Saddle Songs

At night the cattle lay down and slept while the cowboys kept watch. Because almost anything will spook cattle and cause them to stampede, they had to watch for wandering herds of buffalo, bands of unfriendly North American Indians, cattle rustlers, storms, and prairie fires. To keep the cattle contented at night and to keep themselves from getting too lonesome, cowboys on night watch sang as they rode around the herd. Cowboys sang together around the campfire, too, for fun and to keep from getting bored. Some say that a trail boss simply wouldn’t hire a cowboy who couldn’t sing.

Here’s a simple cowboy saddle song from long ago. You can make up your own tune to go with the words:

My home is my saddle,
My roof is the sky;
The prairies I’ll ride
Till the day that I die.

Perhaps you’ve sung “Home on the Range.” It’s one of the most popular songs handed down to us from the cowboy days.

Verse 1:
Oh, give me a home where the buffalo roam,
Where the deer and the antelope play;
Where seldom is heard a discouraging word,
And the skies are not cloudy all day.

Chorus:
Home, home on the range;
Where the deer and the antelope play;
Where seldom is heard a discouraging word,
And the skies are not cloudy all day.

Verse 2:
Where the air is so pure, the zephyrs so free,
The breezes so balmy and light,
That I would not exchange my home on the range,
For all the cities so bright.

Chorus (repeat)

Verse 3:
How often at night when the heavens are bright
With the light of the glittering stars,
Have I stood here amazed and asked as I gazed
If their glory exceeds that of ours.

Chorus (repeat)

Verse 4:
Oh, I love these wild flowers in this dear land of ours;
The curlew I love to hear scream;
And I love the white rocks and the antelope flocks
I Am a Texas Cowboy

Oh, I am a Texas cowboy, right off the Texas plains,
My trade is cinchin' saddles, and pullin' bridle reins;
And I can throw a lasso with the greatest of ease;
I can rope and ride a bronco any way I please.

And when we get 'em, bedded down and settled for the night,
Some Cayuse shakes his saddle and he gives the herd a fright.
And as they madly stampede and gallop fast away,
In the heat of the moment I can hear some cowboy say:
Oh, I am a Texas cowboy, just off the stormy plains.
My trade is horses, cinches, saddles, ropes, and bridle reins.
Oh, I can tip a lariat and with a graceful ease
I can rope a streak of lightnin' and I ride it where I please.

Again we got 'em bedded down; I'm feelin' most forlorn.
A fire in the west arises and with lightnin' on their horns.
The boss says, "Boys, yore pay is here, you'll get it all in gold."
Oh, I'm, bound to follow the longhorns until I am too old.

(From A Treasury of Western Folklore, by B. A. Botkin)