

*BAD MEN AND GOOD BAD MEN: THE CHEROKEE STRIP OUTLAWS, AN EXHIBIT*  
FOR THE CHEROKEE STRIP REGIONAL HERITAGE CENTER

By

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“BAD MEN AND GOOD BAD MEN: THE CHEROKEE STRIP OUTLAWS,” AN  
EXHIBIT FOR THE CHEROKEE STRIP REGIONAL HERITAGE CENTER

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Abstract: This project proposes a museum exhibit that will explore the nature of outlawry and the public's response to it. The introductory chapter will explain the public's perception of outlaws. Richard Aquila argues that the public believes that outlaws represent both honorable and dishonorable aspects of the West. This thesis will argue that the nineteenth-century's perception of outlawry affected the twentieth and twenty-first century's perceptions. The stereotypes related to outlawry are not new. The thesis will specifically assert that actual outlaws were more complex than the "noble criminal" or "bad men" stereotypes. Many outlaws were "noble criminals" and "bad men" at the same time. The Cherokee Strip's outlaws provide an excellent case study for the complex nature of outlawry. Outlaws who operated outside the Cherokee Strip were similar to the Cherokee Strip outlaws in many ways. The second chapter will begin by explaining the nature of the Cherokee Strip and why that region was notorious for the crimes committed in that region. The bulk of the second chapter discusses each of the region's most notorious gang's activities and reception. The most-publicized outlaws of the region were the Dalton Gang, the Doolin-Dalton Gang, the Wyatt-Black Gang, Cattle Annie, Little Britches, the Rose of the Cimarron, Ben Cravens, Nate Sylva, and the Jennings Gang. A few of these outlaws actively contributed to Western fiction and influenced the genre. These outlaw's contributions to cinema and literature are also discussed in chapter two. After considering the Cherokee Strip's outlaws, the chapter focuses on outlaws who operated in other parts of Indian and Oklahoma Territory. This section argues that these outlaws had positive and negative traits that heavily resembled the Cherokee Strip's outlaws. The third chapter explains how objects can teach visitors the reality and legends associated with outlawry. Various weapons, photographs, wanted posters, newspaper articles, films and other materials provide insight into the outlaw's complex codes of honor. Chapter three examines how the exhibit will interpret the artifacts.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

. Outlaws have been popular characters in Western fiction since the dime novels of the 1870s.<sup>1</sup> Along with “the Indian,” the outlaw is perhaps the most famous “villain” archetype in Western folklore. The West’s mythical battles between law and disorder have fascinated the public for many generations. The area that comprises the modern-day state of Oklahoma served as hideout for many notorious criminals during the latter half of the nineteenth-century. The region’s weak government encouraged many cowboys and former lawmen to pursue crime. The story of Oklahomans who defied the law should fascinate the public. For this reason, an exhibit on Oklahoma outlaws has the potential of drawing large crowds. The struggle between outlaws and lawmen also reveals much about Western society. An ideal exhibit on Oklahoma outlaws would discuss the significance of this struggle. An outlaw exhibit should discuss why citizens of Oklahoma and Indian Territory turned to crime, what type of criminal activity these outlaws performed, and how the public reacted to the outlaws. Hundreds of different criminals had been active in the Twin Territories, Oklahoma and Indian Territory. The immense scope of the topic of outlawry would be far too broad to cover sufficiently in

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Atheneum, 1992), 321.

one exhibit. For this reason, covering the activities of outlaws in one specific region would be an ideal tactic. The Cherokee Outlet region, also known as the Cherokee Strip, has enough of a history of outlaw activity to engage the public (see figure 1). The Cherokee Strip Heritage Center in Enid, Oklahoma is a good location for a temporary exhibit on Cherokee Strip Outlaws.

### Historiography

The public's engagement with outlaw history has been a topic covered by a large number of scholars. Perhaps the most notable book on this topic is *Wanted Dead or Alive: The American West in Popular Culture*, edited by Richard Aquila. Aquila and many of the book's other authors argue that popular depictions of the West reveal American's perceptions of the region's significance. Many Americans imagine the West as a place of action and adventure.

Many people consider the history of the West to be composed of struggles between the forces of good and evil, a struggle that is integral to Western fiction. Works of fiction have depicted outlaws in both heroic and villainous lights. Aquila argues that Deadwood Dick, one of the first dime-novel outlaw characters to reach mass popularity since his creation in 1877, is a romanticized version of the outlaw. Deadwood Dick victimized characters that belonged to the evil businessman archetype. Aquila's analysis of the writings of social reformers such as Michael Denning demonstrate that the working class considered outlaws hard-working advocates of the common man. William Bloodworth argues that novels such as *Jesse James*, published in 1910, portray outlaws as noble men driven to crime by social and political injustice. Bloodworth sees novels such as *The Wild Bunch*, released in 1969, as representing the freedom of the

Old West era. Aquila interprets many songs in the Outlaw Country genre as odes to the individualistic nature of outlaws, a nature that contrasted with the conformity forced upon many country artists.<sup>1</sup>

Not every work of fiction glorified outlaws' exploits. John H. Lenihan argues that B-Westerns from the 1930s and 1940s often depict outlaws as being motivated by greed or other selfish motivations. Both Lenihan and Gary A. Yoggy believe that the most popular Western movies and television shows from the 1950s to 1960s tell the audience that crime harms its victims and disrupts order. Many of these programs, such as *Gunsmoke* and *Bonanza*, always end with the lawbreaker receiving punishment for his or her foul deeds. Yoggy asserts that some Western outlaws were allegories for social evils, such as communism. Bloodworth noted that the 1957 novel *The True Story of Jesse James* interprets James as a delinquent who was born with a violent nature.<sup>2</sup>

Richard Slotkin's *The Myth of the American Frontier* series also interprets the significance of outlaws in popular culture. Slotkin agrees that Deadwood Dick was a protector of the weak. According to Slotkin, Deadwood Dick represented the strength and tenacity of Westerners, as contrasted with meeker Easterners. The novel *Deadwood Dick on Deck* tells the tale of abused Pennsylvania mine workers who need salvation from the titular hero. Another series of books Slotkin analyzes are the *James, Street, & Smith* stories. These stories interpret Jesse James as a brave hero admired

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Aquila, *Wanted Dead or Alive: The American West in Popular Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 2, 26, 31; William Bloodworth, "Writers of the Purple Sage: Novelists and the American West," in *Ibid*, 112; "Cool Water, Rye, Whiskey, and Cowboys: Images of the West in Country Music", in *Ibid*. 142.

<sup>2</sup> John H. Lenihan, "Westbound: Feature Films of the American West," in *Ibid*, 128; Gary A. Yoggy, "Prime Time Bonanza! The Western on Television," in *Ibid*, 198; Bloodworth, "Writers of the Purple Sage," 124.



by the common man. Slotkin believes that the *James Boys* series details the struggle between a free range agrarian society, the ideal Western society, and a capitalized society, which outlaws resist. Slotkin believes that outlaws are often symbols of the idealized West.<sup>3</sup>

Patricia Nelson Limerick's *The Legacy of Conquest* asserts that the outlaw is a symbol of resistance to urban development. She cites the radical environmentalist group Earth First! as an example of a criminal organization influenced by outlaws of the nineteenth-century West. Earth First! justified their crimes by using the rationalization of civilization being unjust, a sentiment similar to Deadwood Dick's motivations for engaging in criminal behavior. Limerick explained that many people believed that outlaws represented freedom fighters who attempted to prevent businesses from conquering nature. According to Limerick, the entire history of the West is a contest between the conquerors and the conquered. The struggles between whites and Indians, cattlemen and cattle, and lawmen and outlaws were all struggles between a conquering group and a conquered group.<sup>4</sup>

Eric Hobsbawm examines the public's idealization of outlaws in his books *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries* and *Bandits*. The latter book asserts that the public has considered some criminals "social bandits," or bandits who fought for a social cause. The public perceived many of these outlaws as heroes who supported the common man and

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<sup>3</sup> Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, 321.

<sup>4</sup> Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1988), 169.

opposed powerful corrupt entities, such as governments or corporations. The idea of the social bandit was prominent throughout the world, but it was ubiquitous in the American West. The medieval Robin Hood, the eighteenth-century Spanish robber Diego Corrientes, and the eighteenth-century Slovak robber Juro Jánošík are other examples of social bandits. The majority of Hobsbawm's books focus on criminals outside the United States, but he briefly mentions American outlaws such as Jesse James. Another historian named Richard White applied the idea of social bandits to the American West.<sup>5</sup>

Richard White agrees that many people have a romanticized idea about what outlaws did. He declares that, "Americans have often regarded Western outlaws as heroes. In popular culture—legend, folksongs, and movies—the American West might as well be Sherwood Forest. .... Driven outside the law because of some act sanctioned by local conventions but regarded as criminal by the state or local authorities, the social bandit has been forced to become an outlaw." White acknowledges that the notion of outlaws being romantic heroes was an idea that was popular during the nineteenth-century. He points out that some people who lived near outlaws hid them from their persecuting pursuers.<sup>6</sup> The outlaw's status as a celebrity is an essential theme for an outlaw exhibit.

The journal *Oklahombres* is an excellent example of an Oklahoma outlaw-themed public history publication. The Oklahoma Outlaws and Lawmen History

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<sup>5</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (London: University of Manchester Press, 1959), 27; -----*Bandits* (New York: The New Press, 2000), 20, 47.

<sup>6</sup> Richard White, "Outlaw Gangs of the Middle Border: American Social Bandits", *The Western Historical Quarterly*, 12, (Oct. 1981), 387.

Association (OKOLHA), an organization of people who have an interest in outlaw history, writes and publishes articles related to criminals and law enforcers who had a significant effect on Oklahoma's history. The articles contain stories of the brave feats outlaws and lawmen performed. The publication is more concerned with providing more action-packed content than the analytical content of an article written by professional historians; the content suggests that the general public is the primary audience of *Oklahombres*. The journal's content is an excellent example of what type of material interests the public the most. The adventures of criminals and crime-stoppers are what people who want to read and write about outlaws want to learn about the most. Even though these stories are the primary interest of the public, the ideal museum exhibit should contain at least some material explaining why these criminals participated in illegal activities and what effects these activities had on the population.

Mark Svenfold's *Elmer McCurdy: the Adventures in Life and After-Life of an American Outlaw* is one of the most notable books covering popular culture's obsession with an Oklahoma outlaw. Svenfold portrays McCurdy as a drunken man with a thirst for violence. The author also acknowledges McCurdy's idolization of Jesse James, a man that McCurdy viewed as a hero in the vein of Robin Hood. Svenfold emphasizes that McCurdy was not a successful criminal. His 1910 attempted robbery of an Iron Mountain Train ended with him failing to open the safe. In 1911, a posse shot and killed McCurdy. No one claimed his body, allowing The Great Patterson Shows to display it. The carnival sideshows toured his mummified body around the world, exposing the story of Elmer McCurdy to tens of thousands of people. In 1922, Louis Sonney bought the body and displayed it at his Wax Museum of Crime. Svenfold acknowledges that

McCurdy's body brought the museum more money than any other attraction.<sup>7</sup> The popularity of the McCurdy exhibit is proof that outlawry is a topic appealing to the public.

Svenfold also examines the presentation of McCurdy's body. Sonney's spiel emphasized "great feats of derring-do" that McCurdy never actually performed. Sonney's presentation suggested that he expected the public to want to hear stories of an outlaw's impressive feats. During the 1930s, Sonney toured McCurdy's body with exploitation film companies that played movies related to crime. The film companies' presented McCurdy as an example of an immoral person. Before presenting films covering substance abuse, the presenters emphasized how alcoholism influenced McCurdy's violent behavior. The McCurdy presentations were correct to claim that McCurdy was an alcoholic who committed violent crimes, but there is no proof that his substance abuse was the primary reason for his crimes. Not much is known about these presentations, but they probably consisted of popular stereotypes related to outlawry.<sup>8</sup> The presentations of the McCurdy story suggest that visitors are interested in both the positive and negative aspects of an outlaw's career.

Richard W. Etulain and Glenda Riley's *With Badges and Bullets* provides several brief biographical sketches of the Wests' most famous outlaws to demonstrate that popular culture provides a distorted image of them. For example, novels and fictionalized biographies have accused Belle Starr, an Indian Territory outlaw, of more crimes than she possibly could have committed. Riley does not provide much detail

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<sup>7</sup> Mark Svenfold, *Elmer McCurdy: The Misadventures in Life and After-Life of an American Outlaw*. (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 59, 62, 65, 112, 130, 139, 152.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 196.

about the legendary Starr, but the author succeeds in describing the complexity of the outlaw's life. The real Belle Starr was not always a ruthless killer. She occasionally may or may not have given into her temptation to steal horses, but these crimes occurred during brief moments in her life. Many times, she operated as an upstanding citizen. She was a loving wife and mother, but she was supposedly willing to use violence to get what she wanted. There is little evidence to confirm or deny that she committed any of the crimes people associate with her.<sup>9</sup> Popular culture had a tendency to exaggerate an outlaw's cruelty or daringness.

The public also created distorted versions of outlaws who lived outside the Twin Territories. For example, some descriptions of Jesse James claim he was one of the worst humans to have ever existed, while others portray him as an ally to the poor. There are stories of James giving to the poor, but these stories have little evidence to support them. The James Gang were responsible for a significant number of deaths, but there are a few exaggerated tales about the gang's cruelty. The author of the Jesse James chapter does not go into much detail about these stories so it is difficult to determine to what degree these stories are distorted.<sup>10</sup> Etulain and Riley argue that real outlaws were more complex than the "social bandit" and "irredeemable butcher" stereotypes.

The vast majority of books that cover the history of Oklahoma's outlaws provide a description of what crimes outlaws committed and where and when those crimes

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<sup>9</sup> Glenda Riley, "Belle Starr, 'Queen of the Bandits,'" in Richard W. Etulain and Glenda Riley eds., *With Badges and Bullets: Lawmen and Outlaws in the Old West* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 1999), 148, 151-152.

<sup>10</sup> Elliott West, "Jesse James, *Borderman*," in *Ibid*, 165, 168 170.

occurred, but these books fail to provide much analysis for why people were motivated towards outlawry, what effects outlawry had on the population, and how criminal activity affected the outlaw. Even the books that do analyze these issues provide little elaboration on what evidence supports the authors' conclusions. One of the few books that offers an explanation for why cowboys found the outlaw lifestyle compelling is W. Eugene Hollon's *Frontier Violence: Another Look*. This book argues that boredom was the most significant reason why cowboys decided to partake in crime. The gun culture of the American West made some bored cowboys prone to use violence to obtain adventure and wealth. Shooting at rustlers, hostile Indians, and animals that threatened the livestock allowed cowboys to gain firearm proficiency. The gun was a symbol of both cowboys and outlaws. This association caused the public to associate the two.<sup>11</sup>

Books are not the only medium that explores the topic of Oklahoma outlaws. Several Oklahoma museums already have exhibits that discuss outlaws, but few of them present outlaws as the main subject of the exhibit. The Oklahoma History Center's "Lawmen and Outlaws" exhibit puts more focus on the lawmen than the outlaws. One of the few outlaws to receive significant coverage is Al Jennings, a lawman who became an outlaw. The exhibit does little to explain the careers of the Dalton Gang, Doolin-Dalton Gang, and Wyatt-Black Gang, and many other outlaws who terrorized the Twin Territories during the late nineteenth century. "Notorious Payne County," a temporary exhibit that was showcased at the Sheerar Museum of Stillwater History, put slightly more emphasis on the lawmen than outlaws. The exhibit's main focus was on Payne County gunslingers, outlaws, lawmen, or trick shooter Frank Eaton,

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<sup>11</sup> W. Eugene Hollon, *Frontier Violence: Another Look* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 119.

better known as Pistol Pete. This exhibit displayed guns belonging to Marshals Chris Madsen, Bill Tilghman and Henry “Heck” Thomas, the Three Guardsmen who hunted down many of the Twin Territories’ most notorious outlaws. Unfortunately, “Notorious Payne County” had no three-dimensional artifacts to represent the outlaws.<sup>12</sup> The exhibit was disjointed because of its focus on several different types of “notorious” individuals whom the museum thought would fascinate the public.

The primary goal of Notorious Payne County was to explain whether or not Payne County was filled with outlaws. The exhibit’s secondary goal was to explain why gunfights and other violent activities occurred in Payne County. According to a *Stillwater Living Magazine* article, the exhibit attempted to “use case studies of individuals and events from local history to examine the truth of these legends and discern fact from fiction.” “Notorious Payne County” concluded that the county had relatively little crime, but the crime that occurred there caused the region to have a reputation for lawlessness. Newspapers knew about the public’s obsession with outlaws and exploited it. The exhibit claimed that the reason the Doolin-Dalton Gang succeeded was because the Twin Territories’ law enforcement agencies were barely formed and unable to combat crime. Criminals ranging from disgruntled wives who killed their husbands to hardened train robbers committed crimes in Payne County. In spite of these exceptional incidents, Payne County only had a slightly higher crime rate than the rest of the territory.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> “Outlaws and Lawmen,” Oklahoma History Center. Visited April 2015; “Notorious Payne County,” Sheerar Museum of Stillwater History. Visited September 2014.

This approach to examining outlawry leaves many questions unanswered. For instance, “Notorious Payne County” did not go into depth as to who the Doolin-Dalton Gang were and why they performed the actions they did. The exhibit provided few details about how outlaws affected society, and the exhibit provided even fewer details about how society’s effect on the outlaws. The exhibit mentioned that legends became attached to the outlaw’s lives, but the labels did little to explain what those legends were.

### Proposal

An exhibit on the Cherokee Strip outlaws can attempt to answer these questions and provide a detailed explanation of who the outlaws were and what effects they had on society. Evidence suggests that the Cherokee Strip outlaws were mostly cowboys and lawmen who were disillusioned with the law. These men and women were willing to rob people of lives, well-being, and property, but many of the outlaws had their own moral code of what types of behavior should not be performed. The outlaws’ moral code allowed them to receive support and even admiration from some citizens. On the other hand, the violence of the outlaw lifestyle often caused bandits to face many hardships and die early deaths. The nineteenth-century began the development of the mythologized outlaw. As White argues, some people thought of outlaws as noble bandits. What White does not explore is that many other people thought of outlaws as heartless thieves and murderers. The twentieth-century’s depiction of the Cherokee Strip outlaws featured fictional outlaws of both varieties. The Cherokee Strip outlaw

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<sup>13</sup> “Notorious Payne County,” Sheerar Museum of Stillwater History; Sarah L, “Notorious Payne County,” *Stillwater Living Magazine*, October 1, 2014, stillwaterliving.com. <http://www.stillwaterliving.com/2014/10/01/49888/notorious-payne-county>. Accessed November 8, 2015.



exhibit will argue that the region's outlaws were complex characters who performed both beneficial and destructive actions, and that these actions influenced the public's perception of the outlaws as either "noble, daring criminals" or "bad men."

This project seeks not to glorify crime. The proposed exhibit will thoroughly examine the death and destruction brought upon by the Cherokee Strip's outlaws and will be explicitly designed to compare and contrast the actual Cherokee Strip outlaws with popular culture's portrayal of outlaws. The Cherokee Strip's outlaws resembled both Deadwood Dick and *Bonanza* villains. Disillusionment with the law motivated several outlaws, but money and adventure motivated others. Many of the region's bandits stole and killed, but refused to harm or rob certain types of people, such as women, the poor, or preachers. Some outlaws refused to rob from any passenger. A minority of the region's outlaws had no qualms about harming these "vulnerable" people. Even if an outlaw opposed directly killing a defenseless person, he might be willing to use a defenseless bystander as a shield. The Cherokee Strip outlaws shared many traits with the popular cultural outlaws examined by Yoggy and Aquila. Of course, most of these depictions only emphasize an outlaw's honorable or deplorable aspects. The Cherokee Strip outlaw exhibit will seek to demonstrate that the region's outlaws were more complex than popular culture's stereotypes, but actual outlaws' honor codes and destructive actions heavily influenced popular culture.

The history and geography of the Cherokee Strip is an essential topic in discussing the history of the region's outlaw activity. Paul I. Wellman Junior does an excellent job of explaining the area's history in *A Dynasty of Western Outlaws*. Edward Everett Dale's article "The Cherokee Strip Live Stock Association" is also useful for

studying the region's history. The Cherokee Strip was a portion of land that the United States government promised to allow the Cherokee Indians to have in perpetuity. The twelve-thousand square mile strip contained highly arable land. The government noticed the use of this land and forced the Cherokee to sell this land in 1866. During the 1880s many cowboys worked in the region. In March 1883, a group of ranchers gathered in Caldwell, Kansas and formed the Cherokee Strip Live Stock Association. This organization sought to regulate the trade of cattle and prevent homesteaders from being allowed to farm in the area. The Cherokee Strip was officially open to non-Native American settlement on September 16, 1893. What are now Kay, Grant, Woods, Woodward, Garfield, Noble, Pawnee, Alfalfa, Ellis, Harper, and Major counties comprised the Cherokee Strip region. Wellman argues that the Cherokee Strip Live Stock Association's failure to prevent the opening of the lands upset many cowboys and motivated them to resist urbanization.<sup>14</sup> Slotkin's argument can be applied to the Cherokee Strip's outlaws.

There are several reasons why the Cherokee Strip region provides an excellent case study for the Twin Territories' outlaws and Western outlawry in general. Many outlaws who operated outside the Twin Territories, such as Jesse James, served as the basis for idealized or demonized legendary figures who were similar to the legendary Cherokee Strip outlaws. Some of the region's most famous criminals, such as the Dalton Gang, Doolin-Dalton Gang, Cattle Annie, Little Breeches, the Wyatt-Black Gang, and Al Jennings all performed significant activities within the Cherokee Strip. The

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<sup>14</sup> Paul I. Wellman Junior, *A Dynasty of Western Outlaws* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 195, 188; Edward Everett Dale, "Cherokee Strip Live Stock Association," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 5 (March 1927): 67.

region's outlaws have more material written about them than the outlaws of any other region of what is now Oklahoma. Bill Doolin, the Dalton Gang, Al Jennings, and Zip Wyatt all have biographies written about them. Of the outlaws who operated outside the Cherokee Strip, only Belle Starr and Henry Starr were subjects of in-depth study. This bevy of material should make it easier to draw conclusions on what type of people the Cherokee Strip outlaws were.

There are two major museums in Oklahoma detailing the history of the Cherokee Strip region. The Cherokee Strip Museum in Perry and the Cherokee Strip Regional Heritage Center in Enid. These museums are particularly similar in their content and mission. Both cities' histories are heavily tied to the history of Cherokee Strip outlaws. Perry was the location of several Dalton Gang and Doolin-Dalton Gang train robberies. Enid's jail was the location where Zip Wyatt died of multiple gunshot wounds. Because Enid is a larger city than Perry, the Cherokee Strip Regional Heritage Center draws a larger audience. Of course, the proposed exhibit can travel from museum to museum. This thesis will use Enid's museum's floor plan in order to design the exhibit, but Perry's museum's temporary gallery probably has a similar layout. The plans for the outlaw exhibit can be applied to Perry's museum with a few alterations.

This study will use primarily the words of Twin Territories' citizens to determine what the outlaws were like and how the public perceived them. A few outlaws, such as Emmett Dalton and Al Jennings, wrote autobiographical accounts of their lives. Many newspapers throughout the Twin Territories and the United States contain articles that explain how outlaws committed their crimes and how the public reacted to these crimes. Several marshals have written about their memories of the Twin Territories outlaws.

Biographies of outlaws and other secondary sources contain relatively little in terms of interpretations of outlaw life, but they contain basic information on where and when the outlaws committed their crimes.

