

A Texas Cowboy

or fifteen years on the hurricane deck of a Spanish pony.

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THE AUTHOR,
IN COW BOY UNIFORM.

My boyhood days

It was a bright morning, on the 7th day of February, 1855, as near as I can remember, that your humble servant came prancing into this wide and wicked world.

By glancing over the map you will find his birthplace, at the extreme southern part of the Lone Star State, on the Peninsula of Matagorda, a narrow strip of land bordered by the Gulf of Mexico on the south and Matagorda Bay on the north.

This Peninsula is from one to two miles wide and seventy-five miles long. It connects the mainland at Caney and comes to a focus at Deckrows Point or Salura Pass.^[1] About midway between the two was situated the "Dutch Settlement," and in the centre of that settlement, which contained only a dozen houses, stood the little frame cottage that first gave me shelter.

My father, who died when I was only a year old, came from the sunny clime of Italy, while my dear old mother drifted from the bogs of good "ould" Ireland. Am I not a queer conglomerate—a sweet-scented mixture indeed!

Our nearest neighbor was a kind old soul by the name of John Williams, whose family consisted of his wife and eleven children.

In the fall of 1859 I took my first lessons in school, my teacher being a Mr. Hale from Illinois.

The schoolhouse, a little old frame building, stood off by itself, about a mile from the settlement, and we little towheads, sister and I, had to hoof it up there every morning, through the grass burrs, barefooted; our little sun-browned feet had never been encased in shoe leather up to that time.

To avoid the grass burrs, sometimes on getting an early start we would go around by the Gulf beach which was quite a distance out of our way. In taking this route though, I would generally be late at school, for there were so many little things to detain me—such as trying to catch the shadow of a flying sea gull, or trying to lasso sand crabs on my stick horse.

Crowds of cowboys used to come over to the peninsula from the mainland and sometimes have occasion to rope wild steers in my presence—hence me trying to imitate them.