

5 | The On-Going Game



5.1 | Cattle Ranching

“You see a Longhorn — I see a twenty dollar gold piece on legs. You see 500 pounds of hell-spawned fury wrapped in leather sportin’ rib-breakin’ hooves and gut-gougin’ horns — I see a Longhorn.”

— Morgan P. Hargrave, Cattle Rancher

Historians will undoubtedly debate forever whether it was the longhorn that made the Republic of Texas, or if it was the Texicans that made the longhorn. Either perspective has merit, for the emergence of the unique longhorn variety of *Bos Taurus* and the ascendancy of Texas are inexorably intertwined. Perhaps no enterprise other than gold and silver mining is more lucrative in the untamed west than that of the cattle business. The demand for beef in the industrialized east, as well as in the booming new mining towns, is practically insatiable — creating a seller’s market for those in the business of raising cattle. And whereas those searching for gold and silver must laboriously move stream and mountain to uncover this wealth, beeves can be found on the hoof in copious numbers. The expansive open prairies of west Texas, Arapahoe, Colorado and Wyoming are teeming with herds of milling longhorns in seemingly inexhaustible supply.

Ironically, Texicans once considered the very longhorns now in such demand to be pests. Regional demand had been saturated for decades, and getting the cattle to distant markets where they might fetch a reasonable price was long deemed impractical — if not downright impossible. New methodologies would, however, dramatically alter the landscape and invigorate the cattle raising business.

Shortly before the War Between the States, several Texican ranchers took note of the fact that the herds of wild cattle roaming the outback of the Republic were far heartier than their own stock of farm breeds transplanted from the Atlantic seaboard. They discovered that these rugged longhorns could be successfully driven hundreds or even thousands of miles to market on foot. Driven slowly and allowed to graze along the way, the animals arrived at the far end of the trail fat enough to fetch a decent price. Cattle worth only two to four dollars locally could bring anywhere from 20 to 40 dollars a head at a rail terminal. Perhaps the new economics of beef is best illustrated by the fact that one rancher drove 1,000 head from west Texas to St. Louis and (in his own words) “retired in spades”.

Most of the early Texican drives headed northeast to the Kansas Territory. Such drives were long and haz-

ardous. They ran a veritable gauntlet of obstacles including swollen rivers, arid ranges with little forage or water and hostile Indians. Even at some white settlements, farmers refused to allow passage of the herds - partially for fear of crops being destroyed, but more so from fear of diseases like ‘Texas fever’ infecting their own herds. A drive beginning with several thousand head of cattle could very well end up arriving at market with only a few hundred head remaining. Despite these risks, the profitability of even a moderately successful venture ensured the continuance and enlargement of cattle drives.

The War Between the States witnessed an infrastructural maturation of the cattle industry. Not only did the Union vastly increase its demand for the product, but central planning on the part of the war department put through significant changes in logistics that could never have been accomplished by the small and fiercely competitive pre-war players. Generous subsidies built new rail lines and allowed favored companies to greatly expand their packing and distribution capabilities. These firms continued to expand their reach after the war, as northern diets were now accustomed to cheap western beef.

Despite the fact that ranching had been big business in Texas for years, the real cattle boom only came of age after the war. When new railheads reached Sequoyah and Fort Worth, it didn’t take long before they were ready to receive herds and ship them to the enormous plants in Chicago. Now hundreds of thousand of longhorns are driven up the long and arduous trails to the railheads each summer.

Still a formidable drive from ranches of west Texas, the new railheads at cattle towns such as New Echota and Fort Worth cut the northern drives to U.S. markets by nearly half. Not only do cattle arrive at market faster, but in better condition and with fewer losses.

The lure of reportedly easy money from raising and driving cattle is irresistible to many folks arriving on the frontier. Fresh markets are created with each new gold town that springs into existence. In addition, although most of the wild herds have long since been claimed, there are still rogue herds to be found and rounded up in remote valleys and canyons.

THE TEXAS LONGHORN

Historians bicker over the finer details of the origin of these rugged creatures, but they do agree on the basics. Like the horse, cattle were first introduced to

the new world by the early explorers from the old world. Columbus brought spotted range cattle from the Iberian Peninsula and nearly every subsequent Spanish expedition to the northern frontier of Mexico (Tejas) brought additional cattle that helped seed the herds that would one day flourish in the Americas.

Some of those cattle escaped into the wilds, so the story goes, where (in spite of the odds) they survived to form great wild herds. By the latter 1500s, ranching boomed in Spanish Tejas with some ranches having as many as 150,000 head. Many of these animals escaped and went wild or feral. Adding to the spread of wild cattle was the fact that many Spanish ranchers developed the habit of cutting out sick or sore-footed cattle to give to the Indians as tribute when their herds crossed into their territories, and these cattle eventually seeded additional herds. During the Pueblo Revolts of the late 1600s, virtually all of the Spanish colonists were driven from their settlements or killed. They abandoned their large herds, contributing further to the spread of feral cattle.

When Franciscan missionaries later returned to the area, they founded missions and began operating ranches worked by Indian converts. By the late 1700s, large private ranches again occupied the land on both sides of the San Antonio River. Although the cattle were frequently rounded up, branded and counted for the benefit of Spanish tax assessors, the herds were otherwise allowed to run free, breed and graze alongside the wild herds.

