

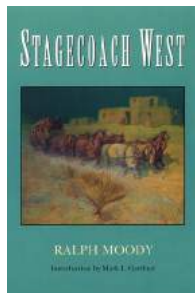
and later he helped negotiate treaties with the Apaches, Kiowas, Comanches, Arapahos, Cheyennes, and Utes that finally brought peace to the southwestern frontier.

Ralph Moody's biography of Kit Carson, appropriate for readers young and old, is a testament to the judgment and loyalty of the man who had perhaps more influence than any other on the history and development of the American West.



Henry Wells (1805–78) and William Fargo (1818–81) first worked together when they broke the Post Office monopoly on mail service along the Erie Canal in the 1840s. In 1852 they incorporated Wells, Fargo & Company and went into the express business in California, carrying gold, letters, packages, and freight between the mining regions and the financial centers of the East. They registered the miners to receive deliveries, guarded the gold-dust shipments, apprehended stage robbers, recovered stolen gold and silver, and established a reliable, conservative banking house in the world's wickedest city, San Francisco. They survived the collapse of the mining industry, the great California panic of 1855, the depredations of bandits such as Rattlesnake Dick and Black Bart, the dominance of the railroads, and the San Francisco earthquake and fire.

Acclaimed Western writer Ralph Moody tells the exciting story of Henry Wells and his drivers, messengers, and riders; his accountants, managers, and detectives; and how they built a lasting empire in a business most entrepreneurs thought too risky to try. Moody, author of more than a dozen books on Western subjects, gives an action-packed account that readers young and old will enjoy.



Stagecoach West is a comprehensive history of stage coaching west of the Missouri. Starting with the evolution of overland passenger transportation, Moody moves on to paint a lively and informative picture of western stage coaching, from its early short runs through its rise with the gold rush, its zenith of 1858–68, and beyond. Its story is one of grand rivalries, political chicanery, and gaudy publicity stunts, traders, fortune hunters, outlaws, courageous drivers, and indefatigable detectives. We

meet colorful characters such as Charlie Parkhurst, a stagecoach driver who took an amazing secret to his death: "he" was actually a woman. Using contemporary accounts, illustrations, maps, and photographs to flesh out his narrative, Moody creates one of the most important accounts of transportation history to date.

Little Britches Short Biography of the Author

If the book *Little Britches* means anything to you, then you know something of the life of Ralph Moody and also something of the history of Littleton. His recollections of his childhood during the early years of the 20th century in this vicinity capture the flavor of the farming community of Littleton between 1906 and 1912.

Ralph Owen Moody was born on December 16, 1898, in East Rochester, NH, the second of six children of Charles and Mary Moody. The family moved to Colorado in 1906, hoping that the state's dry climate would be a cure for the father's tuberculosis. They had purchased, sight unseen, a ranch west of the cavalry post at Fort Logan, at the southwest corner of Harlan Street and Hampden Avenue. The farmhouse was in such bad condition that Charles and Ralph spent many days scavenging for materials and fixing it up while the family lived in a Denver hotel. On the day the family took the "Uncle Sam" train to their new home, their two horses had been frightened away by coyotes and become entangled on a railway trestle. Thus began the adventures and life lessons that Ralph would recall more than forty years later.

Though the family gave it their most earnest effort, insufficient water rights made farming nearly impossible and they eventually moved into Littleton at 1836 W. Lake Ave. Shortly thereafter, in March, 1910, father was killed in a horse-automobile accident. Being the eldest boy at age eleven, Ralph became the "man of the family". To help support the family, his first job was pulling dandelions for ten cents an hour. Next, he was put in charge of other boys herding cattle to the local railroad stockyards, paying him 25 cents per hour, a handsome wage at that time for a man, let alone a boy. The family moved to less expensive quarters along Santa Fe Drive, just northeast of present-day Hudson Gardens. His most lucrative boyhood career began then right at home -- selling his mother's cooking door-to-door: baked beans, *injun* pudding, donuts and apple pies.

