



Left to right: Ed Englestadt, Wyatt Earp and John P. Clum in Nome, Alaska – 1900

Tintype photo of Josephine Marcus Earp – 1900

Harper Collins Publishing Co.





Front Street, Nome – 1900

Carrie McLean Memorial Museum photo

Wyatt Earp & The Dexter Saloon

In 1872, Wyatt and Josie Earp were on a trip to Tomba, Arizona when the news broke that gold had been discovered in Alaska. They immediately returned to San Francisco where they outfitted for the trip to Alaska, Alaska. In route, Josie learned she was pregnant. They immediately booked passage back to San Francisco. Unfortunately, she lost the child.

Within a few months they returned to the gold mine and hoped to make Dawson City by overland. It was late in the season and they only made it to Quartz City before being snowed in for the winter. They found a cabin that

they rented from the noted author Doc Booth. They made friends that included Tex Dickard, the future famous light promoter. In later years, Tex made Jack Dempsey famous and built Madison Square Garden in New York City.

With the spring thaw, they learned that Dawson City was not promising. They then decided to try Nome. En route to Nome they stopped at Saint Michael, where Wyatt invested in a saloon that sold only beer and cigars. His profit here averaged \$200.00 per day. They were content with this profit, but Tex Dickard persuaded them to come to Nome where the pickings were better.

In 1899 they moved to Nome where gold was found on the beach. Wyatt & partner Charlie Rosier bought a lot in town and constructed a saloon called the

Dexter. With the approach of winter and no decent housing the Earps returned to San Francisco. Wyatt purchased furniture for his saloon and in the spring returned to Nome.

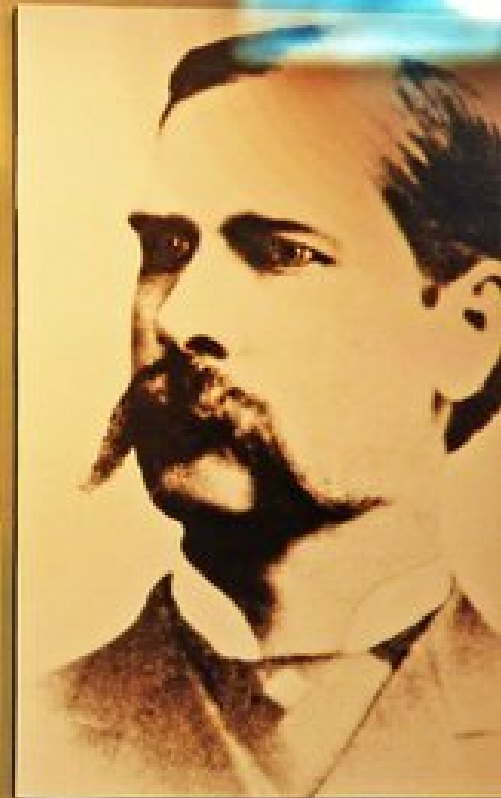
The Dexter Saloon was soon one of the best and most popular. Business boomed. Nome proved to be old home week for Wyatt. He met many of his old friends including John Chin and Lucky Baldwin. Chin was the first mayor of Tombstone and editor of the Tombstone Epitaph newspaper. Chin organized the first U.S. Postal system in Tombstone.

Lucky Baldwin described downtown Nome's liquor and gambling as centered around Wyatt's Dexter Saloon. A few blocks from Earp's saloon, in any direction, business simply petered out.

Jack Dempsey met Wyatt in his saloon in Nome. He confirmed that many well-known personalities hung out in Wyatt's place including writers Jack London and Doc Booth and many engineers. Herbert Hoover, Hoover, prior to being elected President, was one of the premier mining engineers in the world.

Another prominent character that Wyatt met at Nome was Walter Scott, known as Death Valley Scotty. Scotty in later years claimed to have found a gold mine located somewhere in the Death Valley region. He was a big spender and frequently was seen throwing money around saloons up and down the West Coast.

The Earps left Nome in 1901 prosperous. They returned to the States with approximately \$80,000.



