We should begin our tale with the Great Quake of ’68, for the quake—and what was revealed when it split the entire west coast of America apart—has shaped our country, and indeed our world, more than any other single event.

California had long been a land of dreams. Gold was discovered there in ’49 and the tales of those who had become millionaires overnight were the stuff of legend.

The migration of hundreds of thousands of settlers looking to partake in this miracle was what formed the early history of the “Old West.” The dangers of the frontier, the Indians, outlaws, burning deserts, and freezing mountains, created the legendary gunfighters, adventurers, and heroes that so many read about in the dime novels and penny dreadfuls. Men like Wyatt Earp, Wild Bill Hickock, and Bill Pickett were forged in this harsh land, drawn westward by the lure of gold or the notion they would bring law and order to this wild, reckless land.

The Great Quake of ’68

Now imagine the power of a mineral twice as valuable and a thousand times more useful than gold. That’s what happened in 1868 when California fell into the sea.

An earthquake the likes of which the world has never seen before or since shattered the west coast from Mexicali to Oregon. In its wake was left the “Maze,” a labyrinth of jagged mesas towering over the flooded sea-channels below. Magnificent new beasts such as the Maze dragon, were discovered in those troubled waters, but more amazing was the discovery of what some at first thought was simple coal. In fact, the sundered landscape had cracked open to reveal a new mineral heretofore undiscovered.

This new fundament burns a hundred times hotter and longer than coal. When burned, the strange stuff gives off a ghostly-white vapor and howls like the Devil Himself, so the first survivors of the quake who discovered it called it “ghost rock.”

The name stuck.

The Power of Ghost Rock

While you have no doubt seen inventions powered by steam and ghost rock wherever you’re from, you must understand the impact this amazing mineral has had on California and the Maze.

Immediately after its discovery, a great number of hopeful inventors headed to the Maze. In months, they had perfected devices powered by steam and fueled by ghost rock. Reports of horseless carriages, ghost-rock powered ships, and even weapons capable of spewing a torrent of bullets or spewing great gouts of flame became common.

The Battle of Washington

Confederate President Jefferson Davis was the first to realize ghost rock’s potential value to his war effort. Under his supervision, a number of incredible devices were developed in a secret base near Roswell, New Mexico (the base has since been destroyed by an unfortunate accident). These secret weapons were shipped Back East and used in the South’s biggest offensive ever.

In February of 1871, General Lee and his Army of Northern Virginia attacked the Union lines around Washington D.C. The attack, backed by weird science, was devastatingly effective, so effective, in fact, that Lee’s forces actually seized the Union’s capital!
The Great Rail Wars

The Yankees eventually took their city back as the Rebels’ devices began to malfunction or run out of ghost rock, but the message was clear—ghost rock powered weapons and devices were the way of the future.

Though ghost rock had since been found all over the country, the greatest concentrations were still in the Maze, and no single rail line yet connected them to the battlefields of the East. Once back in the White House, President Grant offered the exclusive government contract for ghost rock to the first company to build a transcontinental rail line. The Confederates followed suit the next day.

While a host of railroads answered the government’s call, the competition soon boiled down to just six. These six companies began a bloody war that has sometimes rivaled the one raging between the North and South themselves.

I will return to the subject of the Rail Wars and the bloodthirsty participants who race to the coast later. For now, allow me to continue with the incredible impact ghost rock had on our nation.

A Nation Sundered

As many of you know, the American Civil War began in 1861. The textbooks carried by most schoolmarm’s claim our nation was split in two, but that’s not exactly true. In fact, what used to be the United States of America is now six separate nations. Had it not been for the war, there is little doubt there would be no Sioux Nation, no Coyote Confederation, no Republic of Deseret, and certainly no City of Lost Angels.

The United States of America

President Ulysses S. Grant has ruled the north since 1872. Many thought he would lose last year’s election, if he even ran. President Grant seems more suited to commanding the military on the battlefield than from the White House.

Grant’s administration claims ownership of the entire country and refuses to acknowledge the existence of any other nations. The truth however, is that Washington has no authority, no control, and little or no presence in the other nations I will describe presently.
President Grant

Many thought Grant would lose the election after his troubled term—if he even ran for reelection. But last year’s “November Offensives” (so-called because each side stages a major military campaign prior to any election to win the incumbent votes) convinced the Yankees that the challenger, pro-peace candidate Samuel Tilden, would cave in to the Rebels. When a British column took Detroit, Michigan by force, seemingly in coordination with Confederate plans, the public was convinced “Unconditional Surrender” Grant was their man.