Titles are important to a museum exhibit because they tell visitors the exhibition's goal. The title should be intriguing yet concise. Museum scholar Beverly Serrell believes that titles should contain fewer than fifteen words.<sup>15</sup> The name of the proposed Cherokee Strip outlaw exhibit will be, "Bad Men and Good Bad Men: The Cherokee Strip Outlaws."

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<sup>15</sup> Beverly Serrell, *Making Exhibit Labels: A Step-by-Step Guide* (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1983, 6.

## CHAPTER II

### BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CHEROKEE STRIP'S OUTLAWS

#### The Cherokee Strip

Americans perceived the Twin Territories as having a terrible outlaw problem. Oklahoma historian Glenn Shirley declares, "Nowhere in our Wild West did the outlaw problem become so great a menace." The contemporary press provided some significant evidence for this assumption. *The Daily Ardmoreite* stated that the outlaw problem was severe enough to warrant martial law in Oklahoma and Indian Territory. According to an unnamed marshal who the paper interviewed, "A war of extermination ... is what is needed." The marshal also proposed, "There is but one way to stop this lawlessness that is to make a state out of Indian Territory." The *Stillwater Gazette* acknowledged that Oklahoma Territory was a place with much crime. The paper said, "A tidal wave of criminality is sweeping over the country. There is scarcely a county that is not the scene of bloodshed, suicide, rape, robbery, or gigantic thefts at the present time." The national press also acknowledged that the Twin Territories outlaws were notorious. The New York Tribune described Oklahoma Territory outlaw Bill Doolin as exceptionally dangerous, "Outrages of the worst kind have placed him a class with the James Brothers."<sup>1</sup> The press believed that outlaws' activities were significant threats to

the West's safety.

Although the Cherokee Strip outlaw exhibit will mostly focus on interpreting the lives of the outlaws themselves, the exhibit will not completely ignore the outside factors that encouraged outlawry in the Twin Territories. There were several reasons why Oklahoma and Indian Territory were popular destinations for criminals. Marshal Frank M. Canton remembered that many outlaws who were forced out of their home states found refuge in Oklahoma territory after the Land Run of 1889 and the Cherokee Strip Land Run of 1893. The *Indian Chieftain* believed that Indian Territory's sparse non-Native American settlement allowed outlaws to hide more easily from the law. The paper also theorized that the Creek Indians helped harbor outlaws. The creation of Oklahoma Territory threatened Indian sovereignty, motivating the tribes to help those who opposed the laws of the white man. Evidence suggests that many outlaws hid in Indian Territory. Isaac Parker, the famous "hanging judge" of Fort Smith, Arkansas, tried thirteen thousand five hundred criminals who hid in Indian Territory.<sup>2</sup>

Oklahoma historian Glenn Shirley's work is notable for its interpretation of why Oklahoma and Indian Territory were havens for outlaws. He believes that the region's inefficient newly-formed government motivated criminals to enter Oklahoma and Indian Territory. The courts could not try an outlaw for federal crimes if he was only

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<sup>1</sup> Glenn Shirley, *Six-Gun and Silver Star* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1955), i; *The Daily Ardmoreite*, October 23, 1895, 1

<sup>2</sup> Edward Everett Dale Ed., *Frontier Trails: The Autobiography of Frank M. Canton* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966), 108; "Decline of the Outlaw," *The Indian Chieftain* [Vinita, Indian Territory] May 16, 1895; Hollon, *Frontier Violence*, 118.

prosecuted for territorial crimes, and the courts were equally unable to try criminals for territorial crimes if they were prosecuted for federal crimes.<sup>3</sup>

The Cherokee Strip was also a convenient refuge for outlaws because the area was not open for non-Native American settlement until September 16, 1893. Marshal E. D. Nix remembered that keeping the peace during the land runs prevented lawmen from focusing all of their attention on outlaws. Worrying about “Sooners” and brawls over land claims preoccupied the marshals. He believed that outlaws took advantage of these distractions and camped out in the Cherokee Strip region.<sup>4</sup>

Although some outlaws were fugitives from other parts of the country, the majority of the Twin Territories’ most dangerous outlaws began their criminal careers there. Family influence was seldom a motivating factor for the law-abiding citizens to resort to outlawry. The story of most of Oklahoma and Indian Territories’ outlaws suggests that the majority of the outlaws began their lives as cowboys or lawmen. The Twin Territory’s weak law enforcement was responsible for many failures that tempted men to oppose it. Greed, and the craving of adventure were significant motivating factors. Noticing outlaws’ successful careers probably had the most influence on people to turning to outlawry. It is important to examine each major outlaw gang’s career in order to determine the cause of their outlawry and the effects of their crimes on the Twin Territories and the Cherokee Strip.

Most major outlaws in the Cherokee Strip were responsible for at least one murder, but the majority of them kept a code of honor. The remainder of this chapter

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<sup>3</sup> Shirley, *Six-Gun and Silver Star*, 73.

<sup>4</sup> Evett Dumas Nix, *Oklahombres: Particularly the Wilder Ones* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1929), 108.

examines the most publicized outlaws to determine how he or she defied the law without defying a set of principles. After examining each outlaw, the outlaw's popular cultural depictions are examined if the outlaw appeared in popular culture. Although the Cherokee Strip outlaws often had a set of principles, many of their principles differed. The case studies of each outlaw examine why he or she became an outlaw, what methods the outlaw used, how the public reacted to these methods, what effects the outlaws' methods had on his or her life, and how outlaws portrayed themselves in twentieth-century popular culture.

One of the most significant challenges to presenting an exhibit on the outlaws of the Cherokee Strip is knowing the exact location of their activities. In order to remain uncaptured, outlaws found caves, creeks, and other discreet locations for hiding from the law. Outlaws' memoirs, autobiographies, and other writings do not provide much detail into where they hid. The theoretical Cherokee Strip Outlaw Exhibit's introductory label would acknowledge that outlaws frequently traveled across the state to evade the law. The label would acknowledge that many of the most notorious outlaw gangs, including the Doolin and Dalton gang, might have hid in the Cherokee Strip region. Finding information related to the locations of criminal activity is an easier endeavor. Newspapers, outlaws' writings, lawmen's writings, and many other sources detail where major criminal activity happened. Minor criminal activity, especially activity in smaller areas of the Cherokee Strip, is much more difficult to research.

### The Dalton Gang

The Dalton Gang, whose most famous members included Bob, Gratton, and Emmett Dalton, was one of the earliest successful outlaw gangs in Oklahoma history.



The gang was only active for eighteen months, but the group received much infamy during their short career. The gang's activities provide an excellent case study for determining the significance of outlawry in Indian and Oklahoma Territory. The Dalton Gang's crimes in the Cherokee Strip are especially important for the hypothetical Cherokee Strip Outlaw Exhibit. Harold Preece's 1963 biography of the Dalton Gang, *The Dalton Gang: End of an Outlaw Era*, provides the most thorough and non-biased examination of the gang's life. The biggest problem with this source is its lack of footnotes or endnotes, which makes discerning the veracity of many of his claims difficult. Nancy B. Samuelson's biography *The Dalton Gang Story: Lawmen to Outlaws* is another important work related to the Dalton Gang. This book is mainly concerned with discussing the differences between the reality and myth of the Daltons' careers. She warns that many biographies, including Preece's, contain stories passed from oral tradition that have dubious authenticity. The final major work on the Dalton Gang is *Dalton Gang Days* by Frank F. Latta. This book mainly concerns itself with the Dalton Gang's actions in California rather than the Twin Territories. Even if the book contains minimal information about the gang's Twin Territories' activities, it is valuable for its rare photographs. The book is also notable because it contains numerous oral history interviews. Two notable interview subjects were Emmett Dalton, the only Dalton brother who survived the Coffeyville raid, and Littleton Dalton, one of the few Dalton brothers who did not become an outlaw.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Nancy B. Samuelson, *The Dalton Gang Story: Lawmen to Outlaws* (Dexter, Mississippi: Thomson-Shore, 1992), 3; Frank F. Latta, *Dalton Gang Days* (Santa Cruz, CA: Bear State Books), 134.

Harold Preece gives the following account of the Dalton Gang's early days, an account that Samuelson does not provide. The Dalton family first illegally entered Indian Territory in 1882. The young boys, who were second cousins of the notorious Younger brothers, enjoyed shooting rabbits and chickens among other violent activities. The author believes these early activities were signs that the boys were predisposed to crime, but he provides no evidence that these behaviors troubled the Daltons' friends and neighbors. Preece attributes an unnamed marshal with the quotation, "That Dalton boy, he's going to be a tough man to handle when he gets growed up." Preece includes these details to emphasize his belief that a person's innately violent nature can drive a person to devote himself or herself to crime.<sup>6</sup>

Littleton Dalton's reminiscence provides evidence that the Dalton brothers were ill-behaved from a young age. He said the young Dalton brothers, "Squalled and held their breath until they were blue in the face. Mother talked to them and babied them, but it only made them worse." Littleton disapproved of his mother's parenting and seemed to imply that her lenient treatment caused Bob, Grat, and Emmett to embrace crime. He also stated that the brothers were indeed related to the Younger brothers, as Preece claims. Littleton never explicitly mentioned that the Dalton brothers were violent or obsessed with guns, but it is still possible that Preece's claims could be true.<sup>7</sup>

Preece also examines the common justifications for outlaw behavior. The Dalton Brothers idealized Cole Younger, their second cousin, who they saw as a hero to

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<sup>6</sup> Harold Preece, *The Dalton Gang: End of an Outlaw Era* (New York: Hastings House Publishers, 1963), 30-31, 35.

<sup>7</sup> Latta, *Dalton Gang Days*, 1, 8.

the common man. The Dalton family was poor and struggled to obtain money for themselves. Another notable aspect of Bob and Grat's careers was their former status as marshals. The Daltons grew tired of waiting for the justice system to deal with Alex Cochran, who killed their friend Marshal George Cox. They lost their badges after taking the law into their own hands by killing Alex Cochran. Unfortunately, Preece does not provide any primary source reference to corroborate this anecdote. Emmett Dalton's own writings state that he was disillusioned with the law, but he never mentioned this exact episode. Preece emphasizes the themes of injustice motivating the outlaw and how that injustice motivates outlaws to see themselves as tragic heroes.<sup>8</sup> Preece's *The Dalton Gang* indicates that some of popular culture's interpretations of outlaw's motivations could have a basis in fact. The exhibit label for an outlaw exhibit can discuss how an outlaw's violent nature and disillusionment with the justice system motivated him to defy the law.

Marshal "Red" Orrington Lucas, who was a personal friend of the Daltons, agreed with this assessment. He claimed that Emmett Dalton complained, "The blankety-blank government doesn't pay [marshals] anything—so let's go 'to the brush' [become outlaws]." Although Lucas acknowledged that the government's mistreatment affected the Daltons, the marshal did not believe that revenge was the only reason for betraying the law. He thought that the Daltons craved adventure just as much as other cowboys who turned to outlawry.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Preece, *The Dalton Gang*. 58.

<sup>9</sup> Interview with "Red" Orrington Lucas in W. F. Jones, "The Experiences of a Deputy U.S. Marshal of the Indian Territory", 27.

After losing their badges in 1891, the Dalton Brothers formed a gang and escaped to Silver City, New Mexico where they committed their first crime. “Bitter Creek” Newcomb, “Blackface” Charlie Bryant, and Bill McElhanie were the first members of the Dalton Gang. The first robbery attributed to the gang involved them holding up a mining camp. Later that year, the Dalton Gang returned to the Twin Territories and hid in Beaver Creek. The gang robbed various banks, stores, and trains throughout Indian Territory, Oklahoma Territory, Arkansas, Missouri, Kansas, and Nebraska. The gang accumulated over three hundred thousand dollars from these robberies. On October 5, 1892, the gang attempted to raid Coffeyville, Kansas, with an ambitious plan of robbing two banks at once. It led to their destruction. Emmett Dalton was the only Dalton who participated in the raid and survived; he survived despite receiving twenty bullet wounds.<sup>10</sup>

Contemporaries of outlaws had strong feelings about criminal activity. The anonymous author of *The Dalton Brothers and Their Astounding Career of Crime* reveals that the Daltons were horrifying to some people. This book begins with the author’s recollection of his first encounter with the gang, who hauled a dead body to a wagon in 1888. The rest of the book describes the Daltons going to various places throughout Kansas and Indian Territory and doing little but stealing and killing. The author never portrayed any of the Dalton Gang’s activities as heroic or glamorous. The closest he came to presenting the Daltons as possessing anything other than bloodlust or greed was when he described robberies in Kingfisher, Indian Territory. The author

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<sup>10</sup> “The Dalton Gang: Related to the James Brothers—Career of the Desperados,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*. October 6, 1892, 1; Preece, *The Dalton Gang*, 65-66, 116, 254; Emmett Dalton, *Beyond the Law*, 36.

believed that the Daltons attacked Kingfisher because the town's lawmen arrested their brother-in-law Whipple for possessing a stolen horse. The gang believed their actions were just vengeance for the law's persecution of people important to the Daltons. The author recognized that the Dalton Gang had a code of honor, but that code applied mostly to people important to the gang.<sup>11</sup> The author's writings remind modern audiences that outlaw gangs were not entirely noble organizations. An exhibit label should acknowledge that the outlaw gangs participated in murders and other indisputably immoral activities.

The Dalton Brothers viewed themselves as flawed but honorable. Bob Dalton declared in a newspaper interview that his nature prevented him from resisting the urge to participate in violent crimes. Emmett Dalton begged for a reduced sentence shortly after his arrest. He claimed that his actions were wrong, but he was willing to make amends if he was able to exit prison before reaching old age. Emmett Dalton's 1918 account of the gang's activities, *Beyond the Law*, portrays banks as persecutors of the common man. This perceived persecution was supposedly just cause for robbery. Emmett Dalton states in the preface, "My object in writing this story is threefold. .... Second, to offset the malignant lies that have heretofore been published about us. Third, to put before the world in their true light a number of men who were in many instances more sinned against than sinning."<sup>12</sup> The entire book acts as an apology for

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<sup>11</sup> *The Dalton Brothers and Their Astounding Career of Crime*, (Chicago, Laird & Lee, 1892).

<sup>12</sup> Bob Dalton, "The Return of Bob Dalton: Once Notorious Bandit Tells Inside Stories of Banditry and Adventure in the Great Southwest after the Passing of the James and Younger Bands," Oklahoma Historical Society, Dalton Gang Vertical File,

criminal activity. The sixth chapter, "Forced into Outlawry" says, "Money was needed, and time after time I made efforts to get the one thousand four hundred dollars due me from United States Marshal Walker, but always without any success."<sup>13</sup> Emmett Dalton himself argues that the forces of law were corrupt and heroes needed to stand up against injustice. His description of those who pursued the Dalton Gang was unflattering, "Always keeping ahead of the sheriff and marshals who wanted the reward offered for us for a crime of which knew nothing except that we were accused of having committed it, we came into contact with robbers, horse thieves and all-around rustlers." Emmett Dalton also explained how his actions were heroic. He explained what the outlaw represented, "He becomes our fighting vicar against aristocracy...the smugly virtuous, and the pompously successful corporation whom we envy. He becomes a hero of democracy."<sup>14</sup> Providing quotes from the Dalton Gang can be a useful way for the labels to explore the mind of an outlaw.

A few townspeople supported the Dalton Gang. The brothers' family were their most notable supporters. Emmett Dalton remembered that his mother provided him and his brothers with food and shelter. Richard White argues that familial support was common among outlaw gangs. Various other locals helped shelter the Dalton Gang. Harriett P. Gilstrap, a teacher who helped shelter the gang, described the Dalton brothers as being "nice and polite." Cherokee Strip cowboy Evan G. Barnard had an

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100; Emmett Dalton, *Beyond the Law*, (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company, 1918), 9, 100.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid 49.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 64-65; Emmett Dalton and Jungmeyer Jack, *When the Daltons Rode*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran & Company, 1931), 277.

equally flattering opinion, “These boys, like the average Western man, were big-hearted and generous in every way. They attended the dances in the country and were liked by all the settlers.”<sup>15</sup>

Although the Dalton Gang had support, the gang’s detractors were numerous. Carl W. Breihan’s book *Bad Men of the Frontier Days* asserts that the majority of the public had a negative opinion of the gang’s activities. According to Breihan, “Unlike the James boys, or the Bass Gang or even Rube Burrow, the Daltons were hated by the law and citizenry alike. Vicious, bloodthirsty, and daring, they carved a name for themselves in the history of Oklahoma.” The author provides several pieces of evidence to support this claim. Unfortunately, the author provides no footnotes to support his “facts.” According to Breihan, several parents told their children that the Dalton Gang would attack them if there were any behavioral issues. The gang became legendary forces of destruction. Gun sales increased dramatically after the Dalton’s attack. Each gang member had a bounty of five thousand dollars. After the ill-advised Coffeyville raid, the townspeople wanted to mutilate the gang’s bodies.<sup>16</sup>

The national press’s coverage of the Dalton Gang suggests that only a minority of people supported the Dalton Gang. A few details in the news stories also suggest that a significant portion of the public disliked the Dalton Gang. The *Cincinnati Enquirer* found the Dalton Gang’s failed Coffeyville raid to be worthy of front-page news. The

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid, 91; White, “Outlaw Gangs of the Middle Border,” 390; Harriett P. Gilstrap, “Memoirs of a Pioneer Teacher,” *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* 39 (Spring 1960), 21; Evan G. Barnard, *A Rider of the Cherokee Strip*, (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1936), 198.

<sup>16</sup> Carl W. Breihan, *Bad Men of the Frontier Days*, (New York: Robert and McBride, 1957), 275, 285, 294.

paper described the robbers as the “Terrible Dalton Gang” and listed every man the gang killed: city marshal T.C. Connelly, bank clerk L.M. Baldwin, merchant G.W. Cubine, and shoe-maker C.J. Brown, and bank cashier Thomas G. Ayers. The article acknowledged that dozens of townspeople prepared for the raid and were willing to sacrifice their lives to protect the town.<sup>17</sup> The *Cincinnati Enquirer* portrayed the citizens of Coffeyville as brave defenders who wanted to defeat those who were willing to take many lives in order to obtain wealth. The *Boston Evening Transcript* posted a similar story. The story explained, “They [the Dalton Gang] were met by Baldwin and killed him. The citizens were thoroughly aroused by this time and pursued the robbers, succeeding in killing the four mentioned above [Bob and Grat Dalton, Bill Powers, and Dick Broadwell].” This story theorized that the Coffeyville citizens would lynch Emmett Dalton if he were to recover from his wounds. *The Desert News*, a Salt Lake City newspaper, and *The Daily American*, an Atlanta newspaper, published the exact same story as the *Boston Evening Transcript*.<sup>18</sup> This negative press illustrates that interest in the outlaws’ activities spread beyond Oklahoma and Indian Territory. An outlaw exhibit should acknowledge that outlaws had national as well as local importance.

The local press was no more kind to the Dalton Gang. *The Indian Chieftain*, a Vinita, Indian Territory newspaper emphasized the gang’s thievery and destruction

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<sup>17</sup> “Wiped Out: The Terrible Dalton Gang,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, October 6, 1892, 1.

<sup>18</sup> “The Dalton Gang Squelched: Four Killed Including the Leaders in an Attempt to Rob Coffeyville (Ks) Bank,” *Boston Evening Transcript*, October 6, 1892, 1; “A Sanguinary Affray with the Dalton Gang,” *The Desert News* [Salt Lake City], October 5, 1892, 1; “The Dalton Gang: Exterminated by Citizens of Coffeyville, Kan. Yesterday,” *The Daily American* October 6, 1892.



rather than their righteous cause or honorable nature. When the paper covered the Adair, Indian Territory train robbery of July 1892, all the paper acknowledged was that the gang stole forty thousand dollars and wounded Captain Kinney. *The Indian Chieftain's* article on the Coffeyville raid expressed similar sentiments to the *Cincinnati Enquirer's* coverage. *The Indian Chieftain's* headline read, "Avaunt Daltons: Courageous Coffeyville Citizens Clean Them out Completely. Four Desperadoes and Four Citizens Dead—Emmett Dalton Fatally Wounded—Full Particulars." The article reported the death toll and stated, "This winds up the Dalton Gang of outlaws most effectively, but it is certainly to be regretted that it was only done at such a cost of human life."<sup>19</sup>

The press knew that the Dalton Gang's deeds intrigued the public. *The Daily American* acknowledged that thousands of readers fervently read the papers to learn what the Dalton Gang accomplished. The article was a short yet colorful account of every major crime that the Dalton Gang committed. The story described these crimes as "daring exploits of robbery and murder." The story of the Dalton Gang spread far. *The Montreal Gazette* reported the exact same story as the *Cincinnati Enquirer*.<sup>20</sup> The Dalton Gang's international infamy suggests that Oklahoma outlawry was infamous throughout North America. The public's fascination with the outlaws is one topic that an outlaw exhibit should cover.

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<sup>19</sup> *The Indian Chieftain* [Vinita, Indian Territory], July 21, 1892; October 6, 1892.

<sup>20</sup> *The Famous Dalton Gang*, June 11, 1894, 5; *The Montreal Gazette*, October 6, 1892, 1.

The press began to acknowledge that the gang's infamy led to the gang receiving false attribution for many deeds. *The Visalia-Times Delta* declared,

Those Dalton boys must travel on the fastest trains to be able to bury their treasure in Indian Territory one week and rob a train here [in California] the next. If a company of trappers were to be robbed at Hudson Bay tomorrow the Daltons would get the credit. While officers are chasing the Daltons, other highwaymen are committing robberies and stepping aside to watch the officers hunt the Daltons.<sup>21</sup>

The public's awareness of the Dalton Gang caused many people to falsely attribute crimes to them, even if it was implausible that the Daltons committed the crimes. The Dalton Gang was associated with crime more than any other group in the Southwest. The gang became legendary.

Historians note that although the press was less kind to the Dalton Gang than other gangs, they did have a stricter moral code than other gangs. Preece and Samuelson recognize that the gang refused to rob passengers when holding up a train.<sup>22</sup> None of the newspapers ever reported the gang bothering train passengers. Other Cherokee Strip outlaws did not necessarily follow this "rule." They may have refused to rob from certain types of people, such as women, but many of them had no qualms with stealing from passengers. The gang's responsibility for a high body count was the most likely factor why the press was more hostile to the Dalton Gang than any other gang in the Cherokee Strip.

Discussion of the Dalton Gang's actions in the Cherokee Strip is particularly important to an exhibit at the Cherokee Strip Museum. The Daltons' earliest known criminal activities were cattle rustlings that occurred on the Cherokee Strip around 1888,

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<sup>21</sup> *Visalia-Daily Times* [California], August 11, 1892.

<sup>22</sup> Preece, *The Dalton Gang*, 50; Samuelson, *The Dalton Gang Story*, 3.

when the Daltons were still lawmen. The Daltons' thievery motivated a posse of Cherokee Strip cowboys to pursue the Daltons, a pursuit that eventually forced the brothers to flee to New Mexico.<sup>23</sup> A good museum exhibit on outlaw activity should acknowledge the effects of outlaw activity. Many cattle barons lost property due to the criminal's immoral actions.

