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**“A Hero For Our Time:
Differing Opinions in Different Eras About Wyatt Earp.”**

The conventional opinion of the activities and character of Wyatt Earp have been different in different eras since the Earp – Clanton Feud of 1879 – 1882. The 1931 publication of Stuart N. Lake’s *Wyatt Earp, Frontier Marshal* established a reputation for Wyatt Earp as a fearless law enforcement hero.

This iconic figure has been revered or damned by various authors espousing a wide variety of opinions about his activities and character.

My presentation will review historical fact, major books and films and television program about him. Family life, motivations and justifications will be discussed.

Wyatt Berry Stapp Earp was born in 1848 in Monmouth, Illinois.
His father was a pro-Union native of Kentucky
Wyatt was the third son but once the Civil War began he was man of the house

His father and brothers James and Virgil enlisted in the Union Army.
Wyatt and brother Morgan ran the farm for the war’s duration
This experience probably made him decisive and aggressive for all of his life

He died in Los Angeles in 1929 two months short of his 81st birthday.
He apparently was never wounded despite being in several gunfights

He married three times: Urilla Sutherland died in 1871
He had a common-law marriage with Mattie Blaylock who died in 1887
He had a common-law marriage with Sarah Joseph Marcus 1881 until his death

He worked as a law enforcement officer in Lamar, Missouri, Ellsworth, Kansas, Dodge City, Kansas and Wichita, Kansas before coming to Tombstone, Arizona

He established a reputation as a decisive enforcer of the law
He often lived with or nearby his brothers James, Virgil, Morgan and Warren

The Earps were mining investors, professional gamblers and saloonkeepers.
They were prosperous notables of the Republican Party
Wyatt left home at age 18 and settled in boomtowns repeatedly

Wyatt, Virgil and Morgan were all over 6 feet tall and muscular
Most men of the time were about 5' 6" so they were authoritative
Wyatt was noted as having a deep voice and swift reflexes

He fought with his fists as needed and apparently never lost
Where Wild Bill Hickok shot anyone who opposed him
Wyatt Earp routinely buffaloed anyone who opposed him
He would walk up to the subject and hit him with a pistol

He met with Stuart N. Lake several times in the last two years of his life
Lake talked to him, found him maddeningly laconic, then met with other pioneers
Lake has been damned for including questionable or untrue incidents in his book

Possibly Lake was fooled by old timers with inflated tales or outright lies.
Various writers have been able to dismiss Earp as a liar and poseur.

Other writers find Lake's account to be generally dependable.
Few reputations are founded on one source.
There is a cottage industry of Earp research keeping many busy and interested

Some facts are unquestioned
Wyatt, Virgil, Morgan, James and eventually Warren moved to Tombstone
Wyatt wanted to be elected Sheriff of Cochise County
A stage robbery with two killings had occurred in March of 1881
Wyatt approached a local criminal named Ike Clanton

He asked Ike to help him apprehend the three criminals who robbed the stage
Wyatt wanted the credit for the arrest and Ike would receive the reward money
Ike was a drunken loudmouth with unsteady status in the local criminal gang

Ike became paranoid then determined Wyatt had told others about their deal
Ike would be murdered by his colleagues if the deal was known
Ike and other members of the "Cowboy" gang threatened all of the brothers

Doctor John Henry Holliday, "Doc" Holliday, Wyatt's friend, made things worse
Doc was dying of tuberculosis and ready for a fight at any time
Doc and Ike and other Cowboys had arguments that nearly ended in shootings

October 25, 1881: Ike threatened to anyone who heard him he would kill Earps
He was buffaloed and fined and considered pacified by the Earps
Ike had friends gather to help him kill the Earps and Holliday

The Cowboys openly flaunted the town requirement to check their firearms
They wandered around Tombstone with pistols on their hips and rifles in saddles
John Behan, the county sheriff who covered for them, tried to defuse the situation

The criminal group consisted of Ike and his brother Billy, Frank and Tom
McLaury, Wes Fuller and Billy Claiborne

Virgil Earp, Tombstone’s chief of police, decided to enforce the law
He deputized Wyatt, Morgan & Holliday to disarm the cowboys
The lawmen walked down the street to meet the criminals.

