



On Track

July • Aug • Sept
2026

Volume 23 No. 3 • Garland Landmark Society Newsletter



When the first Western movie, "The Great Train Robbery" was filmed in New Jersey in 1903, movies about the West became as popular as Marvel and superhero films are today. Westerns could be cheaply made in Hollywood since movie makers could easily get to wide open spaces and desert scenery filled with cactus and Joshua trees. Additionally, fake Western towns were built for many movies.

In the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, Garlandites flocked to the local theatres for movies and serials (multiple-part short films) set in the Wild West. The theatres showed films featuring cowboy stars Tom Mix, Gene Autry, William Boyd (Hopalong Cassidy) and others. In addition to the main films, kids would go to the theatres week after week to see the latest exciting episode of the Western serials.

Early Western movies were popular due to their dependable "good guy versus bad guy" morality. In 1922, The Lyric Theatre proudly said it was "exerting itself to improve the character of shows here...no suggestively immoral pictures (will) be shown or any that are calculated to create wrong impressions on the younger generations."

That year the new film of early Western star, Hoot Gibson, titled "Fire Eater," was described as "so full of action it is overflowing." Gibson became one of the period's most popular Western movie heroes. Ten years later he brought his Golden State Ranch Rodeo to the Texas State Fair.

Tom Mix, another of Hollywood's first Western movie stars, also brought much attention to the Western film genre. The Lyric referred to cowboy star Tom Mix as "pre-eminently the leading maker of Western features," and his films sold tickets here until 1932.

The Garland Theatre showed films by the Singing Cowboy Gene Autry (who has an unprecedented five stars on the Hollywood Walk of Fame). These movies included "Rootin' Tootin' Rhythm" and "Western Jamboree." The last one co-starred Smiley Burnette. (Stay tuned for more about him!)

William Boyd as Hopalong Cassidy, one of the most popular movie cowboys, starred in 66 Hopalong films and a popular radio show. He cleverly obtained the rights to his films and released them to television in its early years. A huge catalog of Hoppy merchandise included everything from cowboy or cowgirl outfits and toy guns in fancy holsters to ice cream, paper straws and milk.





Photo appeared in *The Garland Daily News*.

ALMOST FOUR—These two pint-sized cowboys, twin sons of Police Chief Henry Ashley and Mrs. Ashley, will celebrate their fourth birthday in August. The boys' names are Hank and Jerry.

six weeks away, Lea Nan's shop announced that it had cowboy and cowgirl suits made of real leather in sizes 2 to 6 for \$8.95.

Fascination with Westerns went beyond movies and TV screens. Books, films, radio dramas and comic books of Western heroes were enjoyed by people of all ages, and Garland children and adults followed the trend.

In the late 1940s and 1950s, Garland stores offered "Buckaroo Western Wear" which included two-toned cowboy boots, realistic toy guns with fancy faux leather holsters and complete cowgirl or cowboy suits. These suits were fancier than those worn by real cowboy movie stars.

In the 1940, *Garland News* issue that included letters to Santa Claus, kids asked for cap pistols, cowboy or cowgirl costumes and bows and arrows. Margaret Sue Alston of 212 North Seventh Street asked Santa for a cowgirl hat and boots. In 1948, with Christmas



Michael R. Hayslip in his best western gear.

Many kids dressed up in their best cowboy or cowgirl outfits, put on their belts and holsters and posed for photos on ponies as traveling photographers visited neighborhoods with their patient ponies. Were you one of the lucky kids who had your photo taken?

Hollywood comes to Garland

Bill Cody (not to be confused with famed Western frontiersman and showman Buffalo Bill Cody) was a famous action hero in nearly 50 B-Western movies of the 1920s and 1930s. On April 22, 1932, Cody and his horse Chico passed through Garland and stopped for lunch at Bell's sandwich shop. They were traveling in a specially built automobile resembling a steam locomotive, and the horse was in a glassed-in trailer. Bill was dressed in full cowboy attire.

Mr. Bell fed him well, and after the car was filled with gasoline at Joe Wood's garage, the star continued his trip eastward.

Movie cowboys Roy Rogers and Smiley Burnette came to Garland April 19, 1938, to promote their new film "Under Western Stars" which was playing in Dallas at the Capitol Theater on Elm Street. This was Rogers' first starring role. He had played only minor roles until Gene Autry protested his low salary and went "on strike" because he was given a few hundred dollars a week while his films made millions for the studio.

Rogers' stage name had been invented by Republic Pictures management, chosen from that of beloved Western storyteller Will Rogers, and the name Roy, the French word for King, as in King of the Cowboys.



