



One of San Diego's electric streetcars, circa 1887

Wyatt and Josephine spent many years roaming from boom town to boom town throughout the West in search of fortune and San Diego's growth provided a perfect opportunity for them.

When in 1886 at the age of 38, Wyatt and his wife arrived. San Diego was a small seacoast town of about 5,000 persons. The town was just "waking up" however and there was a lot of excitement as a result of the new railroad. After a few months the Santa Fe

and Southern Pacific railroads engaged in a passenger rate war. A \$125 ticket from Chicago to the West Coast quickly fell to just \$1! The result was a boom felt throughout Southern California. Houses, commercial buildings, saloons and other structures sprang up. The town's population leaped to more than 26,000 by the end of 1886.

During his seven years in San Diego, Wyatt dabbled in various real estate and business ventures as well as occasional "lawing," as he called it, especially when his good friend Bat Masterson, the U.S. Deputy Marshal, arrived in town. However Wyatt profited most of all from the three gambling halls that he operated. His establishments were located on 3rd Avenue, 6th Avenue, and E Street. Gambling was legal during that time and Wyatt soon became one of San Diego's most respected citizens. He occasionally refereed boxing matches as a sideline to raising capital at his gambling dens.

True to their nomadic nature, the Earps didn't own a home in San Diego. At first they lived with Virgil and his wife Allie in their home. Soon, however, Virgil and Allie moved to Colton to be near his aging parents and Wyatt and Josephine had to look for another place to stay.

Before long they looked into the recently built Brooklyn Hotel. Although it was very modest in appearance, they obviously found the accommodations to their liking as they secured rooms there for the next several years.

One night Wyatt returned late from a "friendly little card game" at the home of Mr. E. B. Gifford, announcing to his wife that he had just won a racehorse. Always ready to try something new, Wyatt and Josephine bought several other horses and hit the California racing circuit - San Francisco, Santa Rosa, Napa, Exposition Park in Los Angeles and Santa Anita. During this time Wyatt hired other persons to oversee his gambling halls and investments.

In the Spring of 1888 the great boom of the eighties ended almost overnight. The population dropped from a peak of 35,000 residents to 16,000 by 1890. Wyatt Earp, listed in the San Diego City Directory for 1889 as a "Capitalist," kept his investments in town for five more years until a depression hit the area. He immediately sold everything and took on a new adventure by traveling north to the Klondike gold fields.

The only remnant of Earp's stay in San Diego, the Brooklyn Hotel, changed its name to the Kahle Saddlery Hotel in 1912 after the saddle shop that occupied the bottom floor. Restoration of both the Kahle Saddlery and the Horton Grand was begun in 1980. After six years of work, the doors of the beautifully reconstructed Horton Grand Saddlery Hotel opened its doors to the public in May 1986 as a 110-room hotel and restaurant complex.