



KANSAS LEGEND BIOGRAPHY

Wyatt Earp (1848-1929)

A name synonymous with the Wild West, Wyatt Earp is remembered as a legendary peacemaker and law enforcer from the past. Born Wyatt Berry Stapp Earp in Monmouth, Ill., Earp was the fourth of eight children. Following the outbreak of the American Civil War, Earp was left at home to tend the family's 80-acre farm while his older brothers fought with the Union Army and his father worked. In 1864, the family joined a wagon train heading to California, and Earp was given his first gun for self-protection.



In California, Earp held jobs as a stagecoach driver and a teamster. He transported goods all throughout the West and was eventually hired to transport supplies for the construction of the Union Pacific Railroad. Earp eventually traveled with his brother to Lamar, Mo., where he became town constable. He married Urilla Sutherland, but within a year's time, she passed away, leaving Earp sad and alone.

Earp soon found himself in trouble with the law, accused of horse theft and in the middle of two lawsuits. Earp fled the state of Missouri, and all three cases were dropped. Earp is thought to have spent the next four years traveling and hunting bison, reflecting on events of his past. In October of 1874, he turned up in Wichita, Kan., where he served as a deputy marshal and first started earning acclaim as a law enforcement officer.



The next cow-town excursion for Earp occurred in Dodge City where he was appointed assistant marshal. During this time Earp also tried his hand at gambling and found himself quite good. Earp began a close friendship with Doc Holliday, a Texas dentist with whom he became acquainted on the gambling circuit, when Holliday saved Earp's life in a bar-room brawl in Dodge City. He also founded friendships with Bat Masterson and his new partner Celia "Mattie" Blaylock, a former prostitute.

Earp and his brothers moved to Tombstone, Ariz., to stake mining claims after brief stints in New Mexico and California. Earp's brother, Virgil, was named U.S. Deputy Marshal and Wyatt Earp was named Pima County Deputy Sheriff. Doc Holliday soon moved to Tombstone, and Earp acquired the gambling concession at the Oriental Saloon, where he met his third wife, Josie. Issues with the law created feuds for the Earps with both the McLaurys and the Clantons. The Earps enlisted Doc Holliday to face off with their rivals in the famous gunfight at the O.K. Corral in 1881. Three of the Clantons were shot dead, and Earp was the only participant of his team to walk away from the fight uninjured.



The following year, Morgan Earp was assassinated and Virgil Earp suffered severe damage to his right arm in an attempted murder. Wyatt set out for revenge and gunned down the suspects. To escape criminal charges, Earp fled to Colorado with his wife to gamble and mine. Earp returned to Dodge City with Bat Masterson briefly to peacefully end The Dodge City War, a dispute between a corrupt mayor and local businessman.

Earp and his wife moved to San Diego, where they invested in saloons and real estate. Earp refereed boxing matches and bet on horses. The couple moved again to Nome, Ala., during the height of the Alaska Gold Rush and later to Nevada for additional prospecting. During his final years, Earp found veins containing copper and gold in the Mojave Desert. He and his wife moved to Los Angeles, where they befriended several Hollywood Western actors and lived off their investments and findings until his death in 1929. Today, Earp's legend lives on in numerous retellings and movie portrayals.

