



Seeking Pleasure in the Old West

David Dary

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"Pioneering Americans of the nineteenth century did not merely rush for gold, lust for land, and thrust aside the West's original inhabitants. These mountain men, cowboys, homesteaders, and cavalry troopers played nearly as hard as they worked, exploiting to the hilt what little leisure they could steal from their labors. Nor did they only carouse-drink, gamble, and womanize-as the West's fiction might suggest. They were spectators at bull and bear fights in California; actors in amateur theatricals in Army garrisons; and participants in communal barn raisings and quilting bees on the prairie. This is a delightful look at a very neglected aspect of the story of westering Americans."-Richard H. Dillon, author of Meriwether Lewis, Fool's Gold, and The Legend of Grizzly Adams. "The men on Lewis and Clark's 1804 expedition square-danced to fiddle music. Cowboys' leisure pursuits included singing, storytelling, dominoes, reading, and foot races. U.S. Army soldiers played the newfangled game of baseball and even enjoyed debating and attending concerts. Dary's irresistible narrative recreates card games on Mississippi steamboats, New Orleans balls, frontier campfires and cafe-theatres, Santa Fe saloons, and Wyoming bicycle clubs and mineral spas, and it charts the emergence of a middle class that came to disapprove of prostitution, gambling, drinking, bear-baiting, and buffalo-hunting. An engaging chronicle."-Publishers Weekly. "As David Dary proves in this pleasurable book, the Old West was not all trouble and toil. Much is to be learned here-from mountain men and Indians to cowboys and homesteaders-about how to have fun, no matter the circumstances."-Dee Brown, author of Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee. "This lively and good-humored narrative takes the reader on a journey to a time before pleasure ruled lives, a time when fun was where you found it and was what you did when you had time."-Dallas Morning News. "This delightful volume describes activities ranging from the simple and the homespun to the bawdy and elaborate."-Booklist. "A treasury of the colorful characters who spent their brief hour on that wild and woolly stage."-Kansas City Star.

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