

A LOOK BACK IN HUTCHINSON COUNTY HISTORY

The Murder of Johnny Holmes

His probe of crime and corruption in Borger completed, the young District Attorney was finally prepared to begin to eradicate lawlessness and bring criminals to justice in the Panhandle boomtown.

On a September evening, Friday the 13th, 1929 Holmes stopped his car beside the house to let his wife and mother-in-law get out before driving into the garage. Moments later, a concealed gunman fired five shots. Three bullets found their target and Holmes lay dead. His wife who was inside the house, did not get a good look at her husband's killer.

Within two days of Holmes murder, the Texas Rangers were back in Borger. The state lawmen had left the wild oil town the previous February with the hope that vice and violence had been quelled during their two-year stay, but the bloody boomtown refused to stay cleaned up.

The town of Borger was born in the spring of 1926, when oil was discovered nearby. Forty-thousand people came to Borger, each one eager to make a fast buck. With the influx of outsiders came organized crime. Holmes was fighting the local protection "marshals" who required business owners to sell only their brand of bootleg booze. Their "line" consisted of alcohol, narcotics and prostitution of which, the "marshals" made money hand-over-fist by taking a piece of all the action.

The Rangers quickly returned and were joined two weeks later by the Fifty-Sixth Cavalry of the Texas National Guard. Neither the Rangers nor the Governor Moody pulled any punches in an all-out effort to cleanse the tainted town once and for all. But as for the killer of Johnny. Holmes - *he got away with murder!* ■



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