

DYSTOPIAN AGE

THE LAWMEN OF THE FEDERATED STATES MARSHAL SERVICE

The law is an elusive animal on the Union Frontier. After the brutal culmination of the Civil War, the western territories have entered the Dystopian Age, a time of such violence and upheaval that there is almost no hope for ordinary men and women to survive, let alone prosper. First amongst those who rise up to defend them are the Lawmen of the Federated States Marshal Service. These determined and resourceful men and women stand for the Law and act as judge, jury and, if necessary, executioner of those who would sow misery and mayhem.

To: Whitelaw Reid, Editor, New York Tribune.

Sir, please find enclosed the article for which you commissioned me. This piece explores the history and current status of the Lawmen of our nation. I have interviewed a number of Marshals and Sheriffs as well as their deputies as I laid out for the folks back East the nature of this vital service organisation. I look forward to receiving your feedback in due course.

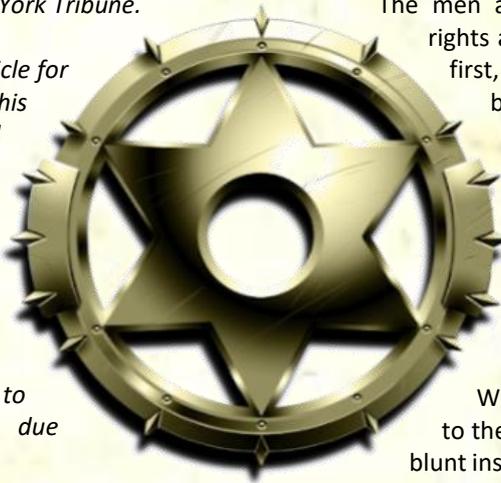
Minerva Bly, Tombstone, Arizona Territory, 1871

“Every citizen needs to know the limits of their freedoms, and the protections to which they are entitled as they go about their daily lives. It is also necessary for a structure of punishments and strictures to be established, to ensure that everyone can enjoy the protections and rights of the Law.”

– Abraham Lincoln

LAW AND ORDER

Our great nation has grown and flourished in the years since the Founding Fathers landed upon our shores. When Abraham Lincoln considered the state of the nation, he proclaimed that without laws, humanity could not flourish. He further stated that without men and women to uphold them, the laws are not worth the parchment on which they are written.



The men and women who enforce those rights and responsibilities are often the first, last, and only line of defence between the innocent and those who would abuse and victimise them. I have extensively researched these individuals and have been fortunate enough to obtain several exclusive interviews.

SHIELD OF THE INNOCENT

While the Union Army is paramount to the survival of the Union, they are a blunt instrument better suited to crushing insurrections and defending against foreign invaders than policing communities and guarding against individual lawbreakers. When the Army is deployed, countless innocents are often injured or killed in the process.

Government agents also move through our great country. And effective as these solitary individuals may be at flushing out enemies of the state and threats to the nation, they too, are ill-suited to the defence of the individual civilian when the more mundane laws of the land are being flouted. So when it comes to the protection of an innocent farmer, a blameless merchant and their families, it is to the Lawmen of the Federated States Marshal Service that these people must turn.

THE LETTER OF THE LAW

In order to understand what the Law has become, it is important to appreciate how it has evolved. I beg you to indulge me and allow me to share a little history.

A framework of professional law enforcement was established by the eastern states considerable



years ago. It is known that the Federated States Marshal Service, based out of the Nottingham Building in New York City, has existed for over a hundred years, overseeing the establishment of local regulating forces and the peaceful implementation of the laws generated from Washington. I should point out here that though the term Lawmen is used it is universally applied to both men and women who serve in the Marshal Service. Though some older Lawmen (and 'Law-women') have gone out of their way to make that distinction, for the vast majority that I interviewed, the inclusion of both genders was so natural that it warranted no comment.

At the heart of the Federated States Marshal Service is the concept that the Law is sacrosanct, that it protects and surrounds everything within the borders of the Union. No man or woman, regardless of social position or status, should consider their actions above the Law. The Law, the marshals believe, exists to protect everyone equally, and to ensure that all citizens of the Union are guaranteed a fair and impartial field upon which to strive for peace and happiness.