When they came to Garland, Burnette, having been Autry's sidekick, was popular, but Rogers was not yet a star. As a result, Burnette got top billing on the banner that welcomed them to Garland.

The actors were accompanied by representatives of the Capitol Theatre and of the Republic

Pictures Corporation, as well as Captain Lee Miller of the State Highway Patrol.

Garland Mayor Alexander presented the actors with Byer-Rolnick "sweatproof" cowboy hats, and the Garland School band gave them a musical welcome. All the elementary school children were permitted to come to the big event to meet and get autographs of the stars.

Rogers sang several songs and acted as caller for an old-fashioned square dance. Burnette sang, told jokes and imitated the sounds of animals to the delight of the kids. The movie they were here to promote was shown at The Garland Theatre and was extended due to popular demand that Friday and Saturday.

By the next year Rogers' films "Rough Riders Round-Up," "In Old Caliente," "Saga of Death

FILM STARS HERE



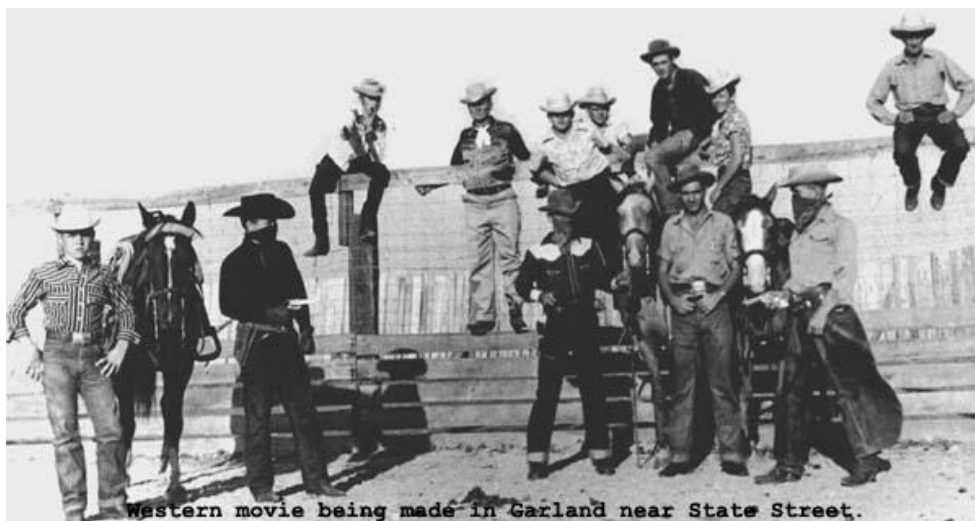
Roy Rogers and Smiley Burnette - in the big white hat and big black one, respectively - visited Garland Tuesday as guests of the Garland Rotary Club. The two were in Dallas in connection with the premiere of their picture "Under Western Stars" at the Capitol. With them above are Mayor J. A. Alexander, wearing hat, and theater manager H. R. Bisby.

NewspaperArchive
by Storyline



Valley" and "Wall Street Cowboy" brought many fans to The Garland Theatre. In years to come, Rogers (born Leonard Slye) made almost 100 films, had two popular TV shows in the 1950s and early 1960s and appeared on TV until the 1990s.

In 1948, to the delight of Garlandites, a movie company filmed a Western scene near State Street and the Santa Fe railroad tracks.