In 1822, the Mexican government allowed American colonists to move to Tejas under the leadership of Stephen F. Austin. These new settlers were mostly from farms and plantations of the Old South, and brought with them their best horses and cattle — live-



stock of English ancestry. As the colony took root, existing herds of wild Spanish cattle mixed with the livestock from the east.

Since there was no controlled breeding, the only factor that shaped these herds was natural survival in the tough unforgiving environment of Texas brush land. The result was the Texas Longhorn, a breed that clearly established itself in large scattered herds by the mid 1800s. Characterized by their long horns (that can span 4 to 5 feet wide from tip to tip), these beasts seem to have been engineered to be tough enough for the long cattle drives that would follow decades hence.

★ THE CATTLE BUSINESS ★

There are several ways for players to get involved in the cattle business. The most obvious is for a character to start at ground level as a ranch hand or cowboy and work his way up. Alternatively, a player with the appropriate skills (and a bit of seed capital) could stake out some land and begin a small ranch of his own. Very wealthy characters can simply invest their capital and buy, or collaborate with, an existing operation. Many wealthy Europeans, drawn to the business by its vaunted profitability, favored this latter route.

STARTING A RANCH

Covering every facet of establishing and running a ranch is beyond the scope of this book, but a broad overview of the process can arm players with enough information to work out the basics.

Starting a ranch from scratch is ambitious, but not impossible. Players wanting to go this route must locate suitable land and secure it from potential competitors. They also need to build a herd. These tasks require a great deal of capital and/or ingenuity.

If a player expresses a desire to start a ranch, it is best handled through role-play, requiring the player to solve the hurdles and work out the details.

In game terms, here are a few of the basic tenets governing cattle ranching:

🐄 Beeves require 10 acres of land (15 if the land is dry and scrubby) per animal over the course of a year, to graze upon. The scrubland typical of the Cauldron (see *Chapter 4.1 | The Aces & Eights Campaign*) supports about 40 animals per square mile.

🐄 Each head of cattle requires up to 30 gallons of water a day to remain healthy. A large and permanent water source must be situated no further than 10 miles from any grazing land. The upshot of this is that suit-

5.2 | Running a Cattle Drive

This section provides an in-depth game mechanism for conducting a cattle drive. Read through the entire chapter before heading out on the trail, unless you just want to end up broke – or worse...

WHY DO IT?

The area of the Shattered Frontier around the San Juan Mountains provides many excellent grazing lands characterized by abundant vegetative growth, most notably in the spring and early summer. As such, it provides an excellent locale for raising beef cattle – so much so that local supply far exceeds the demands of the relatively sparsely populated area. A mature steer may only command a price of \$4 or \$5 when sold within the region. With prices so low, it's difficult to make a profit raising cattle for the local market.

However, there is an almost insatiable demand for beef in the great industrial cities of the Great Lakes and eastern seaboard. Beeves can fetch ten times the regional price – if only they can be delivered to the hungry populace. Railroads mitigate this difficulty in that they provide a cheap form of transportation. However, the catch is that the rails only run to the cities of New Echota in Sequoya, and to Fort Worth in the Republic of Texas. To fetch the magical \$40 to \$50 a head for one's cattle, it's necessary to get your beeves to these distant railheads.

To do so means embarking on a cattle drive. Though long and arduous, the rewards for a successful cattle drive are enormous. Many perils lie on the path, ones that threaten both your valuable beeves as well as your own person, and success is not measured by mere completion of the trail. Cattle arriving at the railheads as scrawny, mangy beasts are unlikely to receive top dollar – in fact, they might sell for as little as \$2 a head. This outcome could be financially ruinous, since a cattle drive is a huge investment with an expectation of a big payoff at the end.

The challenge is to drive your cattle to the railheads in the shortest time possible while maintaining the size and quality of the herd.

BEFORE YOU HEAD OUT

Conducting a cattle drive is a months-long operation that demands careful preparation. It requires an adequately provisioned and skilled crew to have any hope of being successful. It is not a task that one can embark upon on a whim.

What then constitutes “adequate preparation”? To begin with, there are the men. Regardless of the size of the herd, a cattle train requires a minimum of three men to work it – a trail boss (which most likely will be the PC) and a couple of cowboys. Large herds require correspondingly more men. An optimal number is one cowboy per 250 head of cattle (but never any fewer than three). A herd may be run with as few as one per 400 head but this makes things more difficult (and in game terms will cause all Animal Herding skill checks to be made at one level of difficulty greater).

What of the men? What constitutes a cowboy? To be considered an effective cowboy, the person in question must possess the following skills at least at the Novice level: Animal Herding (cattle), Riding and Rope Use. Lack of any of these skills means that the person is free to ride along but cannot meaningfully contribute to the success of the drive.

Other preparations also need to be made. The journey is long and will tire both men and beasts. The beasts most likely to feel the strain are the cowboys' horses. In fact, you must have at least six horses per cowboy!