HIERARCHY OF THE SERVICE

So a little structure, then. At the top of the Federated States Marshal Service are the High Marshals, each responsible for a state or territory and all business conducted therein. The High Marshals answer only to the Nottingham Building and even then are granted wide interpretive powers within their own jurisdictions.

Below the High Marshals are the marshals, assigned to a major city or civic centre within the larger state or territory. Relationships between marshals and High Marshals vary wildly, from familial dynasties policing an entire state, to an outright rebellion led by a large city's marshal against the dictates of that territory's High Marshal. For the most part, these men and women work together for the greater good of the societies under their care, but there are fault lines built into the structure of the system that may shake the foundations of the Law in time. This may be a cynical outlook, but it is a pragmatic and honest one.

Below the marshals serve the sheriffs, looking after small towns, boroughs, and other regions within the larger jurisdictions. The sheriffs serve at the pleasure of the marshals, focusing on those policies and priorities fixed at the higher levels through the use of deputies.

Deputies are civilians who have been granted special status by the High Marshal at the request of the local marshal or sheriff. Deputies are the law-enforcement equivalent of citizen-soldiers and come from all occupations and walks of life. In times of particular distress, deputies don uniforms that identify them as acting with the authority of the local marshal. Deputies provide their own weapons and equipment as well, forming more of a well-ordered militia than a standing constabulary. If confronted with a particularly difficult case, a local sheriff might deputise every able-bodied man and woman in a town to try to bring down a powerful criminal threatening the general peace of the region.

"In the soul of each law-abiding citizen is an outlaw just waiting for their chance."

– Judge Kingsley Stern

A FLAW IN THE SYSTEM

The Law is the Law to any honest officer. It is codified, written in the ordinance books, and available for all to see and read. The problem, however, comes from the interpretation of that law. Most statutes provide for a wide range of punishments, for instance, and it is up to individual Lawmen to decide what penalty is imposed. Further, each individual marshal and sheriff is given extensive interpretive powers within their own jurisdiction, to decide what constitutes an infraction and what might represent a simple misunderstanding or innocent confusion.

Each Lawman is given wide interpretive powers and this can result in considerable confusion when travelling from one jurisdiction to another. In one region something that might be seen as a minor transgression could command the highest corporal punishment the next town over. The High Marshals are constantly working to ensure that the Law is being applied equally across the land, but when so much power resides in the hands of each local Lawman, such a task is not easy.

Luckily, most established eastern jurisdictions have a long tradition of precedent and custom to resort to, and so implementation of the Law throughout the more structured regions of the Union is generally equitable. Many of the marshal's offices have been functioning, in one form or another, since this structure was first put in place and their relationship with the Nottingham Building is well-established.



The newer territories, however, have proven to be a much more difficult region to assimilate into the existing structure and it is these that have provided me with so much fascinating insight into the real lives of these men and women.

FRONTIER JUSTICE

Wyatt Earp, High Marshal of the Arizona Territories is an imposing man. Well over six feet in height, with what could best be called an 'intimidating' presence, he is taciturn and hard to extract information from. When he gives up his words, he is startlingly eloquent and his belief in dispensing justice is without question.

"Unfortunately, what works in a region that has been civilised for over a hundred years might not be a perfect fit for territories still wet with the blood of those who carved them from the wilderness in the first place," he says to me as we sit beneath the burning Arizona Territory sun.

Wyatt Earp has made it his duty to serve and protect the people of the Union of Federated States from threats that might intrude upon their daily lives. Laudable though this goal may be, it has nonetheless earned Earp few friends and countless more enemies. His immediate family has suffered numerous personal tragedies at the hands of the lawless. Only his closest friends are able to permeate the iron-clad demeanour he maintains and so there are but few who can offer support and succour to the undoubtedly lonely man that must lie within the legend.

The enemies of peace and harmony on the frontier are everywhere and, Earp claims, they will stop at nothing to force the Union settlers out of the territories and back to the safe havens of the eastern states.

But the Union claims those territories and demands that their laws be followed there just as anywhere else in their domain. And so the Nottingham Building has sent the High Marshals to impose the Law over the lawless, and to protect the innocent civilians from those who would victimise them.

"My fellow Lawmen and women, who have headed into the untamed frontier, are a special breed. We must be fiercely independent. Resourceful. And utterly dedicated to the Law." He emphasises each point with a slap of his hand on the table.

