
THE JUANITA BROOKS LECTURE SERIES

presents

The 30th Annual Lecture

Antone B. Prince

Washington County Sheriff, 1936–1954

by Stephen L. Prince

St. George Tabernacle

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Juanita Brooks was a professor at [then] Dixie College for many years and became a well-known author.

She is recognized, by scholarly consent, to be one of Utah's and Mormondom's most eminent historians. Her total honesty, unwavering courage, and perceptive interpretation of fact set more stringent standards of scholarship for her fellow historians to emulate. Dr. Obert C. and Grace Tanner had been lifelong friends of Mrs. Brooks and it was their wish to perpetuate her work through this lecture series. Dixie State College and the Brooks family express their thanks to the Tanner family.

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Stephen L. Prince was raised in southern California but has strong ties to Utah's Dixie. His father's ancestors moved to St. George in 1863 as part of the Cotton Mission and many of his relatives remain in southern Utah, including his mother, who lives in St. George. His grandfather Antone Prince, the subject of this lecture, served as sheriff of Washington County from 1936 to 1954.

Prince is an independent historian, living and practicing dentistry in west Los Angeles in the shadow of his alma mater, UCLA, which he attended both for his undergraduate studies as well as dental school. He became interested in Mormon history after his brother Greg challenged him to write a biography of their grandfather, Antone. Ultimately that led to the publication by the Arthur H. Clark Company of his book, *Gathering in Harmony*, which won the Evans Handcart Award, presented at Utah State University, and the Thomas Rice King Award from the Mormon History Association. Articles connected to research for his book were published in *Journal of Mormon History*, *Nauvoo Journal* and *Utah Historical Quarterly*. A biography of Hosea Stout is currently awaiting publication by the University of Utah Press.

Antone B. Prince

Washington County Sheriff, 1936-1954†

By Stephen L. Prince, grandson

Juanita Brooks and Antone Prince were friends as well as neighbors, for more than two decades sharing a backyard fence. On many washdays after hanging her clothes to dry, Juanita would complain to her daughter Willa that Antone's wife Vilate once again had hung her clothes first, as if it were some sort of contest. In May 1933, Juanita married Will Brooks, sheriff of Washington County since 1927. One year later Will resigned to become postmaster, a more permanent job with better pay, and was succeeded as sheriff by his long-time deputy, Antone's brother-in-law John Cottam. Two years later, on the afternoon of June 2, 1936, Cottam, volunteered to move a large and very heavy safe from the recorder's office to the clerk's office at the Washington County Courthouse. Assisted by his son Mason, J. T. Beatty, and Ralph Whipple, Cottam was attempting to lift the safe when he suddenly straightened up, took a couple of steps backward, and started to fall. Beatty caught him and eased him to the floor and called for a glass of water, believing that Cottam had fainted, but a blood vessel had burst at the base of his brain, and he was dead. Informed by his wife Juanita of Cottam's death, Will Brooks immediately asked, "Who shot him?" for Cottam always carried a gun and took such chances that Brooks figured someday he might meet a bullet.¹

Twenty-one men filed applications to serve the remainder of Cottam's elected term, but Antone Prince was not among them. While serving as deputy county extension agent for the federal government, about three weeks after Cottam's death Antone returned late to his home in St. George from a district meeting at Beaver and was told by his wife Vilate that the county commissioners had been trying all day to reach him. He could not imagine what they wanted of him and found it very mysterious that if he got home by midnight he was to come immediately to the courthouse. There he was

greeted by county commission chairman George Lytle, who said, “Congratulations, sheriff.” Antone was dumbfounded and pleaded that they had the wrong man, but Lytle was persistent. “We went through [the applications], sifted them out, Rex Gardner mentioned your name. So we appointed you sheriff.”²

The job paid ninety dollars a month — a fairly low wage that had caused Will Brooks to resign two years earlier — but it gave promise of steady employment in the midst of the Great Depression. The morning after accepting the job Antone visited County Attorney Orval Hafen, who gave him a copy of the 1933 Utah Statutes and told him to learn it all by heart.³ Antone memorized the statutes, particularly the section referring to “the duties and responsibilities of the sheriff.” Fortunately, he was able to ease into the job, as relatively few events during his first year required police action, and most of those that did were centered on the possession of wine or liquors.⁴ There were also, of course, the usual intoxication and drunken driving arrests as well as the arrest of a few cattle rustlers, but no case gave any indication that Antone possessed any special law enforcement capability until it was suggested that he look into a crime that had actually occurred while John Cottam was sheriff.