Grant responded with his own campaign, bombing Richmond, Virginia with amazing air carriages. Simultaneously, his old friend General Sherman marched the Army of the Ohio through Kentucky, burning everything in his path as he had done in Georgia over a decade ago.

But when the smoke of fall finally cleared, the Confederates had managed to defend themselves and not an inch of ground was gained.

Now the president broods in his capital, watching his beloved nation fall apart around him. But though scattered, his military remains strong, and the fight isn’t over yet.

The Agency

One of President Grant’s most effective forces is the Agency, a shadowy organization formed in 1877. The US had formerly relied upon the Pinkerton Detective Agency for its intelligence gathering, but it gradually became clear a private company could not carry out all the actions a wartime government must perform.

The men and women of the Agency now infiltrate, attack, and sabotage all perceived enemies of the state. Though I said we would stay away from the most controversial topics in this guide, I must also tell you that the Agency’s other function is to investigate bizarre and supernatural events. Just like the Texas Rangers, which I’ll discuss shortly, the Agents do not like people talking about these mysterious events. They have used bribes, blackmail, and even personal threats to keep these stories from appearing in the press. Should you find yourself involved with the paranormal, the Agency is often well-equipped to deal with it, but do not be surprised if the price of their assistance is your silence.

The Confederate States of America

Our young and hot-blooded nation was born in blood and seems forever cursed to remain that way. Though the Civil War has had many lulls with no major battles, there has never been a day in this country’s history in which it wasn’t “at war.” I am afraid it is a curse we shall not soon lift, for Mexico seems ready to pounce upon us once again.

President Davis

The leader of our violent land is President Jefferson Davis. He has ruled our nation unchallenged since the war began. He was reelected in the ’67 campaign (after the mysterious death of his opponent, Senator Robert M.T. Hunter died mysteriously mere days before the election), but ruled by martial law until free elections were restored last year. His administration faltered more than once, and the devastated economy and inability to make the North recognize Southern independence made him the underdog.

The Whig party nominated the beloved Robert E. Lee to challenge Davis. The election in the Confederate States made the old general the winner, but highly suspect votes from the territories swung the race in favor of Davis.

Our leader has had one recent bit of true success. During last fall’s campaign, he seems to have convinced the British to finally enter the war in force. A column of troops marched on Detroit from Canada and took it in a day. The rumor is our European allies are preparing an even larger forth up North and may invade after winter. They would not likely attempt to “conquer” the Union, but would instead use their incredible military to force peace and recognition of the Confederacy.

Unfortunately, recent news has come to me that the US has increased its diplomatic ties with France (which currently control Mexico, as well). It could well be that Grant hopes to counter the British invasion with a Franco-Mexican invasion of the South.
The Texas Rangers

The Texas Rangers were first used as spies and scouts in the Mexican War of '46-'48. Afterwards, they protected Texas against Mexican invasions, then later became the law throughout this wild young state.

Early in the War, several detachments of Texas cavalry were dispatched East. They fought in many of the most important battles, including Gettysburg. It was there that the Rangers first began their new careers as monster hunters.

That's right, dear reader. This is not a typo. There are things out there you do not yet understand. The Texas Rangers hunt down these evils and destroy them. That is why they have jurisdiction throughout the South these days. Just like their counterparts in the Agency, the Rangers do not like news of the supernatural to get out. They feel it terrifies the public and somehow makes the forces of darkness that much stronger. As a journalist, I believe the bright light of truth can only illuminate and strengthen. The Rangers do not agree, however, and use whatever means are necessary to keep their activities from the public.

The Sioux Nations

Perhaps the people who have benefitted most from the Civil War are the Sioux. Since the Union Army's attention has remained focused south, they have had little manpower to patrol and control their red neighbors in Dakota Territory.