The gang committed two notable train robberies in the Cherokee Strip. Emmett Dalton boasted about holding up a train in Wharton, Oklahoma Territory, now known as Perry. According to his second account of the gang's career, *When the Daltons Rode*, "There is a strong tendency to do the thing of which one of is accused, psychologists insist; the suggestive picture consummating in the act."<sup>24</sup> Again Emmett Dalton blamed the law's "false accusations" for his behavior. This excuse also expresses the idea of human nature compelling people to perform immoral actions. Emmett Dalton boasted that he obtained over nine thousand dollars after the Wharton robbery. Western historians Richard Patterson and Nancy B. Samuelson are sure that Emmett Dalton exaggerated about his accomplishment. The *Fort-Smith Elevator* reported that the gang only obtained five hundred dollars.<sup>25</sup> This report is solid evidence that Emmett Dalton attempted to portray the gang as more successful than they really were. Partially succeeding in a difficult task and escaping the law allowed the Dalton gang to acquire

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<sup>23</sup> "The Dalton Gang," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 1.

<sup>24</sup> Dalton, *Beyond the Law* 64; Emmett Dalton and Jungmear Jack, *When the Daltons Rode*, (New York: Doubleday, Duran, and Co. 1931), 91.

<sup>25</sup> Dalton, *Beyond the Law*, 71; Richard Patterson, *Train Robbery: The Birth, Flowering, and Decline of a Notorious Western Enterprise* (New York: Johnson Books, 1981; Nancy B. Samuelson, *The Dalton Gang Story: Lawmen to Outlaws* (Dexter, Mississippi: Thomson-Shore, 1992), 87; *Fort Smith Elevator*, May 11, 1891, 1.

fame throughout Oklahoma and Indian Territory. One theme that an outlaw exhibit can discuss is the distinction between fact and myth in outlaw stories. A label can discuss the exaggeration of an outlaw's feats and how those exaggerations became legend. Another reason why the Wharton robbery is significant is because it resulted in the death of the train operator.

The gang's next robbery involved holding-up a train in Waukomis, twelve miles south of Enid, on May 11, 1891. Marshal Ed Short and gangster Charlie Bryant were casualties.<sup>26</sup> The death and destruction caused by these robberies led to the press' aggressively negative coverage of the Dalton Gang.

The Wharton train robbery received much attention from the local and national press. On May 11, 1891, *The New York Times* quoted the *Guthrie Daily Leader*, "The skill with which the Wells-Fargo Express car of the Santa Fé train was robbed last night was only exceeded by the skill with which the express messenger guarded the property in his car from the bandits." The story explained how the Dalton Gang were skilled robbers, but they were unable to outwit the brave express messenger who successfully hid his possessions. The *Guthrie Daily Leader* believed that the Dalton Gang were formidable criminals, but potential victims were capable of resisting the greedy villains. The article claimed, "There seems to be no doubt that the bandits were the Dalton boys. They are a desperate set of outlaws."<sup>27</sup> A Cherokee Strip Outlaw Exhibit should discuss

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<sup>26</sup> Breihan, *Bad Men*, 285; "The Dalton Gang," *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, October 6, 1892, 1.

<sup>27</sup> "Train Robbers Foiled: An Express Messenger who Guarded His Trust Faithfully," *New York Times*, May 11, 1891, 5.

the negative effects of the Wharton robbery, including the Daltons' taking of property and lives.

Another train robbery occurred in Red Rock, Oklahoma Territory on June 2, 1892. The Daltons equaled their haul from the last robbery, a feat that attracted the press's attention. Unlike the Wharton robbery, no one was killed or injured in spite of the two hundred rounds of ammunition that the combatants fired. The *Stillwater Gazette* voiced a strongly negative opinion towards the Daltons and their actions. The *Gazette* said:

It is to be hoped that this band of ruffians may receive a lesson that will deter others from attempting to follow their example. .... With the exception of Charley, who lives near Kingfisher, the family of sons are known to have committed every crime from imposing upon younger school mates at school up to robbing their defenseless fellow men after they became older.<sup>28</sup>

The *Chicago Defender* had a similarly negative opinion of the Dalton Gang's crimes. It reported

The details of the robbery make a story of unexampled outlawry on the part of the bandits and of brave resistance on the part of the custodians of the express company's property. The robbers were at work nearly an hour attempting to intimidate the express messengers into submission, and during all that time the messengers were risking their lives in defense of the company's property.

This article espouses the bravery of the train employees and the exploitive actions of the robbers. The *Chicago Defender's* coverage is also notable for its description of outlaws' methods. The masked members of the Dalton Gang ambushed the engineers and forced them to drive the train to the stockyards. The gang forced a fireman to help

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<sup>28</sup> Breihan, *Bad Men*, 285; "Many Shots Fired: Dalton's Gang Robbed the Express Car at Red Rock," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 3, 1892, 3; *Stillwater Gazette* [Oklahoma], June 10, 1892.

them break into doors and safes.<sup>29</sup> An outlaw exhibit can explore how Western robbers used violence and intimidation to obtain wealth.

The Dalton Gang's legacy continued even after the failed Coffeyville raid. In 1908 Harry Hawkeye published the dime novel *The Dalton Brothers and Their Gang: Fearsome Bandits of Oklahoma and the Southwest. A Tale of Thrilling Adventure, Daring Deeds, and Hairbreadth Escapes*. As the book's title implies, this novel focused more on sensational adventure stories than historical facts. The novel emphasized the impressiveness of the Daltons' feats. When the Daltons escaped from the law, the novel proclaims, "No clue could be found to the perpetrators of the daring and skillfully executed deeds." Hawkeye based a few events, such as the Wharton train robbery, on real events, but his book fabricated many events, such as a Fort Worth, Texas bank robbery. Hawkeye's characterization of the Dalton brothers is also unbelievable. The novel's Bob Dalton committed robberies to help poor folks be able to afford homes. When robbing, he refused to kill unless it was absolutely necessary.<sup>30</sup> The story is notably different from the 1890s' press's depiction of the Daltons' violent crimes. Hawkeye believed that the public had an interest in tales of heroic bandits who bravely evaded danger.

Hollywood also took advantage of these ideas. After Emmett Dalton's acquittal, he starred in the 1912 film *The Passing of the Dalton Boys*. This film portrayed the Dalton Gang as heroically and bravely accepting death as they fought insurmountable

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<sup>29</sup> "Many Shots Fired," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 3.

<sup>30</sup> Harry Hawkeye, *The Dalton Brothers and Their Gang: Fearsome Bandits of Oklahoma and the Southwest: A Tale of Thrilling Adventure, Daring Deeds, and Hairbreadth Escapes* (Balimore: I. & M. Ottenheimer), 1908, 68, 128, 103.

odds during the Coffeyville raid. The film was a success and Emmett Dalton toured around the country to show it. Another notable Emmett Dalton film was *The Man of the Desert*. This 1920 film featured Emmett Dalton as the titular character, a mysterious figure who protected a town from bandits. Unlike *The Passing of the Dalton Boys*, this film portrayed the bandits who raided the town in a completely unsympathetic manner.<sup>31</sup> An outlaw exhibit should discuss the mythology of the outlaw as well as the reality. The exhibit can also discuss what the films reveal about how Dalton viewed his past deeds. These films seem to suggest that he thought his robberies were immoral, but he believed that his gang possessed bravery and other admirable qualities.

As the twentieth century progressed, myths began to be reported as fact. Samuelson mentions a few of these suspect stories. One of the most suspicious stories involved one of the Dalton brothers shooting an apple off a friend's head without harming him. No primary source, even Emmett Dalton's boastful biographies, tell this story. Samuelson never explicitly mentions the source of this story, probably because such stories are impossible to trace. Many oral accounts of the Dalton Gang probably exaggerate the group's feats to make them more menacing figures. Samuelson mentions that other outlaws, such as James Younger, had a similar story told about him. Another absurd feat attributed to the gang was Grat Dalton jumping off a train in Alila without being injured.<sup>32</sup> Emmett Dalton himself attempted to spread myths by

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<sup>31</sup> Frank Richard Prassel, *The Great American Outlaw: A Legacy of Fact and Fiction* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press 1993), 172; *The Man of the Desert*, Library of Congress, <http://lccn.loc.gov/89709322>. Accessed November 8, 2015; *The Man of the Desert*, Youtube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x6thkfTUQ80>. Accessed November 8, 2015.

exaggerating his gangs' feats in both of his books. The public began to portray outlaws as superhuman mythical figures.

### The Doolin-Dalton Gang

Oklahoma Territory was not free of outlaws after the death of most of the Dalton Gang. The Doolin-Dalton Gang, led by Bill Doolin, replaced the Dalton Gang as the Twin Territories' most notorious outlaws. The Doolin-Dalton Gang is especially relevant to the history of the Cherokee Strip because Bill Doolin was a cowboy on the Cherokee Strip before he became an outlaw. Like the Dalton brothers, Doolin had a biography written about him, Bailey C. Haynes's *Bill Doolin, Outlaw O.T.* The Twin Territories had many outlaws, but most do not have much written about them. Being the subject of a biography cements an outlaw as an important part of the West's legacy. The story of the Doolin-Dalton Gang has as much intrigue as the Dalton Gang's. Working at Oscar D. Halswell's ranch allowed Bill Doolin to meet several morally dubious characters; many of Halswell's ranch hands were allies of the Dalton Gang. Bill Doolin helped the Dalton Gang commit a few of their most famous robberies, such as the Red Rock robbery. After the Dalton Gang's dissolution after the Coffeyville raid, Bill Doolin and Bob Dalton formed their own gang. A few famous members of the Doolin-Dalton Gang were Bill Doolin, Bill Dalton, "Bitter Creek" Newcomb, Charlie Pierce, Roy Daugherty, "Arkansas Tom" Jones, Bill Raidler, "Little Dick" West, Oliver Yountis, "Tulsa Jack" Black, and George "Red Buck" Waightman.<sup>33</sup> Some of these members were also

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<sup>32</sup> Samuelson, *The Dalton Gang Story*, 4, 80.

<sup>33</sup> Breihan, *Bad Men*, 307; Bailey C. Haynes, *Bill Doolin Outlaw: O.T.*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967), x,xii.



associated with the Dalton Gang. A label discussing the Doolin-Dalton Gang could discuss the gang's connections.

The Doolin-Dalton Gang had an even more impressive career than their predecessor. Bill Doolin earned the title "King of Oklahoma Outlaws" from *The Indian Chieftain*. No other gang had a career that lasted as long as the Doolin-Dalton Gang's four year career. The gang committed robberies throughout Oklahoma, Kansas, Arkansas, and New Mexico. Bill Doolin had a five thousand dollar bounty, a bounty equal to the Dalton brothers. In 1895 the Doolin-Dalton Gang broke up and the group's members committed crimes separately. Each member of the Doolin-Dalton Gang died in a gunfight. Deputy Marshal Shaffer killed Creek Newcomb and Charles Pierce in May 1895. Tulsa Jack died in April 1895. Bill Tilghman captured Bill Doolin in January 1896; his allies allowed him to escape on July 5. Bill Doolin died in a gunfight with famed marshal "Heck" Thomas on August 24, 1896.<sup>34</sup>

The Doolin-Dalton Gang were successful for several reasons. Haynes believes that Doolin's cowboy experience helped him succeed in a life of crime. Working as a cowboy allowed Bill Doolin to be an effective equestrian who evaded the law many times. Driving cattle allowed him to know his terrain well. Associating with other cowboys allowed him to obtain allies.<sup>35</sup> An important issue that an outlaw exhibit must

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid. 151, 174; "Decline of the Outlaw," *The Indian Chieftan* May 16, 1895; *The Daily Ardomeite* July 8, 1896, 1; "Last of the Dalton Gang Killed: George Newcomb and Charles Pierce Wiped Out by an Oklahoma Posse" *Chicago Daily Tribune* May 3, 1895; Glenn Shirley, *Six-Gun* 152.

<sup>35</sup> Haynes, *Bill Doolin*, xi.

discuss is how outlaw gangs were able to perform robberies without being arrested or killed.

Marshal Evett Dumas Nix examined the Doolin-Dalton Gang's motivations and practices. He declared that the Doolin-Dalton Gang, "Visualize themselves as romantic heroes." He believed that the changes Oklahoma Territory was going through angered the gang and motivated them to resist.<sup>36</sup> It is unclear which changes he was referencing, but it possible that he could have been referring to the land openings, the most dramatic change the region experienced. Nix's evaluation of the Doolin-Dalton Gang provides more support to Limerick's theory of settlement affecting outlawry. Unlike the Dalton brothers, Bill Doolin was not disillusioned with the law's injustice. Nix said Doolin had, "Known the excitement and glow that came in train robberies... a craving of outlaw life was upon him."<sup>37</sup> A craving for adventure was another motivating factor for outlaws.

Haynes's examination of Bill Doolin's life includes an evaluation of his methods. Haynes claims that Doolin restrained himself from senseless killing. Doolin strongly asserted that he never killed anyone in cold blood and the only people he killed were in self-defense. Despite his alleged hatred of bloodshed, it is impossible to refer to him as not responsible for any wrongful deaths. When he robbed a bank in Spearville, Kansas on November 1, 1892, he used an unarmed cashier as a human shield during a gunfight. According to the *Guthrie Daily Leader*, Doolin's partner, Bill Dalton mortally wounded Marshal W. H. Carr and robbed his general store on April 1, 1894. The *Los*

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<sup>36</sup> Everett Dumas Nix, *Oklahombres* 57-58.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* 189-190.

*Angeles Times* reported that Doolin challenged several marshals to a fight a few days before he died.<sup>38</sup> Even if the gang only killed in “self-defense,” the term “self-defense” is flexible enough to include the killing of marshals who probably preferred taking the gang alive rather than killing them. The gang was not above using violence and killing to achieve their goals. A label covering the Doolin-Dalton gang should discuss Doolin’s moral code.

Doolin’s allies and opponents lauded his moral code. Lon Stansbery, who worked on the 3-D ranch near Tulsa, said, “They [the Doolin-Dalton Gang] always treated women with respect and no rancher was ever afraid to leave his family on the ranch on account of outlaws. While they would stand up and shoot it out with men, when women were around they were the first to take off their Stetsons and act like real men.” Stansbery also described an incident where he refused to grant gang membership to someone who did not follow the Doolin-Dalton gang’s moral code. Stansbery described one incident where, “Doolin jerked out his own pistol, put it on the man and told him to hand his gun to the officer, as they would have no man in their outfit who would rob a poor man or any individual.”<sup>39</sup> Zoe Tilghman, widow of Marshal Bill Tilghman, agreed with Haynes’s evaluation. She believed that most of the Doolin Gang, except for Red Buck, refused to kill except in self-defense. The gang normally

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<sup>38</sup> Haynes, *Bill Doolin*, 56, 69; *The Guthrie Daily Leader*, April 8, 1894, 1; “Doolin Was Crazy,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 7, 1896, 2.

<sup>39</sup> Lon Stansbery, *The Passing of the 3-D Ranch* (New York: Buffalo-Head Press, 1966,) 22.

stole only from the rich, unless a commoner had a horse good enough for escaping the law.<sup>40</sup>

The gang's code of honor allowed the Doolin-Dalton Gang to receive support and respect. Marshal Canton remembered having to outwit townspeople who hid the Doolin-Dalton Gang's stolen cattle. He recalled that the Doolin-Dalton Gang had supporters throughout Pawnee County. In spite of marshal's opposition to outlaws, Canton acknowledged that Doolin was capable of acts of kindness. Canton said:

There is no doubt that Doolin furnished many of them [poor townspeople] to buy groceries to live upon when they first settled in that country and had a hard struggle for existence. They appreciated his kindness even though he was an outlaw with a price on his head, and there were plenty of people who would get up at the hour of midnight if necessary to ride to Bill Doolin to warn him of the approach of officers when they were seen in that vicinity.<sup>41</sup>

The local press was generally kinder to the Doolin-Dalton Gang than the Dalton Gang.

*The Ardmore State Herald* said:

Their life is made up of daring. Their courage is always with them and their rifles' as well. They are kind to the benighted traveler, and it is not a fiction that when robbing a train they refuse to take from a woman. It is said that Bill Doolin, at present the reigning highwayman, is friendly to the people in one neighborhood, bestowing all sorts of presents upon the children. It is his boast that he never killed a man. 'This is as fully a romantic figure as Robin Hood ever cut.'<sup>42</sup>

When Bill Doolin was briefly jailed, *The Guthrie Daily Leader* reported that Doolin had a wonderful opportunity, "He would now have a chance to prove that many of the charges against him were false and that he was hunted and persecuted for crimes of others."

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<sup>40</sup> Zoe Tilghman, "I Knew 'Rose of the Cimarron,'" *True West* May-June 1958, 21.

<sup>41</sup> Ed. Everett Dale, *Frontier Trails*, 112.

<sup>42</sup> *The Ardmore State Herald* [Indian Territory], March 14, 1895.

*The Indian Chieftan* reported a story of a mail carrier who stole mail and falsely accused Bill Doolin of robbing him, a story that had the headline “Doolin unjustly Accused.”<sup>43</sup> Bill Doolin’s positive press reception contrasted greatly with the Dalton Gang’s universally negative reception. A label discussing the Doolin-Dalton Gang should discuss the difference between the perceptions of the Dalton Gang and the Doolin-Dalton Gang. The Doolin-Dalton Gang’s code probably helped the gang obtain allies and more successfully evade the law.

Although many local news stories defended Doolin, a few condemned him. One *The Guthrie Daily Leader* article describing his jailbreak declared, “Life-blood must be expended solely and exclusively on account of the inexcusable egotism of one man in his refusal to listen and act upon the warnings given to him. Nothing short of the most rigid and searching investigation will satisfy public opinion.” A *The Indian Chief* article stated, “One by one the ‘bad men from ‘Bitter Creek’ have paid the penalty for the belief that the property of everybody was theirs, if they could take it.” After Bill Doolin died, the *Oklahoma Gazette* said, “It is to be hoped that the report is true and the terror-inspiring Bill has been shot in the leg for the last time.”<sup>44</sup>

*The Daily Ardmoreite* similarly celebrated the death of the gang’s other leader, Bill Dalton. The paper declared, “[the confirmation of Bill Dalton’s death], which will cause the express companies, railroads, and banks from Galveston on the south and San Francisco on the west to breathe easier knowing this man of terror is no more.” Bill

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<sup>43</sup> *The Guthrie Daily Leader*, January 22, 1896; “Doolin Unjustly Accused,” *The Indian Chieftain*, August 6, 1896.

<sup>44</sup> *The Guthrie Daily Leader*, July 12, 1896; “Decline of the Outlaw,” *The Indian Chieftan*, May 16, 1895; *The Oklahoma Gazette* August 26, 1896, 1.

Dalton's relation to Bob, Grat and Emmett was particularly detrimental to his reputation. Newspapers never acknowledged that Bill Dalton had the same chivalrous code as Doolin. The *Daily Ardmoreite* article did not even concede that Bill Dalton was a man of bravery. The article claimed that Dalton cowardly jumped out of a window because he thought that no one was guarding the back of his house. After he jumped, the paper stated that Dalton ran towards the bushes in hopes that the rest of the Doolin-Dalton Gang would save him. Los Hart, a member of the posse, successfully shot him in the back.<sup>45</sup> Bill Dalton received little coverage compared to Doolin, and what little coverage Dalton received was more negative than Doolin's coverage.

Bitter Creek Newcomb and Charlie Pierce's lives and deaths suggest that former Dalton Gang members received the harsher coverage than any other member of the Doolin-Dalton Gang. Bitter Creek's obituary stated that he was an effeminate cowboy who took up a life of crime. A *Guthrie Daily Leader* article focused on the death and destruction caused by Bitter Creek's actions, such as being involved in a gunfight at Ingalls that killed three people, but the obituary did not describe him as a gentleman like the articles that described Doolin did. Newcomb's obituary at least admitted that he was "a daring fighter." Charlie Pierce received little mention or recognition.<sup>46</sup> This article demonstrates that the press found the Dalton Gang's members to be morally repulsive but brave and tough. These qualities made the gang's activities fascinating and highly publicized.

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<sup>45</sup> "Bill Dalton Dead," *The Daily Ardmoreite*, August 26, 1894, 2.

<sup>46</sup> *Guthrie Daily Leader*, May 3, 1895, 4.

Aside from Bill Doolin himself, the public despised the rest of the Doolin-Dalton Gang. The public had the same amount of vitriol towards Arkansas Tom Jones and Ol Yantis as they did towards Bitter Creek Newcomb. The Dodge City *Globe Republican* reported that a posse led by Tom Hueston found Yantis hiding in a home in Orlando, Oklahoma Territory. He fired upon the posse, but their numbers allowed them to wound Yantis. The *Globe Republican* stated, "The magnanimous officer's clemency was thrown away on the wounded robber, for no sooner had he struck the ground than he began blazing away at the officers of the law. One shot grazed Cox [a lawman]." The posse took Yantis to a hotel where he died. The article claimed, "Yantis, the dead robber, bears the reputation of a desperado of the worst class. A companion of the Daltons and like ilk. His demise was looked upon by the better class of those who knew him as a blessing."<sup>47</sup> The *Globe Republican* believed that Yantis was a brave and daring man, but his refusal to give up his violent activities required the law to kill him.

When Deputy Marshal Jim Masterson arrested Arkansas Tom during the September 3, 1893 Ingalls gunfight, the *Guthrie Daily Leader* reported that Stillwater's citizens were ready to lynch him. *The Guthrie Daily Leader* had little doubt about Tulsa Jack's eternal destiny. The paper stated, "Tulsa Jack and Rattlesnake Bill have quit blazing away at passenger trains but will continue to blaze away below."<sup>48</sup> The press did not find the rest of the gang as honorable or generous as Bill Doolin. The rest of the gang were not as honorable as Bill Doolin, or they were not as conspicuous in their

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<sup>47</sup> "Dead Bank Robber," *The Globe Republican* [Dodge City, Kansas] December 2, 1892.

<sup>48</sup> "Tulsa Jack Dead," *The Guthrie Daily Leader*, April 10, 1895; "Revised Story of the Battle," *The Guthrie Daily Leader*, September 3, 1893, 2.

displays of generosity and chivalry. The other members of the gang behaved in a way that caused them to be hated killers and plunderers.

The national press did not write any articles that portrayed the Doolin-Dalton Gang in a positive light. *The Milwaukee Journal* said, “The outlaws have been committing depredations over the section of the country for so long a time, making travel on the railroad trains or by stage unsafe.” When Deputy Marshal Shaffer killed Creek Newcomb and Charles Pierce, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* described the Dalton Gang and Doolin-Dalton Gang as, “The worst band of outlaws that ever cursed Oklahoma and Indian Territory.”<sup>49</sup>

No member of the Doolin-Dalton Gang wrote any personal accounts of their outlawry. This lack of material makes it difficult to determine if the gang actually committed any of the robberies the press attributed to them. There is little reason to doubt that the Doolin-Dalton Gang committed several robberies, but other outlaws could have committed some of the robberies attributed to the gang. For example, the press did not initially identify the criminals who participated in the November 1, 1892 Spearville, Kansas bank robbery. After Ol Yantis died in Orlando, Oklahoma Territory a month later, the *Globe Republican* attributed the robbery to the remnant of the Dalton Gang that survived Coffeyville.<sup>50</sup> It is plausible that the gang travelled a few dozen miles north to rob a Spearville bank, but there is little absolute proof to confirm the

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<sup>49</sup> “One More Indian Territory Gang is Broken up by Officers,” *The Milwaukee Journal* January 19, 1895; “Last of the Dalton Gang Killed,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* May 3, 1895.

<sup>50</sup> *The Wichita Daily Eagle* November 2, 1892, 2; “Dead Bank Robber,” *Globe Republican* December 2, 1892, 1.



*Globe Republican's* suspicions. This example proves that it is advantageous to be cautious when discussing the Doolin-Dalton Gang's crimes. The exhibit should discuss the possibility that the press misattributed a few crimes.

