

**Life and Adventures of Nat Love
(Nat Love's Autobiography, 1907)
Chapter 6 excerpt- Becoming a Cowboy**



It was on the tenth day of February, 1869, that I left the old home, near Nashville, Tennessee. I was at that time about fifteen years old, and though while young in years the hard work and farm life had made me strong and hearty, much beyond my years, and I had full confidence in myself as being able to take care of myself and making my way.

I at once struck out for Kansas of which I had heard something. And I believed it was a good place in which to seek employment. It was in the west, and it was the great west I wanted to see, and so by walking and occasional lifts from farmers going my way and taking advantage of everything that promised to assist me on my way, I eventually came to Dodge City, Kansas, which at that time was a typical frontier city, with a great many saloons, dance halls, and gambling houses, and very little of anything else.

1

When I arrived the town was full of cowboys from the surrounding ranches, and from Texas and other parts of the west. Kansas was a great cattle center and market, with many wild cowboys, prancing horses of which I was very fond, and the wild life generally. They all had their attractions for me, and I decided to try for a place with them. Although it seemed to me I had met with a bad outfit, at least some of them, I watched my chances to get to speak with them. I wanted to find someone whom I thought would give me a civil answer to the questions I wanted to ask, but they all seemed too wild around town, so the next day I went out where they were in camp.

Approaching a party who were eating their breakfast, I got to speak with them. They asked me to have some breakfast with them, and I gladly accepted. During the meal I got a chance to ask them many questions. They proved to be a Texas outfit, who had just come up with a herd of cattle and having delivered them they were preparing to return. There were several colored cowboys among them, and good ones too. After breakfast I asked the camp boss for a job as cowboy.

2

He asked me if I could ride a wild horse. I said "yes sir." He said if you can I will give you a job. So he spoke to one of the colored cowboys called Bronko Jim, and told him to go out and rope old Good Eye, saddle him and put me on his back. Bronko Jim gave me a few pointers and told me to look out for the horse was especially bad on pitching. I told Jim I was a good rider and not afraid of him. I thought I had rode pitching horses before, but from the time I mounted old Good Eye I knew I had not learned what pitching was.

This proved the worst horse to ride I had ever mounted in my life, but I stayed with him and the cowboys were the most surprised outfit you ever saw, as they had taken me for a tenderfoot, pure and simple. After the horse got tired and I dismounted the boss said he would give me a job and pay me \$30.00 per month and more later on. He asked what my name was and I answered Nat Love, he said to the boys we will call him Red River Dick. I went by this name for a long time.

1. How old was Nat Love when he left home?
2. Why was Nat confident he would be OK by himself?
3. What are 2 kinds of businesses in Dodge City, Kansas?
4. How did Nat describe the cowboys in Kansas?
5. How did Nat get his cowboy job?

Answer Key

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Answer Key

1. How old was Nat Love when he left home?
15

2. Why was Nat confident he would be OK by himself?

He had worked on a farm, which made him strong and wise beyond his years

3. What are 2 kinds of businesses in Dodge City, Kansas?

Saloons, dance halls, gambling houses

4. How did Nat describe the cowboys in Kansas?

wild

5. How did Nat get his cowboy job?

Talked to an outfit, boss asked if could ride a wild horse, when he was successful he was offered a job