

The Bandera PROPHECY

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Today in Texas History

By Bandera Spirits of Texas

On this day in 1895, Constable John Selman killed the notorious John Wesley Hardin at El Paso's Acme Saloon. Hardin was born in 1853 in Bonham and revealed a violent personality at an early age.

In 1867 he stabbed another youth in a schoolyard squabble, and at age 15 he shot and killed a black man during an argument. In the fall of 1868 he claimed to have killed three Union soldiers, and within a year another soldier. He killed at least 10 others as he made his way up the Chisholm Trail, and then four more upon returning to Gonzales County.

After Texas Rangers captured him in Pensacola, Florida, in 1877, he was tried for murder, convicted and sentenced to 25 years in prison. While in prison he studied law, and after being pardoned in 1894 he was admitted to the bar and practiced law in Gonzales County and then in El Paso.

In the latter city he took as a lover the wife of one of his clients, and when the husband found out about the affair, Hardin hired a number of law officials to kill him. Selman, an Arkansas native born in 1839, was one of the hired killers, and may have killed Hardin because Hardin had not paid him.

Selman was tried for Hardin's murder but released when the trial ended in a hung jury; he died, aptly enough, in a gunfight in 1896. Hardin and Selman are both buried in El Paso's Concordia Cemetery.