Each Marshal dispatched to the western territories knows that he or she is going to be alone and

entirely dependent upon the organisation they are able to establish themselves. Their marshals, sheriffs and deputies are each responsible for an island of order and safety amidst the chaos, with assistance often days or even weeks away.

Under such circumstances, the price of leniency with lawbreakers is often steep and bloody. Each Lawman is forced to deal with this unhappy situation in their own way. Some maintain law and order through the force of their own personalities, granting wider powers to the sheriffs and deputies beneath them. In so doing, they create a regional character that might keep those tempted to veer from the righteous path on the straight and narrow. Others understand that terror is a superlative motivator, and so impose a rigid, brutal regime, where the slightest infraction is punished swiftly with the full weight of the Law.

Only one thing is certain in the Wild West: The Law is a harsh, fickle mistress, and she often bows to the strongest suitor. In the face of such challenges, many a lesser man would have given up a long time ago. But according to Earp's close friend Henry John "Doc" Holliday: "Mother Earp raised no shrinking violet." So Wyatt Earp continues to heft his shield and shotgun and strides out to the clink of spurs, ready to dispense justice. He is rightly feared by those he faces in the city of Tombstone or further afield, because he brings hell with him.

"The western territories are a violent, chaotic realm where the succour of the eastern states is a distant hope, and too far away to help the brave men and women trying to wrest a living from the unforgiving earth." – Wyatt Earp

GUARDIANS OF THE WEST

As has been true throughout time, those who dispense justice carry the greatest power in their fists. Back East, the marshals are kept in check by a rigid framework of tradition and precedent that holds them accountable to the politicians and bureaucrats above them. In the western territories, no such framework exists. Because of this, the men and women who rise to positions of authority within these lawless tracts tend to hold far more power over their fiefdoms than their eastern cousins. Holding the safety of every man, woman, and child in your jurisdiction within your gloved hand can be a potentially heady brew.

This has resulted in a wide range of behaviours among the marshals of the West. Although the vast



majority of Lawmen came to their occupations honestly, through a genuine desire to protect the innocent and hold the chaos and violence at bay, a lifetime of such struggles, especially against the mounting odds currently piling up against the territories, cannot help but take their toll. Even the strongest will may break if the burden of blood and death becomes too heavy.

Among the High Marshals of the West are men and women who have come to very different methods for dealing with this pressure. Following my interview with him, I ascertained that Wyatt Earp has evidently retained a great deal of the humanity that drove him into his lofty position in the first place. The Law within the Arizona Territory is as fair as he can make it, and a man or woman crossing through that arid region can hope for equitable dealings with the marshals and sheriffs they find there if they keep their wits about them. Unfortunately, as a traveller passes beyond the lands ruled from the rough and tumble town of Tombstone, there is no telling what situation they might find themselves in next.

“They call it the town too tough to die,” I am informed by one of Earp’s deputies, a man well-known for gambling infringements in border towns across the nation. “I reckon it’s the town too damn stubborn to die.”

“The true character of mankind is dark, and must constantly be offered object lessons on the price of malfesance, lest they wander from the bright path.” – Judge Kingsley Stern

FRONTIER JUDGEMENT

Every soul living in the frontier must navigate their way through life by utilising their personal moral compass, regardless of whether the needle points to light or shadow. Soldier or miner, outlaw or deputy, each has their own set of standards, a code by which they live. In the case of Judge Kingsley Stern versus the criminal fraternity, that compass points unshakeably to the creed that guilt in all cases is a given fact. Only the severity of the transgression matters.

Judge Kingsley Stern is an itinerant Lawman serving in the territories. Judge Stern is best described as a roving one-man lynch mob utterly convinced of his own righteousness. He believes that at the heart of each law-abiding man is an outlaw just waiting for his chance. In contrast to Earp, Stern is more than eager to give me his opinions.

Judge Stern’s understanding of the law is so rigid that he has been known to hang his own deputies on more than one occasion when he thought they might have overextended their responsibilities. In one instance, a sworn deputy stopped a bank robbery in progress by shooting dead the perpetrators. But the man was not in uniform, and so his story came to a quick and painful conclusion at the end of Stern’s hanging rope.

