

Old Trail Town

Cody, Wyoming
1885

"It's been 8 months now, the Shoshone and Yellowstone Rivers have been good to me this season, although I loathe to admit John Johnston was right about the beaver, they aren't as plentiful as they used to be. The mules are as heavily loaded as I dare and my supplies are nearly exhausted, I have sufficient pelts to trade at Arland and a lynx pelt for my old friend Curly. Maybe the Doc will have something new for me. I've read "Treasure Island" so many times; I practically have the book committed to memory. I hear William Cody has put together a Wild West Extravaganza. Cutter says it has to be seen to be believed. I understand the dime novelists have christened him Buffalo Bill. I'm certain he is basking in well-deserved fame and fortune. He always did cater to the limelight."

"As I gaze across this vanishing frontier from my vantage atop Inspiration Point, I am humbled again by the sheer majesty of this untainted land, but I fear the storm of progress that brews on the horizon. How strange that I stand inside what is the world's first National Park. Have we truly come this far? As Richard Hooker was known to remark "change, for ill or naught, comes never without inconvenience." Barbed wire and bicycles be damned; to commerce do my bountiful spoils go. And a spot of real whisky might not be such a bad recompense after all."

Wyoming of 1885 is represented through the eyes of a local fur trapper, **Arvis Cole**. He marvels over the land and comments on the rumors he has heard from fellow travelers during his extended isolation as we see the footage of Wyoming unfold on the screen before us. His supplies are running low and he has procured all the furs his mules can carry. We find him on the day before he returns to civilization gazing over Yellowstone National Park from Inspiration Point.

We next cut to the Saloon in Cody, Wyoming. The Saloon doors open before us as **Bartholomew "Doc" McKracken**, the proprietor and bartender of the Saloon, greets Arvis. The Saloon also serves as the local post office. It is the information hub for our part of the world. If it's happening, it's happening at Doc's. (He will keep the narrative moving and serve as the central locus for all our characters)

Also present in the Saloon are:

Phineas Mortimer Cleighton newly arrived from the busted gold fields of California and specifically the Barbary Coast metropolis of San Francisco. Smartly attired in bowler hat and vest, he has made, spent and lost several fortunes and is heading back east no richer or poorer, though much wiser than when he arrived. Phineas is refined and proper, a little stiff, but someone who definitely looks the world square in the eye.

Owen Wister elaborates on life in New York City, having recently arrived from the east for the sole purpose of experiencing the west first hand. He fancies himself a writer and an adventurer but still harbors a sense of pride for his erstwhile home and has no trouble extolling the virtues of "modern civility." (Owen Wister will indeed go on to write "The Virginian", a seminal western novel.)

William Fredrick "Buffalo Bill" Cody the founder of Cody, Wyoming and the Wild West Show, Bill has recently returned from Chicago and offers insight to the marvelous wonders that abound in the Windy City.

Cletus Clavin is both the town drunk and the Saloon's piano player. He is also a clairvoyant, genius and spends a rather substantial amount of time talking to himself.

The exposition of life in the 1880's takes place through the conversation between the viewpoints represented by Owen (New York), Phineas (San Francisco) and Bill Cody (Chicago). Other parts of the country are presented through telegraphs, mail, the Laramie Daily Boomerang (a Regional newspaper) and the postcards Doc has received from the Pony Express. The still and archival photographs would accompany the conversation in the Saloon. They would be seen on screen from those specific sources, either tracking across the screen, superimposed during a particular anecdote, or flying away graphically from the postcards or from a page in the newspaper. They are designed to visually enhance the viewer's connection with the time period.

Additional commentary is made by Cletus as well as patrons and legendary figures passing through the Saloon as needed.

Opening

Arvis enters the Saloon and saunters up the bar, robustly greeting Doc and Cletus. Doc peers over his reading glasses, examining the recent spate of mail.

“Arvis Cole, hale and hearty as I live and breathe.”

“How you been, Doc. You’re looking rather fit yourself for a man that spends most his time supplicating the eternal well of Mr. Clavin there.”