Fuller and Claiborne ran once they saw the oncoming police officers
Frank McLaury told Behan he would disarm once the Earps were disarmed
The logic was ridiculous but Behan later testified to the idea

Behan either said he had talked to them or had disarmed them to Virgil
At a court hearing later Behan and the Earps disagreed on this point
Virgil demanded the cowboys surrender their firearms

Frank and Billy drew as Wyatt either drew or used the pistol already in his hand
The shootout known as The Gunfight at O. K. Corral occurred close to the corral
Frank & Tom McLaury and Billy Clanton were killed

Virgil was shot in the right calf and Morgan was shot across the shoulders
Holliday was grazed on the hip and Wyatt was unhurt
Possibly his status as never wounded contributes to his mystique

That December Virgil was ambushed and lost the use of his left arm
In March 1882 Morgan was killed and Wyatt missed being killed
Wyatt was appointed U. S. Deputy Marshal
He swore out warrants on likely cowboy criminals and organized a posse

His “Vengeance Ride” of March 1882 resulted in several shootings
He and Holliday stated later he killed Curly Bill Brocius the cowboy leader
Wyatt never claimed the reward but Curly Bill never appeared again

Wyatt and his friends escaped to Colorado to avoid murder warrants
Colorado’s governor refused extradition due to likely lynchings by cowboys
Wyatt’s life then became fairly quiet as a prospector and businessman

He was a celebrity during the print culture of the 1800s and early 1900s
He gave some interviews in the 1890s
His friend Bat Masterson wrote about him in a magazine series in 1907.

Wyatt moved to Los Angeles and became technical advisor to Western films
He was a friend of the early movie stars Tom Mix and William S. Hart
Both of them served as pallbearers at his funeral

Various books and films popularized the Wild West in the 1900s.
He also refereed a controversial boxing match in 1896
He has been smeared as corrupt but the evidence does not support it

Jose Earp lived until 1944.
She was fiercely protective of his reputation to her dying day
She dictated her memoirs twice to relatives

The manuscripts were lost for decades
By chance a person rummaging in an old trunk found them
I use this example to my students as how events can change opinions

She and Lake meddled in film representations of Wyatt
Lake was a consultant to the television series starring Hugh O'Brian.
Lake lived until 1964 which was an era of debunking

Some writers had seen him as a spotless hero
Some writers have damned him as a corrupt conniving liar
Recent thorough research usually credits him with courage and direction

Richard Slotkin's book ***Gunfighter Nation: 1800 – 1890 Agrarian to Industrial Nation*** defines the situation of the feud and its popularity

The United States was becoming an industrial nation of wage earners then
The West was an area of freedom and lawlessness and masculine bravery
Industrial mining and high finance and venture capitalism established Tombstone

Slotkin says ***Ideology*** is basic concepts, beliefs and values defining a nation
Genre is how ideological concepts are explicitly stated
Mythology is the "givens" of any culture's ideals
Myth of the Frontier is the oldest myth (legend) of American culture

The frontier is a story of conquest and colonization
Americans since the Puritans see life as the Godly Us and the Godless Them
Law and order versus lawlessness and chaos is the standard dramatic form

Merciless death and slaughter are expected if The Godly are defeated
No quarter is required for The Godly but they can show mercy

The American hero is usually a strong silent type
He says only what is necessary, acts when necessary, is skilled properly
The Western Hero, fictional or factual or both, is the hero of a morality play

The next standard American hero is The Detective, a private eye or policeman
The *Die Hard* films were pegged as modern Westerns by reviewers
Sam Spade or Philip Marlowe were as heroic as any Western lawman
I agree: detective films tend to be morality plays but often are more complex

Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Show of 1893 – 1916 helped set the archetype
He had notables such as himself, Wild Bill Hickok, Sitting Bull and others in it

