



THE MUSEUM OF WESTERN FILM HISTORY

EXHIBIT: Firearms, The Old West and the Movies



There can be no doubt that the exploration and exploitation of the Western frontier that began in 1804 was inextricably linked to the development of the firearm. It is certainly true today that firearms are **associated with "Gunslingers" of the Old West more than with any other era of American history.**

The Old West period, which ended officially in 1890, saw gun design **and manufacture improve dramatically, such that the "taming of the West" could be accomplished with grit and determination.**

Gunslingers frequently appear, along with cowboys, as stock characters in Western movies and novels.

In Western movies, the characters' gun belts were often worn low on the hip and outer thigh, with the holster cut away around the pistol's

trigger and grip for a smooth, fast draw. This type of holster is a Hollywood anachronism.

Twirling one's revolvers is a trademark trick of movie gunslingers; and drawing and spinning the pistol from time to time, without intending to be expected to shoot, is a commonly portrayed habit or compulsion. Fast-draw artists can be distinguished from other movie cowboys because their guns will often be tied to their thigh. Long before holsters were steel lined, they were soft and supple for comfortable all-day wear. A gunfighter would use tie-downs to keep his pistol from catching the holster while drawing.

Museum Exhibit includes:

Col. Tim McCoy's Gun, Hat & Boots



Colt Double Action 45 cal. - United States revolver. Belonged to Tim McCoy. "United States Property" is engraved on the barrel. Patent pat. Date is July 4, 1905. Serial number unreadable. Grips are not original. Used in non-western movie by McCoy.



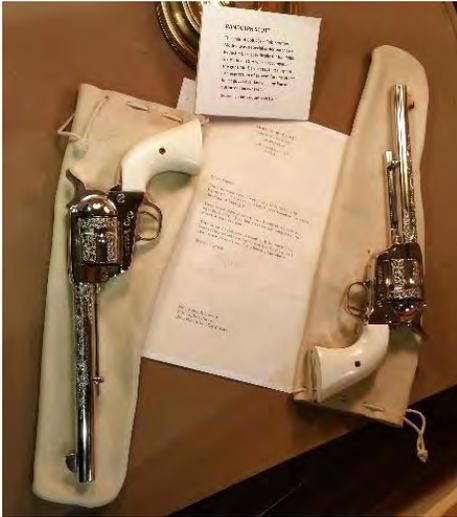
Also on display is a pair of McCoy's Cowboy

Boots and hat. The gun, hat and boots were donated by

Western Singer, Marty Stuart and Packy Smith. Picture on right is McCoy and Ramblin' "Doc" Tommy Scott, one of country music's first generation of stars, who had a TV show called *Last Real Old Time Medicine Show* **in the 80's** and a friend of McCoys.



Pair guns: Randolph Scott's Colts 45s



This pair of Colt 45s, Colt Frontier Model, was a special order purchased by Justin Dart specifically for Randolph Scott. In a letter which accompanied **the guns, Mr. Dart states that they are “an expression of esteem for one of the finest guys I ever knew in any line of business – anywhere”. On loan from the family of Randolph Scott.**

These Colt Sigle Action Army 45s have ivory handles and are inscribed "Randy Scott", ID 357853 (gun A) and ID **357851 (gun B). 7” barrell.** Guns are 3rd generation and have factory engraving.

Colt SAA **.45 Cal. 7” Brl. 3rd** Have ivory handles and are factory inscribed - "Randy Scott", ID 357853 (gun A) and

ID 357851 (gun B).

The Colt Revolving Belt Pistol of Naval Caliber (i.e., .36 cal), later known as the Colt 1851 Navy or Navy Revolver, is a cap and ball revolver that was designed by Samuel Colt between 1847 and 1850. Colt first called this Revolver the Ranger model; but the designation Navy quickly took over.

After the Civil War revolvers using fixed metallic cartridges came into widespread use. The Colt Navy remained in production until 1873, being replaced in the Colt line with what would become one of the manufacturer's most famous handguns, the Colt Single Action Army (also known as the Peacemaker and Colt 45).

Total production numbers of the Colt 1851 Navy Revolver were exceeded only by the Colt Pocket models in concurrent development, and numbered some 215,000 domestic units and about 42,000 produced in the Colt London Armory.

