

= Gunfighter =

Gunfighter and gunslinger / ???nsI???r / 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 .

= = Origin of the term = =

The term " gun slinger " was used in the Western film 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 " , " pistoleer " , " 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 " .

= = = Usage = = =

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 .

= = Depiction in culture = =

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 .

Another classic bit of cinema that is largely a myth is the showdown at high noon , where two well @-@ matched gunslingers agree to meet for a climactic formal duel . These duels did occasionally happen , as in the case of the Luke Short ? Jim Courtright duel , but gunfights were typically more spontaneous , a fight that turned deadly when one side reached for a weapon , and no one knew who actually won the fight for several minutes until the air finally cleared of smoke . Gunfights could be won by simple distraction , or pistols could be emptied as gunmen fought from behind cover without injury . When a gunman did square off , it rarely was with another gunfighter . Gunslingers usually gave each other a wide berth , and it was uncommon for two well @-@ known gunslingers to face off . The gunslinger 's reputation often was as valuable as any skills possessed . In Western films and books , young toughs often challenge experienced gunmen with the hopes of building a reputation , but this rarely happened in real life . A strong reputation was enough to keep others civil and often would spare a gunfighter from conflict . Even other gunslingers were likely to avoid any unnecessary confrontation .

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 = =

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 .

Mythology and folklore often exaggerate the skills of famous gunfighters . Most of these historical figures were not known to be capable of trick shooting , nor did they necessarily have a reputation for precision sharpshooting . Such tropes that are frequently seen in Westerns include shooting the center of a coin , stylistic pistol twirling , glancing shots that intentionally only graze an opponent ( the bullet through the hat being an example ) , shooting an opponent 's belt buckle ( thus dropping his pants ) , a bullet cutting the hangman 's rope , or shooting the guns out of opponents ' hands ( typically as an alternative to killing ) . The latter was debunked by Mythbusters as an impossibility , as unjacketed bullets tend to shatter into fragments that can hurt or even kill . Ed McGivern dispelled

the myth of the inaccuracy of pistol fanning by shooting tight groups while fanning the revolver .

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 . 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 .

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 = =

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 did not actually happen in the corral , but in a vacant lot outside of it . The shooting started when Billy Clanton and Frank McLaury cocked their pistols . Both parties simultaneously drew their guns , which added to the confusion of

who fired first . 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 ribcage . 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 . 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 April 14 , 1881 , lawman Dallas Stoudenmire participated in a gunfight in El Paso , Texas which many dubbed the Four Dead in Five Seconds Gunfight , in which he killed three of the four fatalities with his twin .44 caliber Colt revolvers . One of those killed was an innocent Mexican bystander . Less than a year after these incidents , he would kill as many as six more men in gunfights while in the line of duty .

Another well documented gunfight resulted in the most kills by one person in a single event , when Capt. Jonathan R. Davis shot eleven bandits single handedly on 19 December 1854 . Unknown to Davis and his companions , a band of robbers was lying in wait in the canyon brush near the trail . They were a typically diverse and motley group of Gold Rush bandits : two Americans , one Frenchman , two Britons , five Sydney Ducks , and four Mexicans . As Captain Davis and his companions trudged on foot , the bandit gang charged out of the brush , pistols flaming . James McDonald died instantly , without time to draw his revolver or react in any way . Dr. Bolivar managed to get his six shooter out and fire twice at the highwaymen before he dropped , badly wounded . Captain Davis later described himself as being " in a fever of excitement at the time . " Unfazed , he stood his ground , pulling out both pistols and firing a barrage at the charging outlaws . He shot down his assailants , one after another . The outlaws ' bullets tore at Davis 's clothing , but caused only two slight flesh wounds . Within moments , seven of the bandits were dead or dying on the ground and Davis 's pistols were empty . Four of the remaining robbers now closed in on the captain to finish him off . Davis whipped out his Bowie knife , and quickly warded off the thrusts from the two of the bandits . He stabbed one of them to death ; the other he disarmed by knocking the knife from his grasp and slicing off his nose and a finger of his right hand . The two last attackers were the men who had been wounded in a previous bandit raid . Despite their weakened condition , they foolishly approached Davis with drawn knives . The captain reacted in an instant . Slashing with his heavy Bowie , he killed them both .