By 1875 cheap fiction shifted from colonial, Revolutionary or Indian warfare tales
The new focus was on detective and outlaw fiction: Wyatt Earp fits here

I believe the model of Wyatt Earp set the ideal of the American hero
Some later heroes are anti-heroes, bad men who did good things for redemption
They are still heroes in the conclusion of their novels or films

Some criminals have been cast as ***Social Bandits***
They are traditional heroes upholding culture against needless modernization
The Clanton Gang is usually seen as unredeemable backshooters

Western films and fiction became the vehicle for The Frontier Myth
Fiction and fact is used as entertainment and instruction to the audience

In some eras many in the audience were immigrants or their children
These viewers needed instruction in how to be Americans
The Wyatt Earp story gave clear instruction: strong, silent and decisive

The Wyatt Earp story has been told repeatedly
Some of the attempts are considered to be classic now
My Darling Clementine (1946) combined Western & gangster film

A factual basis for Western films has been used to various extents
Eugene Cunningham's book *Triggernometry* supplied film details
The Gunfighter (1950) was based on Cunningham's anecdotes

The film and book cast the Western gunfighter as a celebrity
This celebrity was sometimes hounded by fans or copycats

The cultural importance of Wyatt Earp's story was shown by an offhand remark Muhammad Ali, during his legal troubles with the military draft, said:

"History will remember me. I've been attacked like all the great men, like Jesus, like Muhammad, even like Wyatt Earp!"

This topic is intriguing because of sources and factual determinations.

We know when and where Wyatt Earp was born.

We know his ashes are interred in a Jewish cemetery in Los Angeles

We can determine many of his residences

He is not a shadowy figure like Robin Hood with questionable existence

People who liked him or disliked him wrote about him.

He lived when the West was being settled: fluid, free and open life existed

The masculine protest of lawmen and outlaws appeals to many today

The clear sense of right and wrong is well dramatized in film, TV or writing

I expect people will be interested in this topic a hundred years from now

Richard Prassel has written that the frontier experience left a residue

Criminal behavior in our culture still is influenced by these ideals

The past is prologue and we are still influenced by the Earp-Clanton Feud

Prassel quoted Wyatt Earp for a statement I have never seen elsewhere:

"Outlaws are made, not born."

This optimistic view still holds for many people hoping to reform criminals

The earliest source I can cite was on the scene

George Whitwell Parsons lived in Tombstone during the days of the feud

He was an open partisan for the Earps and against the cowboys

He wrote in his diary he expected the O. K. shootout earlier

He was not surprised by this fatal gunplay

He recorded 30 killings, usually by gunfire, a death every few days

Parsons was clear that Sheriff Behan was corrupt and untrustworthy

This diarist wrote he wanted more dead cowboys as soon as possible

William McLeod Rainie in his 1903 book ***Famous Western Sheriffs and***

Outlaws said life was cheap in Tombstone in the 1870s & 1880s

He was clear the Clantons were all well known cattle thieves and backshooters

Rainie idealizes the Earp brothers are strong fearless bold lawmen

He is clear that Wyatt was the leader of the lawmen in Tombstone

89: "They were a dangerous combination, for the group stood as a unit."

Wyatt was a forceful personality and a natural leader

91: "Each side made its threats."

He refers to The Battle of Vurleigh where Wyatt killed Curly bill

He makes the point that some disputed Curly's death

He makes the point that Curly disappeared from the scene afterward

Frederick R. Bechdolt's 1922 book **When The West Was Young**

Says that the Feud was Homeric in violence involving bold men

He says the Clantons robbed stages and stole cattle

He states Johnny Ringo was the brains and Curly Bill the operational leader

(Such statements often conflict with each other depending on the writer)

(Ringo is generally understood as a drunken psychotic so that is unlikely)

He tells the tale that Billy Breakenridge, a deputy sheriff, asked Curly's help

Curly helped him collect local taxes which Curly found amusing

He says the Old West was like the Middle Ages:

Some men were chivalrous and others had not decency

Billy Breakenridge's book **Hellorado (1928)** is an interesting source

It has been upheld and damned by various writers

He was a county sheriff deputy at the time of the Feud

He visited Wyatt for his recollection of details and Wyatt helped him

Wyatt and Josie later felt he made Wyatt look villainous in his book

Breakenridge contradicts himself and other authorities in his book

He is portrayed in the 1993 film **Tombstone** by Jason Priestly

This is the only time his character appears in any film I have seen

The film intimates that he was homosexual: this view is due to one letter.