The Doolin-Dalton Gang also committed crimes in the Cherokee Strip. Nix recounted several specific instances of the gang's robberies. In June 1893, the gang went to Wharton and robbed two trains at once. The gang succeeded in obtaining several hundred dollars and a few passengers' valuables. In January 1894, the Doolin-Dalton Gang robbed a bank in Pawnee. Bill Doolin pointed a revolver at the teller and ordered him to open the safe. The teller failed and Doolin threatened, "Fail on that again and I'll blow your brains out." After Doolin got the money, he fired at a witness who was about to report the gang's crime. Fortunately, no one was injured during the incident. In March Bill Doolin and Bill Dalton went to Woodward and robbed a railroad hotel. The masked robbers kidnapped hotel manager George W. Rouke and compelled him to open the safe. Doolin and Dalton obtained \$6,540 from this robbery.<sup>51</sup>

The Doolin-Dalton Gang regularly hid in the Cherokee Strip. The Glass Mountains are semi-arid hills in what is now southern Woods County and northern Blaine County. This region is infested with rattlesnakes and other dangerous wildlife. This inhospitable territory was far away from anybody who could collect the bounty on the gang members' heads. The numerous caves allowed the outlaws to hide from posses. The Glass Mountains were an unsafe and uncomfortable environment. "Red" Lucas's posse once attempted to chase the gang in spite of the bitter February cold. He reminisced, "The ice looked like glass, the men were afraid to try it [pursuing the Doolin-

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<sup>51</sup> Nix, *Oklahombres*, 90, 99.

Dalton Gang].” The harshness of the area was an excellent deterrent for anyone who could oppose the gang.<sup>52</sup> A label discussing outlaw life can discuss the hardships of hiding from the law. These hardships challenged the idea that an outlaw’s life was always dignified and glamorous. The Doolin-Dalton Gang’s suffering influenced the idea that an outlaw’s life was one of tragedy. *The Passing of the Oklahoma Outlaws* itself was an example of portraying outlaws as men who attract suffering.

The violent deaths of the Doolin-Dalton Gang demonstrate that the outlaw’s life was a dangerous life. Stansbery believed that most outlaws lasted one or two years before being killed. Few members of the Dalton Gang or Doolin-Dalton Gang survived long enough to witness the turn of the century. Bill Doolin lived to be thirty-eight and Bill Dalton lived to be twenty-eight. Ol Yantis, the first Doolin-Dalton Gang member to die, lost his life on November 28, 1892. A posse invaded Bill Dalton’s home near Elk and killed him on June 8, 1894. Another posse killed Tulsa Jack in present-day Major County on April 4, 1895. William Bank’s posse killed Tulsa Jack on April 4, 1895. Bitter Creek Newcomb and Charlie Pierce were the next Doolin-Dalton Gang members to die; their deaths occurred on May 2, 1895.<sup>53</sup> The average lifespan of a Doolin-Dalton Gang member was thirty-two years, well below the average life expectancy.

As the years passed, the Doolin-Dalton Gang’s hardships increased. In addition to bullets, the strain of hiding from the law had profoundly negative effects on the Doolin-Dalton Gang’s well-being. Bill Doolin had to go to Hot Springs, Arkansas to relieve his body from the medical problems that resulted from his stressful lifestyle. The

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<sup>52</sup> Glenn Shirley, *West of Hell’s Fringe*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978), 207; Interview with Lucas, 22.

<sup>53</sup> *The Daily Ardmoreite* June 9, 1894.

gang lost another member on March 4, 1896, when a posse tracked down Red Buck and killed him in what is now Arapaho County, Oklahoma. Another member fell on November 7, 1897 when Chris Madsen's posse killed Dynamite Dick near Checotah, Indian Territory. Roy Daugherty, also known as "Arkansas Tom Jones" was the only member of the Doolin-Dalton Gang to live past age fifty. According to Graves, Deputy Marshal Jim Masterson captured Arkansas Tom during the September 3, 1892 gunfight at Ingalls. Arkansas Tom was paroled in 1910 after being sentenced to life in prison. He died in a gunfight with lawmen on August 16, 1924.<sup>54</sup> The stories of both the Dalton Gang and Doolin-Dalton Gang prove that being an outlaw dramatically decreased his or her lifespan. An exhibit label should note how living a criminal life had powerful negative effects on an outlaw's well-being. The gang's deaths drew much attention to the self-destructive nature of outlawry and influenced the public's association of outlawry with destruction.

The Doolin-Dalton Gang intrigued the public just as the Dalton gang had. Whenever a Doolin-Dalton Gang member died, Guthrie displayed his body. The *Guthrie Daily Leader* declared, "All who desire can see the last of the Daltons [Charlie Pierce and Bitter Creek Newcomb]." According to another article, over five hundred

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<sup>54</sup> Stansbery, *3-D Ranch*, 18; Richard S. Graves, *Oklahoma Outlaws: a Graphic History of the Early Days in Oklahoma; the Bandits Who Terrorized the First Settlers and the Marshals Who Fought Them to Extinction; Covering a Period of Twenty-Five Years* (Oklahoma City: State Print and Pub.), 1915, 28; *The Guthrie Daily Leader*, March 17, 1896, 1; *Indian Chieftain* [Vinita, Indian Territory] November 11, 1897; *The Guthrie Daily Leader* November 12, 1897; "Roy 'Arkansas Tom Jones' Daugherty," Find a Grave, findagrave.com.

people came to Oklahoma City in order to see Tulsa Jack's body.<sup>55</sup> The public was already interested in the Dalton Gang, and the Doolin-Dalton Gang had several members who used to be in the Dalton Gang. The public began to follow the exploits of the Dalton Gang's successors in the local newspapers. Films also preserved the memory of the mythical Doolin-Dalton Gang. Bill Tilghman and Chris Madsen created *The Passing of the Oklahoma Outlaws* in 1915 to explain how outlawry often has a dire costs to whoever participated in it, but they knew that exploiting the public's fascination with crime was beneficial for a film's success. The film took advantage of the public's obsession by featuring Arkansas Tom as one of its lead actors. The film's main plot revolves around the deaths of the Doolin-Dalton Gang.<sup>56</sup> The average filmgoers could interpret the film as a message against crime or an exhilarating adventure story featuring outlaws. The film is evidence that outlawry was a popular topic among the public.

### Female Outlaws

Two young women who idolized the Doolin-Dalton Gang, Anna Emmaline McDoulet, better known as "Cattle Annie" and Jennie Stevenson, better known as "Little Breeches", assisted the gang from 1894-1895. The former lady had an infatuation with one of the gang's members. In order to help the gang, the two women provided the marshals with false information. In addition to helping the Doolin-Dalton Gang, the two women stole cattle and horses for their own use. The women's thievery was not significant enough to receive press coverage during their careers. In July 1895, Bill

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<sup>55</sup> *The Guthrie Daily Leader*, May 3, 1895, 4; "Tulsa Jack Dead," *The Guthrie Daily Leader*, 2.

<sup>56</sup> Graves, *Oklahoma Outlaws*, 28.

Tilghman and Steve Burke were able to easily subdue Cattle Annie and Little Breeches. Burke grabbed Cattle Annie in a bear hug and captured her with no resistance. Little Breeches was harder to subdue. Tilghman found her in Pawnee and attempted to catch her. Her shots came close to injuring Tilghman. Although Little Breeches had no problems with shooting him, he refused to shoot a woman. Tilghman shot her horse and came up to her. She bit, clawed, and kicked him, but he continued his attempt to capture her. He spanked the young woman and sent her to the Perry jail, where her sister was also held. Cattle Annie lived a long life after her release in 1898, but Little Breeches's fate is unknown. Cattle Annie ended her career of crime and married Earl Frost of Perry in 1901. In 1909, the former outlaw used her horse-riding talents to impress visitors at Wild West Shows. Little is known about her life after that period. She died in 1978, at the age of ninety-five.<sup>57</sup>

*The Guthrie Daily Leader* was not pleased with the women's behavior. The paper described Little Breeches as ill-behaved, tobacco-spewing woman. Citizens of Oklahoma Territory found outlawry to be appalling and unfeminine.<sup>58</sup> The two women's relative lack of coverage suggests that female outlaws were not romanticized to the degree of male outlaws. An outlaw exhibit should explain how the public responded negatively to female outlaws and how these females were willing to defy society's expectations.

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<sup>57</sup> James David Horan, *Desperate Women* (New York: Putnam, 1952), 248, 266; "Cattle Annie," *Oklahoma Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, <http://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=CA075>. Accessed November 8, 2015; *The Guthrie Daily Leader*, July 7, 1895, 4; *The Beaver Herald* [Beaver, Oklahoma Territory] August 29, 1895, 1.

<sup>58</sup> *The Guthrie Daily Leader*, July 7, 1895, 4

Although Cattle Annie and Little Breeches achieved little fame during their career, they became significantly more famous in the twentieth century. Bill Tilghman's film, *The Passing of the Oklahoma Outlaws* was the first film depiction of the two women. The film's advertisement acknowledged Cattle Annie and Little Breeches' role in the film. Even if the two outlaws failed to cause significant damage to society, the fact that women were willing to forgo their femininity in favor of the more "masculine" outlaw lifestyle was probably fascinating to the public. The two outlaws' second film appearance was the 1981 Disney film *Cattle Annie and Little Britches*. This comedy joked about the relative ineptitude of their outlaw efforts.<sup>59</sup> The women's activities would probably fascinate modern audiences. A Cherokee Strip Outlaw Exhibit should acknowledge that females participated in outlawry, but far fewer female outlaws achieved the same infamy as their male counterparts.

Rose Dunn, better known as The Rose of the Cimarron was another female outlaw who assisted the Doolin-Dalton Gang. Her main activities included rustling cattle in Pawnee County and sheltering the gang. Her most famous action was helping the gang during a gun battle at Ingalls, Oklahoma Territory. After the marshals wounded Bitter Creek Newcomb, she grabbed a gun and defended the outlaw. At the end of the battle, she helped nurse the wounded man back to health. The Rose of the Cimarron became famous after being featured in *The Passing of the Oklahoma Outlaws*. The movie's creators referred to Dunn as the "Rose of the Cimarron" to avoid tarnishing Dunn's good reputation. After the release of this movie, many people wrote sensational

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<sup>59</sup> *Tulsa World* May 11, 1919, 8; *Cattle Annie and Little Britches* Internet Movie Database, imbd.com. [http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0082145/?ref=fn\\_al\\_tt\\_1](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0082145/?ref=fn_al_tt_1). Accessed November 8, 2015.

stories about her. According to Zoe Tilghman, “Pages and pages of speculation, misstatements, and wild guesses have been printed about Rose of the Cimarron. Many writers claim that their stories about Rose are absolute fact, although they never saw her.”<sup>60</sup> She never explained what those stories were, but they were probably as exaggerated and ridiculous as the Dalton Gang’s alleged superhuman feats.

### The Wyatt-Black Gang

The Doolin-Dalton Gang’s crimes distracted the law from dealing with other Cherokee Strip criminals. The Wyatt-Black Gang took advantage of the law’s preoccupation with others and committed robberies from 1893 to August 1895. N. Ellsworth Wyatt, also known by the aliases of Zip Wyatt, Wild Charlie and Dick Yeager, came to Cowboy Flats in Oklahoma Territory in 1889 and worked as a cowboy. He also worked for the Wyath Cattle Company and Dean & Broderick Ranch, located in the Cherokee Strip north of Cowboy Flats. At the height of the Doolin-Dalton Gang’s career, Wyatt recruited Ike and Pearl Black, S. T. Watson, and Jenny Freeman to join his gang, which specialized in cattle and horse thefts in the northwestern portion of Oklahoma Territory. Zip Wyatt was another outlaw infamous enough to have a biography written about him. Glenn Shirley wrote *Desperado from Cowboy Flat: The Saga of “Zip” Wyatt* in order to explore the bandit’s mysterious career. Shirley interviewed homesteaders from the Cherokee Strip region and found conflicting accounts of data as basic as Wyatt’s first name. Some people said Wyatt’s first name was Nelson while others said it was Nathaniel.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Tilghman, “Rose of the Cimarron,” 21, 44.

The same factors that motivated the Dalton Gang motivated the Wyatt-Black Gang. They also faced the same persecution as the Dalton Gang. Glen Shirley claims that people accused the Wyatt-Black Gang of many crimes that they did not commit. *The Guthrie Daily Leader's* assessment of Wyatt's career supported Shirley's claims. One article admitted that a story about the Wyatt-Black Gang being involved in a January 1895 shootout was fabricated.<sup>62</sup> Unfortunately, it is impossible to determine definitively Wyatt's motives because he never wrote a first-hand account of his experiences. It is still probable that he could have been combatting perceived injustice. Zip Wyatt's nature could have also caused him to become an outlaw. The *Aurora Daily Express* reported, "Wyatt, the outlaw chief, used to be a cowboy and went to Guthrie once a month to spend his wager in one wild carousal."<sup>63</sup> The most likely explanation for Wyatt's behavior is that the law's persecution drove an already violent man to perform more violent acts.

Zip Wyatt and his gang did not adhere to the same moral code as the Doolin-Dalton Gang. Marshal William D. Fossett remembered that the Zip Wyatt Gang scammed poor farmers. Fossett said that the gang schemed, "to offer to pay the poor farmers for their meals with large bills that they knew the farmers couldn't change. The outlaws would ask the farmers how nearly they could come to changing the bills, and the farmers would tell them how much they had.... The outlaws would take the money from the farmers, keep their greenbacks and ride away." *The Guthrie Daily Leader*

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<sup>61</sup> Shirley, *Six-Gun*, 125-126; Glenn Shirley, *Desperado from Cowboy Flat: The Saga of "Zip" Wyatt* (Stillwater, OK: Barbed Wire Press, 1997), 19, 20.

<sup>62</sup> *The Guthrie Daily Leader*, January 20, 1895, 1.

<sup>63</sup> *Aurora Daily Express* [Illinois], August 3, 1895, 4.



reported that the Wyatt-Black Gang killed a preacher and stole his horse after escaping from the April 3, 1895 Dover train robbery.<sup>64</sup>

In spite of Wyatt's horrific actions, a few people believed that Wyatt had some honorable qualities. His father declared, "Zip is 24 years old and not the tough boy many people take him to be. He would reform if given the chance." It is not surprising that family members considered an outlaw to be a misunderstood individual, but historian Marquis James believes that the Wyatt-Black Gang had honorable qualities. He cites the gang's loyalty to each other as one admirable quality. James believes that the gang were planning to help Pearl Black and Jennie Freeman escape, but the law's attention prevented the gang from accomplishing this feat. One *Guthrie Daily Leader* article claims that the gang were in Guthrie in late July 1895.<sup>65</sup> There is no concrete proof, but it is highly probable that gang were loyal to each other. The Dalton Gang raided Kingfisher because of an attack on the gang's ally. The Wyatt-Black Gang probably had a similar code to determine how to protect one of their own. Even if the gang committed horrific deeds, they were not completely devoid of principles.

The Wyatt-Black Gang's deeds intrigued the Twin Territories' population. After Wyatt died, *The Guthrie Daily Leader* stated, "It was thought that Zip would unfold the history and criminal career of himself and his gang before his spirit would depart, but death sealed his lips forever and the inside facts of his career are as an unwritten book." The press wanted to tell sensational stories of gun battles and other adventures, but his

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<sup>64</sup> Marquis James, *They Had Their Hour* (Blue Ribbon, 1934), 288; Second Interview with William D. Fossett, August 18, 1937, Foreman Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society; *The Guthrie Daily Leader* August 6, 1895.

<sup>65</sup> *The Guthrie Daily Leader*, August 6, 1895, 2.

death prevented newspapers from discovering these tales. The press emphasized the outlaws' ferocity and skill. According to the *Guthrie Daily Leader*, "The Yeager Gang [the Wyatt-Black Gang] has taken the front rank in the bandits of Oklahoma. They robbed and murdered wherever they went and held up trains, country merchants, and individuals."<sup>66</sup> The January 1895 story was probably fabricated to take advantage of the people's interest in gun-slinging. The press exploited the outlaw's behavior to captivate the public.

Even if the Wyatt-Black Gang were successful, the Doolin-Dalton Gang's accomplishments dwarfed their fellow outlaws'. The press attributed twenty robberies to the Doolin-Dalton Gang, far more than what the press attributed to the Wyatt-Black Gang. The only train robbery attributed to the Wyatt-Black Gang was the Dover Train Robbery of April 3, 1895. All of the gang's other criminal activities were cattle and horse thefts. Richard Patterson argues that "long riders," or train and bank robbers, were the type of criminals who were considered the most elite. The press's lack of coverage of Wyatt-Black Gang's specific acts of theft suggests that the gang did not perform as much carnage as the Doolin-Dalton Gang during their Wharton, Woodward, or Pawnee robberies. Even if the Wyatt-Black Gang did not steal as many thousands of dollars' worth of cash and merchandise, the gang's killings were significant. The *Aurora Daily Express* credited the gang with over twenty murderers.<sup>67</sup> Even if the paper falsely attributed some of these murders, some were likely to have been the Wyatt Black Gang's doing. The Dalton Gang and Doolin-Dalton Gang frequently used lethal force to

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.* July 28, 1895, 1; *Ibid.* September 9, 1895, 1

<sup>67</sup> *Aurora Daily Express*, August 3, 1895.

get what they wanted. There is no reason to believe that the Wyatt-Black Gang were any different, especially when one considers the less honorable nature of the gang.

The Wyatt-Black Gang hid in the Glass Mountains, just as the Doolin-Dalton Gang did. The *Cincinnati Enquirer* alleged that gun battles occurred there in June and July of 1895. The *Cincinnati Enquirer* reported these stories on June 9 and July 25, 1895. Both stories reported that the Doolin-Dalton Gang was with the Wyatt-Black Gang. The former story reported the capture of Pearl Black and Jennie Freeman. The latter story claimed that the gunfighters shot over one hundred rounds of ammunition. Supposedly, Frank Canton's posse killed Zip Wyatt in this battle. The article declared, "Both sides maneuvered with skill that would do credit to scientific warfare, and some times they would advance and some times again they retreated." *The Guthrie Daily Leader* reported the July 25 battle. *The Langston City Herald*, Langston City, Oklahoma Territory's paper, reported that the men involved were not part of the Wyatt-Black Gang and the law misidentified the corpses.<sup>68</sup>

A few members of the Wyatt-Black Gang died violent deaths. A group of vigilantes was able to kill Ike Black on August 3, 1895. They captured Wyatt alive, but they shot him multiple times in order to subdue him. When he was sent to the Enid jail on August 6, he had forty-five bullets in his body. He died from infected wounds at the age of twenty-four on September 9, 1895.<sup>69</sup> Wyatt's death was particularly notable for

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<sup>68</sup> "Corned: Remnant of the Doolin Gang of Desperados Surrounded in a Cave," *Cincinnati Enquirer* June 9, 1895, 1; "Battle with the Doolin-Gang Along the Rocks of the Glass Mountains," *ibid* July 25, 1895, 4; *The Guthrie Daily Leader* July 28, 1895, 1; *The Langston City Herald* [Langston City, Oklahoma Territory], August 3, 1895, 2.

<sup>69</sup> *The Guthrie Daily Leader*, August 6, 1895, 2; *Langston City Herald*, August 17, 1895; *The Guthrie Daily Leader*, September 9, 1895.

being slow and agonizing. His death demonstrates that outlawry sometimes led to harrowing experiences. The Wyatt-Black Gang are another example of a group of outlaws who died early in life.

Zip Wyatt may have committed exactly one highly-publicized crime in the Cherokee Strip, the robbery of the Wharton train station on November 7, 1889. He supposedly shot and killed Charles M. Smith, the night telegrapher, and ran away without collecting any money. No one was able to identify Smith's killers. The *Indian Chieftain* simply stated that there was a one thousand dollar reward to whoever captured Smith's murderers. Chris Madsen believed that Wyatt was responsible for this murder, but there is little proof that Wyatt was the guilty party<sup>70</sup> The Wharton robbery attempt is one story that the Cherokee Strip Outlaw exhibit can discuss.

#### Minor Outlaws

Less talented bandits emulated the Doolin-Dalton and Wyatt-Black gangs. Nate Sylva and Felix Young attempted their own robbery in the Cherokee Strip. On April 9, the two outlaws' newly formed gang decided to rob the train near Pond Creek. The *New York Tribune* reported that when the train was four miles south of Pond Creek, "One of the men, with a revolver in his hand, compelled the train to stop. ... The fellows on the locomotive kept the engineer and the fireman from giving the alarm. ... They fired through the car." The gang assigned each member a specific duty. One member attempted to use dynamite to blow up the safe. Jacob Harmon, a Wells-Fargo express messenger, shot and killed one of the would-be thieves, an action that enticed the gang

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<sup>70</sup> *Indian Chieftain*, November 14, 1889; Harold L. Mueller and Chris Madsen, "Four Score Years a Fighter!" Chapter 12.

to retreat. The *New York Tribune* stated, “Had it not been for the bravery of Harmon, the hold-up would have been a success. The amount of money on the car is not known, but it is supposed to have been large.”<sup>71</sup> One month later, marshals Madison, Prater, and Eichoff caught Slyva and Young in Guthrie. Slyva surrendered with no resistance, but Young decided to ride away from the law. Gamblers Slim Jim Hathaway and Big Dan Donaldson helped the outlaws. They fired at the marshals but surrendered when three more marshals arrived. The marshals managed to capture Young after what the *Cincinnati Enquirer* referred to as an “exciting chase.”<sup>72</sup> The Pond Creek robbery reveals that even minor criminals could have brief front page attention from the national press. These minor outlaws could cause significant havoc even if they did not succeed at robbery. The Twin Territories’ outlaw problem was serious.

Ben Cravens had a brief career in the post-Doolin-Dalton Gang era. The *Chickasha Daily Express* related, “Ben Cravens the escaped convict from the Kansas penitentiary is known in Pawnee and Noble Counties as a most successful cattle and horse thief and highwayman.” He was a Kansas cattle thief who regularly hid south of its border. Eventually, the law caught him and jailed him in Perry. He broke out of prison and continued his life of crime. His gang attempted to rob a bank in Blackwell on December 4, 1896, but a posse prevented the gang from obtaining any loot. Gang members Frank McRae and Dick Ainsely died attempting the failed raid. In 1901 Cravens robbed a store in Red Rock and killed postmaster Alva Bateman. His crimes encouraged the law to offer a ten thousand dollar reward to whoever caught Cravens.

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<sup>71</sup> “Train Robbers Driven Off,” *New York Tribune*, April 11, 1894, 1.

<sup>72</sup> *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, May 13, 1894, 1.

He hid in the Creek Country for a while before going to Missouri and working as a rancher. In June 1903 Cravens, known by the pseudonym “Charles Maust,” returned to crime and stole nine horses and eight hundred dollars cash from ranchers. He was arrested in 1908 and served a life sentence for killing Bateman.<sup>73</sup>

### Al Jennings

Alphonso “Al” Jennings was another outlaw who lived on the Cherokee Strip. He was born in Virginia in 1863. In 1892, he moved to El Reno, Oklahoma Territory and practiced law. He moved to Woodward, a town in the Cherokee Strip, in 1894. Attorneys Temple Houston, Ed, and John Jennings were involved in a gunfight in Woodward on October 5, 1895. Houston successfully killed Ed and badly injured John. Despite Temple’s murderous act, he was acquitted. The court’s decision angered Jennings and motivated him to become an outlaw. In 1897 he recruited Little Dick West, the O’Malley Brothers, and Frank Jennings for the Jennings Gang. The gang robbed several trains throughout Oklahoma until Jennings was arrested in November 1897.<sup>74</sup>

Al Jennings’s novel allegedly based on his career, *Beating Back*, extensively discussed his motivations for turning to crime. One scene involves him confronting Temple Houston and reluctantly refusing to kill him. Jennings lamented, “Yet, in the period which the law gave me to think over my career, this failure was for a long time

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<sup>73</sup> *The Beaver Herald* [Beaver, Indian Territory] December 6, 1900, 1; *The Herald* [Carroll, Iowa] March 29, 1905, 7; “In the Creek Country,” *The Guthrie Daily Leader* March 21, 1901, 4; *Daily Sun* [Nebraska] June 20, 1903, 10; Geo Rainey, *The Cherokee Strip* (Enid: self-published, 1925), 243.

