

0. THE TROUBLE STARTS - Story Preface

1. THE TROUBLE STARTS

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In 1879, Tombstone was started—as a settlement—by a prospector called Ed Schieffelin. A tale is told that one of Ed's friends—an Army scout named Al Sieber—warned him: "The only rock you will find out there will be your own tombstone." Another version of the story has Al telling Ed: "Better take your coffin with you; you will find your tombstone there, and nothing else." (See *Mexico, California and Arizona*, by William Henry Bishop at [page 486](#). This image, by C.S. Fly, depicts Tombstone as it appeared in 1881. Click on the image for a full-page view.

When Wyatt Earp came to [Tombstone](#) in 1879 with his common-law wife, [Mattie Blaylock](#), and his two brothers, [Virgil](#) and [Morgan](#), Arizona was a U.S. Territory. Tombstone was a fast-growing, silver-mining town (population 900) where men (like John Heath) were sometimes [lynched](#) before they could be legally hanged.

Not long after he arrived, Tombstone's population doubled and Wyatt was appointed Deputy Sheriff (follow this link to his [oath of office](#)). The job was short-lived. (Follow this link to his [signed resignation](#)). Wyatt wanted a different, more prestigious job. He wanted to fill the new position of Cochise County Sheriff, but the job went to a newcomer, Johnny Behan, with whom Wyatt was soon at odds.

How did [Behan](#) and Wyatt Earp get off to a bad start? Both wanted to be the law of Tombstone. Both fell in love with the same woman - [Josie Marcus](#), a beautiful showgirl. Even worse, Behan reneged on a deal he had made with Wyatt and was a friend of "The Cowboys," a group of mostly honest ranchers with cattle rustlers in their midst.

It wasn't just that folks believed some of the Cowboys (like [Tom](#) and [Frank McLaurry](#), Ike and Billy Clanton) were rustlers. There was bad blood between the Earps, the Clantons and the McLaurys. Both sides had verbally threatened each other while Virgil Earp, a Deputy U.S. Marshall, got physical with the McLaurys and Ike Clanton.

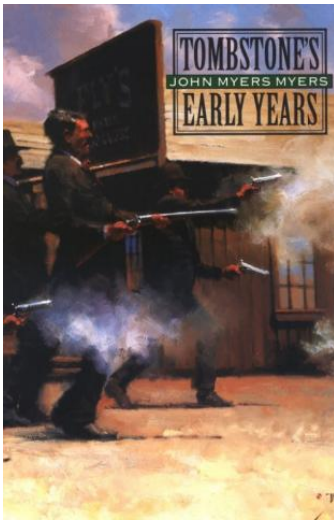
And then there was "Doc Holliday," who made matters worse. Doc, a dentist back east, but a professional gambler out west, became close to the Earps. Doc was [known](#) for his bad health (tuberculosis) and his quick draw. At the time, and later, folks in Tombstone said Doc was the real source of trouble between the Earps and the Cowboys, despite his "gentlemanly ways."

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/THE-TROUBLE-STARTS-Wyatt-Earp>

See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](#)

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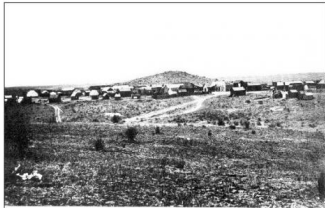


Tombstone's Early Years - by John Myers Myers

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Tombstone in 1879

Tombstone - 1879 Photo

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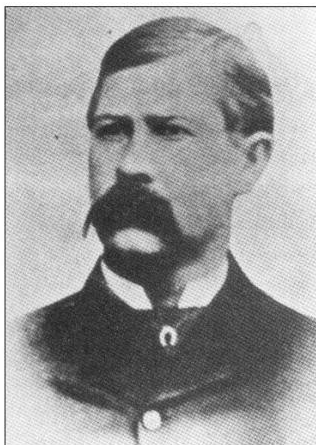


Wyatt's second wife
Celia Ann "Mattie" Blaylock

Mattie Blaylock

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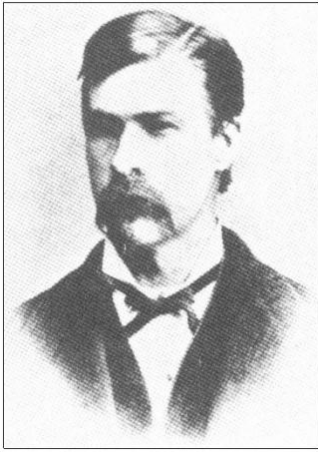


Virgil Earp

Virgil Earp

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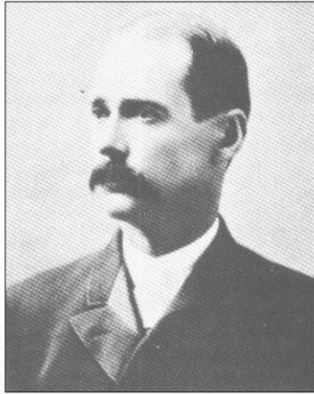


Morgan Earp in 1881

Morgan Earp

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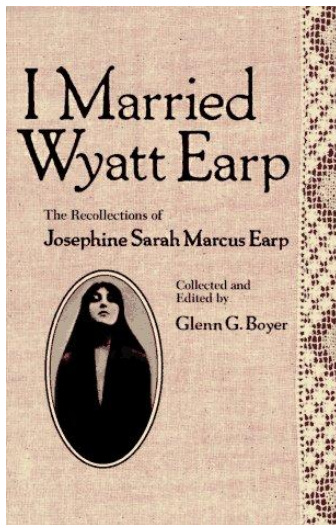


Johnny Behan

Johnny Behan

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I Married Wyatt Earp - by Glenn G. Boyer

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Tom McLaury in 1879

Tom McLaury

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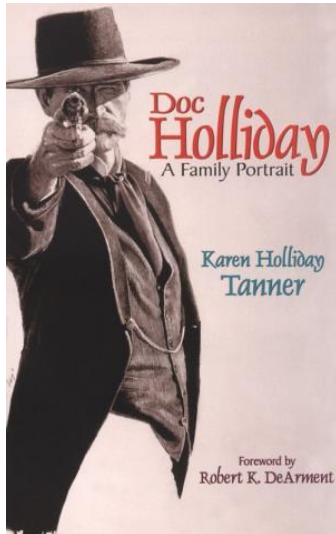


Frank McLaury in 1879

Frank McLaury

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Doc Holliday: A Family Portrait - by Karen Holliday Tanner

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