

## TOMBSTONE PERSONALITIES

### JOHN HENRY “DOC” HOLLIDAY

John Henry Holliday was born into a well-to-do Georgia family that lost its fortune following the Civil War. Doc was sent to study dentistry in Philadelphia so that he might learn a trade, as there was little hope of him inheriting anything more than the genteel manners of his forebears. It was probably during his stay in the city that he contracted tuberculosis.

Advised by doctors that the arid southwest climate might ease his suffering and prolong his life, Holliday relocated to Dallas, Texas and resumed his trade as a dentist. He soon abandoned his practice and became a professional gambler, finding it a more lucrative profession. Growing ever more gloomy and fatalistic, he began drinking heavily in an effort to quell the constant cough that accompanied his disease. This combination of drink, lifestyle and morbid outlook served as the cornerstone of his gun-fighting career.

Deciding that death by gun or knife would be quick and less painful than dying of tuberculosis, Doc soon found himself embroiled in hostile situations that his massive intake of alcohol almost certainly escalated. Ironically, he was usually the victor in most of the contests, his acceptance of mortality giving him an edge over his opponents. He took gutsy chances at the gambling tables, sometimes playing for days on end for high stakes and winning. In one alleged episode, Doc threatened a hot-headed gambler named Ed Bailey who he suspected of cheating. Bailey, thinking the frail, sickly Holliday would be a pushover, ignored the threat and stood up, reaching across the table to attack him. Holliday pulled a concealed knife from his vest and gutted Bailey, killing him.

Doc would spend the next few years of his life following the

professional gambling circuit to Denver, Cheyenne and Deadwood, eventually ending up back in Texas where he met a young lawman named Wyatt Earp. The unemotional, level-headed Earp and the fatalistic, impulsive Holliday became unlikely friends. Wyatt invited Holliday to join him in Dodge City, a riotous cow town in Kansas where Earp was serving as deputy city Marshal and operated several gambling tables. Holliday, with his fiery companion Kate “Big Nose Kate” Fisher, agreed.

The event that would cement Doc and Wyatt’s friendship occurred September 1878. Wyatt had arrested a rowdy cowboy and hauled him off to jail. The cowboy’s friends followed, gathered at the jail and threatened to attack Earp unless their friend was released. Earp refused. As the crowd became angrier, Earp drew his gun but knew that he was outnumbered. Holliday stepped out of the shadows at that moment, flanking the cowboys and holding two guns, told the crowd that he would open fire if they didn’t disperse. The cowboys, now facing two men with reputations, backed down. Wyatt credited Doc with saving his life that night and Doc would always insist that he had no choice, as Wyatt was his only friend!

In time, Dodge City began to settle down and the gamblers and opportunists left, searching for the next boomtown. Doc stayed briefly in Las Vegas, New Mexico, and spent his time drinking, gambling and fighting with Kate. After watching a man named Mike Gordon yelling loudly at a saloon girl, Holliday followed Gordon as he stormed from the bar and killed him in the street. Despite his reputation as a gunfighter, this was Holliday’s only confirmed kill prior to his time spent in Arizona.

Doc soon received word from Wyatt Earp to join him in Tombstone, Arizona. The town was experiencing a mining boom and Wyatt and his brothers were relocating there, hoping to make their fortunes. Doc and Kate soon joined them. Doc’s life continued on much the same as it had in New Mexico.

As an ally of the Earps, Doc was drawn into the drama that unfolded in Tombstone between the Earps and their rivals, the Cowboys. Doc and Johnny Ringo were facing off, preparing to duel in the street when city policemen broke up the argument and arrested both men. Later, Holliday and Ike Clanton got into a fight that ended with Clanton being arrested by Virgil Earp. The next day, Doc was a participant in the most famous shootout in western history, the Gunfight at the OK Corral. Doc definitely killed Tom McLaury and his may have been the bullet that killed Frank McLaury, striking him in the chest.

The Earps and Holliday were acquitted of all charges following the fight. However, Doc continued receiving death threats along with the Earps. After the wounding of Virgil Earp and the murder of Morgan Earp, Doc joined Wyatt, Wyatt’s brother Warren, “Texas Jack” Vermillion, Jack Johnson and Sherman McMasters for the Earp Vendetta Ride. He was present when



the party killed Frank Stilwell in Tucson, Florentino "Indian Charlie" Cruz in the Dragoon Mountains and the shootout at Sulphur Springs when Wyatt killed Curly Bill Brocius and Johnny Barnes. Doc fled Arizona with the party and never returned.

The final chapters of Doc's life would quickly play out. After an argument with Wyatt in Albuquerque, the party split up and headed for Colorado, most of the party hiding out in Gunnison while Doc continued on to Denver alone. With the help of allies, Doc escaped extradition back to Arizona for warrants stemming from the Vendetta Ride. Doc moved onto Leadville, Colorado and resumed his gambling career but the high altitude proved too much for his now weakened lungs.

Doc was drinking heavily by now and was almost continually drunk. His tuberculosis had advanced to such a degree that although only in his mid thirties, he looked much older. Knowing the end was near, he checked into the sanitarium at Glenwood Springs, Colorado. The day he died, he acknowledged the great irony of his life: he had died not by the gun or the knife but in bed with his boots off. Tuberculosis had caught up with him. Looking at his bare feet sticking out of the sheets he mumbled his last words, "This is funny," and died peacefully. He was 36 years old.

STR: 2            AGL: 4            MND: 3            RES: 4  
Move: 5"        DR: 3            Fate: 4            Vitality: 3  
Traits:        Combat Attack 1  
              Crack Shot 2  
              Dodge  
              Gambler  
              Greased Lightning 2  
              Scholar 2  
              Shootist [] []  
              Wit [] []  
Equipment:    Single Action heavy pistol (DN 5, ER 10", Fan)  
                  Light Pistol (DN 4, ER 8")  
                  Knife (DN4)

#### SPECIAL RULES:

ILL- Roll a D6 at the beginning of the game. No re-rolls or modifiers of any kind may be used to modify this roll. If a 1 is rolled, Doc's tuberculosis is acting up. His movement is reduced to 4" and his opponents add 1 die to close combat attacks against him.