



# SILVER SCREEN BUCKAROOS OF COLORADO

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## Buckaroos' News

Highlands Ranch, Colorado

Fall, 1996

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DOC HOLLIDAY

## Colorado's Famous Faces: John Henry "Doc" Holliday

Just a few months before Colorado became a state, a slim, well-dressed man calling himself Tom McKey arrived in Pueblo, Colorado. This man, whose fast gun often required him to make a fast exit from his immediate locale, had most recently been forced to make a swift retreat from down Texas way. Realizing that Pueblo wasn't as big a town as he would like, John Henry "Doc" Holliday took himself and his assumed name on to Denver, where with his cool nerve and competent hands he established himself as a faro dealer at Babbit's House on Blake Street.

But working for Charley Foster at Babbit's just wasn't enough excitement for the dentist-turned-gambler, and when not working his eight-hour shift, he was likely to be found in one of the other gambling establishments on Blake or Larimer Streets, such as Big Ed Chase's place. Not one to be tied to one spot, Doc's adventuring spirit took him on various jaunts during the summer of 1876 to Colorado's boom towns and mining camps, including Boulder, Black Hawk, Central City, Georgetown, Idaho Springs, and Rosita. In the fall, Doc visited Cheyenne and Deadwood, but returned to the faro table at Babbit's.

Denver, now capitol of the nation's newest state, forbade the carrying of firearms. Doc, never in good health and being slightly built, concealed a well-sharpened knife to make up for the lack of a Colt. One Budd Ryan took exception to the thin, coughing Tom McKey's card playing, finally making blustering vocal threats and pulling a hidden revolver. But before the larger man had fully unlimbered his weapon, the slight gambler was on him like a cat, severely, if not fatally, wounding him in the throat. Had Budd known he was dealing with the notorious Doc Holliday, he might well have kept his bluster to himself.

Doc, a well-educated Southerner, realized that a sucker is born every minute. He began carrying a gold-plated brick of lead while riding the Union Pacific, passing himself off as a mine owner or other cultured gentleman. Letting a well-healed fellow passenger know that he had a gold brick for sale at a bargain price, Doc would soon have a substantial wad of the unsuspecting stranger's cash. Shortly after Doc left the train, a couple of men posing as "Pinkertons" would confront the possessor of the golden brick, saying that it was stolen property. The sucker was always able to convince the "Pinkertons" that he was actually the victim, not the thief, and usually offered a substantial payment of cash to help them forget the whole thing. The men would immediately leave the train and rejoin Doc while the now poorer sucker continued his trip. Doc not only had the evidence, but only had to have one brick for the confidence scheme to work over and over again.

In December, 1877, before things got too hot for him in Colorado, Doc returned to Dodge City. Within a few months, Doc was becoming very well acquainted with Wyatt Earp, and the sheriff of Ford County, Kansas, one William Barclay "Bat" Masterson. By then, Colorado's first real railroad war was looming, as the Rio Grande prepared to face off with the Santa Fe. A recruiter was dispatched to Dodge City, where Doc decided to leave his faro table and Bat found time to leave his lawman duties. They joined a dozen and a half gunmen of lesser stature as mercenaries for the Santa Fe to guard a surveying party in the depths of Royal Gorge in Colorado. As luck would have it, both the Great Royal Gorge War and the Roundhouse Battle ended with neither Doc nor Bat having fired a shot.

Bat went back to Kansas to resume duties as the Ford County Sheriff, while Doc stayed on in Trinidad, Colorado, to relax and partake of the town's gambling halls. A gambler called Kid Colton ran afoul of Doc, and was shot for his impertinence. The Kid survived, but Doc decided that June was a good month to

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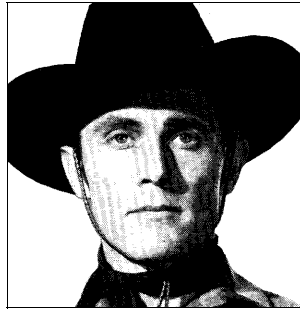
## Coloradans In the Movies: Ken Curtis

Ken Curtis was born Curtis Wain Gates July 2, 1916, on a homestead in Lamar, Colorado. His cattleman father, Dan Gates, moved to Las Animas, Colorado, in 1922 and was later elected Bent County Sheriff. Because their living quarters were in the lower part of the jailhouse, the young man's mother cooked for the prisoners and he became the youngest turn-key on record. In 1935, he left home to attend college in Colorado Springs, Colorado, with the intent of becoming a doctor.

While in college, he became involved with various college musical events. In 1938, he left college for Los Angeles with Dale Shutts and Tommy Clelland in the hopes of making it big as a singer in the music world. He was invited to perform for Louis B. Mayer and several other moguls of the movies and radio. This resulted in his being signed by NBC. He then left for New York City with his brother Chester (nicknamed "Dud") hoping to break into big-time entertaining, but they worked as tunnel construction "sand-hogs" to make ends meet.

