

The Bandera PROPHEET

June 4, 2021

Today in Texas history

By Bandera Spirits of Texas

On this day in 1913, Brownsville photographer Robert Runyon arrived in Matamoros and began compiling a unique record of the Mexican Revolution along the Texas-Mexico border. The Kentucky native arrived in Texas in 1909 and opened a photography studio the following year. He is best known for his coverage of the revolutionary conflict in northeastern Mexico between 1913 and 1916. He traveled to Matamoros the day after its Federal garrison had been captured by Gen. Lucio Blanco's Constitutionalist revolutionary forces. There Runyon photographed the wounded and the dead, destroyed buildings, and political executions.

In August he recorded the ceremony at Los Borregos in which General Blanco turned over captured land to the peasants who worked there. He was the only professional photographer to record two 1915 raids across the United States border, the Norias Ranch raid and the train wreck near Olmito.

A number of Runyon's images were used on widely distributed postcards that contributed to a stereotypical view of Mexicans and their culture. Runyon also documented the buildup of United States military forces at Fort Brown with more than 2,000 images.

He was an accomplished botanist, and served as city manager and mayor of Brownsville before his death in 1968. In 1989 the Barker Texas History Center organized an exhibition of Runyon's photographs.