On March 18, 1935, Spencer Malan, a rancher in Enterprise, a small town about fifty miles northwest of St. George, was reported to be missing. John Cottam looked into but could not solve the case, and Antone had never even heard of it. After being asked by Enterprise city marshal George Hunt to investigate the disappearance, Sheriff Prince went house to house in Enterprise on November 16, 1937, to gather information. Malan was last seen on St. Patrick’s Day in the company of Charles Bosshardt, so Antone visited Bosshardt’s farm with marshal Hunt, pretending to be a soil expert, while Hunt, who feared Bosshardt, hid out of sight on his hands and knees between the seats of the sheriff’s car. Bosshardt became suspicious after being peppered with questions and said, “What’s this all about?” Antone shook his finger at him and said, “Charlie, I’m charging you with murder in the first degree and you’re under arrest right now.”⁵ The arrest was a bold move, since there was no evidence that a crime had been committed, the body

of Spencer Malan never having been found. Before the sheriff left with his prisoner, Hunt cautioned, "You be careful; he's a very mean man," but Antone seemed to have no fear.

Night was at hand as the sheriff and his prisoner began the return trip to St. George. After informing Bosshardt that he did not have to answer any questions, the sheriff began the interrogation. "You might as well go back, because I don't know anything," was Charlie's response. For about ten miles Antone drove along in the dark contemplating his next move. Suddenly he whirled at Bosshardt, pointing his finger and saying, "Charlie Bosshardt, as sure as there is a God in Heaven you are guilty of murder in the first degree, and I can tell you within two places where the body is."

Bosshardt was stunned and asked incredulously, "Where?"

"Either up in the cedars back of your home or down on the desert in a well," the sheriff replied.

Charlie was dumbfounded. "Down on the desert in a well," he blurted.

Antone couldn't believe his ears. "You mean it is, huh?" It was a bluff, a ruse, a grand deception, but Antone had thrown out the bait and, to his astonishment, Charlie swallowed it whole.

"We had a fight down at the place and George Schaefer and I had to kill him," Bosshardt continued. "We took him down on the desert and threw him in this well. Then we sifted a lot of dirt down on him."⁶

It was late at night, and Antone had extracted a confession but still had no evidence that a crime had been committed. What if Bosshardt woke up the next morning and decided to recant? What if the body could not be found? The quick-thinking sheriff concocted another plan. Going to Dick's Cafe in St. George, he told proprietor Dick Hammer to fix up the best meal he could and put a couple of candy bars on the side to sweeten the deal. In the meantime, Antone asked Charlie if he could find the well at nighttime, perhaps fearing that with the dawn an attorney would appear and tell Bosshardt to keep his mouth shut. Bosshardt claimed that the killing was not intentional but rather in self-defense, that he and Malan had been

best friends since they had known each other, and that he was very willing to lead the sheriff, by moonlight, to the well where the body had been deposited. Armed with rope and flashlights, a group that included Prince, Bosshardt, City Marshal Paul Seegmiller, and Claire Morrow located the well. Antone began almost immediately the arduous task of searching for the body, but the well had partially caved in and was filled with tumbleweeds. The next day the sheriff worked with a crew that labored diligently to remove dirt and obstructions from the 110-foot-deep well.⁷

The case was sensational enough to generate headlines in many newspapers across the nation. The *Seattle Times* and *Salt Lake Tribune*, among other papers, featured a photo of the sheriff being lowered into the well, wearing as head protection a tin kettle from his wife's kitchen.⁸ After a difficult and dangerous day of digging in the 110-foot well, during which time the sheriff openly doubted Bosshardt's veracity, Spencer Malan's body finally was recovered, prompting a banner story in the *Salt Lake Tribune*, complete with a large mug shot of Charlie Bosshardt and a diagram of the abandoned desert well in Iron County where the body had been entombed for nearly three years. But as it turned out, there was one rather significant problem, as Antone explained:

