Backstories

Once you have rolled up your character's characteristics (as on p.45), the next step is to decide your backstory. Backstories are what happened to your character during their years as a child and a teenager. This will not only give your character a deeper background but will also provide additional skills for your character as a reflection of the things they learned.

The backstories listed here are only some of the possibilities. Players and Referees are encouraged to use these backstories as jumping off points rather than hard rules and if a Player comes up with something interesting that doesn't perfectly follow one of these, we encourage you to pursue that. These backstories exist to assist Players and Referees and they are certainly not meant to constrain them. Feel free to make backstories of your own if these are not to your liking or don't address the concept which a Player may have about their character.

Once you have chosen a backstory for your character, you should move on to a career. Careers and how to take a character through them begins on p.51.

Chinese Immigrant – You a part of one of many Chinese immigrants who came to the West as a child through California, many of whom worked on the railroad. Your primary language will be Mandarin. You may enter the Craftsperson or Railroad Worker career without making an Enlistment roll.

Coal Miner – You were one of many children and teenagers who worked in the coal mines of Pennsylvania or the newly formed West Virginia. The miners were often Irish immigrants. Gain +1 to END and Prospecting 1. Your primary language is English.

European Immigrant – You are one of many European immigrants who came to the West as a child through ports on the East coast. Your primary language will likely be Dutch, English, French, German, Norwegian, or Swedish though you may choose any European language. You may enter the Homesteader or Craftsperson career without making an Enlistment roll.

Freedman – You are the child or grandchild of a former slave that gained their freedom before the Civil War. Your primary language will be English. You may enter the Homesteader or Craftsperson career without making an Enlistment roll.

Mexican Immigrant – Your family either immigrated north from Mexico or were living in a place which was taken by the United States. Your primary language will be Spanish. You may enter the Craftsperson career without making an Enlistment roll.

Midwestern Farmer – You were one of the middle-class farmers working in the Midwest. You started as someone in a family which has dedicated their life to the farm your parents or grandparents have established on this land. Gain +1 to your STR and END as well as a level in Animals (Farming) 1. Your primary language will be English though your parents may be first- or second-generation immigrants from England, Ireland, Scotland, Germany, or Scandinavia. If you choose this to be the case, gain level 2 Language skill in the language of your parents or grandparents' birth country.

PREVIEW

Doctors often treated conditions by purging the body. This would involve bleeding patients by cutting them or giving them ipecac to induce vomiting. Leeches were even used when they could be obtained. Some doctors would recommend drinking sulfur. While quinine was available, it was hugely expensive.

The Doctor career is on p.98. Those wishing to have their character go through formal training can find the Medical School rules on p.49.

Gambler

Gambling was quite common in the historical Old West and is a staple of the fictional version. Gambling was often one of the few sources of entertainment for those who were out on the frontier of the westward expansion and thus it was the sort of thing that was engaged in, at least once, by most of the people who lived there. Often when a new settlement arose, a casino or "gambling hall" would be one of the first buildings erected and might even be little more than a tent.

Due to this commonality, the professional gambler came on to the scene whose sole job was to make money through games of chance. Many professional gamblers would go from town to town playing in games, making their money, and then moving on to the next town. Other professionals would set up their own games, often renting a table from a hotel or saloon, and bankrolling the game themselves. The stigma that usually comes with gambling in modern times was not present in the Old West in most areas and the professional gambler was usually seen as a businessperson rather than the usual cliché of the "degenerate gambler".

"Gambling was not only the principal and best paying industry of the town at the time, but it was also reckoned among its most respectable." – Bat Masterson in 1907 describing professional gamblers in the Old West

All these gamblers saw the perception of fairness and honesty as the hallmarks of their profession. After all, if a person knew that the odds were completely stacked against them, they felt, no one would ever play. So, while the odds of winning in some games were low and, in others, the chances of a novice beating a professional were slim, cheating was highly frowned upon and discouraged. Someone caught cheating, whether the person running the game or one of the players, would often find themselves the victim of violence.

Many who had other professions would find that professional gambling was something to "fall back on" when their usual work dried up and thus, many who would be famous for other things, would spend time as professional gamblers. While this career concentrates on professional gamblers, many of the famous historical figures of the Old West such as James Butler "Wild Bill" Hickok were frequent gamblers.

Gambling was one of the few professions in the Old West that women were considered to be equals to men. The numbers of famous female gamblers in the Old West are numerous including Alice Ives, known as "Poker Alice", who had a forty-year career as a professional gambler.