The **Mare’s Leg** (aka **Mare’s Laig**)



Both sometimes spelled without the apostrophe) was the name given to a customized [shortened rifle](#) by Steve McQueen’s **character on the television series *Wanted: Dead or Alive* (1958–1961).** **McQueen’s character was named Josh Randall, and the gun has also been referred to as a Winchester Randall or a **Randall Special.** “Mare’s leg” is now a generic term for a Winchester Model 1892 (or modern derivative) with a shortened barrel and stock.**

The term "mare's leg" was introduced in 1957 in the TV series "*Trackdown*," where Steve McQueen first appeared as the "Bounty Hunter." Steve McQueen and his "mare's leg" then appeared throughout the CBS TV series "*Wanted Dead or Alive.*"

The original Winchester 1892 model was actually chambered for cal.44/40 but the exhibit gun belt has 45/70 cartridges which would have been more impressive to a TV audience.

Jack Elam Holster - Tan leather belt and holster. Signature of Jack Elam located on right side of belt. It, the signature, is in black (looks like a marker was used) and is placed above the holster on the belt. No embellishment. Donated by Gary Brown



U.S. Army Springfield “Trapdoor Rifle”



This U.S. Army Springfield “trapdoor rifle” 45/70

trapdoor rifle with faux flintlock was adapted by studio armourers to look like an Arab tribe’s manor Kyber Pass bandit flintlock firearm of the 1700 to 1900 period.

The rifle is on loan to the Museum from Western Collector, Al Frich acquired the gun from [Stembridge Gun Rentals](#). Stembridge was one of the major suppliers of movie guns to the film industry for over 80 years.

This firearm was used in many epic films including the *Charge of the Light Brigade*, *Gunga Din* and *King of the Kyber Rifles*, all which were shot in Lone Pine. It is also typical of rifle in *The Alamo* and many films depicting frontier in the American frontier of the 18th century.

Roy Rogers Pair of SAA Colts “King of the Cowboys”



Left Picture is the Happy Trails "King of Cowboys" SA Colt .45 with "KING OF COWBOYS" on the left side of barrel (see picture below) and "1911-1998" on the right side of barrel. The words "Happy Trails" are on the handle frame strip.



Barrel inscribed “Roy Rogers, King of the Cowboys”



Roy Rogers - Pair Colt SAA 45 with gold inlay in Black Holster Noted: # 171 & 172 of 250.



Barrels engraved "Roy Rogers King of the Cowboys?"

These Colt 45's are identical, numbered #171 and #172. have both Roy and Dale engraved on both sides of the receiver. Buttermilk is on the same side as Dale Evans "Queen of the West." Enscription - "Trigger" is on top of the handle frame strip.

King of Cowboys is on the left side of the barrel. The left side of the receiver is an image of Roy on Trigger and the right side of the receiver has "Dale Evans Queen of Cowboys" and an image of Buttermilk. The words "Happy Trails" are running down the handle frame strip.



Unidentified pair of guns in Tan Holster Prop guns with lock. No Special markings.



Unidentified pair of Prop guns.



Pair of guns identified as "The American Indian" in Tan Holster with Tan cartridge leather.

Unidentified pair of Prop guns.

Identified as #61 and #62. These are not Roy Rogers guns. An image of a bison is on the right side of the receiver and an image of Indians killing a bison on the left side of receiver. Also has a longhorn skull on the top of handle strip. Tan and Black Holser with black cartridge leather.



OBJ



Winchester 1892 .44-.40 Lever action.



The Winchester rifle is a comprehensive term describing a series of lever-action repeating rifles manufactured by the Winchester Repeating Arms Company. Developed from the 1860 Henry rifle, Winchester rifles were among the earliest repeaters. The Model 1873 was particularly successful, being colloquially known as "The Gun that Won the West".

The Museum model 1892 **has what has been called the "John Wayne" loop made famous by John Wayne in the movies.**

The Model 1873 was one of the most successful Winchester rifles of its day, with Winchester marketing it as "The Gun that Won the West". Still an icon in the modern day, it was manufactured between 1873 and 1923. It was originally chambered for the .44-40 cartridge, which was the first centrefire cartridge and which became immensely popular. The 1873 was later produced in .38-40 and .32-20, all of which later became popular handgun cartridges of the day, allowing users to carry just one type of ammunition. The Model 1873 was produced in three variations: a 24-inch barrel rifle, a 20-inch barrel carbine, and a "musket"—which was aimed at military contracts and only made up less than 5% of production. (Musket was a term that, at the time, denoted a full-length military-style stock, not to be confused with a true smoothbore musket). The standard rifle-length version was most popular in the 19th century, although Winchester would make rifles to order in any configuration the customer wished, including longer barrels or baby carbines with barrels as short as 12 inches, octagonal-shaped barrels, colour case hardened receivers and fancy engraving.