Sitting Bull & Custer

The leader, or “hunkpapa wicasa” of the Sioux is Sitting Bull, a wily old Indian chief who is far more belligerent than the rest of the wicasas (a council of elder chiefs, medicine men, and revered warriors). It was Sitting Bull who was responsible for defeating General George Armstrong Custer recently at the Battle of the Little Big Horn. Since then, the Union has given the Sioux a little more respect. Unfortunately, the headstrong Custer, who single-handedly survived his “last stand,” has not forgiven the Sioux for his humiliating defeat. He has pieced together a mercenary army and is threatening to invade when his band of claim jumpers, troublemakers, and freebooters is ready. Custer is acting without authority from Washington, but the Sioux don't see it that way. Since he wears the rank of a US Army officer, to them, he is an officer.

Deadwood

Since ghost rock was discovered in the sacred Black Hills of the Sioux Nations, thousands of white prospectors violated the Indian's borders in search of riches. This caused so much trouble that the wicasas finally allowed the whites to mine the Black Hills, but only if they would not stray from there, paid a fee to the Nations, and lived only in the treaty city of Deadwood. Those who strayed outside these boundaries were considered trespassers and subject to Sioux law for that charge—which is inevitably death.
Unfortunately, Custer and the greedy miners of Deadwood constantly violate the treaty. It is only a matter of time before an incident sets off a war between the Sioux and any white man who sets foot in Dakota Territory.

The Old Ways

Outnumbered as they are, the isolated whites of the area have one important advantage—or so they think. The wicasas claim things changed a little over a decade ago, that evil spirits had returned to the world to punish them for adopting some of the “polluted white man’s evils,” such as fire water and guns. This philosophy eventually came to mean the “People” were not to use any sort of technological device. They were supposed to return to the “Old Ways,” and the movement was born.

Many young braves feel this is foolish. Why should they attack Gatling guns and cannons with arrows and tomahawks. The wicasas have forbid this kind of talk, but this only gave rise to a secret rebellion calling itself the “Order of the Raven.” The wicasas feel this poisons the People in the eyes of their gods, and so put to death any young brave found with the distinctive and hidden tattoo that marks them as a Ravenite.

The Coyote Confederation

Down south, in what used to be known as the “Indian Territory,” a coalition of Cherokee, Comanche, Creek, Seminole, Kiowa, Chickasaw, and Choctaw Indians saw the success of the Sioux and formed their own nation. The Confederation’s leader is a mysterious figure known only as “Coyote.” I suspect that since this leader remains cowled in a red cloak even among his own people, the tribe’s true leaders, Quanah Parker and Satanta, or one of their most trusted medicine men, act as Coyote. This would explain why Coyote has often been reported hundreds of miles apart on the same day.

In either case, “Coyote” seems wiser than the sometimes hot-headed leader of the Sioux, but he does not take as active a hand in the Confederation’s affairs, leaving each tribe to its own devices. Because there is no single, strong leader, some of the braves carry on the age-old tradition of raiding white settlements, a habit that brings them into frequent conflict with settlers in the Disputed Lands.

Brothers in Arms

The Coyotes rarely raid into the Confederacy, and truth be told, rarely venture into towns in the Disputed Lands that are sympathetic to the Southern cause. This led many to believe the Confederation had a secret alliance with the Rebels. During the offensives of ’76, this became very clear, and is now basically public knowledge.

Presumably, the Indians believe we Southerners are an oppressed people, just as they are, making us brothers-in-arms.

The Republic of Deseret

No doubt most of you know the story of the Mormons. They practice a different version of Christianity that didn’t seem to sit well with their neighbors Back East. Eventually, things got so bad the “Latter Day Saints,” as they call themselves, trekked west. Far west—to a desolate parcel of earth called Utah. There their new leader and prophet, Brigham Young, founded Salt Lake City in 1847.

President Brigham Young

Young was a clever man, and he orchestrated Utah’s conversion to a territory rather quickly. The Mormons enjoyed isolation, anonymity, and even their own laws until the Gold Rush of ’49. Though the Saints prospered financially as a waypoint for thousands of miners headed for California, the new “Gentiles” could not always live by their laws. Once again, the Mormons found themselves battling for their way of life, which included polygamy among other things—a practice the rest of the country couldn’t tolerate.

The Saints muddled along until 1866. By that time, with no end insight for the Civil War and several unfortunate conflicts with non-Mormons (including the Union Army), Brigham Young declared that the Mormons would rule themselves until such time as the government...
had the time and resources to properly address the Saints concerns and complaints. The new nation is called “Deseret,” and encompasses all of Utah.

