

How the West was REALLY won: Early settlers on the coach to Deadwood and in pow-wows with the natives revealed in 19th century photographs

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The Wild West as it really was rather than how Hollywood has imagined it is revealed in this extraordinary collection of pictures.

The grainy photographs, taken in the late 19th century in and around the notorious gold mining town of Deadwood, provide a unique, sepia-toned glimpse of the Wild West. The images were published in American papers this week after being released by the U.S. Library of Congress.

Deadwood — recently brought to life in an acclaimed TV drama series of the same name, starring Ian McShane — has gone down in legend as a riotous and lawless town that was home to the likes of ‘Wild Bill’ Hickok, Calamity Jane and Wyatt Earp.



Modern travel: The photograph taken by John C.H Grabill in the 1880s was titled 'The Deadwood Coach' and shows formally dressed passengers both on top and inside



Striking it rich: Washing and panning for gold in Rockerville, Dakota. Three old timers named Spriggs, Lamb and Dillon are pictured in 1889



Ready to roll: A line of oxen and wagons along the main street in Sturgis in the Dakota Territory which was taken between 1887 and 1892



© Library Of Congress

Horse hero: Comanche, the only survivor of the Custer massacre of 1876. It was a regimental order that the 7th Cavalry cared for the animal 'as long as he shall live'

And yet many of the pictures, taken by the pioneering photographer John C.H. Grabill, show how the reality was rather different to the traditions instilled by decades of Hollywood Westerns.

The bushy-bearded old timers are pictured panning for gold, native American Indian chiefs are seen posing solemnly in full headdress. There is the ugly scar of a mining town on a hillside and the tepee encampments of 'hostiles' such as the Lakota Sioux.

The expressions of weather-beaten earnestness on the faces of frontiersmen and Native Americans alike are what we have come to expect, but there is barely a six-shooter to be seen hanging from anyone's hip, the wagon trains are pulled by oxen, not horses, and everyone on the Deadwood Stage is wearing a jacket and tie, dressed more for a business meeting than a Sioux attack.

THE LEGEND OF DEADWOOD

In 2004 a three-series TV Show based on the early days of Deadwood was aired in the U.S. The first season was based on the founding of the town in 1876, soon after Custer's Last Stand, and shows the lawlessness of Deadwood where greed and corruption are rife.

It also introduced well-known characters such as Wild Bill Hickok, Colonel Custer, the Sundance Kid and Calamity Jane.

Season two represents life a year after the first season and marked the arrival of the telegraph and showed the town progressing in early 1877 with new conveniences including a bank.

The architecture of the town starts to take shape with inhabitants moving out of walled tents and into more permanent structures.

The final season concentrated on the establishment of law and commercialisation before Deadwood is brought into the Dakota territory.

When it was finished there was talk of TV movies being filmed but they are yet to come to fruition.

Between 1887 and 1892, Grabill sent 188 photographs — taken using an early technique that used albumen, or egg white, to bind together the chemicals — to the Library of Congress for copyright protection.

Deadwood in South Dakota was founded shortly after the discovery of gold in the neighbouring Black Hills in 1876.

As miners flocked to the town and its population quickly grew to 5,000, the wagon trains brought in not only supplies but gamblers, prostitutes and gunfighters.

Grabill (who also famously photographed the aftermath of the Wounded Knee massacre in which the U.S. Seventh Cavalry killed up to 300 Native American men, women and children) chronicled the settlement's rapid expansion from a collection of tents to a fully-fledged town that celebrated the completion of a connecting railway with a parade down its main street in 1888.

Long before the arrival of the white man, the land was home to the Cheyenne, Kiowa, Pawnee, Crow and Sioux (or Lakota) Indians.

The settlement of Deadwood began in the 1870s, despite the town lying within the territory granted to Native Americans in the 1868 Treaty of Laramie, which guaranteed ownership of the Black Hills to the Lakota tribes.

However, in 1874, Colonel George Armstrong Custer led an expedition into the Hills and announced the discovery of gold on French Creek.

This triggered the Black Hills Gold Rush and gave rise to the town of Deadwood, which quickly reached a population of around 5,000.

In early 1876, frontiersman Charlie Utter and his brother Steve led a wagon train to Deadwood containing what were deemed to be needed commodities to bolster business.

The wagon train also brought gamblers and prostitutes, helping the town to boom - but with a bawdy reputation.

As the economy changed from gold rush to steady mining, Deadwood lost its rough and rowdy character and settled down into a prosperous town.