THE MAN WHO NEVER SMILED FOR A PHOTOGRAPH — Nome is Monumentally Illusion, Wyatt Earp became a legend with his part in the Klondike at the 1 in Tombstone, Arizona in 1891. Wyatt was 39 when this photo was taken in 1891 courtesy of the Tombstone Courthouse State Park.



Display at the Carrie McLain Memorial Museum in Nome

Photo by Doug Vandegraft



Sign on Front Street in Nome

Photo by Doug Vandegraft

ALASKA
ADVENTURES

WYATT EARP
AND FRIENDS

Howard Clifford

Alaska's first Mayor and City Council. 1901.



NOME'S CITY COUNCIL. Nome's first official city council took office in June 1901. Pictured standing (left to right) are Bill McPhee, John Harris, S. H. Stevens and Charles Hoxsie. Seated are Tex Rickard Mayor Julius Guise and Capt. Geiger. Hoxsie was Wyatt Earp's partner and Rickard operated the Northern Saloon. Clifford Collection.

advantage of this discovery. The beach at Nome and a dozen or so miles to the West, proved to be the richest tidewater diggings ever discovered.

The magic of it all was that anyone with a shovel and a rocker could work the sand to his heart's content. The commander in charge of the small detachment of troops sent to Nome ruled that under federal law no claims could be staked on the beach beyond a point 60 feet above the high tide mark. Such remains the law today and prospecting on the beach is still popular. More than \$1,000,000 was recovered from beach sands with pans and shovels that first season.

Such was the information Wyatt received from Tex as well as other friends from Rampart who went on to Nome. Hence their decision to give

it a try. Also, in the back of Wyatt's mind and not to be overlooked was the fact that a U.S. Deputy Marshal for the Nome area was to be picked in the near future and Wyatt had hopes of being selected, especially after he had been offered a similar posit in Wrangell not too many months previous.

Upon arriving in the summer of 1899 the Earps were surprised with the miles and miles of tents along the waterfront with only a few wooden buildings, such as Rickard's Northern.

Meanwhile Wyatt had teamed up with Charles Hoxsie, his friend from St. Michael. The first thing after landing Wyatt conferred with Rickard, and decided that a saloon would most certainly be a money maker. Wyatt and Charles purchased a large "piece or parcel of ground" on the so called main street close to Rickard's Northern.

The street, according to Josie, was marked "This street is impassible. Not even jack-assable."

In all probability their property had been purchased from one of the many con-artists operating at the time. Such is indicated as on August 29, 1900 Wyatt Earp "sold" the "piece or parcel of ground" to his partner Charles Hoxsie. This provided a legal deed of ownership on the records—of which there had been none. This was also the case in many other instances when a con-man sold property for a down payment and never showed up to collect payments and there was no record of any such purchase.

The Earps rented one of the few shacks in town as living quarters as Wyatt and Hoxsie went to work. They ordered lumber from British Columbia, returned to St. Michael to gather up their belonging and order coal for winter. By September 1899 they had complete the first two story building in town and named their saloon the Dexter after John Dexter who had a trading post at Golovin Bay and indirectly was responsible for the Nome rush.

Dexter believed there was gold in the general area and taught the natives how to pan for gold and urged them to do so while on hunting trips. He also provided supplies for many of the prospectors

In August 1898. Dexter, who was half crippled and too old for prospecting, warned the natives who found gold not to mention their finds, but didn't follow up on them himself.

as was often the case in other locations operated by Wyatt Earp.

The original site of the Dexter, researched by historian Howard Appel of Nome, is marked by a plaque dedicated during the Wyatt Earp's 100th Anniversary celebration, July 4, 1999. Wyatt's great grand nephew, Wyatt Earp took part in the ceremony.

Located near the Dexter was the Second Class Saloon (often mistaken for the Dexter) owned by Dick Dawson and Sutter.

Next door to the Dexter to the East was the Hunter at 239 Front St. and to the West the Warwick, 233 Front St.

