Explore the lives and work of the numerous Black men, women and children—enslaved and free—who labored on ranches and participated on cattle drives from before the Civil War through the turn of the twentieth century.
By revealing stories that have largely been untold, *Black Cowboys* offers insight into the legendary cowboy, a clearer picture of the Black West, and a more diverse portrait of the American West.

**INTRODUCTION**

Visitors entering *Black Cowboys* first encounter a saddle from the early 1900s that belonged to a Black cowboy whose name has been forgotten. Most of the tools that cowboys used on the trail or on a ranch were used up or repurposed, few known examples of saddles and other tools used by Black cowboys exist today.

Here, visitors come face to face with lifesize figures and discover that Black cowboys were men, women and children—enslaved and free—who labored on ranches and worked on cattle drives from before the Civil War through the turn of the twentieth century.

**HECTOR BAZY THEATER**

Beyond the saddle of the unknown cowboy, an immersive theater features an intimate conversation with Hector Bazy, played by award winning actor and playwright, Eugene Lee. In 1910, Hector Bazy published a memoir, detailing his daily life cattle herding and cooking on the prairies of Texas. Bazy was born in 1851 on a plantation in Grimes County, Texas; he and his parents were enslaved there. His story welcomes visitors to the exhibition and invites them to explore the lives of other Black cowboys, about many much less is known.
Biographical profiles, photos, artifacts, multimedia and interactives reveal how Black cowboys were integral to the American economy, shaped the legacies of Black ranching families and turned ranch skills into popular performances in rodeos, music and film.

ON THE TRAIL
From 1865 until the 1890s the largest number of domestic animals in world history were driven up trails from Texas to be sold at market to provide the country with beef. By the early 1880s, the highly profitable cattle industry was one of the largest in the United States.

RANCHERS AND FAMILY LEGACY
Formerly-enslaved Black cowboys continued to work in ranching and farming after Emancipation. They developed skills and networks to become ranch owners. Even after Emancipation, Black ranchers’ legacies were under constant threat from the Klu Klux Klan and use of the judicial system to steal their property.

POPULAR PERFORMANCES: RODEOS, MUSIC AND FILM
Thousands of Black cowboys in the American South made rodeos a part of ranch gatherings and small fairs across the United States. The riding skills, music and dress styles of Black Americans were showcased in Black rodeos, Wild West shows, and later in movies, radio, recordings and television.
FEATURING THE STORIES OF

**TRAIL DRIVE**
- Bose Ikard
- Ben Kinchlow
- George Glenn
- Robert Lemmons
- Al Jones
- Jack
- “Aunt Rittie” Foster
- Coaley Owens
- Tom “Ball” Rodgers
- Hector Bazy
- Nat Love
- Monroe Brackins
- Jim Perry

**RANCHING**
- Steve West
- The Ashworth Family
- “80 John” Daniel Webster Wallace
- Ann George Taylor
- Daniel Alexander
- The Wilcox Family
- Sam Jones Washington
- James Cape
- Johana July
- Mack Williams
- George McJunkin

**PERFORMANCES**
- “Tony” Lott
- Larry Callies
- Tex Williams
- Myrtis Dightman
- Bill Pickett
- Leon Coffee
- A..J. Walker
- Fred Whitfield
- Herb Jeffries
BLACK COWBOYS: AN AMERICAN STORY

Through striking visuals and transformative experiences, this powerful exhibition transports visitors through time to meet a variety of real Black cowboy figures and discover their profound impact in American history.

ABOUT THE WITTE MUSEUM

The Witte Museum inspires people to shape the future of Texas through transformative and relevant experiences in Nature, Science and Culture. For 96 years, the Witte Museum has shared the stories of those who have lived on this land we now call Texas. Visitors come from near and far seeking a deeper understanding of the history of Texas, from the lives of indigenous people to Spanish settlement to the tumultuous 19th century to today.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about this exhibition from the Witte Museum, please contact:

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