

1

00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:04,000

An epic mountain, thought to be unclimable.

2

00:00:04,000 --> 00:00:09,000

You're going to fall thousands of feet, so it's a very dangerous dome.

3

00:00:09,000 --> 00:00:13,000

An iconic bridge whose origins are shrouded in tragedy.

4

00:00:13,000 --> 00:00:17,000

Suddenly tilted, and twelve guys went into the water.

5

00:00:17,000 --> 00:00:21,000

And a memorial to a hound whose heroism saved the day.

6

00:00:21,000 --> 00:00:25,000

What if Smokey gets stuck? What if Smokey dies?

7

00:00:25,000 --> 00:00:29,000

Sometimes the greatest secrets lie in plain sight.

8

00:00:30,000 --> 00:00:33,000

These are monumental mysteries.

9

00:00:42,000 --> 00:00:47,000

Oakville, Washington. Population 682.

10

00:00:47,000 --> 00:00:54,000

This tiny logging town occupies just one half of one square mile in a corner of the Evergreen state.

11

00:00:54,000 --> 00:01:02,000

And on the eastern border of this quiet community lies a vast woodland that spans over 91,000 acres.

12

00:01:02,000 --> 00:01:08,000

This is the Capitol State Forest, one of nature's most majestic monuments.

13

00:01:10,000 --> 00:01:16,000

But this tranquil and silvan landscape was once home to a bizarre phenomenon

14

00:01:16,000 --> 00:01:19,000

that puzzled local residents like Sunny Barcliffe.

15

00:01:19,000 --> 00:01:23,000

I kept thinking, are we in a science fiction movie?

16

00:01:24,000 --> 00:01:32,000

The events that transpired here sparked a baffling mystery of meteorology, medicine and the military.

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00:01:33,000 --> 00:01:36,000

August 7, 1994.

18

00:01:36,000 --> 00:01:42,000

After spending the night in the Capitol State Forest, two campers emerged from their tent.

19

00:01:43,000 --> 00:01:46,000

To something completely unexpected.

20

00:01:46,000 --> 00:01:53,000

They found the surrounding area literally covered with this strange material.

21

00:01:53,000 --> 00:01:59,000

It was very gooey. It looked like hail, but it was soft.

22

00:02:01,000 --> 00:02:05,000

And they're not the only ones to encounter this bizarre substance.

23

00:02:07,000 --> 00:02:13,000

Over the next few days, Oakville police are inundated with similar reports from across the region.

24

00:02:14,000 --> 00:02:23,000

One sighting later that week comes from Sunny Barcliffe, who along with her mother also witnesses something extraordinary.

25

00:02:23,000 --> 00:02:27,000

A strange clear goo falling from the sky.

26

00:02:28,000 --> 00:02:35,000

They have a gelatinous substance raining down. I've never witnessed anything like it before.

27

00:02:36,000 --> 00:02:42,000

Curious as to what these blobs are, her mother takes a closer look.

28

00:02:42,000 --> 00:02:51,000

My mom just picked one of the blobules that sniffed it, squished it between her fingers. She had never seen anything like it.

29

00:02:53,000 --> 00:02:57,000

The next day, Sunny makes an alarming discovery.

30

00:02:58,000 --> 00:03:08,000

I found her on the bathroom floor. She was nauseated. Everything was spinning around her and she literally could not get up.

31

00:03:09,000 --> 00:03:14,000

And the illness that has suddenly stricken Sunny's mother appears to be spreading.

32

00:03:14,000 --> 00:03:23,000

Within a week, there were a number of people in Oakville who became sick with a strange flu-like syndrome.

33

00:03:24,000 --> 00:03:31,000

Doctors are baffled. The sickness does not discriminate, afflicting both young and old without any apparent cause.

34

00:03:33,000 --> 00:03:39,000

But Sunny Barcliffe thinks the answer lies in the odd material that blanketed the town.

35

00:03:39,000 --> 00:03:45,000

It was such a mystery. I wanted to know what this stuff was.

36

00:03:45,000 --> 00:03:51,000

So what are the so-called Oakville blobs and are they behind this debilitating illness?

37

00:03:52,000 --> 00:03:58,000

To determine the origin of this mysterious goo, Sunny has samples tested by a scientist.

38

00:03:59,000 --> 00:04:03,000

And after careful analysis, he reports his findings.

39

00:04:05,000 --> 00:04:08,000

A human white blood cell was found in that substance.

40

00:04:10,000 --> 00:04:20,000

As rumor and panic settles over this small logging community, several theories begin to emerge as to why these blobs might contain human cells.

41

00:04:20,000 --> 00:04:24,000

The first points to a very common sight in the skies above Washington.

42

00:04:24,000 --> 00:04:31,000

One of the first theories was that this might have been human waste from an airliner.

43

00:04:32,000 --> 00:04:39,000

If waste had accidentally been jettisoned from passenger planes, that could account for the human cells.

44

00:04:40,000 --> 00:04:42,000

But one fact gets in the way.

45

00:04:42,000 --> 00:04:48,000

That was pretty much discounted because they're required to dye that substance blue.

46

00:04:48,000 --> 00:04:51,000

And this had no color whatsoever.

47

00:04:52,000 --> 00:04:58,000

And even more bizarre hypothesis points to a different kind of airborne material.

48

00:04:58,000 --> 00:05:01,000

The Navy was conducting live bombing runs at sea.

49

00:05:01,000 --> 00:05:10,000

They theorized they had blown up a school of jellyfish and this jellyfish had been ejected into the jet stream.