The City of Gloom

Salt Lake City is often called the “City of Gloom.” This is not some satirical comment on the Mormon’s lives. The city is called such because of its incredible factories. These factories build ghost-rock powered devices of steam and steel. The constant cloud of ghost-rock soot that hangs in the air and permeates certain sections of the city give it its less than cheerful moniker.

If you want more information on Deseret, see the Tombstone Epitaph’s Guide to the City o’ Gloom for a more complete story.

The City of Lost Angels

Our last stop on this tour takes us back to the Maze. After the Great Quake of ’68, one band of survivors who made it to shore from the deadly Maze was led by the Reverend Ezekiah Grimme. He provided a large band of survivors with both food and water during their arduous escape, and eventually came to call his followers his “Lost Angels.” The group founded a city where they came ashore and Grimme named it after his beloved flock—the City of Lost Angels.

Reverend Grimme

Since then, Reverend Grimme has become a bit more stern. He had the city’s co-founders build its streets in a circular pattern with the “Church of Lost Angels” cathedral at the center. He claims he was inspired by a divine dream that told him to create the “Celestial City” that way.

It wasn’t long before the city became the center of the ghost rock trade between the isolated boomtowns of the maze and the rest of the world. Grimme maintained his leadership for one simple reason. Food is incredibly scarce in the city. The high desert on the landward side of Lost Angels is arid and poorly suited for crops, and the few herds someone has tried to raise there are ravaged by a variety of natural diseases. Starvation is a very real threat in the Maze. Or it would be if not for Reverend Grimme.

Every Sunday, following his sermon, those who attended may join the congregation in a great feast. Fruit, vegetables, and especially meat (which is scarce and expensive but Grimme never seems to have any trouble finding) are all free for the taking.

Even in a normal city, Grimme’s free feasts would make him a popular man. In the Maze, where a loaf of bread sometimes costs as much as a man makes in a week, Grimme seems but one step lower than the Almighty Himself.

And that’s just what Grimme seems to believe.

The Edict

Reverend Grimme believes a transcontinental railroad will bring only graft and corruption into his city. At least that’s what he tells his congregation. Most believe he is merely afraid that the rail lines would make food more available and spoil the source of his power.

He preached against the coming of the railroads for years, but finally the iron horses must have come too close. In late 1877, Grimme took control of the city and declared it a sovereign state. I guess he figured if the Vatican could do it, so could he.

In his famous “Edict of ’77,” he proclaimed that only true believers in the Church of Lost Angels could live in the city (though thousands of hopefuls live in the “tent cities” outside). Those who do not recognize the Church’s sovereignty are not only exiled, but considered enemies of the state as well.

Grimme’s Crusade

 Needless to say, no one liked seeing one man control the world’s largest supply of ghost rock. The USA, CSA, Deseret, and a host of other nations condemned the move and called Grimme a despot. Even the zealous Grimme knows he cannot defeat the entire world. To convince people the Church of Lost Angels is acting in everyone’s best interests, he has sent small bands of missionaries out across the West to proselytize and recruit new followers.

Of course, the railroads he keeps from fulfilling their dreams do not take kindly to
these believers, and their armed gangs attack them almost on sight. The Lost Angels have responded by arming their own faithful. This new war, between Grimme's missionaries and the railroads, threatens to eventually turn into a battle smaller but far more bloody and vicious than the Great Rail Wars.

The Great Rail Wars

Though the race in both the North and the South were open to everyone, only six companies have managed to survive until the present. With so much at stake, the competition proved fierce and violent. Just like the rail wars of the mid-60's, the railroads hired gangs to “protect” their rolling stock and rail crews. One might ask “protect from whom?” The answer, of course, is each other.

Grimme's edict brought the lines, but not the war, to a grinding halt. The camps of their railheads now lie empty in the plains and deserts of the West. The rail barons gambled everything on their race, and some of them now lose hundreds of thousands of dollars a day due to the lull. How this chapter of the Great Rail Wars will end is anyone's guess.

Here is a little information on each of the railroads that remain in the race and their so-called Rail Barons.

Bayou Vermillion

Owned by the mysterious “Baron Simone LaCroix,” (a man, despite his first name), this New Orleans-based company runs due south through Texas and Arizona. It is here that the rail head stalled, both because of Grimme's Edict and the constant attack of Apaches, who take a particular hatred to his rail crews for some reason.

