



A WALK THROUGH DODGE CITY

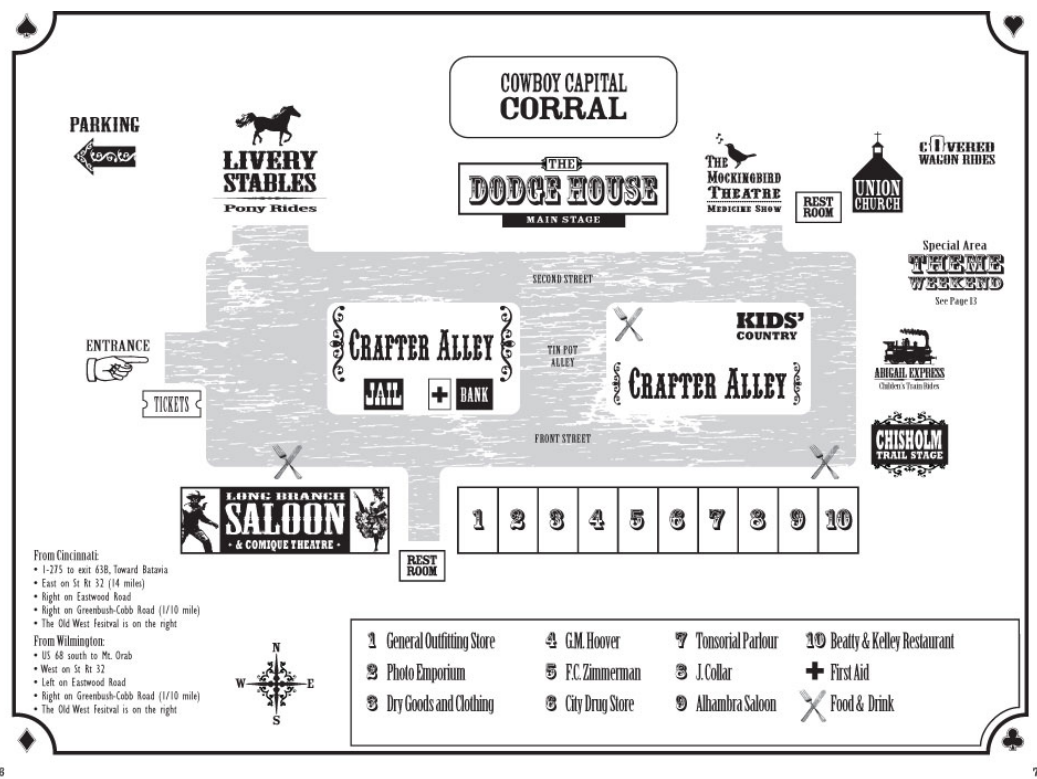
Instructional Format and Hints:

You may wish to consult the site map ahead of time and plan a “walking tour” of the Old West Festival. Better yet, if numbers permit, would be to allow students to set the pace and agenda according to their personal interests.

Social studies and history are disciplines that examine the structure of societies in specific places and times. Teachers might chose to consider any one of the following questions as an overarching theme of your visit:

- How and why was Dodge City in the 1870’s different from a city or town of today?
- How and why did Dodge City differ from Cincinnati or from your town in the 1870’s?
- How and why did Dodge City differ from the cultures or societies that you have been studying over the course of the academic year?

Some major aspects of these or other questions can be illustrated by various features of the Old West Festival. Below is a list of four such features, with some interesting introductory information to share with students, and suggested questions.





TRAIN

Educational Theme:

Transportation and Communication

Background Information:

- The design of our train is inspired by nineteenth-century steam locomotives.
- In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the train was *the* symbol of scientific invention, progress, and the future. Most American roads were little more than dirt or gravel tracks. The 1850's was the decade of greatest railroad expansion. The railroad reached the Mississippi River at Rock Island, Illinois in 1854, at which time toasts were offered to "the press, the telegraph, and the steam engine, the three levers that move the engine of modern civilization." During the Civil War, superior rail networks in the North gave the Union a great logistical advantage over the Confederacy. Meanwhile in Europe, a carefully planned system of railroads facilitated the unification of Germany into a single country in the 1860's and aided in its defeat of France in 1870—an outcome that shocked the world. Railroads allowed Russia to expand across the Asian continent, and helped European powers to control their colonies in Africa, Asia, and Latin America well into the twentieth century.
- In the United States the railroad created the great city of Chicago. The railroad transformed Dodge from a buffalo hunting settlement into a depot for government freight headed for the military outposts in Indian territory to the south and west. By 1878, one in four cattle shipped back east on the Santa Fe Rail Road line came from Dodge City. By 1880, Dodge City was the "railhead" of the Western Trail, having replaced Ogallala, Nebraska as the main destination of the cattle drives.

Questions to Consider:

- How did the growth and extension of railroads open up the lands of the West for American settlement?
- How did the railroad affect river cities such as Saint Louis, Cincinnati, and New Orleans?
- How did the railroad transform ideas of distance and affect travel, agriculture, manufacturing, and economic life?



