

**LUCILLE
AGATHA
MULHALL**
1885-1940



**AMERICA'S
FIRST
COWGIRL**

Lucille Agatha Mulhall was born in October 1885 in St. Louis. The family moved to Oklahoma Territory, acquiring over 80,000 acres near Guthrie. Lucy wasn't interested in dolls, sewing, or piano lessons. She preferred being outdoors riding horses. Lucille refused to ride sidesaddle, wearing a divided skirt, to make riding easier. At age thirteen, her father Zack promised she could have all the yearlings she could brand herself. Soon, she had over 300 cattle – so he had to rescind his offer!

Lucille started her show business career at the St. Louis World's Fair with Zack's Wild West Show "Congress of Rough Riders and Ropers". The show also featured a young trick roper Will Rogers and early movie cowboys Tom Mix and Gene Autry.

In 1900, Lucille appeared at an Oklahoma City reunion of the Rough Riders where Teddy Roosevelt saw her running, roping and tying steers. "Little Miss Mulhall, who weighs only 90 pounds, can break a bronco, lasso and brand a steer," reported a New York newspaper. Roosevelt later invited her to lead his inauguration parade in Washington.

Roosevelt encouraged Zack to "put her on stage.". By the next year, Lucille was performing all over the country. Will Rogers coined the phrase 'Cowgirl' to describe Lucy after she won a 1904 cattle-roping competition, where she lassoed and tied three steers in three minutes 36 seconds – for a world record.

According to Dale Evans, "Cowgirl is an attitude, a special brand of courage. The cowgirl faces life head on, and makes no excuses. Cowgirls defend the things they hold dear." Lucille was called Queen of the Western Prairie, Queen of the Saddle, and America's Greatest Horse Woman. She was among the first and most accomplished roping and riding champions, even starring in the Miller Brothers' 101 Ranch Wild West show.

Lucy secretly married singer Martin Van Bergen in Brooklyn in a 1907 civil ceremony. He had joined Zack's Wild West show two years earlier. Her father was not pleased because she was Catholic and he was not. They married again in a Catholic ceremony in Kansas City in March 1909. The marriage fell apart because Martin wanted to settle down. He filed for divorce in March 1914 on grounds of abandonment. He was granted custody of their son Logan, and moved to Santa Monica.

Lucille ended her 30-year career in 1917. In May 1919, Lucy married wealthy Texas cattleman Thomas Burnett. They were both strong-willed and separated a year later. Downsizing of the ranch due to the Great Depression left her broke. She appeared occasionally, including a 1931 exhibition of trick riding and roping, and riding in the 1935 Guthrie Eighty-Niners' Day parade.

Lucille died in December 1940, in a car crash near her ranch. Due to heavy rains, a neighbor's plow horses brought her hearse to the ranch. "A machine killed Lucille Mulhall, but horses brought her home." She was posthumously inducted into the 1975 Rodeo Hall of Fame and 1977 National Cowgirl Hall of Fame.