

Cockeyed Frank Loving



by **Bob Turpin**

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Who Is Bob Turpin?

It's me, I'm Bob Turpin. I am an avid western reader, researcher, and writer of historical fiction for over thirty years. My articles and short stories frequently appeared in historical western magazines from 1967 through 1999. In 1972 I published "Oklahoma's Buried Millions" and did a second printing that same year. This was followed by two more small books, "Treasure Hunt" 1 and 2.



I had several more books and a million stories to tell when I was interrupted by illness and had to put my work on hold. During that time I have received letters from western fans nationally wanting to know if and when I would continue my work. Well, I'm happy to say that I am finally back and ready to take you, my readers, old and new, on many more exciting rides into our western history.

So, pard, saddle up and join me on my many rides through the pages of western history and meet the folks who lived there.

With the help of my trusty side kick and wife, Naola, and my good friend, agent, and publisher, Grace Michael, we will be working hard to bring you new and interesting material just as fast as we can get it ready... I have a million stories to tell ... and even though they are considered to be historical fiction, they are all based on true and recorded incidents and happenings through the 1800's.

Here's to your reading pleasure

Bob Turpin

Cockeyed Frank Loving

Gunfighter and gambler, “Cockeyed Frank” Loving would have been forgotten in western history if not for the famous Bat Masterson who did



a series of magazine stories on known gunfighters published in 1907. Masterson stated that in order to be a top rate gunman one had to have three important qualities – an outstanding skill with firearms, cold nerve when confronted by an armed and dangerous adversary, and courage. In Earp’s biography “Wyatt Earp, Frontier Marshal,” Stuart Lake insured a place in frontier history for Cockeyed Frank Loving.

Bat Masters put Frank Loving on the pages of frontier history. In 1907, he wrote several stories for the newspaper about this little known gunman.

Dodge City, Kansas, was the cowboy capital of the United States in 1879 due to the cattle drives that originated in Texas and ended in Kansas. The wood plank sidewalks that covered Dodge City were trodden by a host of celebrated gunmen, Sheriff Bat Masterson, City Marshal Wyatt

Earp and three of his brothers, and the leather-slapping Doc Holliday, and Ben Thompson. That year none of these gun wielders spilled any blood. It was left for two obscure characters, Levi Richardson and Frank Loving. Richardson was a twenty-eight year old man from Wisconsin who worked in Dodge City as a freight driver. Earlier he had hunted buffalo on the

plains of southwest Kansas. One of his fellow hunters and friends was Bat Masterson. The two shared their blankets on many a cold night. Masterson later said this about his friend: “Levi Richardson was thoroughly familiar with the use of firearms, an excellent shot with rifle or handgun and rather high strung and quick to anger. He wasn’t afraid of anything or anyone.”

Stuart Lake spoke of Richardson saying he was one of frontiers most noted six-shooter experts. Earp said this: “Levi Richardson, a buffalo hunter, was one of the best fellows I have seen with a rifle or pistol but he had a touchy disposition that always got him into trouble. He had the courage to back it and that made him a dangerous man.”

Lake continued to quote Earp adding that Richardson supposedly killed several men in gunfights but so far, the records do not substantiate that nor that he had ever taken up the art of gun-fighting.

“I have seen him practicing on a number of occasions before his fight with Loving. Only a few men in Dodge could beat him at shooting targets.”

Frank Loving, born in Jackson County, Missouri, was only twenty at the time of his fight. He was a beardless youth who left his native home in Fort Worth, Texas, to pursue the precarious, dangerous profession of a gambler. A Dodge City newspaper described him as not being rowdy, but cool and of desperate order. His most notable appearance was one of his eyes being crossed giving him the nickname of “Cockeyed Frank.”



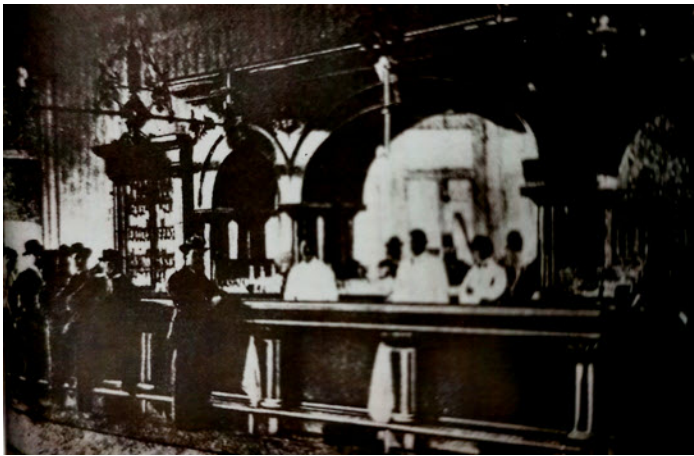
Dodge City around 1870, where many top-notch gunfighters hung out.

The trouble between Loving and Richardson was an age old story – a woman. Loving had won the attention of a local dance hall girl that Richardson had kept company with. The town’s newspaper reported that Loving had lived with the woman for several months. Richardson retained tender feelings for her. The two men quarreled on several occasions over

her, and a couple of times they had exchanged blows.

At the Richardson-Loving hearing P. L. Beatty testified that there was bad blood between the two men for over a month.

“About a month ago Richardson stated that he had words with Loving. He had threatened to shoot the cock-eyed son-of-a-bitch.”



This saloon like so many frontier saloons is similar to the one often visited by Loving and others.

Richardson found Loving at the Long Branch sipping whiskey. Standing before the man he blurted out, “You-son-of-a-bitch, I’ll teach you to mess with my woman.” He whipped out his pistol and opened fire. He fired five times as fast as he could cock and pull the trigger. Amazingly he missed Loving with all five bullets.

Loving, cool and collected, brought up his pistol and fired. Richardson fell dead trying to reload his weapon.

Wyatt Earp was not a personal witness, but some years later told the story according to his own imagination and that of Stuart Lake’s. The account says that after a loud exchange of cursing, Richardson left the saloon and went to his hotel to get a gun from his room. When he returned to the saloon he saw Loving standing at the back of the room hidden by the large wood burning stove. Richardson called to Loving, “Start shooting you bastard. I’m here to kill you!”

“It’s your play, turd brains.” Loving called in return.

Hearing Loving’s remark Richardson opened fire as fast as he could work his weapon. The last bullet scratched Loving’s hand.

On the evening of April 5, 1879 Loving and Richardson met accidentally at the Long Branch Saloon. Bat Masterson was not a personal witness to the gunfight but he wrote a terse account of what happened as he remembered it twenty-eight years later.

Richardson found Loving at the Long