Wilson Mizner's McQuestion Saloon and Hotel was back of the Northern. It was a combination gambling casino, dance hall, brothel and flop house, sleeping 30 to 40 persons in some of the room. There was a bar in front, a dance hall of size behind it and gambling in the rear. The building was of sheet metal and was heated by oil barrels converted into stoves. Among its guests were such as Jack Kearns, "Swiftwater Bill" Gates, Alexander Pantages and Sid Grauman to name a few.

The Anvil Bar, owned by "Diamond Jim" Wilson was deemed the best



NOME'S BEST. Generally considered the best saloon in Nome early days was Tex Rickard's Northern. It is decorated for a Fourth of July celebration. Clifford Collection.



WYATT EARP'S DEXTER SALOON. Located in the center of town on Front Street, Wyatt Earp's Dexter was the first multi-story building in Nome and among the best along with the Northern.—Carrie McClain Memorial Museum photo.

in Nome next to the Northern and the Dexter. Wilson weighed more than 300 pounds and emulated "Diamond Jim" Brady in his style and fashions, decorating his body with diamond rings, cuff links and tie studs. "Diamond Jim" and his "partner" Ione lived in a lavish suite above the saloon.

One of the unsuccessful operators was a saloon opened by Elias Jackson "Lucky" Baldwin, a long time friend of Wyatt and Josie. Baldwin had hopes of opening a grand saloon in Nome in 1900. He brought lots of money and his prized bar from the San Francisco Hotel which had survived the burning of the hotel in 1898.

Such was not to be. The Baldwin was a failure and "Lucky" found it necessary to borrow \$20,000 in gold from friend Wyatt to take care of city licenses and taxes and to get out of debt so he could sell the saloon equipment. He sold it for a few thousand dollars to Sol Warner whose Hunter Saloon became one of Nome's show places. Later, when Baldwin had returned to California and was back in the chips, Wyatt refused payments on the loan.

Other popular saloons included Charles Cobb's Horseshoe and Bill Robinson's Eldorado. One of the largest with a 10 yard long mahogany bar was the Ophir operated by Jed Jordan and his partner.



POPULAR NOMEITE. Popular among saloon patrons as well as being a member of the city council, Charles Hoxsie was Wyatt Earp's trusted partner. Anchorage Museum of History photo.

Jordan's complaint was the shortage of whiskey bottles, as oftentimes the spirited customers liked to destroy the bottles when empty, either by shooting or smashing. Many saloons used empty paint or turpentine bottles when regular whiskey bottles were not available.

Jordan found three real quart whiskey bottles and made good use by keeping them on the backbar. A customer at the Ophir had his choice of drink, either from a rye, bourbon or Scotch bottle all from the same batch. The bourbon and rye were \$1 for a two ounce shot. The Scotch was more at \$1.25 because of "the expense of transporting it from Scotland to Alaska." A finger of water in the glass was available at no extra charge.

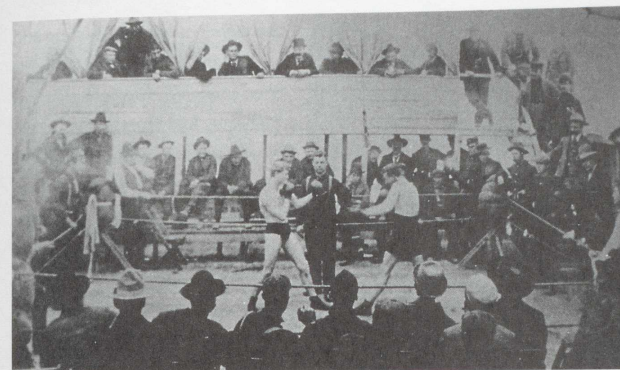
Other saloons had similar arrangements. After losing the McQuestion Mizner

Unlike some of the others, Jed was willing to admit that he cut his whiskey, but only with the finest water available. The brew was seasoned with tobacco juice and tabasco sauce. He admitted that when he felt creative or business was slow he added brown sugar or coffee to give it a little color, or red pepper to improve the body. Complaints were few and some of the regular sourdough clients even declared that "one got a real good pour" at the Ophir.