In December 1 , 1884 , a town sheriff named Elfego Baca came face to face against 80 gunmen which became known as the Frisco shootout . The battle started when Baca arrested a cowboy who had shot him . In turn the cowboy called upon 80 of his associates to murder Baca . Baca took refuge in an adobe house , and over the course of a 36 hour siege , the gunmen put 400 bullet holes in the house ( some accounts say a total of 4 ,000 shots ) without touching Baca . He in turn killed 4 of them and wounded 8 . When the shooting was over as the attackers finally ran out of ammo , Baca strolled out of the house unscathed . Baca went on to a distinguished career as a lawyer and legislator and died in his bed in 1945 , age 80 .

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 .

General George S. Patton himself had a gunfight when he was a young second lieutenant chasing Pancho Villa all over northern Mexico in 1916 . Patton and 10 enlisted men had been sent to San Miguelito Ranch to look for Villa , who had recently raided the city of Columbus , New Mexico . Patton positioned his men by the south gate and was making his way up to the north gate when a trio of Villa 's men came into the ranch on horseback . Patton drew his obsolete single @-@ action Colt Peacemaker revolver and shot two of the men . The first man had been fatally wounded in the exchange and tried to draw his pistol before Patton killed him with a single shot . After his troops took down the remaining outlaw , Patton tied the three dead men to the hood of his touring car and drove the bodies back to his commanding officer .

= = = Real @-@ life Wild West duels = = =

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 . The Langford - Peel duel occurred in July 22 , 1867 between gunmen John Bull and Langford Peel .

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 .

Another well @-@ known duel in the American West happened in Fort Worth , Texas , and was known as the Luke Short @-@ Jim Courtright Duel . Timothy Isaiah " Longhair Jim " Courtright was running the T.I.C. Commercial agency in Fort Worth , which provided " protection " to gambling dens and saloons in return for a portion of their profits . At the same time , Luke Short , a former friend of Courtright 's , was running the White Elephant Saloon and Jim was trying to get Short to utilize his services . But the Dodge City gunfighter told Courtright to " go to Hell , " that he could do anything that was necessary to take care of his business . On February 8 , 1887 , the two quarreled , and with Bat Masterson at Short 's side , Courtright and Short dueled in the street . They drew their pistols at close range , and Short fired first , blowing off Courtright 's thumb . Courtright attempted the " border shift " , a move where a gunfighter switches his gun to his uninjured hand , but he was too slow . Short shot him in the chest , killing him .

The Long Branch Saloon Shootout , involving Levi Richardson , a buffalo hunter , and " Cockeyed Frank " Loving , a professional gambler , happened on April 5 , 1879 . Richardson had developed some affection for Loving 's wife Mattie , and the two began to argue about her . In the saloon , Frank sat down at a long table , Richardson turned around and took a seat at the same table . The two were then heard speaking in low voices . After the conversation , Richardson drew his pistol , and Loving drew his in response . The Long Branch Saloon was then filled with smoke . Dodge City Marshal Charlie Bassett , who was in Beatty & Kelley 's Saloon , heard the shots and came running . Both men were still standing , although Richardson had fired five shots from his gun and Loving 's Remington No. 44 was empty . Deputy Sheriff Duffey threw Richardson down in a chair and took his gun , while Bassett disarmed Loving . Richardson then got up and started toward the billiard table , when he fell to the floor with a fatal gunshot in the chest , as well as a shot through the side and another through the right arm . Frank Loving , who had only a slight scratch on the hand , was immediately taken to jail . Two days later , the coroner 's inquest ruled that the killing had been in self @-@ defense and Loving was immediately released .

On March 9 , 1877 , gamblers Jim Levy and Charlie Harrison argued over a game of cards in a saloon in Cheyenne , Wyoming . They met in an alley following an argument about a card game . Harrison shot first , but missed . Levy aimed carefully and hit Harrison , who died a week later .

