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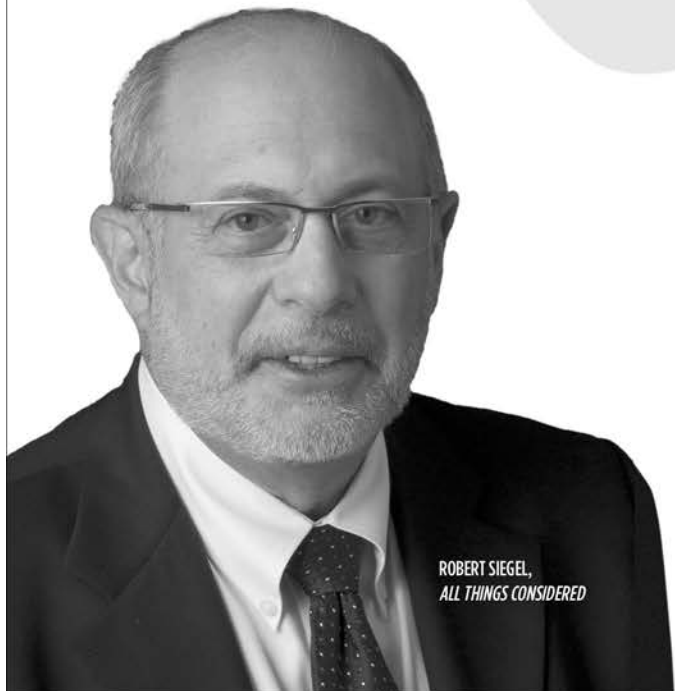
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ROBERT SIEGEL,
ALL THINGS CONSIDERED

Bassett served with famed Dodge lawmen

Lots happened in Dodge City, Kansas where Charlie Bassett was marshal at the same time Wyatt Earp, Bat and Jim Masterson were lawmen. It was a lawless town. Wyatt was assistant marshal, Jim Masterson was a city policeman, and older brother Bat was county sheriff. During the years of 1873-1879 they all reported to Charlie Bassett at one time or another, and he merits more recognition than has been shown him by history.

Bassett was born Oct. 30, 1847, in Massachusetts. When his parents separated, he chose to live with his father until he joined the Union Army in February 1865, two months before the end of the war between the states. He enlisted as a volunteer for a \$100 bounty and served only nine months.

From 1865 to 1873 he drifted around the West working as a miner, bartender and buffalo hunter, winding up in Dodge City. Charlie opened the original Long Branch Saloon in 1872 with a partner, running it until they sold to Luke Short. Short's ownership in the Long Branch would become a pivotal point in Bassett's life later.

Bassett was elected sheriff of Ford County, serving two terms with Bat Masterson as his assistant. By law Bassett could not run for a third term, so some role-reversal took place. Bat Masterson was elected sheriff and one of the first acts he performed was to appoint Charlie Bassett his under-sheriff.

While serving as under-sheriff, Bassett also was assistant-marshal to then City Marshal Ed Masterson. Bassett was paid a nice compliment by Mayor Kelly: "Charlie Bassett has had thorough training and is a good man for Dodge City."

A typical Dodge City incident occurred one hot steamy evening in July 1887, causing Jim Masterson and Wyatt Earp to dash to the scene. A couple of Texas cowboys were leaving the saloon late one evening, returning to their camp just outside of town. After strapping on their six-shooters they decided to depart with a bang. They rode the street horseback, firing their pistols every which way, bringing the two lawmen out into the street. A gun battle ensued causing the cowboys to turn tail and ride out.

As they dashed across a bridge one of the lawmen wounded George Hoy. Nobody else was hurt. The only other damage done was a few lights that were shot out and some bullet holes were added through the walls of the Lady Gay Saloon. The bullets caused all the patrons to flatten out on the floor in haste. At the time Bat Masterson and Doc Holliday were immersed in a game of Spanish monte.

Young Hoy died of his wound days later. He was laid to rest in the finest of fashion by his cowboy brothers. The residents of Dodge thought he'd received

Taking a Look Back

by John McVey Middagh



'Dodge City Peace Commission' (Charlie Bassett is bottom row, far left)

his just dues, but still were deeply saddened to hear that he'd passed away, "George was nothing but a poor cowboy," reported the Ford County Globe.

In November 1879 Bassett resigned his law job in Dodge City and left to roam the West panning for gold. Never successful in that pursuit, he wandered into New Mexico and Texas. Maybe he spent some time in El Paso on his way to San Antonio in 1881. He remained in Texas for two years, then moved to Missouri to manage the Webster and Hughes Marble Hall Saloon. The Kansas City Journal welcomed him by reporting that the "Hon. C. E. Bassett, a well-known cattleman of Kansas and Texas, returned yesterday, after a brief stay in Dodge City. He will remain here for some time."

In 1883 Bassett was summoned back to Dodge City by Short, who still owned the Long Branch Saloon. The mayor of Dodge had run Short out of town in an effort to clean up the town, closing all the bars and sporting houses. Short put out a call for help, and his friends started showing up, gunmen all, including Bat Masterson, Earp and Bassett.

The town's businessmen were afraid the crackdown would hurt their businesses when cowboys from Texas arrived at the end of their cattle drive, causing Mayor Deger to recant, and allowing Short and the others to re-open. That ended the possibility of violence. There was not a shot fired. The entire incident still became known as the "Dodge City War."

All the participants faded back from wherever they had come. Bassett returned to Kansas, opening his own saloon that didn't last long, then going to work as a bartender for others. By that time he was suffering from inflammatory rheumatism. He traveled to Hot Springs, Arkansas, in hopes that the healing waters there would help. He died Jan. 5, 1896 at age 48.

There is a famous photo out there of some of Short's friends, who were called the "Dodge City Peace Commission." Bassett is the only one with a clean-shaven face and has the look of a true bartender.

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