

This month's theme:  
**Rodeo**



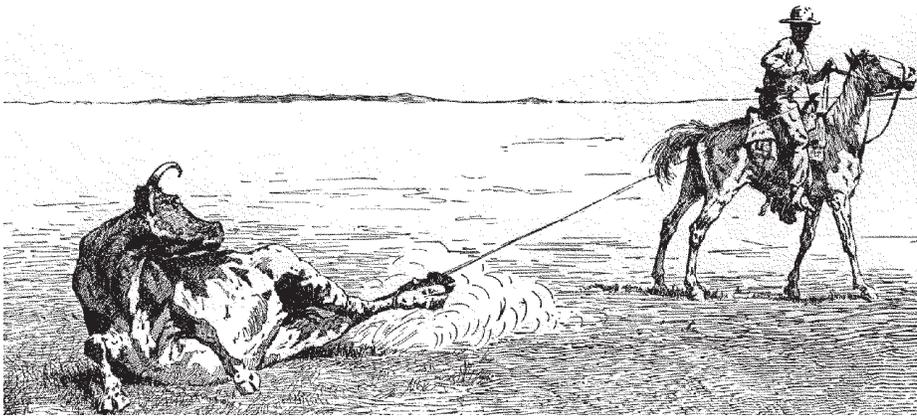
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The Newsletter of the Idaho State Historical Society's Junior Historian Program

# PROSPECTOR

March, 2007



## Rodeo

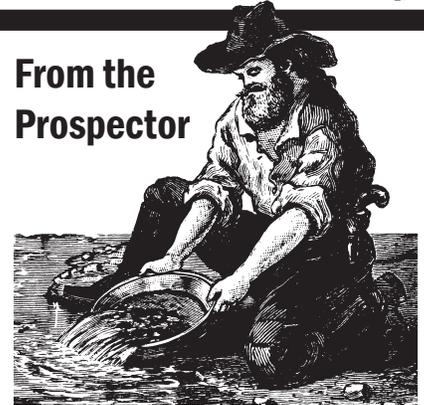
The sport of rodeo arose from cattle ranching traditions in North America. In the late 1800's cattle ranching was very different from now. Back then, cowboys moved cattle across the land in long expeditions called cattle drives. When the animals arrived at their destination they were let loose nearby to graze on the grasses of the open range. This worked fairly well, but created one big problem. Because there were no fences, the cattle would wander around and get mixed up. After a few months it was difficult to figure out which cattle belonged to whom. A couple of

times a year, all the cowboys in a region would get together and hold a roundup to sort the confusion out. At the roundup, the cowboys would use all of their skills in riding and roping to drive the cattle into a common corral. Each animal was then marked with hot metal branding irons that showed everyone who owned the animals.

Even though the roundup was held for practical reasons, the cowboys also enjoyed the social gathering. Often times, when they weren't working, they held competitions, taking bets on who was the fastest and best on a horse. These contests eventually came to be

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## From the Prospector



### Howdy Prospectors!

Spring is in the air. Birds are singing, wildflowers are blooming, and my mule is starting to think about rodeo season. That's right, my mule is a big rodeo fan. Every summer he drags me down from my favorite gold claim so that he can watch the latest rodeo action. I shouldn't complain, I like sitting in the stands and watching the rodeo myself. Did you know that rodeo comes from cowboy traditions of the late 1800's? Sometimes a simple sporting event can have a lot of history behind it. Enjoy this month's issue on the history of rodeo.

*Lucky Noah*

## Rodeo Continued

known as a rodeo, taken from the Spanish word “rodear,” which means to encircle or surround.

In the late 1800’s barbed wire was invented and ranchers had a quick, cheap way to fence their land. If the cattle no longer roamed free, most ranchers no longer needed to participate in the roundups. The cowboys still enjoyed the gatherings, though, as a way to get together to show off their skills for entertainment. At first there were just a few small contests, but they soon grew in number, and attracted large crowds. Buffalo Bill Cody, a legendary western character, also had a lot to do with the popular rise of rodeos. He created an elaborate Wild West Show that was similar to today’s circus. His show had fantastic displays of roping, riding and shooting that portrayed the cowboy as an American hero. As his show traveled from state to state, people in the East who were unfamiliar with the cowboy life, became interested in the contests that make up today’s rodeo events.

