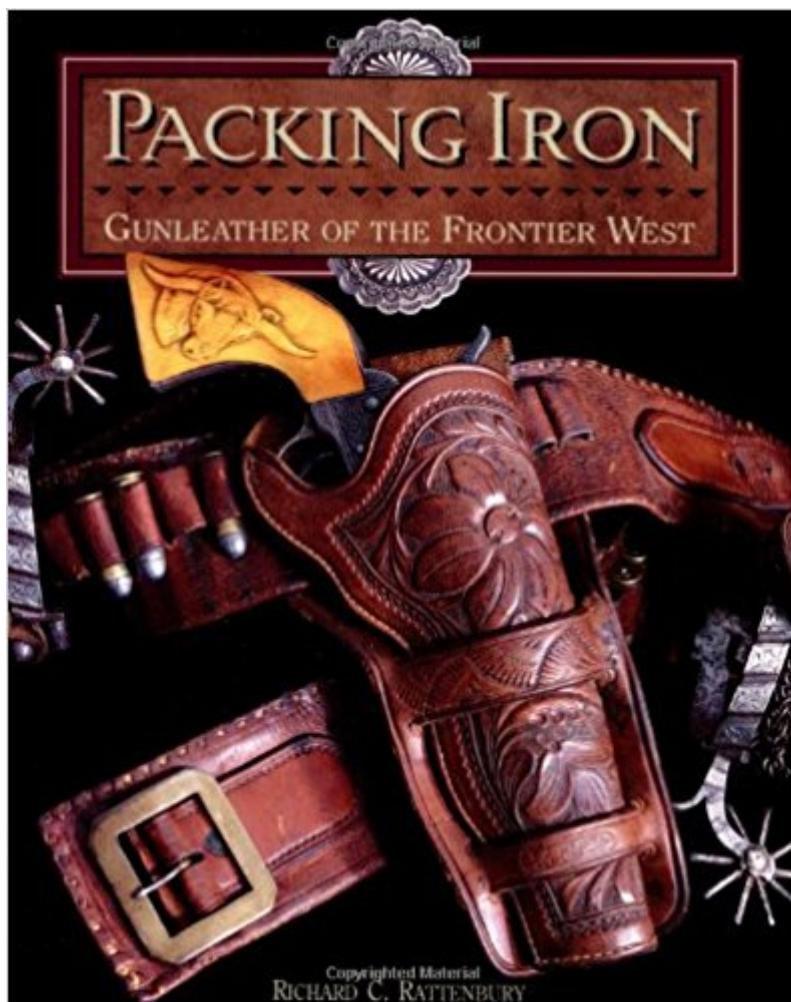


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# Packing Iron: Gunleather Of The Frontier West



## **Synopsis**

Western gunleather is an icon of American frontier lore. Packing Iron celebrates the artistry and innovation of the craftsmen who designed the gun rigs of the old time cowboys, troopers, lawmen, and Hollywood heroes. This unique art form is fully described and richly illustrated with more than 300 exciting color photographs and nearly 100 rare historic images. In the pages of Packing Iron you will discover gunleather produced by historic government arsenals, along with the famed frontier craftsmen like Collins, Meanea, Gallatin, and Heiser.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Richard C. Rattenbury's enthusiasm for western gunleather was sparked in 1989 while doing research for an exhibit at the National Cowboy Hall of Fame and Western Heritage Center in Oklahoma City, where he is Curator of History. A long-time student of firearms and western material culture, Rattenbury formerly held curatorial positions with the Winchester Museum at the Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, Wyoming, and with the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum, Canyon, Texas. Over the past 15 years he has authored three exhibition catalogs on firearms history and technology, as well as more than 30 articles and monographs for such publications as *Man at Arms*, *American West*, *History News*, *Military Images* and *Persimmon Hill*. Rattenbury resides with his wife, Suzette, in Edmond, Oklahoma.

I acquired this book after hearing it's praise and having begun making old west gun leather myself. It

has been called the Bible of gun leather history and authenticity. I feel that could be future edition's new title, or more practical, the subtitle. I found to my disappointment that the Hollywood holster which hung down at that "cool" slant, was not historically authentic. But that's why a book such as this is so important; it corrects the mythology of the romantic and gives the truth, even if it is "disappointing". However the Hollywood genre is not omitted or treated with disdain. Rather, the early to mid-hollywood span is objectively covered with credit given to the film industry's creator of the holster which I mentioned above. As for the personal influence on leather work, it directed me to whole new love for the true style of historical accuracy and where they evolved from in the practical purpose they came. One prominent instance was the debt owed to the culture south of the border. The Mexican cowboys or "Vaceros" (sp) had been doing cowboy work long before the American counterpart. The holster which first accommodated the cartridge belt, was the "Mexican Loop". A beautiful style of leather braiding to trim belts and holsters is the "Mexicana Round Braid". These have been deeply ingrained into my gun leather work. Now, I have gone on for a great length here and overused the personal pronoun but this only due to an enthusiasm for, thus far, the definitive authority of how the western "hogleg" was carried on the cowboy's tool belt. If the subject interests you and you want to read a number of books about it, beware...all other books will be diminished by comparison; "Packing Iron" is the last book, or only book you'll need.

This has rapidly become a favorite book of mine and, judging from the constant references to it from holster makers, has become a widely-used reference source. The quality of the book itself is excellent, with lots of crisp, large pictures and good accompanying text. The "frontier" period covered is pretty wide, really the colonial period into the pre-WW2 era. The emphasis, however, is on the 1800s. The first section of the book mostly covers military gunleather and its transition into civilian forms and usage. The bulk of part two is on California and Mexican Loop pattern holsters of the 1800's and early 20th century, although there is good material on a number of other subjects (all gun-related). The holster photo captions in part two tend to be very repetitious as there are numerous style variations presented, but ultimately don't detract from the pictures themselves or the text. This is not a book to buy if you are interested in costume or accoutrements other than gunleather, and you should pass it by if your primary interest is Western film and TV versions of gunleather - the buscadero, or drop-loop style is barely mentioned.

I saw this book several years ago in a book catalogue, I put off buying it because there really didn't seem to be enough subject matter to justify such a book. I could not have been more wrong. When I

finally had one in hand I realized there really was a rich wealth of interesting material especially historically. This book shows the colorful evolution of holsters in the American West tradition. This is a fascinating collection of color and detail that leaves the reader in awe concerning this little known facet of traditional Western Americana. Well worth the price. Hours will be spent studing the beautiful illustrations and carefully researched text. You don't have to own a Colt sixshooter to appreciate this beautiful book that faithfully follows and matches the tradition of the R.L. Wilson publications on the art of firearms.

This is a terrific reference to holsters, belts, and scabbards made from the early 1800's to the prop leather used by Hollywood's Western stars, on into the end of the 20th century. Some truly beautiful examples of leather design and carving. Excellent book.

If you love the quality and craftsmanship of a by gone era, you will love this book. Packing Iron has many beautiful photographs and the history behind them too.

Whether you are into guns and their holsters or not this book is a comprehensive overview of the art and craftsmanship not easily found anymore. Beautifully produced and well researched.

A very colorful book pack filled with information on all sorts of leather accessories dealing with protecting and transporting firearms. Deals with early sleeves for Flintlocks to cowboy holsters made up to the 1930s. If you are into cowboy leather gear for firearms, this a a must have reference book. A lot of work and research went into this book.

Complete history and excellent pictures. highly recommend this to one considering making their own old west holsters and gear

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