

## **Slain from famous shootout getting new Epitaphs, By Allen G. Breed/ The Associated Press**

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Tombstone, Arizona-Past boot hill graveyard and around the bend where Arizona 80 becomes Fremont Street, a larger than-life statue of a man rises from a low sandstone pedestal, Clad in a duster and a broad-brimmed hat, a sawed-off shotgun over one shoulder, Wyatt Earp stands guard at the entrance to this dusty town that calls itself “too tough to die.”

Since the October 26<sup>th</sup> 1881, “Gunfight at the O.K. Corral,” the famed frontier lawman has loomed large over this former boomtown. The silver deposits that gave birth to the city have long since been played out, but Tombstone has survived largely by mining the legend of the West’s most infamous shootout.

And in popular culture, the Earp brothers have always been the good guys; the Mclaury’s and Clanton’s the bad guys. But something peculiar has happened at the O.K. Corral: The white hats and the black hats have all gotten a bit grayer.

Hanging on the stucco wall surrounding the little amphitheater where the fusillade is re-enacted daily is a tiny bronze plaque. Unpretentious and easy to miss, it is dedicated, not to the badge-wearing Earp’s or their lungier TB friend Doc Holliday, but to the memory of the brothers Tom and Frank McLaury-two of the men who died that day.

Beneath oval portraits of the two is a short, but enigmatic epitaph: “One owes respect to the living, but to the dead, one owes nothing but the truth.” To movie-goers who thought they knew the real story of the O.K. Corral, the Mclaury clan’s message is unmistakable. “The stars of the gunfight the winners,” says Pam Potter of Mountain Center, Calif., the brothers’ great-grand-niece.

Two new books seek to even the score a hit. “In now way did the shootout represent a clearly defined duel to the death between Good and Evil,” says former journalist Jeff Guinn, author of the just released “The Last Gunfight; The Real Story of the Shootout at the O.K. Corral-And How It Changed The American West.” “But the poor McLaury’s have gotten the short shrift all these years, and they don’t deserve it.”

Paul L. Johnson agrees. “They weren’t angels,” says the New Yorker, whose childhood fascination with the gunfight resulted in “The McLaury Brothers of Arizona: An O.K. Corral Obituary,” currently being vetted by the University of North Texas Press, “Innocent’s a hard word to apply because they were complicit in the various illegal dealing gong on. It’s this nuance business.”

The Shootout lasted just 30 seconds. But its echoes continue to reverberate 130 years later. The Immediate cause of the gunfight was Police Chief Virgil Earp’s attempt to enforce the local ordinance against carrying firearms. But Guinn’s research reveals that tensions between the Earp’s and the Cowboy gang had deep roots.

The McLaury’s came to the San Pedro Valley from Iowa in 1877 for the promise of cheap and abundant grazing hand. The Earp’s, particularly Wyatt, followed a couple of years later with dreams of cashing in on the silver boom.

In a series of movies-starting in 1934 with “Frontier Marshal,” based on Stuart N. Lake’s flattering and deeply flawed biography of the same title, continuing with John Ford’s “My Darling Clementine.” In 1946 and Kevin Costner’s “Wyatt Earp” in 1994- the Earp’s have come across as straight-shooting, law and order types. But Guinn says it wasn’t that simple. (Actual fact 1 listed below)

Never mentioned are Wyatt’s own brushes with the horse theft and misappropriation of funds, or his time working brothels in Peoria, Ill, Guinn says, also omitted is the fact that Wyatt’s and at least one brothers “wives”

were convicted of prostitution. (Below is the real truth numbered (2)

“Wyatt broke jail on a charge of horse theft back in Indian territory as a young man,” he says, “Technically he was a fugitive from the law his entire life. Nobody out in the West was completely pristine.” (Below is the real truth numbered (3)

Wyatt Earp had a well-earned reputation for toughness from his days a deputy in the Kansas boom towns referring to “Buffalo” or pistol whip-his adversaries rather than shooting them. But while those methods with the itinerant cow town population, they didn’t sit well with the “much more permanent” residents of Tombstone, says Johnson. (Below I explain this inaccuracy of this paragraph numbered (4)

Wyatt Earp recovered some stolen Army mules from the McLaury ranch, and it is widely believed that the brothers were fencing rustled cattle for the Clanton’s and the rest of the other members Cowboy gang. Below is the real explanation of this paragraph numbered (5)

But Guinn and Johnson argue they were no worse than the other local ranchers trying to feed the insatiable appetites of the U.S. Army and Tombstone population.