50

00:05:11,000 --> 00:05:16,000

But even if the explosions had been enough to blow jellyfish remains into the sky,

51

00:05:16,000 --> 00:05:23,000

it doesn't explain why the cells inside the material are of human, not marine origin.

52

00:05:24,000 --> 00:05:32,000

So another idea takes root in the community that the blobs weren't a freak occurrence at all, but a planned attack.

53

00:05:32,000 --> 00:05:36,000

It was a biological warfare experiment.

54

00:05:37,000 --> 00:05:46,000

Some residents believe that Oakville's isolated setting on the edge of the Capitol State Forest makes it the perfect military testing ground.

55

00:05:46,000 --> 00:05:51,000

It was a small controlled population, no one would notice.

56

00:05:51,000 --> 00:06:01,000

This theory is bolstered by a recollection Sunny has of military aircraft in Oakville airspace just days before the goo hit the ground.

57

00:06:01,000 --> 00:06:04,000

We saw black helicopters almost every day.

58

00:06:04,000 --> 00:06:12,000

But representatives from the US military dismissed this idea entirely and shut down further requests for inquiry.

59

00:06:13,000 --> 00:06:18,000

Their refusal to answer questions leaves some residents suspicious.

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00:06:18,000 --> 00:06:25,000

That lends credibility to the idea that it may have been a military experiment.

61

00:06:26,000 --> 00:06:35,000

In time, everyone who fell ill in Oakville eventually recovers and the cause of their sickness is never determined.

62

00:06:35,000 --> 00:06:45,000

But even though nearly two decades have passed since the strange material fell from the sky, the people of this close knit community still wonder.

63

00:06:45,000 --> 00:06:47,000

What were those blobs?

64

00:06:47,000 --> 00:06:55,000

I still don't have an answer, but I'm still curious about what it was that fell in 1994 in Oakville.

65

00:06:56,000 --> 00:07:04,000

And so it seems that the truth is still swirling in the skies above Washington's Capitol State Forest.

66

00:07:07,000 --> 00:07:14,000

At the mouth of the Cuyahoga River on the south shore of Lake Erie sits Weevland, Ohio.

67

00:07:15,000 --> 00:07:28,000

And not far from the towering skyscrapers of this rust belt metropolis is a quiet city park known as the Rocky River Reservation, which contains a diminutive but very special monument.

68

00:07:28,000 --> 00:07:32,000

It's bronze. It's about four and a half feet high.

69

00:07:32,000 --> 00:07:41,000

According to historian James Banks, this sculpture that sits atop an imposing stone base depicts a most unlikely war hero.

70

00:07:41,000 --> 00:07:47,000

The closer you get, the clearer it becomes that it is a memorial to an animal.

71

00:07:48,000 --> 00:07:58,000

It's a dog. But who was this little muck? And what role did she play in saving the lives of American troops in the heat of a ferocious battle?

72

00:07:58,000 --> 00:08:11,000

Papua New Guinea, 1944. This lush Pacific Island is a flashpoint in a world at war.

73

00:08:13,000 --> 00:08:22,000

One young soldier stationed in this remote outpost is Bill Wynn, a corporal in the U.S. Army's 26th photo reconnaissance squadron.

74

00:08:22,000 --> 00:08:33,000

The Pacific War was like no other war. The jungle was very humid. It rained almost every day. We just toughed it out and we did it.

75

00:08:34,000 --> 00:08:43,000

But for Bill and his fellow troops, the hardships of war are eased by the arrival of an unlikely and adorable new recruit.

76

00:08:43,000 --> 00:08:55,000

A stray Yorkshire terrier that Bill names Smokey after the smokestacks of his native Cleveland. Bill takes it upon himself to train the playful mutt.

77

00:08:56,000 --> 00:09:07,000

She could ride a scooter. She could roll a drum. I taught her the walking a tight wire blindfold. She could spell her name out of letters. That was a real difficult one.

78

00:09:08,000 --> 00:09:17,000

But Smokey's role goes far beyond entertaining the troops. She accompanies Bill on many of his dangerous reconnaissance flights over enemy lines.

79

00:09:18,000 --> 00:09:20,000

I figured if we're going to go down, we're going to go down together.

80

00:09:21,000 --> 00:09:33,000

She even gets her own custom-made air-core vest. And when Bill is eventually transferred from New Guinea to the Philippines, there's no question. Smokey goes with him.

81

00:09:33,000 --> 00:09:37,000

It's there that the plucky war dog has her finest hour.

82

00:09:39,000 --> 00:09:42,000

February 1945, the island of Luzon.

83

00:09:44,000 --> 00:09:49,000

U.S. forces are in the midst of a pitched battle to take the island back from the Japanese.

84

00:09:50,000 --> 00:10:02,000

Bill and his squadron have been charged with setting up a lookout post at a recently captured airstrip and must establish a communications link with headquarters in order to relay advanced warnings of Japanese bombing runs.

85

00:10:03,000 --> 00:10:08,000

To do this, they must run a phone wire beneath the runway to the Army's operation center.

86

00:10:09,000 --> 00:10:13,000

It became a crucial thing that this telephone wire got through.

87

00:10:15,000 --> 00:10:22,000

The problem is that digging up the runway to lay the cable will leave Bill and his men vulnerable to attack from the air.

88

00:10:23,000 --> 00:10:27,000

The Japanese were bombing that airstrip every day, at least once a day.

