

## Museum News: David L. Anderson ~ In Memoriam

by C. W. (Bill) Smith

Although tomorrow is the day we honor our veterans, it is well to remember that law enforcement ranks right up there with our armed forces in keeping our country and our home safe. Many officers of the law have made the ultimate sacrifice to uphold the law and protect the innocent. And many of those officers received their training in the military. Terrell County is very fortunate in losing only one officer in the line of duty, but he was a very interesting man.

David L. "Doc" Anderson, Dryden rancher and livestock inspector, was the fourth sheriff of Terrell County. Doc had a run-in with the law as a young man and was convicted of counterfeiting, even though he only passed counterfeit bills given to him in a transaction. He escaped custody and fell in with Billy the Kid, Dave Rudabaugh and other outlaws in New Mexico. They were all brought to justice, but Doc escaped again before incarceration and ended up in Southwest Texas, where he changed his life for the good and never got into trouble again.



Visiting in Uvalde, Texas, he by chance ran across Pat Garrett, the man who brought down Billy the Kid. Garrett recognized Anderson, but after a long visit with Anderson and in questioning leading citizens of the community, Garrett decided not to turn him in, but instead made an appeal to President Grover Cleveland to give Anderson a presidential pardon. The pardon was granted and Anderson was a free man.

Doc Anderson moved out to Terrell County and became a respected cattleman in the Dryden area. In 1915 he was asked to fill out the term of Sheriff J. J. Crawford and was elected to office at the next election.

An able lawman, he was beloved by his constituents, but he was a tough sheriff in the difficult period of the Mexican Revolution, which raged just twenty miles from Sanderson. During his watch there were murders, cattle rustling, gun-running and smuggling, in addition to train robberies and general mayhem. It was a tough time, but he was a tough man.

On June 4, 1918, Anderson was called to Harrell's Ex-Pecos County Saloon in Sanderson to deal with a drunken cowboy, Ed Valentine, who was threatening bystanders and taking potshots at the citizenry. Anderson knew the man and realized that he was in a fit of depression. His young wife had recently passed away and he was raising two young children by himself. Anderson felt he could just talk with the distraught young man and get the gun away from him.

However, when Anderson reached the establishment and entered, Ed Valentine fired two rounds at the sheriff, the first taking off his trigger finger and disabling his shooting hand, and a second shot that pierced Anderson's heart. Anderson died instantly, falling back into a chair at a table.

In a moment, gunfire began to pour into the building as outraged citizens took up arms outside, with Valentine returning fire.

Shortly, Constable Gatlin of Dryden, Anderson's good friend and business partner, arrived and surveyed the scene. He went to Kerr's Store, borrowed a new rifle and had a box of cartridges charged to his account.

Returning to the saloon, he made one remarkable shot and terminated Valentine in his tracks. Gatlin returned quietly to Kerr's, wiped the gun down and replaced it in the rack. It took only one shot, but justice and personal vengeance had been served.

Sanderson, Dryden, indeed all of Terrell County and Southwest Texas went into mourning. The slain officer of the law was prepared for burial and moved by solemn cortege to the railroad station, to be taken to Brackettville, Texas for final rites. In the procession behind the flower-laden casket were men, women, children, the elderly, the high-born and the common, marching to muffled sobs, all paying respect to a hero and a good man. A large crowd of mourners traveled to Brackettville to attend the funeral, and it was many days before the melancholy of this tragic chapter of our history faded.