<sup>74</sup> Suzanne H. Schrems, “Al Jennings: Image of an Outlaw,” *Journal of Popular Culture* 22 (Spring 1989), 109-111.

my greatest regret—I had let undone the very thing which I broke with society to accomplish.” Another incident portrayed him as falsely persecuted. When he was ranching near Bixby, he said:

Three or four armed men stood about watching me. .... I hadn't ridden two hundred yards when the whole crowd opened on me with Winchesters. My horse went dead, and I got a bullet in the right ankle. ... I rushed through the store looking for someone to kill. It was deserted. .... I committed my very first crime. They took me for a criminal. Very well! I will show them!<sup>75</sup>

Jennings used many of the same excuses as the Dalton Brothers.

Jennings's methods were similar to the Doolin-Dalton Gang's. *The Guthrie Daily Leader* described his October 1897 robbery of a train near Chickasha as adhering to a code of honor, "The women in the party were not searched at all, and were treated very curiously by the brigands. Nor did their chivalry end with the ladies. Reverend Mr. Roe, a preacher, was sick in the car, and he was left undisturbed." Jennings was not unwilling to use fear and violence to obtain what he wanted. When the *Saturday Evening Post* interviewed him, he described his intimidation tactics for robbing trains. He said, "Occasionally the express manager showed fight, but a few bullets just over his head always stopped him. Sometimes we made the messengers open it [the safe]; generally we blew it with giant powder. We'd empty the contents into sacks, fan a few shots round the train for a warning, and get to our horses." These techniques obviously caused great distress to the train workers and heavy damage to the railroad company's property. Jennings's threats of violence were not always bluffs. The same *Guthrie Daily Leader* article reported that Jennings shot off part of an uncooperative

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<sup>75</sup> Al Jennings, *Beating Back* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1914), 48-49, 84.

passenger's ear. The article also stated that Jennings allegedly killed two people in Denison, Texas but was acquitted.<sup>76</sup> Jennings had a moral code but that code did not preclude him from engaging in acts of hurting, killing, and destroying.

Al Jennings eventually became a celebrity. *The Saturday Evening Post* wrote a flattering article about him on September 6, 1913. The article favorably described Jennings, "Here was one, you felt instantly, whom all men of good will would like on sight, one to whom children and dogs would come running to on instinct. .... He'd tell them about his past, prison and all, until he had them crying like penitents at the mourner's bench."<sup>77</sup> Several pieces of fiction depicted Jennings's life. The 1913 film *Beating Back* glamorized his career and portrayed the law as cowardly. Famous author O. Henry, a friend of Al Jennings, published a short story allegedly based on the outlaw's life, "Holding up a Train."<sup>78</sup>

The reality of Jennings's career was less impressive than the legendary stories about him. He failed to break open the safe during his August 16, 1897 Edmond robbery or his October 1897 Chickasha robbery. According to Patterson, the gang was too afraid to attempt robberies near Purcell and in Minco when they saw a posse in the area. One of the gangs' few successes was its robbery of the train at Berwyn, a few miles north of Texas. As Richard Patterson describes the Jennings Gang's career, "Al Jennings and his crew have received much ridicule for their inauspicious first year as

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<sup>76</sup> *The Guthrie Daily Leader*, October 3, 1897, 1; Will Irvin, "Beating Back: Introducing Al Jennings," *The Saturday Evening Post* September 6, 1913, 22.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.* 1

<sup>78</sup> Shrems, "Image of an Outlaw," 111, 113.



train robbers. This is perhaps unfair. True, their luck was bad from the start, and at times they were plainly inept.”<sup>79</sup> Jennings claimed that he was an excellent marksman who could shoot a tin can thrown in the air. General Roy Hoffman, an acquaintance of Al Jennings, said that the outlaw could not hit the side of a barn.<sup>80</sup> Jennings was nowhere near as formidable as fiction portrayed him.

In spite of his incompetence, or maybe because of his incompetence, he lived a much longer life than most members of the Dalton Gang and Doolin Dalton Gang. After spending ten years in prison, President Theodore Roosevelt pardoned him. Instead of continuing as an outlaw, Jennings decided to begin a film and evangelism career. The *Pittsburg Post-Gazette* reported that Jennings lived to the age of ninety-eight, an age that very few outlaws ever reached.<sup>81</sup> Ending his career of crime put him in far less danger than continuing to resist other Western gunslingers. His renunciation of his previous life reinforced the idea that outlawry did not benefit society or the outlaw himself.

#### Oklahoma Outlaws outside the Cherokee Strip

The Twin Territories’ outlaw problem was not exclusive to the Cherokee Strip. The Buck Gang, Weightman Gang, Cherokee Bill, Belle Starr, and Henry Starr were some of the most notable outlaws who operated in Indian and Oklahoma territory. Their

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid. 109; Patterson, *Train Robbery*, 171-172.

<sup>80</sup> “Hickok-Hoakum Case Goes to Jury,” *The American Rifleman*, 73 (June 1926), 902.

<sup>81</sup> “Pint-Sized Bad Man of the Old West Dies at 90,” *Pittsburg Post-Gazette* December 17, 1941; Shrems, “Image of an Outlaw,” 109.

careers had many similarities to the Cherokee Strip outlaws. The Cherokee Strip outlaws' careers help explain the history of outlawry in the Twin Territories.

Belle Starr was one of the individuals most associated with Indian Territory outlawry, but, as Etulain and Riley argue, she may or may not have committed any of the crimes attributed to her. Although most of her alleged thefts occurred in Texas, she hid in "the Nations," better known as Indian Territory. Starr's fugitive status caused her to hide in Indian Territory. Her career lasted from 1873-1889, significantly earlier than the Dalton Gang or Doolin-Dalton Gang's. The only hideout location anyone is certain of was the house of Cole Younger, famous member of the James-Younger Gang, in Miami, Indian Territory. The only crime in Indian Territory that biographers attributed to her was her 1873 robbery of a wealthy Creek man from Eufaula, a robbery that allowed her to obtain thirty thousand dollars in gold.<sup>82</sup>

Her career had several similarities to the Cherokee Strip outlaws. "The Bandit Queen's" supposed skill at thievery allowed her to achieve great fame. The *Fort Worth Daily Gazette* reported that a theatrical production in Fort Smith, Arkansas cast Belle Starr as a stagecoach robber. The paper focused on her daring deeds. The February 6, 1889 paper said, "She had been arrested for murder and robbery a score of times, but always managed to escape." The national press also paid attention to Starr's career. The New York *Sun* published an article that contained a brief overview of her career. The article said, "Belle attracts considerable attention wherever she goes, being a dashing horsewoman and exceedingly graceful inside the saddle."<sup>83</sup> Belle Starr was a

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<sup>82</sup>Horan, *Desperate Women*, 208, 211.

celebrity just as her successors were. Many fictitious stories about Belle Starr began to develop as her career continued. The *National Police Gazette* serialized a “biography” that contained many mistakes. Aside from detailing train robberies that Starr never performed, the book incorrectly stated such basic information as Starr’s date of birth. Contemporary newspapers reported few of the spectacular crimes that the *Police Gazette* claimed she committed.<sup>84</sup> The fictionalization of her career was similar to the fictionalization of the Dalton Gang’s career.

Starr’s career had many of the same triumphs and tragedies of the Doolin-Dalton Gang’s. She took advantage of her environment and was able to escape from the law for a significant period of time. When she was not hiding, she may have stole horses and a significant amount of money. In spite of the benefits of her alleged crimes, she eventually paid a heavy price. In February 1889, an unknown assassin murdered Belle Starr. She was only forty years old at the time of her death. Outlaws in the Twin Territories were lucky if they lived longer than Starr.

The Cook Gang, which included Bill Cook, Crawford Goldsby “Cherokee Bill,” and Henry Starr, was another of the region’s more notable gangs. This gang consisted of former cowboys, as many outlaw gangs did. Bill Cook’s experience as a cowboy was useful for his outlaw career; the New York *Sun* acknowledged that he was, “a good rider, a sure shot, and one of the coolest hands with a steer in the country. “ The gang had a brief three-month career, lasting from October-December 1894, but accomplished much. The criminals performed ten stagecoach, store, bank, and train robberies in that

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<sup>83</sup> *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, October 16, 1886, 4; *Ibid.* February 6, 1889; *The Sun* [New York] June 3, 1886, 7.

<sup>84</sup> Burton Rascoe, *Belle Starr* (New York: Random House, 1941), 305.

short time, a feat that the legendary James-Younger Gang could not match. Another astounding aspect of their careers was the fact that they only killed one person during their robberies. The law captured most of the gang on October 30, 1894. A posse was able to capture Cherokee Bill on January 30, 1895. Cherokee Bill, a twenty year old outlaw, was executed on March 17, 1896.<sup>85</sup>

Bill Cook claimed that he had a code of honor. The *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* reported that Cook said, “Nor have I ever robbed a poor man, unless it was of a horse and food that I was compelled to have when I dodged officers.” Another claim he made was, “I have given more to the poor than many rich people.”<sup>86</sup> Bill Cook shared a similar code of honor as the Doolin-Dalton Gang.

The gang’s robberies caused a significant amount of destruction. The Cook Gang robbed a train at Correta on October 20, 1894. They shot at the doors of the train in an attempt to slow it down. Bill Cook shot into the air, swore at the passengers, and told them to leave. This robbery resulted in two injuries. Railroad agent Jack Mahara was shot in the forehead and seriously wounded; Walter Barnes was shot in the cheek but was less-critically injured. The gun battle that ensued destroyed every window in the train. The Cook Gang’s destructive tendencies did not give them any sympathetic press. *The Daily Ardmoreite* reported the marshals’ attempts to stop the Cook Gang were, “Heroic Measures Proposed to Solve the Outlaw Questions in the Territory.”<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Harry Sinclair Drago, *Outlaws on Horseback: the History of the Organized Bands of Bank and Train Robbers Who Terrorized the Prairie Towns of Missouri, Kansas, Indian Territory, and Oklahoma for Half a Century* (New York: Mead Dodd, 1964), 166; “Bill Cook, the Outlaw,” *The Sun* December 16, 1894, 8.

<sup>86</sup> *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, January 14, 1895, 6; *Ibid.* January 17, 1895, 3.

Citizens of Indian Territory had to fear outlaws' carnage as much as residents of the Cherokee Strip.

Stories of Bill Cook's career spread throughout the nation. The New York *Sun* said, "Bill Cook, the outlaw, whose name causes the Oklahoma citizen to instantly grab the butt of his revolvers, has been pictured as a coward and a lion-hearted man. ....In short he has been represented as everyone and anyone but himself. .... He is not a man of extraordinary brutality or exceeding tyranny." This story demonstrated that myths began to develop, a common occurrence for outlaws. The paper also claimed, "It was a love affair that led to his desperate career of plundering and killing." Supposedly, Bill Cook committed his crimes in order to afford gifts for a woman whom he loved.<sup>88</sup> The *Sun* surprisingly depicted Cook as evil but somewhat honorable.

Henry Starr was the nineteenth-century's last major outlaw who operated in the Twin Territories. Unlike many of his contemporaries, his career lasted into the twentieth-century. His most significant string of robberies occurred between September 8, 1914 and January 13, 1915. During this period, the Starr Gang robbed fourteen banks across Oklahoma. These banks were in Kiefer, Tube, Pontotoc, Byars, Glencoe, Wardville, Pru, Carney, Preston, Owasso, Terlton, Garber, and Vera. The robberies allowed the gang to obtain over twenty-six thousand dollars. The law captured Starr on March 15, 1915. After being paroled in 1919, he attempted to rob the

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<sup>87</sup> *The Guthrie Daily Leader*, October 23, 1894, 1; "Heroic Measures Proposed to Solve the Outlaw Questions in the Territory," *The Daily Ardmoreite*, October 23, 1894, 1.

<sup>88</sup> "Bill Cook, the Outlaw," *The Sun*, December 16, 1894, 8.

People's National Bank of Harrison, Arkansas on February 18, 1921. While attempting this robbery, he was mortally wounded at the age of forty-seven.<sup>89</sup>

While imprisoned, Starr became a celebrity and began writing an autobiography, *Thrilling Events: Life of Henry Starr*. This book conveys themes that are common to the outlaw narrative. He claimed that the law falsely accused him of stealing horses. Starr asserted his friends knew he was a kind-hearted man who the law falsely persecuted. One of the book's most evocative quotes is, "I, an innocent man, felt the murder-breeding leg irons and chains.....I was disheartened and disgusted. My respect for the law had begun to take an awful tumble. I began to think that so long as I had the name of being a 'bad one' I might as well have the game."<sup>90</sup> Perceived injustice was a motivator for many of the region's outlaws.

Although most of his crimes occurred in the early statehood era, Elmer McCurdy's career is similar to many territorial-era outlaws. McCurdy had a reputation as a man who was as violent as the Dalton brothers. In 1905 he worked in Iola, Kansas and told his employer that he killed a man. McCurdy's career also had similarities to Jennings's. His crimes were unspectacular as he was unable to commit successful robberies. On March 1911, he attempted to blow up the safe of an Iron Mountain train but accidentally blew up the money as well as the safe. During the October 4, 1911 Okesa, Oklahoma robbery, he only obtained forty-six dollars. Similarly to many other outlaws, he died at age thirty-one. On October 7, 1911, a posse found him near Pawhuska and killed him. For many decades after his death, many people used his

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<sup>89</sup> Glenn Shirley, *Henry Starr: Last of the Real Badmen*, (New York: D. McKay, 1965), 162; "Bill Cook, the Outlaw," *The Sun*, December 16, 1894, 8.

<sup>90</sup> Henry Starr, *Thrilling Events: Life of Henry Starr*, 9-10.

body as a sideshow attraction. He became a celebrity and legendary figure well after his death. The Wax Museum of Crime attempted to portray him as a daring and skilled outlaw, rather than an inept one. McCurdy was not that different from Al Jennings in that he became known as a much more competent and dangerous figure than he really was.<sup>91</sup>

### Final Thoughts

Many of the Twin Territories' outlaws had varying codes of honor and the public reacted to them in various ways. Popular perception transformed outlaws into larger-than-life personalities who could thwart lawmen with superhuman prowess. The public began to see these supermen as menaces or rebels against a corrupt society. The Cherokee Strip provides much information on how the legend of the Western outlaw developed. As Etulain and Riley argue, outlaws from throughout the West have become legendary figures.

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<sup>91</sup> Mark Svenfold, *Elmer McCurdy: The Misadventures in Life and After-Life of an American Outlaw*. (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 38, 69-75, 130, 139, 152.

## Chapter III

### IMPLEMENTING THE EXHIBIT

#### Mission and Scope

Every good museum exhibit requires a mission statement. The outlaw exhibit that this thesis proposes seeks to educate the public on the activities of the nineteenth century Cherokee Strip outlaws, the causes of outlawry in the Cherokee Strip, the effects of outlawry on society, and the effects of criminal behavior on the outlaws themselves. Having a set goal and purpose helps the exhibit accomplish its mission of enhancing the public's knowledge of the Cherokee Strip Outlaws. The exhibit should ideally tell the story of the Cherokee Strip outlaws while putting them in the broader context of outlawry in the Twin Territories and the West. Although there are many fascinating stories about outlaws who operated outside the Cherokee Strip, the exhibit should focus mainly on outlaws who participated in significant activities in the Cherokee Strip. Keeping this focus should help the museum achieve its mission of telling the Cherokee Strip's story. Arminta Neal, author of *Exhibits for the Small Museum: A Handbook* believes that covering local history is the most effective way to engage a small museum's audience. She says, "It cannot be emphasized enough that out-of-town or local visitors are most interested in *your local story*."<sup>1</sup> The Cherokee Strip outlaws' stories have a substantial amount of adventure and intrigue, features that

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<sup>1</sup> Arminta Neal, *Exhibits for the Small Museum: A Handbook* (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1976), 11 [emphasis hers].



fascinate audiences. The fact that these events occurred in the Cherokee Strip area should also interest the residents of the area.

The exhibit should also have a scope. It is much easier to fulfill the exhibit's mission statement if there is a plan to note what should be included or excluded. The time period of this exhibit will be limited to the 1890s. Although the Cherokee Strip region had notable criminal activity during the twentieth century, including Larry "Chopper" O'Keefe's gun battle with a police officer in 1936, this exhibit will focus exclusively on the history of the nineteenth-century outlaws.<sup>1</sup> The criminals from this period were the subjects of many works in the Western genre. Focusing on 1930s outlaws would not accomplish the exhibit's goal of interpreting the outlaws who have become synonymous with the "Wild West."

The exhibit will also limit its scope to focus mainly on the Cherokee Strip region. The Twin Territories had many outlaws, but the exhibit will not examine any outlaw who did not partake in any major activities in the Cherokee Strip. The goal of the Cherokee Strip Regional Heritage Center is to interpret the Cherokee Strip region, so focusing on outlaws outside the region would distract from the museum's mission. The Dalton Gang and Doolin-Dalton Gang performed many crimes outside the Cherokee Strip, but the exhibit will focus mostly on their activities within the strip. Major events in an outlaw's career that occurred outside the strip, such as the Dalton Gang's Coffeyville raid, will be mentioned only briefly. Minor events that occurred outside the Cherokee Strip will receive minimal, if any mention.

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<sup>1</sup> Ed. Robert Barr Smith, *100 Oklahoma Outlaws, Gangsters, and Lawmen 1839-1939*. (Gretna: Louisiana: Pelican Publishing Company, 2007), 251.

The Cherokee Strip outlaws themselves are to be the main focus of the exhibit. The exhibit will discuss other personalities, such as the outlaws' allies and enemies, but these figures will not be discussed as heavily as the outlaws. A goal of the exhibit is to show how the outlaws affected the people of the Cherokee Strip. Mentioning E. D. Nix's opinion of Bill Doolin would be in-scope but providing a detailed biography of Nix's life would be out of scope. Concentrating on figures other than outlaws would distract from the exhibit's goal of examining the outlaws' lives and determining the infamous criminals' significance.

Although the exhibit will emphasize the history of nineteenth-century outlaws, it will also examine the mythology of these outlaws that began to emerge in the twentieth century. A major theme of the exhibit is how the mythology of the nineteenth-century Twin Territories outlaw began to develop, specifically the period of time within living memory of the outlaws discussed in chapter two. The exhibit will explain how Emmett Dalton and Al Jennings romanticized or decried outlawry. Discussing any of Emmett Dalton's books would be in-scope, but discussing Elmer McCurdy's career in detail would be out of scope because his outlaw career began in the twentieth century. The exhibit's material must all somehow tie into the history of the nineteenth-century.

There were many other minor outlaws who operated in the Cherokee Strip, but listing every crime in the region would overload a visitor. A goal of this exhibit is to explain how actual outlawry influenced popular cultural depictions of outlaws. Because major outlaws had a much larger role in influencing popular culture than minor outlaws, the exhibit will focus primarily on the major outlaws. Because Ben Cravens is the only

minor outlaw whose photograph can be found in a major archive, he will be the exhibit's primary representation of the Cherokee Strip's minor outlaws.

#### Artifacts and Potential Partners

Artifacts are the most important component of any museum exhibition. The public will be much more engaged with the story if they see objects related to the careers of the Cherokee Strip outlaws. Many of these artifacts are in other museums and private collections; a major challenge for the Cherokee Strip Heritage Center is being able to acquire the artifacts. The Cherokee Strip Outlaw exhibit should house objects representing the most significant outlaws: the Dalton Gang, Doolin-Dalton Gang, and Wyatt-Black Gang, Cattle Annie and Little Breeches, and the Jennings Gang.

There are many objects that are useful for representing the Dalton Gang's criminal career. In 2001, Western history author Lee A. Silva wrote an article on *Historynet* covering artifacts related to the Dalton Gang. He claimed he had Emmett Dalton's U.S. Marshal's badge in his personal collection. This badge can explain that the Dalton brothers were lawmen before they became disillusioned long riders. Another item Silva had was Emmett Dalton's engraved .44-40-caliber Colt single-action revolver, serial number 83073. Silva claims that Dalton used this gun in all of his robberies.<sup>2</sup> The gun will represent the violent methods used to obtain money and valuables. The biggest challenge to obtaining these items is knowing whether or not Silva still has these items or is willing to gift or loan them. He wrote the article in 2001, long enough

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<sup>2</sup> Lee A. Silva, "Dressed to Kill: the Guns Used by the Daltons at Coffeyville," *Historynet*, <http://www.historynet.com/dressed-to-kill-the-guns-used-by-the-daltons-at-coffeyville.htm>. Accessed November 9, 2015.

ago that it is probable that he could have given away these items. The best course of action is to contact him to find out whether he still has the items and to contact whoever is in possession of the items if he sold or donated them. If whoever he gave the items to transferred the items to another party, it is essential to contact that party. Tracking down the artifacts could be a simple or complex affair.

The Dalton Defenders Museum in Coffeyville and the Kansas Historical Museum are other potential sources for finding artifacts. Both museums discuss the Daltons' role in the Coffeyville raid. Because of this focus, only a few items will be useful for explaining the gang's activities in the Cherokee Strip. The Dalton Defenders Museum's website indicates that the museum has Bob Dalton's pearl-handled revolver, Bill Power's revolver, and Emmett Dalton's six-shooter. The Kansas Historical Society's website reveals that the Kansas historical museum has fragments of the Dalton Gang's clothing. These strips have an interesting history. Immediately following the raid, the citizens of Coffeyville stripped off pieces of the gang's clothing as a souvenir.<sup>3</sup> These small strips could be used to explain what the Dalton Gang wore during their raids. It would be wonderful if either museum allowed the Cherokee Strip outlaw exhibit to borrow the artifacts for a few months. It is necessary to contact potential partners and ask permission for a loan. If the institution approves, it is necessary to send the necessary paperwork.

The Oklahoma Historical Society and Kansas Historical Society can provide the exhibit with photographs. Both historical societies retain a few photographs of the Dalton Gang members and the Kansas Historical Society could provide a photograph of

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<sup>3</sup> "Museum Exhibits," Dalton Defenders Museum, [daltondefendersmuseum.com](http://daltondefendersmuseum.com).

Ben Cravens. These images should allow visitors to become more familiar with the faces of outlaws. The most interesting photographs in the Kansas Historical Society's collections are the images of the corpses of the four outlaws who died in the Coffeyville raid.<sup>4</sup> Including or excluding these images is a difficult decision for two reasons: these images depict the aftermath of an event that occurred outside the Cherokee Strip and these images contain disturbing content. Although the photograph of the gang's corpses is graphic, it helps explain the grim fate of many of the Cherokee Strip outlaws. The Dalton Gang's collapse may have occurred in Coffeyville, but that collapse had a definite effect on the Cherokee Strip. The gang's dissolution allowed the Doolin-Dalton Gang to become the region's most powerful outlaw group. Another important aspect of the photographs is that one of them is a postcard commemorating Coffeyville's efforts to destroy the Dalton Gang. This image should be included, but the interpretation should focus primarily on the Cherokee Strip. The label should discuss the effects of the Dalton Gang's death on the Cherokee Strip and the reactions of Oklahomans to the Dalton Gang's demise.<sup>5</sup>

The California State Library in Sacramento possesses a few interesting photographs related to Cherokee Strip outlaws. It houses photographs of Bob, Grat, and Emmett Dalton when they were alive. The library also owns a photograph of Bill Dalton when he was alive and photographs of Bill Dalton and Bill Doolin's corpses. The photograph of Doolin's body shows that he had many gunshot wounds when he died.