Black River

Owned by the beautiful and utterly ruthless Mina Devlin, Black River is headquartered in Memphis, Tennessee. Its line runs straight through heart of the Disputed Lands, with an especially notable station in Dodge City, Kansas.

Perhaps because Union Blue also has a right-of-way through Dodge, Mina is rumored to have seduced the line's president, Joshua Chamberlain. This reporter knows the “hero of Gettysburg” personally, however, and can vouch for his fidelity with his wife.

Denver-Pacific

The Denver-Pacific Railroad isn't really capable of building a trans-continental line, but its owners are in a perfect position to sell their tracks between Denver and Salt Lake City to another. This could provide another of the Rail Barons with a quick, but likely very expensive, jump to the coast should the City of Lost Angels somehow be reopened to outside trade.

The DP's owners are none other than Jacob Smith and Clifton Robards, of the famous Smith & Robard's catalog service. Their incredible devices are another factor in their favor, and have already helped them thwart violent takeovers of their rail lines.
Dixie Rails

Though a private company, Dixie Rails is heavily funded by the Confederate government via its exclusive contracts to ship men and materiel from east to west. This provides the owner, Fitzhugh Lee, with a very important advantage. Perhaps an even greater advantage is the occasional leadership of his uncle, General Robert E. Lee.

Dixie Rails has often called upon Rebel troops stationed out West and even Texas Rangers in its constant fights against the other rail barons.

Iron Dragon

The most curious player in the Great Rail Wars is Iron Dragon, owned by a Chinese "warlord" of the maze named Kang. By all accounts, a pirate, opium lord, and thief, Kang has managed to enter the race and stay in it, most likely due to the respect he gives the thousands of Chinese workers who flock to his rail heads.

Most amazedly, Kang somehow convinced the Sioux to let him run his line smack through the Dakotas. This is a clear violation of the Old Ways movement and no one is quite sure how he did it. It gave him a great advantage, however, for all the good routes south of the Nations were already taken when Kang entered the race. Now Iron Dragon is one of the most prosperous players in the Rail Wars.

Union Blue

Perhaps the most noble of the Rail Barons is General Joshua Chamberlain. His spectacular performance at Gettysburg with 20th Maine won this former schoolteacher a spot on Grant's command staff, then later command of the Union Blue railroad. Like Dixie Rails in the South, Union Blue is a private company in name only. The Army of the West gives Chamberlain all of its business, and its solid protection of passengers and cargoes—the best record of the railroads by far—means it gets the lion's share of private business in the north as well.

Wastach

The Wasatch railroad is the property of the notorious Dr. Darius Hellstromme. His rail gangs dominated the early phases of the Rail Wars with his amazing "automatons," clockwork men made of thick metal and wielding Gatling guns. They and other such devices prove that Hellstromme is the world's leading "mad scientist." But though his genius is without equal, he is also a ruthless man who uses violence and terror to secure right-of-ways when bribes and extortion fail.

Hellstromme's most significant obstacle is the Denver-Pacific. Smith & Robards are the professor's arch-enemies, and will not likely sell him their line at any price. Unfortunately for Hellstromme, the Wasatch line was planned to run through his home town—Salt Lake City—but the DP lines have secured most of the passes through the Rockies.

There has been talk that Hellstromme has another way through the Rockies. An incredible digging machine vanished beneath the mountains some time ago and hasn't been seen since.
Go West, Young Man!

Now you’re up on current events. But what you really need to survive the frontier is practical information. You have to know the best way to go west and how to pay for things once you get there.

Forget the latter, and you’ll need to know how to avoid getting in trouble with the law. Forget that, and you’ll need to know how to wire home for Momma.

Getting Around

If you’ve decided to head on out into the Weird West regardless of the dangers, you’d best know how to get here. For that, you need to pick a method of locomotion.

Remember that the civilized world ends just west of the Mississippi. After that, you head into the Disputed Lands, the Sioux Nations, or the Coyote Confederation. Tread cautiously, and keep a six-shooter handy in case local disputes reach the monthly bloodletting stage while you’re passing through.

Scared yet? Perhaps by the end of this guide. We don’t need any more victims out here. But if your heart’s still set on making the journey, you can get here by hoof or by rail.

Hoofing It

Whether you ride in your own saddle alongside your compadres or in a spiffy new Concord stagecoach, hoofing it across the West is basically a bad idea. The ride is long and uncomfortable, and you’re very likely to be chased by angry Indians, road agents, or critters you don’t believe in even when your bones are coming out their kiesters.

