

## LOOKING BACK

continued from page 172

Wild Bill did a good job of keeping the cowboys in line until a saloon owner, named Phil Coe, decided it was time to settle an old dispute. While working a street brawl, Hickok ordered him arrested for firing his weapon in the city. Suddenly Coe turned his pistol on Hickok. However, before Coe could fire, Wild Bill shot him twice in the chest killing him instantly.

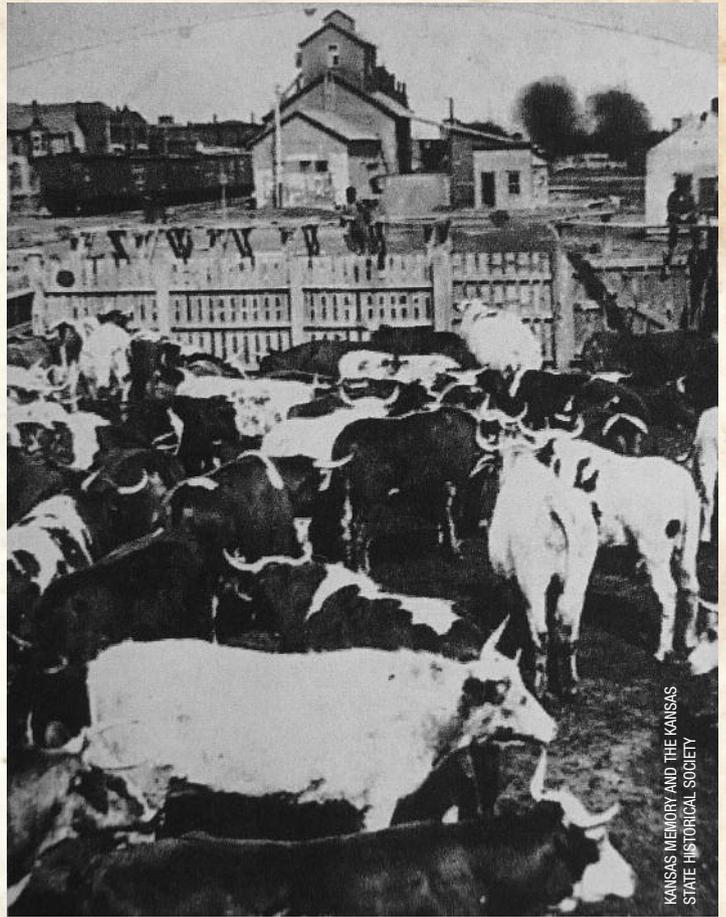
In the chaos of the moment, Hickok caught a fleeting glimpse of a man running towards him and fired two quick shots – hitting and killing his friend, Deputy Marshall Mike Williams, who was rushing to assist him. The event haunted Wild Bill for the rest of his life, and ended his career as a lawman.

By 1872, the railroads had pushed farther South and West, and the cattle business was shifting to the newer cow towns closer to Texas. As the cow business slowed, Abilene began to return to a quiet prairie town. After leaving the mayor's office in 1873, McCoy moved to Kansas City to pursue new business prospects. Kansas City had become the leading cattle market in the West. After a few years he invested in the meat processing side of the live cattle trade, and traveled extensively throughout the West and the Southwest to learn all aspects of the business.

In 1881, McCoy was hired by the Cherokee Indians as an agent to collect all the revenue on lands owned by the Indians, and he eventually moved to Oklahoma. He was then appointed to the job of Superintendent of the Range Cattle Dept. by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Joe McCoy lived his last years in Kansas City, passing away October 19, 1915. Later in life, he had authored a book entitled *Historic Sketches of the Cattle Trade of the West and Southwest*. Never was anyone better qualified to write about the early days of the cattle drives, the railroads or the wild cow towns, than the man who connected the live cattle drives to the railroads of Kansas.

One of the more famous stories tells of McCoy's trip to Chicago for his meeting with the railroad officials. When he pitched his idea, he bragged that he "would bring 200,000 head of cattle to their market in ten years." In reality, he brought in nearly two million head over four years. The phrase "It's the real McCoy" is said to be coined by people that knew him as a pioneer visionary and giant figure in the early Kansas cattle business, a great tribute to a legendary cattle man. **WR**



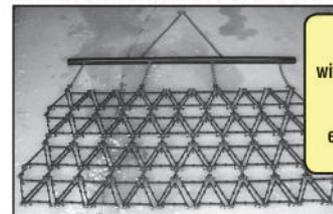
Some big cattle penned in the stockyards in Abilene, Kansas.

KANSAS MEMORY AND THE KANSAS STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

- Will not fold over on itself, allowing tight turns.
- Travels at high speeds.
- Will not tangle.
- Folds up for easy transportation.
- Can be pulled end-wise through small gates.
- Will wear longer because the material is considerably harder than steel rods yet has great strength and good ductility.
- Will clean itself of trash.
- Won't require repeated passes over areas of heavy manure concentrations because of much greater weight and number of tines.
- Produces smaller pieces and better distribution.
- The Hi-Valley Harrow won't ever cause you to regret you bought it!

[www.deltaharrow.com](http://www.deltaharrow.com)

### Delta-Tooth Harrow THE **SHAPE** OF THE FUTURE



Harrows are sold by the foot. With or without pull bars. Each harrow is custom assembled to your exact need & budget. Call for pricing.