89

00:10:28,000 --> 00:10:35,000

The task is estimated to take three days of heavy labor out in the open, exposing the men to almost certain death.

90

00:10:38,000 --> 00:10:41,000

It's then that one of them has a brilliant idea.

91

00:10:42,000 --> 00:10:46,000

And key to the plan is Smokey.

92

00:10:47,000 --> 00:10:59,000

At the edge of the runway, one of the soldiers notices a narrow drainage pipe that seems to run under the airstrip in the same direction that the phone cable needs to be laid.

93

00:11:00,000 --> 00:11:04,000

And the pipe's opening is just large enough to fit. A small dog.

94

00:11:07,000 --> 00:11:10,000

This is a totally new trick that Smokey has never tried.

95

00:11:10,000 --> 00:11:21,000

Threading a wire through a culvert may sound easy, but the chances are that the wire could get snagged or Smokey herself could get trapped.

96

00:11:23,000 --> 00:11:31,000

To encourage Smokey to go into the pipe, Bill positions himself at the other end and calls to his canine cable carrier.

97

00:11:32,000 --> 00:11:35,000

Smokey, come. Come on, baby. Smokey, come. Come.

98

00:11:36,000 --> 00:11:41,000

And upon hearing her master's voice, Smokey dives into the opening.

99

00:11:41,000 --> 00:11:44,000

Come Smokey, come on. Atta girl, atta girl, atta girl, atta.

100

00:11:46,000 --> 00:11:52,000

By yelling across the audience, she's still coming and he says, yeah, I'm still feeding wine. Okay, come on Smokey, come on baby.

101

00:11:53,000 --> 00:11:58,000

But as the minutes pass, without any sign of the dog, the men start to grow anxious.

102

00:11:59,000 --> 00:12:04,000

What if Smokey gets stuck? Will she back out? What if Smokey dies?

103

00:12:05,000 --> 00:12:08,000

So will Smokey make it through and save the day?

104

00:12:12,000 --> 00:12:23,000

The Philippines, 1945. Corporal Bill Wynn and his fellow American soldiers have been charged with the task of laying a vital phone cable across a recently captured airstrip.

105

00:12:24,000 --> 00:12:29,000

The only problem is doing so will leave them hopelessly exposed to attack from Japanese fighters.

106

00:12:29,000 --> 00:12:37,000

The Americans have a secret weapon, a four pound Yorkshire Terrier named Smokey. Can Smokey save the day?

107

00:12:39,000 --> 00:12:45,000

At the edge of the airstrip, Bill and his men wait anxiously for Smokey to emerge from the drainage pipe.

108

00:12:47,000 --> 00:12:54,000

As the seconds tick by, their fears begin to grow. Then the heroic dog reappears.

109

00:12:59,000 --> 00:13:09,000

So all of a sudden she burst into a rut and she ran into my arms. She still had the string attached and with that they were able to pull the phone wires through. Most dogs could not do that.

110

00:13:11,000 --> 00:13:17,000

The Lookout Post is established and Smokey is commended as the hero of the squadron.

111

00:13:18,000 --> 00:13:32,000

When the war finally ends later that year, Bill and Smokey return to Ohio where the lovable mutt lives out her days performing tricks in vaudeville halls and VA hospitals.

112

00:13:35,000 --> 00:13:44,000

In 1957, at the age of 14, Smokey passes away and it seems the tale of this war dog will be lost forever.

113

00:13:48,000 --> 00:14:01,000

But nearly 50 years later, in 2003, a local veterans group proposes that the Cleveland Metro Parks erect a monument as a tribute to Smokey and all the brave dogs that have fought in war.

114

00:14:02,000 --> 00:14:13,000

And today, the monument stands as a memorial to an extraordinary dog, a hero in war and a born entertainer who warmed the hearts of thousands of Americans.

115

00:14:18,000 --> 00:14:29,000

Harlem, New York. Starting life in the 1650s as a Dutch village, it's now famed as a worldwide jazz mecca and a vibrant cultural epicenter.

116

00:14:30,000 --> 00:14:39,000

But for author Franz Litz, the most extraordinary tale in Harlem's rich history is tied to this unassuming plot of land.

117

00:14:40,000 --> 00:14:51,000

It's a pocket park with a few iron park benches surrounded by iron gates. It's a size of a brownstone without the brownstone in it.

118

00:14:52,000 --> 00:15:03,000

This is Collier Brothers Park, named after an enigmatic pair of siblings who were at the center of a bizarre mystery that gripped New York and the nation.

119

00:15:03,000 --> 00:15:07,000

The story behind it is the ultimate urban nightmare.

120

00:15:07,000 --> 00:15:17,000

So who were the brothers who gave this park its name? And what weird tale of paranoia, obsession and death does it conceal?

121

00:15:20,000 --> 00:15:26,000

The early 20th century, Harlem is a fashionable and affluent suburb of New York City.

122

00:15:27,000 --> 00:15:37,000

In 1909, the wealthy Collier family, whose fortune lies in prime Manhattan real estate, moves into a grand brownstone at 2078 Fifth Avenue.

123

00:15:38,000 --> 00:15:47,000

The two Collier sons, Homer and Langley, though in their late 20s, both still live at home and show little interest in getting married.

124

00:15:48,000 --> 00:15:53,000

The Collier boys always had a reputation as reclusive eccentrics.

125

00:15:54,000 --> 00:16:01,000

But after both their parents die in the late 1920s, the grieving sons grow even stranger.