Not as well known today but famous in his time was the dapper , derby @-@ wearing train robber Marion Hedgepeth , who despite his swell appearance , " was a deadly killer and one of the fastest guns in the Wild , Wild West " . William Pinkerton , whose National Detective Agency had sought to capture Hedgepeth and his gang for years , noted that Hedgepeth once gunned down another outlaw who had already unholstered his pistol before Hedgepeth had drawn his revolver . The

infamous assassin Tom Horn was also said to have participated in a duel with a second lieutenant from the Mexican Army , due to a dispute with a prostitute when he was twenty @-@ six years old . Gunfighters Jim Levy and Tom Carberry became infamous for participating in at least two quick draw duels in their lifetimes .

= = 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 . As city marshal , Virgil made the decision to disarm the Cowboys in Tombstone and requested Wyatt 's assistance . 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 .

There are no records to support the reputation that Johnny Ringo developed . Of the documented instances where Ringo killed men , they were unarmed , and there is no evidence to support his participation in a single gunfight . Others deserved the reputation associated with them . Jim Courtright and Dallas Stoudenmire both killed several men in gunfights both as lawmen and as civilians . Clay Allison and Ben Thompson had well @-@ deserved reputations . At the same time , gunmen like Scott Cooley are all but unknown , when they actually led a life reflective of what most would consider a gunfighter to be . In other cases , certain gunfighters were possibly confused , over time , with being someone else with a similar name . The most well known of Butch Cassidy 's Wild Bunch gang , the Sundance Kid , was in reality only known to have been in one shootout during his lifetime , and no gunfights . Some historians have since stated that it is possible that over time he was confused with another Wild Bunch member , Kid Curry , who was without a doubt the most dangerous member of the gang , having killed many lawmen and civilians during his lifetime before being killed himself . Hence , it is the Sundance Kid who is better known .

= = 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 .

Tom Horn , historically cited as an assassin , served both as a deputy sheriff and as a Pinkerton detective , a job in which he shot at least three people as a killer for hire . Ben Thompson , best known as a gunfighter and gambler , was a very successful chief of police in Austin , Texas . King Fisher had great success as a county sheriff in Texas . Doc Holliday and Billy the Kid both wore badges as lawmen at least once . " Big " Steve Long served as deputy marshal for Laramie , Wyoming , while the entire time committing murders and forced theft of land deeds . A town with a substantial violent crime rate would often turn to a known gunman as their town marshal , chief , or sheriff , in the hopes that the gunman could stem the violence and bring order .

Known gunmen / lawmen were generally effective , and in time the violence would subside , usually after the gunman / lawman had been involved in several shooting incidents , eventually leading to a substantial and well earned fear that kept everyone in line . At times they were hired by cattlemen or other prominent figures to serve as henchmen or enforcers during cattle wars . Although sanctioned by law enforcement officials , the gunmen were not always actually deputized . Sometimes , however , just to make things " official " , they would go through the formality of deputization . A case in point : the service of the Jesse Evans Gang , and outlaw Jesse Evans himself , as agents for the Murphy @-@ Dolan faction during the Lincoln County War . While technically working as lawmen , they were little more than hired guns .

Usually , when a gunman was hired by a town as town marshal , they received the full support of the townspeople until order was restored , at which point the town would tactfully indicate it was time for a change to a less dangerous lawman who relied more on respect than fear to enforce the law . A good example was the 1882 decision by the El Paso , Texas , town council to dismiss Town Marshal Dallas Stoudenmire . He entered the council hall and dared the councilors to try to take his guns or his job , at which point they immediately changed their mind , saying he could keep his job . He resigned on his own a couple of days later .

= = Legacy = =

= = = Modern gunslinger = = =

People relive the Wild West both historically and in popular culture by participating in cowboy action shooting events , where each gunslinger adopts his or her own look representing a character from Western life in the late 1800s , and as part of that character , chooses an alias to go by . The sport originated in Southern California , USA , in the early 1980s but is now practiced in many places with several sanctioning organizations including the Single Action Shooting Society ( SASS ) , Western Action Shootists Association ( WASA ) , and National Congress of Old West Shooters ( NCOWS ) , as well as others in the USA and in other countries . There are different categories shooters can compete in . There 's the gunfighter , frontiersman , classic cowboy and duelist - each with its own specifications .

