25, 2009. Particular events celebrating the event can be found at nationaldayofthecowboy.com.