

Travel Through History

1837, May 27 - James Butler Hickok is born in Troy Grove, Illinois to William A. and Polly Butler Hickok.

1861 - Hickok joins the Union Army as a teamster and also engages in duties of wagon master, sharpshooter and spy. He earns the nickname "Wild Bill" as a result of his daring exploits.

1865 - Pistol duel in Springfield, Missouri. Hickok is charged with manslaughter but is later acquitted.

1866 - Hickok appointed Deputy United States Marshal out of Fort Riley, Kansas.

1867 - Harpers New Monthly Magazine publishes an article about Hickok, glorifying him as an Indian fighter, plainsman, and Civil War scout.

1871 - As Marshal, Hickok brings order to Abilene, KS.

1873 - Hickok joins "Buffalo Bill" Cody's Wild West show.

1875, fall - Gold discovered in Whitewood Creek and adjacent tributaries. Miners begin to congregate into Deadwood Gulch.

1876 - Hickok marries Agnes Thatcher in Cheyenne, Wyoming Territory. The town of Deadwood, Dakota Territory, is laid out.

1876, June - Hickok and other famous Deadwood legends head for the Black Hills.

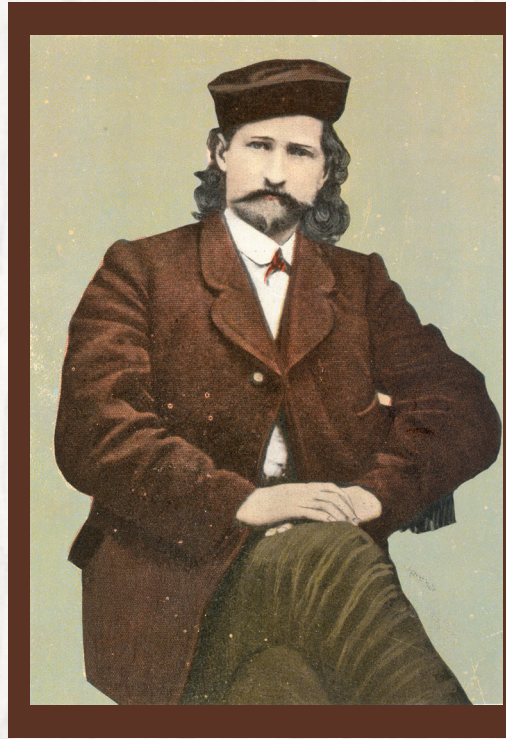
1876, August 2 - Hickok is murdered by Jack McCall in Nutall & Mann's No. 10 Saloon. His remains are buried in Deadwood's first cemetery.

1877 - Hickok's assassin Jack McCall is tried and executed in Yankton, Dakota Territory.

1879, August - Hickok's remains are disinterred and moved to Mt. Moriah Cemetery.

1890 - Citizens of Deadwood commission James Riordan to create a new gravemarker for Hickok.

2002 - Bronze sculpture in likeness of the 1890 memorial placed on Wild Bill's grave.



Postcard of James Butler Hickok, circa 1870s.

Visit the grave of
Wild Bill Hickok
at Mt. Moriah
Cemetery in
Deadwood, South
Dakota



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DEADWOOD

James Butler Hickok



WILD BILL

May 27, 1837 - August 2, 1876

HistoryLink

A TRAIL TO DEADWOOD'S PAST

DEADWOOD
SOUTH
DAKOTA
A National Historic
Landmark

1837 - James Butler Hickok - 1876

His contemporaries called him Wild Bill, and the newspaper 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, scout for the US Army, and as the Marshal of Abilene, Kansas.



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

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.

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..."



Photograph of the 1890 Hickok memorial at Mt. Moriah Cemetery

Wild Bill was murdered in Deadwood on August 2, 1876. Wild Bill's friends buried him in Deadwood's first cemetery, but three years later he was reburied at the present site in Mt. Moriah Cemetery.

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 mystery.