"I tied this rope around his legs and said, 'Take him away.' He had a blue suit on, and when they started pulling they pulled the right shoulder off and his head. I thought that was all that was necessary. When they started pulling him up the juice from him came down on me in a stream. Just imagine how I felt. Well, we took him to St. George and I went to the district attorney and I said, 'Ellis [Pickett], we've got this man.' He looked at him and said, 'Well, we've got to have the head; without the head we haven't got any corpus delicti. We need a complete body, a corpus delicti, so he can be recognized.'"⁹

So it was back to the well, but it was obvious that locating the skull would be done at great risk. Under the direction of E. A. Hodges, state mining engineer, the walls of the well were timbered and, after about five more feet of digging — all by the sheriff, since his helpers refused to enter the hole — the badly crushed skull was located. Following the drama of the original arrest and the search

for the body in the well, the trial of Charles Bosshardt and George Schaefer seemed almost an afterthought, as the prosecution failed to break down the self-defense plea, and the jury came back with a verdict of ‘not guilty.’¹⁰

In reality, the prosecution may have made only a half-hearted attempt to assault the self-defense plea, for Orval Hafen recorded in his journal at the time of the arrest, “When I took Bosshardt’s confession Wednesday morning I came away feeling that it would be much easier to defend him than it would to demand his life.”¹¹ Predictably, Antone disagreed with the verdict: “That was a slap in the face of the law enforcement officer,” he said, “because even though they killed him in self-defense, they took him down in the desert and threw him in a well and concealed him.”¹²

That should have been the end of the story, but about four days after the verdict was read, Antone got a call to go to Bosshardt’s farm. Common sense dictated caution, but the sheriff went alone. It was the final surprise of the strange case: “When I got there they had a big dinner prepared. I’d never seen such a dinner — chicken or turkey, dressing, salads, dressing to go with it. They said, ‘Sheriff, you were so fair in this trial, you didn’t try to do anything but to be fair and just. We wanted to give you a dinner for it.’

“Well, naturally, I thought they were going to poison me. They would pass the mashed potatoes, and I’d thank them and let them go all around the table and let everyone take some and when it came back to me I’d take some. My fears were to no avail, because they were just trying to show me consideration because I’d been fair with these men.”¹³

Shortly thereafter, Sheriff Prince was called back to Enterprise, where Bosshardt was pointing a gun at Roy Adams and threatening, “If you move, I’ll kill you right here.” Antone, typically fearless, took the gun and told Bosshardt, I’ll take you to jail and lock you up and you’ll go forever if I have anything more like this happen. That was the last trouble the sheriff ever had with Charlie Bosshardt.¹⁴

Unlike John Cottam, who had carried a gun at all times, Antone was unarmed as he approached Bosshardt. “All the time you

were running around without a gun?” he was later asked. “Oh,” he answered nonchalantly, “I had a gun in my car.” In the glove compartment, to be exact, completely out of reach. “That was my philosophy. I never carried a gun.”¹⁵

In retrospect, the wonder is that Antone Prince, not John Cottam, never got shot. The first opportunity for that to happen came on November 16, 1938, a day after Jack Herman Gordon robbed G. W. Simmons of Salt Lake City, stole his car and left him tied in a gulch. Simmons worked himself loose and flagged down a Shivwits Indian bus driver named Yellow Jacket, who alerted authorities. Notified that a man matching the description of the robber had purchased a ticket for Las Vegas on the Union Pacific bus line, Antone and deputy sheriff G. P. Howell waited for the bus to stop near the Big Hand Cafe in St. George.

The waiting lawmen were too obvious, and a suspicious Gordon escaped through the emergency door of the bus and ran across Main Street into an alley behind the J.C. Penney store on St. George Blvd., where he hid among some packing boxes. Antone followed him into the alley, unarmed of course, and ordered him to come out with his hands up. As he flashed his light in the direction of Gordon, however, he saw a gun aimed right at him.¹⁶ “You don’t have enough guts to shoot,” growled the sheriff in what became a familiar refrain. “Come on out with your hands up.”

