

Story of the life and adventures of Wild Bill Hickok.

Wild Bill - The Story of James Butler Hickok

**Buy The Complete Version of This Book at
Booklocker.com:**

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/2758.html?s=pdf>

Wild Bill

The Story of James Butler Hickok



By Donald J. Aday

Wild Bill

The Story of James Butler Hickok

By Donald J. Aday

“He was loyal in his friendship, generous to a fault, and invariably espoused the cause of the weaker against the stronger one in a quarrel.”
Captain Jack Crawford

Published 2006
Copyright D. J. Aday, 2006
All Rights Reserved

No part of this publication may be reproduced in any way
without the prior written permission of Donald Aday.
donald_aday@yahoo.com

1

A Man of Character



The Western Territories of the United States during the last half of the 1800's were the new frontier of the day. The land was still open, wild and lawless. The men and women who ventured into this territory found that their survival depended as much on their skills with weapons as with tools for creating a successful life. Even in the towns of some size, where a more civilized structure had been established, lawlessness had to be dealt with. It took brave men to put on the lawman's badge and enforce the law. Many gunfighters and lawmen passed through the Old West, but few are remembered, fewer still became legends.

James Butler Hickok was a man of impressive character, destined for fame. He favored adventure, but was happiest with an easy way of life. He was a good man who was courteous and gentlemanly by nature. A man who followed his own course, who was honest and loyal to his friends, but also a man who had large flaws. He was not good at keeping a job or staying put for any long period of time. After he entered his only marriage late in life, he

left soon after for more adventure. He was one of the most fearless killers ever to draw a pistol. He was a gambler of no real prowess.

He wanted what any other young man of the time wanted, to be free to seek adventures, and to find his fortune in the wide open spaces of the Old West. Better known as “Wild Bill,” he remains one of the first and most famous Western gunfighters. Although his reputation as a gunfighter grew to astounding proportions, Wild Bill actually killed fewer men than were accounted for in the newspapers and dime novels of his day. He drew his revolvers in face-to-face confrontations only six times that are recorded. This number of men is far less than the fabricated estimations of the hundreds of men he is said to have killed.

A man of great courage, ruthless in his encounters with his enemies, James Hickok was exceptionally cool under fire and in any dire situation. During his short lifetime, his amazing adventures and feats of daring were written about in highly exaggerated articles in newspapers. More fantastic stories of him appeared in cheap novels, and word-of-mouth spread the stories to the general public, which was hungry for stories of the heroes and villains of the new, wild lands in the Western Territories of the 1800’s. Even Wild Bill himself could not resist embellishing on his own stories about himself to anyone who would lend an ear.

Although he was generally a friendly man and a loyal friend, Hickok had his dark side. More often than not it was brought on by his heavy drinking, when he could be brash, outspoken and arrogant. His friendly, easy-going manner hid a ruthlessness unmatched by any adversary he met. Behind the calm, collected face lay an acute wariness, a sense of foreboding and paranoia. Even as he had become the best man with a gun, Wild Bill had inadvertently made himself a target for every aspiring gunfighter who had the nerve to try to earn the mantle of the man who killed Hickok.

By one account from a friend:

“Wild Bill had the bearing of a hunted animal. His eyes seemed restless, ever watchful as he nervously searched about him in the saloons and on the streets which he controlled as a lawman, sizing up every stranger for signs of danger. When he played cards, which he did at every opportunity, he maintained a vigil to prevent a potential enemy from stealing up behind him, going so far as to insist on having a chair at the

table that put his back to the wall. He never backed down from a fight, taking any opposition head on.”

And yet, in spite of his vigilance, the assault he had guarded against all his life finally caught up to him in a ramshackle saloon, where he was shot and killed. Gunned down from behind by a coward while his guard was loosened in a friendly game of cards.

Abilene Lawman

During his time, his unmatched reputation and skills as a gunfighter made it easy for him to find employment as a lawman in some of the roughest towns in the West. But even though he drew pay as an enforcer of the law, he preferred the easy lifestyle that included drinking and playing cards with friends in the saloons and gambling halls. There was no doubt, however, that when called upon to exercise his legal powers, he would take the challenge face on, and never back away from taking action.