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<sup>4</sup> Oklahoma Historical Society, Historic Photograph Collection, Location 8957, Box 8; Kansas Historical Society Digital Photograph Collection, Bob and Grat, Emmett Dalton; Ibid, Prisoner Glass Negatives of Ben Cravens.

<sup>5</sup> Oklahoma Historical Society, Historic Photograph Collection, Location 8957, Box 8, "Overnight in Jail after the Raid," Post Card October 13, 1899.

Bill Dalton's photograph shows no bullet wounds from the front, an indication that he was shot in the back.<sup>6</sup>

The University of Oklahoma's Western History Collections contain a few photographs related to Cherokee Strip outlaws. One photograph is an image of Little Breeches, the woman on the left side of the photograph, and the other is an image of Cattle Annie, located on the right side of the picture. Other notable photographs include images of Tulsa Jack and Rose of the Cimarron.<sup>7</sup> Material related to Cattle Annie and Little Breeches' careers are relatively scarce, a scarcity that makes this collection valuable to a Cherokee Strip outlaw exhibit.

Newspapers are another artifact that could help visitors learn about the Dalton Gang. Although three-dimensional objects might excite visitors more, newspapers provide insight into how the public reacted to the outlaws' activities. The Sheerar Museum's "Notorious Payne County" exhibit extensively used newspapers to explain the criminal activity in Payne County.<sup>8</sup> Visitors can learn about the gang's activities and press's reaction to them if the exhibit includes the papers describing the most famous Dalton Gang robberies in the Cherokee Strip. The Oklahoma Historical Society has an

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<sup>6</sup> Latta, *Dalton Gang Days*, 35, 107, 191, 268-269.

<sup>7</sup> "Little Britches and Cattle Annie," Walter Scott Ferguson Collection, *University of Oklahoma*, <https://libraries.ou.edu/locations/docs/westhist/ferguson/index.html>. Accessed November 9, 2015.

<sup>8</sup> "Notorious Payne County," Sheerar Museum of Stillwater History. Visited October 2015.

excellent newspaper archive that is able to provide the Cherokee Strip outlaw exhibit with all of the necessary materials.<sup>9</sup>

Rare books could also educate the public about the how outlaws exploited their fame and created myths. The Oklahoma Historical Society has rare original copies of *Beyond the Law*, *When the Daltons Rode*, and *Beating Back*.<sup>10</sup> The books could teach visitors that some outlaws wrote fictionalized accounts of their exploits to enthrall the public. Visitors could also learn how these books justified and glorified outlaw activities.

Film is another medium that can help tell the story of the Dalton Gang. The Library of Congress has preserved one of Emmett Dalton's films, *The Man of the Desert*, but none of his other films.<sup>11</sup> The films discussing the Dalton Gang's outlaw activities would have been an excellent tool to explain how Emmett Dalton and the movie's producers viewed the Dalton Gang's famous crimes. *The Man of the Desert* still has value as it explains how Emmett Dalton became disgusted with outlawry. *The Passing of the Oklahoma Outlaws* is another film that features a former outlaw, Arkansas Tom Jones of the Doolin-Dalton gang. Bill Tilghman directed this film to explain why outlawry was not glamorous or noble. The Ingalls gunfight scene is one particular example of how the film portrayed the Doolin-Dalton Gang as harbingers of death and destruction. The most significant problem with showing this film is that the

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<sup>9</sup> *Oklahoma Historical Society*, okhistory.org/research/newspapers. Accessed November 9, 2015.

<sup>10</sup> *Oklahoma Historical Society*, okhistory.cuadra.com. Accessed November 9, 2015.

<sup>11</sup> *The Man of the Desert*, Library of Congress, <http://lccn.loc.gov/89709322>. Accessed November 9, 2015.

majority of it has been destroyed. Only thirteen minutes of footage survive. The Zip Wyatt pursuit scene is probably the most suitable scene for the exhibit.<sup>12</sup> The scene can be used to discuss the threat poses posed to outlaws and how film depicted outlaws as a menace. The National Film Preservation Foundation preserved the 1918 film *The Lady of the Dugout*. This film portrayed outlawry in a more positive manner than Dalton's films. Jennings's character was a noble outlaw who committed crimes but opposed oppression.<sup>13</sup> These films can show the many ways the outlaws presented outlawry. Contacting the National Film Preservation Foundation and the Library of Congress is needed to determine if these films are available for loan and in what format were they created.

Wanted posters are fascinating artifacts, but none of Oklahoma's major museums or archives have the original posters. Replicas are easy to find on the Internet, though. Some "wanted posters" might actually be a Western history enthusiast's photoshop project, but a few websites provide copies of the authentic posters. The posters on *rustyaccents.com* are replicas of the posters that the Sheerar Museum displayed.<sup>14</sup> Although using a replica is convenient, the public would be more

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<sup>12</sup> "Passing of the Oklahoma Outlaw (1915) Fragment," *Century Film Project*. <https://centuryfilmproject.wordpress.com/2015/02/24/passing-of-the-oklahoma-outlaw-1915-fragment/> Accessed November 9, 2015; *Passing of the Oklahoma Outlaws Youtube* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=REOpIo0-P0A>. Accessed November 8, 2015; Richard S. Graves, *Oklahoma Outlaws*, 54.

<sup>13</sup> Edward Bescombe, "Rare Westerns from the Archive," *Film Quarterly*, <http://www.filmquarterly.org/2011/12/rare-westerns-from-the-archive/>. Accessed November 9, 2015.

<sup>14</sup> *Rusty Accents*. *Rustyaccents.com*; "Notorious Payne County," Sheerar Museum of Stillwater History. Visited October 2015.



impressed with seeing the original. Searching for the originals, if any are still intact, would be a difficult endeavor. Finding them might require searching all over the United States and contacting every museum or archive that could possibly own an original. The Dalton brothers committed crimes as far away as New Mexico and California. Because of the geographic scope of the gang's activities, finding a poster would take searching, possibly more searching than a small museum has the ability to do. If a significant number of museums or archives are unable to identify the originals' location, the exhibit would have to stick with using a copy. Ideally, the exhibit should use a poster explaining crimes located in the Cherokee Strip. A copy of a poster describing crimes in the Cherokee Strip might tell the story of the region's outlaw problem better than a poster describing the gang's crimes in California.

Even if the exhibit uses only a copy, the facsimile tells visitors important pieces of information about outlaws, such as the Dalton Gang. One poster provides photographs of Robert, Emmett, and Gratton Dalton and information about them. This poster declares, "Reward: \$15,000. Wanted Dead or Alive! Notorious Badmen. Dalton Gang. For murder, train robbery and introducing liquor into the Indian Territory, and stealing horses. IMMEDIATELY CONTACT NEAREST U.S. MARSHAL'S OFFICE."<sup>15</sup> Although this poster does not mention which specific robberies they were wanted for, it does explain broadly which types of criminal activities the gang was most notorious for committing. The exhibit's visitors should learn how the law considered the Dalton Gang a significant threat to society, a threat large enough to merit a fifteen thousand dollar

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

reward to whoever was able to help capture or kills the outlaws. The poster explains the negative effects the Dalton Gang had on society and the dangers of outlawry.

Cattle Annie's poster states, "REWARD \$500 for the capture of Annie McDougal AKA 'Cattle Annie.' Wanted for cattle rustling and selling whiskey to the Indians. Is known to keep company with members of the Doolin Gang."<sup>16</sup> This poster shows that Cattle Annie was wanted for a significant amount of money but nowhere near as much as the Dalton Gang. Wanted posters can provide basic information about outlaws and the law's response to them.

Private collectors might be the best source for finding outlaw artifacts. One *Oklahombres* article discusses the hobby of Western artifact collecting. Western history enthusiast Patrick Keen states that he has wanted posters, spurs, chaps, firearms, hats, and saddles. Keen emphasizes that some artifacts can be worth thousands of dollars. One example of a valuable Western artifact is Sheriff Johnny Behan's badge, which Keen says is worth roughly eighty thousand dollars. High prices might make collecting some artifacts prohibitively expensive. Because the Cherokee Strip outlaw exhibit is temporary, asking private collectors to lend the more expensive items for a few months will probably be easier than buying the artifacts. If an item is relatively inexpensive, it will be better to own the item in perpetuity so the museum can care for them and use them for any future exhibits. Keen also warns potential buyers about fake artifacts. He instructs buyers to ask the seller to give the artifact's provenance.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Patrick Keen, "Collecting Old West Outlaw and Lawmen Artifacts," *Oklahombres* 9 (Summer 1998): 18-19.

The Washington Irving Trail Museum houses a few items related to the Doolin-Dalton Gang. The museum boasts that it has ownership of a billfold and saddle that Bill Doolin donated to poor homesteaders.<sup>18</sup> The only problem with including this artifact is that it represents the gang's activities in Payne County, a few miles east of the region the Cherokee Strip Outlaw exhibit would attempt to interpret. On the other hand, artifacts related to the Doolin-Dalton Gang are relatively rare. The exhibit can include these artifacts, but it should try to relate them to the story of the Cherokee Strip. The artifacts' labels can explain Bill Doolin's generosity towards the poor and how he might have committed similar charitable activities in the Cherokee Strip. The exhibit should have artifacts to illustrate both the noble and ignoble aspects of the Doolin-Dalton Gang's character.

The U.S. Marshals Museum in Fort Smith, Arkansas is another potential source of artifacts. This museum has recently acquired the Betty Willfrong Collection, which contains photographs of many of the Twin Territories' most famous outlaws, including Belle Starr, Cherokee Bill, and the Doolin-Dalton Gang. The photographs of the Doolin-Dalton Gang would be most useful for the Cherokee Strip Outlaw exhibit. The Cherokee Strip Regional Heritage Center can also contact the museum to discover what other artifacts it has in its collection. Because the U.S. Marshals Museum will not open until 2017, it is possible that it will be more willing to allow other museums to borrow its artifacts because the museum does not yet have to display them. Of course, it is also possible that the museum would be unwilling to offer artifacts because it is too busy

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<sup>18</sup> *Washington Irving Trail Museum*, [washingtonirvingtrailmuseum.com](http://washingtonirvingtrailmuseum.com). Accessed November 9, 2015.

accessioning the items and contemplating how to use them.<sup>19</sup> The U.S. Marshals Museum may or may not be a reliable partner.

The Wyandotte County Museum in Bonner Springs, Kansas created a temporary exhibit on Al Jennings. This exhibit had photographs related to Jennings's career. This exhibit was open from March 7 -- May 30 2009.<sup>20</sup> Because the exhibit was open several years ago, it is highly probably at the museum could have moved these photographs.

The Schwend Gun Collection is another potential partner. In the 1890s Harry Harrison Schwend, a marshal from Henrietta, Texas, began collecting firearms belonging to important Western gunslingers. This collection contains weapons owned by many notable Western figures, such as Bill Doolin. Selby M. Schwend, Harrison Schwend's grandson, is the current owner of these rare firearms. Schwend owns Bill Doolin's Smith and Wesson .44 and his Derringer. According to the Schwend Gun Collection's website, Schwend is happy to allow museums to borrow the guns. His website contains a brief description of some of the more famous guns, descriptions that should make label writing significantly easier. Unfortunately, only a small percentage of the guns in the collection are featured in the online gallery. The website's "About" page mentions that the collection contains Grat Dalton's gun, an artifact useful for the

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<sup>19</sup> "U.S. Marshals Museum Acquires Historic Photo Collection," *The City Wire*. <http://www.thecitywire.com/node/37411#.VgRTpGeFO70>. Accessed November 9, 2015; "U.S. Marshals Museum Opening Delayed to 2017," *The City Wire*, <http://www.thecitywire.com/node/32170#.VgRYK2eFO70>. Accessed November 9, 2015.

<sup>20</sup> "Exhibits," Wyandotte County Museum. <https://wycomuseum.wordpress.com/exhibits/>. Accessed November 9, 2015.

Cherokee Strip outlaw exhibit.<sup>21</sup> Contacting Schwend is one way to learn what is in his collection and whether or not he is willing to lend his collection.

The Sheerar Museum of Stillwater History and Culture is another potential partner for the Cherokee Strip Outlaw exhibit. “Notorious Payne County” contained photographs of outlaws who operated in both Payne County and the Cherokee Strip, such as Cattle Annie and Little Breeches.<sup>22</sup> The Cherokee Strip Regional Heritage Center can contact the Sheerar Museum to learn where it obtained these photographs. Unfortunately, the exhibit has little else in the way of useful material. Even though the Doolin-Dalton Gang hid in Payne County, the exhibit contained textual material related to the famed Ingalls gunfight but no artifacts.<sup>23</sup>

The Oklahoma History Center (OHC) and The Chisholm Trail Museum in Kingfisher, Oklahoma also house useful artifacts. OHC’s Al Jennings collection is particularly useful as it includes Jennings’s gun. The “Lawmen and Outlaws” collection also contains the Three Guardsmen’s guns.<sup>24</sup> The shortage of artifacts related to the outlaws might necessitate the presence of lawmen artifacts, but the Cherokee Strip Outlaw Exhibit should keep its focus on the story of the outlaws. The labels could discuss the constant threat that the lawmen posed to the outlaws and how the outlaws

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<sup>21</sup> “About,” *Schwend Gun Collection*, <http://www.schwendguns.us/about.htm>. Accessed November 9, 2015; “Gallery,” *Ibid.* [http://www.schwendguns.us/Photo\\_Page\\_One.htm](http://www.schwendguns.us/Photo_Page_One.htm). Accessed November 9, 2015.

<sup>22</sup> “Notorious Payne County,” Sheerar Museum of Stillwater History and Culture. Visited October 2014

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> “Lawmen and Outlaws,” Oklahoma History Center. Visited April 2015.

attempted to thwart the lawmen. The Chisholm Trail Museum has Zip Wyatt's .45-70 Winchester rifle.<sup>25</sup> Both museums can provide guns for the Cherokee Strip Outlaw exhibit.

Frank M. Latta, author of *Dalton Gang Days* owned a May 23, 1932 telegram from Emmett Dalton. This telegram says, "Thank you for your letter of April ninth [sic]. I have just been thinking that if you wanted to tackle writing two or three reall [sic] Western stories regarding famous Western characters, I am sure I could sell them, and we would split fifty-fifty."<sup>26</sup> This telegram demonstrates how Dalton exploited his fame to obtain money and propagate his views of outlawry. Reading Emmett Dalton's own words helps visitors understand the man's character. His spelling errors prove that he was not highly educated. Contacting Latta's descendants could allow a museum to be able to track down this telegram.

#### Handling the Artifacts

In order for the exhibit to be successful, The Cherokee Strip Regional Heritage Center should make careful agreements with these institutions. Daniel B. Reibal's book *Registration Methods for the Small Museum* provides excellent advice for how to acquire and register artifacts. If the institutions with the needed artifacts are willing to loan them, it is necessary to have a loan form, a document that contains the exact conditions of a loan. The loan form specifies the loan's purpose, the manner in which the objects are to be handled, the objects' conditions, the correct methods of packing

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<sup>25</sup> Glenn Shirley, *Desperado from Cowboy Flat: The Saga of "Zip" Wyatt* (Stillwater, OK: Barbed Wire Press, 1997), 115.

<sup>26</sup> Frank F. Latta, *Dalton Gang Days* (Santa Cruz, CA: Bear State Books), 108.

and transporting the object, the period of the loan, the value of each object, and the names and signatures of the parties partaking in the loan. If any institution is willing to donate or sell an item, it is important to obtain title to prove ownership of the item. Obtaining title allows museums to have the right to display and deaccession items as seen fit.<sup>27</sup> Negotiating with artifact providers allows museums to avoid upsetting the providing entities and allows for future relationships.

After obtaining the objects, it is necessary to store, conserve, and register the objects. The data provided from the loan form should be recorded on a loan register, a database that contains information on loaned material. Each item should be given a loan number. If any potential donor is willing to give an outlaw artifact outright, the material should be catalogued in the Cherokee Strip Regional Heritage Center's database. The material should have an accession number that indicates the date and other information. Reibal provides 008.23.14 as an example of an accession number, 008 indicating that the item was accessioned in 2008, 23 signifying that the object was the twenty-third accession of the year, and 14 meaning that the object was the fourteenth object of the accession.

The object should also be given a name using the nomenclature system if the object has not already been given one. Using this system allows museums to easily identify the intended use of each artifact. The nomenclature system is a classification method where objects are grouped by use. The system usually uses one or two names for each object, but a few objects with many sub-types have tertiary terms. The first

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<sup>27</sup> Daniel B. Reibel, *Registration Methods for the Small Museum* Fourth Edition (New York: Altamira Press, 2008), 25-26, 105-111.

term refers to general name of the object and the second term refers to types of that object. All terms are singular. For example, Zip Wyatt's Winchester is a "Rifle" and would be referred to as "Rifle, Repeating." .44 revolvers have the primary term "Revolver" and secondary term "Revolver, Cartridge." A Derringer has the primary term "Pistol," secondary term, "Pistol, Pocket" and the tertiary term "Derringer." Photographs are "Photograph," novels are "Novel," Wanted Posters are "Poster," monographs are "Monograph," and saddles are "saddle"; newspaper clippings are "Clipping" referred to as "Clipping, Newspaper." Emmett Dalton's badge would have "Insignia" as its primary term, "Badge, Insignia" as its secondary term, and "Badge, Law Enforcement" as its tertiary term.<sup>28</sup>

After determining the objects' nomenclature, it is important to catalogue the objects. A register is necessary to record accessions. The register lists all items sorted by accession number. The register's data include the accession number, object name, material, date object was used, value, location within museum collection, and the donor of the object. The catalogue includes similar data, but provides somewhat more detailed information. Reibal states that museums' catalogues can mention the object's creator and size. Providing the place where the object was originally used could help the museum remember the place with which the item is associated. He also suggests creating a detailed description of the item consisting of up to fifty words.<sup>29</sup>

Before the objects go on display, the objects must be in displayable condition. Goldbeck's *The Care of Historical Collections: A Conservation Handbook for the*

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 42, 53; Paul Bourcier, Ruby Rogers, and the Nomenclature Committee eds., *Nomenclature 3.0 for Museum Cataloguing* (New York: Altamira Press, 2010), xv, 237-238, 376, 391, 395, 408.

<sup>29</sup> Reibal, *Registration Methods*, 57, 90.



*Nonspecialist* warns that objects have a finite lifespan that might shorten significantly if museums neglect to adopt good conservation practices. Each object should be carefully shelved in the museum's storage area. Goldbeck has specific pieces of advice on how to care for paper, ferrous objects, and leather, the types of objects that are important to the Cherokee Strip outlaw exhibit. He advises museums to avoid exposing paper to sunlight, humidity, and dampness. Documents should be stored flat instead of upright. Finally, it is important to check for insect infestation. Goldbeck argues that leather should be treated in a somewhat similar manner. The most notable practices for reducing damage to leather include putting the objects away from heat or fume and sulphurous, coke, or coal-gas. For conserving guns, Goldbeck believes that museums should protect the firearms from humidity, chloride salts, industrial vapors, acid conditions and fingerprints.<sup>30</sup> Performing these actions should allow the objects to be displayable for the outlaw exhibit.

### Planning the Exhibit

Planning is the most important aspect of creating any effective museum exhibit. Neal recommends using a story board to plan an exhibit. The story board includes index cards with captions indicating themes. Another technique she recommends is creating a written outline of an exhibit. The latter option is probably easiest to discuss for the purposes of this thesis. This outline should begin with planning the exhibit's introductory label. The label should be put in a location that is easy to find. Like all labels, the introductory label should have a specific purpose. After listing a purpose and

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<sup>30</sup> Per E. Guldbeck, *The Care of Historical Collection: A Historical Handbook for the Nonspecialist* (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1972), 1, 64, 88, 98.

location, an exhibit outline should contain the label's text. The next step in planning an exhibit label is listing every artifact available. For every artifact or group of artifacts, the outline should list the object's purpose and label text. Neal reminds readers that planners should remember to plan how to light artifacts so the public can see them.<sup>31</sup>

The first aspect of the exhibit that must be planned is how to write the title and introductory label. Beverly Serrell's book *Making Exhibit Labels: A Step-by-Step Guide* provides useful advice. The planning of these labels will heed her advice. Serrell advises museums to let the title labels be the largest labels for the exhibit. This label should indicate the exhibits' topic to let visitors know what the exhibit will discuss. In order to emphasize the introductory label's purpose of providing a summary of the topic, the label will be placed near the entrance of the temporary exhibit gallery. To ensure that people can read it from far away, the label's text will be in thirty-six point Arial font. The label will explain the themes pertinent to the mission statement of the exhibit. Serrell believes that these labels should provide fifty to two hundred words worth of information, enough information to give the public an understanding of the topic but not too much to overwhelm the visitor. The text size should be large enough for visitors to read at a distance. The introductory text's main job is to attract people to the exhibit.<sup>32</sup> This exhibit will use twenty-five point Calibri for its introductory text. The label will say:

The Cherokee Strip was a center of activity for many of Oklahoma Territory's most notorious outlaws, most famously the Dalton Gang and Doolin-Dalton Gang. Many of these outlaws were former lawmen or cowboys who were dissatisfied with the law's failure to effectively carry out

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 13-14.

<sup>32</sup> Beverly Serrell, *Making Exhibit Labels: A Step-by-Step Guide* (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1983, 7.

justice. These dissatisfied men found adventure and excitement in their attempts to gain infamy and fortune. Train and bank employees were constantly in fear of theft, property damage, and violence. The amount of bloodshed and property damage motivated marshals and their posses to constantly hunt down the outlaws. The posses' pursuits forced some outlaws, such as the Doolin-Dalton Gang, to hide in the Glass Mountains, an arid and inhospitable environment, in order to avoid detection. Although much of the population feared the outlaws, a few believed them to be men and women of moral character. Some cowboys were willing to hide the outlaws because of their code of honor. A few, such as Bill Doolin, refused to steal from women or the poor. This help did not provide enough protection for many outlaws, such as most of the Dalton Gang, who died very early in life. Many outlaws died before reaching age forty, but legendary stories of their feats continued. Twentieth-century dime novels and films provided sensationalized accounts of the outlaw's deeds. Popular culture outlaws came in two varieties, the despicable bad man and the noble social bandit. The popular cultural outlaw might be a distorted version of the historical outlaw, but the historical outlaws heavily influenced the literary and cinematic bad man and good bad man.

This label should provide an overview sufficient for understanding the rest of the exhibit.

There will be a smaller label next to the introductory label explaining the concept of social banditry. The text will be twelve-point Arial font. The title for this label will say, "Social banditry." It will say:

"Social bandits,' a term coined by historian Eric Hobsbawm, refers to men and women who fought against the more privileged members of society. These people often stole and killed, but many commoners supported them and believed they were heroes fighting against corruption. Even if social bandits committed a few acts of kindness, many stories of their alleged noble deeds are more legendary than factual. Many of the West's most famous outlaws, such as Jesse James, had the reputation of being a supporter of the poor and helpless. According to historian Richard White, the Doolin-Dalton Gang was perhaps the most notable example of a group of social bandits in the Cherokee Strip. The idea of social banditry affected contemporary perceptions of outlaws to a significant degree.