The next morning at breakfast Antone mused, “I can’t figure out why he didn’t pull the trigger.” A few days later, Antone’s sons Clayton and Alpine were taking a trailer full of trash out to the city dump and asked their dad for a gun to take with them in case they saw a rabbit. Antone gave them the gun he had just taken from his prisoner, but when they saw a rabbit and Alpine pointed the gun, he was unable to pull the trigger until he used both hands and all the strength he could muster. It finally dawned on Antone that the reason he wasn’t shot was that the mechanism was jammed.¹⁷

It was a close encounter but hardly the only one he ever had. Henry Ward, the sheriff of Las Vegas, called Antone one night and told him that a man who had just robbed a garage at gunpoint in

Las Vegas was headed in the direction of St. George and was armed and dangerous. Sheriff Prince set up a roadblock, which in this case amounted to him standing alone in the middle of the road, armed with a hunting rifle. At two o'clock in the morning, about seven miles west of St. George, he spotted the car: "I yelled at him to stop," recalled Antone, "and leveled my .30-.30 at him but he just kept a coming 'til he got right up to me almost. He plied on his brakes and I had to ask him to come out of the car with his hands in the air. I turned my head just a fraction of a second; I looked back, I looked right down the mouth of his revolver. There we were, out on the desert, just the two of us, and I was looking down his gun. I just stood there, he told me what he was going to do, he was going to kill me and throw me into my own car, haul me so far that I'd never be found.

"I let him talk — didn't appear to be frightened, but I was — and finally I said, 'You yellow son-of-a-bitch, you haven't got guts enough to shoot — hand me that gun!' His arm dropped and I took the gun out of his hand and threw it out in the sand. I left his car right in the middle of the road while I brought him to St. George and locked him up. On the road in he said, 'I don't know why I didn't kill you.'"¹⁸

In November 1938, after more than two years in office filling the remainder of John Cottam's term, Antone ran for election for the first time. Following his work in the Charlie Bosshardt case, the returns from Enterprise were predictable: Antone had picked up all but eleven votes, and nobody was quite sure why he didn't get those. He did just about as well in the rest of the county, getting nearly 64% of the vote. "Sheriff Antone B. Prince, Democrat, proved to be the best vote-getter," said the *Washington County News* in reporting that he received more votes and a larger margin of victory than any other candidate in the election.¹⁹

There was no doubt that Sheriff Prince was widely popular, but it did not hurt that he ran as a Democrat, a cagey move at the time of Franklin D. Roosevelt's first reelection, since theretofore Antone had been a Republican. "Sweeping seven candidates out of a possible 10 into office, the Democrats in Washington County definitely showed

that their candidates were the peoples' choice at the polls Tuesday," reported the *Washington County News*.²⁰

Ironically, one of the major depression-era programs of his new party was indirectly responsible for a significant portion of the crime with which the sheriff had to deal. The Civilian Conservation Corps, widely known simply as the CCC, was created by a Democrat-controlled Congress in 1933 as an employment measure to provide work for young men in reforestation, road construction, prevention of soil erosion, and park and flood control projects. In southern Utah and across the border on the Arizona Strip there were a total of eleven CCC camps, with most of the young men hailing from outside Utah. More than a few got into some sort of trouble while attached to the corps, causing an increase in the crime rate in Washington County. And a former CCC boy was responsible for the only murder that Sheriff Prince knew to be committed in his jurisdiction while he was in office.²¹

Royal Hunt, a resident St. George who ran a ranch about twenty-eight miles north in the Pine Valley Mountains near Central, met Vae Monroe Fenley, an eighteen-year-old ex-CCC member, on November 21, 1941, and offered him employment at his ranch. Fenley, who had been dishonorably discharged from the CCC for multiple thefts at his camp near Sacramento, worked on the ranch for two days, but on the third day he shot his boss through a window in the ranch house with a .22 caliber rifle and robbed him. While Fenley saddled a horse with the intention of riding to Nebraska, a trip of more than a thousand miles, Hunt revived enough to telephone the operator at Central to report he had been shot. Fenley subsequently reentered the house and shot the wounded rancher three more times, killing him.²²

Mrs. Mahalia Bracken, the telephone operator, had already called Sheriff Prince, who hurried to Hunt's ranch with his deputy Art Mitchell, Judge George Whitehead, and Royal Hunt's wife. He then organized a posse that searched all night for the fugitive. Early the next morning a government trapper captured Fenley, who was weakened from his nightlong wanderings in the severe cold. In his possession was Hunt's watch and \$21.51 taken from Hunt's wallet.

