



SILVER SCREEN BUCKAROOS OF COLORADO

Buckaroos' News

Highlands Ranch, Colorado

Winter, 1996

Colorado's Famous Faces: William Barclay "Bat" Masterson

In November, 1877, William Barclay "Bat" Masterson was elected sheriff of Ford County, Kansas, out of Dodge City. While Bat, Wyatt Earp, and John Henry "Doc" Holliday were becoming better acquainted in Dodge City, out in Colorado, The Denver and Rio Grande and the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe railroads could not agree on which road was to use which right of way and consequently serve which areas of Colorado.

On April 10, 1878, the Santa Fe announced that it intended to build a line through the Royal Gorge to silver-rich Leadville, Colorado. The Santa Fe took exception and at once had its crews begin building their own line into the narrow defile of the Arkansas River. While opposing attorneys prepared to do battle in court, battle lines were immediately drawn between the two warring factions as they gathered arms and ammunition and constructed stone forts at strategic points overlooking the depths of the gorge.

The Santa Fe sent a recruiter to Dodge City to hire a group of gunmen mercenaries. Both Bat and Doc Holliday decided to join another dozen and a half gunmen of and the other gunmen rode in wagons into the party. Back in court, the Santa Fe won the first Grande was forced to turn over depots and lease.

In June, after five hundred Santa Fe strategically located Raton Pass, the situation Pueblo, Colorado. By that time, Bat and around a Gatling gun. The Santa Fe had gotten Bat they could "legally" defend Santa Fe property. roundhouse carrying several hundred armed who surrounded the roundhouse. Before blood Weitbrec approached the roundhouse carrying fortress to meet the Rio Grande emissary. The bowed in a formal manner and parted. When was considerably lighter. Bat's staunch defenders divided a ten thousand dollar bribe and surrendered the stronghold without a shot being fired. The Santa Fe held Raton Pass secure, the courts worked out the Royal Gorge situation without violence, and the Great Royal Gorge War and Roundhouse Battle both ended without Bat or Doc firing a shot in anger. Bat then hurried back to his duties as sheriff of Ford County, Kansas.



BAT MASTERSON

lesser stature and set off for Colorado. Bat, Doc, depths of Royal Gorge to guard a surveying round by unanimous decision, and the Rio miles of track to the Santa Fe on a thirty-year

riflemen sniped at Rio Grande work parties in came to a head in the Roundhouse Battle at fifty gunmen had fortified the roundhouse with appointed as a Deputy United States Marshal, so A Rio Grande special fast train approached the men, led by General William Jackson Palmer, was spilled, Rio Grande treasurer Robert F. a flag of truce and a heavy satchel. Bat left the two conferred for nearly an hour, then both the two men returned to their forces, the satchel

In the spring of 1881, Bat moved to Trinidad, Colorado, where he became a peace officer and a gambler. Being a noted gunslinger, he was an asset to any gambling establishment as, in the event of trouble, the law was already there. So, while Doc Holliday and the Earp brothers were slinging lead at the O. K. Corral, Bat was enjoying the bounties of colorful Colorado.

After receiving a telegram from Wyatt Earp to go to Doc Holliday's support, Bat traveled to Denver where Doc was in jail on a phony murder charge. Although Bat really had little love for Doc, he actively worked for Doc's release. He told a reporter, "I tell you this talk about Holliday is wrong. I know him well. He was with me in Dodge, where he was known as an enemy of the lawless element."

Bat was not a hardened killer, and basically had a calm nature, but during his

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Coloradans In the Movies: Olin Howlin



Olin Howlin was born February 10, 1896, in Denver, Colorado. As a young man he was a vaudeville comic. In 1918 he entered the movie business and made films under the names Olin Howlin and Olin Howland.

Although he made over fifty films in his career, Mr. Howlin made his mark as a 'B' Western "second-string" sidekick. When a "first-string" starting sidekick couldn't make it for a particular movie, Republic Pictures brought in Mr. Howlin as a replacement. For example, when Smiley Brunette left the Sunset Carson series in 1945, Mr. Howlin was

brought in for two films. In 1947, he bridged the gap between Gabby Hayes and Andy Devine as Roy Rogers' sidekick.

