

## Museum News: Fred Yeates - Tonsorial Artist

by C. W. (Bill) Smith

We sometimes think that Sanderson was made up of ranchers, cowboys and railroad men, but it took other kinds of men and women to make this community. Shop keepers, businessmen and those who provided services also came to cash in on the best kept secret in West Texas. Fred Yeates was one of those men.

Charles Fred Yeates was a barber...not the first to move to Sanderson but one who came in the early 20th Century and spent the rest of his life here. Yeates was born to John and Susie Hutchinson Yeates in Brackettville, Texas, on April 15, 1899. His father had immigrated to the US in 1881 from London,

England, his home. His mother, Susie, was a sister to Bertha Whistler, wife of John Whistler, the first licensed barber of Sanderson. He had a shop located on Persimmon between the old TCISD Tax Office (the Joe Kerr Office Building) and Bogusch's two-storey brick jewelry store, both of which are still in existence, but the barbershop is gone.

In 1918 Fred Yeates came to Sanderson to work for his Uncle John Whistler in his barbershop. After Joe Kerr built the Kerr Hotel in 1920, just across the street, Yeates leased a space there for a new barbershop, and he ran it in that spot for years. Eventually he moved his shop to the east end of the Princess Theater building. Yeates ran a first-class barbershop with two chairs and a bathtub available for a reasonable price. Most barbershops in the area maintained bathtubs for travelers and dusty cowboys.

The year before Yeates moved to Sanderson, the Litton family arrived from Oneida, Tennessee, bringing with them their daughter, Mabel. When Mabel was old enough to date, Yeates began to court her and in 1922 they were married. Their marriage produced six children, including twin girls. But, unfortunately, their baby girls died after living only one day. Their other children, Joyce Yeates Gross, Margaret Ruth Yeates Erickson, Charles Edward "Bosco" Yeates, and Betty Sue Yeates Dishman survived, and eventually graduated from Sanderson High School.

In 1926 Yeates was elected county tax assessor and collector for one term, then in 1937, he was appointed Justice of the Peace for his precinct. Fred and Mabel were great supporters of all activities in Sanderson, especially civic, social and school and town sporting events. Fred was a Presbyterian and Mabel was a member of the Church of Christ, but they loved to dance and attended all the dances in town, especially the ones at the Masonic Hall, the CAC Building and dances held at Dryden. Their daughter, Joyce, recalled in the Terrell County history book that they enjoyed their lives in Sanderson, as most folks of that time and now still do. She said they loved to picnic down Sanderson Canyon, take trips out to Five-Mile Hill, go to rodeos and barbecues and fish at Devil's River, on the Pecos and out at the Banner Ranch.

But sadly, in 1938 Fred Yeates succumbed to a heart attack, at the young age of 39. Mabel was appointed to fill his position as JP and was elected the first woman JP in Terrell County history at the next election. He was interred at Cedar Grove Cemetery in Sanderson.



*Yeates Barbershop in the Kerr Hotel Building. Fred Yates is the barber at the rear and the man in the front chair is W. E. Lea, long-time railroad man. The others are unidentified.*

*Photo: Alice Evans Downie*

In 1947 Mabel remarried, to Herman Halsell, a conductor on the T&NO Railroad. He retired in 1957 and they moved to El Paso, Texas. Herman passed in 1971 and Mabel died in 1978, and they are buried at Cedar Grove.

As a barber in a small place, Fred Yeates maintained a very valuable service for men and boys of the town. But, he also was a good friend, as well, to many folks in Sanderson and Terrell County. If the number of pallbearers at his funeral is an indication of the love and affection shown him by the town of Sanderson, he must have been a beloved man...he had six active pallbearers and 29 honorary pallbearers, as well as having the pastors of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Baptist churches participate in his service.

Charles Fred Yeates was not just a good barber...he was a good man. What better thing can you say about a person's life?