Regardless of how good your horse is, you can't depend on a single steed to do the job. Horses simply cannot be ridden and worked hard all day and still be expected to perform. It's common for a cowboy to alternate horses at every meal, allowing allow the others to rest and graze so they're ready when needed.

Meal Planning

As anyone who's ever gone grocery shopping knows, it's far cheaper to prepare meals from scratch than purchase prepared meals. However, it's not so easy to look at a chart of bulk provisions and decide what constitutes three meals a day.

For planning purposes, you may assume the following list of food is sufficient to feed a cowboy on the trail for one day:

- 1 pound beans
- ½ pound corn meal
- ¼ pound bacon
- ½ pound coffee

A slaughtered cow may be substituted for the bacon, but this is generally not done. The available meat that can be eaten before it goes bad is not worth the loss of the profit it would have made at the end of the trail.

You also need to bring along enough food. Cowboys on the trail are busy 16 hours a day with their various duties. It is inconceivable that they can sustain themselves by hunting and foraging for food. Therefore, you must bring along adequate provisions.

While it is possible to purchase preserved food, this is not only expensive but also hurts morale. No one likes to eat cold food out of tin cans for months at a time. Characters forced to operate under these conditions suffer a cumulative -5% penalty per month to all their skill checks. This is a demonstrable effect of their constant grouching about the food and the surliness it inculcates. (This penalty does not apply to characters with a 35% or greater share in the drive, since their desire to get the beeves to the railhead overcomes this lesser inconvenience.)

The upshot is, for any serious cattle drive, you're going to have to purchase a chuckwagon, two oxen or mules to pull it, plenty of food and the services of a cook. So, before you make the first mile of your trek, you're already in the hole for quite a bit of money – dozens of good horses, provisions and sundries. Fortunately, the hired hands only expect their pay at trail's end.

THE TRAIL

At this time, no one else has dared to blaze the long trail from the Shattered Frontier. The paths to the railheads can be dangerous, and your ranching peers have been content to make their meager profits locally. However, it won't be long before one of them takes the plunge, so it's time for you to be bold and be the first.

The route ahead is depicted on the two-page spread map that can be found at the end of this section. You'll notice that there are four terrain types: **lush**, **adequate**, **sparse** and **bare**. These represent the amount of forage available to your herd.

Major rivers are also listed on the map. These are a boon and a potential hazard. Although they are a guaranteed source of water, they are also an obstacle that may need to be crossed.

Hitting the Trail

For simplicity's sake, you may wish to think of the cattle drive as a "mini-game" (albeit a game that may have dire consequences for your *Aces & Eights* character). On each "turn" (1 day in game time), you have to manage the events that occur to your characters and herd that day (see the Daily Grind, following), keeping track of certain events on the Herd Worksheet.

Do the same for each day until you reach your destination. Now you can roleplay selling your beeves, or simply note the appropriate dollar amount on your character sheet and move on. Your GM may decide which is best.

Remember, you need to know the basics that we've already mentioned – the number of cattle in your herd, what characters are guiding the herd (and their statistics), and how much food exists to feed those characters. Naturally, you also need to know where you're starting from (such as the town of Black Horse), and where you want to finish (Fort Worth or New Echota). Consult the map at the end of this section.

You do not need to manage your cattle drive in the starting hex (the first town you left) or ending hex (the hex containing the destination town/railhead).

The Daily Grind

For a simple way to manage your cattle drive, follow these steps.

- 1) Determine today's movement rate (or graze)
- 2) Make Animal Herding check for movement/graze
 - if failed, possible stampede
 - if successful movement, enter adjacent hex
- 3) Send scout ahead to other hexes (if applicable)
- 4) Record how today's movement or grazing affected Quality of Beef
- 5) Roll 1d10 to check for severe weather
- 6) Make Animal Herding check for river crossing (if applicable)
 - success: roll d3 for number of cattle lost
 - if failed, roll d12 for number of cattle lost
 - on 10-12, cattle stampede
- 7) Roll once on *Table 5.2-8: Random Encounters By Terrain* **or** act upon the encounter foretold by scout for this hex
- 8) Roll on *Table 5.2-5: Chance of Finding Water*
 - automatic success in river hex
 - automatic success on day of rainstorm
 - add 40% bonus on the day after rainstorm
- 9) Record dehydration effects (if applicable)
- 10) Make Riding check for scout (if applicable)
 - if success, scout returns with report (roll encounter for each hex the scout visited)
 - if failed, scout returns with no information (do not roll encounters, cannot use scout the next day)

5.3 | All that Glitters...

Gold is a harsh mistress, lad. A man kin chase ‘er half way across the Rockies and court ‘er for a thousand moons and she’ll leave him penniless and wasted of soul. Then deny ever knowin’ ‘im if anyone should ask about claimin’ the body.

— unknown prospector

In the Shattered Frontier, one can hardly turn around without hearing the latest embellished story of a glorious new strike of gold and silver. The lure of precious metals and the promise of untold riches can inflict ‘gold fever’ on otherwise sensible men as they proceed to abandon home and family and race off to grab their share. Fortune seekers from as far away as Europe have come scrambling to the great expanses of the west to claim their piece of the action.

The rumormongers would have you believe that gold is just waiting to be scooped up by the pan or shovel and that nuggets so big they can trip a horse lie in nearby mountain streams.