When taken into custody, Fenley initially denied any knowledge of Hunt's death, but with repeated prodding by Sheriff Prince he finally admitted that he knew Hunt had \$15 in his possession and had killed him to steal the money.²³ Justice was swift for the young man: Apprehended on November 25, 1941, he was arraigned on December 1; the jury was selected on January 6; on January 12, after three hours of deliberation, the jury delivered a verdict of guilty. Offered the choice of death by firing squad or hanging, Fenley chose the firing squad, and the execution was scheduled for March 10. Before the execution, however, his sentence was commuted to life in prison.²⁴ With that, Fenley was luckier than the previous three men arrested for murder in St. George, each of whom was hanged by vigilantes; one of the three, Tom Forrest, killed a man in Silver Reef in 1881 and was taken forcibly from the county jail and hanged from a large cottonwood tree in front of the home of Antone's father-in-law, George Cottam, leading an onlooker to comment, "I have watched that tree grow nigh onto twenty years, and this is the first time it has borne fruit."²⁵

Sometime before the CCC was disbanded at the start of World War II, a truck carrying twenty-six workers was hit by a flash flood on the Arizona Strip, a vast but sparsely populated area between the Grand Canyon and the Utah-Arizona border. All escaped but one, so Antone organized a search posse to scour the countryside. As they reached the mouth of the Virgin River Gorge, where two decades later I-15 was constructed, all turned back save for Antone and Jack Spencer. Hungry and thirsty, having gone without food and water all day, the two pressed on and soon encountered a large rattlesnake, which crawled back between two sandstone rocks and Antone anchored a stick to block its escape. Late at night, choking from thirst, Antone said to Jack, "I've got to go back and get a drink." As they descended a ledge in the vicinity of the rattlesnake encounter Antone said, "Jack, be careful, they say where there's one rattlesnake there's usually two." No sooner did the words leave Antone's mouth than a rattler grabbed him on the leg, hanging on his overalls. "My hell, I'm bit by a rattlesnake, Jack!" Antone yelled. The snake wrapped around his leg and hung on for several seconds before he

was able to shake it loose. Remarkably, the snake's fangs penetrated the pants but not his leg.

Having no flashlight and unable to see in the dark, the duo backed up against a ledge and stood there the rest of the night, afraid to move. The next morning they carefully made their way down through the narrows, locking arms to stabilize each other against the swift current of the Virgin River. As they exited the canyon several hours later they were met and received word that the body had been found by a dog about ten miles downstream near Mesquite, Nevada.²⁶

Antone's fear of rattlesnakes, considering that he had a very similar experience while growing up in New Harmony, was understandable, but his other great fear was irrational: He was terrified of rats and mice. Knowing of his fright, sons Alpine and Jim found a mouse in a bathtub one day and put it in a paper bag, alive. They handed the bag to Antone, who opened it and the mouse jumped out. Antone did not appreciate the prank. "I'll kill you sons-of-bitches!" he yelled as he chased his sons around the house. "I'll kill both of you! I'm going to kill you on the spot!"²⁷

Remarkably, that fear did not extend to when he came face to face with known desperados such as Bill Shanley. The Arizona Strip, being isolated from the rest of Arizona by the Colorado River and out of the reach of Utah authorities, was an ideal home for a number of polygamists seeking to live without government interference as well as for a variety of thugs, thieves, and cattle rustlers, the most notorious of whom was William Franklin Bragg, who assumed the alias Bill Shanley after killing a posse member by that name.