For long distances, stagecoaches are faster than riding alone. The drivers stick to well-known routes (often likely places for ambush, by the way), and they change horses about every 15 miles to keep up a steady pace. In fact, most reputable lines average about 100 miles a day.

Stagecoaches are more comfortable than riding your own animal. The coaches hang by leather straps to take away some of the bounce. Conords, by far the most popular model, fit nine in the passenger compartment and as many as can hold on up top. Six horses are typical, but stages used for shorter routes might only use four.

By Rail

Taking a locomotive west is, in my opinion, the only sane choice a traveler can make, and even this is fraught with dangers.

Bandits are common along the train routes. Most are two-bit thugs who are easily handled by the train’s guards. A few are a little more devious. The Wichita Witches, for example, have even been known to dynamite trestles, sending entire trainloads of honest folks to their dooms just for a safe full of gold.

All the big companies keep armed guards on board these days to deal with trouble. Trains carrying payroll or gold shipments usually have a contingent of soldiers, Pinkertons, or hired gunmen. Passenger trains are more likely to have “troubleshooters” dressed in ordinary clothes on board.

But bandits aren’t your greatest threat when you ride the rails west. That dubious distinction belongs to the companies themselves. Regardless of which rail company you choose to carry you west, remember you’re going to be riding right into the middle of the Great Rail Wars.

You need to be able to budget how far you can get in a day to properly plan a trip. Here are some rough figures for you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Average Miles/Day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Horse</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rail</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above numbers are based on traveling about eight hours a day. A stage makes better time than a horse, by the way, because its animals are changed every 15 miles. If a lone rider somehow has the luxury of changing horses often (like a Pony Express rider), he can average about 80 miles a day.
Dinero

Now onto more pleasant topics. Let’s talk about money. Most merchants out West don’t like paper money. They aren’t sure whether the North or South will win the war, so they’re understandably nervous about getting stuck with a wad of useless currency. If a shop-owner does take paper, he’ll probably charge you an “exchange tax” of 10–20%.

Metal is always a safe bet. I’d advise you to convert your Union greenbacks or Confederate scrip to metal coins before heading out West. Here’s a list of coins in case you need a reminder or you’re foreign to our country.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coin</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gold Eagle</td>
<td>$10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half Eagle</td>
<td>$5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quarter Eagle</td>
<td>$2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver Dollar</td>
<td>$1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half Dollar</td>
<td>50¢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dime</td>
<td>10¢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half Dime</td>
<td>5¢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copper Cent</td>
<td>1¢</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other Currency

There are a couple other types of “money” floating around the Weird Western economy. Most Indian tribes prefer barter, but some accept coins or paper at about a quarter its printed value. Indians of the Coyote Confederation honor Confederate scrip at half its value.

Deseret also mints its own money, called “bank notes.” Long ago, there were some problems with so-called “Mormon money” and a lot of people lost their shirts (and pants and shoes). The problem seems to have been resolved since Deseret was formed, however.

Grimme hasn’t done anything about money yet. Merchants in Lost Angels continue to take paper or coins just like everyone else. Out in the maze itself, ghost rock is a popular form of currency, a practice started in a little place called Gomorra.

Communication

There are basically two ways one communicates out West—via telegraph, US mail, or Pony Express.

Telegraph

The telegraph is an amazing invention. As a reporter for the Epitaph, I could hardly survive without it. Who’d have ever guessed the miracles of modern technology would allow a man to write an article in Denver and have a decent chance of it reaching Tombstone the same day? The only trouble, of course, is actually receiving the darn things. Telegraph offices in both the North and South are forbidden by law to transmit messages over the border. You can still get it done by wiring someone in the Disputed Lands, but these “black market” telegraphers charge triple the normal cost.

When you do send a telegram, ask for a confirmation from the other end. Messages are frequently garbled, misinterpreted, or just plain wrong—often with disastrous consequences. I have my own pet theory as to why—gremlins—but I promised my editor not to scare off all you greenhorns in this particular guide.

The US Mail

Neither rain, nor sleet, nor gloom of night keep the mailmen from their appointed rounds. It’s usually the highwaymen, or more specifically, their bullets that keep the mail from going through. Mail robbery is on the rise. You may only send a letter to Aunt Minnie, but the bandits who sort through the mail bag don’t tend to return the mail once they’ve pulled out any currency.