Few complained of the flavor but some did about the size of the drink.



MANY FACES. Wilson Mizner wore many faces. He was a popular saloon operator and faro dealer, and was also considered by many to be the leader of the Nome underworld plus he also served as a Deputy Sheriff. Clifford Collection.



POPULAR SPORT. Probably the most popular sport in Nome during the gold rush was boxing in the various saloons. Clifford Collection.

went honest for a change frequently working the faro game in Rickard's and Earp's gambling tables and was voted the second favorite faro dealer in Nome.

Boxing was one of the most popular means of entertainment in Nome and many of the top prize fighters in the country appeared on the cards held in the various saloons.

Rickard, Earp and Mizner were the most active in promoting boxing as they had backgrounds in the sport. Another was Jack "Doc" Kearns, who Mizner took under his wing in teaching the ins and outs of the trade. Kearns later became manager of World Champion Jack Dempsey. Over the years both became close friends of Wyatt. Mizner later handled the rugged middleweight champion Stanley Ketchel. In later years Wilson received a telegram that Ketchel had died. He wired back "start counting, he'll get up."

One of the great fights in Nome held in the Dexter was between Klondike Mike Mahoney, a young miner and dog musher, and Tommy Burns, a highly regarded heavyweight contender who later became World Heavyweight Champion.

Fighting under local rules, which were more like street fighting, Mahoney won by a knockout in the third round. When Rickard became



FUTURE CHAMPION. One of the most popular and discussed boxing matches in Nome was a fight between Tommy Burns and Irish Mike Mahoney, a young Nome miner and dog musher. Mahoney won on a knockout in the third round. Burns went on to become world heavyweight champion a few years later. This picture shows them in a meeting in Seattle 37 years later. Mahoney is on the right. Clifford Collection.

the father of big time boxing and built Madison Square Garden, he tried to match the pair again, but Mahoney had found riches in the North and was not interested.

Although the Northern was his favorite hangout, Jack Hines, one of Nome's most colorful characters, was also a regular at the Dexter and spent considerable time with Wyatt and Josie. He became a prospector, newsman and mining company executive. Upon arriving in Nome in July 1900, his first stop was Tex Rickard's Northern. After a few drinks, his companion induced him to sing a song in the Northern's rowdy and noisy bar. Jack did, and brought down the houses as well as attracting the attention of Tex Rickard. Then and there Tex invited Jack to be a

regular "guest" at the Northern with drinks on the house.

Hines, who eventually spent more than six years in Nome, became a favorite of Nome's society, married the daughter of Nome's most prominent lawyer and enjoyed the hospitality aboard the Russian naval vessels that were frequent visitors in the port. It was claimed that one of the Polish noblemen assaulted Hines' wife.

With an assist from Al Cody the former U.S. Deputy Marshal, Hines trailed the nobleman to Nevada and shot him.

Hines was arrested, tried and found not guilty in a Nevada court which attracted international attention to Nome and drew cheers from both

Brewed in Seattle Drank Everywhere
Rainier Beer
There's new vigor and strength in every drop

DICK DAWSON CHAR. C. BUTER
The Second Class
The Only Second Class Saloon in Alaska.
Genuine Imported Goods of All Kinds
Always in Stock.
NOME ALASKA.
Drop in at
The NORTHERN
Where you will always find a fine line of Liquors & Cigars.
RICKARD & LITTLE
Proprietors.

THE
Board of Trade
Refitted
Restocked
Excellent Service and Courteous Treatment
The Best of Case and Draught Goods
Adams & Thagard, Props.
Front Street

The Dexter Saloon
HOXIE & EARP, Proprietors.
Good Goods Square Game. 237 Front Street.

