

Museum News: The Doc Anderson killing

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Terrell County Memorial Museum News

This week we will explore the murder of David L. "Doc" Anderson at the hands of Ed Valentine in F. N. Harrell's Ex-Pecos County Saloon at 1st and Downie. The first part is the actual story from *Sanderson Times*, dated June 8, 1918, page 1,

A Sad Tragedy

One of the saddest and most deplorable tragedies in the history of Terrell County happened late Tuesday evening, which resulted in the death of two men – Sheriff D. L. Anderson and Ed Valentine.

From the testimony of eyewitnesses it seems that all during the day Tuesday Ed Valentine had been quarrelsome and abusive.

He was drinking and late in the evening, at F. N. Harrell's saloon, he dashed behind the bar and seized Mr. Harrell's pistol that was lying underneath the bar.

Lee Allen, who was tending bar, grappled with Valentine and attempted to take the pistol away from him, but Valentine placed the nose of the gun against Mr. Allen and said, "If you don't turn me loose I will kill you."

Mr. Allen then turned him loose and Valentine fired two or three shots.

Mr. Harrell was out of town on business, came in and began talking to Valentine and tried to persuade him to give the gun up but Valentine threw the gun down on him and told Mr. Harrell if he came near him he would kill him.

Sheriff Anderson was phoned for and went down immediately and on arriving at the scene was told by several men to be careful as Valentine had a gun and was acting very badly.

Sheriff Anderson didn't seem to think there was any danger. He remarked on his way down that he guessed Valentine was drunk and shooting off his pistol and that he would go and persuade him to put up his gun and go to bed.

Sheriff Anderson stepped into the side door of the saloon and the moment he did so Valentine began shooting at him, three shots taking effect in Mr. Anderson's body.

The Sheriff drew his gun but expired before he could fire it.

The hammer of the Sheriff's gun looked as though it had been struck by a bullet and this and the fact that his right thumb was split indicates one shot struck his gun and if it had not been for this Sheriff Anderson would undoubtedly have gotten in a good shot even after being mortally wounded.

Mr. Anderson fell into a chair and expired in a few seconds.

Deputy R. A. Stewart fired one shot at Valentine but missed and the next attempt his gun failed to fire.

Valentine having emptied this gun (Mr. Harrell's) went into the little side room next to the pool hall, and secured his own gun which was fully loaded.

Several men appeared at the front door of the saloon and Valentine threw the pistol down on them and cocking it said, "I will kill the first man that enters."

Valentine then barricaded himself in the saloon and refused to surrender.

He went into the little side room where there was two Winchesters and another pistol, the property of Mr. Harrell and Mr. Allen.

Several citizens soon armed themselves and took up stations around the building. Valentine was called on to surrender but refused.

After a few minutes a fusillade of shots was exchanged and Valentine dropped dead with a hole through his bosom.

David L. Anderson was one of the widest known and best loved men in this part of the state. He was good natured and kind hearted but did not know what fear was.

He had been sheriff of Terrell County for about three years. He was a native of Ohio and came to Texas about 32 years ago.

For several years he was in the Customs service along the border, being stationed at Langtry.

For a number of years he was manager of the T5 Ranch on the Independence.

Shortly after coming to Texas Mr. Anderson was united in marriage to Miss Maggie Fitzmaurice of Brackettville.

He leaves his wife and one daughter to mourn his loss.

"Doc" Anderson's friends were legion and there is many a heart that is filled with grief at his untimely death.

His body was taken to Brackettville where his burial took place Wednesday evening. It was accompanied by a large number of faithful, sorrowing friends.

Ed Valentine came here from Fort Stockton about six months ago. He is survived by a mother and two children.



Doc Anderson, holding his daughter, Ella Mae.
Courtesy of TCMM

To expand a little on this story, based partially on research done by Bill Perhealth, former pastor of the First United Methodist Church, there were four key players in this tragedy.

Doc Anderson had a more complex past than people at the time knew. Before he moved to Terrell County, supposedly he ran with Billy the Kid under his real name, Billy Wilson, and was sent to prison for counterfeiting. According to one source, he received a pardon from the governor of New Mexico at the instigation of Wyatt Earp. Another version has it that Pat Garrett secured a presidential pardon for him from Grover Cleveland. Those arguments will rage on, I'm sure.

Ed Valentine had lived in Sanderson for some time and was well known and liked by a number of people, including Anderson. His wife had died and his mother was helping raise his two little girls. Other reports were that Valentine had lost badly at the gambling table and that, for a cowboy needing money and having drunk too much liquor, probably pushed him beyond the point of no return.

Dr. Frank Reeve proved particularly heroic in the event. Rejecting danger to himself, he went into the saloon to examine the body of Anderson and pronounced him dead. With the help of Chester Smith, father of the late Donald Smith, they removed the body from the saloon, even though citizens were firing into the building with Valentine returning fire.

The real hero of the story was not mentioned by name in the *Sanderson Times* article. According to Bill Perhealth, in a story in a 2005 edition of the *TCNL*:

“Bob Gatlin and Doc Anderson, ran stock together under the pitchfork brand and was well known around town.

“As Deputy Sheriff for the Dryden area he would have responded anyway but now his friend had been shot.

“He arrived at the Harrell Saloon and saw the chaos underway. He remained calm and took stock of the situation.

“Gatlin went into the old Kerr's store, spoke to Joe Kerr and took a 30-30 rifle from Kerr's wall. He loaded it and went to the saloon where he took careful aim and Valentine fell dead.

“Gatlin returned to the store, took out a rag, cleaned the gun and placed it back on the wall.

“He told Kerr to charge a box of cartridges to his account and left.”

One shot was all it took.