

**Krum Robberies, Murder & Mischief & Mayhem-By Kathryn Dodd
W.A. Martin and the Story Gang; The Shootout on Oakland Street-Part 2
by Mike Cochran**

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Below is the final part of the story by Mike Cochran on W.A. Martin and the Story Gang; The Shootout on Oakland Street.

The Murder

On August 3, 1925, W. A. Martin and R. B. Parsons reportedly talked in a store on the square. It was obvious why Parsons was in town, with his reputation and the Denton situation as it was. And Martin was scared of this man.

Martin's version of the conversation is as follows; "I said, 'Parsons, I understand that you have been telling around town that you are going to kill me. I want to talk to you about it. Parsons said 'Well, what about it?' I said, 'Parsons, I have a wife and two babies, I can't afford to have any trouble.' Parsons said 'G__ D_____ your wife and babies!'"

At 2:45PM, on the afternoon of August 6, 1925, Deputy Parsons was meeting with Joe Woodrum in the Denton County Courthouse. When this meeting was over, Parsons left by the east door of the courthouse and was seen walking down East Hickory Street. Lee Poole stated that Parsons came into his store on East Hickory a few minutes before the hour of three. They talked for a few minutes and Parsons, after finding out where Hess Tyler could be found, left by back door of Poole's store. (#17)

Around 3:00PM of the same afternoon, 13 year old Myron Taliaferro saw W.A. Martin step from a car on the north east corner of the square. Martin had a gun in his hand. Myron saw Martin walk to a store on the square watching the courthouse all the way. (#18) Aware of Martin's threat on his uncle's life, Myron went to the Taliaferro Store to warn W.V. Taliaferro. Mr. Taliaferro again picked up his shotgun and waited on the mezzanine of the store for Martin to come in. (#19) Martin never came.

Martin claimed that while on the square he met Jess Sewell and asked him for a ride to look for a friend. The time is 3:00PM, August 6, 1925. W.A. Martin is heading east on Hickory Street in Jess Sewell's car. R.B. Parsons is at a place called Market Square, at that moment stepping off the curb. Martin said he saw Parsons and asked Sewell not to stop because he was afraid of him. He claims misunderstood his remark and stopped anyway about even with the deputy. Witnesses differ in their versions of what happened next. Parsons reportedly yelled "Hey" to Martin. Doc Tyler claims he saw Parsons draw his gun and that Martin then jumped from the car firing all the while. (#20) Tom Hall says that Parsons had no gun and that Martin gunned him down without provocation. Doc Tyler's and Tom Hall's versions are the two extreme ones, while most of the witnesses report various versions between the two. Martin emptied one gun into Deputy Parsons and started walking towards him emptying another into Parsons body. One witness saw Parsons head jump a little off the pavement as Martin's continued to fire a total of nine shots. (#21)

With the shooting over, Martin reportedly waved his guns at the crowd of people shouting "He threatened to kill me. There are his guns and here are mine and there he is." Martin then got back into the Sewell car and went home where Mrs. W.V. Taliaferro saw him at 3:15PM, getting out of the car and going inside. Martin made a phone call to Austin to Texas Ranger, Captain Tom Hickman. He offered to surrender to Hickman explaining, Sheriff Fry was trying to kill him. Hickman said that he couldn't do anything without the order of the Sheriff Fry or the governor. (#22)

The Shootout on Oakland Street

When Fry learned of his deputy's death, he alerted all the law enforcement officers in the North Texas area that he might need their help. A group from the sheriff's office in Dallas came up because then had been friends of Parsons. ` A group from Grayson County came down for same reason. A hand full of men from the local

National Guard armory came out and Tom Hickman of the Rangers came after all. There were more than 50 of them there that night as they assembled at the courthouse. Fry tried to persuade Martin to surrender, but he wouldn't give himself up. Machine guns were set up on the lawn of the College of Industrial Arts (now T.W.U.) and the whole neighborhood was evacuated.

Sheriff Fry gave the order, "Go in and kill every G__ D___ one of them". (#23) More than 200 rounds were fired in the salvo on the house. No one was hit by the fire. The 11 members of the gang then came filing out of the house, their hands held high in the air. Martin was the last to leave the house and he defiantly kept his hands lower than those of his friends. One National Guardsman motioned with his rifle that Martin should raise his hands. Martin slapped at the rifle with his hands and refused to obey the order.

There was an old Marshal retired and living in Krum, that had answered Fry's call for men. He dressed like he had just ridden in off the range, with 10 gallon hat and six shooters at his side. When he saw Martin slap at the rifle, he thought he was trying to escape. Without even drawing his pistol from his holster, he fired from the hip and neatly creased Martin's right side with the bullet. Without another word Martin raised his hands in the spirit of compliance and was taken off to jail.

The arrest of W. A. Martin marked the end of the era of lawlessness that had gripped Denton County for years. Nathan A. and Yancey Story were soon arrested along 21 members of their gang. The grand jury returned a total of 81 indictments against the members, 26 against Yancey himself. Nathan A. Story was charged with murder and sentenced to 99 years by a Gainesville jury. Martin was indicted for the murder of Parsons, the attempted murder of Deputies Roberts and Akin and the bank robberies at Sanger, Krum, Ponder and Holland, Texas. W. J. Sewell, J.T. Baker, Louise Ross, R. W. Beaty, Leslie Briggs and Herman Shifflett, Jr. were all indicted as accessories in the murder of R. B. Parsons.

The Trial

It was impossible for W. A. Martin to receive a fair trial in Denton now that the people whom he had intimidated for so long had the upper hand, they would show little sympathy or interest in objectivity. The word was that anyone aiding the defense of Martin would be boycotted by the town. The town wanted blood. On August 27, 1925, Martin was granted a change of venue to Dallas and trial was set for October 5. The trial lasted a week and Martin had few friends there. County attorney Elbert Hooper of Denton handled the case for the prosecution and Martin was defended by Mauty Hughs

On Sunday morning, October 11, at 8:55AM the Jury returned a verdict of guilty and assessed a prison sentence of 99 years. Martin, who sat with his 8 year old son nervously awaiting the verdict, was unmoved when the prison sentence, was read by Judge Pippen.

Sheriff Fry won this last battle against the lawless and made good his vow to clean up Denton. A year later he was paralyzed by a stroke and had to leave office. He lay bed-ridden for four years until his death in 1930.

Martin was released from prison on parole after 20 years and went to live with his wife in either Dallas or California, according to which old-timer you talk to. The story goes that he got drunk one night, mistreated his wife and was killed his son. It doesn't quite end there. His son was later executed for killing a Federal Marshall.