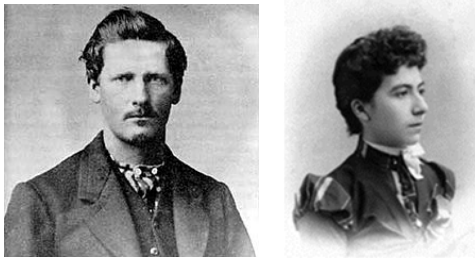


Wyatt Earp Dies, is Buried in Colma, CA's Jewish Cemetery

January 13, 1929



Wyatt Earp and Josie Marcus.

Josephine Sarah Marcus, future wife of lawman and gambler Wyatt Earp, was born in 1861 in Brooklyn, to an observant Prussian Jewish family, the third of four children of immigrants Henry Marcus and Sophie Lewis. In 1867, the Marcus family moved to San Francisco where she is said to have received a Jewish education. In San Francisco, Josie became enamored of the Gold Rush culture. Wyatt's friend Bat Masterson would later describe her as beautiful and rebellious, and she was a frequent teenage runaway, eventually joining a traveling theater company when she was 17.

When the troupe played Tombstone, Arizona, she fell in love and moved in with the corrupt sheriff of Cochise County, Johnny Behan. The much older Behan promised to marry Josie, but never did. Wyatt and his two brothers Morgan and Virgil lived in town, and Josie seems to have met Wyatt at the Union News Depot in Tombstone, owned by Sol Israel. The Israel family was one of about 75 Jewish families in Tombstone, and Jews comprised most the town's merchant class.

Josie quickly fell in love with Deputy U.S. Marshall Wyatt Earp, "thirtyish, tall handsome and laconic," and Behan's fury lead to bad blood in Tombstone. Earp and Behan were political and romantic rivals, competing for power in Cochise County and for Josie's affection. Wyatt's quest to clean up Cochise County brought him into conflict with the Clanton Gang, run by outlaw brothers Ike and Billy. The Clantons were cattle rustlers, stage coach robbers and killers, and they made open threats to kill the Earp brothers, who were interfering with their criminal activities. Evidently, Behan hired the gang to help him kill Wyatt, which dovetailed with their goals. The Gunfight at the OK Corral followed October 26, 1881.

It's difficult to unwind legend and fact about the incident, but we know that Wyatt, his brothers Morgan and Virgil, and friend Doc Holliday, in their capacity as U.S. Marshals, marched toward the OK Corral, where Ike and Billy Clanton, Frank and Tom McLaury and Billie Claiborne were assembling. They came face to face on a nearby street, and each side claimed the other drew their guns first when they were less than 10 feet apart. After thirty shots, Billy Clanton and the McLaury brothers were dead, and Virgil and Morgan Earp and Doc Holliday were wounded. Wyatt didn't have a scratch on him.

Soon after, Wyatt and Josie began to call themselves man and wife. Their common-law marriage would last 47 years. The court acquitted Wyatt and his men of murder at the OK Corral on grounds of self-defense. Seeking revenge, the Clantons ambushed the Earps and killed brother Morgan. Wyatt and Doc Holliday relentlessly tracked down and killed everyone they suspected had a hand in Morgan's death.

Wyatt and Josie fled to Colorado, which refused to extradite him because he couldn't get a fair trial.

Wyatt and Josie caught gold fever, and capitalizing on their celebrity, they travelled the Wild West. They staked claims, invested in mines and real estate, saloons and casinos all over the West and Alaska. They lived for a time in San Francisco in Josie's parents' Orthodox Jewish home, but eventually settled in southern California, where they raised racehorses and lived off gambling winnings, real estate speculation, and oil well investment. Wyatt Earp died on January 13, 1929 and was cremated. Josie buried Wyatt's ashes in the Marcus family plot at the Little Hills of Eternity Jewish Cemetery, in Colma, California. Josie died in 1944, and was buried next to Wyatt. If you find yourself in the Bay Area, make the short trip to the renamed [Hills of Eternity Memorial Park](#) at 1301 El Camino Real, Colma, CA 94014. Put a stone on the tomb of the most famous lawman of the American frontier.



(Image credit: Flickr user Joel Meadows)

Compiled from articles by Miss Cellania, Saul Singer, Larry Tritten, David Green & Paula Hyman.