

TEXAS RANGER CAPTAIN WILL WRIGHT

William Lee Wright was the son of L. B. Wright and Ann Tumlinson Wright. He was born in Lockhart, Texas February 19, 1868. His Family moved to Yorktown when he was an infant. He attended school there. Will worked as a cowboy on the Eckhardt Ranch in Dewitt County and on the Rutledge Ranch in Karnes County. He also worked some as a farmer.

Later, his family moved to Sutherland Springs, Texas. Will Wright married Mary Ann (Mollie) Brown, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Sanford Brown at Sutherland Springs, December 20, 1892. Six sons and one daughter were born to Mr. and Mrs. Will Wright.

Will worked as a deputy Sheriff in Wilson County under Sheriff Craighead. In 1898, Will Wright joined the Texas Rangers under the command of John M. Rogers. In 1902 he left the Rangers and was elected sheriff of Wilson County and was sheriff of Wilson County for 15 years. He was at one time, president of the Texas Sheriff's Association. In 1917 Governor William P. Hobby appointed Will Wright to the position of Texas Ranger Captain and he was assigned to form a new company. The citizens of Wilson County presented a beautiful bay horse to Will Wright as a tribute for excellent service and friendship.

A Seguin, Texas newspaper reported June 18, 1909, that a prisoner, who had committed an atrocious crime, was hung at Floresville on a Friday afternoon. The man, after hearing the reading of the death warrant, walked up to the scaffold unassisted. When they began to tie his hands, he fought furiously. He called for his brother. He came up and shook hands and started away. It was then that the condemned man made a quick move and stabbed Sheriff Will Wright just above the heart with a sharpened spoon handle. It is not known how he secured the weapon. The man was quickly brought under control and Sheriff Wright was treated for his wounds.

When Will Wright became a ranger captain, there was much unrest along the Rio Grand River. Raiders from across the border were wreaking havoc on U. S. citizens. There was much trouble from one end of the Rio Grande to the other. Will Wright was known to take part in many battles. He was called "El Capitan Diablo" (the devil captain). The rangers under his command guarded the border during WWI. They chased liquor smugglers and raiders. Wright was known to be a law enforcer and at the same time, a peace maker.

Will Wright was a Texas Ranger at the time of the South Texas manhunt or chase after Gregorio Cortez, who was a sheriff killer. At this time Wright belonged to the Frontier Battalion.

Dogie Wright, Will's son, reported that his dad "always wore a coat, collar, tie and a gun. He carried a pearl handled .45 colt pistol that had been presented to him in 1910 by the people of Wilson County. Old Jack was one of his favorite horses. The horse was always clean and well cared for.

He participated in the transition of Texas Rangers from the horseback era in the early 1900s to the modern rangers of the Texas Department of Public Safety after 1935.

Will Wright retired from the Texas Rangers in 1939 and returned to Wilson County to live out his life. Sam Fore said of him, "He loved the Texas Ranger Force with a deep and abiding affection. He died March 7, 1942 and is buried in the Floresville City Cemetery.

Compiled by Maurine Liles from the files of the Wilson County Historical Society Archives. 7/17/09