

SCOTT COOLEY, TEXAS RANGER

Most Texas Masons are well aware of the longstanding relationship that has existed between Freemasonry and the Texas Rangers. Some are also aware of the fact that the Texas Rangers were instituted by Masonic Brother Stephen F. Austin and supported and maintained by Masonic Brother Sam Houston, Masonic Brother Mirabeau B. Lamar, and every subsequent President of the Republic of Texas (who were all Masons); and later, by each Governor of Texas, many of whom were Masons.

Named after the highest-ranking Texas Ranger during the era of the Frontier Battalion and Past Grand Master of Masons in Texas, the *Major John B. Jones Masonic Ranging Company* emphasizes the close relationship that Texas Rangers and Texas Masons have always shared. It has been said that “the badge of a Ranger was a good recommendation to become a Mason, and the badge of a Mason was a good recommendation to become a Ranger.”

Scott Cooley was born in Arkansas sometime in the year of 1855. Census records show varying age differences; however, the 1860 census shows him to be 5 years old. Scott's father, Mathias Cooley, was shot and killed by Thomas Horton on May 26, 1870. His mother, Martha Whitney was born in the Cherokee Nation which would account for Scott's dark complexion and dark eyes. Martha died sometime in 1862, so at the age of 7 Scott lost his mother and at the age of 15 his father. On a side note, Scott's brother James, hunted down and

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killed Horton the day after Horton murdered their father. The Cooley family in general were considered to be a fearless bunch who took pleasure in pursuing thieves and had a genuine hatred for Comanche Indians.

There are conflicting reports about their relationship but around 1873 Cooley met Ted Williamson. Some stories say that on a Cattle Drive through the Oklahoma Territory, Williamson a rancher from Mason County, Texas found and adopted Cooley, and with him returned to Mason County. Other stories say that about that same time Cooley and Williamson simply met while driving cattle and became good friends. It is a known fact that the two men drove Williamsons' cattle to Texas where the two men remained until their deaths. The friendship they forged lasted for the rest of their lives. When you hear "the rest of their lives", your first thought has to be years and years of friendship, however the truth is, their friendship was short lived. Also, the adoption story is a little difficult for me to believe. In those days a boy of 15 would, for the most part be considered a full-grown man. There is no doubt in my mind that Williamson took Scott "under his wing" but to have adopted a 15-year-old in those days is too far-fetched for me.

Shortly after arriving in Texas, in 1874, Cooley became a member of the Texas Rangers in Company D, under Captain

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C.R. Perry. Cooley told the Rangers he was 22, however it is now a known fact that he was only 19 years old when he joined the force with the rank of Corporal. I have to say even at 22 years of age, to be hired on by the Texas Rangers with the rank of Corporal, he had to have been a well-respected man in the territory of Mason County.

Ranger Cooley was regarded as knowledgeable and fearless when it came to tracking down known outlaws and seeing justice served whether that justice be delivered by a jury or by means of a firearm.

In July of 1874 Cooley was riding with Major John B. Jones, Commander of the Texas Rangers. John B. Jones? Where have we heard that name before? Major Jones was the highest ranking Texas Ranger during the era of the Frontier Battalion and his is a Past Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Texas. Anyway, Jones and Cooley were riding in the Western Frontier making routine inspections. On July 12, they along with Captain G. W. Stevens and several other Texas Rangers came under attack while pursuing a Raider Gang and were ambushed. Two Rangers lost their lives and two were wounded. After that fight Cooley resigned his post as Corporal but remained with the Rangers with the rank of Private.

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On December 4, 1874, while on routine patrol, Cooley, along with partner William Trayweek, who were working “beef detail”, came under attack by a group of Indian raiders. Cooley and Trayweek escaped the raiders and made it back to the Rangers camp and a counter-offensive began. Five of the raiders were killed and one wounded. Not a single Ranger lost his life, However, this began the downfall of Ranger Cooley, when at the end of the battle he removed a large strip of skin from the back of one of the raiders and declared he would use it to make a whip. Due to his conduct Major John Jones, discharged Cooley as a member of the Texas Rangers.