Model 1892 Large Loop Carbine

Iconic style large loop lever-action Model 1892, walnut carbine style buttstock and forearm, strap style buttplate, ladder rear sight.

Saddle up. The Model 92 is the most famous of all the levers produced in the 1890s. It includes all the John Browning improvements and special features. This is why it is used by a huge number of competitors in Cowboy Action Shooting events. It is slick, fast and extremely reliable. Designed for primarily pistol calibers, its recoil is manageable and is a fantastic gun for training a young shooter of lever actions in general. In the ranching days of the American West, the 92 was considered a premier rifle for looking out for the safety of livestock. And in every way, it remains a premier rifle.

Large loop -- very fun. The large loop is often associated with the films of John Wayne or the TV Show The Rifleman. But it has a value that is more than movies and fun. The large loop is very functional when hunting or shooting while wearing gloves. And of course, it looks great.

Harrington & Richardson 12 Gauge Unidentified Provenance



The original H&R firm was in business for over a century from 1871 to 1986.

Frank Wesson, brother of Daniel B. Wesson who co-founded Smith & Wesson, started a firearms manufacturing firm in 1859, sharing an early patent with Nathan Harrington. Wesson produced two trigger rifles and spur trigger pistols and pocket rifles/shotguns popular for short length holster models such as the discontinued topper compact pocket shotguns..

In 1875 Harrington and another former Wesson employee, William Augustus Richardson, formed the new Harrington & Richardson Company. In 1888 the firm was incorporated as The Harrington & Richardson Arms Company.

A new company, H&R 1871, Inc., was formed in 1991 and started production of revolvers, single-shot rifles and shotguns using original H&R designs. H&R 1871, Inc. assets were subsequently sold to H&R 1871, LLC., a Connecticut LLC owned by Marlin Firearms Company in November 2000. H&R 1871, LLC. did not extend their product warranty to H&R guns made prior to the LLC's takeover.

Guns in Gunga Din Exhibit:

Authentic Black Powder Rifle of the 1700/1800s
Long Arm Rifle (circa 1760 – 1820) – in Gunga Din Gun Case.

Gun - long arm rifle manufactured is between 1760 -1820's and used until the early 1900's. It was used from India to the Mediterranean countries. Based on the ornate designs on this particular rifle, it was originally for a chieftain or his eldest son. These rifles were handed down from generation to generation and used for hunting, defense or battle. (Above information from Frank Serrao of Anthony's Guns who has researched this gun.) Material is metal.



Snaphauck

The first image is of a Jezail snaphaunce musket. The caliber was probably .75 Cal. range. It fired one solid ball shot one of a time or shot. The weapon was readily available in the late 18th century and throughout the 19th, especially in the near East and north Africa. The ornamentation is common. The butt of the rifle is missing.



The second image is of a Jezail that had been sawed down, probably by a Hollywood propman not by an original Mideastern gunmaker.

Donated in 2015, the Black Powder rifle is very similar to the type of rifle used during the era that Gunga Din portrays.

Ken Maynard – Early Years Room
Hat, Chaps & Gun Belt
Donated by Diamond Farnsworth



Maynard with Tarzan



Gunfighter and Gunslinger in the 19th century

Gunfighter and gunslinger are literary words used historically to refer to men in the American Old West who had gained a reputation of being dangerous with a gun and had participated in gunfights and shootouts. Gunman was a more common term used for these individuals in the 19th century. Today, the term "gunslinger" is now more or less used to denote someone who is quick on the draw with a pistol, but can also refer to riflemen and shotgun messengers. The gunfighter is also one of the most popular characters in the Western genre and has appeared in associated films, video games, and literature.

Gunfighters range from different occupations including lawman, outlaw, cowboy, exhibitionists and duelist, but are more commonly synonymous to a hired gun who made a living with his weapons in the Old West.

Etymologist Barry Popik has traced the term "gun slinger" back to its use in the Western movie *Drag Harlan* (1920). The word was soon adopted by other Western writers, such as Zane Grey, and became common usage. In his introduction to *The Shootist* (1976), author Glendon Swarthout says "gunslinger" and "gunfighter" are modern terms, and the more authentic terms for the period would have been "gunman", "pistoleder", "shootist," or "bad man" (sometimes written as "badman"). Swarthout seems to have been correct about "gunslinger", but the term "gunfighter" existed in several newspapers in the 1870s, and as such the term existed in the 19th century. Bat Masterson used the term "gunfighter" in the newspaper articles which he wrote about the lawmen and outlaws whom he had known.