Rodeos typically start out with a display of the American flag, followed by the singing of the National Anthem. There are several competitive events, with some in the category of ‘Rough Stock’, which pits man against beast, and others in timed events. The rough stock

includes contests like bull riding and both saddle and bareback bronc riding. The rider is scored on how well and how long he can ride the bucking animal, with both animal and rider scores tallied for total points. The timed events include calf roping, steer wrestling, steer

farthest is given a ribbon or prize.

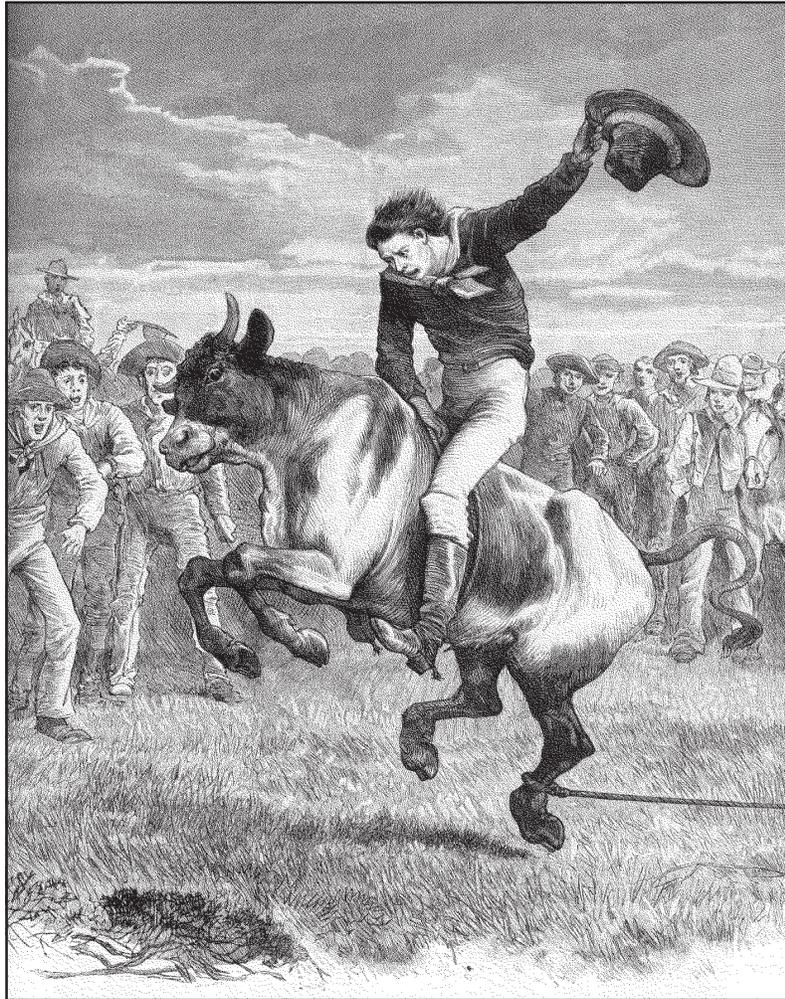
The Cowboy Turtle Association was the name taken by a group of 60 cowboys in 1936. They decided that they weren’t being treated fairly by the organizers of the rodeo.

They referred to their association as the Turtles, because they said “they were slow to get started, but they finally stuck their necks out.” The name was eventually changed to the Professional Rodeo Cowboy Association.

The Snake River Stampede is probably Idaho’s most well-known rodeo. It started as a bull and bronco-riding contest in 1913, which was held at the same time as the Nampa harvest festival. In 1937 the Stampede broke away from the festival and changed the time of the rodeo to July, eventually joining with the Professional Rodeo Cowboy Association. Of course, Nampa is just one of the many towns across Idaho to hold an annual rodeo. Our state’s strong rodeo tradition has helped

create several well-known rodeo stars, with some entered into the Hall of Fame, such as Eldon Evans, Gene Pruett and Shawn Davis.