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 .

The quick draw which gunfighters help popularize , is still an important skill in the American military .

= = = In popular culture = = =

Gunfighters have been featured in media even outside the Western genre , often combined with other elements and genres , mainly science @-@ fiction Space Westerns , steampunk , and the contemporary setting . Abilities , clothing and attitude associated with gunfighters are seen in many



other genres . An example of these is Han shot first , in which Han Solo , a gunfighter @-@ like protagonist in Star Wars , kills his opponent with a subtle , under @-@ the @-@ table draw . He also wore his holster low on , and tied to , the thigh with a cutaway for the trigger . Roland Deschain from the fantasy series The Dark Tower is a gunfighter pitted against fantasy @-@ themed monsters and enemies . Inspired by the " Man with No Name " and other spaghetti @-@ western characters , he himself is detached or unsympathetic , often reacting as uncaring or angry at signs of cowardice or self @-@ pity , yet he possesses a strong sense of heroism , often attempting to help those in need , a morality much seen in Westerns .

Jonah Hex , from DC Comics , is a ruthless bounty hunter bound by a personal code of honor to protect and avenge the innocent . IGN ranked Jonah Hex the 73rd greatest comic book hero of all time . Throughout the DC Universe , Hex has been , on many occasions , transported from the Old West to the contemporary setting and beyond . Even in an unfamiliar territory and time period , Hex managed to outgun his enemies with more advanced weaponry . Two @-@ Gun Kid is another comic book gunfighter from Marvel Comics . Skilled with revolvers , he has aided many super @-@ heroes in future timelines , most notably She @-@ Hulk .

Many Japanese manga and anime have also adopted the western genre . Yasuhiro Nightow is known for creating the space western Trigun . The story 's protagonist , Vash the Stampede , is a wandering gunslinger with a dark past . Unlike other violence @-@ themed gunslingers , Vash carries a Shane @-@ like pacifist attitude , and avoids killing men , even dangerous enemies . Behind him is the gun @-@ toting priest named Nicholas D. Wolfwood , who carries with him a heavy machine gun and rocket launcher shaped like a cross . Nicholas is more violent than Vash , and the two would often argue about killing opponents . Other western genre themed manga and anime include Cowboy Bebop and Kino 's Journey , who both incorporate knight @-@ errant gunslinger themes .

Modern @-@ day western gunslingers have also appeared in recent Neo @-@ Westerns . Raylan Givens from the television series Justified shares the same ambiguous moral code of an Old West sheriff , even using a fast draw to dispatch his enemies . The hitman Anton Chigurh from No Country For Old Men shares many elements of a hunted outlaw . Additionally , the comic book character Vigilante is a self @-@ proclaimed gunfighter born in the 1940s .

Gunfighters have also been featured in many video games , both in traditional Old West , and in contemporary and future settings . Colton White , the protagonist of 2005 's best @-@ selling western video game Gun . Another well @-@ known video game Western protagonist is John Marston from Red Dead Redemption , who was nominated for 2010 Spike 's Video Game Awards . The New York Times stated : " he and his creators conjure such a convincing , cohesive and enthralling re @-@ imagination of the real world that it sets a new standard for sophistication and ambition in electronic gaming . " The main character Caleb in the video games Blood and Blood II : The Chosen is also a former Old West gunfighter . Gunfighter is also a callsign for a group of two Apache Helicopters in the video game Medal of Honor . They appear on mission named " Gunfighters " , and the player will act as Captain Brad " Hawk " Hawkins from 1st Aviation Regiment .

Former professional American football quarterback Brett Favre was nicknamed " The Gunslinger " due to his rural , Southern upbringings and his wild , risky , quick @-@ throwing play @-@ style that led him to great success in the National Football League .