However, Joseph Rosa noted that, even though Masterson used the term "gunfighter", he "preferred the term 'mankiller'" when discussing these individuals. Clay Allison (1841–1887), a notorious New Mexico and Texas gunman and cattleman, originated the term "shootist".

Often, the term has been applied to men who would hire out for contract killings or at a ranch embroiled in a range war where they would earn "fighting wages". Others, like Billy the Kid, were notorious bandits, and still others were lawmen like Pat Garrett and Wyatt Earp. A gunfighter could be an outlaw—a robber or murderer who took advantage of the wilderness of the frontier to hide from genteel society and to make periodic raids on it. The gunfighter could also be an agent of the state, archetypically a lone avenger, but more often a sheriff, whose duty was to face the outlaw and bring him to justice or to personally administer it. There were also a few historical cowboys who were actual gunfighters, such as the Outlaw cowboy gang who participated in the bloody Skeleton Canyon Massacre.

Gunslinger

Gunslingers frequently appear as stock characters in Western movies and novels, along with cowboys. Often, the hero of a Western meets his opposite "double", a mirror of his own evil side that he has to destroy.

Western gunslinger heroes are portrayed as local lawmen or enforcement officers, ranchers, army officers, cowboys, territorial marshals, nomadic loners, or skilled fast-draw artists. They are normally masculine persons of integrity and principle - courageous, moral, tough, solid, and self-sufficient, maverick characters (often with trusty sidekicks), possessing an independent and honorable attitude (but often characterized as slow-talking). They are depicted as similar to a knight-errant, wandering from place to place with no particular direction, often facing curious and hostile enemies, while saving individuals or communities from those enemies in terms of chivalry. The Western hero usually stands alone and faces danger on his own, commonly against lawlessness, with an expert display of his physical skills (roping, gun-play, horse-handling, pioneering abilities, etc.).

In films, the gunslinger often possesses a nearly superhuman speed and skill with the revolver. Twirling pistols, lightning draws, and trick shots are standard fare for the gunmen of the big screen. In the real world, however, gunmen who relied on flashy tricks and theatrics died quickly, and most gunslingers took a much more practical approach to their weapons. Real gunslingers did not shoot to disarm or to impress, but to kill.

In the days of the Old West, tales tended to grow with repeated telling, and a single fight might grow into a career-making reputation. For instance, *the Gunfight at the O.K. Corral* made legends of Wyatt Earp and the Outlaw Cowboy gang, but they were relatively minor figures before that conflict. Some gunslingers, such as Bat Masterson, actively engaged in self-promotion. Johnny Ringo built a reputation as a gunslinger while never taking part in a gunfight or killing unarmed civilians.

Fact and fiction” Gunfighters fighting off an Indian attack

Most gunfights are portrayed in films or books as having two men square off, waiting for one to make the first move. This was rarely the case. Often, a gunfight was spur-of-the-moment, with one drawing his pistol, and the other reacting. Often it would develop into a shootout where both men bolted for cover. In popular folklore, men who held noteworthy reputations as a gunfighter were eager to match up against another gunman with the same reputation. On the contrary, in cases where two men held a similar reputation, both would avoid confrontation with one another whenever possible. They rarely took undue risks, and usually weighed their options before confronting another well-known gunman. This respect for one another is why most famous gunfights were rarely two or more well-known gunmen matched up against one another, but rather one notable gunman against a lesser-known opponent or opponents.

These fights were usually close-up and personal, with a number of shots blasted from pistols, often resulting in innocent bystanders hit by bullets gone wild. Much of the time, it would be **difficult to tell who had "won" the gunfight for several minutes, as the black powder smoke** from the pistols cleared the air. How famous gunfighters died is as varied as each man. Many well-known gunfighters were so feared by the public because of their reputation that when they were killed, they died as a result of ambush rather than going down in a "blaze of glory". Others died secluded deaths either from old age or illness.

In Western movies, the characters' gun belts are often worn low on the hip and outer thigh, with the holster cut away around the pistol's trigger and grip for a smooth, fast draw. This type of holster is a Hollywood anachronism. Fast-draw artists can be distinguished from other movie cowboys because their guns will often be tied to their thigh. Long before holsters were steel-lined, they were soft and supple for comfortable all-day wear. A gunfighter would use tie-downs to keep his pistol from catching on the holster while drawing. Most of the time,



gunfighters would just hide their pistols in their pockets and waistbands. Wild Bill Hickok popularized the butt-forward holster type, which worked better on horseback. Colt 51 Navys butt forward in a sash around **waste... making it easier to draw.**

Other gunfighters would use bridgeport rigs that gave a faster and easier draw. Revolvers were a popular weapon to gunfighters who were horsemen, cowboys, and lawmen because of their concealability and effectiveness on horseback. The Winchester rifle was also a popular weapon among gunfighters. Dubbed the "Gun that Won the West", it was widely used during the settlement of the American frontier. Shotguns were also a popular weapon for "express messengers" and guards, especially those on stagecoaches and trains who were in charge of overseeing and guarding a valuable private shipment.

