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ABOUT GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the *GURPS* system. Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! Resources now available include:

Pyramid (www.sjgames.com/pyramid). Our online magazine includes new rules and articles for *GURPS*. It also covers the hobby's top games – *Dungeons & Dragons*, *Traveller*, *World of Darkness*, *Call of Cthulhu*, *Shadowrun*, and many more – and other Steve Jackson Games releases like *In Nomine*, *INWO*, *Car Wars*, *Toon*, *Ogre*, and more. And *Pyramid* subscribers also have access to playtest files online, to see (and comment on) new books before they're released.

New supplements and adventures. *GURPS* continues to grow, and we'll be happy to let you know what's new. A current catalog is available for a SASE. Or check out our Web site (below).

Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata sheets for all *GURPS* releases, including this book, are always available from SJ Games; be sure to include an SASE with your request. Or download them from the Web – see below.

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Internet. Visit us on the World Wide Web at www.sjgames.com for an online catalog, errata, updates, and hundreds of pages of information. We also have conferences on CompuServe and AOL. *GURPS* has its own Usenet group, too: rec.games.frp.gurps.

GURPSnet. Much of the online discussion of *GURPS* happens on this e-mail list. To join, send mail to majordomo@io.com with “subscribe GURPSnet-L” in the body, or point your World Wide Web browser to gurpsnet.sjgames.com/.

The *GURPS Old West* Web page is at www.sjgames.com/gurps/books/oldwest.

PAGE REFERENCES

See *GURPS Compendium I*, p. 181, for a list of abbreviations for *GURPS* titles, or for the most recent list, visit our Web site at www.sjgames.com/gurps/abbrevs.html.

Any page reference that begins with a B refers to *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition Revised*; e.g., p. B22 refers to page 22 of the *Basic Set*. Also, CI refers to *GURPS Compendium I* and CII refers to *Compendium II*.

INTRODUCTION

Stagecoach holdups . . . Indian raids . . . shootouts at high noon . . . stampedes . . . greedy railroad barons. The Wild West is a gold mine of adventure for roleplaying!

GURPS Old West covers the whole 19th century, giving special emphasis to the classic period of the Old West (1865-1885). It runs from the first overland explorations through white settlement to the last days of the frontier. There's also plenty of information about everything Western – the Pony Express, the gold rushes, steamboats and railroads, cattle drives and cow towns, outlaws and lawmen, border wars and wars with the Indians, and how the country grew out of it all.

Dozens of character types, skills, advantages, and disadvantages help you create any conceivable type of Western character, from town drunk to railroad baron, soiled dove to revival preacher. Authentic equipment lists outfit your character from head to toe. Carefully researched, detailed background information lets you build an adventure or campaign with highly realistic detail, or simply an adventure with Western flavor. There's something for everyone here, with rules for train robbery, mounted combat, and ritual magic – enough fun for anyone, even a reckless cowboy.

This book is the Old West as it should have been – liberally tinged with romance and heroics. But there's little need to stray from the truth. Nearly every Hollywood myth has its counterpart in history. But when choosing how much reality to include in an Old West campaign, the GM should follow the advice of editor Edmond O'Brien in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* – “If the facts conflict with the legend, print the legend.”

About the Authors

Ann Dupuis began roleplaying in 1978, and spends as much time as possible playing, gamemastering, writing and reading adventures. 1990 marked her first publications in the roleplaying world: an adventure in *Dungeon* magazine and two articles in *Roleplayer*. *Old West* was her first book, but she now has several more under her belt as proprietor of Grey Ghost Games. In her spare time, Ann rides, practices Shim Gum Do (Korean Sword), paints miniatures, and reads fantasy, science fiction, and mystery novels.

Stephen Dedman began roleplaying in 1977, and sold his first *Villains & Vigilantes* adventure in 1985. He's the author of *GURPS Dinosaurs* and the novels *The Art of Arrow Cutting* and *Foreign Bodies*, and co-author of *GURPS Martial Arts Adventures* and *GURPS Space Atlas 4*. Stephen lives in Western Australia, which is bigger and hotter than Texas.

