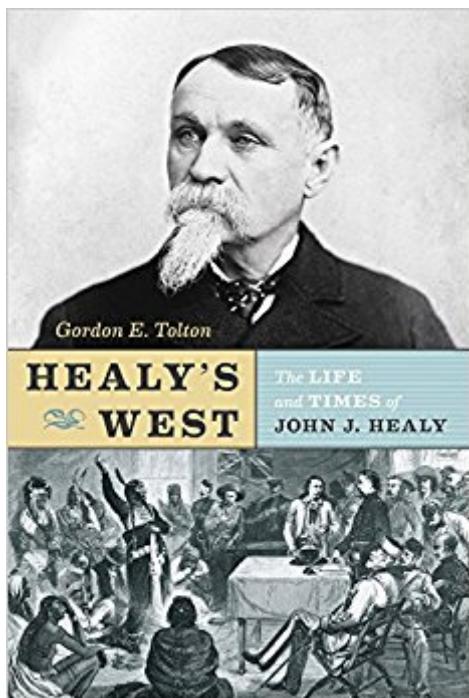


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# Healy's West: The Life And Times Of John J. Healy



## Synopsis

When Healy pans for Idaho gold, descends the Missouri River, tames wild Alberta mustangs, stares down Montana outlaws, equips Klondike prospectors, or promotes the untapped potential of Alaska, you can't help but admire him. *Healy's West: The Life and Times of John J. Healy* demonstrates how this man's colorful and enterprising life helped to shape the American and Canadian West. Although he was never immortalized in a dime novel of Hollywood western, John J. Healy (1840-1908) was one of the most influential figures of the westward movement. From Irish famine to army saddle, from taking on powerful monopolies to trading with the Blackfoot, from political maneuvering to hunting down rustlers behind a sheriff's badge, Healy challenged life, nature, enemies, and governments head on. In his own time, Healy was inflated to heroic myth by some and derided as a controversial agent of change by others. *Healy's West: The Life and Times of John J. Healy* demonstrates, he was both. This is the most complete and truly balanced account of Healy's life ever published. An entertaining and critical portrayal of the West's most charismatic figure, *Healy's West* is a must ready for anyone interested in Western U.S. History.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Tolton excels at providing a balanced portrayal of Healy, not hesitating to point out shortcomings or exaggerations in personal accounts or historical records. In *Healy's West*, Gordon E. Tolton superbly chronicles the many facets of frontiersman John J. Healy's dramatic and often mesmerizing biography. Tolton faces a monumental task to condense Healy's life story into one volume, and his superb writing produces a well-rounded, captivating overview of Healy, revealing both his many

grand accomplishments and his trail of shadowy dealings. John Healy was born in Ireland in 1840, and his boyhood was indelibly marked by the devastation he witnessed during Ireland's Great Famine in the mid-1800s. His family eventually immigrated to New York, and when John turned eighteen, he enlisted in the army and was stationed in Kansas, beginning his lifelong relationship with the land west of the Missouri River. Tolton's narrative conveys a seemingly nonstop string of Healy's head-shaking adventures, and there is an abundance of favorable and unfavorable episodes from which to select. Healy compiled a lengthy list of business adventures ranging through Montana, Idaho, Canada's Alberta and Yukon regions, and Alaska. Besides his early soldiering, Healy experienced numerous other careers: as a prospector, fur trapper, trader, horse dealer, lawman, editor, merchant, politician, and journalist. Despite such a diverse range of Healy's ventures, Tolton smoothly transitions from one series of escapades to another without interrupting the flow of the story and always maintaining balance in his portrayal of the man. He appropriately points out those places where the facts are sketchy or missing, and he gives knowledgeable possibilities when trying to bridge informational gaps. Perhaps Tolton's greatest accomplishment is keeping the story believable. Many incidents in Healy's life sometimes seem fictional such as the many narrow escapes from seemingly certain death in situations with natives, business competitors, lawmen, and scores of other people but Tolton is always able to pull the reader back to reality just before the story gets too unbelievable. Tolton's vast knowledge of the regions where Healy operated gives interesting historical background and perspective. Healy's West is a must-read for anyone interested in 1800s Alaskan life or early frontier history of the United States and Canada, or for someone just wanting a compelling, engrossing biography of a relatively obscure figure who had a large impact on local, regional, and national affairs. --Jeff Friend --Foreword Reviews

Some Westerners became legends, others led legendary lives but never made it into dime novels or onto the big screen. John Healy was one of the latter, though Canadian author Gordon Tolton aims to redress that with a picaresque biography spanning two nations and two centuries.... Still, Healy was an enthusiastic embracer and multifaceted agent of "Manifest Destiny," and his life runs intriguingly parallel to the history of two developing nations. Although Healy's attitude toward Indians would be considered racist by present-day standards, he did say, "I admire the Blood Indians, I fought them for years, and when they became my friends, I could trust them absolutely." For those who have never heard of the man, Healy's West should prove enlightening. For those already familiar with Healy, the reward is a further introduction to this unsung Westerner. --John Guttman

--HistoryNet.com [T]he lively prose bring this restless adventurer to life while also inviting readers to examine questions of morality in the westering tradition. --Chris Allen --Alaska History

Gordon E. Tolton was raised on a family farm near Taber, Alberta. While working in the agricultural, construction, and service industries he volunteered for several historic sites and societies and became immersed in history while learning the disciplines of writing, archiving, and museum practices. He is the author of five previous books. He lives in Coaldale, Alberta with his wife, Rose.

John J. Healy was an influential figure in early Montana history. He was seen as a scoundrel by some, a legend by others. He was active in the whiskey trade at the notorious Fort Whoop-Up and elsewhere, served a term as sheriff of Chouteau County, Montana, and later made it big in Alaska. "Healy's West: The Life and Times of John J. Healy" is a very thorough and well-written chronicle of this man and the times he lived in. Much on early gold prospecting in Oregon and Idaho, Ft. Benton, Fort Whoop-Up and the Klondike gold rush in Alaska. I heartily recommends this book.

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