Historical professional gamblers include Lottie Deno, Eleanor Dumont, Wyatt Earp and his brothers, John "Doc" Holiday, Alice "Poker Alice" Ives, and Bat Masterson.

The Gambler career is on p.102.

PREVIEW

COWBOY

Enlistment: END 8+
If the character's age is 40+, take a -2 modifier to this roll. Take a -1 modifier for each career you have entered before this one.

Assignment:
Cowboy - You are a person who herds cattle on ranches and on cattle drives.

Wrangler – You a person who cares for the horses on a ranch and oversees breaking horses for riding.

Career	Survival	Advancement
Cowboy	END 8+	DEX 8+
Wrangler	DEX 8+	END 8+

Mustering Out Benefits

Roll	Cash	Other Benefits
1	0	+1 STR
2	5	+1 END
3	10	+1 DEX
4	20	Contact
5	30	Weapon
6	40	Ally
7	80	Horse

Career Progress

Skills and Training

Roll	Personal Development	Service Skills	Advanced Education (Minimum EDU 8+)
1	+1 STR	Gun Combat (Any)	Animals (Veterinary or Training)
2	+1 DEX	Navigation	Chef
3	+1 END	Animals (Riding)	Medic (First Aid)
4	+1 INT	Melee (Lasso)	Drive (Wagon)
5	+1 EDU	Survival (Plains)	Broker
6	Athletics (Any)	Carouse	Jack of All Trades

Roll	Specialist: Cowboy	Specialist: Wrangler
1	Melee (Any)	Animals (Any)
2	Navigation	Carouse
3	Animals (Riding)	Animals (Training)
4	Gun Combat (Any)	Melee (Lasso or Unarmed)
5	Survival (Any)	Mechanic
6	Recon	Persuade

PREVIEW



Colt Peacemaker: Also known as the Colt Single Action Army or Model P, the Peacemaker is a single-action revolver with six shots in the cylinder. First manufactured in 1873, the Peacemaker saw widespread use in the Western frontier.

The Peacemaker can be purchased with a shorter barrel. These are referred to as "Civilian" or "Gunfighter" models and will add a +1 to any Draw Skill Check.

It can also be purchased with a longer 12" barrel called the "Buntline Special". This was supposedly the revolver carried by Wyatt Earp though this is heavily disputed and highly doubted. Still, many fictional portrayals of Earp feature the weapon and a character may wish to carry one as well.

Peacemakers are regarded as accurate weapons and will give the user a +1 to fire.



Griswold & Gunnison: The Griswold and Gunnison revolver is a Confederate revolver created in Griswoldville, Georgia during the US Civil War. It is a .36 caliber revolver which is largely a copy of the Colt Navy. It is believed that approximately 3700 of these were created for Confederate forces until the 9th Michigan Cavalry Regiment destroyed the factory in November of 1864.

The Griswold & Gunnison's manufacture reflects the lack of steel available to Southern manufacturers. The frame is brass rather than steel and the cylinders are made of twisted iron.

PREVIEW



Appaloosa

Bred by the Nez-Perce tribe of Native Americans in the Pacific Northwest from the best of the wild horse herds they encountered, the Appaloosa was a practical, rugged, and versatile animal. The Appaloosa was well-known for its yielding nature, common sense, and great stamina.

They are best known for their distinctive color pattern. Appaloosa coat colors are a combination of a base color with an overlaid spotting pattern. The base colors are often bay, black, chestnut, palomino, buckskin, roan, gray, dun, grullo.

Appaloosas have patterns which are described below.

Spots: This is a horse with light or dark spots over all or part of its body.
Blanket: This is a horse with a solid white area which is normally, but not always, over the hip area with a contrasting base color.
Blanket with Spots: This is a horse with the blanket pattern with dark spots within the white area.
Leopard: A white horse with dark spots over the entire body.
Few Spot Leopard: A mostly white horse with a scattering of spots on the body.
Snowflake: A dark horse with white spots on the body.
Mottled: A few spot leopard that is completely white with slightly darker spots on the body.
Frost: A horse with roan coloring over the dorsal area of the hips and a blanket color on the rest of the hips.
Roan with Spots: A horse with a roan blanket that has white or dark spots within the roan area.

Appaloosas are 4.6 – 5.3 feet (1.4 - 1.6 meters) tall and weigh 950 – 1250 pounds (430 – 570 kilograms).