Historical Note: Buscadero Holster

This is the holster most well known to us that have grown up as the Hollywood cowboy generation, watching such The Montana Mexican Loop Variation Gun Holster favorites as Roy Rodgers, The Lone Ranger and Rawhide to mention but a few. The gun belt and holster known as the Buscadero was originally designed for Texas lawmen and the Hollywood cowboys in the 1920's. The rig combines a carved leather gunbelt with one or two holsters. The holster is held in place by an elongated slot in the gun belt or sewn to the belt. The Buscadero gun belt is cut in an arc across the back, sets low on the hips and the holster(s) are angled slightly forward for a faster draw. These rigs often had silver engraved ranger buckles. Many of the first westerns had actual cowboys in them wearing their traditional rigs but as movies caught on stars were wanted for the movies. Theses western stars wore custom made, hand-tooled outfits that were edge laced and sported custom buckles. Theses stars included such greats as Tex Ritter, the Cisco Kid, Roy Rogers, Hopalong Cassidy, Gene Autry, John Carroll and the Lone Ranger.



During the 1950's the "Fast Draw" rig used a specially contoured Buscadero cartridge belt that placed the slotted holster tab even lower on the hip. A low cut "drop loop" slim almost tubular holster was hung from the belt tab. This put the pistol grip at hand level when the arm was extended. This new style had rigid sheet metal or steel liner which allowed hammer cocking and cylinder rotation before the gun actually cleared leather. Hammer and leg thongs secure both the revolver an the holster. To achieve an even faster draw some versions extended the metal liner upward with the face or shank portion of the holster which angled the pistol slightly out. This also added stability to the draw. The holster body usually had a strap that buckled over the mid-section reminding one of the traditional Mexican Loop Pattern.

Arvo Ojala was a Hollywood technical advisor on the subject of quick-draw with a revolver. He also worked as an actor; his most famous role was that of the unnamed man shot by Marshal Matt Dillon in the opening sequences of the long-running television series *Gunsmoke*. As a joke on the producers, James Arness and Arvo actually did the opener once with Dillon falling to the ground.

During the early 1950s, Ojala was living in Los Angeles, and working for the Hollywood film studios. "I watched these guys in Westerns," he told a reporter in 1957, "and realized that they were slow on the draw because the cylinder of their guns got stuck in their holsters. I decided the trick was to keep the cylinder free. I began making holsters in my garage. I lined each one with metal so a man could draw without any impediment. Then I began practicing myself. After a year or two I got it down so pat that today I can double draw in one-sixth of a second."



Ojala was "the genuine article" to those he tutored. His speed was clocked and verified a number of times. He could draw, fire, and hit the target in one-sixth of a second, faster than the eye can blink. His technique of cocking "in the holster" as he drew revolutionized the western and was shown in detail both by Henry Fonda in the western film *The Tin Star* and by John Payne in his series *The Restless Gun*. At the height of the TV Westerns, Ojala opened a "quick-draw" studio on the 8500 block of the Sunset Strip, next to the famous King's Cellar Liquor Store.

For further proof, Arvo would drop a silver dollar with his gun hand (right) from belt height, then draw and hit the coin before it could fall four inches. This was using "live", or full-power ammunition, not the wax bullets and quarter-loads used today in so-called "fast draw" competitions. In another exhibition, his opponent (using blanks) would face him with his pistol out of the holster and cocked, then nod as he simultaneously fired his revolver, while Arvo would draw and fire before the opponent could get a shot off. He never lost.

In August 1956, Ojala filed a patent application for his low-slung, metal-lined "Quick Draw Holster", and in April 1958, he was granted US Patent 2832519. His holster was publicly described in the *New York Times* on May 3, 1958. Disputes over similar holsters made by others resulted in a published court case—California Court of Appeals, *OJALA v. BOHLIN*, 178 Cal.App.2d 292 (1960) Docket No. 23844, February 24, 1960.