The Earp’s were Republicans, while the Cochise County Sheriff Johnny Behan and members of the cowboy faction were members of the Democratic Party, aligned with former Confederates. Wyatt desperately wanted Behan’s job-and its lucrative tax-collecting duties-and saw a crackdown on the lawless cowboys as a way to archive that goal, Guinn says. (Below is a better definition of this statement numbered (6)

Most historians agree that Ike Clanton was the fight’s chief instigator. He had been drinking the night before and into the morning, and was going around town threatening to kill the Earp’s the next time he saw them. Virgil Earp arrested Ike the night before the gunfight but he was quickly released the next morning after paying a fine for

disorderly conduct. Adding to the tension: The Earp's had publicly pistol whipped both Clanton and Tom McNairy also for disorderly conduct and carrying a weapon in town again which was against the law, again just hours before the gunfight took place on Oct 18<sup>th</sup> 1881.

## Below is the Reality Check, by Zeke Crandall, Author & Historian

The fact is that "Frontier Marshall" published two years after Wyatt Earp's death in 1929 is a very accurate depiction of his life. Wyatt was interviewed directly by Stuart Lake. There is a little biased information but that is pretty much standard in all books by folks that were involved. He does shed any information that would make him have any questionable decisions. Sadly, though the book was a failure because it was a very unsuccessful endeavor for many reasons. I was made a movie in 1934. Sadly one of the truly great very accurate movies was not mentioned, "Tombstone." Released in 1993. The McLaury brothers were cattle rustlers right along with the Clanton's and the rest of the Cowboy gang. That Simple!!

- 1) It is very well documented that Wyatt Earp had a past that was not exactly on the up and up. He did have an outstanding warrant for his arrest for horse Stealing. a horse I in as crazy as it sounds, Joplin, Mo. There was some question as the owner tried to sell the horse to Wyatt but wanted too much money. Wyatt gave him \$100 for the horse but the owner was upset because he wanted \$200. Wyatt would have never been convicted although horse stealing was an offense punishable by being hung.

Wyatt was a pimp for Mattie Blaylock in Abilene Kansas along with his brother James who pimped his wife. Wyatt took Mattie with him when he left

Kansas. Both women were sporting ladies before The Earp brothers took up with them. They actually Protected the women so they were glad to have the brothers as their pimps. Prostitution was not against the law in any of the boomtowns! This writer has his head up his rear-end!

- 2) Wyatt did ride to the Indian Nation to hide as it was a federal Territory and he was safe from extradition after stealing a horse in Joplin Mo. And since horse stealing was not a federal offense and any Marshall or sheriff could not serve a state or city warrant on federal land. In order to chase outlaws as well as Wyatt Earp did he had to think like an outlaw. He had to be just as tough as the outlaws and Wyatt Earp was no different then any other peace officer in the old west. They hall had questionable backgrounds.
- 3) To explain this paragraph, one must realize how inaccurate this writer is. First, the town's people in Abilene, Dodge City, Wichita and Tombstone wanted drinking, gambling and prostitution to continue in the red light district which was across the railroad tracks from the lives of the business and families. So they hired Virgil and his brothers along with Bat Masterson and Luke Short. To enforce the law that prohibited the carrying of weapons inside the city limits. They did not want anyone to be shot because that was bad for business. Virgil, Wyatt and the other town deputies were all paid \$300 per month and \$25 per arrest not shooting!!! The officers would go up to the culprit and ask if he had seen the law. If he did not then they would point out the law and take the weapon. If the culprit said he saw the sign the officers were instructed to hit them on the head (Buffalo not pistol whip) and haul them

to jail. The next morning they would be taken in front of the justice of the peace. Fined \$50 of which half would go to the city and the other half would go to the arresting officers. It also must be noted that at any one time in the town of Dodge City which was the end of the railroad line heading east that with cattlemen, miners and railroad workers the population of these towns were in the millions! So Wyatt Earp's services were needed to keep the money flowing.

- 4) Wyatt did recover six stolen mules from the McLaurry ranch after the shooting, after Tom and Frank were shot at the OK corral. The Earp's were not involved in any dealings with the Cowboy gang and this statement is totally bogus.
- 5) This is a true statement. The Earp's were Republicans in a almost 95% Democratic state, which it stayed until around the 1940's. Wyatt did enter the election to run against Johnny Behan for the lucarative Cochise County Sheriff job. It paid 25K a year and was allowed to keep the taxes he collected to be used as his discretion. What a joke huh! Johnny was also in cahoots with the Cowboy gang in as much as they paid him taxes on stole cattle so he would look the other way. This has been going forever by the different county Sheriff's here in Arizona. Arpaio is on the long list of sheriffs making under the table money.

This article goes to show that people that did not live here in Arizona should not be writing books and articles about Arizona History. It would be the same as if I was writing a book or article about an occurrence that took place in Chicago or New York. I'm sure the people back there would buy books written about there city while I was never there a lived my life here in Arizona, NOT!!!