Unfortunately, when it comes to bestowing her blessings on those with a greed-laden heart, Lady Luck has a discerning eye and a mischievous heart. The sad truth is that for every prospector who has climbed back down out of the hills loaded with gold, a thousand others with dust in their beards and aches in their backs have returned empty handed — sullen individuals who look as though they’ve had their very souls ripped from their chest. Hollow men with nothing to show for the many months, or even years, they spent pawing and scratching at earth and stream looking for color.

Still, these men are more fortunate than others. Many who set out in search of gold found only death for their troubles - a fate some are glad to embrace if the alternative is returning home in disgrace.

Sheriff Patch of Lazarus once commented, “If ever I met the man who steps off that Wednesday stage who doesn’t immediately buy a damn shovel, and a damn pan — I’ll shake the bastard’s hand and buy ‘em a drink. ‘Cos he’ll be the first sunuvabitch I’ve ever met who’s had the God-given good sense not get caught up in such foolishness. Gold, or the want of it, has dealt out more misery on this sorry earth than any good man can imagine.” This opinion is, however, courtesy of a man who spent four years stooping in the cold waters of the Animas swirling a gold pan with nothing to show for it.

Despite such tales of gloom and disappointment, there truly are fortunes to be made in the frontier. The hills and canyons of the San Juan range are laden with gold and silver deposits still waiting to be uncovered. Anyone with a little luck can dip a pan and come up with a few flakes of gold but prospecting requires a certain level of skill in order to make the enterprise worthwhile.

Every seasoned prospector has his own tricks of the trade, procedures that he guards closely. Acquiring the skills and know-how of prospecting isn’t something you can learn from a book or by simply buying some gritty old timer a drink at the local watering hole and getting him to talk. It’s something that’s learned in the doing through time, sweat and patience.

It won’t take long for players stepping off that stage to notice a few who struck it rich reveling in the fortune they’ve taken out of the hills and streams. Despite admonitions to the contrary, some doubtlessly will get bit by the fever and want to try their hands whether they’re prepared for it or not...

This chapter will give you a broad overview on various mining techniques as well as a basic system that allows players to pursue prospecting. Note that large scale (i.e. commercial) mining is outside the scope of this work.

GOLD

You don’t have to be a schooled geologist to find and identify gold. Even an illiterate prospector has a basic understanding of how gold is found and where to look for it. Knowledge dating back to antiquity has been passed down by those who have dedicated their lives to finding their fortunes in the ground.

At the dawn of time, so their understanding goes, molten gold-bearing ore deep within the forge of the earth was squeezed to the surface by powers of biblical proportions. It was a time of creation when forces capable of building mountains thrust the earth upwards until it touched the sky. This gold-bearing material later cooled and formed worthless looking quartz or ‘gangue’. Secreted within was the precious yellow metal that men would one day be so willing to die for. This gold took several forms; thick threads (veins) that wound through the rock like golden tendrils, clumpy masses (nuggets), or a suspension of small dust-like particles (flakes).

High on mountaintops, portions of these quartz formations would occasionally jut through the surface

exposing their vein-streaked surfaces. Such outcroppings are known as 'blowups'. As the ages passed and the mountains began to erode, the quartz would become further exposed. Erosion gradually caused the quartz to break apart and crumble away freeing its bounty of precious yellow metal in the process. Large pieces of quartz would snap off and tumble down slopes where it would come to rest among beds of broken rock and gravel. This is called a 'float'. Smaller nuggets and flakes freed from their rocky matrices would wash short distances down slopes. Even smaller particles of gold dust (flood gold) would end up in streams and rivers to be carried miles away from their sources.

This simple understanding of where gold came from is the basis of everything that drives the prospector. Once the first traces of gold are found, every attempt is made to meticulously track them back to their source - the elusive Mother Lode. This is the ultimate dream of every prospector. Chasing the 'color' to its source is a difficult challenge. Streams bearing gold may have changed course a dozen times over the years or may no longer exist having dried up thousands of years ago.

In his search that may consume months, years or even decades, the prospector becomes a detective. He follows clues and inevitable false leads as he explores every meandering stream and box canyon with no certainty of success.

Types of Gold

Gold is encountered in two basic forms; placer and quartz.

Simply stated, **placer** is gold that has been freed from its stone matrix. This is the 'easy' stuff. It appears in the form of dust, flakes or nuggets and is typically found in streambeds or buried beneath dirt and clay in the banks or surrounding hillsides and slopes. Wizeden prospectors know what 'sign' to look for in their quest for the elusive yellow metal. Quartz, black sand and gravel beds are often present when placer is found.

The word is Spanish and is pronounced *plath-air* in the mother tongue, but *plass-er* by Anglophones.

Quartz gold (more commonly referred to as gold ore) is gold that is still encapsulated in stone. Even a skilled eye can have difficulty determining whether or not a sample is a piece of gold ore. It all depends on its relative gold content.

In both forms gold may be found either in a pure state or combined with other minerals as a gold alloy. Gold alloy must be liberated from those other minerals mechanically or chemically. High grade ore may have visible streaks or flakes of gold in it but more commonly the gold is visually undetectable and must be taken to an assayer to determine its quality. Ore containing very little gold may be uneconomical to process, costing more in labor and capital to extract than the value of the metal.



