



Frontier Folklore & Pioneer Prose from Harvey County

by Darren McMannis

Cowboy Profiling

What's A "Real Man" To Do?

It took considerable effort, but Newton finally cleaned up the town and sent the majority of its ruffian citizenry packing. Where do you send a trigger-happy cowboy? Literally, the new resident Newtonians sent them out of town on a rail - the railway line which intersected the burgeoning trail town of Dodge City is where many of the tough guys ended up.

For a while, at least. Eventually the orderly citizens of Dodge City also gained control, and formed a vigilance committee of their own. Soon "the roughs and rogues who generally have a horror for such proceedings" began to scatter in all directions. Many of them considered their old hometown of Newton, and came back on the eastbound train. They were met by Marshall Johnson on several occasions in 1873, who regularly watched those who stepped off the train. The Marshall quickly decided who might stay in town and who should, for the sake of the community, be sent on their way.

"Several roughs came here on Monday morning's train," reported the newspaper that winter. Marshall Johnson immediately confronted them, told them there was no room here for "such as the likes of them," and they all left on the evening train.

A few weeks later, more of the roughs ordered out of Dodge city stopped off in Newton. They too received marching orders from Marshall Johnson. They declared to the Marshall that they had enough of this State, as the vigilance extended from Dodge City to Pueblo while from Dodge eastward they were unable to find a descent community that would "appreciate a good strong man in town." As they immediately left for the East on the noon train, they announced that Newton was welcome to its "sissy citizenry" and they were most content to find a new home where "a man can be a real man and where a good cowboy is still appreciated."

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It would be an interesting experiment if the Marshall in Harvey County would send hooligans out of town today. Maybe the cowboys were right. The only criminals in Harvey County that winter were a much kinder and gentler bunch. It was reported that "A couple of clothes lines in town have been robbed recently" and "A purloiner of a handful of heating coal has been transported to the placid confines of the Sedgwick City jail."

I wonder where all the cowboys went. Dallas, maybe.



Real Cowboys Read Prairie Tales