The adjacent label will describe the bad man. It will state:

"Bad man' is a common epithet for Western outlaws, for good reason. The Dalton Gang and Doolin-Dalton Gang were responsible for many deaths. The press often expressed great fear and hatred toward these

thieves and murderers. Almost all Western outlaws, including Billy the Kid and Belle Starr, gained reputation as a bad man or woman. Although legend often exaggerated the Cherokee Strip outlaws' crimes, it cannot be denied that the 'bad men' caused much destruction and suffering. Every one of the region's outlaws received much condemnation for being a bad man or bad woman. The idea of the bad man was just as important, if not moreso, for the creation of the legendary outlaw.

These labels should provide a brief overview of the contrasting concepts of the social bandit and the bad man.

When designing an exhibit, its planners must carefully plan to arrange the exhibit. It is important to accommodate space for the exhibitions; it is equally important to determine what method is best for the museum's layout. The Cherokee Regional Heritage Center's floor plan (see figure 2) will be used when planning this exhibit. Unfortunately, the floor plan does not contain any scale. Examining the museum in person was necessary to plan this exhibit. When visitors visit the museum, they have the choice of going left or right. Because English speakers read from left to right, it would probably be best to design the exhibit so visitors can experience the exhibit in that order. Organizing the exhibit in a counterclockwise pattern will allow visitors to read the exhibit from left to right.<sup>33</sup>

The temporary gallery is more than large enough to house the exhibit, but certain factors make it difficult to tell the exhibit's story in the desired order. The ceiling-mounted projector is not easily moved, requiring films to be shown at a certain location at the exhibit.<sup>34</sup> Winchester rifles are the largest objects that the exhibit will house. These guns are a little over three feet in length. The average newspaper is about

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<sup>33</sup> Cherokee Strip Regional Heritage Center, Floor Plan.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

twelve by twenty inches, but they can be folded in half. According to *rustyaccents.com*, their posters are eight and a half by eleven inches.<sup>35</sup> Although it is practical to place objects close together, creating space can make the exhibit less crowded. The exhibit will provide an inch and a half of space per two dimensional object and four inches of space for three dimensional objects. Most and the archives and museums that house objects useful for the Cherokee Strip outlaw exhibit do not provide dimensions in their archives, but it is not too difficult to estimate the size of most of the artifacts. Each section's size should be planned. There will be seven sections to the exhibit: the Dalton Gang, the Doolin-Dalton Gang, female outlaws, Zip Wyatt, Al Jennings, minor outlaws, and outlaws in popular culture.

The Dalton Gang section will include five photographs, one wanted poster two newspapers, and three guns. Assuming that photographs are two and half inches long and the section's introductory label takes up six inches of space, the two dimensional objects should take up fifty-five inches of space. The three handguns in this section should be small enough to fit within the planned fifty-three inches. The Doolin-Dalton Gang's section will be the largest part of the exhibit. The exhibit will contain photographs of eight members of the Doolin-Dalton Gang, one photograph of the Glass Mountains, and one photograph of Doolin's body. Two newspapers will also be used in this section. This section should take up fifty-seven inches of space.

The female outlaws section will contain three photographs, a newspaper and a wanted poster. This section should be roughly twenty-two inches. Zip Wyatt's section will only contain his Winchester, which is probably roughly thirty nine inches long. Al

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<sup>35</sup> Rustyaccents.com.

Jennings's section will contain a photograph of him and a revolver. His section should comprise roughly ten inches of space. The minor outlaws section will only contain Ben Craven's photograph, a section that will take up six inches. The popular culture section will display several of Al Jennings and Emmett Dalton's books. If the books are six-inches long, this section should take twenty-three and a half inches of space. If each section has four inches between each sub-section, the exhibit's introductory and title label are three feet long, and the social banditry and bad men labels are one foot long apiece, the entire exhibit will be two hundred ninety inches long, or about twenty-four feet wide.

Even if these estimations are not quite correct, the exhibit is in no danger of taking up roughly one hundred eighty square feet of space, the approximate size of the temporary gallery. The proposed exhibit will be roughly the size of the Sheerar Museum's "Notorious Payne County"<sup>36</sup> The relatively small size of the exhibit should allow the Cherokee Strip Regional Heritage Center to complement this exhibit with any related exhibits. Although this proposed exhibit is fairly small, it should explore some compelling ideas.

The first section of the exhibit will discuss the Dalton Gang's career. This section will include the weapons, photographs, and newspaper clippings related to the Dalton Gang's activities. The gang's tools will be displayed in the center of the exhibit. The photographs and newspapers will be posted across the walls. The portraits of the Dalton Gang will be arranged on the viewer's left side. Newspaper stories detailing the gang's crimes will be placed to the right of the portraits. These newspapers will be

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<sup>36</sup> "Notorious Payne County," Sheerar Museum of Stillwater History. Visited October 2014.

arranged by date. The photographs and newspapers might take multiple rows to display. If the material has to take up multiple rows, the material should be arranged in columns. The columns of material furthest to the left must have material whose date precedes the material to the right. This method of arrangement should prevent visitors from having to walk back and forth to read the exhibit in chronological order.

The Dalton Gang's section will have an introductory label that provides a brief overview of the gang's career. This label, and every subsequent label for introducing sections, will be placed on a small eight by fourteen inch placard. The text will be smaller, twelve point Calibri, than the entire exhibit's introductory label. Introducing the sections with smaller labels will save on space. The label will say:

Robert, Gratton, and Emmett Dalton were poorly-paid lawmen from Kingfisher before they forsook the law and became some of the Cherokee Strip's most notorious outlaws. Before the Dalton brothers abandoned their law-enforcement career, they secretly rustled cattle and sold them to Cherokee Strip ranchers. When the Daltons' peers discovered these activities in 1890, the brothers had little choice but to hide in New Mexico and recruit allies. The Dalton brothers formed the Dalton Gang, initially consisting of "Bitter Creek" Newcomb, "Blackface" Charlie Bryant, and Bill McElhanie. Later additions to the gang were Dick Broadwell, Bill Doolin, and Bill Powers. After the gang returned to the Twin Territories, they began to commit a series of highly-publicized robberies. Although the gang refused to rob from any of the train's passengers, the gang had a notably negative reputation. The press associated the gang with the significant amount of death and destruction they caused. In spite of the press's attacks on the Dalton Gang, a small number of the Twin Territories' citizens helped shelter the gang. The press acknowledged that the public, whether they defended or opposed the gang, was fascinated by the gang's "daring exploits of robbery and murder." The Dalton Gang transformed from criminals to legendary figures. Stories of the gang's superhuman feats and rampant cruelty spread throughout the Southwest. The Dalton Gang's last major crime was the October 5, 1892 Coffeyville raid. The gang attempted to rob two banks at once, but the city's citizens were prepared. Bob and Grat Dalton, Bill Powers, and Dick Broadwell died in this gun battle and Emmett Dalton was arrested.

This label should provide context for the artifacts displayed in the Dalton Gang section of the exhibit.

A map of the Southwest indicating the location of the gang's major crimes will be located below this label. The Cherokee Strip region will be highlighted in red to allow visitors to discover how active the gang was in that part of the Twin Territories. Each city where the gang committed a major crime will be represented by a dot. Below that dot will be the name of the city and the criminal activity associated with the city; the date of the crime will be below the name of the event. The 1890 Silver City, New Mexico robbery, the May 10, 1892 Wharton train robbery, the May 1892 Waukomis robbery, the June 2, 1892 Red Rock train robbery, the July 1892 Adair train robbery, and the October 5, 1892 Coffeyville bank robbery.<sup>37</sup> The map should show visitors the relatively large geographic scope of the gang's activities.

The photographs, posters, and newspapers will be placed on the wall of the gallery. Each artifact will be arranged chronologically. Objects representing events that occurred earlier in the gang's history will be to the left of objects representing events that occurred later in their history. Each photograph will receive a briefer label describing the contents of the photograph. The portraits of the Dalton brothers will be arranged based on the outlaw's birthdate. The oldest outlaw will be displayed first. The content of the Dalton brothers' portraits should be straightforward to the audience so it is probably best to use an identification (ID) label for these photographs. An ID label is a label that contains the object's name, date, origin, catalog number, donor, and other

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<sup>37</sup> "The Dalton Gang," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, October 5, 1892.



basic pieces of information.<sup>38</sup> The label below Grat Dalton's photograph (see figure 3) will say, "Gratton Haley 'Grat' Dalton. Born near Lawrence, Kansas March 30, 1861. Killed in Coffeyville, Kansas October 5, 1892." The label below Bob Dalton's (see figure 4) photograph will say, "Robert Rennick Dalton. Born near Belton, Missouri May 13, 1869. Killed in Coffeyville, Kansas October 5, 1892." The label for Emmett Dalton's (see figure 5) photograph will say, "Emmett Dalton. Born near Belton, Missouri May 3, 1871. Died in Long Beach, California July 13, 1937."<sup>39</sup> Displaying the Dalton brother's birth and death dates allows visitors to discover that outlaws risked an early death. This detail challenges popular culture's glamorized portrayal of outlawry. The Dalton brother's place of birth and death provides geographic context for the brothers' lives. Bill Power's photograph will be placed next to the Dalton brothers photographs, but a slight amount of space will be used to indicate that Powers was not related to the Dalton brothers. His (see figure 6) label will indicate, "Bill Powers. Born 18??. Killed in Coffeyville, Kansas October 5, 1892."

The gang's wanted poster (see figure 7) will be located to the right of the gang's portrait. The wanted poster's label will say, "Dalton Gang Wanted Poster. Wanted posters motivated many citizens to pursue outlaws to collect a large reward. The fifteen thousand dollar reward prevented the Dalton Gang from remaining stationary for prolonged periods of time." After being introduced to the faces of the Dalton Gang, the

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<sup>38</sup> Serrell, *Making Exhibit Labels*, 13.

<sup>39</sup> "The Dalton Gang," Robinson Library, <http://www.robinsonlibrary.com/social/pathology/criminology/crimes/daltongan>. Accessed November 9, 2015.

public will learn what types of criminal activity the gang committed and how these crimes affected the gang's relationship with the public.

The newspapers articles covering the gang's major robberies will be displayed next to the portraits of the Dalton Gang. The May 11, 1892 *Guthrie Dispatch* article covering the Wharton robbery and the June 10, 1892 *Stillwater Gazette* article covering the Red Rock robbery will be displayed. Both of these articles related the gang's crimes and the press's reactions to them. The newspapers' labels should focus on explaining how these articles support the exhibit's argument. The label for the article describing the Wharton robbery will say:

*Guthrie Dispatch*, May 11, 1892. This article comments on the May 10, 1892 Wharton train robbery. This robbery earned the gang five hundred dollars in loot. The train operator was the only fatality during this robbery. The press were impressed with the gang's bravery and skill, but the *Guthrie Dispatch* had nothing kind to say about the gang's willingness to wrongfully take away property and lives.

The label describing the *Stillwater Gazette* article will say,

*Stillwater Gazette* Jun 10, 1892. This article is responding to the June 2, 1892 Red Rock robbery. Although the gang intimidated the train operators by shooting many rounds of ammunition, no one was hurt during the course of the robbery. This article demonstrates that the *Stillwater Gazette* believed the exaggerated tales of the gang's cruelty.

The photographs related to the gang's demise (see figures 8 and 9) will be located on the right end of the exhibit. The labels for the photographs of the Dalton Gang's corpses will say, "Dalton Gang' photographed by John B. Tackett. The bodies of the Dalton Gang members who died during the Coffeyville raid. John B. Tackett took these photographs to commemorate Coffeyville's defeat of the notorious outlaws. Citizens could buy these photographs for thirty-five cents." The label for Emmett Dalton's booking photograph will say, "Emmett Dalton' 1892. Prison photograph of

Emmett Dalton, the only Dalton Gang member who participated in the Coffeyville raid and survived.”<sup>40</sup> These images explain how the Dalton Gang’s career ended.

The gang’s weapons will be displayed in front of the wall with the photographs, posters, and newspapers. The weapons will be below these images in order to avoid obscuring them. Each gun will receive a label located below the weapon describing what type of gun the exhibit is displaying. The label for Emmett Dalton’s six-shooter (see figure 10) will say, “Emmett Dalton’s Six-Shooter. This gun has a revolving cylinder with six cartridges. Emmett Dalton used this six-shooter in all of his famous robberies.” The label for Bob Dalton’s revolver (see figure 11) and Bill Power’s (see figure 12) revolver will state, “Bob Dalton’s revolver. Revolvers were the most common types of Western handguns,” and “Bill Power’s revolver.”<sup>41</sup> An interpretive label will be located below these labels. The interpretive label will say:

The gun was the outlaw’s primary tool for coercing banks and railroad employees to do his bidding. Although the gun was often seen as a means of violence and intimidation, the gang’s enemies used guns as to achieve order. The forces of law and crime clashed several times during the Cherokee Strip’s history. On May 11, 1892 Marshal Ed Short and outlaw Charlie Bryant mortally wounded themselves during a gunfight in Waukomis. The gun has become a symbol of both of these opposing forces.

The interpretive label will foreshadow the second portion of the exhibit’s exploration of popular culture’s two different interpretations of outlaws and Western history in general.

The next section of the exhibit will discuss the Doolin-Dalton Gang. The Doolin-Dalton Gang’s introductory label will say:

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<sup>40</sup> “The Aftermath of the Coffeyville Raid: October 1892,” Kampea.net, Kansas Historical Society, “Emmett Dalton,” 1892, Kansas Historical Society.

<sup>41</sup> Cliff Gromer, “New Guns of the Old West,” *Popular Mechanics*. August 2002 86.

William “Bill” Doolin was a Cherokee Strip cowboy before he met several members of the Dalton Gang at the Halswell ranch. After the Coffeyville raid, Bill Doolin led the remnants of the Dalton Gang and formed the Doolin-Dalton Gang. Bill Doolin, Bill Dalton, “Bitter Creek” Newcomb, Charlie Pierce, Roy Daugherty, “Arkansas Tom” Jones, Bill Raidler, “Little Dick” West, Oliver Yountis, “Tulsa Jack” Black, and George “Red Buck” Waightman were a few notable members of this gang. The Doolin-Dalton Gang lasted over three years, significantly longer than the Dalton Gang. Bill Doolin’s success led to him being declared “King of the Oklahoma Outlaws.” This gang had a much different reputation than its predecessor. Several Cherokee Strip cowboys praised the gang’s politeness and refusal to rob from women or the poor. The gang was known for its charitable support of the less fortunate, actions that led to the gang being compared to Robin Hood. Even the press, who lambasted the Dalton Gang, praised the gang’s honorable qualities. In spite of the gang’s code of honor, they were not immune to engaging in violence. Every member of the Doolin-Dalton Gang died a violent death at the hands of the marshals. The Doolin-Dalton Gang’s career officially ended when Marshal “Heck” Thomas’s posse killed Bill Doolin on August 24, 1896.

This information helps contrast the Dalton Gang’s career and public perception with the Doolin-Dalton Gang’s.

The Doolin-Dalton Gang section will also include a map showing the locations of important events in the gang’s career. A label below the map will say, “Significant events associated with the Doolin-Dalton Gang, including major crimes attributed to the gang.” The map will highlight the November 1, 1892 Spearville robbery, the June 1893 Wharton train robbery, the September 1, 1893 Ingalls gunfight, the January 1894 Pawnee bank robbery, the January 3, 1894 Clarkson post office robbery, the April 1, 1894 Sacred Heart store robbery, the March 1894 Woodward train hotel robbery, the May 10, 1894 Southwest City, Missouri Bank robbery, and the April 3, 1895 Dover robbery. In addition to discussing the gang’s crimes, the map will also show the location of the gang members’ deaths and captures. A few highlighted captures and deaths will include Ol Yontis’s November 27, 1892 death in Orlando, Bill Dalton’s June 8, 1894 death near Elk Bill Doolin’s 1896 capture at Eureka Springs, Arkansas, his January 5

escape from Guthrie's prison, and his August 26, 1896 death at Lawson.<sup>42</sup> The map will reveal that the Doolin-Dalton Gang had a longer and busier career than the Dalton Gang.

The Doolin-Dalton Gang's section will display photographs of notable gang members. The first two photographs will be the portraits of Bill Doolin (figure 13) and Bill Dalton (figure 14), the gang's two most important members. The photograph for Bill Doolin's label will say, "William 'Bill' Doolin. Leader of Doolin-Dalton Gang. Born in Johnson County Arkansas, 1858. Killed August 25, 1896 Lawson." Bill Dalton's photograph's label will say, "William Marion 'Bill' Dalton. Brother of Grat, Emmett, and Bob Dalton. Co-leader of the Doolin-Dalton Gang. Born in Cass County, Missouri 1895. Killed near Elk. June 8, 1894." The rest of the photographs will be various members of the Doolin-Dalton Gang, arranged by date of death. Because Tulsa Jack died first, his photograph will appear next to Bill Dalton's. The label for Tulsa Jack's photograph will say, "William 'Tulsa Jack' Blake. Born 18???. Killed in Major County April 4, 1895." There will be a label next to Bitter Creek Newcomb's photograph that will state, "George 'Bitter Creek' Newcomb born circa 1866. Killed near Pawnee May 2, 1895." Charlie Pierce's photograph will be placed next to Bitter Creek Newcomb's. The label for Pierce's portrait will say, "Charles 'Charley' Pierce Born 18???. Died near Pawnee May 2, 1895." The next photograph will be of Red Buck. The label for his photograph will provide the birth and death dates, "George 'Red Buck' Weightman' Born 18???. Killed in Arapaho County, March 4, 1896." Dynamite Dick's photograph (see

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<sup>42</sup> *The Daily Ardmoreite*, April 10, 1895, 2; *Guthrie Daily Leader*, August 26, 1896, 1; "Bank Robbers at Southwest City," *The State Republican* [Jefferson City, Missouri], May 17, 1894, 1; *Guthrie Daily Leader*, January 11, 1894.

figure 19) will be placed next and his label will explain, “Daniel ‘Dynamite Dick’ Clifton. Born 1865. Killed near Checotah November 7, 1895. The label for Arkansas Tom Jones’s photograph (see figure 20) will explain, “Roy Daugherty, alias Arkansas Tom Jones. Born in Missouri 1870. Killed in Joplin, Missouri August 16, 1924.”<sup>43</sup>

Bill Doolin’s wanted poster (figure 21) will be placed next to the gang’s photographs. The label for his wanted poster will say, “Although some citizens were willing to protect Bill Doolin, the five thousand dollar reward for his capture did not make his life safer. This ‘heavily armed and dangerous’ man posed a threat to the Cherokee Strip’s businesses. Posses regularly forced the Doolin-Dalton Gang to hide in the Glass Mountains.”<sup>44</sup> This information should assist visitors in noticing the similarities between the Dalton Gang and Doolin-Dalton Gang’s interactions with the public.

A photograph of the Glass Mountains (see figure 22) will represent the methods the Doolin-Dalton Gang used to evade lawman. The label will explain,

The Glass Mountains are a series of mesas and buttes that are one hundred fifty to two hundred feet high. The glassy appearance of the area’s gypsum deposits give the ‘mountains’ a glassy look. This semi-arid area’s inhospitable nature made it an excellent hiding place for outlaws. Although hiding in this region allowed the gang to avoid detection, the rocky environment and hot weather did not make the gang’s stay comfortable.<sup>45</sup>

An explanation of the hardships of sleeping in the Glass Mountains should prove that outlaws’ lives were not always pleasant.

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<sup>43</sup> “William Marion ‘Bill’ Dalton (1865-1893),” Find a Grave, findagrave.com; “Roy ‘Arkansas Tom’ Draughty; Outlaw Index, Legends of America, legendsofamerica.com.

<sup>44</sup> “Bill Doolin Old West Wanted Poster,” Rustyaccents, rustyaccents.com

<sup>45</sup> “Glass Mountains,” Oklahoma Encyclopedia of History and Culture.

A few newspapers covering the deaths of the Doolin-Dalton Gang will be used to help explain the public's reaction to them. In order to save on space, the exhibit will only use two newspapers. Because Bitter Creek Newcomb and Charlie Pierce died in the Cherokee Strip, the reports of their death are most applicable to the museum. The exhibit will also display the *Ardmore State Herald* article that describes Bill Doolin's honorable qualities. Showing both reactions should demonstrate that the press found horrific and laudable traits in the Doolin-Dalton Gang. The interpretive label will explain,

The death of each member of the Doolin-Dalton Gang was a time of celebration for the marshals, bank owners, and railroad workers who constantly feared being one of the gang's victims. The gang had taken the lives of several marshals, such as Richard Speed and Lafayette 'Lafe' Shadely.<sup>46</sup> Although the press had just as much indignation towards the Doolin-Dalton Gang as their predecessors, it found the Doolin-Dalton's Gang's bravery and skill just as fascinating as the gang's predecessors. While most of the gang received hatred and scorn, the press gave a few positive comments towards Bill Doolin's chivalry and generosity.

The photographs of Bill Doolin's and Bill Dalton's corpses (figure 23) will be the final object displayed in the Doolin-Dalton section. The photographs' label will explain, "Each member of the Doolin-Dalton Gang died a violent death. The photograph of Bill Doolin shows that he received at least twenty bullet wounds."<sup>47</sup> These photographs will prove that the Doolin-Dalton Gang lived a violent life even though local citizens believed that Bill Doolin was a romantic hero.

Again, guns will be in front of the photographs. The label for Bill Doolin's Smith and Wesson .44 (see figure 24) will describe the weapon, "Bill Doolin's Smith and

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<sup>46</sup> "Richard Speed," "Lafayette 'Lafe' Shadely," Officer Down Memorial Page, [odmp.org](http://odmp.org).

<sup>47</sup> "Bill Doolin's Body," Betty Wilfrong Collection.

Wesson .44. This weapon is suitable for short-range combat, but users have to worry about recoil and muzzle flash.” The label for his derringer (see figure 25) will state, “Bill Doolin’s Derringer. Derringers were the smallest types of handguns and the easiest to conceal.”<sup>48</sup> The guns’ interpretive label will declare:

The Doolin-Dalton Gang terrorized the wealthy using the same methods as the Dalton Gang. The gang had many enemies and their guns were the only reason their careers lasted as long as they did. The gang were able to kill a few marshals who tried to arrest them, but their battles with the law all eventually ended with their deaths.

A few of the marshal’s weapons will be juxtaposed next to the outlaw’s weapons. The label will describe the marshal’s role in the Doolin-Dalton Gang’s career by stating, “The Three Guardsmen’s weapons. Chris Madsen, Bill Tilghman, and Henry Andrew ‘Heck’ Thomas were the Cherokee Strip’s most noted lawmen. The Doolin-Dalton Gang feared these men for good reason. Heck Thomas’s posse was responsible for ending Bill Doolin’s outlaw career once and for all.” This label should let visitors learn why the Three Guardsmen were important to the outlaws’ story without making the story all about the lawmen.

Bill Doolin’s saddle will be the next item featured in the Doolin-Dalton section of the exhibit. The label for the saddle will argue, “Many cowboys admired Bill Doolin and his generosity towards the poor. According to legend, Bill Doolin donated this saddle to a poor family in Ingalls, a community a few miles east of the Cherokee Strip. Doolin might have given similar gifts to citizens throughout the Cherokee Strip.” This artifact

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<sup>48</sup> Boddington and Craig, “The Fabulous .44 Mag,” *Guns and Ammo* <http://imomags.com/>. Accessed October 24, 2015; Greg Lee Carter Ed., *Guns in American Society: An Encyclopedia of the History, Culture, Politics, and the Law*, (Denver, ABC-CLIO, 2002), 158.



should provide more evidence that the Cherokee Strip outlaws had admirable qualities in spite of their violent nature.