5.4 | Gambling

Whether in a shady saloon or a gussied-up gambling hall, a single hand can turn the lowest of men into a winner, or the best of men into a poor wretch without a cent to his name. In the Shattered Frontier, card games are king, but dice games and even the roulette wheel also have a place at the table. This section details the most popular games and their rules.

★ DICE GAMES ★

CRAPS

A very popular dice game in the Shattered Frontier is “craps.” If the shooter rolls a 7 or 11 on the first roll, he wins. He may throw and bet again, or pass the dice to another player. However, if he rolls a 2, 3 or 12 on the first roll, he loses.

If the shooter's first throw is 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 or 10, he continues to throw until he again rolls the same number and wins, or throws 7 (“craps out”) and loses both his bet and the dice.

Playin’ Craps

Craps can be as simple or as complex as you wish. The common rules for craps (listed above) are elementary enough for novices to quickly play the game. Saloons will typically add a host of options allowing for a wide variety of betting opportunities for both the shooter and observers. A bit of research on your part will discover a myriad of features that you can add to a gambling hall’s craps table should you so choose.

CHUCK-A-LUCK

This dice game (also known as “birdcage” or “sweat,” among other names), is played by throwing (“chucking”) three six-sided dice. Punters (“players”) place their wagers on a layout labeled “one” through “six.” When all bets are down, the dealer chucks three (and always three) dice onto the table, usually on a felt throwing area. Only the dealer is allowed to touch the dice. If one or more dice falls to the floor, all dice must be rerolled. Players win even money (1:1), double (2:1) or triple (3:1) depending on the results.

For example, Billy Zane wagered \$2 on a result of 3. If one of the die results is a 3, he wins \$2 (and keeps his original two dollar bet, of course). If two dice come up 3s he wins \$4, or if all three dice come up 3s, Billy wins \$6. If none of the dice are 3s, the initial wager is lost.

After all losing bets are collected and all winnings paid out, new players can join the game. Once all bets are down, the dealer chucks the dice again and the process repeats itself.

Playin’ Chuck-A-Luck

To play chuck-a-luck, make a simple board or layout labeled with the numbers one through six on which players may place their bets. You should have ready access to the three six-sided dice the dealer requires.

HIGH DICE

This simple dice game is often called “beat the dealer,” or the “bartender’s game,” since it keeps drinkers occupied while they sit at the bar. Players simply bet 1:1 odds that they can beat the dealer.

Play begins with the dealer rolling two six-sided dice. On a roll of 2, each player immediately wins even money, while on a roll of 12, the dealer takes all wagers.

On any other result (rolls of 3 through 11), the dealer places a marker on a numbered layout or simply uses chalk to indicate his score. The player on the dealer’s far left then rolls the dice versus the dealer’s score. If the result is higher than the dealer’s score, the player wins even money (1:1). Each remaining player (in order of the dealer’s left to right), also rolls in an attempt to beat the dealer’s score, until all players have rolled. The dealer wins all ties. If one or both dice falls to the floor, all dice must be rerolled.

UNDER AND OVER

This three- to six-player dice game (also known as “Lucky Number Seven” or “Hi/Lo”) is popular in the saloons of the Shattered Frontier, and generally uses a rotating “birdcage” wheel to roll two dice.

Players simply place their wagers for a result of “under seven” (2 through 6) or “over seven” (8 through 12). On a win, they get even money (1:1), while the dealer takes all losses. Alternatively, punters may wager on a roll of 7, for which winners receive 4:1 odds. Variant house or dealer rules may include wagers on other combinations, such as 15:1 odds on double 6s. Only the dealer is allowed to touch the dice or spin the wheel.

Playin' Under and Over

This is another simple game to simulate. Make a simple board or layout with the numbers two through twelve, plus spaces for wagers on house rules. Instead of a gambling wheel, simply use a cup to shake and roll the dice.

★ CARD GAMES ★

FARO

This card game is easy to learn and simple to play. It is the most commonly played card game – even more than poker. After all, in an honest faro (sometimes spelled “pharo”) game, the odds of winning are nearly 1:1 – not bad at all. Bets are also paid off 1:1 (for example, a player who makes a dollar bet wins a dollar – in addition to retaining his original dollar bet, of course).

In faro, one or more players play against the dealer (also known as the “bank”). The dealer shuffles a standard deck of cards and places it face down (or face up in a spring-loaded dealer’s box) on the table. Also on the table is a faro board, which displays each card rank (usually ♠s, glued or painted on the board). Layout is in two rows, with the cards running in a counter-clockwise manner, so the upper row displays the 6 through the Ace (left to right), and the lower row the 8 up to the King (also left to right). Off to the left, between the two rows, is the 7. The Ace is always the lowest card in faro.

