



American Legends: The Life of Roy Rogers

Charles River Editors

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“I did pretty good for a guy who never finished high school and used to yodel at square dances.” – Roy Rogers

A lot of ink has been spilled covering the lives of history’s most influential figures, but how much of the forest is lost for the trees? In Charles River Editors’ American Legends series, readers can get caught up to speed on the lives of America’s most important men and women in the time it takes to finish a commute, while learning interesting facts long forgotten or never known.

In the early 20th century, Westerns were one of the most popular genres in Hollywood, and one of the young stars at the forefront was Roy Rogers, who had come from an Ohio farm to transform himself into a cowboy. Regardless of his background, Rogers certainly looked the part of the quintessential cowboy, along with his wife Dale Evans and his horse Trigger. His versatile singing and acting abilities made him successful both on radio and on the screen.

Rogers came of age at a time when the “singing cowboy” was at the apex of his popularity, and that was favorable because he actually got his start in show business as a singer. In the early ‘30s, he bounced around several groups as a country music singer before earning national attention as a member of the Sons of the Pioneers, who were signed to Decca and had a couple of hits. As a result, when he first appeared in movies in 1935, it was usually in bit roles that required singing, but when Gene Autry threatened to quit acting in 1938, Rogers was viewed as a suitable replacement for lead roles. As it turned out, he became the premiere “singing cowboy” in Autry’s stead, and from 1939-1954, he was one of the Top 10 Western stars in Hollywood, and a Top 10 movie star overall during some of those years.


As Rogers evolved into the “King of the Cowboys”, he became a pop culture icon, and he was shrewd enough to capitalize on his image. All sorts of Roy Rogers merchandise hit stores, from action figures to comic strips, and Rogers even banked on the popularity of his horse Trigger by featuring him enough to make the horse a household name as well. Even today, people can find the name Roy Rogers all over the place, if only because he eventually had his name lent to a popular fast food chain in later years.

Even as his movie career inevitably tailed off, Rogers remained popular enough to host a television show in the ‘60s with his wife, and though it was only on for a short while, the show’s theme song, “Happy Trails”, is still well-known today. Rogers continued to appear on television and was involved with a production company in later years, the capstone on a career that saw him earn 3 stars on the Hollywood Walk of Fame and induction into both the Western Performers Hall of Fame and Country Music Hall of Fame.

American Legends: The Life of Roy Rogers chronicles the life and career of one of America’s most famous actors. Along with pictures of important people, places, and events, you will learn about the “King of the Cowboys” like never before, in no time at all.



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