



## The Cowboy Boot: A Tribute To The American Cowboy By Cindy K. Roberts

The cowboy reached into his hip pocket, pulled out a pair of leather work gloves, slipped them onto his calloused hands and flexed his fingers. They were a good fit. Today will be the day to put saddle time in on the new colt.

Walking out to the catch pen, the cowboy lead the young horse over into the round pen. Slowly, the he rubbed all over the colt with a saddle blanket in his right hand, while the three year old bay trotted to the end of the lead held in his left hand. A couple of minutes later, the colt settled down to being saddled and cinched slowly. One deep sigh from the gelding along with a relaxed look to his eye assured the cowboy it was time to step up on him. He slipped on a bosal over the colt's nose with a fifteen foot cotton lead held in his left hand and carefully stepped up into the saddle half-way. Leaning over like a sack of feed, the cowboy reached over to caress the colt's neck for reassurance. Slowly, he stepped down into the powdered dirt and rubbed the colt on his forehead. He then walked the colt out to the other side of the pen and repeated his step up and down routine as though his tall top boots danced to the tune of "Buffalo Gals" all in time with the rawhide covered stirrups. The cowboy mounted up again. This time he lengthened his calves with his heels resting down and turned slightly into the colt's side, he then nudged the colt to step out. This is another work day for this American cowboy...the American cowboy that wears his boots everyday with pride.



### The beginning.

The cowboy boot began during the cattle drive era of 1866-1884. The American cowboy was then able to invest in quality leather gear such as a saddle and boots. While a cowboy was not apt to ruin a good pair of dress boots while working, basic style elements permeated even working boots, and made the Wellington boot obsolete. Fashion magazines from 1850 and 1860 show the cowboy boot with top stitching, cutouts of geometric or other natural elements and the underslung heel were already in place. As it went, the style commonly known as the cowboy boot appeared in the mid 19th century, with the higher heel, elaborate stitching, and

other decorative features distinguishing the new style from the military issue boots that preceded them.

The American-style boot was taken up by bootmakers in the cattle ranching areas of Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas. Two of the best known early bootmakers of that time were Charles Hyer of Hyer Brothers Boots in Olathe, Kansas, and H. J. "Big Daddy Joe" Justin of Justin Boots in Spanish Fort, Texas and later Nocona, Texas. After Justin moved closer to Dallas where shipping product was easier, the Nocona brand of cowboy boots was made by Enid Justin Selzer, eldest daughter of Joe Justin, who stayed in Nocona with her husband, and the couple continued the family business. After the couple divorced, the Olsen-Selzer boot brand was started by Selzer.

**Tony Lama** got his start as he apprenticed to a shoemaker in Syracuse, New York as a young lad. After the turn of the century, Tony Lama joined the U.S. Cavalry as a cobbler for the soldiers stationed at Fort Bliss, Texas. Once he completed his tour of service, he decided to stay in the nearby border town of El Paso. Realizing the importance of a good boot fit from his service in the Cavalry, Tony Lama set out to make the best fitting, most comfortable boot possible.

When the army phased out the horse soldiers, Tony Lama concentrated solely on making quality Western boots. In the 1930s, Western wear stores began asking for his boots. To meet the growing demands, Tony Lama developed methods to produce greater quantities without sacrificing the key steps in hand crafting. In 1961, nearly 50 years after the first store opened, the company moved into larger quarters and began making 750 pairs of boots a day.

It was 1880 when **Sam Lucchese Sr.** and his brothers came to America to make their fortune. Although he was just 17 years old, the young Lucchese had a vision for a career in bootmaking, and just three years later, the Lucchese Boot Company was established in San Antonio, Texas. Words of wisdom for hand crafted quality boots: "If you cut leather for your boots in the same way you would carve up a meat carcass for your dinner table, you will be in good shape."- Sam Lucchese Jr.

## **CARE OF LEATHER BOOTS**

The rules that apply to care and conditioning of cowboy boots are very simple. Care for your cowboy boots and other natural western wear in much the same manner as you treat your skin. The leather in your cowboy boots requires nutrients to keep them supple and strong.

The four steps for proper cowboy boot care are: *Clean, Condition, Polish, and Protect!*

Dirt and dust are a cowboy boot's worst enemies. Wiping down often with a damp cloth can prevent dirt and dust from cutting away at the microscopic fibers that make cowboy boots strong and durable.