Players then place wagers (chips) directly on the faro board. A chip placed directly on a card means that the player is “backing” only that card rank. Players may also bet on multiple card ranks by placing a chip between a pair of cards (directly between them or on the diagonal, on the inside or outside). This is called “splitting,” but does not mean a split wager. For

example, if a player splits the 10-Jack (putting his chips directly between the 10 and the Jack), he wins his full wager on a 10 or a Jack. Players who place their chips between the 6, 7 and 8 are “betting the pot.” On the other hand, placing chips between four adjacent cards is known as a “square” bet.

Once all bets are down, the dealer discards the top card of his deck (known as the “soda card”). The **next** card displayed is the losing card, which the dealer places on his right, next to his deck or box. The dealer (or house) wins any bets placed on the losing card.

The next card drawn is the winning card. For example, if the winning card is a 7, all players who bet on the 7 (either by backing, splitting or betting the pot) win. Players who bet on other cards may leave their bets on the same card for the next draw, remove them from the board or move the bet to another card. New players can also join the game in between turns. Once all bets are down, the dealer draws another winning card, and the process repeats itself.

Players may also “copper” their first wager, by placing a penny or token on top of their chips. This



A game of faro in action

5.5 | Goods and Services

These costs incorporate a standard markup on the part of the merchant to cover his shipping, salary and other overhead costs. When it comes to pricing goods and services, you can typically use the prices listed below.

However, a few situations exist that require a modification of the listed prices. The first of these occurs when the point of purchase is not located in close proximity to a rail stop. Such goods need to be transported to the location by cart or wagon, and this additional freight cost should be reflected in the price. A good rule of thumb to employ is to add 10% to the listed price for every 25 miles the store or trader is located from a train stop or rail head.

A second extenuating circumstance occurs when sales take place in the region of a gold (or silver) camp. The abundance of hard currency in such locales guarantees an inflationary effect, particularly when it comes to mining tools and similar hardware.

To simulate the inflation, roll 5d4 (using the penetration rule), add 10, and then multiply the result by

10. This generates a percentage you must add to the base price of any item. If the camp is in a remote location, you may need to calculate an additional freight surcharge (as described above) before applying the inflationary effect.

For example, Jack Murphy has had some success prospecting for gold and returns to the fictional boom town of Silver Gulch to buy a couple of items (a shovel and a mining pan). The total for these items is three dollars. However, Silver Gulch is 250 miles from the nearest rail line and so any goods must be transported via wagon. This adds 100% to the base price (250 miles/25 = 10 x 10%).

Additionally, since Silver Gulch is a boomtown, the abundance of hard currency has an inflationary effect on prices. The GM rolls 5d4 and gets 15 (including penetration). This means that prices in Silver Gulch will be 250% ((15 + 10) x 10) of the base price after the transportation surcharge is calculated.

The shopkeeper will therefore charge Jack \$15 for the pan and shovel (base price \$3 + 100% transportation charge = \$6 x 2.5 inflationary effect = \$15).



Apparel	Base Price
Bathing suit	\$4.00
Belt, ladies' .....	.20¢
Belt, leather .....	.10¢
Blouse	\$2.50
Boots, fancy	\$20.00
Boots, riding leather	\$15.00
Button, lapel	\$.120
Cane, hickory .....	.25¢
Cap, hunting .....	.48¢
Chaps, leather	\$5.00
Chaps, wool	\$7.00
Coat, wool	\$2.25
Collar, linen .....	.13¢
Comb, mens' or ladies' .....	.10¢
Corset, ladies' .....	.75¢
Cotton, weaving (per lb.) .....	.16¢
Cuffs, linen (pair) .....	.18¢
Dress, fancy	\$7.00
Dress, plain	\$3.00
Fabric, denim (per yd.) .....	.10¢
Fabric, flannel (per yd.) .....	.12¢
Fabric, half wool (per yd.) .....	.13¢
Fabric, ribbon (per yd.) .....	.35¢
Fabric, silk (per yd.) .....	.50¢
Fabric, Spanish lace (per yd.) .....	.7¢
Fabric, velvet (per yd.) .....	.75¢
Fabric, wool (per yd.) .....	.29¢
Gloves, buckskin .....	.78¢
Gloves, ladies'	\$.125
Gloves, tanned buckskin	\$1.00
Grass suit (hunting camouflage)	\$1.75
Handkerchief, fancy brocade silk .....	.22¢
Handkerchief, plain linen .....	.5¢
Hat, cavalry	\$.137
Hat, conductor's	\$.145
Hat, cowboy or sombrero (low crown)	\$3.00
Hat, derby	\$.150
Hat, fedora	\$2.25
Hat, ladies' fancy	\$3.25
Hat, sombrero (high crown)	\$5.25
Hat, straw .....	.25¢
Overalls .....	.95¢
Pants, men's	\$1.00
Scarf, common (any color) .....	.25¢
Scarf, silk (any color) .....	.50¢
Shirt, fancy	\$.125
Shirt, plain .....	.75¢
Shoes, fancy	\$3.50
Shoes, ladies' dress	\$3.00
Shoes, mens' dress	\$2.45
Shoes, plain	\$1.75

