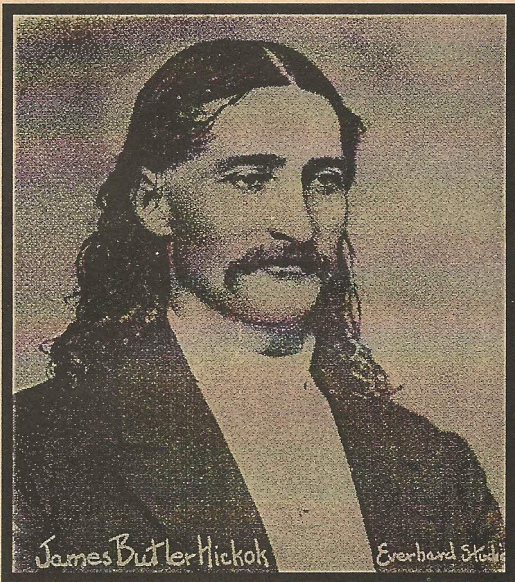
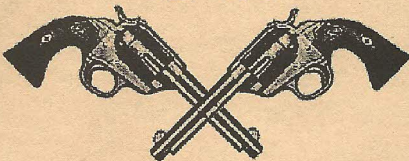

James Butler Hickok
a.k.a.

Wild Bill



James Butler Hickok

1837 - 1876



“His contemporaries called him Wild Bill, and the newspapermen and others made him a legend in his own time.”*



He was written about by General George Armstrong Custer and “Buffalo Bill” Cody. But what are the facts behind the legend? James Butler Hickok was born in 1837 in Troy Grove, Illinois, and spent his formative years helping out on the family farm. Most of his adult years were spent in the West, where his exploits included employment as a detective, scouting for the US Army, and as the Marshal of Abilene, Kansas.

Hickok stood over 6 feet tall, had shoulder length light brown hair and gray eyes. Libbie Custer describes him in her 1890 book, *Following the Guidon*,

“Physically he was a delight to look upon. Tall, lithe, and free in every motion, he rode and walked as if every muscle was perfection, and the careless swing of his body as he moved seemed perfectly in keeping with the man, the country, the time in which he lived. I do not recall anything finer in the way of physical perfection than Wild Bill when he swung himself lightly from his saddle, and with graceful, swaying step, squarely set shoulders and well poised head...”

Five months before his death, he married Agnes Thatcher in Cheyenne, Wyoming Territory. Although this was his only documented marriage, evidence indicates that he was a ladies man.

Part of the Hickok legend was built on his ability to handle a pistol with either hand, becoming one of the first so-called “fast guns.” He carried his pistols in his belt, in an unusual “butts-forward” position. Although his contemporaries were mixed in their opinion of his marksmanship, everyone agreed that when he shot at a man, Hickok was in a class by himself.

“The most famous scout on the Plains... of his courage there could be no question... his skill in the use of the rifle and pistol was unairing... his influence among the frontiersmen was unbounded, his word was law...”

George Custer writing of Wild Bill Hickok in *My Life on the Plains*.

Adding to his greatness was his ability to stay calm while taking very deliberate and careful aim.

Wild Bill liked to gamble, but opinions vary as to his abilities. Some people said that Hickok would rather “indulge in poker than eat,” and that he would “gamble the shirt off his back.” One story tells of Hickok wagering his last earthly possession, a black and tan terrier.

Hickok's life of adventure ended on August 2, 1876, during a card game in Deadwood's No. 10 Saloon. He was shot from behind by Jack McCall, who was later hanged for the crime. Although allegedly holding black aces and eights, and a nine of diamonds - forever known as The Dead Man's Hand - the actual composition of Wild Bill's final hand of cards remains an unresolved issue.