Among the TV and film stars that Ojala taught to shoot included James Arness, Robert Culp, James Garner, Kevin Kline, Paul Newman, Hugh O'Brian, Clint Walker, Marilyn Monroe and Thomas F. Wilson. He was a close personal friend to Audie Murphy with Murphy becoming Arvo's children's Godfather. He noted that most actors in westerns had, at best, a nodding acquaintance with handguns, especially the 1873 Colt .45s widely used in television and film because of their reliability. But, a gifted teacher, he said he could teach the necessary skills to anyone in two weeks. He also had speaking roles in many television series and films, to include the 1959 film *The Oregon Trail*, in which his expertise as a gunhandler, fastdraw artist, and instructor were shown. Usually, it was Arvo's hand that was actually shown in close-up when real speed and spinning skills were needed.

His wife Doris Severson, preceded him in death (1951 - 1978). He is survived by his children Valerie, Jon, Erikk, Inga and Kym.

Although quick draw and hip shooting was an important skill in the West, only a handful of historically known gunslingers were known to be fast, such as Luke Short, John Wesley Hardin, Wild Bill Hickok, Doc Holliday, and Billy the Kid. Shooting a pistol with one hand is normally associated with gunslingers, and is also a standard for them of the era to carry two guns and fire ambidextrously. Capt. Jonathan R. Davis carried two revolvers in his iconic gunfight, while Jesse James himself carried over half a dozen revolvers in many of his gunfights.

Gunfighters King Fisher, John Wesley Hardin, Ben Thompson, Billy the Kid, Wild Bill Hickok and Pat Garrett all died as a result of ambush, killed by men who feared them because of their reputation. Gunmen Kid Curry, Jim Courtright, Dallas Stoudenmire and Dave Rudabaugh were killed in raging gun battles, much as portrayed in films about the era, and usually against more than one opponent. Bill Longley and Tom Horn were executed. Famed gunman Clay Allison died in a wagon accident. Gunmen Wyatt Earp, Bat Masterson, Bass Reeves, Commodore Perry Owens, and Luke Short all died of natural causes, living out their lives on reputation and avoiding conflict in secluded retirement. Gunfighter and lawman Frank Eaton, known as "Pistol Pete" lived into old age and gained further fame, before his death at age 97, by becoming the mascot for Oklahoma A&M College (now Oklahoma State University). Rare are the gunfighters who, like William Sidney "Cap" Light, died accidentally by their own hand.

Famous Gunfights

For a list of notable Old West gunfighters, see List of [Old West Gunfighters](#) on Wikipedia

"The most important lesson I learned...was that the winner of a gunplay usually was the one who took his time. The second was that, if I hoped to live on the frontier, I would shun flashy trick-shooting--grandstand play--as I would poison...In all my life as a frontier peace officer, I did not know a really proficient gunfighter who had anything but contempt for the gun-fanner, or the man who literally shot from the hip.

Wyatt Earp

The image of a Wild West filled with countless gunfights was a myth generated primarily by dime-novel authors in the late 19th century. An estimate of 20,000 men in the American West were killed by gunshot between 1866 and 1900, and over 21,586 total casualties during the American Indian Wars from 1850 to 1890. The most notable and well-known took place in the states/territories of Arizona, New Mexico, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. Actual gunfights in the Old West were very rare, very few and far between, but when gunfights did occur, the cause for each varied. Some were simply the result of the heat of the moment, while others were longstanding feuds, or between bandits and lawmen. Lawless violence such as range wars like the Lincoln County War and clashes with Indians were also a cause. Some of these shootouts became famous, while others faded into history with only a few accounts surviving. To prevent gunfights from happening, many cities in the American frontier, such as Dodge City and Tombstone, put up a local ordinance to prohibit firearms in the area.

The Gunfight at the OK Corral is a famous example of a real-life western shootout, between the Earp Brothers together with Doc Holliday, and the Clanton-McLaury gang. It lasted only 30 seconds, contrary to many movie adaptations. The gunfight itself didn't actually happen in the corral, but in a vacant lot outside of the corral. Both parties simultaneously drew their guns, which added to the confusion of who fired first. The shooting started when Billy Clanton and Frank McLaury cocked their pistols. It is not known who fired the first shot, but Wyatt's **bullet was the first to hit, tearing through Frank McLaury's belly and sending McLaury's own shot wild through Wyatt's coattail**. Billy Clanton fired at Virgil, but his shot also went astray when he was hit with Morgan's shot through his rib cage. Billy Claiborne ran as soon as shots

were fired and was already out of sight. Ike Clanton panicked as well and ran towards Wyatt pleading for his life. "Go to fighting or get away!", Wyatt yelled and watched Ike desert his brother Billy and run. Doc instantly killed Tom with blasts from his shotgun. Frank was running to Fremont Street, and he challenged Holliday for killing his brother, but Doc dropped his shotgun, drew his pistol, and shot Frank in the right temple. Desperately, wounded and dying, Billy Clanton fired blindly into the gun smoke encircling him, striking Virgil's leg. Wyatt responded by sending several rounds into Billy.