126

00:16:01,000 --> 00:16:08,000

Both brothers, who are scruffies, smelly, dirty, they look like vagrants.

127

00:16:09,000 --> 00:16:14,000

And their eccentric appearance is matched by their bizarre behavior.

128

00:16:14,000 --> 00:16:23,000

Langley would go out at night like Dracula on scavenging missions and collect scraps of meat from trash cans.

129

00:16:24,000 --> 00:16:31,000

To their neighbors, the brothers' strange conduct certainly seems at odds with the family's vast

wealth.

130

00:16:31,000 --> 00:16:39,000

Word on the street was that gold bars were hidden under the floorboards, there were jewels and treasures.

131

00:16:40,000 --> 00:16:45,000

And one night, robbers set their sights on the Collier brothers mansion.

132

00:16:45,000 --> 00:16:50,000

Burglars were trying to sneak in and windows were broken.

133

00:16:52,000 --> 00:16:59,000

Disturbed by the attack on their home, the brothers board up the windows and retreat even further from society.

134

00:17:00,000 --> 00:17:05,000

And in the years that followed, they are rarely seen outside the famed family residence.

135

00:17:06,000 --> 00:17:16,000

Then, on March 21, 1947, police receive a report that there is a pestilent odor emanating from the

Collier mansion.

136

00:17:17,000 --> 00:17:22,000

When they arrive at the property, there is no answer and they force their way in.

137

00:17:24,000 --> 00:17:27,000

What shocking sights await them within its walls?

138

00:17:28,000 --> 00:17:31,000

It's 1947, New York City.

139

00:17:32,000 --> 00:17:37,000

Police have received reports of a horrific stench emanating from a brown stone in Harlem.

140

00:17:38,000 --> 00:17:44,000

The owners, two eccentric brothers named Homer and Langley Collier, haven't been seen for some time.

141

00:17:45,000 --> 00:17:48,000

What lies in wait for the police is deeply disturbing.

142

00:17:48,000 --> 00:17:51,000

The house was a rotting accretion of junk.

143

00:17:52,000 --> 00:18:01,000

Hundreds and thousands of newspapers, their 14 grand pianos, baby carriages, a disassembled Model T Ford.

144

00:18:02,000 --> 00:18:04,000

Just about anything you can imagine.

145

00:18:05,000 --> 00:18:11,000

Then, as police scour the piles of detritus, they stumble upon a horrific sight.

146

00:18:11,000 --> 00:18:16,000

There's this emaciated figure, Homer Collier was dead in his mansion.

147

00:18:18,000 --> 00:18:23,000

It becomes clear to investigators that Homer had been sick and housebound for years.

148

00:18:24,000 --> 00:18:28,000

And they conclude that his sole caretaker had been his younger brother Langley.

149

00:18:30,000 --> 00:18:32,000

But Langley is not there.

150

00:18:32,000 --> 00:18:39,000

One theory was that he had killed his brother and fled with all the vast Collier riches.

151

00:18:40,000 --> 00:18:44,000

When the story hits the headlines, a massive manhunt is launched,

152

00:18:45,000 --> 00:18:50,000

with reported sightings of Langley Collier in Brooklyn, New Jersey, even North Carolina.

153

00:18:51,000 --> 00:18:55,000

The story is about a manhunt that was shot in the face by a manhunt.

154

00:18:55,000 --> 00:19:00,000

There's a lot of reported sightings of Langley Collier in Brooklyn, New Jersey, even North Carolina.

155

00:19:03,000 --> 00:19:08,000

But in spite of the publicity that the case receives, Langley is nowhere to be found.

156

00:19:10,000 --> 00:19:16,000

Then, after weeks of hunting through the junk choked house, one of the workers makes another gruesome discovery.

157

00:19:17,000 --> 00:19:19,000

Langley's decomposing body.

158

00:19:21,000 --> 00:19:24,000

His face, his hands had been gnawed away by rats.

159

00:19:26,000 --> 00:19:29,000

But what killed him is even more unusual.

160

00:19:31,000 --> 00:19:39,000

In their search through the house, police find booby traps made of hidden trip wires attached to

piles of junk suspended from the ceiling.

161

00:19:40,000 --> 00:19:44,000

Which they surmise, a paranoid Langley must have set up to catch intruders.

162

00:19:46,000 --> 00:19:52,000

And they conclude that Langley died after being crushed by one of his own booby traps.

163

00:19:53,000 --> 00:19:58,000

He was lying there with a tray of food that he had been bringing Homer.

164

00:19:59,000 --> 00:20:06,000

After Langley was smothered by his own junk, there was no one to take care of Homer, who died days later of starvation.

165

00:20:08,000 --> 00:20:17,000

All told, after months of intensive cleaning, crews haul out over 100 tons of trash from bicycles to mannequins.

166

00:20:18,000 --> 00:20:21,000

But there's no sign of any hidden treasure.

167

00:20:22,000 --> 00:20:27,000

It seems that the family's once vast fortune had been swallowed up by property taxes.

168

00:20:30,000 --> 00:20:39,000

Soon after the brothers' deaths, the Collier Mansion is condemned and raised to the ground, replaced years later by a vest pocket city park.

169

00:20:42,000 --> 00:20:47,000

But that's not the only way in which the legacy of these eccentric brothers lives on.

170

00:20:47,000 --> 00:20:56,000

Even now, New York City firefighters, when faced with a junk jammed apartment that's on fire, haul it in as a Collier.