An acquaintance years later referred to him as "an nice little old lady."

Breakenridge says men had to be courageous in Tombstone in those days

He said law enforcement was frustrated by Clanton Gang members

The rustlers always provided alibis for each other when charged with a crime

He says Tombstone was generally order in contradiction to Parsons

Breakenridge says there were few killings and little crime

He says the Clantons and McLaurys were apparently respectable people

The Clantons were well known as cattle thieves and claim jumpers

This author says Billy Clanton was shot with his hands up
The wounds in Billy's arms prove his arms were straight out as if shooting
Every witness said Billy was the only effective shooter of the Clantons at O. K.
This author cannot be trusted in this matter

He acknowledges Frank Stillwell was killed by the Earps in Tucson
Stillwell was shot in the train yard in Tucson as Virgil was leaving
Wyatt always took credit for killing Stilwell who was lying in wait for them
This author has a specific fact apparently right: every other writer agrees

Breakenridge was not on the scene at the shootout involving Curly
He says it is generally accepted Wyatt killed Curly in that battle
He also says dependable sources saw Curly years later

Walter Noble Burns 1929 book *Tombstone: An Iliad of the Southwest*
Is a basic source since Burns talked to Wyatt about the time and place

He says Wyatt was always watchful and says Virgil was dour and silent
Most sources peg Virgil as affable and friendly so this view is novel
He also mistakenly lists James as being younger than Morgan
He clearly confused Warren, the youngest, with James, the oldest.

Burns says Behan was in over his head and indecisive as county sheriff
He does not say that Behan was corrupt or even criminal as others said

He admits Wyatt was either an admirable hero or a cynical politician
This writer invites the reader to take his choice of possible opinions

Rustling on the Arizona-Mexican border was so serious that discussions in
Congress occurred in the 1800s and might have led to international problems

He is clear that only Ike, in court testimony, said Earps were criminals
Burns refers to Wyatt repeated as *The Lion of Tombstone*.

Stuart N. Lake's 1931 book *Wyatt Earp, Frontier Marshal* is the source
Lake was a journalist looking to write a Western book
He found Wyatt aged and willing to talk a little

Wyatt and Josie felt they had been portrayed badly by recent writers
Lake talked to other pioneers and did not cite any except Wyatt
Wyatt has been vilified by some writers as a liar due to Lake's reports

He makes the point that shooting required daily practice, calm mind & aim
Lake describes the Border Shift: tossing a pistol from one hand to another
He quoted Bat Masterson saying Wyatt's speed was remarkable
He quoted Masterson as saying Wyatt was the best gunman he ever saw.

Wyatt is stated, for the first time, as physically very strong and a good fighter
The most controversial anecdote of Wyatt is disarming Ben Thompson
Lake says Wyatt volunteered to disarm this well known mankiller in Ellsworth

Lake's story has been pegged as a complete lie
There is no contemporary account of it so Wyatt is pegged as a liar
Possibly old-timers told him the story or Lake made it up or Wyatt lied
Nobody can be sure of it now

He also tells the tale of The Buntline Special a large Colt pistol
The story may or may not be true: the information is muddled
Some writers and films support it and others deny it

He says Wyatt wounded over 50 men he could have killed
Wyatt is displayed as cool in deliberation and slow to use lethal force
He is clear the Rustlers had threatened Wyatt & brothers with death

The death threats have usually been accepted as true
The motivation of stopping these threats has been credited with the Feud
Ike particularly threatened Wyatt, Doc and others in public repeatedly