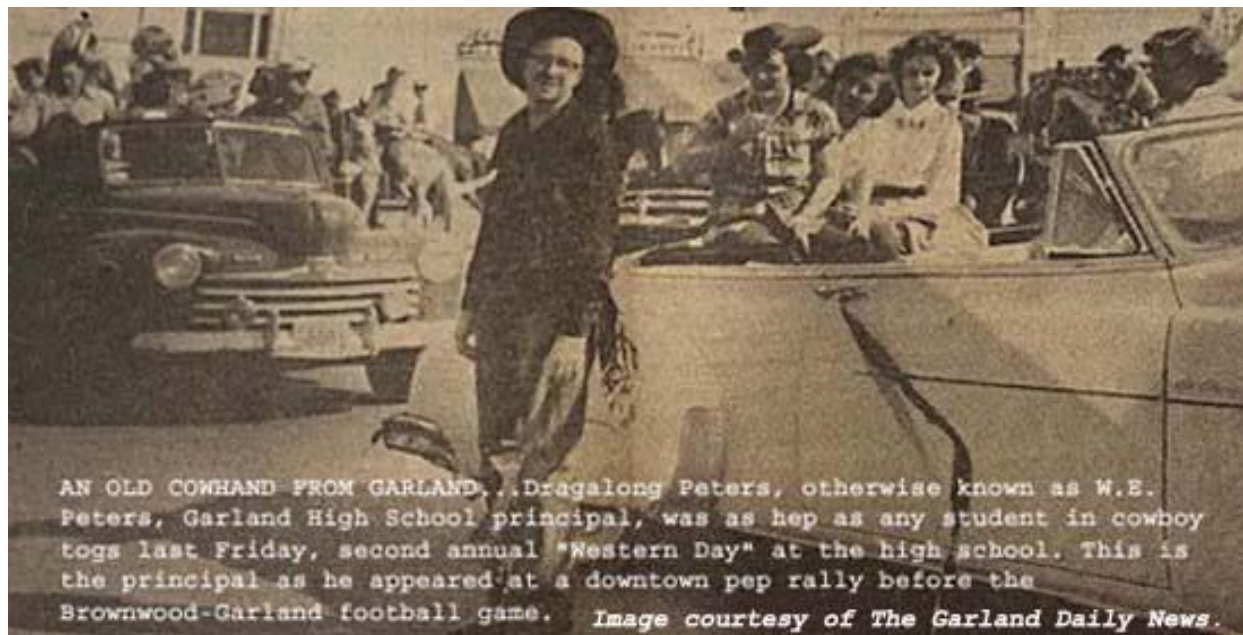
In the 1950s, major A-list movie stars like Henry Fonda and Gary Cooper began to make Western films with more serious subjects that were no longer simply “white hat versus black hat.” By 1955, the so-called “Adult Western” had taken over evening television, with “The Life and Legend of Wyatt Earp,” “Bat Masterson” and of course

“Gunsmoke,” which started life as a radio drama. Future stars including James Garner, Steve McQueen and Clint Eastwood got their start in Western TV shows.

By the late 1950s, science fiction films, romantic comedies, Disney films and more realistic modern stories like “Reform School Girl” were edging out Westerns at Garland theaters, but on TV, the Wild West lived on until the 1970s.

--Written by Carlotta Barnes

Schools, churches and businesses even got in on the western trend!



AN OLD COWHAND FROM GARLAND...Dragalong Peters, otherwise known as W.E. Peters, Garland High School principal, was as hep as any student in cowboy togs last Friday, second annual “Western Day” at the high school. This is the principal as he appeared at a downtown pep rally before the Brownwood-Garland football game. Image courtesy of The Garland Daily News.



ALL DRESSED UP for the Caldwell Corral are the four second grade teachers of the Caldwell Elementary School who will teach their classes Friday in western attire. They are, left to right, Mrs. Walter Floyd, Mrs. Ed Estes, Miss Dwan Lemmond and Mrs. Bill Bonham. The PTA sponsored corral opens at 5:30 Friday night at Caldwell School.

Image courtesy of The Garland Daily News.

**"If your youngster has a faith to live by
he'll never wander off the trail!"**

says GENE AUTRY, America's No. 1 cowboy

"As any cowhand will tell you, it's easier to keep 'em on a well-marked trail than to hunt for a maverick once he's wandered away. Even when you find 'em, they don't always want to come back.

"It's like that with youngsters. Give them a trail to follow—something to guide them when problems come along—and you'll never have a maverick on your hands. Even when the grazing looks greener away from the path, if your kids are sure the path leads to something—even though they can't see the destination—they'll stick to it.

"It's all in believing—in having faith. I guess that's the biggest gift any parent can give a child—and it's more valuable than anything money can buy. Build your faith together—by going together to the church of your choice."

TAKE YOUR PROBLEMS TO CHURCH THIS WEEK millions leave them there!

Ad appeared in The Garland Daily News.

Garland Landmark Society

GarlandHistorical.org

PRESIDENT

Carlotta Barnes
CarlottaBarnes@icloud.com

VICE PRESIDENT Museum Affairs

John Hatch
JDHatch@garlandisd.net

VICE PRESIDENT Membership

Jeanette Manning
jeemanning@gmail.com

SECRETARY

Sara James
jamesjd1@verizon.net

TREASURER

Patsy Rogers
pbrogers1@verizon.net

DIRECTORS

Merrill Balanciere
Barbara Baynham
Don Baynham
Nancy Boeding
Bryan Bradford
Kim Everett
Mike Hayslip
Carol Montgomery

**P.O. Box 462232
Garland, Texas 75046**



Share Your History

If you're a Landmark Society Member or friend—and you must be if you are reading this—you have history in your head that we would like to share with other members. We encourage you to write your memories of Garland's history and send them to us along with supporting pictures, letters or newspaper articles.

Email:

Heritage@GarlandTX.gov

The Landmark Museum and the Pullman Railcar are operated by the Garland Landmark Society, a nonprofit, volunteer organization.

The museum is open
Thursday, Friday
and Saturday
10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