“No more beaver in Clarks Fork next year. Gonna be ridin’ in clockwork carts soon enough, I tell ya.”

“Good to see you too Cletus.”

“Got something that might interest you, Arvis.”

Doc pulls a newly bound book from an oilskin wrapper and hands it to Arvis

“Just got it in last week, only copy in the Territory, gentleman name of Mark Twain wrote it. Thought you might take a fancy to it.”

“Just might at that. Sore sight better than having to traipse through this again.”

Arvis tosses his well-worn and beaten copy of “Treasure Island” on the bar and takes the copy of Huckleberry Finn.

“Suppose you’d like to know, Ulysses Grant passed away.”

“Damn shame”

“It is at that.”

“New president?”

“Sure enough, Grover Cleveland. They got a Democrat in office now.”

Cletus pipes up “He’ll be around for a spell”

Doc shows Arvis a copy of the Laramie Daily Boomerang. “Looks like a lotta folks giving up on the gold mines.”

“Doesn’t mean it’s not still a land of milk and honey, though. For an enterprising young man, that is.

Phineas Mortimer Cleighton, at your service.”

The conversation continues around the advances of San Francisco, the export of frozen meat, canned meat and fruit on store shelves and the 500 Saloons and 20 theaters. Cletus points out it will all be rubble when the Big One hits in 20 years. At the mention of the California Electric Light Company supplying electrical distribution for the city Owen Wister chimes in, remarking how New York streets are lit by electricity allowing one to walk down the streets at night and that hydroelectric installations have begun at Niagara Falls. The Brooklyn Bridge has been opened for traffic. Preparations are under way for the dedication of the Statue of Liberty. Construction has begun on a train that will run *underground!*

At this point Buffalo Bill walks through the saloon doors announcing the 10-story skyscraper they had just finished in Chicago before he came out west, and the first entirely steel frame building currently under construction.

Mention is made of Oklahoma being opened up to non-Indian settlement, and Montana, Washington, North and South Dakota becoming states soon.

(This section allows us the opportunity to explore the current advances of the country through fact, hearsay, newspaper, telegraph, postcards and first hand experience)

Annie Oakely sticks her head in the saloon and informs Bill that Butch Cassidy and the Hole in the Wall Gang have arrived back in town. He remarks they are probably still steamed about that whole Meeteetse sting.

“Keep an eye on them, and let Sheriff Cogburn know.”

---Finally a disruption take us from our discourse and opens up the opportunity for Bill Cody to turn to the audience and invite them to step outside and step back to a period when the west was wild for the last time.

Timeline

1876

Colorado becomes state

Alexander Graham Bell invents the telephone

US National Baseball League founded

1877

Rutherford B Hayes elected 19th US President

Edison invents phonograph

Italian astronomer Giovanni V. Schiaparelli observes canals on Mars

First public telephones

1878

Gilbert and Sullivan "HMS Pinafore"

Bicycles manufactured in America

Electric Street lighting in London

1879

Albert Einstein born

Saccharin discovered

1880

JA Garfield elected President

Gilbert and Sullivan "Pirates of Penzance"

Canned fruits and meats first appear in stores

NYC streets are lit by electricity

87,800 miles of railroad in US

1881

First US Lawn Tennis Championship played

New York population 1.2 million

1882

RL Stevenson writes "Treasure Island"

Edison designs the first hydroelectric plant in Wisconsin

Maxim patents recoil-operated machine gun

1883

Chicago first skyscraper 10 stories high

NYC Brooklyn Bridge opens to traffic

WF Buffalo Bill Cody organizes his Wild West show

1884

Grover Cleveland elected President

Mark Twain writes Huck Finn

Sir Charles Parsons invents first practical steam turbine engine

1885

Ulysses S. Grant dies

"King Solomon's Mines"

1886

Statue of Liberty dedicated

Hydroelectric installations begun at Niagara Falls

Coming up

Swan and Edison produce electric lamps

George Eastman invents Kodak camera box

George Harrison pres (1888)

Montana, N S Dakota, Washington become states

Oklahoma opens to non-Indian settlement

First entirely steel frame building in Chicago