

JUDGE EARP

(Continued)

him that he later named one of his sons, Wyatt Berry Stapp Earp.

Captain Stapp's volunteers did not engage in any major battle but in guerilla fighting and skirmishes. Many caught yellow fever or some other disease and died ingloriously on Mexican soil. Nicholas was one of the unfortunate ones. He suffered a double rupture when kicked by a mule and before he recovered to leave the hospital became ill with recurrent fever. But a shadow of his former self, he finally recovered and returned home.

As a result of his Mexican War service, Nicholas received a land grant of 160 acres at Pella, Iowa, where the family moved in 1850. Then came the Civil War and three of "Judge" Earp's sons joined the Union Army, while the rest of the family hit the overland trail to California (Nicholas was wagon master for the train).

They landed in San Bernardino, California in December, 1864 and by 1867 Nicholas had been appointed foreman of that county's Grand Jury, further enhancing his legal standing. By the following year, however, the family returned to Iowa to sell their land and stayed in the midwest until returning to San Bernardino in 1877.

Their second journey west was made over the old Santa Fe Trail and it was a historic one, for this time the family stopped at Dodge City, where Wyatt Earp was a member of the local police force and started his reputation as one of the west's most noted law officers.

After leaving Dodge City, Virgil and James Earp heard about numerous rich silver strikes in and around the Fort Huachuca District, near a little town called Tombstone in Arizona. Fate led their wagon train there where Wyatt, Virgil, Morgan and James, in a few short months, emblazoned the family name across the annals of the west. After the O. K. Corral fight, Virgil was gunned down on one of Tombstone's dark streets, suffering wounds that crippled him for life, while Morgan was murdered by an unknown killer a few weeks later.

But "Judge" Earp had not remained in Tombstone with his sons. He, along with wife Virginia, youngest son Warren and daughter Adelia, had gone on to Colton, California, where he resumed farming and, later, again became a Justice of the Peace. It was while living here that Morgan's body was delivered to the family, after he was murdered at Tombstone. Virgil, also ailing from his own wounds, along with James, also joined their parents there. Wyatt struck north, went to Colorado and Idaho for a while, then joined the gold rush to Alaska, before returning to southern California to live until he passed away in Los Angeles in 1929.

"Judge" Earp never quite got over the shock of Morgan's death and when his youngest boy Warren was killed in a saloon brawl at Willcox, Arizona in 1900 and Virgil died of pneumonia at Goldfield, Nevada in 1905, he became an embittered man. In the interim, after Virginia's death in 1897, he had married a woman thirty year's younger than himself.

Nicholas Porter Earp died in the Soldier's Home at Sawtelle in 1907. His life had spanned almost a century of American history and in some fashion or another, either he or the rest of the family had participated in every part of those historic years, when America opened up the Western frontier, then tottered on the brink of disaster during the Civil War, before emerging to become one of the greatest nations in the world.

Earp was one of our last rugged individualists—a man religious, yet profane, with the courage of a lion, yet sensitive to those more needy about him; he was a real man.



Virginia Earp