

Cooke County History

A Texas Ranger, Empty Cartridges and Mexican Bandits

Part 3 of a 3 Part Series on the Hulens

By Shana Powell
Contributing Historian
The Weekly News

Years ago, a boy scout troop touring the Cooke County Courthouse was bored and misbehaving. But, when they walked into one of the offices that suddenly changed. The boys instantly snapped to attention as they stood admiring the real-life Texas Ranger standing before them! From his hat to his badge they could not get enough of him, it was the highlight of their visit.

For generations, young boys like those in the courthouse have been both awestruck by Texas Rangers and enticed by the dream of possibly joining their force (and today, young girls can dream about that as well).

One young man who pursued such a dream was

Eugene B. Hulen, the son of Harvey Hulen and the younger brother of John Augustus Hulen. But, unfortunately for him, his time as a Texas Ranger was destined to be short and to end tragically.

Born in Missouri in 1876, Eugene was the third son in what became a large and boisterous family. After the family moved to Texas, Eugene grew up in Gainesville graduating from high school here in 1893.

By 1900, Eugene Hulen was still living with his parents in the 4th Ward of Gainesville and was working as a stock raiser. At times, he would be listed as a contractor. Ten years later, the census shows him in Dallas employed as an express messenger and in the following year he had moved to Houston, close to his older brother and was working as a gateman at the Union Station.

John Augustus Hulen was prosperous and influential, a rising star. He was happily married. He was everything that Eugene was not as Eugene had not really found his niche in a profession. At times, it must have been difficult for Eugene to contend with his brother's success.

Then in 1915, thirty-six-



year-old 5 foot nine inches tall, brown-haired Eugene seemed to have finally found his place when he signed on with the Texas Rangers. That may have happened through the influence of

his brother, former adjutant general of Texas and a man who had been involved with the Rangers himself. In any case, on March 29, 1915, Hulen took the oath of office in Austin becoming a private in the Rangers and was ordered to report to Capt. James Monroe Fox, Commander of Co. B. in Marfa.

It was a chaotic period. World War I was raging in Europe and there was a great deal of instability and unrest in Mexico as well as along the border between Texas and Mexico. Pancho Villa and other bandits were trying to take control and it was a dangerous time for law enforcement operating in the Big Bend region.

One of the gangs raiding in that area was the Chico Cano gang. Officials had come up against them before and had not fared well. Their next meeting would not go well either.

In Texas Lawmen 1900-1940, it was reported that on "Monday, May 24, 1915 Joe Sitter, a former Texas Ranger and now a River Guard, gathered a posse that included fellow inspector and former Ranger Charles Craighead and Texas Ranger privates Eugene Hulen, Harry Trollinger and A.P.

Cummings." Sitter apparently "was intent on capturing the Cano gang for various crimes that they had committed, including theft."

When the posse arrived in

Pilares Canyon close to Valentine, Texas, they could see what appeared to be stolen horses. Accounts indicate that some of the posse believed that the horses were part of an ambush plan by Cano. Others disagreed.

Sitter decided to split the posse into two groups and enter the canyon. "Trollinger, Craighead, and Cummings started up one side of the canyon but were met by heavy fire and were forced to retreat." They later said that they could see "Sitter and Hulen pinned down across the canyon and claimed to have made five unsuccessful attempts to reach them. When the firing stopped, they believed that Sitter and Hulen were dead."

The three remaining lawmen walked for miles to get to a ranch where they could summon help. The next day the new posse arrived in the canyon and "found Sitter and Hulen stripped naked and shot scores of times. Their faces had been beaten so badly that they were practically unrecognizable."

A newspaper in Alpine reported that the bodies of Eugene Hulen and Joe Sitter were recovered and that "a sack of empty cartridges besides the bodies showed that the Americans had made

a long fight." Their deaths brought the number up to five American peace officers killed in that region by alleged Mexican bandits during the past year.

Chico Cano was "indicted for the murder of Sitter and Hulen but never prosecuted. He became a captain in the Mexican Revolutionary Army and then later retired to his ranch in Mexico and died peacefully in August 1943."

John Augustus Hulen made the arrangements to have his brother, who had been a Texas Ranger for around two months at the time of his death, brought back to Gainesville where he was buried in Fairview Cemetery.

It is unknown if he blamed himself for helping his brother to get the job.



Landman
you feel like
the most in