By the time Wild Bill became the marshal of Abilene, Kansas on April 15, 1871, he was considered by many to be a dandy. An imposing and intimidating figure who stood 6 foot 3 in his custom-made boots, he had a flair for wearing fine, colorful clothes that showed off his graceful physique and gave him stature. The large black hat he wore atop his shoulder length blond hair was cocked to one side in a rakish manner. His stylishly long frock coat and the red sash he wrapped around his narrow waist gave an air of authority and style. No one could mistake who this dandy was, and that he was in charge.

He favored two Navy Colt revolvers that rested in holsters in the red sash around his waist. Their engraved ivory butts were turned forward for the underhand “twist” draw that Hickok preferred. He kept them scrupulously clean and ready for their deadly work. Brimming with self-confidence, he could dispatch an adversary with lightening speed and deadly accuracy, drawing his guns with either hand, firing with a coolness that amazed onlookers and terrified all who dared challenge him. It was said that he drew and cocked the pistols in the same motion, and aimed for the opponent’s guts, which may not kill a man outright, but it would take them out of the fight.

To his peers he was considered the best pistol shot on the Plains. His quick, calm and deadly reaction to danger got the drop time and again on any fool

who crossed him, drawing and firing his revolvers before his opponent had time to think about doing the same. He killed without hesitation, fear or remorse, thoroughly committed to the task at hand, and having no conscience to hold him back once he made his move.

The Gambler

In the Wild West of the 1800's gambling was one of the most popular diversions in the towns that sprang up along the cattle trails, from the diggings of the legion of prospectors, and in the larger towns that had long been established. To be a gambler was an acceptable occupation, and Hickok took to it easily. Being employed to keep the peace often seemed more of a sideline, as he was most fond of frequenting the saloons and often making more money as a gambler.

Wild Bill was not much interested in working as a lawman, as it turned out. It was just a way for him to earn a living that would allow him to take life easy. He was, in fact, rather ineffectual at the little routine matters that came with the office. He had deputies who could handle such mundane problems, and he only wanted to be notified of anything that they couldn't handle.

Hickok would always sit with his back against a wall or in a corner, with a clear and broad view of the room and the doors leading into the saloon, in case of any attempt at a surprise attack from a foe. He would pour and drink his whiskey with his left hand, keeping his right hand free to draw his pistol.

Newspaper reporters and cheap novel writers traveled long distances to find him, to get an interview and write about him. These scribes found a willing participant in Wild Bill. They relished his stories and found plenty of material for their own colorful accounts of this man of the West, this gunfighter and so-called "man killer", who was bigger than life, unmatched by any of his contemporaries.

Hickok would have made his mark even without the help of such publications. He was a man of strong character, a colorful and imposing personality with a single-mindedness that made him stand out, and attract much attention. Not one of his friends or peers considered him in a bad light, as this quote from his friend Captain Jack Crawford states:

“...Wild Bill had his faults, grievous ones, perhaps... He would get drunk, gamble, and indulge in the general licentiousness

characteristic of the border in the early days, yet even when full of the vile libel of the name of whiskey which was dealt over the bars at exorbitant prices, he was gentle as a child, unless aroused to anger by intended insults...He was loyal in his friendship, generous to a fault, and invariably espoused the cause of the weaker against the stronger one in a quarrel.”

Another account from Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer described him as a "strange character, just the one which a novelist might gloat over... a Plainsman in every sense of the word... whose skill in the use of the rifle and pistol was unerring."

The Hickok of the public image and awesome reputation was completely different from the real James Hickok. While everyone knew that he was a man who commanded respect, who would meet his adversaries one-on-one and win, the real Bill was a man of exceptional personal character. A striking figure of grace and beauty, soft-spoken and courteous, easy-going and friendly, he would go out of his way to help a friend in need. Though a man of patience, when roused to anger he was a man to be feared, who would seek out his foe and meet them with overwhelming force , skill and confidence.

Story of the life and adventures of Wild Bill Hickok.

Wild Bill - The Story of James Butler Hickok

**Buy The Complete Version of This Book at
Booklocker.com:**

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/2758.html?s=pdf>