Liz Tornabene began roleplaying in 1978, but did nothing of note after that until she cleverly escaped the snares and toils of the corporate world to rescue Ann from the impending *Old West* deadline. She is becoming a freelance writer and has several books and articles planned.

Robert E. Smith began playing miniatures in 1974. He then started roleplaying with M.A.R. Barker's *Empire of the Petal Throne*, which he enjoys to this day. Historical miniatures are his favorite, and he has written a set of miniature rules for the Civil War.

Lynda Manning-Schwartz grew up in Temple, Texas. Her grandparents owned a large ranch, but Lynda was frequently cautioned against “bothering the hands.” Her hobbies include deciphering Mayan hieroglyphics and researching topics such as occultism, herbalism, and American Indian beliefs. Lynda privately published a book of poetry in 1979.

Drunkards

Drunks hang around a town's authority figures, doing odd jobs and being pitifully inadequate. Staples of Western fiction include the ruined gunslinger, the guilt-ridden doctor, and the booze-sodden Indian. Occasionally they sober up just in time to save the town or the hero. And it's always possible that a drunken Indian is just shamming, infiltrating white society for his own reasons.

Advantages are rare. Common disadvantages include Alcoholism, Laziness, and Odious Personal Habits. Dead Broke or Poor, bad Reputation, and Status of -2 or -3 are appropriate. Skills, if any, are rarely used.

See also *Doctors*, *Gunslingers*, and *Indian Braves*.

Dudes and Tenderfeet

A *tenderfoot* is naive and unused to the hardships of the Old West. A *dude* is a non-westerner who takes pride in his clothing, whether he wears the costume of his origin – deerstalker cap and monocle of the Englishman, the tall hat of the Bostonian – or dresses up in fancy “western” duds. Both are subject to hazing and rough treatment. Westerners take especially dim views of Englishmen, even if appropriately attired and not at all tenderfooted. (See *Reputation*, p. 32.)

Many dudes are tourists with enormous quantities of luggage, including dime novels and travel guides.

Gullibility plays well. Most of their skills are not very useful in the West – such as Savoir-Faire (Back East or European), European History, Area Knowledge of (Boston or London), etc. A Kodak camera is a must after 1888. Prior to that, the very wealthy bring along their own artists to record their adventures.

Odious Personal Habits such as continual small-talk may annoy stagecoach companions. Phobias of Indians, insects, snakes, or other wildlife are possible. Many dudes have the Delusion that everything in the West is just like the dime novels. A few are actually good at something useful, such as Boxing, Guns (Shotgun or Rifle) or Riding . . . much to the surprise of their would-be tormentors.

Entertainers

The West is hungry for entertainment, and even amateurs can draw a crowd. Circus performers, opera singers, phrenologists, mesmerists, and famous actors tour the Old West. Patent-medicine shows have troupes of fire-eaters, sword swallowers, and tumblers. Saloonkeepers put on song-and-dance acts, plays, and variety shows. Circuses have marching bands, trick riders, trained animals, acrobats, and clowns. Wild West shows offer genuine Indians, trick ropers, and female gunslingers.

Bard, Dancing, Hypnotism, Musical Instrument, Performance, Poetry, and Singing are all suitable. Audiences find Acrobatics and Equestrian Acrobatics particularly thrilling. Dancing black bears are always crowd-pleasers – an animal act requires the Animal Handling skill.

Some entertainers are treated like royalty. A few are disdained by respectable citizens – notably the saloons' piano players and dancing girls.

See also *Confidence Men and Snake Oil Salesmen* and “Soiled Doves.”

Explorers and Trailblazers

Explorers in the early 1800s searched for a Northwest Passage. The U.S. government sponsored expeditions to support territorial claims and establish relations with Indians. Scientific expeditions recorded topographical, geological, botanical, and zoological information.