171

00:20:57,000 --> 00:21:08,000

And it's here in Harlem that visitors to the Collier Brothers Park can remember this haunting tale of the Harlem Hermits, who became the Big Apple's most notorious hoarders.

172

00:21:09,000 --> 00:21:21,000

The picturesque city of San Francisco is home to 800,000 people and one of the most iconic landmarks in the world.

173

00:21:22,000 --> 00:21:27,000

It's put together with 600,000 field-driven rivets. It's a mile and a quarter long.

174

00:21:28,000 --> 00:21:33,000

It ranks with the Eiffel Tower, Big Bend, the Empire State Building, maybe surpasses them.

175

00:21:33,000 --> 00:21:42,000

It is the Golden Gate Bridge. Completed in 1937, it was hailed as a triumph of engineering and human endeavor.

176

00:21:43,000 --> 00:21:48,000

But few visitors here realize its origins were shrouded in tragedy.

177

00:21:49,000 --> 00:21:54,000

The Bridge constitutes an epic engineering achievement and it came at the cost of life.

178

00:21:56,000 --> 00:22:02,000

So what horrific incident marred the construction of the magnificent Golden Gate Bridge?

179

00:22:04,000 --> 00:22:08,000

January 1933, San Francisco.

180

00:22:09,000 --> 00:22:12,000

The city is mired in the worst year of the Great Depression.

181

00:22:13,000 --> 00:22:17,000

Trade is stagnant and the local economy is in ruins.

182

00:22:18,000 --> 00:22:25,000

But one man has a plan to revitalize the area's flagging economy and bring prosperity back to the region.

183

00:22:26,000 --> 00:22:29,000

His name is Joseph Strauss.

184

00:22:29,000 --> 00:22:33,000

Strauss was a dreamer in every sense of the word.

185

00:22:34,000 --> 00:22:43,000

The 63-year-old structural engineer believes the cure to the city's woes lies to the north on the far shores of Marin County.

186

00:22:45,000 --> 00:22:55,000

Rich in timber and blessed with acres of fertile agricultural land, Marin County is separated from San Francisco by a seemingly impassable barrier.

187

00:22:56,000 --> 00:22:59,000

The forbidding waters of California's Golden Gate.

188

00:23:00,000 --> 00:23:04,000

The strait that connects San Francisco Bay to the Pacific Ocean.

189

00:23:05,000 --> 00:23:13,000

Strauss' plan is to build a giant bridge that will span this gaping waterway and open the region to trade and commerce.

190

00:23:14,000 --> 00:23:18,000

Prevailing opinion is that you can't do it. It's impossible to bridge this gap.

191

00:23:19,000 --> 00:23:22,000

It's a bold idea, but not a new one.

192

00:23:22,000 --> 00:23:30,000

Since the 19th century, city planners had dreamed of a bridge in this location, but no one had dared attempt it.

193

00:23:31,000 --> 00:23:38,000

The Golden Gate is over a mile wide and channeled by some of the most unforgiving waters on earth.

194

00:23:39,000 --> 00:23:42,000

But Strauss is undeterred and convinced his plan can work.

195

00:23:44,000 --> 00:23:51,000

When construction commences, there is no denying that building the bridge is an extremely dangerous endeavor.

196

00:23:52,000 --> 00:24:00,000

It would have been bad above land. Being above San Francisco Bay just compounded the danger.

197

00:24:01,000 --> 00:24:12,000

And yet the hardened laborers who climb out on the scaffolds and cable work each day grow to respect Joseph Strauss, whose planning shows a genuine concern for their welfare.

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00:24:13,000 --> 00:24:19,000

Strauss wanted it to be the safest big construction project in American history.

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00:24:19,000 --> 00:24:28,000

Strauss institutes a series of groundbreaking safety requirements, including mandatory hardhats, tetherlines and goggles.

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00:24:30,000 --> 00:24:36,000

And strong beneath the span of the bridge is an unprecedented Circa-style safety net.

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00:24:37,000 --> 00:24:43,000

The net proved itself many times over, workers that slipped and fell, fell into the net.

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00:24:43,000 --> 00:24:49,000

After four years of construction, the project has achieved a remarkable safety record.

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00:24:51,000 --> 00:24:54,000

But Strauss' good fortune is about to end.

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00:24:57,000 --> 00:25:06,000

On the morning of February 17, 1937, a dozen men are working on a five-ton platform beneath the recently completed roadway.

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00:25:07,000 --> 00:25:10,000

The foreman of the group is 37-year-old Slim Lambert.

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00:25:10,000 --> 00:25:16,000

They were stripping the lumber that is used to provide the forms for the pouring of concrete.

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00:25:17,000 --> 00:25:19,000

Suddenly, Lambert hears a gut-wrenching noise.

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00:25:21,000 --> 00:25:30,000

This platform tilted and most of the men slid off. Then the entire structure came loose and fell into the net.

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00:25:31,000 --> 00:25:36,000

The net, which was never designed to bear the weight of the massive platform, rips free from the bridge.

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00:25:37,000 --> 00:25:41,000

Platform and the net and 12 guys went into the water.

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00:25:43,000 --> 00:25:44,000

10 of them died.

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00:25:46,000 --> 00:25:52,000

In one tragic moment, the incredible safety record of the bridge is all but forgotten.

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00:25:53,000 --> 00:25:56,000

So what caused this horrific accident?

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00:26:00,000 --> 00:26:03,000

1937, San Francisco Bay, California.

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00:26:04,000 --> 00:26:11,000

The Golden Gate Bridge has been under construction for four years and in that time boasts a near-perfect safety record.