The Rodeo has been a part of Idaho’s history for the last hundred years and it continues to bring excitement, entertainment and memories of the days of the open range. ♦



roping and barrel racing, which is the only event women are usually allowed to enter. Mutton busting is a pre-rodeo event that challenges children to ride a sheep across the arena. People hold the sheep still while the kids climb on, and when the signal is given, the sheep take off running with the small riders hanging on for an exciting ride. The one who stays on the longest or rides the



## The Fun Page

# Word Rodeo

Use the letters in the phrase below and see how many new words you can create. Plural forms of words don't count. Good luck!

## MUTTON BUSTERS

**0-9 words**

**10-25 words**

**26-35 words**

**36 or more**

**Rodeo Clown**

**Novice Roper**

**Bronco Rider**

**Rodeo Champion**





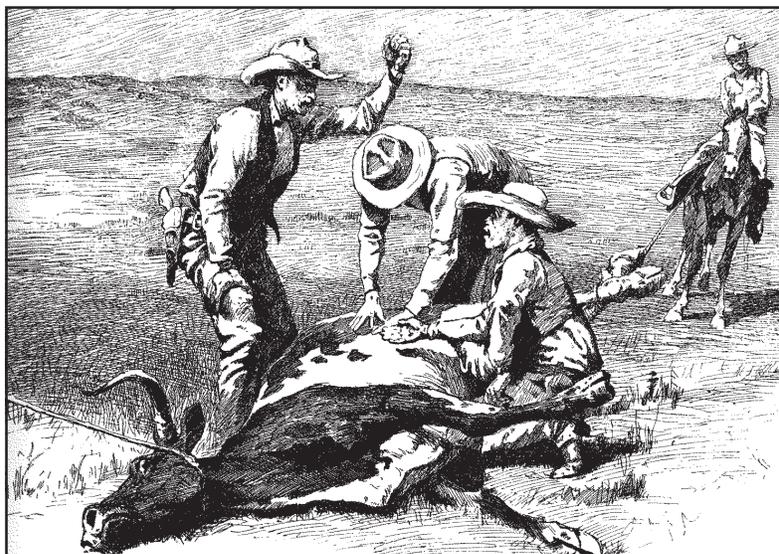
## Next Month's Activities

**W**ell, we've told you all we know about the history of rodeo in Idaho, but we need your help so that we can learn more. Pick from one of the activities below or make up your own rodeo project and send it in to our Prospector Headquarters. We'll take some of your best work and print it in next month's magazine. Remember to include your name, where you're from, and the name of your Prospector Chapter. We can't wait to see what you send in!

**Rodeo Clowns:** One of the most entertaining parts of a rodeo is the clowns. Half cowboys and half circus performers, these clowns have an important job. When a rodeo rider is thrown from a bronco or bull the clown moves in to distract the angry animal. The clown's crazy clothes and antics keep the heavy animals from trampling the fallen riders. Draw us a picture of the perfect rodeo clown in action. Will they

wear polka dot chaps or a giant purple cowboy hat? See if you can make your clown flashy enough to get an angry bull's attention.

**Rodeo Events:** Most of the modern rodeo events come from



cowboy tradition. Bronco riding, steer roping, and barrel riding all show off skills that were important to a cowboy's lifestyle. But things have changed a lot since the late 1800's. Maybe the rodeo should come up with some new events for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Make up a new event for the modern rodeo. Draw

a picture and write up a short description of the event. We'll print some of the best in next month's issue.

**Report from the Field:** Idaho is a rodeo state. From panhandle towns to the cities on the Snake River Plain, there are more rodeos than you can imagine. Have you ever visited or participated in a rodeo? Write us a small report telling the rest of the Prospectors about your experience. We can't wait to hear what you come up with!

Send in your work by April 26th to:

Prospector Club  
 Lucky Noah  
 Idaho State Historical Museum  
 610 North Julia Davis Drive  
 Boise, ID 83702

Or email it to us at  
[kzwolfer@ishs.state.id.us](mailto:kzwolfer@ishs.state.id.us).