

J. W. Buel



LIFE AND
MARVELOUS
ADVENTURES OF

WILD BILL

M & A



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Life and Marvelous Adventures of Wild Bill

**A True and Exact History of All the Combats and
Escapes of the Most Famous Scout and Spy**

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Wild Bill.

PECULIARITIES OF WILD BILL'S NATURE.

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Wild Bill, as a frontier character of the daring, cunning and honorable class, stands alone, without a prototype; his originality is as conspicuous as his remarkable escapades. He was desperate without being a desperado; a fighter without that disposition which invites danger or craves the excitement of an encounter. He killed many men, but in every instance it was either in self-defense or in the prosecution of a duty which he deemed justifiable. Wild Bill was a necessary character in the Far West during the period which marked his career. He was essentially a civilizer, in the sense of a vigilance posse. The law and order class found in him an effective agent for the correction of the lawless; it was fighting the desperate with one of their kind, and Bill had the cunning to remain on the side of society and to always flank his enemies.

It would require a volume to moralize upon the deeds of this remarkable man as they deserve, for his desperate encounters find a parallel only in the atmospheric changes which abate an epidemic. When Bill drew his pistol there was always one less desperado to harass the law-abiding, and his presence served to allay the hunger of cut-throats and rapacious plunderers. As a fighter, he had no equal; as a pistol shot, none could excel him; as a scout in the service of his country, there were none more faithful, daring and serviceable; with a disposition as gentle as a zephyr, but a determination stronger than the hurricane. Never a boaster; always deferential to those who might differ from him in

opinion; a man of strong friendships and little enmity. Such were the marked characteristics of him whose memory is deserving of perpetuation, and whose wonderful exploits it is the purpose of the writer to describe. The half cannot be told, because of the subject's secretive disposition, and extreme dislike to reciting his own adventures. That which is herewith given is absolutely true in every particular, without a single shading of fiction or extravagance, and may confidently be accepted as truthful history.

J. W. Buel.

WILD BILL'S EARLY LIFE.

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James B. Hickok, known to history as "Wild Bill," was born near Troy Grove, La Salle county, Illinois, May 27th, 1837. His father and mother were both natives of Vermont, in which state they were married. Shortly after marriage, they went to New York, and remained in that state until 1834, when they removed to Illinois, and settled in Putnam county. Two years afterwards, however, they again removed to settle upon a more desirable homestead in La Salle county, where they resided until their death, the father dying in 1852 and the mother in 1878, at the advanced age of seventy-four years.

The family consisted of six children, four boys and two girls, as follows: O. C. Hickok, born in New York in 1830, and now living in California; Lorenzo B., also born in New York in 1832; Horace D., born in Putnam county, Illinois, in 1834; James B., the subject of this sketch; and Celinda D. and Lydia M., both born in La Salle county, the former in 1839 and the latter in 1841. Lorenzo and Horace are still living upon the old homestead. Celinda married a gentleman by the name of Dewey, and is now living in Mendota, La Salle county. Lydia married a Mr. Barnes, and is living in Decatur county, Kansas. Thus it will be seen that all the children are still living, with the single exception of James (Wild Bill,) whose marvelous exploits it is the purpose of the writer to faithfully, but briefly, record in this pamphlet.

The names and dates of birth of the several children are given in order to correct the prevalent idea that James was much older. His most intimate acquaintances informed the

writer that he was born in 1830; and the inscription on the stump which served as a head-board to his original grave, gave his age at the time of death at forty-eight years, as will be seen in a subsequent chapter descriptive of his murder.

The advantages possessed by James for acquiring an education were very limited, in consequence of which he grew up with little knowledge. He learned to read, and this single acquirement he used almost exclusively in exploring fiction literature. Nothing afforded him so much pleasure as the perusal of such novels as "Claude Duval," "The Bold Ranger," "Dick Turpin," and that class of stories descriptive of adventures in an *outré* civilization. A result of this reading is found in his life.

In 1856, when James was nineteen years of age, he left home for the west, Kansas being his proposed destination. The border troubles of that time, no doubt, influenced him to go to that (then) territory; for, from the time that he was twelve years of age, he manifested an ardent love for adventure. He made the rifle and pistol his earliest companions, and when he left La Salle county he had the reputation of being the best shot in that portion of the state.

The first record we have of him after leaving Illinois was during his short stay at Independence, Missouri, at which place he gained some notoriety by boldly entering the midst of a dozen infuriated men and bidding them to disperse. This event, we believe, has never before been mentioned in any of the many sketches written of him, and as it was his first act of daring, it is worthy of production here. Its truthfulness, however, we cannot vouch for, not having received the details from an eye-witness.