Type	Breed	STR	DEX	END	INT	Price
Horse	Appaloosa	16	15	13	0	160
Survival (Plains) 1, Athletics 0, Melee 0						
Hooves (2d6+3)						

PREVIEW

GAMBLING

One of the most popular pastimes in the Old West period was gambling. One could find gambling going on almost everywhere from casinos in the cities set up entirely for that purpose to tables set up in saloon corners to a game of cards between cowboys out on the range. While some have stated that gambling was simply "something to do" other than drink or sleep, others have rightfully stated that gambling was a natural extension for those who had already wagered their life on moving into a dangerous location like the western frontier.

While gambling and wagering has existed for centuries, gambling in the United States truly began to flourish on the Mississippi riverboats in the 1840s. This popularity, like so many other things in the Old West, moved west with the population and its popularity continued to skyrocket. Almost every town of any size in the American frontier had some sort of gambling going on and many, like Deadwood and Tombstone, had dedicated casinos to cater to professional gamblers and amateurs alike. Modern casinos like those found in the American West in Las Vegas and Reno are simply the descendants of the Western frontier casino and gambling hall.

Then as now, gamblers will bet on anything. From elaborate "prop bets" on whether a not a man can sit atop a flagpole for two days to how many horses "litter" the street that day, gamblers can find a way to bet on almost any occurrence. However, the majority of gambling in the Old West had to do with a few games in particular. In this section, we will address how to play those games both in real life and how to simulate them in *Rider*.

One way to play out one of these games is to actually play the game itself and allow the results to work themselves out through the course of playing a game of cards. This will help with the immersion of the players into the Western theme, but it will fail to take the character's Gambling skill into consideration. However, if the Referee chooses to do so, each of these games can be simulated with a few Skill Checks.

Faro

Also called "Pharoah","Farobank", or "Bucking the Tiger" (after the many decks of cards in the Old West with a tiger emblazoned on the back), Faro was the most popular card game in the American frontier during the 1870s and 1880s. It was popular due to being quick to play, easy to learn, and had better odds than most other games. To run a Faro game, all one needed was a table and a deck of cards, so it was easy to add to a saloon or brothel without taking up too much space and could be easily played in locations such a in a tent city on a nomadic railroad "Hell on Wheels".

Faro's popularity would continue until poker began to take its place in the 1890s. Faro would decline further in popularity after Arizona outlawed the game in 1907. By the 1950s, there were only five known Faro banks in the United States, all in Nevada. The last known casino-run Faro bank was at the Ramada in Reno, Nevada, and they stopped running the game in 1985.

The game is played with one deck of cards and all of the cards of the spades suit from another deck of cards. The dealer spreads all the extra spades on the table in two rows in numerical order. This usually takes the form of a row of Ace to Six left to right closest to the dealer, a row of Eight to King right to left closest to the players, and a Seven on the dealer's right diagonally places between the Six and Eight. This is referred to as "The Layout" or "The Board". The full deck of

PREVIEW

Restaurant

A restaurant in the Old West will serve up locally sourced food from farms and ranches as well as possibly serving up whatever was able to be caught locally by hunters or fishermen. This could lead to varied menus from day to day and place to place. One could almost always count on biscuits, bacon, beans, and coffee being on offer.

Saddler

The saddler was a leatherworker who would keep a shop to sell, make, and repair saddles. The saddler would also make other leather items such as bridles, holsters, chaps, and anything else made of leather.

Saloon

As drinking was often a form of entertainment for those with little else to distract them, getting intoxicated was a common activity in the Old West (see p.223 for more about drinking). Saloons would often be one of the first businesses to open in a town. In small settlements, the saloon could be something as simple as a makeshift tent with a few bottles of whiskey present. In established towns, the saloon could be an elaborate building with a hardwood bar, a good stock of varying alcohols, an array of tables and chairs, and elements of a dance hall, hotel, restaurant, and casino rolled into one.

Saloons might be there simply to provide alcohol and be a place for social gathering, but some would offer other services as well. There are instances where the saloon in a town had rooms on a second floor to rent like a hotel, food available like a restaurant, a Faro table in one corner for gambling, and dance hall girls milling about the room. There are even recorded instances of a saloon being the local post office rather than the general store. The Referee should decide which sort of saloon might be present.