In January 1887 Commodore Perry Owens took office as Sheriff of Apache County, Arizona. He sent two deputies to arrest Ike Clanton. Clanton had instigated the Gunfight at the OK Corral and was charged with the later ambush shooting of Virgil Earp. Wyatt Earp searched for Ike Clanton in his vendetta, but never found him - Ike move north to Apache County to continue rustling cattle and killing. Owens' two deputies killed Ike Clanton; Phin Clanton was arrested; three other gang members were killed; and the Clanton gang was done. Then Sheriff Owens turned his attention to the Blevins family, the other rustling gang in the county. In June 1887 Old Man Blevins disappeared, presumably killed by the Tewksbury faction of the Pleasant Valley War. The Blevins sons searched for their father and in August Hamp Blevins and another were killed by the Tewksbury side. So Andy Blevins (aka Cooper) ambushed and killed John Tewksbury and Bill Jacobs in revenge. Blevins returned to Holbrook and was heard bragging about his killings. Sheriff Owens had inherited a warrant for Andy Blevins' (Cooper) arrest for horse theft so he rode to Holbrook on September 2, 1887. Sheriff Owens had hunted buffalo for the railroad and could shoot his Winchester from the hip with great accuracy. Cradling his Winchester rifle in his arm, Sheriff Owens knocked on the Blevins' door. Andy Blevins answered with a pistol in hand, the lawman told him to come out, that he had a warrant for arrest. Blevins refused and tried to close the door. Owens shot his rifle from his hip through the door, hitting Andy Blevins in the stomach. Andy's half-brother, John Blevins, pushed a pistol out the door to Owens' right and fired at the Sheriff. He missed and Owens shot John Blevins in the arm, putting him out of the fight. Owens saw Andy Blevins in the window moving to shoot back. Owens shot through the wall, striking Andy in the right hip - he died that night. Mose Roberts, boarding with the family, jumped out of a side window with a pistol. Sheriff Owens shot him through his back and chest, killing him. Fifteen-year-old Samuel Houston Blevins ran out the front door, with his brother's revolver, and yelled "I'll get him." His mother ran out after him. Owens shot and Sam fell backward, dying in his mother's arms. The shootout took less than one minute and made Owens a legend. In eight months Sheriff Owens had rid Apache County of two notorious gangs of rustlers and killers.

In many early western films and literature, Native Americans were often portrayed as savages; having conflicts and battles against gunfighters and white settlements. According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1894), an estimate of 19,000 white men, women and children were killed while the Indians killed numbered between 30,000 and 45,000 casualties during the American Indian Wars. Gunfighters in history did fight Native Americans. Among them was civilian Billy Dixon, who made one of the longest recorded sniper kills, by shooting an Indian off his horse almost a mile away with his Sharps rifle, during a standoff in the Second Battle of Adobe Walls.

Real-life Wild West duels

Wild Bill Hickok after killing Davis Tutt in a duel. *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, February 1867

The image of two gunslingers with violent reputation squaring off in a street in a duel, where each draws his pistol and tries to kill the other, is a Hollywood invention. However, Wild West

duels did occur in real life (though rarely) and as such are not entirely a myth. These duels were first recorded in the South, brought by emigrants to the American Frontier as a crude form of the "code duello," a highly formalized means of solving disputes between gentlemen with swords or guns that had its origins in European chivalry. By the second half of the 19th century, few Americans still fought duels to solve their problems, and became a thing of the past in the United States by the start of the 20th century. Writer Wyatt-Brown in his book "Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South" described dueling in the American frontier as a "custom", and was primarily used for teenage disputes, rise in ranking, status and scapegoating.

The most famous and well-recorded duel occurred on 21 July 1865, in Springfield, Missouri. Wild Bill Hickok and Davis Tutt quarreled over cards and decided to have a gunfight. They arranged to walk towards each other at 6 p.m. Wild Bill's armed presence caused the crowd to immediately scatter to the safety of nearby buildings, leaving Tutt alone in the northwestern corner of the square. When they were about 50 yards apart, both men drew their guns. The two fired at the same time, but Hickok's shot hit Tutt in the heart, while Tutt's shot missed. This was the first recorded example of two men taking part in a quick-draw duel. The following month Hickok was acquitted after pleading self-defense. The first story of the shootout was detailed in an article in Harper's Magazine in 1867, and became a staple of the gunslinger legend.

