

**Myth #6: T.R. and Wyatt by Guy Rocha, Former Nevada State Archivist and Dennis Myers, Journalist**

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Contrary to what you'll read on back of picture postcards purchased in Goldfield, Theodore Roosevelt never spoke from the balcony of the Goldfield Hotel or anywhere else in the town. His only Nevada appearances were in Reno and Carson City (as President in 1903), Reno (1911, 1912), and Las Vegas (1915). The story makes little sense anyway, inasmuch as it was Roosevelt who in December 1907 sent federal troops into Goldfield, where they broke a miners' strike. Theodore Roosevelt going to Goldfield would be like Fidel Castro going to Miami.



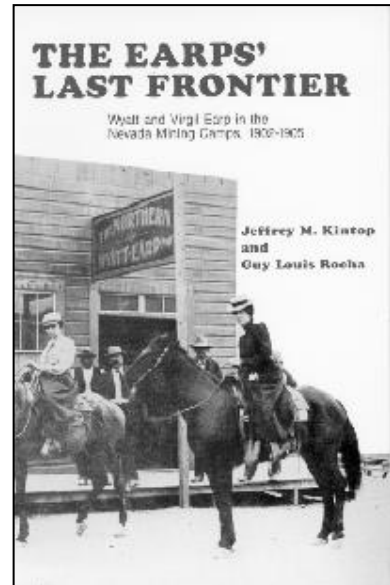
The story apparently originated with a character who showed up at the 42-round Gans- Nelson lightweight world title fight in Goldfield on September, 3, 1906. According to historian Phillip Earl, Curator of History emeritus at the Nevada Historical Society, the fellow went around posing as the president at a variety of functions. The town's residents knew the truth; modern Nevadans are apparently a little more imaginative.

As for Wyatt Earp, there is no end to the list of things he didn't do in Goldfield. He didn't tend bar there, he didn't own a hotel or saloon there, and in fact he didn't do much of anything there except reportedly visit his brother Virgil in 1905. Virgil died there on October 19, however he is buried in Riverview Cemetery in Portland, Oregon. Somehow over the years Wyatt's actual activities in and around Tonopah in 1902-03, including owning the Northern Saloon, have become blurred with imaginary stories of Goldfield, perhaps because the two towns are only 25 miles apart and were part of the same mining boom.

On August 23, 2002 according to the Associated Press (AP), Goldfield residents enthusiastically welcomed to the mining town's 100th anniversary celebration a 60 year-old man who claimed he was Wyatt Earp's grandson. The man showed up in costume and said his gun, which he was willing to sell for \$5,000, once belonged to his grandfather. He was commissioned an honorary Esmeralda County sheriff's deputy as politicians posed for photographs with him. "There was just one problem," wrote the AP, "historians say Wyatt Earp had no children and the man is an imposter."

Experts on Wyatt Earp attending the celebration confronted the fraud and asked for proof, none of which was forthcoming. "Absolutely, he's a con man," said Michael Curcio of Genoa who portrays Earp at special events and has studied the controversial lawman. "If you are going to do a fraud, you ought to get your history right." Before morning was up, the imposter had hightailed it out of town. Community leaders were embarrassed to discover they had been deceived by a flim-flam man.

The moral to this story is to be careful what you believe. Your ignorance is the dupe's delight.



An excellent source on Wyatt Earp is *The Earps' Last Frontier: Wyatt and Virgil Earp in the Nevada Mining Camps, 1902 - 1905* by Jeffrey Kintop and Guy Rocha.

Photo: Nevada Historical Society

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