The Pony Express

Much more reliable than the US Mail is the Pony Express. Its riders—all orphans or single men and women—are paid better and seem more suited to fighting off highwaymen. It’s more expensive, of course, but valuable documents and bank notes should not be sent any other way.
The Military

Let's take a quick look at the regular army units you're likely to run into out here. Most of the units out here are cavalry forces, though there are a few infantry regiments stationed at key points along the borders. Both the North and the South use the same organization and ranks, as shown on the chart below. I've listed the order of things all the way up to the Commander-in-Chief, though you'll rarely find more than a brigade out West.

Military Ranks

Private

Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs):
- Corporal
- Sergeant
- 1st Sergeant
- Ordnance-Sergeant
- Quartermaster-Sergeant
- Sergeant Major

Commissioned Officers:
- 2nd Lieutenant
- 1st Lieutenant
- Captain, Major
- Lieutenant Colonel
- Colonel
- Brigadier General
- Major General
- Lieutenant General
- General
- Commander-in-Chief

Confederate and Yankee ranks and organization are virtually identical.

The basic rank is Private; your ordinary, ground-pounding grunts. 95 privates (plus NCOs and officers) made a Company (though very rarely does any Company achieve full strength), under command of a Captain.

Ten Companies (designated A-J, usually) make a Regiment, usually under the command of a Lt. Colonel. Regiments on both sides are designated by a number and their state of origin, for example: 18th Virginia Infantry Regiment.

Three or four Regiments make up a Brigade, usually under the command of a Brigadier General. Union brigades are designated by number within their Division (1st, 2nd, etc.); Confederate, by their commander's surname (Garnett's Brigade, for instance).

Three or four Brigades make up a Division, usually under the command of a Major General. Union Divisions are designated by number within their Corps (1st, 2nd, etc.); Confederate, by their commander's surname (Pickett's Division, for example).

Three or four Divisions make up a Corps, usually under the command of a Lieutenant General. Union Corps are designated by number within their Army (1st, 2nd, etc.); Confederate, by their commander's surname.

Three or four Corps made up an Army, usually under the command of a full General. Union Armies are named after major rivers in their area of operation (the Army of the Potomac); Confederates, after the state they were based in (the Army of Northern Virginia).
The Law

Hopefully most of you readers out there should have little reason to come into day-to-day contact with the lawmen out West. We like to think of our readership as fine, law-abiding folks.

There are three tiers of the law in the West. Know them and respect these brave men and women. They’re the only thing that keeps the lawless frontier from becoming even worse.

Town Marshal

At the lowest level is a “town marshal.” Most large towns have such a person, as do a few smaller ones with delusions of grandeur or lots of local problems. They are usually elected by the people, though many towns allow the mayor or a town council to appoint them as well.

Town marshals and their deputies have jurisdiction within town limits, though most county courts uphold their right to chase fleeing criminals short distances beyond the usual boundaries.

The problem is most local troublemakers know just how little authority a town marshal has outside his jurisdiction. They commit a crime in town and then head for the hills where he has no official reach. Most town marshals ignore this technicality if they are in “hot pursuit,” however.

Sheriff

A step above the town marshal is a county sheriff and any deputies he’s appointed. These men and women have authority over everyone who lives within the county.

I would like to tell you that most county officers work in conjunction with the town marshals within their jurisdiction, but the opposite is all too frequently the truth. Lawmen, by their very nature, are a tough and independent breed, so they often butt heads when jurisdictions collide.

Sheriffs are always elected by the people. Famous gunmen often hold such an office just to justify any killing they might have to do in and around town. Sheriffs must still prove self-defense after a fatal shooting, however, so abusive lawmen are eventually dismissed by the state or territorial government. Assuming there is no graft or corruption involved, which is unfortunately the case in too many counties.

US Marshals & Texas Rangers

Now things get a little trickier depending on which side of the border you happen to be on.

In Union states and territories, US Marshals have ultimate authority over the law. They can hire Deputy US Marshals, authorize posses, cross state and territorial lines, and even call on county sheriffs and town marshals if need be.

US Marshals are usually based in the largest cities of the state or territory they happen to be stationed in, although some work out of a few district offices scattered in important areas elsewhere. When they leave their offices, it’s usually because they’ve been called on by a smaller town or they’re on the trail of some vicious desperado.