The next section will devote itself to exploring the careers of the region's female outlaws. The introductory label for their section will explain:

The Cherokee Strip's outlaw population was not exclusively male. In spite of society's expectations of female behavior, some women were not afraid to embrace banditry. A few women who deeply admired the Doolin-Dalton Gang assisted them by giving the marshals false information. Anna Emmaline "Cattle Annie" McDoulet, Jennie "Little Breeches" Stevenson, and Rose Dunn, also known as "Rose of the Cimarron" were the most famous assistants to the Doolin-Dalton Gang. Although they never actively participated in any bank or train robberies, all three of them rustled cattle in Pawnee County. Their outlaw career was relatively short-lived. Cattle Annie and Little Britches were both arrested in July 1895. After their arrest, both women permanently renounced their lives of crime. According to legend, in 1909, Cattle Annie exploited her equestrienne and marksman skills to entertain visitors at a Wild West Show. The end of Dunn's career is more mysterious as no one knows much about her life after the dissolution of the Doolin-Dalton Gang.

This section will contain fewer artifacts than the previous two sections. The only artifacts available are photographs of the three women (see figures 26 and 27), a few newspaper articles, and Cattle Annie's wanted poster (see figure 28). The photograph for Little Breeches and Cattle Annie will be labeled, "Little Breeches (left) and Cattle Annie (right)." Below this label will be two separate labels for each outlaw. They will state, "Jennie 'Little Breeches' Stevenson. Born in Barton County, Missouri Circa 1879. Date and place of death unknown," and, "Anna Emmaline 'Cattle Annie' McDoulet Born in Lawrence, Kansas November 29, 1882. Died in Oklahoma City November 7, 1978." Cattle Annie's wanted poster will be below the two ladies' photographs. The label for her wanted poster will interpret her notoriety, "Cattle rustlers did not achieve the same notoriety as bank and train robbers, as Cattle Annie's five hundred dollar bounty

suggests. Even if her crimes were not daring as the Dalton Gang's, her status as a female outlaw was fascinating to the public."<sup>49</sup> Rose of the Cimarron's photograph will be to the right of the two teenage outlaws. Her label will declare, "Rose Dunn, also known as 'Rose of the Cimarron' Born in Cowley, Kansas September 5, 1878. Died in Lewis County, Washington June 11, 1955."<sup>50</sup>

The female outlaws section will use the July 7, 1895 *Guthrie Daily Leader* article that describes Little Breeches. The label for the paper will explain, "Outlawry involved violent, unfeminine behavior. The press denounced any woman who would dare to defy gender norms and pursue a life of crime." This section of the exhibit should demonstrate the presence of female outlaws in the Cherokee Strip and how negatively the public received them.

The next section will focus on the Wyatt-Black Gang. The introductory label will explain:

The Doolin-Dalton Gang's reign of terror allowed other outlaw gangs to take advantage of the law's distraction. The Wyatt-Black Gang, led by N. Ellsworth "Zip" Wyatt was the second most famous outlaw gang in the Cherokee Strip during the Doolin-Dalton gang's reign of terror. Zip Wyatt was a Cherokee Strip rancher known for his immoral behavior. In 1893 he recruited Ike and Pearl Black, S. T. Watson, and Jenny Freeman. Unlike the Doolin-Dalton Gang, the Wyatt-Black Gang specialized in cattle rustling rather than bank or train robberies. Wyatt's first major robbery might have been on November 7, 1889 at the Wharton train station. The night telegrapher, Charles M. Smith was killed during this robbery, but there is no conclusive proof that Wyatt committed this crime. The public's obsession with outlaws and gunfights led to the press reporting several false stories of the Wyatt-Black Gang engaging in bloody shootouts with

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<sup>49</sup> "Anna McDoulet, a.k.a. Cattle Annie Wanted Poster, rustyaccents, rustyaccents.com.

<sup>50</sup> Dan Anderson and Laurence Yadon, Robert Barr Smith Ed., *100 Oklahoma Outlaws, Gangsters, and Lawmen* (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company), 246; "Anna Emmaline 'Cattle Annie' McDoulet Roach," Find a Grave, findagrave.com; "Rose Ella 'Rose of the Cimarron' Dunn (Noble) Flemming," Ibid.

the law. The reputation for the Wyatt-Black Gang was worse than the Dalton Gang or Doolin-Dalton Gang's reputation. The Wyatt-Black Gang were willing to steal from the poor and kill preachers. The gang's only values were their loyalty to each other. The gang's career ended when vigilantes ended the gang leaders' lives. A group of vigilantes killed Ike Black near Enid on August 6, 1895. The vigilantes were able to capture Wyatt alive, but his bullet wounds led to him dying an agonizing death in the Enid jail on September 9, 1895.

Visitors should notice the similarities and differences between each of the Cherokee Strip's outlaw gangs by this point in the exhibit.

Zip Wyatt's Winchester or a replica of it will be the sole object used to represent the Wyatt-Black Gang. Its label will say, "Zip Wyatt's .44-70 Winchester. This model of the Winchester rifle is most famously known as 'the gun that won the West' for its durability, power, and popularity."<sup>51</sup> Audiences should already notice the importance of guns in the history of the outlaw and the West. As with many other Cherokee Strip outlaws, the gun was the outlaw's tool of intimidation and his enemies' tool for protecting society against the outlaw.

Al Jennings will be the final outlaw discussed before the exhibit shifts its focus to popular depictions of outlaws. Al Jennings's label will say:

Alphonso "Al" J. Jennings was born in Virginia in 1863. In 1892 he moved to El Reno to practice law. A few years later, he moved his law practice to Woodward.<sup>52</sup> Jennings became disillusioned with the law after a gunfighter named Temple Houston killed Al's brother Ed and did not receive any punishment. After Houston's acquittal, Al Jennings became angry enough to consider a new career. In 1897 he recruited Little Dick West, Frank Jennings, and the O'Malley brothers. These ineffectual outlaws were able to break apart a safe in exactly one robbery, the Berwyn train robbery. During these failed robberies, Al Jennings followed a similar code of honor as the Doolin-Dalton Gang and refused to rob from the poor. Unlike the Doolin-Dalton Gang, there is no evidence that the

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<sup>51</sup> Edmund Lewis, "One of One Hundred," *American Rifleman* October 2005, 96.

<sup>52</sup> Jennings, *Beating Back*, 5, 35.

Jennings gang actually killed anybody. The gang broke up after Jennings was arrested in 1897. While he was imprisoned, he told outlandish stories of his allegedly superior marksmanship, stories that his peers claimed were not even remotely true. Ten years after his arrest, Theodore Roosevelt pardoned him and Jennings forsook his outlaw career in favor of working as an actor, public speaker and minister. As a minister, he warned his audiences away from the sins of greed and theft. He died on December 26, 1961.

Visitors will learn about the outlaws' varying moral codes and destructive tendencies by reading these labels.

The only two objects in this section of the exhibit will be a photograph of Al Jennings (see figure 29) and Al Jennings's revolver. The label for the photograph will identify Al Jennings as the subject of the photograph and the revolver will have the label, "Al Jennings's revolver. Skill with guns was necessary to be a successful outlaw. Jennings's poor marksmanship may have hurt his success as an outlaw and hurt his chances of becoming as infamous as the Dalton Gang or Doolin-Dalton Gang."

The last part outlaws that the exhibit will discuss are the minor Cherokee Strip outlaws. The label will pay particular attention to Ben Cravens (see figure 30), the most active minor outlaw. The label will say,

The famed Dalton Gang, Doolin-Dalton Gang, Wyatt-Black Gang, and Jennings Gang were not the only outlaw bands to terrorize the Cherokee Strip. A few minor, less successful criminals attempted to emulate the more notorious outlaws, to less than stellar results. Ben Cravens was one example of a Cherokee Strip outlaw with a brief career. He rustled cattle in Kansas, Pawnee County, and Noble County, and attempted to rob one train. On December 4, 1896 he attempted to rob a train in Blackwell but failed to obtain any loot. Marshals were able to kill Cravens's underlings Frank McRae and Dick Ainsley shortly after the attempted robbery. Cravens spent a brief period of time in Perry's jail before escaping and continuing his outlawry. Although his career was less spectacular than his processors, his daring actions caught the attention of the press, who described him as a notorious and successful bandit. In 1901 he robbed a post office in Red Rock and killed the city's postmaster. Cravens was captured and served a life sentence in 1908.

This label should prove that minor criminals intrigued the public, albeit not to the degree of the more well-known ones.

After a lengthy discussion on the actual careers of the Cherokee Strip's outlaws, the last section of the exhibit will focus on how popular culture portrayed outlaws during the lifetimes of Emmett Dalton and Al Jennings. This section will be titled "Cherokee Strip Outlaws in Popular Culture." The introductory label will explain:

The Cherokee Strip outlaws' destructive and honorable actions influenced popular culture's depictions of outlaws, but these depictions often included legend as well as fact. Historians Richard Etulain and Glenda Riley note that the legendary versions of outlaws such as Billy the Kid and Jesse James were far different from the real outlaws. Likewise, many fictional depictions of the Cherokee Strip's outlaws became more daring, cruel, or noble than the real ones. The outlaws themselves occasionally worked on books and movies that explored the concept of outlawry. Some of these works portrayed crime as glamorous or immoral yet somewhat honorable, as historian Richard Slotkin asserts. Other works of fiction renounced the outlaws' former deeds and portrayed them as acts of pure greed. As historian Richard Aquila argues, the villainous outlaw characters found in *Bonanza* episodes probably would not have existed if not for the actual violent deeds of Western outlaws and the popular cultural depictions made within living memory of them. The less common noble outlaw character owes its existence to the codes of honor that a few Western outlaws had. The Cherokee Strip's outlaws were important for their influence on Western fiction and how the twentieth and twenty-first centuries viewed the West. Modern audiences think of the West as a place where less-fortunate citizens preyed upon the more privileged and the place where criminals victimized innocents, stole, killed, and oppressed. Outlaws are a symbol of the West's nature as a land of resistance and conquest according to Patricia Nelson Limerick. Their history demonstrates that perceptions of the West itself are contested.

The introductory label should prepare audiences to receive a more detailed examination of the Cherokee Strip outlaws' popular cultural depictions.

The first two objects in the exhibit will be Emmett Dalton and Al Jennings's major works of literature. The label for Emmet Dalton's books will attempt to explain their depiction of the Dalton Gang's career:

*Beyond the Law* by Emmett Dalton, published in and *When the Daltons Rode* by Emmett Dalton and Jack Jungemeyer, published in 1931. These books were Emmett Dalton's attempt to romanticize his outlaw past. According to Dalton, the law's mistreatment caused the Dalton brothers to become 'forced into outlawry.' Both books exaggerate the feats and accomplishments of the Dalton Gang. Even if the book contains much false information, it reveals that press was also responsible for spreading falsehood. Dalton asserted that the Dalton Gang did not commit many of the crimes that newspapers and dime novels attributed to them.

The label for *Beating Back* will have a similar interpretation, "*Beating Back* by Al Jennings. Published in 1914 Al Jennings portrayed his outlaw activities in a similar manner as Emmett Dalton. Jennings also presented himself as man who fought against a corrupt society." These books should be a good example of how outlaws glorified their own behavior.

If it is possible to find an original copy of Harry Hawkeye's dime novel featuring the Dalton Gang, the novel should be a part of the exhibit. The novel provides an example of how non-gang members portrayed the Dalton Gang. The label will explain,

"Harry Hawkeye published the dime novel *The Dalton Brothers and Their Gang: Fearsome Bandits of Oklahoma and the Southwest. A Tale of Thrilling Adventure, Daring Deeds, and Hairbreadth Escapes*. Published in 1908. This dime novel thrilled audiences with fictitious accounts of the gang's exciting adventures. Many events in this novel, such as a Fort Worth, Texas bank robbery, were completely fictitious. Others, such as the Wharton train robbery, were adaptations of actual events. This novel's version of the gang were noble thieves who robbed from the wealthy to give to the poor."

Hawkeye's novel will prove that outlaws were not the only ones who portrayed Western crime in a positive manner.

The final section of the exhibit will showcase film. The museum has a projector located in the prefect spot for the exhibit. The exhibit will showcase the only surviving films with Emmett Dalton and Arkansas Tom acting in them. A set of labels will be

located next to the projector in order to explain the contents of the silent films. The first label will say,

*Passing of the Oklahoma Outlaws* directed by Bill Tilghman and Chris Madsen 1915. This film dramatized the deaths of the Doolin-Dalton Gang. Although the film's primary purpose was to educate the public on the dangers of crime, the guardsmen knew that the public was fascinated with these men's crimes interested the public. Arkansas Tom acted in this film to give an authentic portrayal of an Oklahoma outlaw.

The next label will say, "*Man of the Desert*. 1920. This film featured Emmett Dalton as a hero who defended a town from an outlaw. Dalton renounced his criminal ways and acknowledged that outlaws were responsible for instilling fear into the population."

These films serve as examples of negative portrayals of outlawry.

#### Closing Thoughts

The Cherokee Strip outlaws help explain why popular culture often portrays the West as having two opposing natures. Limerick believes that the West was a battleground between the conquerors and the conquered, but the Cherokee Strip's outlaws assumed both roles. The outlaws conquered banks, railroads, and other successful businesses, but the lawmen defeated the outlaws. Some outlaws saw the West's law system as a corrupt institution that failed to protect the less fortunate from poverty, murder, or other unpleasant features of Western society. Limerick acknowledges that many people see the outlaws as symbols of resistance to conquest, but she never explains how they became symbols of resistance. The works of Emmett Dalton and Al Jennings often saw themselves as rebels fighting against a flawed society. The gang's sympathizers also suggest that the idea of the noble outlaw existed in the 1890s. Limerick also neglects to mention how many people view the outlaw as

an agent of conquest. The majority of newspaper articles written in the 1890s seem to suggest that the Twin Territories predominately viewed the outlaws as brutal butchers.

The conflict between outlaws and civilization was just one conflict in the history of the West. The conflicts between whites and Indians and humans and nature are the other two most famous conflicts in Western history and folklore. The outlaws' relationship with nature is one way that the outlaw conflict is connected with the nature conflict. A few outlaws started their careers as beast-taming cowboys before becoming outlaws. Railroads, an enemy of the outlaw, were notorious for destroying nature in order to advance civilization. The yet to be completely tamed Glass Mountains helped the outlaws conceal their presence from the conquering force of civilization. Although Belle Starr and outlaws who operated outside the Cherokee Strip interacted with Indians more, the Cherokee Strip outlaws did not ignore them entirely. They probably hid in a few Indian nations and interacted with the locals. Outlaws' Indian allies probably viewed these criminals as enemies of the white civilization, a civilization who attempted to subdue non-whites. The outlaws were heavily connected to other aspects of Western society. It is necessary to understand the outlaw to completely understand the West.

The outlaws' activities caused society to fear and admire them. Business owners prepared for the possibility of a raid at any time. Those who harbored outlaws also had to fear the penalty for their rebellion against the law. The press constantly told dramatic stories of the gang's killing and stealing. There was no way that the Cherokee Strip's citizens could forget about the outlaws.

The memory of the outlaws has affected people's perceptions of the West. Even if an outlaw did not rob and murder every day, the press's sensational coverage of



these events gave Cherokee Strip citizens a negative impression of their home. The idea that the West was a place of conflict led to cinema always portraying the region as a battleground. These twentieth-century films reinforced the fears that many nineteenth-century Cherokee Strip citizens probably had. The story of the Cherokee Strip outlaws suggests that Western films' depictions of the region reflected nineteenth-century Westerners' perceptions of their home.

This museum exhibit should challenge visitors to think about how Western films discuss outlawry. Visitors should be able to identify a few aspects of movie outlaws that are similar to the nineteenth-century's thoughts on Western crime. Although most people believe that crime is a negative aspect of society, it is important to understand crime to understand the history of the Cherokee Strip. Audiences might be uncomfortable with the exhibit's graphic content and the discussion of people who supported criminals, but outlaws were important to the history of the Cherokee Strip. Nineteenth and twentieth century Americans may have deplored the outlaws, but they found them to be intriguing and complex. Twenty-first century Americans can learn why previous generations had an interest in outlaws and some people today still wish to learn more about them. When visitors leave this exhibit, they should have a different perspective on outlaws and how they symbolize the West.

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### *Floor Plans*

Cherokee Strip Regional Heritage Center, Floor Plan.



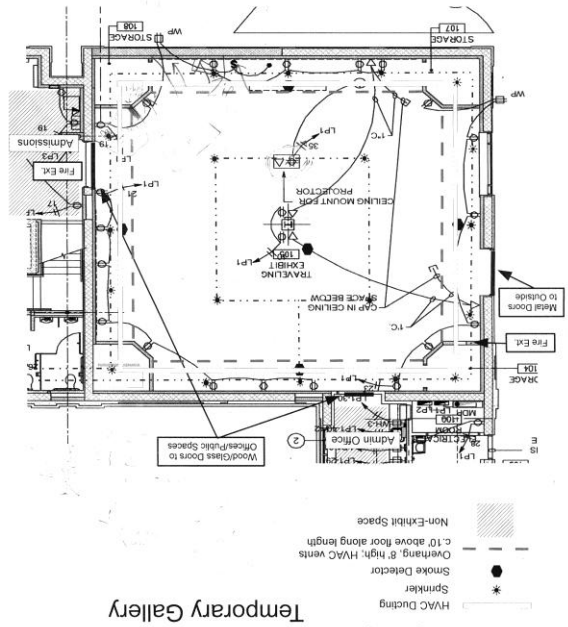
Appendix

Figure 1



Map of Cherokee Strip. Image Courtesy of nationalcowboymuseum.org

Figure 2



Digitized Cherokee Strip Regional Heritage Center Floor Plan rotated 180 degrees. Entrance is at the bottom.

Figure 3



Grat Dalton. Image Courtesy of wikipedia.org.

Figure 4



Robert "Bob" Dalton. Image courtesy of usmarshalsmuseum.c

Figure 5



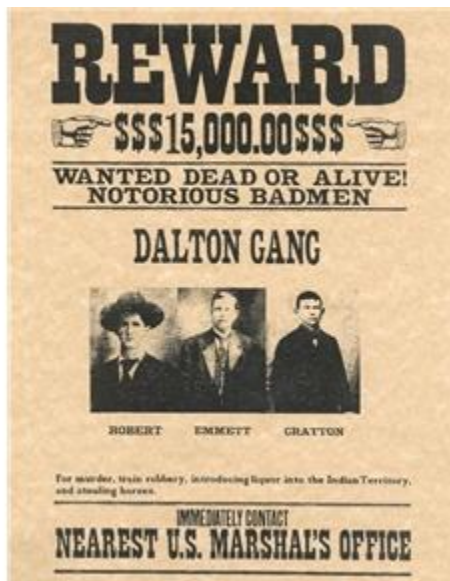
Emmett Dalton. Image courtesy of Kansas Historical Society.

Figure 6



Bill Power. Image courtesy of daltondefendersmuseum.com

Figure 7



Dalton Gang Wanted Poster. Image courtesy of rustyaccents.com.

Figure 8



Bodies of Dalton Gang. Image courtesy of Kansas Historical Society

Figure 9



Emmett Dalton's prison photograph. Image courtesy of Kansas Historical Society

Figure 10



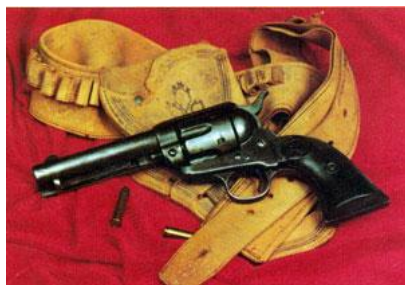
Emmett Dalton's six-shooter. Image courtesy of daltondefendersmuseum.com

Figure 11



Bob Dalton's Revolver. Image courtesy of daltondefendersmuseum.com

Figure 12



Bill Power's Revolver. Image courtesy of daltondefendersmuseum.com

Figure 13



Bill Doolin. Image courtesy of [schwendguns.us](http://schwendguns.us).

Figure 14



Bill Dalton. Image courtesy of [usmarshalsmuseum.org](http://usmarshalsmuseum.org).

Figure 15



Marshal's with Tulsa Jack's Body. Image courtesy of the Walter Scott Ferguson Collection at [libraries.ou.edu](http://libraries.ou.edu)

Figure 16



Bitter Creek Newcomb's body. Image courtesy of [legendsofamerica.com](http://legendsofamerica.com)



Figure 17



Charlie Pierce's body. Image courtesy of Wikipedia.org

Figure 18



Red Buck's Body. Image courtesy of legendsofamerica.com.

Figure 19



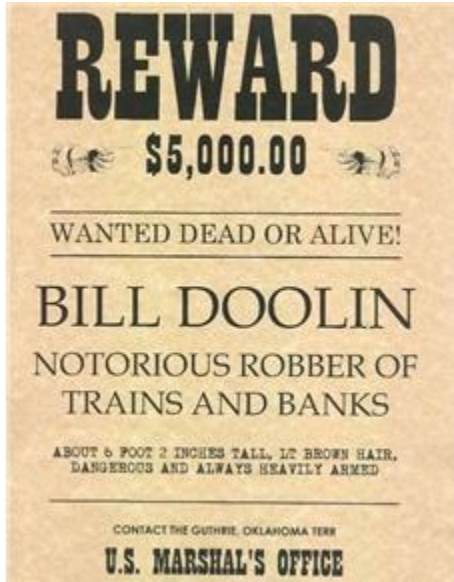
Dynamite Dick. Image courtesy of ancestry.com.

Figure 20



Arkansas Tom. Image courtesy of Wikipedia.org

Figure 21



Bill Doolin's Wanted Poster. Image courtesy of rustyaccents.com

Figure 22



Glass Mountains. Photo courtesy of libraryphoto.cr.usgs.org

Figure 23



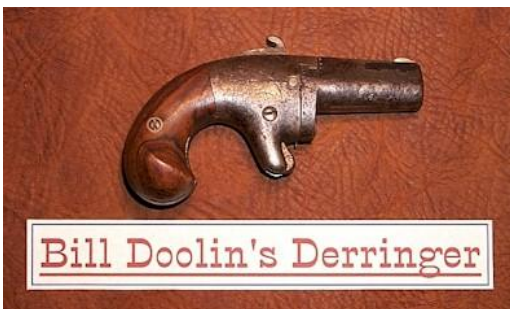
Bill Doolin's Body. Image courtesy of Wikipedia.org.

Figure 24



Bill Doolin's Smith and Wesson .44. Image courtesy of schwendguns.us

Figure 25



Bill Doolin's Derringer. Image courtesy of schwendguns.us.

Figure 26



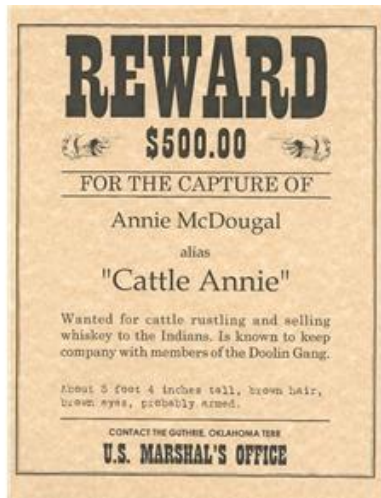
Little Britches and Cattle Annie. Photograph courtesy of the Walter Scott Ferguson Collection at [libraries.ou.edu](http://libraries.ou.edu).

Figure 27



Rose of the Cimarron. Photograph courtesy of the Walter Scott Ferguson Collection at [libraries.ou.edu](http://libraries.ou.edu)

Figure 28



Cattle Annie's wanted poster. Image courtesy of rustyaccents.com.

Figure 29



Al Jennings. Image courtesy of wikipedia.org

Figure 30



Ben Cravens. Image Courtesy of Kansas Historical Society.

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