The famous lawman Wyatt Earp gave an account of having participated a duel once during his vendetta. While in the South Pass of the Dragoon Mountains, Earp's posse found one of the outlaw cowboys named "Indian Charlie" Cruz. One account says that after the party recognized Cruz, they chased him down and a gunfight ensued. The party manage to capture Cruz and he confessed to have taken part in Morgan's murder, and that he identified Stilwell, Hank Swilling, Curly Bill and Johnny Ringo as other of Morgan's killers. During that time, Wyatt allowed Cruz to keep his revolver to "give him a chance to fight like a man." After the confession, Wyatt told Cruz to draw, challenging him to a duel, and the posse counted to three before Wyatt gunned Cruz down.

Doc Holliday himself had a duel in a saloon in Las Vegas, New Mexico. One of the women who worked there had an ex-boyfriend named Mike Gordon who had just been discharged from the Army. Gordon wanted her to stop working. When she told him to leave her alone, he became angry, went outside the saloon, and started shooting out the windows with his pistol. As bullets went through the saloon, Doc unflinching, holstered his Colt Peacemaker revolver, and walked outside. Gordon then started shooting at him but missed. Holliday then drew his pistol and shot Gordon at long range with one shot. He then went back to the saloon. Gordon died the next day and Holliday fled. Doc Holliday has also been credited with wounding and shooting a pistol out of saloon owner Milt Joyce's hand when he tried to brandish it at Holliday.

Living on reputation

Most Old West men who were labeled as being "gunfighters" did not kill nearly as many men in gunfights as they were given credit for, if any at all. They were often labeled as such due to one particular instance, which developed from rumors into them having been involved in many more events than they actually were. Often their reputation was as much "self-promotion" as anything else; such was the case of Bat Masterson. Wyatt Earp with his brothers Morgan and Virgil along with Doc Holliday killed three outlaw Cowboys in the Gunfight at the O.K. Corral in Tombstone, Arizona Territory. He has been said to have been involved in more than one hundred gunfights in his lifetime. But Prof. Bill O'Neal cites just five incidents in his Encyclopedia of Western Gunfighters. Earp expressed his dismay about

the controversy that followed him his entire life. He wrote in a letter to John Hays Hammond on May 21, 1925, that "notoriety had been the bane of my life."

After his brother Virgil was maimed in an ambush and Morgan was assassinated by hidden assailants, the men suspected of involvement were provided alibis by fellow Cowboys and released without trial. Wyatt and his brother Warren set out on a vendetta ride to locate and kill those they felt were responsible. Wyatt has been portrayed in a number of film and books as a fearless Western hero. He is often viewed as the central character and hero of the Gunfight at the O.K. Corral, at least in part because he was the only one who was not wounded or killed. In fact, his brother, Tombstone Marshal and Deputy U.S. Marshal Virgil Earp had considerably more experience with weapons and combat as a Union soldier in the Civil War, and in law enforcement as a sheriff, constable, and marshal.[46] As city marshal, Virgil made the decision to disarm the Cowboys in Tombstone and requested Wyatt's assistance.[47] But because Wyatt outlived Virgil and due to a creative biography, Wyatt Earp: Frontier Marshal published two years after Wyatt's death, Wyatt became famous and the subject of various movies, television shows, biographies and works of fiction.

Outlaw or Lawman

It is often difficult to separate lawmen of the Old West from outlaws of the Old West. In many cases, the term gunfighter was applied to constables. Despite idealistic portrayals in television, movies, and even in history books, very few lawmen/gunfighters could claim their law enforcement role as their only source of employment. Unlike contemporary peace officers, these lawmen generally pursued other occupations, often earning money as gamblers, business owners, or outlaws—as was the case with "Curly" Bill Brocius, who, while always referred to as an outlaw, served as a deputy sheriff under-sheriff Johnny Behan. Many shootouts involving lawmen were caused by disputes arising from these alternative occupations, rather than the lawman's attempts to enforce the law.

Alongside the iconic cowboy, gunfighters have become a cultural image of the American people abroad, and also as an idealized image of violence, frontier justice, and adventure. Even outside of the Western genre, the term 'gunslinger' has been used in modern times to describe someone who is fast and accurate with pistols, either in real life or in other fictional action genre.

Source: Wikipedia

Museum of Western Film History
PO Box 111 Lone Pine, California 93545
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Website: www.museumofwesternfilmhistory.org

For more information on the history of gun belts and holsters see:

<http://www.cochiseleather.com/western-gun-leather-history.aspx>

<https://truewestmagazine.com/the-buscadero-bio/>