A practice of many saloons was to offer a "free lunch". The saloon would offer free food, usually bread, butter, soup, or some sort of meat, for no cost under the expectation that person availing themselves of the "free lunch" would then purchase drinks to go with the meal. Those abusing the offer could find themselves being physically removed from the premises. The expectation by the saloon that people taking the "free lunch" would purchase drinks (and, perhaps, more drinks than usual) led to the adage *"There ain't no such thing as a free lunch"* meaning that you will never get something for nothing.

Schoolhouse

Once families began to arrive in a town, there arose a need to educate the children. At this point, the town would hire a schoolmaster or schoolmarm to come in and teach the children. These schoolhouses were often one room buildings with a single teacher teaching all of the children regardless of age. These schools would teach basic reading, writing, and arithmetic to give the children a basic education.

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Prospector

2d6	STR	DEX	END	INT	EDU	CHA
2	6	7	7	7	5	3
3	7	7	7	7	5	3
4	7	7	8	7	5	3
5	7	8	8	8	6	4
6	8	8	8	8	6	4
7	8	8	9	8	6	4
8	8	9	9	9	7	5
9	9	9	9	9	7	5
10	9	9	10	9	7	5
11	9	10	10	10	8	6
12	10	10	10	10	8	6

2d6	Skills and Skill Levels
2	Animals (Riding) 1, Explosives 1, Prospecting 1, Survival 0
3	Carouse 1, Explosives 1, Prospecting 1, Drive 0, Survival 0
4	Admin 1, Prospecting 1, Science (Geology) 1, Survival (Mountains) 1
5	Admin 1, Carouse 1, Mechanic 1, Prospecting 1, Survival (Mountains) 1
6	Broker 1, Carouse 1, Drive (Wagon) 1, Prospecting 1, Animals 0, Survival 0
7	Prospecting 1, Explosives 1, Science (Geology) 1, Carouse 1, Drive (Wagon) 1, Survival (Mountains) 1
8	Prospecting 2, Carouse 1, Science (Geology) 1, Survival (Mountains) 1, Explosives 0
9	Carouse 2, Prospecting 2, Language (Any) 1, Recon 1, Survival (Mountains) 1, Drive 0, Explosives 0
10	Prospecting 2, Streetwise 2, Science (Geology) 1, Explosives 1, Survival (Mountains) 1, Navigation 0
11	Prospecting 3, Science (Geology) 3, Recon 2, Survival (Desert) 1, Survival (Mountains) 1, Animals 0, Drive 0
12	Prospecting 3, Science (Geology) 3, Explosives 2, Etiquette 1, Gun Combat (Revolver) 1, Recon 1, Survival 0

PREVIEW

CHASES

Chases are a staple of most action-oriented entertainment and Westerns are no different though a chase will almost always be on foot or on horseback. These can be harrowing affairs along the edges of ravines or almost comedic runs through towns with odd things along the path of the chase.

Like combat, chases occur in Chase Rounds. Chase rounds are abstract, and the maneuvers involved can take varying amounts of time to perform. Actual game time per round will vary and it is up to the Referee to keep these abstractions moving forward.

Chases will most often involve one of several skills: Animals (Riding), Athletics (Running), Drive (Stagecoach), Drive (Wagon). Situations may come up where other skills may need to be used such as Engineer (Steam Engine) or one of the Seafarer specialties.

Before the chase begins, the two sides of the chase engage in a bidding war to see who is control of the order of the Chase Round. The number bid is the Difficulty that the bidder is willing to accept for the round of action. This allows the party who is willing to accept the most risk to control the action. This also allows the party with the most skill the option of being able to bid lower than the party with lesser skills. Bidding always begins at Simple (+6) and progresses upward from that point.

If a side wishes to do so, they may bid further upwards than Formidable (-6). While this may be foolhardy, some may wish to attempt it. Those wishing to do so should simply increase the difficulty by -2. So that if they wish to bid higher than Formidable, they should take a -8 to the roll and if someone wishes to bid further, that should be -10 and so forth.

Difficulty	Modifier
Simple	+6
Easy	+4
Routine	+2
Average	+0
Difficult	-2
Very Difficult	-4
Formidable	-6
Formidable +1	-8

Please note that a chase between a person on foot and a person on horseback will end quite quickly with the horse outpacing the person who is running. For chases to be effective, the chase needs to be between two or more characters which are on par with one another. If they are not on par with one another the chase ends with the faster character leaving the other behind immediately.

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