In 1941, he returned in disillusionment to Los Angeles, again to take "a job in construction to keep beans on the table." He then made a demo record that impressed Tommy Dorsey. Mr. Dorsey signed him as a temporary replacement for Frank Sinatra. It was Mr. Dorsey who suggested that the 25-year-old singer change his name to Ken Curtis. When Sinatra returned to the Dorsey band, Ken was loaned to the Shep Fields band. He then enlisted in the Army in June, 1942.

When Ken returned to civilian life in 1945, Johnny Mercer invited him to make a radio guest appearance on radio. Ken sang "Tumbling Tumbleweeds." Columbia Pictures, on



the strength of this performance, signed him to a series of eight musical Western jamboree movies along with the Hoosier Hotshots and Ken's sidekick, Guinn "Big Boy" Williams. Their first movie was *Rhythm Roundup*. He also made one chapter play in 1951 for Republic Pictures, *Don Daredevil Rides Again*, in which he played a masked Zorro-like hero. When Gene Autry moved his production company over from Republic, however, Ken was out of a job--there was to be only one singing star at Columbia!

Ken and good friend, Shug Fisher, went on a tour of the southwest with other artists that included the Sons of the Pioneers. In Texas, Ken was asked to fill in for Lloyd Perryman, and then replaced the Pioneers' Tim Spencer when Tim's voice began to give out. The Sons of the Pioneers were featured in Roy Rogers Westerns for Republic.

In February, 1953, Ken left the Pioneers, and after a stint as host of the *Lucky U Ranch* program, appeared in a number of movies, including several with the "Duke," John Wayne. His role as "Monk" in the television series *Have Gun--Will Travel* led in 1964 to his replacing Dennis ("Chester") Weaver in the role of "Festus" in *Gunsmoke* until the show was canceled in 1975. In 1983, Ken co-starred in *The Yellow Rose*, a short-lived NBC television series.

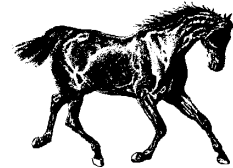
## Ken Curtis Filmography

A partial list of Ken Curtis Westerns includes: *Apache Rose* (1947), *Cowboy Blues* (1946), *Don Daredevil Rides Again* (1951), *The Horse Soldiers* (1959), *How the West Was Won* (1963), *Lone Star Moonlight* (1946), *Over the Santa Fe Trail* (1947), *Riders of the Pony Express* (1949), *Rhythm Roundup* (1945), *The Searchers* (1956), *Singing on the Trail* (1946), *Song of the Prairie* (1945), *Stallion Canyon* (1949), *That Texas Jamboree* (1946), *Throw a Saddle on a Star* (1946), *Two Rode Together* (1961).



## The Old Buckaroo Sez:

"The advantage of the horse over the horseless carriage was that horses all had leather seats."



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## Doc Holliday

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drop down to Las Vegas, New Mexico, to do his gambling. While there, he was involved in yet another shooting.

February, 1880, found Doc arriving in Tombstone, Arizona. In October of 1881, Doc assisted Wyatt Earp in the gunfight at the O. K. Corral. In the aftermath of the shooting, Doc and Wyatt decided to head for quieter parts, arriving in Pueblo, Colorado, on May 10, 1882, where Doc decided to again try his luck, this time under his own name, Doc Holliday. Wyatt, however, disagreed with staying in Pueblo, and left to travel over the Continental Divide to Gunnison, Colorado. It is unlikely that Doc ever saw Wyatt again.

On Sunday, May 14, Doc decided to go to the races at the Fair Grounds in Denver. The following day, as he walked a Denver street, he was confronted by two men with drawn revolvers, and the command, "Throw up your hands." Doc was hurried off to the Arapahoe County sheriff's office by the two sheriff's deputies, Barney Cutler and Charles Linton, where he was met by Perry Mallen. Mallen, it seemed, was a deputy sheriff from Los Angeles and had informed the Arapahoe officers of Doc Holliday's whereabouts. Mallen said that he had been hunting Doc for seven years for killing his partner, Harry White, in Utah. That Doc had never been in Utah made little difference to the officers, as they had a noted gunman in custody and Sheriff Michael Spangler meant to keep him there. Doc was moved to the Arapahoe County jail where he called for Bat Masterson. Bat arrived in Denver and publicly supported Doc and worked actively for Doc's release. On Wednesday, May 31, Doc appeared before Justice McBride in Pueblo on a charge of swindling, with the murder charge and Mallen both now debunked as phonies. Doc paid

three hundred dollars bail and his case was bound over for District Court. Doc became something of a tourist attraction as he settled down as a gambler in South Pueblo.

