

Terrell County Memorial

April, 2016  
Sanderson, Texas

# Museum News

## The Doc Anderson Killing

### *A Sad Tragedy*

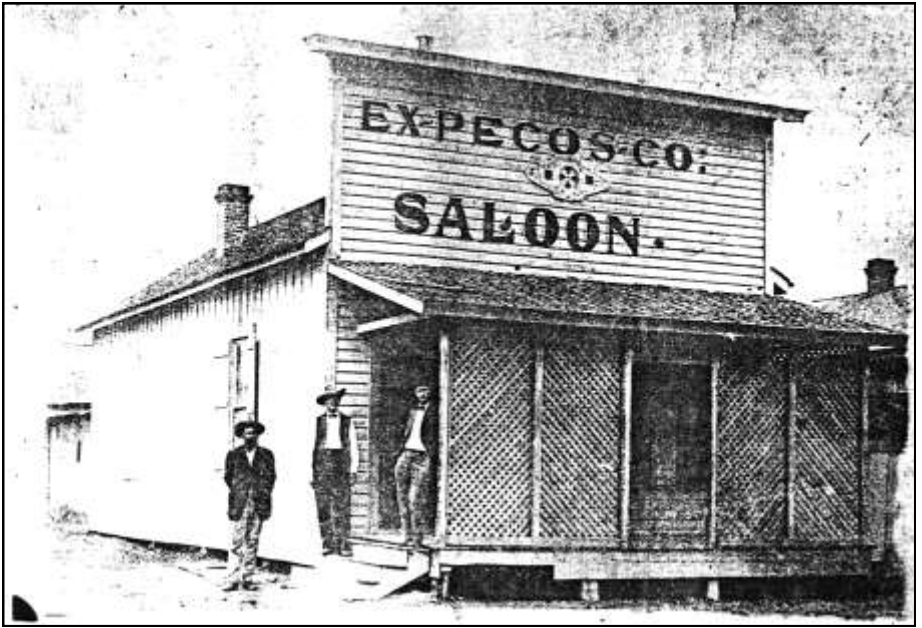


*Sheriff David L. "Doc" Anderson*

This month we will explore the murder of Sheriff David L. "Doc" Anderson at the hands of Ed Valentine in F. N. Harrell's Ex-Pecos County Saloon at 1<sup>st</sup> and Downie in Sanderson, Texas. The first part is the actual story from *Sanderson Times*, 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.*



***The exterior of Harrell's Ex-Pecos County Saloon. When he bought it in 1905 it was the Pecos County Saloon. With the organization of the new county, it became the Ex-Pecos County Saloon. The men are unidentified, George Fenley, first sheriff of Terrell County and F. N. Harrell, owner of the saloon.***

*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 is the interior of the Harrell saloon where Doc Anderson was gunned down in 1918. The first two men on the left are unknown, the third is Henry Mills, wearing a vest, and the fourth is Felix Harrell, the owner.***

*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 T-5 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.*

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There were four key players in this tragedy.

Doc Anderson had a complex past, much more complex than people at the time knew. Before he moved to Terrell County, at age 20 he fell in with Billy the Kid in New Mexico under his real name, Billy Wilson, and was convicted of passing counterfeit currency. He escaped and disappeared to Texas. In 1896, Pat Garrett found him, but secured a presidential pardon for him from Grover Cleveland because he had led an exemplary life after escape.

In his justification for the pardon, Cleveland remarked, "Granted upon condition that the pardon of convict shall take effect immediately after his personal appearance and sentence in the proper court, or, if sentence has been pronounced, upon his surrender to the proper authorities under such sentence. This convict was convicted about 15 years ago and escaped from jail pending an appeal from his conviction. Since his escape he has established a new home and has by his reputable conduct gained the respect and goodwill of his neighbors, who numerously certify to his good character and standing. He was very young when convicted, and developments upon his trial and representations now made to me cause very great doubts in my mind as to his guilt. I am entirely satisfied that the ends of Justice will be answered and a desirable citizen saved to society by the act of clemency I have determined on. The pardon in this case will be sent to the governor of New Mexico, in order that the condition upon

which it is granted may be complied with."

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. In a moment of intense danger, with vile drunken threats spewing from Valentine, he rejected the danger, 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, even though citizens were firing into the building in a pitched battle with Valentine.

The real hero of the story, however, was not mentioned by name in the *Sanderson Times* article. Bob Gatlin, who ran stock with Anderson at Dryden, had been appointed deputy at that place. When he got word that his friend and boss had been killed, he came immediately to Sanderson and observed the chaos at Harrell's Saloon. Citizens were still firing wildly, with Valentine returning fire.

Gatlin calmly went across the street to Joe Kerr's store, borrowed a new rifle and got a box of cartridges, then went back to the saloon. In moments the crisis was over...one shot was all it took. He returned the gun to Kerr's, wiped it down and put it back in the rack. As he left, he told Mr. Kerr, "Charge a box of cartridges to my account." Then he went home to grieve for his good friend.



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#### References

"Terrell County, Its Past, Its People" Alice Evans Downie. Sanderson, Texas: Terrell Co. Heritage Commission, 1978.

"A Sad Tragedy" *Sanderson Times*, June 8, 1918, p.1.

United States Congressional serial set, Issue 3655, "Annual Report of the Attorney General of the United States for the year 1897." Washington: Government Printing Office, 1897, p213.

All newsletters can be found at <http://terrellmuseum.info/newsletters/>