Shoes, work (miners', loggers', etc.)	\$1.98
Skirt, ladies'	\$2.50
Socks, wool .....	.18¢
Stockings, ladies' silk	\$1.30
Suit	\$6.75
Suit, fancy	\$10.00
Suit, plain	\$5.00
Suspenders, fancy silk .....	.47¢
Suspenders, plain .....	.25¢
Thimble .....	.1¢
Tie, bow .....	.10¢
Tie, neck .....	.7¢
Traveling bag (16 in., alligator skin) .....	.65¢
Trousers, fancy	\$4.00
Trousers, work	\$2.00
Umbrella	\$1.35
Underskirt, ladies'	\$1.65
Underwear .....	.45¢
Vest, hunting	\$3.40
Vest, men's fancy silk	\$5.00
Vest, men's leather	\$1.25
Wallet, leather .....	.92¢
Wig, ladies'	\$15.00
Wig, mens' (toupee)	\$12.00
Wrap	\$15.00

Domestic Items	Base Price
Barometer	\$3.50
Basket .....	.32¢
Bed room suit, simple wooden	\$10.50
<i>(Includes bed, washstand and dresser)</i>	
Bed, cast iron	\$4.85
Bed, simple wooden	\$2.10
Blanket, bed (per pair)	\$1.50
Book case, wooden standing	\$4.35
<i>(4'11" h, 32" w; four adjustable shelves)</i>	
Bread box .....	.65¢
Brush, hair .....	.38¢
Brush, shaving	\$1.50
Can opener .....	.10¢
Candles (box of 12) .....	.8¢
Carriage, baby	\$6.35
Chair, cloth easy	\$12.75
Chair, wooden .....	.60¢
Chair, wooden rocking	\$1.68
Clock, fancy wooden cabinet	\$6.15
Clock, plain wooden	\$1.45
Cradle, rocking	\$25.00
Cup .....	.10¢
Cutlery .....	.45¢
<i>(set of 6 knives/forks/spoons)</i>	
Cutlery, silver-plated	\$2.65
<i>(set of 6 knives/forks/spoons)</i>	
Desk, standing wooden office	\$11.50
<i>(5' long, 2'11" deep, three drawers)</i>	
Dinner set, 100-piece china	\$7.95
Dresser, simple wooden (three drawers)	\$6.75
Flag, national (5 ft. long)	\$1.25

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5.6 | Frontier Justice

No matter how carefully a character conducts his affairs in the Shattered Frontier, there's a chance that, at some point during his career, he's going to find himself on the wrong side of the law.

Outlaws must accept this possibility when embarking on their dastardly deeds. While no one expects to be caught, there is always the nagging fear that an escapade will go horribly wrong and day's end will find iron shackles binding one's limbs. Forewarned is forearmed. The truly thinking criminal prepares for this eventuality by doing some background work on the local legal establishment – it's a good idea to know if the sheriff or judge is crooked and open to bribery. Greasing the wheels in advance can make for an easier ride later. However, even the most corrupt sheriff may have to respond to a public outcry and at least make a show of arresting his underworld patron. That's why it's a good idea to have a judge or two in your pocket as well, and why it's a bad idea to operate in a territory with incorruptible lawmen.

Knowing he has a real possibility of dealing with the justice system makes a smarter criminal prepare for his eventual legal duels. Not only hardened thugs get caught up in this system, though. Ironically, the relatively law abiding citizen may be far less prepared (and at a greater disadvantage) if he gets swept up into the system.

Now, you're thinking to yourself, "If I keep my nose clean, how can this be of interest to me?" Well there are a number of ways to fall under the wheels of justice. The most obvious is if your character fled to the west to escape some youthful indiscretions back east. While it certainly is more difficult to be brought to justice in some small frontier hamlet, it is not inconceivable for a dogged victim to trace you to the Shattered Frontier. There are, after all, telegraph lines linking many towns to the rest of the nation, and a few well placed dollars with the promise of more to come can work wonders in stimulating the memories of clerks and shopkeepers from Kansas City to Lazarus.

Even if you've lived your whole life on the straight and narrow, you can still end up in Johnny Law's grasp. What if that horse you purchased fair and square a few towns back turns out to be stolen and the rightful owner is now in your face? Or, more insidiously, one of your rivals may set you up by concocting a story replete with fake evidence and paid accusers.

There are two types of justice in the Shattered Frontier: vigilante and rule of law.

VIGILANTE JUSTICE

In a region with overlapping and unclear legal jurisdictions, the dark specter of vigilanteism is certain to put in an appearance. While this self-appointed judiciary is frequently self-righteous in defense of its actions, such 'justice' is capricious in application, highly error-prone and often the enforcement tool of an influential minority.

Lynch mobs are perhaps the most notorious form of vigilantes. Often stirred to action by an agitator with an agenda, their judgment is frequently impaired by alcohol. Their target's guilt is presumed and there is little one can do to convince them otherwise. 'Justice' is usually swift and brutal.

The greatest failing of vigilanteism is that parties do not feel bound by its summary judgments. Instead of settling a matter, vigilanteism often sets in motion a series of tit-for-tat killings that wind up with much blood being shed and, ironically, lessened overall security.

There's little wonder that most average citizens welcome the rule of law.