Shanley was a twelve-year-old tending cattle in a remote mountain area of southeastern Utah when he met and for nearly three weeks shared a campsite with four desperados, including Butch Cassidy. The infamous outlaw introduced him to the fine art of his trade and invited him to join his gang; Shanley declined the invitation but did follow in Cassidy's direction, eventually becoming, according to his biographer, one of the great cattle rustlers of all time

after having escaped from the Colorado State Penitentiary, where he was serving a sentence for first-degree murder.²⁸

The Arizona Strip, with plenty of cows, provided a perfect venue for Shanley, who rustled and killed cattle and brought the beef across the state line into Utah. In May 1941, Antone got a tip that Shanley was bringing beef into the cafes in St. George and arrested him, but Shanley was released on \$1,000 bond and did not stick around for a trial.²⁹ Months later, Antone spied the fugitive at the Liberty Hotel, tapped Shanley on the shoulder and told him he was under arrest. As always, Antone did not have a gun, but nevertheless he said, "You'd better hand me that thing under your arm, too; I don't want a scene here." Shanley looked at the sheriff, reached under his arm, and handed over his .45 Colt revolver.³⁰

Shanley was given a \$300 fine and six months in the county jail for "slaughtering of beef without a slaughterer's stamp," the only charge that could be leveled against him in Utah, since the cattle rustling took place in Arizona. At first, Antone carried two or three meals a day to the prisoner from Dick's Cafe, but after a couple of months he said, "Bill, I'm not going to carry another meal to you. If you can't get your own meal, you can starve." Shanley looked at Antone and said, "Do you trust me?" "If I didn't think I could, I wouldn't do it," came the response.³¹

Time and again Shanley went to Dick's Cafe, had his meal, and came right back. In May 1942, Antone took him before Judge Will Hoyt, who released Shanley to do necessary planting and farming on his ranch.³² "The sheriff tells me that you have been a model prisoner, Mr. Shanley," and told him he could go. Shanley replied, "Well, I'm not going." Both the sheriff and the judge tried to persuade him, but turning to Antone, Bill repeated, "I'm not going! You're the only man who's ever treated me like I was a white man, and I'm going to stay." Shanley, as a matter of fact, was white but had been raised on the Navajo Reservation in Arizona, and no man had ever treated him with the kindness and trust that the sheriff had, perhaps for good reason: He was, after all, a cattle rustler and convicted murderer.³³

Shanley finally did go to his ranch with the promise to return to jail in five months to serve the remaining sixty days of his sentence. True to his word, and before the appointed date, he returned to jail, and the sheriff continued to trust many prisoners, though one time he got stung. In August 1942, Harold Messenger, Bill Shanley and a few other prisoners went to Dick's Cafe for breakfast under the charge of Deputy Sheriff Israel Wade. As they started back after breakfast, Messenger claimed that he urgently had to go to the restroom and was permitted by Wade to go ahead. When Wade arrived at the jail, however, Messenger was nowhere in sight.

Antone found the escapee's tracks in back of the jail and surmised that he had headed north. Driving up to the Sugar Loaf, he did not see Messenger, so he drove east toward Washington. When once again he could not locate the escapee, he returned and drove several miles up the old road that went to Enterprise. Getting out of his car, he walked over to the edge of the Black Ridge and spotted the man climbing it about a quarter of a mile away. The sheriff ran, out of sight, to a point where he expected the prisoner to come over the ridge; he was in exactly the right location when Messenger emerged and immediately took the escapee into custody. Held in solitary confinement, Messenger vowed that, when released, he would come back and kill the sheriff, though the vow went unfulfilled.³⁴

Undeterred, Antone continued to trust many of his prisoners. At the close of World War II, Antone and his wife Vilate invited their son Clayton and his wife Joy, who were visiting St. George with their year-old son John, to go to a dance. "I'll get babysitting," said Antone, who left and soon returned with two young men. "Now you take care of this boy," instructed Antone. "I'll guard him with my life, sheriff," came the response. While at the dance, Clayton and Joy asked who the babysitter was. "Oh, my prisoners," Antone answered casually. "We came up and saw these two guys just fussing around outside," Clayton recounted, "and dad says, 'Well, I think it's about time for you boys to go back there... Can you go back over to Big Hand Café and get your dinner and then go up and lock yourselves in, or do you want me to do it?'" The prisoners

responded, “No, we can do it, sheriff.” “And they did,” Joy piped in. “They did!!”³⁵

This was truly a most unusual sheriff. His reputation, already established in the Charlie Bosshardt case, in 1940 grew to epic proportions, particularly among the younger set, with his handling of the most famous Dixie College prank of all time. “I’ll tell you, everybody heard about it,” recalled Dr. Everard Cox forty-nine years later.³⁶

