

INTRODUCTION

On a cold December day in 1926, Oklahoma Governor Martin E. Trapp looked on as veteran peace officer H. A. Thompson joined five other lawmen in carrying a casket down the steps of the First Christian Church in Oklahoma City. A forty-five man honor guard of the Oklahoma City Police Department was part of a crowd of four hundred and fifty people attending the funeral service of State Operative Luther Bishop. Thompson was a special agent for the Frisco railroad. Sharing his burden were Claude Tyler, W. E. Snelson, James Brown, Sam Tulk, and Charles Woorley. Each of the men had served as peace officers for many years and was aware of the dangers which they faced. Thompson, perhaps more than the others, understood the true challenge confronting the lawmen of Oklahoma, where outlaws would resort to any means, including murder, to avoid capture.

Prior to statehood, infamous gangs such as the James brothers, the Youngers, the Daltons, and the Doolins all sought refuge at one time or another in the Indian Territory. In those days the chief law enforcement officers were Deputy U.S. Marshals. From about 1875 through 1900, over one hundred marshals who rode for the federal court in Fort Smith lost their lives in the line of duty.¹ The grim reality is that law and order in the early days of Oklahoma was a deadly business, and gun fights between outlaws and lawmen were common. H. A. Thompson was a veteran of one of the biggest gunfights there ever was in Oklahoma.

On September 1, 1893, in what became known as the Ingalls Raid, Payne County Undersheriff

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Written by Dee Cordry

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H. A. "Hi" Thompson joined over a dozen lawmen who surrounded the small town of Ingalls where the infamous Doolin gang was holed up. A fierce gun battle ensued in which three marshals were killed. Deputy U.S. Marshals Dick Speed, Tom Hueston, and Lafe Shadley were shot down.² The Doolin Gang had escaped. Marshal E. D. Nix ordered his men to "*bring them in - alive if possible - dead if necessary.*"

" Three years later Bill Doolin was captured by Deputy U.S. Marshal Bill Tilghman.

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He was taken to the jail in Guthrie, but he later escaped. Doolin was eventually tracked down by Deputy U.S. Marshal Heck Thomas and was killed when he tried to shoot it out with Thomas and a posse. Tilghman, Thomas, and Chris Madsen became known as the "Three Guardsmen" of Oklahoma Territory.

When Trapp became Governor of Oklahoma in 1924, his state had been experiencing one of the worst crime waves in history. Trapp called on Bill Tilghman to become his "special investigator," and dispatched him to clean up the oil boomtown of Cromwell. Governor Trapp, while watching the Bishop funeral procession, remembered that he, U.S. Marshal Alva McDonald, and others had carried Tilghman to his grave after he was shot down in the line of duty. Within a few weeks of Tilghman's murder, Governor Trapp was forced to call on Marshal McDonald and Oklahoma City policeman Luther Bishop. Trapp gave them the order to "*take the bandits alive, but to shoot to kill if necessary.*"

" State officials quickly followed by creating the Oklahoma Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation, the first such law enforcement agency in the United States.

Two years later, Governor Trapp, Marshal McDonald, and H. A. Thompson were helping lay to rest State Crime Bureau Operative Luther Bishop. Bishop was described by federal officials as having "been successful in putting in the penitentiary more bank robbers and other outlaws than any other man in this state." Bishop, who had often been the subject of death threats, was the victim of a very violent death. Mortuary officials, fearing vandalism, recommended to the family that a headstone not be placed on the grave. As a result, the grave remained unmarked for over sixty years. And the murder of Luther Bishop remains a mystery.

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