

The Earp Brothers: Wyatt, Virgil and Morgan Earp

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Synopsis

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Of all the colorful characters that inhabited the West during the 19th century, the most famous of them all is Wyatt Earp (1848-1929), who has long been regarded as the embodiment of the Wild West. Considered the "toughest and deadliest gunman of his day", Earp symbolized the swagger, the heroism, and even the lawlessness of the West. He was notorious for being a law enforcer, gambler, saloon keeper, and vigilante. The Western icon is best known for being a sheriff in Tombstone, but before that he had been arrested and jailed several times himself, in one case escaping from prison. And he was not above gambling and spending time in "houses of ill-fame".

Though they have long been overshadowed by their more famous brother Wyatt, Virgil and Morgan Earp played decisive roles in some of the most famous events in the history of the Old West. Most notably, the two brothers were at Wyatt's side for America's most famous gunfight: the gunfight at the O. K. Corral. Though the gunfight lasted less than a minute, it is still widely remembered as the climactic event of the period, representing lawlessness and justice, vendettas, and a uniquely Western moral code. Fought in the middle of Tombstone, Arizona, the gunfight pitted the three Earp brothers and Doc Holliday against Billy Clanton, Tom McLaury and Frank McLaury. By the time the 30-second gunfight was over, the McLaury brothers were dead in the street; Billy Clanton had suffered a painful and fatal gunshot wound to the chest; and Holliday, Virgil, and Morgan Earp were all wounded.

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