Lake is the first to state that Fuller and Claiborne ran from the scene
He explains Wyatt shot Frank first since Frank was the best shot of the gang
Lake is clear that Tom was armed and shooting
Tom has sometimes been characterized as an unarmed victim

He is clear Wyatt was the best lawman there or responsible for many crimes
President McKinley offered Wyatt the post of U. S. Marshal for Arizona later
He turned it down since he & Josie realized he would be a target for thugs

Eugene Cunningham's 1941 book *Triggernometry* focuses on gun science
He says Old West gunmen usually fought face to face and showed integrity
He damns 1930s gangsters as cowards who shot indiscriminately
This comparison shows up in a few writers' evaluations of the Feud

He repeats the questionable tale of Wyatt disarming Ben Thompson
He agrees Wyatt was a deadly gunfighter and effective peace officer
He feels Burns and Lake made Wyatt too much of a saint

Joseph G. Rosa's 1969 book must be mentioned here out of historical line
The Gunfighter: Man or Myth? Is an authoritative study
It deserves to sit next to Cunningham's work so I will review it now

Rosa states Lake established reputations of all Earps and Tombstone
A gunfighter's reputation did not have room for weakness or indecision
He says Western outlaws did not include any Robin Hoods

Various films and a TV program (1955 – 1961) lionized Wyatt Earp
The widening of higher education and prosperity motivated questioning
There has been revisionism about Wyatt Earp in research and entertainment

Ed Bartholomew's two books on Wyatt are very thoroughly researched
His work is the only writing I have found about Wyatt's father Nicholas
Nicholas Earp was a mean spirited opportunist who drove his sons hard

Bartholomew is also very mean spirited in his writing
He establishes that Wyatt was an opportunist and less than a saint
He discusses how Wyatt deserted Mattie for Josie
Apparently Wyatt once dropped his pistol and it went off accidentally

Bartholomew's books ***Wyatt Earp: The Untold Story (1963)*** and
Wyatt Earp: The Man and The Myth (1964) evidence the 1960s spirit

He is clear that no contemporary accounts describe Wyatt disarming Thompson
He blames Wyatt without considering Lake as a liar or a fool
He says there are no records of Wyatt as a buffalo hunter as if there are such

Bartholomew notes Lake's book was a runaway success
It surprised Lake and Josie of its many printings and various movies
He says the legend of Wyatt is now so commercialized that fiction is now fact

The most extreme point he makes is that most of Wyatt's story is fiction
Later revisionists setting balance disagree with him
He says the McLaurys were respected ranchers: few writers agree

Bartholomew states that all Earps were involved in stage robberies
He says they were all involved in criminal activities routinely
The revelation that one or more of them were involved in prostitution is stated

He blames John Clum, editor of ***Tombstone Epitaph***, for inventing legends
The most egregious "legend" is that there was a Rustler Gang
Nobody agrees with Bartholomew: all acknowledge this criminal group

Bartholomew cites 1893 newspaper interviews to determine Wyatt's celebrity
He accepts without attribution the idea that Earps were stage robbers
He says Earps masterminded all local stage robberies for bullion

He says Stilwell was not an outlaw but a brave resourceful deputy
He gives no explanation about Stilwell being in the Tucson rail yard
He is sure Wyatt did not kill Curly
He also says Wyatt did not kill Dave Rudabaugh: nobody ever said it

Bartholomew provides useful details about lethality of Feud characters
Billy Breakenridge was the prize winner for gunfire accuracy in Tombstone
Frank McLaury had won prizes for accurate shooting so Wyatt chose well

Bartholomew says Stilwell and Indian Charlie were killed by Wyatt
He says they did not murder Morgan but gives no idea of who did it
He says Stilwell's body was robbed of his watch and wallet: maybe

He says the pistol in Stilwell's pocket was probably a plant: why?
Bartholomew says Ike was shot at 12 times at O. K. Corral shootout
How did they miss him so many times?