In 1912, Mrs. Moody was witness to a horse-theft and duly reported it. But once she was subpoenaed to testify at the trial of what was still a "hangin'" offense, she could not bear to be party to a man's death and opted to move the family, under cover of darkness,

back to New England. Along the route they took the famous Cherrelyn horse car from Littleton to Englewood.

Ralph continued at any odd job from carpentry to board boy in a broker's office to support his mother and siblings. He also managed to finish eighth grade and continued to attend night school after that. When the call for volunteers for the Great War in Europe went out, Ralph promptly answered. But he was rejected for enlistment due to a "leaky heart" that was later diagnosed as diabetes. "The Boston doctors gave me less than a year to live, put me on a stiff diet, and sent me to the country to cash in my chips," Moody recalled.

He intended to return to his boyhood home in Littleton, but only got as far as Kansas. When he hadn't yet died after four years, he decided the doctors were wrong and got on with his life. He married Edna Hudgins of Boston in 1922. Moving to Kansas City, MO, they had three children, Charles, Edna and Andrew, and Ralph began a career with the Proctor & Gamble Company. Soon afterward, he left Proctor & Gamble to become partners with a former client, B/G Foods, Inc., and moved his family to California.

Ever interested in furthering his education, Ralph enrolled in a beginner's short story writing class in 1950. Before long he had written his first book, *Little Britches*, which described those early days on the ranch outside Littleton. In 1951, he followed with *Man of the Family* and another book set in Colorado, *The Home Ranch*. In all, Ralph Moody wrote 19 books, all based on actual, composite, and sometimes fictional characters in his life. As Moody put it: "My goal in writing is to leave a record of the rural way of life in this country during the early part of the 20th century, and to point up the values of the era which I feel that we, as a people, are letting slip away from us."

At the age of 83, he returned to his native New England and there, in the home of his sister Elizabeth, he passed away on June 28, 1982.



Carl Henry, Ralph Moody and Dutch Gunther, 1955. Henry and Gunther are characters in Moody's books.

RALPH OWEN MOODY was born December 16, 1898, in Rochester, N. H. His father was a farmer whose illness forced the family to move to Colorado when Ralph was eight years old. The family's life in the new surroundings is told from the point of view of the boy himself in *Little Britches* (1950).

The farm failed and the family moved into Littleton, Colorado, when Ralph was about eleven. Soon after, the elder Moody died of pneumonia, leaving Ralph as the oldest boy, the man of the family. After a year or so—described in *Man of the Family* (1951) and *The Home Ranch* (1956)—Mrs. Moody brought her three sons and three daughters back to Medford, Mass., where Ralph completed his formal education through the eighth grade of grammar school. This is the period of *Mary Emma & Company* (1961). Later, Ralph joined his maternal grandfather on his farm in Maine—the period covered in *The Fields of Home* (1953).

In spite of his farming experience, Ralph Moody was not destined to be a farmer. He abandoned the land because his wife was determined to raise her family (they have three children) in the city. He completed his high-school studies in the evening and continued his education in university extension classes.

"When I was twenty-one," he writes, "I got a diary as a birthday present and I wrote in it that I was going to work as hard as I could, save fifty thousand dollars by the time I was fifty, and then start writing." True to his word, he did start writing on the night of his fiftieth birthday.

—Adapted from the *Wilson Library Bulletin*

Other Books by Ralph Moody

KIT CARSON



AND THE WILD FRONTIER

In 1826 an undersized sixteen-year-old apprentice ran away from a saddle maker in Franklin, Missouri, to join one of the first wagon trains crossing the prairie on the Santa Fe Trail. Kit Carson (1809–68) wanted to be a mountain man, and he spent his next sixteen years learning the paths of the West, the ways of its Native inhabitants, and the habits of the beaver, becoming the most successful and respected fur trapper of his time.

From 1842 to 1848 he guided John C. Frémont's mapping expeditions through the Rockies and was instrumental in the U.S. military conquest of California during the Mexican War. In 1853 he was appointed Indian agent at Taos,