Condition cowboy boots only when they are clean and dry so conditioner can penetrate through the pores to keep leather soft and pliable. Lanolin-based conditioners are best. Too much oil or wax can clog the pores, which cause the cowboy boot to dry out. Also, oils and waxes attract dust.

Rejuvenate cowboy boots by applying a cream-based polish. This will cover scratches and bring a glossy finish. Only cowboy boots that have a finish can be polished.

### **Care for cowboy boots with a non-silicone water and stain protector :**

#### **Exotic Boots: Alligator, Caiman, Kangaroo, Lizard, Ostrich, Python, Shark**

- Brush off dirt or dust with a damp cloth or soft brush.
- Apply an exotic leather conditioner to your cowboy boots in several thin layers.
- Apply a neutral or matching cream based polish, buff with a soft cloth.
- Apply a non-silicone water and stain protector.

Note: Don't use polish on rattlesnake boots. On snakeskin boots, be sure to go with the grain of the scales.

#### **Smooth Leather Boots:**

- Brush off dirt or dust from your cowboy boots with a damp cloth or soft brush.
- Apply a leather conditioner.
- Apply a neutral or matching cream-based polish to your cowboy boots and buff with a soft cloth.
- Finish your cowboy boot care program with a non-silicone water and stain protector.

#### **Naked Finish Cowboy Boots:**

- Brush off dirt or dust from your cowboy boots with a damp cloth or soft brush.
- Apply a non-silicone water and stain protector.

#### **Oil-Impregnated Leather Boots:**

- With a damp cloth or soft brush, brush off dirt or dust from each cowboy boot.

- Care for the material with a leather conditioner.
- Apply a non-silicone water and stain protector.

### **Buffed/Sueded Leather Boots:**

- Treat new cowboy boots with a non-silicone water and stain protector.
- Brush clean each cowboy boot.
- Care for the boots with an application of a non-silicone water and stain protector.

### **Suede Cowboy Boots :**

- Be sure to store suede boots so that they can breathe. Keep them away from light, which can fade the color, and damp.
- If your suede boots get wet, soak up excess moisture with a clean towel. Then allow the suede to dry naturally. Do not use a heat source to speed up the process. After the boots dry, restore the nap (the raised fibers typical of suede) with a suede brush.
- Use a nail file to remove dry mud and scuff marks. Be gentle and use delicate strokes.

### **More Helpful Tips**

Use edge dressing to make outsoles and heels look new. Let cowboy boots dry at room temperature; never dry over direct heat. Do not store in cold or damp places; mildew can destroy a cowboy boot. Care for your cowboy boots with a boot trees to help maintain their shape.

### **HOW A BOOT SHOULD FIT.**

**Instep:** Unlike shoes with laces, a boot has only the instep to hold it securely to the foot. Consequently, proper fit in the instep is of utmost importance. Boots should not fit loosely or tightly; the fit should be snug. The snugness is governed by the instep fit and the width of the throat. If the instep is too tight, go to a wider or larger size.



**Ball:** When you walk or run, you bend your foot at its widest part, called the ball. In a quality boot, you will find a steel shank between the insole and the outsole that extends from the heel to the point where the ball of the boot begins. If the boot is too short for the foot, the ball of the foot will sit too far forward and force the toes into the toe box.

**Heel:** A boot must slip slightly in the heel. As shown in the illustration, there is nothing to prevent the heel of the foot from

riding up slightly because of the way a boot is constructed. When the boot is new, the sole is stiff. As you wear the boot, the sole is "flexed." With time, most of the slippage will disappear. If the instep is too loose, the boot will slip excessively in the heel. To remedy this, you may need a more narrow width to shorten the circumference of the throat and thus lessen the slippage without cutting down on the length of the boot. Slight slippage is necessary to obtain a proper fit.

Western boot styles vary from casual work boots to hand carved-flamboyant designer style boots. Whether it is a factory made boot or a custom made boot, I bet you can find a pair of quality made western boots to suit your style, pocketbook and daily needs. They are not just for cowboyin' around either. Western boots have scooted their way into everyday fashion of the businessman, politician, the President and factory worker as well as bride and groom couples exchanging vows at their own western wedding.

Celebrate National Day of The Cowboy, this July 26<sup>th</sup> and let a working cowboy know that you are proud of his work. Tell him you appreciate him for keeping our American heritage alive. Shake his hand and tell him "May God continue to bless America with the American Cowboy." And may you wear your cowboy boots with pride.



**[WWW.EVERYCOWGIRLSDREAM.COM](http://WWW.EVERYCOWGIRLSDREAM.COM)**