What is now Southern Utah University in Cedar City at the time was known as BAC for Branch Agricultural College and was the archrival of Dixie College. Both schools were small, so the teams played football with only six players per side. In 1940, as the big game between the two approached, Merrill ‘Bud’ Kunz, one of the Dixie players, came up with a brilliant plan. Taking teammate Justin Tolten along to Cedar City, they carefully measured and laid out a large block ‘D’ on a grassy hillside near the football stadium.³⁷ Kunz, who was a skilled carpenter, took great pride in making the letter perfect with string line and tapes before pouring gasoline on the grass to kill it. The ‘D,’ between twenty and thirty feet tall, was an overwhelming and unwelcome sight for the hometown fans the next day.

Irate officials called Sheriff Prince, who investigated and in short order found the perpetrators. At the behest of leaders at BAC, an assembly was arranged for Kunz and Tolten to meet and apologize to their enemies. “Can you believe this?” said Kunz. “Now I’ve got to get up in front of the whole school!” On the appointed day, Sheriff Prince picked up the culpable parties and began to drive them to BAC and their doom. After chastising them, not more than halfway to Cedar City Antone suddenly put his foot on the brake. “Oh, I can’t take you up to apologize to those Cedar people,” he said as he turned back to St. George. But it was too soon to return — everyone would know they had skipped the assembly — so Antone took them to Washington, where they drove through the fields and stopped to get a milkshake for about as long as it would have taken to go to Cedar City and back. In recounting the incident, Kunz said that his father got a kick out of two things: That Sheriff Prince did not make

them apologize and that, through the years, many others took credit for the prank.³⁸

Though the Bosshardt case got the most press and the BAC prank story was repeated most frequently in St. George, the case that Antone always thought to be his most important was his encounter with Joe Lewis who, according to news reports, was rated by the F.B.I. as the #1 enemy on their list. So often did he repeat the story in his later years that Vilate, upon hearing just a few words on one occasion, said, "I've got to leave the room, I've heard it so many times!" and on another she simply said, "Oh, bull!" Vilate's reaction would seem to indicate that Antone embellished the story each time he retold it, but his account is remarkably consistent not only with the *Washington County News* but also with the official account in the *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*.

On the night of September 26, 1944, Highway Patrolman Loren Squire called Antone to report that he had been shot at twice after stopping a car for speeding. After reaching Toquerville and talking to Squire, Sheriff Prince approached the automobile and shouted, "If you're in that car, you'd better come out with your hands in the air, because you're surrounded and somebody's going to get hurt." Nothing happened, so he looked in the car and found a box on the front seat containing \$364 in silver dollars, three brand new guns that had never been fired — a .38 special police revolver, a .32 automatic revolver, and a .22 — and well over 100 rounds of ammunition.³⁹

Antone phoned Jay Newman, chief agent for the western district of the FBI, to report the incident. Newman heard enough and interjected, "Do you know who that cookie is?" Antone did not, so Newman told him: "Joe Lewis, the number one enemy in America today." Lewis had just robbed a bank in Prairie City, Oregon, and earlier in the year had escaped from the Texas State Penitentiary.⁴⁰ "You be careful; by daylight I'll have several agents down there to help you," Newman said.

At daybreak, Antone started tracking Lewis. In all his years running livestock he had become an expert tracker, as recognized by the *FBI Bulletin*: "Sheriff Prince is a tireless worker and has in the

past proved himself expert in the art of tracking down fugitives.”⁴¹ Though his tracks were easily identified by the unique prints of his rubber heels, which carried the picture of a bell, numerous times Lewis’s trail was picked up only to be lost as the outlaw traveled back and forth across the base of the Pine Valley Mountains. On the fifth day, Deputy Sheriff Carl Caldwell and two FBI agents again located the tracks and came upon Lewis near a stream. The noise of the running water covered their approach, but when they were close and called for him to surrender, Lewis fired two shots and jumped into the creek. The officers returned fire, striking Lewis in the right temple. When Antone arrived on the scene a few moments later, Lewis’s lifeless body was being dragged out of the water.⁴²

High praise was given by FBI agent Newman “for the fine cooperation of all branches of law enforcement” and, in particular, for “the trailing ability of Sheriff Prince.” The next week, Antone received a personal letter from the famous FBI director J. Edgar Hoover, commending him for “your tireless performance of duty, which, coupled with your detailed knowledge of the terrain and your abilities as a tracker, made possible a successful termination of this case.”⁴³