**Hi-Valley Manufacturing**

Dave and Chris Sammons

(970) 724-9488 (970) 531-2498



- Transport manure easily
- Large 200 gallon Capacity.
- Helps eliminate waste's damaging effect on ground cover.
- Simple, one person operation.
- Power assist tilt for easy unloading & clean out.



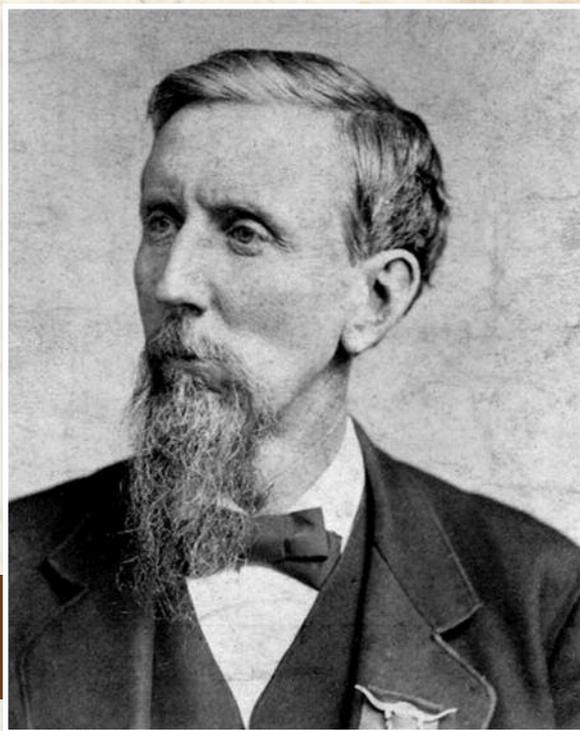
855-402-6885 [www.fieldvac.com](http://www.fieldvac.com)

\*\*Not for sale or use in California\*\*

## The Genuine 'Real' McCoy

**H**ell Is Now In Session in Abilene...! trumpeted the July, 1867 headline from the *Topeka Commonwealth* newspaper. With the opening of Joe McCoy's Great Western Stockyards, the tiny settlement in Central Kansas had turned into the wildest town in the West almost overnight.

Illinois cattle buyer Joe McCoy somehow found himself Mayor of Abilene, Kansas, back in 1870. The town was rough enough to require him to recruit a new sheriff by the name of James Butler Hickok.



McCoy, a cattle buyer originally from Illinois, had seen states like Missouri shut down the huge trail drives from Texas to Kansas City and other locations. The local farmers and ranchers were beginning to block access to their ground. Longhorns driven up from the South carried ticks that spread a disease called *Texas Fever* or *Spanish Fever*, depending who you wanted to blame. The Longhorns were the carriers, but were generally immune to it; and the local cattle were devastated by the disease. The ticks left behind by the large herds killed thousands of animals that were not resistant to them.

In 1866, the Texas market was paying about four dollars per head compared to a more lucrative forty dollars a head in the North. McCoy knew that the Union Pacific railroad was interested in the possibility of expanding their rails to places like Abilene; and he lobbied them hard for a new line, promising to fill their cars with prime Texas beef. He then set to work plotting a course for the new *Abilene Trail*, a route that would connect to the North end of the *Chisholm Trail*. While marking the route and looking

for watering stops along the way, he founded the village of Newton, Kansas.

Once the railroad committed to a new line, he made a 600 acre purchase outside of Abilene for his stock yard and headed for Texas to advertise the new venture. After investing \$5,000 in flyers and advertising, he headed back home to prepare for the rush of business. The first drives of Texas cattle arrived in Abilene in August, and the first carloads were shipped to Chicago in September. The new system was a dramatic success and the Texas ranchers and McCoy were making more money than ever.

By 1870, the new Kansas cow town elected McCoy for their mayor. It didn't take long before he came to realize that with the success of the cattle business came everything that most towns didn't want – gambling, prostitution, gunmen and murder. Different cattle drives often ended at nearly the same time, and hundreds if not thousands of cowboys, their pockets flush with a month's pay, all landed in Abilene at the same time looking for excitement.

The wild little cow town was run by the brothel and saloon owners, and

the mayor brought in one new sheriff after another. Some tried a 'no guns in city limits' law and failed miserably. After a few days, some of the newly-appointed lawmen simply disappeared, not wanting any part of Abilene's problems. In 1870, a fearless new marshal, named Tom "Bear River" Smith, a former professional boxer, started out well but died in a murderous ambush by two locals. The killers were caught and sent to prison for life, but the job of sheriff was open again.

In frustration, Mayor McCoy began the search for someone to stand up to the lawless crowd. In April of 1871, he found the man for the job - James Butler Hickok, a.k.a. Wild Bill, became the next sheriff of Abilene. Hickok's fearsome reputation served him well when he came to town. The very sight of him walking down the street with his wide-brimmed hat, long flowing hair and silver-plated .36 caliber Navy Colts tucked into his belt commanded more than a little attention from the local gunmen. Mayor McCoy had hired him for \$150 a month plus a percentage of the fines he collected.

*continued on page 171*