One of the subjects of Grabill's photographs is the last survivor from the battle of Little Bighorn - a horse called Comanche.

The battle took place between soldiers under the command for General Custer and the combined forces of Lakota, Northern Cheyenne and Arapaho people

Every soldier in the five companies under Custer was killed and Comanche, who belonged to Captain Keogh, was found wondering the battlefield.

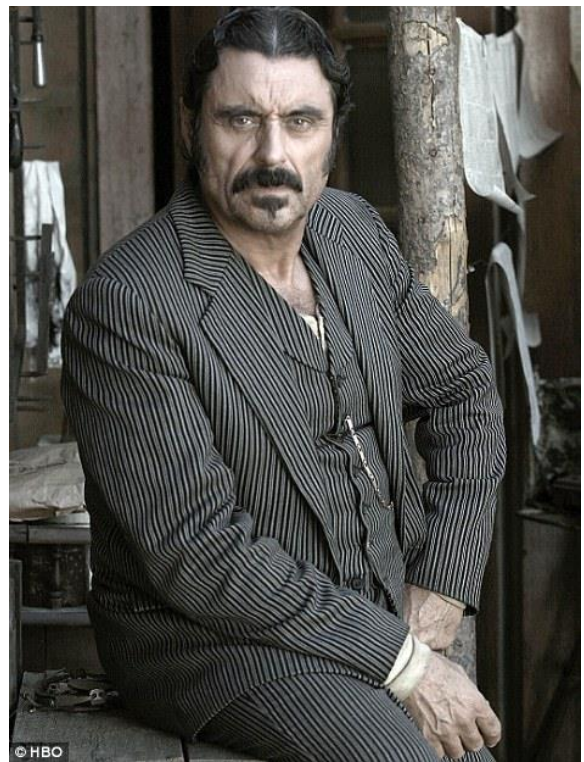
It is thought, however, that the Indians may have captured some of the American army's animals.

Other images chronicle a time otherwise only imagined on film; from prospectors panning for gold to the early interactions between settlers from the East and the native Americans who inhabited the Midwest.

Little is known about Grabill's life before or after his work in the Midwest.

There is speculation that he moved to Colorado - Denver Public Library is in possession of some of his work - or that he moved back to Chicago.

What is surprising is that a man who dedicated his life to charting people and communities left no self-portrait, memoir or anything else with which to remember Grabill the man.



Legendry: Deadwood has long captivated the imagination of writers. In 1953 Doris Day starred in the Wild West themed film musical, Calamity Jane (left). Then, 51 years later Ian McShane played Al Swearengen, the owner of the Gem Saloon, a popular brothel in the centre of the town



Indian camp: Titled Villa of Brule, this was the home of the Lakota (Sioux) tribe pictured in 1891 near the Pine Ridge reservation with the White Clay Creek watering hole



New town: John Grabill charted how towns such as Hot Springs, South Dakota, sprung up across the Midwest as the railways grew



Wagon train: Oxen lead out the wagons in a photograph titled 'Freighting in the Black Hills' taken between Sturgis and Deadwood



Braves: A portrait of a band of Big Foots (Miniconjou) at a Grass Dance on the Cheyenne River, watched by soldiers from the 8th U.S. Cavalry and 3rd Infantry



Peace council: The Indian chiefs who ended their war with the U.S. Army. Their names included Standing Bull, High Hawk, White Tail, Little Thunder and Lame



Rebel: A Native American named Little, leader of the Oglala band, started the 1890 Indian Revolt at Pine Ridge. He sat for this studio portrait between two Euro-Americans



Two faces of the native American: Oglala chiefs Red Cloud in full headdress and American Horse wearing western clothing and gun-in-holster. Women and children seated inside an uncovered tipi frame in an encampment near Pine Ridge Reservation.



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Progress: The people of Deadwood celebrate the completion of a stretch of railroad in 1888 with a parade along the town's Main Street



© Library Of Congress

No. 3603. Company "C," 3rd U. S. Infantry.

Army exercise: Soldiers from Company C of the 3rd U.S. Infantry carry their rifles as they spread out near Fort Meade



Happy band: Mining engineers with their wives and a couple of tame deer get together for an impromptu campside musical concert



Living side-by-side: A school for Indians at Pine Ridge, South Dakota. There is a small Oglala tipi camp in front the large government school buildings



As the railroads went further west, so the settlers followed. Grabill's image Horse Shoe Curve in the shadow of the Buckhorn Mountains