Most expeditions will have a leader, soldiers for protection, and a guide. Expedition leaders must have either Wealth or a Patron for funding. Military Rank (level 3 or 4) is almost mandatory in government-sponsored expeditions.



Trailblazers mark out paths for mule trains and wagons. Many are solitary, living by their wit with minimal equipment. They often have the Compulsive Behavior of wanderlust, though a few encounters with grizzly bears or hostile Indians can quickly earn enough character points to buy this off.

Explorers and trailblazers need Survival skills in many different terrains – woods, desert, mountains, and waterways. They should also have Cartography, Orienteering, and weapons skills. Animal Handling helps with pack or riding animals. Some Area Knowledge of the terrain to be explored is helpful. The main idea, of course, is to increase the level of Area Knowledge tremendously in the course of the exploration.

See also *Mountain Men*, *Scouts*, and *Scientists and Engineers*.

Thunder teaches Gambling, Meteorology, Medical skills, Riding, and Survival. It can bestow the mundane advantages of High Pain Threshold, Longevity, Luck, Rapid Healing, Temperature Tolerance (up to 2 levels), and Very Rapid Healing. In a cinematic campaign, it can grant Hard to Kill, and greater levels of Luck and Temperature Tolerance.

WOLF

Wolf medicine grants invulnerability to bullets. Wolf Dreamers walk barefoot on cold snow and are not bothered by winter. They put red paint between their toes, like their brother wolves, and vow never to harm their brethren (-11 points). Wolves patronize warriors, and may reveal the whereabouts and strengths of enemies.

Wolf teaches Combat Skills and Tactics. It can bestow the mundane advantages of Combat Reflexes, Danger Sense, Fearlessness, High Pain Threshold, Temperature Tolerance (up to 2 levels), and Toughness. In a cinematic campaign, it can grant Hard to Kill, Passive Defense, and greater levels of Temperature Tolerance. Warriors with Wolf as their Guardian Spirit may become Berserk.

WAKAN TANKA

Only very lucky or persistent medicine men receive the favors of Wakan Tanka, the Great Spirit. These become Shamans, and may learn any ritual known. Wakan Tanka demands a Great Vow to Show Respect for all Nature, which includes never refusing a request for aid (-15 points). Wakan Tanka may grant any ability that lesser spirits may bestow.

Other Guardian Spirits include Antelope, Badger, Elk, Skunk, Snake, Turtle, Earth, Sky, and Wind. Almost every animal may grant magical powers; the horse and the dog are exceptions. Sun, according to the Sioux, "is too powerful, and will not be a spirit to any person."

HERBALISTS, DREAMERS, AND SHAMANS

Sioux society has three classes of medicine men: Herbalists, Dreamers, and Shamans. The point cost is not cumulative; e.g. Dreamers who wish to become Shaman pay only 25 points (40-15), or 10 if they already have the Empathy advantage.

ENCHANTED ITEMS

Indians believe that many things, such as eagle feathers, wood from the ash tree, and tobacco, are magical. Man-made items retain some of the power of their materials, but require enchantment to become truly powerful.

An Indian without a Guardian Spirit-granted design may buy one – usually for a shield or a medicine bundle. If the buyer knows how to make the item, he will do so himself, carefully following the seller's instructions. Otherwise he will ask another to do it. Copying the purchased design onto the finished product requires a DX-2 or Artist roll.

Empowering the copy requires a reaction roll for the spirit which revealed the original design.

Indians with no Guardian Spirit advantage have a -5 to the spirit's reaction roll. The GM should apply additional modifiers based on the honor and behavior of both the buyer and the seller, their relationship to the Guardian Spirit, and the level of magic in the campaign.

With an Excellent reaction, the copy duplicates the original in Power and abilities. Lesser reactions may produce less powerful copies. A

Disastrous reaction causes the loss of the original's enchantments. The GM should not reveal the result – the owners will believe in the powers of both items until proven otherwise. Spirits rarely allow more than four items with the same design and abilities, and never more than 12. Any attempt to create more copies than the spirit permits destroys the enchantments of the original and all copies.

Continued on next page . . .