PONY RIDES

Educational Theme:

Communications, Geography and Distance

Background Information:

- Before the spread of automobiles, horses and ponies were integral to transportation, communication, and the American economy: well into the twentieth century, about a quarter of all farm production was devoted to oats and other fodder for horses. Horse-drawn taxicabs and horse-pulled buses (on rails) were a familiar sight in Cincinnati and all the “modern cities” to the east of Dodge.
- The famous Pony Express was one of a number of private, for-profit mail carrier services that were established in response to the exploding demand for postal service that resulted from the population growth of California after the 1849 gold rush. The U.S. Postal Service in California could not handle the volume of correspondence. Previously, instead of being sent over land, letters from one American coast to the other had been transported by ship, taking 8 to 9 months to reach their destination! Ships had to go around Cape Horn at the tip of South America (there was no Panama Canal and Panama was still a province of Columbia). By Pony Express, mail was carried in four leather bags attached to the saddle (20 lbs. maximum), and riders changed horses at stations every 10-15 miles along the route, which ran through the northeastern corner of Kansas and through Nebraska to Sacramento. Usually it took about two minutes to change horses. There were 190 stations, 500 horses, and 80 riders, who rode day and night and sometimes had to face attacks from hostile Indians (this is how “Buffalo Bill” Cody became famous; Calamity Jane also claimed to have been a Pony Express rider).
- The Pony Express only operated for 18 months, and in the shadow of the telegraph, which had been developed about fifteen years earlier and reached from coast to coast by 1861, putting the Pony Express (and the ponies) out of business.
- The ancient Persian Empire of the Achaemenid dynasty operated a similar system of stations and mounted couriers in the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. Riders carried news and messages from the frontiers of the empire in northern Greece through what is today Turkey, Egypt, Iraq, and Iran, and out to the eastern borders in central Asia.

Questions to Consider:

- Why was the Pony Express established?
- Why did it only operate for about 18 months?
- Why did American Indians attack the riders? What did they hope to accomplish?
- Why does the image of the Pony Express persist in American culture? What do the myths and stories of the Pony Express say about our collective memory and image of the “Wild West?”



SALOON

Educational Theme:

Law Enforcement and Government, Culture

Background Information:

- In the cattle towns of the American West like Dodge City, Tombstone, and Abilene, the saloon was more than just a place to get a drink and something to eat. It was the center of communication where people would come to hear news and rumors, to meet and greet anyone who was new, important, or interesting, and to find someone who could read the newspaper.
- In the saloons “peace officers” such as Wyatt Earp would set up their “headquarters.” These officers were city, township, county, or federal officers. The police chief or “marshal” as he was called was appointed by the mayor and city council. The assistant marshal in particular was often chosen for his particular abilities to keep order, since apprehension of criminals often involved the use of firearms by all parties.
- 1883 featured the famous “Saloon War” in Dodge City.
- The saloon was also a center of culture and entertainment. In our saloon today, you can see our fabulous saloon and can-can show. In the real Dodge City, comedian Eddie Foy was once lassoed by some angry cowboys whom he had made the butt of his jokes. He asked them if he might speak his final words at the saloon, which amused the cowboys so much that they decided not to hang him after all. On a stage in Tombstone, Arizona, one cowboy became so involved in a performance of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* that he pulled out his gun and shot a dog that was chasing “Eliza.” The management decided it was time for an intermission to break the dramatic spell of the theater.

Questions to Consider:

- In an era before radio and television, why would such social hubs be important? How would the means of communication and the quality of information differ from today, and how would it in many respects be similar to our consumption of news media?
- What were the advantages and disadvantages of law enforcement in Dodge City? Why did the system develop and fit the needs of the time? Was justice served in Dodge? Under our American legal and judicial system, what does “due process” mean, and why does it matter?
- How has entertainment changed since the 1870’s, whether in Dodge City or in a sophisticated and developed city such as Cincinnati? Has the change been largely for the better or not for individuals and for society as a whole?



BOOTHS

Educational Theme:

Technological and Economic Change, Jobs and Social Classes, Gender Roles

Background Information:

- In Dodge City, the economy included both traditional skilled crafts (like blacksmithing) as well as more modern retailing of machine-sewn clothing (for examples see replicas in the Photo Emporium). The overall economy in the 1870's was based on the cattle drives.
- The best way to learn about traditional crafts is to have students watch them practiced firsthand and to ask the experts about their training, about standards of craftsmanship within the practice, how long they have been involved in the business, and other specific questions that come to them.
- Clothing styles at our Photo Emporium are modeled on contemporary Victorian American fashion. The most important centers of the fashion world in the nineteenth century were Paris and London. Men and women's fashion, like their expected roles in society, were sharply delineated by gender. The reality of gender roles in the West, was more complex, with women working as cowgirls and in some cases even as Indian fighters and scouts for military expeditions.

Questions to Consider:

- Why were the crafts featured important? How did they support in various ways the primary economic activity of Dodge City?
- Is there a primary industry or industries in your community? How do other businesses "piggy-back" or support "anchor" industries?
- What do the fashions of the time suggest about what was considered the proper role for a man versus a woman?

Of course, the best follow up assignment is probably to check out a book at the local or school library about the Pony Express, gunfighters, or any thing that sparks an interest during your visit. Some books are also available at the General Store.