He also says Behan was an efficient busy officer: what about the porous jail?
Bartholomew sees Wyatt as a coward hiding behind Holliday
The walk down is portrayed here as in no other source

**Most writers describe four abreast, then Virgil & Wyatt leading,
Then the four lawmen abreast to meet the criminals
Bartholomew says Wyatt skulked behind Holliday all along the way
What is his source?**

He says "one" McLaury was robbed of \$1600 after behind killed
He gives no more detail on this item

Bartholomew makes a good point: why did the Rustlers not shoot earlier
They had rifles in the saddles of two horses but did not draw them
Bravado or drunkenness or head wounds might explain it
His point is the cowboys should have drawn and fired earlier
I agree: they made a big mistake in threats and actions

He believes Behan's testimony that cowboys had their hands up
Autopsy records show the wounds were consistent with pointing guns
Judge Spicer at the hearing stated that fact

Stuart Lake died in 1964 in an era of debunking and disrespect of tradition
Later researchers take Bartholomew as a starting point of truth or nonsense
Writing about Wyatt Earp since the 1960s finds balance not found before

The unquestioned truth is Wyatt faced organized murderous enemies
He was decisive and had losses and never realized his goal of Sheriff

His story is wish fulfillment for today's people whose enemies cannot be touched
Wyatt was active, eventually exonerated and he exemplifies masculine protest
He is a hero for our time in any time depending on details

Paula Mitchell Marks 1990 book . . . ***And Die in The West*** provides deep
research and balance to the canon of this area

She says nobody is completely clear about "good guys" and "bad guys" here
The Earps were either noble lawmen or corrupt opportunists
The source determines that view

Wyatt was driven, Virgil was stolid, Morgan was affable and hot tempered
Gunmen had to have courage, accuracy and deliberation, no room for amateurs
Rustlers left locals alone and well liked by some old timers
Negative views of the Earps often came from old timers years later

The Western hero tradition began with J. F. Cooper's western tales
He fictionalized the life of Daniel Boone as Natty Bumppo
Plays and films and television made these heroes larger than life

She rejects the idea of Earps as stage robbers since they were prosperous
She records Virgil's and Wyatt's heroism during a June 1881 fire in Tombstone
This is the first time these anecdotes have surfaced

Marks says Jim Earp's stepdaughter Hattie was trysting with a McLauray
Possibly this relationship was one of the motivations for the shootout and Feud
This is the first time this anecdote has surfaced

She notes Virgil offered help by two Vigilante committees
He turned them down since it would look cowardly
It was his job as Town Marshal or Chief of Police to enforce the law

She says Wyatt might have had a 10-inch barrel Colt ergo a long weapon
The Buntline Special legend might have had some root in this use
She says Wyatt was a good shot who practiced daily
Marks pegs Virgil as an efficient officer who was well respected

Judge Spicer's verdict of the hearing is explored in depth
The Judge noted Ike could have been killed at O. K. or earlier but still alive
He said Ike's story was ridiculous and Virgil acted reasonably

She is clear that gunfights were confusing and evaluations made in seconds
The Earps were well armed and good shots
Who do you trust or believe, she asks, there are many sources and opinions

Casey Terfertiler's 1997 book ***Wyatt Earp: The Life Behind The Legend*** is another re-balancing revisionist work of thorough research

This book is clear that the Vengeance Ride asks an important question:
"How does a nation of laws work when law fails?"
If law supersedes order then criminal violence may spin out of control
If order supersedes law then police may overstep boundaries

Wyatt is defined here as a peace officer, a Vigilante and an outlaw
He upheld law, established order and punished without due process
He was always sure of the virtue of his actions even in old age

A ***Saturday Evening Post*** article in 1919 told their story with inaccuracies
A ***Los Angeles Times*** article in 1922 said Wyatt was dead but lived into 1929
Scribner's Magazine in 1925 had an article about Wyatt in Alaska

San Francisco Chronicle published basic story of the Feud in 1891
Wyatt agreed to 3-part article in San Francisco Examiner in 1896
He was a celebrity during his life and cooperated with publishers