Mr. Howlin remained active in the movie world until his death on September 20, 1959.

Olin Howlin Filmography

A partial list of Olin Howlin's Western films includes: Angel and the Badman (1947), Apache Rose (1947), Dakota (1945), Days of Jesse James (1939), The Fabulous Texan (1947), Hellfire (1949), Home in Wyomin' (1942), Ridin' Down the Canyon (1942), Rock Island Trail (1950), Santa Fe Saddlemates (1945), Sheriff of Cimarron (1945), Wyoming (1947).

Among Mr. Howlin's non-Western films are: The Blob (1958), Bringing Up Baby (1938), Country Gentleman (1936), The Fabulous Senorita (1952), Fighting Coast Guard (1951), Gobs and Gals (1952), Goodnight Sweetheart (1944), Grissly's Millions (1945), Joan of Ozark (1942), Man from Frisco (1944), Sing Neighbor Sing (1944), Secrets of the Underground (1942), A Star Is Born (1937).

The Cowboy's Prayer



Used by
Roy Rogers
at all his
Riders Club
Meetings

Oh Lord, I reckon I'm not much just by myself.

I fail to do a lot of things I ought to do.

But Lord, when trails are steep and passes high,

Help me to ride it straight the whole way through.

And when in the falling dusk I get the final call,

I do not care how many flowers they send --

Above all else the happiest trail would be

For You to say to me, "Let's ride, My friend."



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110 Years Ago November 1886—February 1887

From Canada through Colorado and into Texas, the most devastating winter in memory swept across the Great Plains. Snow began falling in November and rarely ceased, freezing cattle and burying their grasslands. A short thaw in the middle of January was followed by a blizzard of unprecedented proportions on the 28th, lasting 72 hours. Afterward, temperatures plunged to 50 degrees below zero Fahrenheit. Entire herds died, with losses for some ranchers between 75 and 85 percent of their livestock. The severe winter ended the cattle boom and the open-range of raising cattle but spawned the cultivation of corn feed and hay to support cattle ranching.



Bat Masterson

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fifteen years in Colorado, had his share of adventures. In Denver, the Rocky Mountain News reported that "W. B. Masterson is well known in this city. He is a handsome man, and one who pleased the ladies." On September 21, 1886, for instance, comedian Louis Spencer found his wife sitting on Bat's knee during a performance. Spencer went to the door of the box and called her out, reminding Bat that the lady was Spencer's wife. Spencer says that Bat did "strike at me with his pistol, and I struck back with my fist. Then we were arrested and taken down to the station, where we were both released."

By the close of the 1880s, Bat had essentially given up the life of the lawman gunslinger, although his gun was for hire as a peace keeper wherever he worked. Bat was most often employed as a gambler, but by 1891 had made Denver his home where he managed a burlesque troupe at the Palace Theater. Bat established a set of rules at the Palace, two of which were "Variety ladies with more than three husbands need not write to this house for a date," and "Performers writing to this house for an engagement will state . . . the amount of salary they will work for, not what they want, for we make all the allowances for a performer's gall."

On November 21, 1891, Bat married one of the Palace dancers, Emma Walters. Shortly after the wedding, Bat moved to the roaring mining camp of Creede, Colorado, where he worked sixteen hours a day as manager of the saloon and gambling house owned by the Denver firm of Watrous, Banniger, and Company. Although Bat was a short man, and often affected a lavender suit of corduroy, the cry, "Here comes Masterson!" was usually all that was necessary to calm a disorderly customer.



While in Creede, Bat served as the referee when Billy Woods, self-proclaimed heavyweight champion of Colorado, fought in the ring. Bat was also a second to Jake Kilrain, when Kilrain lost a seventy-five round heavyweight championship to John L. Sullivan on July 8, 1889, at Richburg, Mississippi. That brutal fight marked the end of bare knuckles championships.

