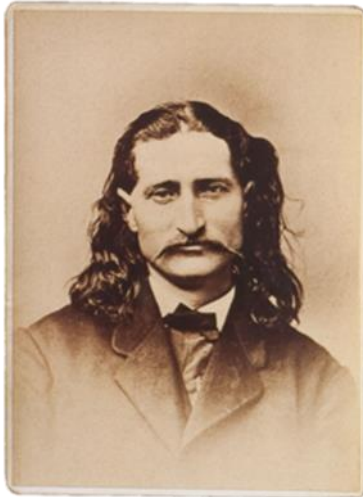


Reading Homework

The following is adapted from the website <old west legends>

Lawmen of the Old West



Wild Bill Hickock

The gunfighter era was an outgrowth of the Civil War. With many men without opportunities for jobs, their homes and lands in ruins, family members killed or missing, and few skills, with the exception of gun handling, they headed westward in search of new lives. Some hunted for gold; some, who had the means, started businesses, others became cowboys, and some with sharp gun handling skills became gunfighters.

Living in the American West was not easy at that time. There were few laws or courts, and little or no government, and because of this, criminals went west. Some of them were escaping punishment for other crimes, some wanted to take advantage of the west having few laws, and a few sought redemption.

However, honest people were also moving to the west and over time, they determined to rid their towns from lawlessness. This often led them to employ men who were known to be expert in the use of firearms. There was a fine line in the Old West between the skills and nerve required to be a lawman or an outlaw, and those lines often became tangled with some men playing each role at different times in their lives.

Many lawmen received no pay other than a percentage of any money that those they arrested might be fined, (which you saw



Wyatt Earp



Judge Roy Bean

Judge Bean collect), or the collection of bounties on the heads of wanted men. This often led them to have second jobs or sometimes, to use their badges in establishing protection rackets or other crimes. Of those who did make a salary, it was often very low. For these reasons very few of even the most famous lawmen actually spent very many years wearing a badge. Wild Bill Hickok only served a few short years in various roles as a lawman, and Wyatt Earp worked as a marshal in a few Kansas cow towns, before being temporarily deputized by his brother Virgil in time for the O.K. Corral gunfight.

The year 1881 was an eventful year for lawmen and outlaws. Billy the Kid, charged with more than 21 murders in a brief lifetime of crime, is finally brought to justice by Sheriff Pat Garrett, who trails The Kid for more than six months before killing him with a single shot at Fort Sumner, New Mexico. That same year Deputy Marshal Wyatt Earp and his brothers gunned down the Clanton gang in a showdown at the O.K. Corral in Tombstone, Arizona.



Pat Barret