Police Gazette, 1880, identified Curly Bill as a dangerous outlaw
He says Bartholomew & Frank Waters were inaccurate and negative
This book says lake was generally correct with some errors

Lake may have created quotations or been naïve in accepting others' stories
It is unquestioned Ike made death threats as per witness testimony
The shootout was reported in San Diego, Yuma AZ & New Hampshire papers

He reports witnesses testified cowboys did not have their hands up
A witness stated in San Francisco paper months later Tom was shooting

He defines Wyatt as chasing money opportunities, honest, dependable
Wyatt was courageous and a better officer than most of his contemporaries

Terfertiler interviewed Hugh O’Brian who played Wyatt in the TV series O’Brian told him John Wayne told him Wayne knew Earp as an old man Wayne said his acting was based on the personality of Wyatt Earp

Alford Turner’s two books are based on library research of source materials.
The Earps Talk (1980) and The O. K. Corral Inquest (1981) give new views

The author sees Wyatt Earp as a man with good and bad characteristics
Wyatt and Virgil did well in real estate, mining, water rights and saloons
Morgan & Doc were less respectable and more likely to act rashly

He states Big Nose Kate, Doc’s common-law wife, hated Wyatt
She said in 1935 that Wyatt had disguises hidden and used them
(How would that mask his size and obvious physique?)

The second book is the only one to say the shootout was on Wednesday
He sees the cowboys as stupid to be unarmed (if so) if threatening police
The Rustlers were probably overconfident about facing the Earps

Wyatt carried a Colt Peacemaker with a 10 or 12 inch barrel
The shootout was due to **“a legitimate police action”**
He says that the Judge found Billy’s wounds inconsistent with “hands up.”

Film is the most expensive and involved form of story telling
Actors, designers, writers, technicians and directors and producers are involved
No film is a sure thing so it is venture capitalism

No film was made about Wyatt during his life
Several films have been made in the talking pictures era about him

Frontier Marshal (1934) and remake (1939) were “programmers”
They were traditional plots of Western heroism with stock characters
George O’Brien was Michael Wyatt in the first film due to Josie’s legal meddling
Randolph Scott played Wyatt Earp in the second film
Ward Bond plays the sheriff in both films

Tombstone: The Town Too Tough To Die (1942) had Richard Dix as Wyatt
Edgar Buchanan, later Uncle Joe in ***Petticoat Junction*** played Curly

My Darling Clementine (1946) is seen as a classic film
John Ford directed, Henry Fonda as Wyatt: lyrical riveting story
The film is rife with errors or odd choices but the story is well done
Ford claimed he had known Wyatt but the film is far from accurate

This boast proves that a good story may not be a truthful tale.

Gunfight at the O. K. Corral (1957) has Burt Lancaster as Wyatt
Kirk Douglas plays Doc: for the first time Doc is shown as a knife fighter
The colors are bright and everyone is well dressed
The gunfight is more involved and involves more people than in real life

Hour of the Gun (1967) James Garner as Wyatt and Jason Robards as Doc
It has some errors such as Doc having been a Confederate soldier
The Vengeance Ride is shown for the first time yet has Wyatt kill Ike
Ike was killed years later by another lawman

Doc (1971) is a revisionist Western: Harris Yulin is Wyatt as a criminal
The shootout has each lawman using a shotgun
It is gritty but neither good entertainment nor good accuracy

Tombstone (1993) has Kurt Russell as Wyatt and Val Kilmer was Doc
The celebrated script includes many persons not included before
The Vengeance Ride is show but inaccurately

Wyatt Earp (1994) has Kevin Costner as possibly the most accurate Wyatt
Costner and director Lawrence Kasdan clashed on the script and film
Overall this film shows Wyatt as a child for the first time and a young man
Usually a Wyatt Earp film begins with him as an adult and no earlier explanations

I expect storytellers will shade their stories to reflect their influences and hunches
Hugh O'Brian played Wyatt Earp on television as a spotless big brother.
The program reflected the expectations and culture of the day
Every book and film and the TV series are products of their day.
Wyatt Earp was a man of his time as well

End of Presentation

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