Bat returned to Denver when the Creede boom began to show signs of slowing down. He became a fight promoter, and had "hung up his guns" in favor of the boxing scene. However, he was in charge of the special police at the Corbett-Fitzsimmons fight in Carson City, Nevada, on March 17, 1897. Still into the fighting game, Bat was listed as official referee when the Colorado Athletic Association was founded on April 9, 1899. But a month later a trio of sports editors froze out Bat and the other members of the CAA. Never a quitter, Bat organized the Olympic Athletic Club, with himself as president, at the old Academy of Music at Sixteenth and Market. According to the *Denver Times*, Bat was the "Dignified Sheik of the Olympic Athletic Club." By the summer of 1900, however, Bat was broke and the Olympic had become a lodging house.

Theodore Roosevelt, the president-to-be whom Bat had met on one of Roosevelt's jaunts to the West, offered Bat the post of an Oklahoma United States Marshal. Feeling that no good could come from accepting the post, he declined saying that he had "taken his guns

off."

Bat began to let his temper get the better of him, and Denver had become in one reporter's eyes "notoriously the crookedest town in the country." Having nothing to say in favor of the Queen City of the Plains, which no longer held the charm for him that it once had, Bat sent his wife to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Bat appeared one day wearing his .45 and Denver's police chief and district attorney called in Cripple Creek's gunslinging city marshal, Jim Marshall. Bat was tipped off as to Marshall's arrival and wired Marshall to meet him at the barbershop in the rear of the Schlotz drugstore. But Marshall didn't show. After a while, Bat went to a bar to get a drink, but Jim stole in behind Bat and pressed cold steel into his back. Bat agreed to be on the 4:00 Burlington train, and Jim holstered his gun. His Colorado career at an end, the aging Bat Masterson packed, boarded the train, and left the state.

The now president Theodore Roosevelt came to Bat's aid in the East, and Bat eventually became sports editor for the New York *Morning Telegraph*. Still at his job on the newspaper, William Barclay "Bat" Masterson died at his desk on the morning of October 25, 1921. Bat was once described by a reporter as "one of the terrors of the West . . . of muscular build and pleasant face. He is quiet in demeanor and sober in habit. There is no blow or bluff or bullyism about him. He attends strictly to business. He has been known to take a slap in the face from some drunken fool who didn't know his record, and not resent the insult . . ." No better epitaph can be said of this true hero of our early West.

Bat Masterson Chronology

1855. William Barclay "Bat" Masterson born on a farm in Iroquois County, Illinois.
Winter of 1872-73. Bat and Wyatt

Earp, both professional hunters, meet on the Salt Fork of the Arkansas River.

Summer, 1876. Bat arrives in Dodge City, Kansas.

November, 1877. Bat elected from Dodge City as sheriff of Ford County, Kansas.

1878-79. Royal Gorge Railroad War in Colorado involves Bat and Doc Holliday.

1881. Bat arrives in Tombstone.

April 16, 1881. Bat returns to Dodge City, Kansas.

April or May, 1881. Bat becomes a peace officer in Trinidad, Colorado.

1883. Bat and Wyatt Earp meet in Silverton, Colorado.

Mid 1880s. Bat, now living in Denver,

Colorado, tours Colorado boom towns and mining camps as a gambler.

1892. Bat arrives in the mining boom town of Creede, Colorado.

1899. Bat becomes a Denver boxing fight promoter.

September, 1900. Bat is forced to leave Colorado for the East.

October 25, 1921. Bat dies at his desk in New York City, New York.



The Old Buckaroo

B-Western aficionados lost a friend on December 10, 1996, in the person of Ralph "Montana" Trant of Simi Valley, California. While I didn't know Montana all that well, he and his wife, Judy "Little Pony Rider," always made me feel right at home when I visited them. Montana was a train lover, too, and was pleased as bear in honey when I gave him a train schedule from my collection. Red and I never failed to receive a nice note from Montana when the holidays rolled around, either. He'll be missed, but someday we'll all ride together with him on those Happy Trails.

Colorado



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