After his tenure as a Ranger, Cooley worked as a rancher for a short time in Menard County. On May 13, 1875 Cooley learned that his close friend Ted Williamson had been arrested by Deputy Sheriff John Whorle for cattle theft. While in custody a mob of German ranchers led by Peter Bader murdered Williamson. Cooley pledged revenge.

Cooley did allow the wheels of justice to run its’ course however when no attempt was made to prosecute Bader and other members of the mob, Cooley decided to take matters into his own hands.

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Between 10 Aug and 02 Sep 1875, John Whorle, Carl Bader and J.P. Miller were shot and killed. Scott was responsible for Whorle's death and likely the others, but he particularly showed his disdain for Whorle by scalping him. On 06 Sep, Sheriff John Clark was granted a \$300 reward for Scott by the governor. The next day, Clark led a posse of 40-60 men that killed Moses Baird and wounded George Gladden because they were likely responsible for Carl Bader's murder. Scott joined John Baird's vigilante gang that included a notorious villain who's name I will reveal later. On 25 Sep, Scott and the gang rode into Mason, a small town of 300 with 25 houses, four stores, two churches, two hotels, two saloons and a blacksmith shop. That same notorious villain and a man named Williams killed Jim Chaney who had helped the Sheriff posse ambush their compadres Baird and Gladden. On 29 Sep, Cooley, John Baird and George Gladden murdered Daniel Hoerster in Mason. For his safety, Scott remained in Baird's gang in Mason Co. and later Burnet Co.

On December 27th, Cooley and the notorious villain were arrested, and fearing a jailbreak were transferred to Austin and later to Lampasas where they were indeed busted from jail by supporters of Baird.

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Scott returned to Mason but left Baird's gang and headed to Blanco Co. Here's a report that puts those days in perspective:

A gentleman from the frontier says that “Scott Cooley, that notorious villain, and others, who were recently taken out of the Lampasas jail, have gone into camp, and that they defy the law and the authorities, and that there is no protection for life and property in many places up-country. He says that some men who have no visible means of support, and are suspected of being horse thieves, assert that the business don't pay now very well, as horses only command from twenty to thirty dollars in Austin and other places, and that that does not pay for the trouble of getting them and taking them to market. It is currently reported that the whole country is filled with armed men these snake-hatted, goat skin-leggined chaps who are the terror to travelers and law-abiding citizens. Perhaps the Governor will yet find it necessary to issue a proclamation authorizing all good citizens to shoot down all notoriously bad characters, and to offer rewards for their scalps. The people are crying aloud for protection, law and order, and they should have it, even if extraordinary measures have to be resorted to. Never has so much lawlessness been experienced in Texas.”

At the Nimitz Hotel in Fredericksburg, TX not far 40 miles or so from Blanco City, Scott became ill after eating a meal but

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eventually made it to his friend Daniel Maddux's home in Blanco Co. That would be Scott's final ride.

On June 10, 1876 former Texas Ranger, Scott Cooley died either from a brain hemorrhage or deliberate poisoning. The jury is still out on what the exact cause of death was, but a man named Rudolph Meyer said he died of “the fits”. Scott Cooley is buried in Miller’s Creek Cemetery in Blanco County, Texas. His tombstone simply states “Scott Cooley, 1852-1876, Texas Ranger”.

The notorious villain we spoke about earlier escaped the Mason County war and headed west to Arizona where he fell right in with the outlaws of that territory. This notorious villain became a member of the Clanton gang and tangled with the likes of Wyatt Earp and Doc Holiday. There is no proof of who was behind his killing, but everyone knows he died while facing the wrong end of a pistol. There is no proof of who pulled the trigger, but everyone in the territory knows the truth. This villain was killed either by Wyatt Earp or Doc Holiday, maybe both. This villain known by us all, this villain with deep roots in the hill county of Texas, was none other than Johnny Ringo.