

The Cowboy Hat

John B. Stetson introduced the Stetson cowboy hat, called "Boss of the Plains," in the mid 1800s. It was a toned down version of the hats worn by the Mexican Vaqueros and now it would cost about \$15, which was about two weeks wages. The hats worn by southern cowboys had wide brims while those worn by northern cowboys had a much narrower brim because of the wind. To the cowboy the hat was a piece of equipment, and he wanted it kept simple in design. It was usually made from fur felt with a braided horsehair or leather string used to hold it on his head when riding fast. The space between the top of the cowboy's head and the crown of the hat created an air pocket that kept the cowboy's head warm in winter. While the cowboy hat could be used in many ways, its primary use was to keep the sun and the rain off the cowboy's face. It could also be used to scoop water from a creek, swat a horse, signal another cowboy or fan the evening campfire.

