

OKLAHOMA
TERRITORY

TERRITORIAL TALES

Bits of
History
Before
Statehood

INDIAN
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Early Sooners Had A Marshal Dillon

Oklahoma had its own Marshal Dillon long before television introduced Matt Dillon of Dodge City to the world of "Gunsmoke." He was James F. Dillon of Chickasha, who served as Grady County deputy sheriff and Chickasha policeman before he was appointed deputy U.S. marshal in 1912, five years after statehood.

During the first few months of the administration, chronicler J.B. Thoburn said, Dillon "assisted in the breaking up of one of the boldest gangs of counterfeiters that has operated in Oklahoma in many years and in the confiscation of their plant and the arrest of the offenders."

Thoburn also recorded in his 1916 "History of Oklahoma" that Dillon assisted in the capture of violators of the prohibition law and in the confiscation of property of bootleggers. On a raid incident to this work he assisted the sheriff of Grady County in unearthing a liquor plant buried underground in a smokehouse, where six 63-gallon barrels of whisky were found.

Another of Deputy Marshal Dillon's notable actions was participation in a raid on bootleggers in the town of Krebs in Pittsburg County. The raiders confiscated 1,781 gallons of "Choctaw beer," 1,325 bottles of liquor and 14 gallons of wine.