Saloons.
Board of Trade, Adams and Thagard, props; only best of wines, liquors and cigars; 267 Front st.
Fairchild's, W E Fairchild, prop; only first-class goods at lowest rates; Steadman ave.
Kidder's, H. E. Kidder, prop; high grade whiskies and cigars a specialty; merchants' lunch daily.
Montana Saloon, Kelly and Holland; only pure liquors, wines and cigars; 540 Front st.
Ocean Saloon, Reber and Krebs, props; general liquor and wine merchants; 250 Front st.
Seattle Saloon, H D Wheeler & Son; imported case goods a specialty. 630 Front st.
The Capitol, Lackie and Moore, props; liquor dealers; 234 Front st.
The Columbia, highest grade liquors and cigars; Becker and Knutler, props; Columbia Theater bldg.
The Dexter, Hoxie and Earp, props; whiskies direct from bond; Front st and Hunter way.

DAWSON, YUKON TERRITORY AND ALASKA.
Northern Saloon
RICKARD, MURPHY & LITTLE, Props.
Oldest and Most Popular Saloon in Nome. Finest Liquors and Cigars.
237 FRONT STREET.

SALOON ADVERTISING. Many of the saloons carried advertising such as this in the various Nome publications. Clifford Collection.

Nevada and Alaska residents.

Nome saloons, gambling houses and dance hall operators assumed the responsibility of taking care of the broke and homeless, especially if they had squandered their funds in saloons or gambling halls. They were provided with a ticket back home or if work might be forthcoming they were provided with funds to live on until they went to work.

As a matter of fact in that day and time Nome saloon and gaming halls were the principal source of all funds for charitable purposes.

CHAPTER XIII

Heading Home

In the fall of 1901 the Earps decided to leave Nome and head back to the lower states despite the fact that the rush was still on.

As he boarded the S.S. *Roanoke* for departure Wyatt was heard to remark in reference to Nome "She's been a good old burg. Mighty good to us."

And rightfully so. Wyatt sold out to his partner, Charles Hoxsie. Despite a lengthy losing gambling spree by Josie prior to leaving, they still had a small fortune, ranging between \$85,000 and \$250,000, depending upon what newspaper or personal friend to believe. Either way, it was well over a million dollars by today's standards.

Josie said her main regret in leaving Alaska was the fact that she did not have the opportunity to meet Jefferson Randolph "Soapy" Smith.

Wyatt's greatest disappointment was that he was passed over as U.S. Deputy Marshal for Nome. Josie campaigned hard to get him named to the post. The marshal's wife carried considerable influence in the area and had been one of Josie's closest friends in Alaska. The disappointment had a lot to do with Wyatt deciding to leave Nome at the very height of the gold rush.

Reports on Wyatt in Alaska differ greatly. Some report he was less than popular. It was also reported that like Rickard, Wyatt was one of Nome's most respected citizens. His reputation alone prevented any gunfighter incidents in the gold fields.

Wyatt Earp was a man who could face bad luck or dangers with the



ALEX AND KATE. As the rush reached its peak, Nome was flooded by greats and near greats in an attempt to pick up a fortune. Among those searching for such was Alexander Pantages and his "banker" Klondike Kate. They made a couple of trips to Nome looking for a theater or gambling saloon. Clifford Collection.

professional gambler's icy nerves. The rowdiest sourdough in the North Country quieted down when the calm gunfighter flicked his eyes over anyone presuming to disturb the peace.

No man in his right mind was going up against the man who was rated the equal or superior to Doc Holliday, Bat Masterson and Wild Bill Hickok. Although he was in his early fifties, Earp was still a tough customer.

Hoxsie refurbished the Dexter after Wyatt left and some years later changed the name of the saloon to the New Eldorado. Hoxsie also acquired the Warwick next door and other properties and later sold out. In 1914 he took part in the short lived Iditarod stampede. He was later reported to have been one of Juneau's best bootleggers during prohibition.

Leaving Nome a couple of years later, Rickard and Wilson Mizner took over a saloon and gambling hall in Seattle. The Rickard/Mizner operation was short lived, however, as a result of action by the Seattle underworld in cooperation with the local police. The local gamblers were not pleased in facing Rickard's honest reputation in competition with their facilities. Rickard spent a considerable sum on the gambling hall which he named the "Totem".