He began his career in Boston, a brilliant and much-respected attorney-at-law whose passion for ensuring justice was served brought him not only great respect from his fellow lawyers but also tremendous wealth. Focused on his career and with no intention of marriage or children, Stern demonstrated remarkable acts of philanthropy, providing for those who had none. The people of Boston loved him, but the criminal element rightly feared him. For those unfortunates who transgressed too far above the law, the name Judge Stern was associated with a long drop and short stop.

The lawlessness of the frontier of the Federated States attracted his attention, drawing him to the territories as a moth to a flame. He learned swiftly that the soft and privileged life he had led back in Massachusetts had not remotely prepared him for life out here. Subsequently, he set aside his law books, applying his determination to mastering the arts of self-defence. That early training has long since metamorphosed into an ability to dole out justice at the end of his beautifully crafted and masterfully balanced hammer.

What could be seen as a ‘hang ‘em high’ approach to the law has drawn criticism from other Lawmen who feel that Stern’s zeal occasionally blinds him to circumstance. Stern is not bothered by the opinion of his fellow Lawmen, but out of respect for their station, rarely deputizes among their ranks. Instead, he hires and deputizes people from many walks of life who are eager to prove their worth. More often, their lack of experience and training means that Stern rarely gets to re-use their services.

Only one thing is certain in the territories: Law or no Law, a man or woman intending to live out their days so far from civilisation takes their life and livelihood in their own hands.

NO EASY PEACE

The end of the Ore War saw a massive influx of settlers flood throughout the western territories. They came from the defeated Confederacy, fleeing



the brutal destruction of cities and towns; they came from all over the Union, looking to take advantage of the vast lands of opportunity opening up before them. Each of them came with all of the preconceived notions of their past lives firmly grasped in their whitened fists.

With this exodus of new flesh came those who would prey upon them. Confidence men, hucksters, and snake-oil salesmen flourished, willing to take the last penny from a desperate farmer new to the harsh conditions and isolated lands. Desperados sweeping up from the South, or wandering in from the broken Confederate armies, felt no qualms at earning a living off the backs of the hard-working farmers and ranchers trying to make new lives for themselves in the territories.

But in addition to these dangers, classic archetypes of violence and greed that have existed for thousands of years, new, more insidious dangers arose to threaten the men and women who would make the territories their homes.

There were dark things lurking in the canyons, arroyos, deep caves and pine forests of this unforgiving and inhospitable terrain. Twisted monsters from the darkest tales of the Old World stalked the night for prey. A Lawman freshly arrived from the East might look askance at these stories, unwilling to give the slightest credence to the numb babbling of an exhausted madman. But all too quickly, that veneer of genteel disapproval would be worn away, or that particular Lawman would be heading back East, all too often in a pine box.

“My mom always said she heard that Bass was so tough he could spit on a brick and bust it in two!”
-Willabelle Shultz

THE RESTLESS NATIVES

The Union rightly claims all the lands between the Dominion of Canada in the North and way down South past Gran Columbia to the Socialist Unity of South American, but the natives of the so-called Warrior Nation believe differently. These native tribes pose a wholly different kind of threat. Although the Lawmen in the East have been swift to dismiss the tribesmen as vicious beasts, those tasked with bringing Law to the territories believe differently.

The Warrior Nation might not accept the rule of the Union of Federated States, but they still have a code of lawfulness of their own and they impose it upon

any who live on their ancestral land, no matter what Washington or the Nottingham Building might think. All too often, a naïve settler might transgress against this native law, and feel the sudden and irrevocable punishment crush him into the dirt. It is the uneasy task of the Lawmen to untangle the intersection of the Law of the Union and the Tribal Law, and navigate a path forward that might not result in open warfare. Fortunately for us all, there is a man up to this difficult task of upholding the law in the region known as Indian Territory

No lawman has earned the respect of the Warrior Nation to the degree afforded Marshal Bass Reeves. His reputation for both fairness and determination, coupled with his skills at the fast draw has settled many of the disputes he dealt with during his long career in that troubled region. Grimly determined and fiercely loyal, Reeves commands the respect of those who follow him. With over three thousand outlaw arrests to his name, Reeves is valued by the Lawmen for his ability to deploy a cool head and rein in the sort of impetuosity that Marshal Earp is known for. Consequently, for newly appointed sheriffs, it is Reeves whose activities in the East are cited as the shining light to which all Lawmen should aspire.