RULE OF LAW

Rule of Law occurs when an impartial party with the power to enforce its decrees establishes and fairly administers an established legal code. Such a system avoids civil strife by clearly delineating infractions of law and setting a prescribed punishment for violation. All persons are expected to abide by the code, and those who do not are punished equally – regardless of status. Someone independent of the dispute is called upon to mete out justice, thereby removing the temptation for either party to seek revenge and escalate the dispute.

The typical method through which violations of the legal code are determined and justice meted out is a trial. For minor crimes, a judge may summarily issue a judgement but serious crimes require a jury trial.

★ TRIAL PROCESS ★

At some point in your campaign, you will undoubtedly run across a circumstance that calls for a jury trial. What follows is a relatively simple mechanic for resolving a trial, while nonetheless maintaining the excitement and drama of watching two legal minds compete.

Specific detail on pre-trial discovery and related sleuthing has been left out of the following discussion.

However, if such gaming is to your taste, the *Aces & Eights* rules certainly support it. It will, however, take a good deal of work on the part of the GM or players to fully flesh out the cast of the mystery, as well as to weave the intricate plot details. While perhaps a little out of genre, a murder investigation could be an exciting change of pace for trail-sore cowboys and an opportunity to utilize some underappreciated skills!

PLAYING A TRIAL

Each trial needs a judge, prosecutor, defending attorney, the accused and the jury. Ideally, these first four characters should be in the hands of different players, although a player may handle multiple characters if all players agree to this and can do so fairly. At a minimum, two players are required (one for the prosecutor and one for the defense). Note that a character without any legal training may choose to represent himself. The jury (and the judge, if need be) are specially determined using the rules below.

The Hearing

In the hearing, the accused is brought before the judge. The prosecutor (who may or may not be a lawyer) brings evidence, and the judge decides if a trial is warranted.

At this point, the prosecutor role-plays his case. All other players vote on the merits of his presentation, claiming it to be either Flimsy, Circumstantial, or Solid and Credible. Each merit is assigned a certain point value adjustment, as noted on *Table 5.6-1: Case Merit*.

TABLE 5.6-1: CASE MERIT	
Merit	Value
Flimsy	0
Circumstantial	+2
Solid & Credible	+3

If the personality of the judge is not predetermined, it must now be determined per *Table 5.6-2 Judge Severity*.

TABLE 5.6-2: JUDGE SEVERITY		
Roll (d100)	Merit	Roll Adjustment
01-20	Lenient	-1
21-50	Average/Fair	0
51-85	Stern	+1
86-00	Hanging Judge	+2

The Reputation score of the accused also comes into play during the hearing. All things being equal, a case against a person of high Reputation demands a

greater level of proof than a case against a person of poor Reputation. See *Table 5.6-3 Reputation Adjustment (Hearing)*.

TABLE 5.6-3: REPUTATION ADJUSTMENT (HEARING)	
Reputation	Roll Adjustment
Legendary	-2
Great	-1
Average	0
Low	+1
Disreputable	+2
Notorious	+3

Now, roll 1d6, adding the above modifiers. A result of 3 or less indicates that there's insufficient evidence to hold the accused for trial, and the judge sets him free. However, if the result was 4 or higher, the accused must stand trial. The first step in staging a trial is to gather a jury.

The Jury

Each trial needs twelve persons for the jury (with each juror represented by a six-sided die). These twelve jurors may be chosen from existing characters (the citizens of the town where the crime was committed), or created as abstract townfolk. In either case, each juror is represented by a die.

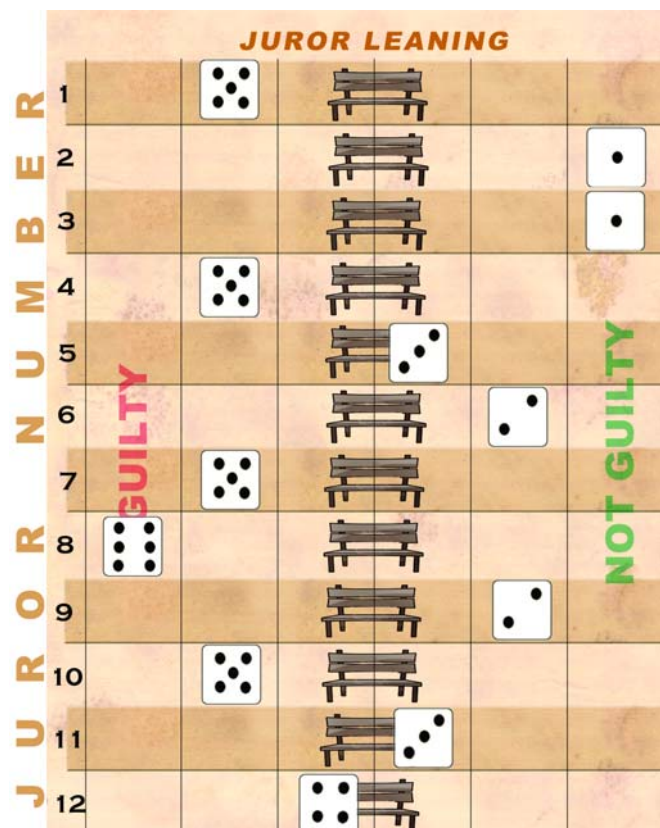


Figure 5.6-1: Initial placement of jurors