



Written in Blood: The History of Fort Worth's Fallen Lawmen, Volume 2, 1910-1928

Richard F. Selcer, Kevin S. Foster

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In 2010 *Written in Blood: The History of Fort Worth's Fallen Lawmen, Volume 1*, told the stories of thirteen Fort Worth law officers who died in the line of duty between 1861 and 1909. Now Richard F. Selcer and Kevin S. Foster are back with Volume 2 covering another baker's dozen line-of-duty deaths that occurred between 1910 and 1928. The stories are grouped into two sections: "When Blood Ran in the Streets, 1910-1919" and "Life Was Cheap, 1920-1928." Not counting the two officers who died of natural causes (meningitis and drowning), these are more tales of murder, mayhem, and dirty work from all branches of local law enforcement: police, sheriff's deputies, constables, and special officers, just like in Volume 1.

This era was, if anything, bloodier than the preceding era of the first volume. Fort Worth experienced a race riot, two lynchings, and martial law imposed by the U.S. Army while Camp Bowie was operating. Bushwhacking (such as happened to Peter Howard in 1915) and assassinations (such as happened to Jeff Couch in 1920) replaced blood feuds and old-fashioned shootouts as leading causes of death among lawmen. Violence was not confined to the streets either; a Police Commissioner was gunned down in his city hall office in 1917. Even the new category of "vehicular homicide" claimed a lawman's life.

Selcer and Foster also relate the story of their murderers and of the times. Every chapter follows the arrest and trial of the perp(s) and their ultimate fate. How some of the accused were treated by the justice system and how they ended up will surprise you. Woven throughout is the story of law enforcement and the criminal justice system in the early 20th century, including the move from horseback to motorized transportation; how the FWPD wrestled with the city's growing ethnic communities; bonding procedures back when policemen issued "bonds," not tickets; and the insidious influence of the KKK in local law enforcement. Forensics science changed how crimes were solved, even *if* they were solved. Throughout it all, the man wearing the badge was always the front line of civilization. He laid his life on the line every time he stepped out onto the street. As a result some men bought life insurance (something else new); some men did not marry.

There are no saints here. These thirteen officers were all flesh-and-blood men. And their killers were not all mustache-twirling villains. Juries sometimes had trouble making the distinction, too. *Written in Blood Volume 2* continues the story begun in the first volume, but it also stands alone as a fascinating slice of Fort Worth history and an examination of law enforcement in the old days.

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