Though they can call on these resources, most US Marshals work alone. Don’t ask me why; I’m just a journalist. If I was chasing down the most violent desperadoes in the country, I’d surround myself with an army of deputies.

I imagine most US Marshals just aren’t the trusting sort. They need to move quietly in the wilderness and slip into towns without alerting their quarry. Inexperienced deputies with loud feet and loose lips probably cause them more harm than good, and in a US Marshal’s occupation, that kind of harm often adds up to an unmarked grave in Boot Hill.

The Confederacy relies on the military or territorial rangers to do its interstate policing in the West. Regiments scattered throughout Rebel states and territories always have jurisdiction over local town marshals and county sheriffs.

Then there are the South’s elite, the Texas Rangers. These surly fellows fought as regulars in the early years of the war, but they were later detached from the regular military to serve the Confederacy as mounted police officers. They continue to fulfill that function today throughout the South (in the east and west). They also track down any strange creatures reported in their domain and shoot them dead.
There's an old saying that goes, "one riot, one Ranger." This is true when they're dealing with outlaws or lynching mobs. When they're chasing something less natural, the wily Rangers travel in packs, much like wolves but twice as mean.

The "Fourth" Level

There is a secret fourth level of the law in both the North and South that operates under its own authority and agenda. I have already told you of the Agency and the Rangers. I have also mentioned that both believe spreading the strange tales one finds in the pages of the Tombstone Epitaph or that circulate along the frontier only serves to make things worse.

Should you witness a strange occurrence, be careful where you repeat your tale. Both groups care nothing for civil rights, and they even have authority over any town marshals, sheriffs, US Marshals, and even judges and local politicians. They will do as they please in the interests of "national security," including incarceration of innocents, blackmail, and perhaps even murder.

Rather than repeating your tales to a possibly under-appreciative audience, it's far better to contact a your dedicated reporters of the Tombstone Epitaph than to risk the wrath of the Agents or Rangers. We reach a wider audience, and if you defeat whatever evil besets you, we can spread the tales of your daring deeds throughout the nation. And of course we'll sell a few papers in the process.

Judges and Courts

Judges work the same in western states as they do Back East. Every county has its own judge, and the state usually has some sort of "superior" court for appeals or matters of state jurisdiction.

In the territories, the men who interpret—or invent, some would say—the law of the West are the circuit judges. They're called "circuit" judges because they make a circuit throughout the scattered towns of a territory.

There just aren't enough judges—or people—to maintain permanent courts. This means you might wait anywhere from 2 to 10 weeks for your "fair and speedy" trial. And if the judge gets bushwhacked while he's making his rounds, you'll find yourself waiting until the state appoints a replacement.

Some judges are a little too quick to hang a man. In the West, these men and women are called "hanging judges." Most have more bark than bite, but there are some who'll hang you for swearing on a Sunday. I highly advise you to avoid trouble in these areas, regardless of whether or not you started it.

Common Jail Times & Fines

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<tr>
<th>Offense</th>
<th>Sentence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Horse Thieving</td>
<td>Hanging</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rustling</td>
<td>Hanging</td>
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<tr>
<td>Murder</td>
<td>Hanging</td>
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<td>Rape</td>
<td>Hanging</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attempted Murder</td>
<td>20 years or more</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bank Robbing</td>
<td>20 years or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Train Robbing</td>
<td>20 years or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stealing money from a widow</td>
<td>20 years or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbing someone of authority</td>
<td>5 years or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Larceny (stealing $300 or more in goods or currency, besides horses or beves)</td>
<td>5 years or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stealing less than $300</td>
<td>1 week to 1 year</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drunk in public</td>
<td>Overnight, $10 fine</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disorderly</td>
<td>$10 fine</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carrying a weapon in a no-weapons zone</td>
<td>Confiscation, $10 fine</td>
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A Final Word

Well, there you have some of the basics of this big Weird West of ours. From the High Plains, to the shattered coast of the Great Maze, it's the most interesting place on God's Green Earth, of that I'm sure.

We here at the Tombstone Epitaph hope to see you out here on the wild frontier soon, my friends. In the meantime, we shall continue our publishing efforts, bringing you the one thing that shines out like a beacon in this dark world of fear—the TRUTH!