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00:26:12,000 --> 00:26:18,000

But on February 17, a platform suddenly collapses, sending 12 men plummeting into the bay.

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00:26:19,000 --> 00:26:23,000

So if safety was so tight, what went wrong?

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00:26:25,000 --> 00:26:28,000

Investigators soon arrive at the sad conclusion.

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00:26:28,000 --> 00:26:34,000

That Strauss' meticulous safety planning had overlooked a tiny but crucial design flaw.

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00:26:36,000 --> 00:26:45,000

The platform that collapsed was connected to the bridge by a rolling hanger on a track, which allowed the staging to move beneath the span of the bridge.

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00:26:46,000 --> 00:26:54,000

Authorities determined that the bolts connecting the platform to the hanger were too small for the amount of weight they were required to bear.

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00:26:55,000 --> 00:27:00,000

The bolts that was holding the platform to the girders broke in one corner.

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00:27:01,000 --> 00:27:07,000

The torque from that breakage put pressure on the other three they broke, the platform fell into the net.

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00:27:08,000 --> 00:27:12,000

Once the net ripped away, the workers plunged into the icy currents of the bay.

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00:27:14,000 --> 00:27:21,000

Miraculously, two men survived the 200-foot fall, including the foreman, Slim Lambert.

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00:27:21,000 --> 00:27:30,000

For most people, it's receded into the mists of memory. My father was 37 at the time and lived to the age of 88.

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00:27:31,000 --> 00:27:42,000

Within months of the accident, on May 27, 1937, the Golden Gate Bridge, which had once been seen as an impossible feat, is open to the public.

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00:27:43,000 --> 00:27:54,000

And today, the workers who perished in the pursuit of Joseph Strauss' bold dream are memorialized by a simple bronze plaque on the southern tip of the bridge.

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00:27:56,000 --> 00:28:11,000

For the 10 million visitors to the site and the 40 million vehicles that cross the span each year, the Golden Gate Bridge is a grand symbol of one man's enduring vision and a tribute to those who gave their lives to build it.

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00:28:13,000 --> 00:28:30,000

200 miles due east of San Francisco lies the great untamed expanse of Yosemite National Park, a vast conglomeration of cascading waterfalls, soaring cliffs, and clear mountain streams.

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00:28:32,000 --> 00:28:39,000

And dominating this breathtaking wilderness is a colossal landmark that towers over 4,700 feet.

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00:28:42,000 --> 00:28:49,000

It demands your attention, and really from the valley floor, it looks like it would be inaccessible.

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00:28:50,000 --> 00:29:07,000

This is Half Dome, the mammoth mountain that presides over Yosemite like a proud sentinel, and which boasts an unparalleled pathway up its 45-degree eastern slope, which has long amazed park ranger Carrie Carr.

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00:29:08,000 --> 00:29:14,000

The Half Dome Cable's hike is one of the most popular hikes in any national park in the United States.

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00:29:15,000 --> 00:29:22,000

But the story of how this iconic walkway came into being is one of the most extraordinary tales in the park's epic history.

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00:29:26,000 --> 00:29:30,000

Yosemite Valley, California, October 1875.

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00:29:31,000 --> 00:29:36,000

It's an era of burgeoning tourism in the 700,000 acres of protected wilderness.

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00:29:38,000 --> 00:29:48,000

Arriving by horseback and stagecoach on newly built roads, visitors are enraptured when they behold a spectacle, the likes of which they've never seen before.

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00:29:50,000 --> 00:29:52,000

The lofty peak, known as Half Dome.

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00:29:53,000 --> 00:30:02,000

When tourists first looked at Half Dome, it was something they looked upon and thought, gosh, how can we get up there? If the view is this amazing from down here, what's it going to be like up there?

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00:30:03,000 --> 00:30:12,000

But neither the near vertical northwest face nor the less severe but equally challenging eastern slope will yield to human endeavor easily.

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00:30:13,000 --> 00:30:23,000

In 1870, the chief geologist in California said Half Dome is perfectly inaccessible. It will never be trodden by human foot.

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00:30:24,000 --> 00:30:32,000

Given such a challenge, daring residents of Yosemite Valley make several efforts to climb the eastern slope, but all fail.

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00:30:33,000 --> 00:30:39,000

Until the fall of 1875, when a certain local blacksmith picks up the gauntlet.

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00:30:40,000 --> 00:30:48,000

George Anderson is a 36-year-old Scotsman who, a few years earlier, had made his way to California as a gold prospector.

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00:30:49,000 --> 00:30:59,000

George Anderson had this desire in him to get to the top of Half Dome, to be the first person on top, and he looked at it like it was a challenge.

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00:31:00,000 --> 00:31:06,000

So Anderson sets about taking on the challenge of scaling the Dome's 45-degree eastern slope.

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00:31:06,000 --> 00:31:16,000

It's a very, very flat, slick face that doesn't have a lot of features. There's nothing to grab onto, and if you do fall, you're going to fall thousands of feet.

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00:31:17,000 --> 00:31:19,000

So it's a very, very dangerous Dome.

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00:31:20,000 --> 00:31:33,000

Anderson ponders the problem of the granite's treacherous surface. He first tries climbing in stockings, then with bare feet to give himself more grip, but he has no success.

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00:31:34,000 --> 00:31:37,000

Then he comes up with a surprising solution.