Indian Territory encompasses not only grounds sacred to the Warrior Nation but also land around an Enlightened Promethean Complex. In addition, there are numerous outlaw camps and the hunting grounds of a fell creature known as Wicasasni. Bringing justice and security to the towns in such a place proved an impossible task, even for Marshal Reeves. However, after he saved the son of Chief Raven Spirit, the so-called Apache Kid, Reeves was set on his current path. Still under-resourced and over stretched, Reeves now fights valiantly to stem the flow of attacks on civilians. With the Apache Kid at his side under oath of a life-debt and Chief Raven Spirit lending him braves to help protect the townsfolk under his care, Bass Reeves has become something more than that which he was. He has become legendary.

OTHER DANGERS

In addition to these other dangers and difficulties is the cabal of so-called genius scientists who have swept across the western territories since the ending of the Ore War. Most of the Covenant of the Enlightened’s factory-fortresses established after the war are scattered throughout the West. These semi-autonomous enclaves tend to police themselves, not allowing Lawmen of any stripe near enough to impose the Law. As their influence



grows, they often spread that dubious protection over surrounding towns and settlements, creating tension with the local marshals.

The Union Army, having received their orders from the more centrally-controlled high command in Washington, tend to leave the Enlightened's burgeoning forge-cities alone except in the instance of truly egregious offences, or if their name is Odysseus Grant. The Lawmen, however, often feel the diminution of their own authority more keenly, and refuse to be called off so easily. The marshals and sheriffs work within the letter of the Law, but to the settlers caught in the middle, this distinction carries little weight.

The tension between the Lawmen and the Union Army is perhaps the most frustrating aspect of enforcing peace and justice in the territories. The Army is often called upon to deal with uprisings, large-scale savage incursions, or massive outbreaks of lawlessness. And when the Army is unleashed upon the territories, they care very little for any civilians who make the mistake of standing inadvertently in their path. To the military mind, the destruction of an entire frontier shantytown might be considered a small price to pay if a threat to the Union can be contained. When an overzealous commander is dispatched into the territories, most Lawmen feel it is their duty to protect the population, even from their own defenders.

THE FRINGE OF THE FRONTIER

As dangerous and dark as the territories are, there are lands even stranger that lie beyond. The threats that menace the settlers of this region may be manifold, but in the grand scheme of things, most of those can be handily dealt with by the stalwart folk who have dedicated themselves to the Law in the West.

When times grow truly desperate, and the enemies of peace and order become too much even for the High Marshals to handle, the Lawmen know they must be able to call for aid, or the dream of a civilised West will be lost. Short of calling upon the Union Army to come and crush the delicate balance of power and freedom beneath their hobnailed feet, there are two organisations within the wider law enforcement community that can be summoned to help the local Lawmen when things get out of hand.

The Rangers are a force of roving Lawmen who trace their roots back through Texas and the fierce battles waged there against all manner of foe. Semi-

autonomous units of sheriffs that operate in the grey space between jurisdictions, the Rangers go where they will, and are not afraid to follow the scent of wrongdoing no matter where it might lead. Although a band of Rangers riding into a marshal's town might cause some friction, most Rangers are savvy enough to finesse local politics in their favour, and seldom will such tensions be allowed to rise to a level that interferes with the work of either group.

"At last, after thinking a heap about it, I came to the conclusion that I always did: that the boldest plan is the best and safest."

– Wild Bill Hickok

A LEGENDARY RANGER

Some men earn their legends. Others contribute to the legends of others. Some, like the Marshal known as 'Wild' Bill Hickok, simply make their own legends up and recount them for anybody who will spare the time to listen. Hickok is a charmer; a story-teller extraordinaire and a man well versed in what the renowned showman P T Barnum would call 'the noble art of humbug'. He knows well the magic a good yarn can bring to others, having spent some considerable time with a travelling show in his younger years. His marksmanship skills were as sharp then as they are now and many a contented visitor would leave the show that night swearing that they truly had seen the greatest gunman on Earth.