By November, 1883, Doc had taken up permanent residence in Leadville, Colorado, for his dwindling health. Two-mile high Leadville, known as Cloud City, was noted for "having ten months of winter and two of mighty late fall," and its cold, dry air was a curative for his congested, tubercular lungs. After another fight, which Doc won, Cy Allen, his employer at the Monarch Saloon on Harrison Avenue, fired Doc as a troublemaker. With little money and without a job, Doc moved from his upstairs room above 106 East Second to a rent-free room above Manie Hyman's saloon on Harrison Avenue.

A man named Billy Allen began to make public boasts that he would whip Doc. Allen was a side kick of John Tyler and it was Tyler who Wyatt Earp had thrown from the Oriental Saloon in Tombstone with Doc's backing. Allen's courage and boldness, more than likely urged on by Tyler, was probably increased by the fact that Allen weighed 170 pounds to Doc's 122, and that Doc no longer wore a gun. When Allen burst in through the swinging doors of Hyman's saloon, Doc picked up a short barreled Colt from under the counter and shot Allen in his gun arm. Doc was taken to jail, and Judge Old set his bail at eight thousand dollars, the sum being raised by Leadville citizens. Now a public figure, Doc went back to his gambling.

One Constable Kelly, out to avenge the shooting of Allen, drew his weapon on Doc. Before he could fire, Doc had dropped him, and he was carried away to die. Doc was again arrested, but this time as a mere formality, since Doc had acted in self defense. On March 30, a court

acquitted Doc, but he was told to get out of town and officers escorted him to the evening train from Leadville to Denver where he checked in at the Metropolitan Hotel on Sixteenth Street. On August 3, 1886, he was arrested for vagrancy in Denver, but his case never came to trial.

Doc's health worsened daily, as he continued to divide his gambling time between Denver, Pueblo, and Leadville. Finally, in May, 1887, Doc boarded a stage to Glenwood Springs to partake of the wonder-working sulfur baths. But the mineral baths failed to arrest Doc's tuberculosis. Shortly before 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, November 8, 1887, Doc drank a glass of whiskey, lay back on his bed, and said, "This is funny," referring to the fact that despite his predictions, a bullet had not gotten him in the end. A few minutes later, Doc was dead.

Although John Henry "Doc" Holliday was buried that afternoon at Linwood Cemetery, in Glenwood Springs, Colorado, his legend will live on forever.

## Doc Holliday Chronology

January or February, 1852. John Henry Holliday born in Griffin, Georgia.

1872. John Holliday graduates from Baltimore Dental School

May or June, 1876. Doc leaves Texas and travels to Pueblo, Colorado, under the assumed name of Tom McKey.

November, 1877. Doc meets Wyatt Earp in Fort Griffith, Texas.

December, 1877. Doc goes to Dodge City, Kansas.

1878-79. Doc and Bat Masterson involved in the Royal Gorge Railroad War in Colorado.

February, 1880. Doc arrives in Tombstone, Arizona.

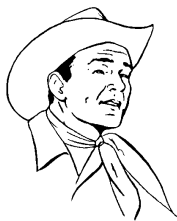
October, 1881. Doc supports Wyatt Earp in the gunfight at the O. K. Corral in Tombstone, Arizona.

May 10, 1882. Doc again arrives in

Pueblo with Wyatt Earp, this time using Doc Holliday as his name.  
 May 15, 1882. Doc arrested in Denver, Colorado.  
 May, 1883. Doc visits Silverton, Colorado.  
 November, 1883. Doc moves to Leadville, Colorado.  
 August 19, 1884. Doc shoots Billy Allen in Leadville, Colorado.  
 1885-87. Doc divides his time among Denver, Leadville, and Pueblo, Colorado.  
 May, 1887. Doc moves to Glenwood Springs, Colorado, to partake in the sulfur mineral baths.  
 November 8, 1887. Doc Holliday dies at Glenwood Springs, Colorado.



## The Code of the West



"A man  
 must  
 always  
 keep his  
 word;  
 especially with  
 himself."

Roy Rogers in *Sons of the Pioneers* (1947).



## The Old Buckaroo

Whew, doggies, did we enjoy the 1996 Lone Pine Film Festival, including the town sites tour with Dave Holland (in person), the panel discussion, and the vintage movies. What we liked most, however, was the Pierson's campfire at Diaz Lake, the closing campfire at Lone Pine Park, and the music of Rusty Richards and The American Cowboys. We were especially pleased with the poetry of Will "Cherokee Slim" Lacey and Larry Maurice. Thanks also to our good friend, Tom "Cowboy" Ratican, for autographing one of his renderings for us. Until next time, Happy Trails, buckaroos!

*Colorado*



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