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00:31:38,000 --> 00:31:50,000

Anderson decided to tie burlap sacks around his shoes, and what he did after that was he put pitch on the bottom of the burlap sacks, and he thought that that would create a sticking mechanism for him.

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00:31:51,000 --> 00:31:53,000

And sure enough, Anderson makes headway.

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00:31:56,000 --> 00:32:00,000

But almost halfway up, his ascent is abruptly halting.

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00:32:00,000 --> 00:32:15,000

His feet started to stick to the rock so strong that he actually got stuck. He could not move his foot. He had nobody else with him. If he fell, he was going to fall thousands of feet. He's in a very, very dangerous spot.

256

00:32:16,000 --> 00:32:28,000

Finally, with much difficulty, Anderson manages to pry his foot away from the rock. Badly shaken, he retreats down the slope, disheartened, but not defeated.

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00:32:31,000 --> 00:32:41,000

A few days later, Anderson returns to the valley with an astonishing announcement. That he's made it to the coveted summit of Half Dome.

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00:32:43,000 --> 00:32:49,000

But with no eyewitnesses to such an unprecedented conquest, the community is skeptical.

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00:32:50,000 --> 00:32:56,000

People didn't believe him. They thought that he was making it up. They thought there's no way anybody could be on top of Half Dome.

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00:32:57,000 --> 00:33:07,000

So is Anderson telling the truth? Has he really scaled the mighty Half Dome? Or is it all a giant hoax?

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00:33:08,000 --> 00:33:12,000

It's 1875, Yosemite Valley, California.

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00:33:13,000 --> 00:33:25,000

Scotsman George Anderson is determined to do what many think impossible. Climb to the summit of the 4700 foot tall monolith known as Half Dome.

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00:33:26,000 --> 00:33:36,000

After repeated failures, it seems his dream is in tatters. So when he suddenly announces that he's made it to the top, the question on everyone's mind is,

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00:33:37,000 --> 00:33:39,000

does he really do it?

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00:33:40,000 --> 00:33:49,000

In order for Anderson to prove that he really did make it to the top, he takes a couple of people up to the base of Half Dome to show them how he actually climbed the dome.

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00:33:50,000 --> 00:34:00,000

There, Anderson shows the dubious onlookers something astonishing. A revolutionary climbing technique that he used to successfully reach the top.

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00:34:00,000 --> 00:34:08,000

He had actually hammered these pieces of metal into the backside of Half Dome. And in those holes, he stuck these eye bolts.

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00:34:09,000 --> 00:34:19,000

Once they were securely in place, he would actually stand on each eye bolt. He would then pound in the next one, and then he would step up on that one until he actually reached the top of the dome.

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00:34:21,000 --> 00:34:27,000

Little does Anderson know that his use of eye bolts marks a world first in the history of rock climbing.

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00:34:27,000 --> 00:34:33,000

It was something that had never been done before, and it paved the way for modern day climbing as what we know it today.

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00:34:34,000 --> 00:34:44,000

Not long after his famous climb, Anderson consults on a groundbreaking scheme to build an accessible walkway to the top of the peak.

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00:34:45,000 --> 00:34:50,000

And in 1919, the Half Dome Cables hike is completed.

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00:34:51,000 --> 00:34:56,000

Every year we see about 45,000 people that will get to the top.

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00:34:57,000 --> 00:35:14,000

Today, visitors to Yosemite National Park can ascend the mighty Half Dome and experience the thrill of conquering what was once thought of as the impossible climb.

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00:35:14,000 --> 00:35:29,000

Stretching along the 370-mile border with Mexico, the vast desert landscape of Baja, Arizona harkens back to a prehistoric era.

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00:35:30,000 --> 00:35:37,000

But there's one place here that speaks to a very different, more recent period.

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00:35:38,000 --> 00:35:47,000

An old-time pioneer town and national historic landmark with a name that is synonymous with a standoff that defined the Old West.

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00:35:48,000 --> 00:35:50,000

This is Tombstone.

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00:35:51,000 --> 00:35:56,000

It's a town that lives in American fact and American fiction.

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00:35:57,000 --> 00:36:08,000

As curator Jeffrey Richardson can attest, the events that played out here are inexorably entwined with the actions of one iconic lawman, Wyatt Earp.

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00:36:09,000 --> 00:36:13,000

He played a pivotal role in one of the most important events in the American West.

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00:36:14,000 --> 00:36:23,000

So what is the true story behind the most famous gunfight in American history and the epic blood feud that it spawned?

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00:36:26,000 --> 00:36:34,000

The late 1800s. Tombstone, Arizona is booming with silver mines luring prospectors by the thousands.

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00:36:35,000 --> 00:36:42,000

But following in their wake is a band of outlaws notorious for drinking, stealing and murdering.

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00:36:45,000 --> 00:36:52,000

They're called the Cowboys. And at their helm is a ruthless killer named Johnny Gringo.

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00:36:52,000 --> 00:36:56,000

He was called the king of the Cowboys. Gringo was a deadly man.

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00:36:58,000 --> 00:37:06,000

But the infamous bandit is about to meet his match in the form of newly appointed Deputy U.S. Marshal, Virgil Erd.

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00:37:07,000 --> 00:37:11,000

Accompanying him are his brothers, Morgan and Wyatt.

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00:37:12,000 --> 00:37:17,000

Together, the three men are tasked with taking the town back from the clutches of the Cowboys.

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00:37:17,000 --> 00:37:22,000

The federal government was under a great deal of pressure to do something about the outlaws.