For all his dramatic tendencies and his overblown, often hugely exaggerated tales, Hickok is a canny, shrewd soul. Like so many of his ilk, he fell into the role of Lawman without intending to. When he first came out West, he did so with the intention of setting up a travelling show of his own, perhaps bringing entertainment to what he perceived as the poverty-stricken settlers of the frontier. Instead of the struggling little shanty towns he envisioned, he found flourishing settlements, rich with prospects, loaded with opportunity and marred by those who operated outside the law. Along with his friend and fellow former showman, Bill Cody, he excelled in the field of scouting and reconnaissance. As a young ranger, he discovered a love for this unexpected new career and when Cody headed back East, Hickok remained, eager to keep his skills as one of the newly-named Rangers sharp and focused. He grew strong and powerful, mastering the use of a rifle as well as his pistols.

As the years passed, Hickok took others under his wing, training them in the arts of wilderness living



and tracking. One young woman in particular – Grace Myrtle – has grown to be every bit his equal in skill and is in possession of a personality as big as his own. They have become confidantes, even good friends and he values her opinion more than he'd ever openly admit.

The stories of his own greatness that he told in his youth have long been forgotten, replaced with stories that are every bit as true as he tells them... mostly, anyway. Hickok is still fond of exaggerating and as long as he has a glass of whisky, a comfortable seat and a willing audience, he will still wheel out the showman of old and entertain a crowd with the wild tales of Wild Bill.

Despite the somewhat menacing air of many Rangers (what Ranger Myrtle suggested I do when asked if she was prepared to be interviewed cannot be reprinted, for example), men and women like Myrtle and Hickok are veterans, spending their lives on the bleeding edge between civilisation and chaos. If a marshal needs help but is loath to turn to the Union Army, the Rangers are always willing to answer the call.

"Is there any way I can get this stuff off my fingers without betraying my calm exterior?"
– Investigator Helena Miller

INFERNAL INVESTIGATIONS

When the darkness truly falls, and the stuff of nightmares crawls out beneath the clearing skies, only one group can shine a light on the taint and corruption to enforce the Law. The Bureau of Infernal Investigative Affairs, an elite band of Lawmen working directly out of Washington, specialise in investigating the very worst crimes and infractions. Although many of the greater mysteries of the Earth defy description or analysis, it is the men and women of Infernal Affairs who strive to keep the Frontier safe from the depredations of those malign menaces that stalk the long nights.

When some purportedly horrific creature begins to threaten the peace of a frontier town, or a law-abiding citizen suddenly goes insane with rage and bloody-minded murder, it is the marshals of Infernal Affairs who are dispatched to deal with the threat.

It is Infernal Affairs who 'watch the watchmen'. Should a Marshal, Sheriff or Deputy overstep their remit and put themselves above and beyond the Law, it is Infernal Affairs who are mandated to be

the judge, jury and, if necessary, executioner of their fellow Lawmen. This ominous duty, along with the necessity that Infernal Investigators have preeminence over their fellow Marshals and Sheriffs causes no end of grief and frustration among those who perceive themselves to be the 'real' Lawmen in the Frontier. But when desperation is the watchword of the day, most High Marshals will concede and accept help from any quarter.

"I believe it is your round." – Doc Holliday

TINMEN

The western territories are haunted by all manner of dangers, but they are filled with opportunities as well. As long as settlers move westward seeking a new and better life, there will be those who follow close behind or wait up ahead in cowardly ambush, to take advantage of their innocence and naiveté. But there is Law, even in the West; and so long as a single marshal, sheriff, or deputy draws breath, that Law will be defended.

Their motivations are infinite, and their methods range from the terrible to the inspired, but the dedication and commitment of the Lawmen of the western territories cannot be denied. There are no riches to be had within the letter of the Law; she makes no guarantees of fame or fortune. Most of these men and women will struggle against the darkness all their lives for little more than a roof over their heads, warm meals, and maybe a timid smile or hushed greeting as they walk down the street. Many will gasp out their last breath into the dust of the desert, taking a bolt or blade meant for some innocent settler. But they answer the call nevertheless, willing to sacrifice their own peace and happiness for the Law.

Each Lawman, be they Marshal, Ranger, Infernal Investigator, Judge or Deputy, carries a thin tin shield or star on their person. This symbol, all but worthless in the wider world, represents lifetimes of commitment and obligation to an ideal without which they believe civilisation cannot survive. They are the first and only line of defence between the falling night and the true wealth of the Wild West: her people. They are the guarantee of a quiet night. They are the promise of peace in the face of viciousness and greed.

They are the Lawmen.