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00:37:24,000 --> 00:37:32,000

And it's not long before the Cowboys and the Erbs will come face to face in a meeting that will live long in the annals of the American West.

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00:37:33,000 --> 00:37:35,000

The gunfight at the OK Corral.

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00:37:35,000 --> 00:37:47,000

On October 26, 1881, a band of Cowboys steps onto the streets of Tombstone armed to the teeth and thirsty for blood.

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00:37:48,000 --> 00:37:53,000

All that stands between them and control of the town are the three Earp Brothers.

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00:37:56,000 --> 00:37:58,000

And then all hell broke loose.

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00:37:58,000 --> 00:38:06,000

30 shots were fired in 30 seconds.

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00:38:07,000 --> 00:38:11,000

When the dust settles, three Cowboys are dead.

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00:38:12,000 --> 00:38:17,000

But the fatal feud between Johnny Gringo's Cowboys and the Earp Brothers has only just begun.

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00:38:20,000 --> 00:38:25,000

Some believe that Johnny Gringo took a blood pack to avenge those Cowboys who had been killed.

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00:38:26,000 --> 00:38:36,000

On December 28, two months after the shootout, Deputy Virgil Earp is ambushed on the street and barely survives the attack.

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00:38:37,000 --> 00:38:46,000

Weeks later, Morgan Earp is shot dead, leaving Wyatt to conclude that it's killed or be killed.

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00:38:47,000 --> 00:38:53,000

So he organizes a posse to hunt down Gringo and the Cowboys one by one.

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00:38:54,000 --> 00:39:01,000

He was determined to kill the men that killed Morgan and Gringo was the last man on Wyatt's list.

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00:39:02,000 --> 00:39:06,000

But the final target of Earp's vendetta has vanished.

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00:39:07,000 --> 00:39:12,000

Was he on the run? Was he hiding from Wyatt Earp? Where did he go?

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00:39:13,000 --> 00:39:17,000

Will Wyatt Earp be able to find and kill Johnny Gringo?

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00:39:23,000 --> 00:39:34,000

It's 1882, Tombstone, Arizona. The gunfight at the Ok Corral has sparked a deadly feud between the Earp Brothers and a gang of outlaws led by Johnny Gringo.

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00:39:35,000 --> 00:39:42,000

With one sibling maimed and the other dead, Deputy Marshal Wyatt Earp is out to settle the score with Gringo.

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00:39:43,000 --> 00:39:46,000

So, does Wyatt Earp get his man?

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00:39:47,000 --> 00:39:51,000

July 14th, 1882.

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00:39:52,000 --> 00:40:01,000

Eight months after the shootout at the Ok Corral, a man working for a lumber company makes a macabre discovery on the outskirts of Tombstone.

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00:40:02,000 --> 00:40:05,000

A dead body beneath a tree.

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00:40:06,000 --> 00:40:10,000

He had a hole in his temple and another hole in the top of his head.

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00:40:11,000 --> 00:40:18,000

The corpse is identified as none other than Johnny Gringo, the villainous leader of the Cowboys.

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00:40:19,000 --> 00:40:23,000

It's widely presumed that Wyatt Earp has finally got his man.

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00:40:24,000 --> 00:40:29,000

Now, of course, it is naturally assumed that Wyatt Earp ultimately took his life.

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00:40:32,000 --> 00:40:36,000

And in later years, Earp even admits to killing Gringo.

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00:40:37,000 --> 00:40:40,000

But something isn't right about Earp's version of events.

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00:40:42,000 --> 00:40:49,000

It's known that in the days preceding Gringo's death, Wyatt Earp was several hundred miles away in Colorado.

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00:40:50,000 --> 00:40:56,000

Many historians doubt that he could have made the ride all the way back to Tombstone in time to kill Gringo.

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00:40:58,000 --> 00:40:59,000

So what really happened?

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00:41:00,000 --> 00:41:04,000

One theory states that Earp didn't kill Gringo at all.

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00:41:04,000 --> 00:41:08,000

There's also other outlaws and bandits that had a conflict with him.

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00:41:08,000 --> 00:41:13,000

There's even some speculation that some individuals were seeking favor with the Earp, so they

killed them.

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00:41:17,000 --> 00:41:21,000

So if Wyatt Earp didn't kill his nemesis, why did he take credit for it?

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00:41:23,000 --> 00:41:27,000

In the Old West, reputations were made by the settling of scores.

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00:41:27,000 --> 00:41:35,000

So some say that the deputy marshal took credit for killing Gringo in order to cement his legacy as a tough acting lawman

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00:41:36,000 --> 00:41:39,000

and make good on his oath to avenge his brother's death.

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00:41:41,000 --> 00:41:43,000

But the truth may never be known.

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00:41:44,000 --> 00:41:50,000

How John Gringo died will always be a mystery, but it sure is fun trying to find those answers.

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00:41:51,000 --> 00:41:59,000

Today, this simple grave, marking the spot where Gringo's body was found, lies just outside of Tombstone, Arizona.

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00:42:00,000 --> 00:42:08,000

Where these wooden storefronts and dusty roads remind visitors of one of the most infamous gunfights of the American West

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00:42:09,000 --> 00:42:11,000

and the blood feud it spawned.

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00:42:14,000 --> 00:42:18,000

From a slimy scourge to a daring dog,

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00:42:18,000 --> 00:42:22,000

a gun-slinging cowboy to a house of hoarders.

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00:42:24,000 --> 00:42:28,000

I'm Don Wildman and these are Monumental Mysteries.