Antone had two other cases involving a gun battle. Las Vegas police called to notify Antone that a garage owner there was robbed and his car was stolen. Once again, Antone thought a roadblock meant standing alone in the middle of the road and barely got out of the way as the car tried to run him over. Both Antone and City Marshal Paul Seegmiller opened fire, causing the car to weave but not stop. Driving in a car with a windshield that could be pushed forward, the two lawmen gave chase, loaded up and ready for action. They spotted the car near Cedar City and followed it briefly down a dirt road but had to stop when dust from the suspects’ car reduced visibility to near zero. Later, the FBI found the car abandoned near Wendover, Nevada. There were holes in both hind fenders, large pieces of rubber taken out of both solid rear tires, and a bullet hole that lodged in the front seat just two inches from the driver’s back. Antone and City Marshal Paul Seegmiller fired numerous shots. The agents commended Prince and Seegmiller, saying “they had never

seen so many well placed shots in a car that didn't stop it," but they chided the pair "for not shooting at the men instead of just trying to stop the car."⁴⁴

The other known case of a gun battle had an almost comical ending. A car stolen at Mesquite, trailed by Antone and deputy sheriff Lee Adams, raced down Tabernacle Street at a speed of 80 miles per hour. When they failed to stop at the edge of town, Antone peppered the fugitive car with bullets and, as reported by the *Washington County News* on 30 September 1943, shot the tires off, forcing the car to stop. Two youths jumped out and began running up a hill. By the time the officers stopped the boys were nearly to the top of the hill. Antone yelled to them, "stop or I'll shoot your legs off." The youths, who had just been on the receiving end of superior marksmanship from the window of a speeding car, wisely decided not to tempt fate and stopped immediately and were taken into custody.⁴⁵

Antone was no-nonsense in most respects, but he also was compassionate and would try to settle a matter, whenever possible, outside the legal system. "If a juvenile was involved nowadays in some of these offences, they'd have him in court and really make a big deal out of it," said Charlie Pickett, whose father Ellis was district attorney for most of the time Antone served as sheriff. "Antone would get these kids who were doing some pilfering — we called it pilfering; it wasn't stealing — he'd get the kids and talk to the parents, and it never got past that. Once Antone would talk to you, you got things straightened out."⁴⁶ His sense of fair play could make friends out of enemies, as demonstrated by Bill Shanley and, to an extent, by Charlie Bosshardt, but the most unusual example occurred in a totally unexpected location.

After graduating from the USC School of Dentistry in 1943, Antone's son Clayton took the Utah State Board Examination, the clinical section of which took place at the Utah State Prison, using prisoners as patients. Thirteen graduates lined up to work in somewhat primitive conditions, with each patient sitting in an uncomfortable chair that had a board nailed to the back as a headrest and spitting into a gallon bucket. Seventeen prisoners were brought

out, and Les Warburton, the chairman of the Board of Dental Examiners, said, “Thirteen of you boys go over there and get in a chair.” Clayton had noticed that one of the convicts, number 17, kept staring at him. At the first opportunity, the man made a beeline for his chair. “Is your name Prince?” asked the prisoner. Of course it was. “I thought so. You look just like your dad. He’s the one who sent me up here.” “Oh, no; there goes my career,” thought the young dentist, but the inmate continued, “He treated me more fairly than anyone else in my life.” When Clayton finished the dental exam, the prisoner rewarded him with a tooled leather wallet and a braided horsehair belt.⁴⁷

Antone easily won reelection in 1942 and by 1946 had become so popular that nobody bothered to run against him. In 1950, an opponent dared to challenge him, but Sheriff Prince once again won by a wide margin. Something seemed to be missing, however: The number of arrests had dwindled in the years following 1946. In 1949 there were barely more than a quarter as many arrests as there had been a decade earlier and not many more the following year.⁴⁸

Part of the decrease might be ascribed to the prosperity the country experienced following World War II. The crime rate does seem to have decreased — certainly there were no murders or violent crimes and only a few armed robberies — but the possibility cannot be discounted that Sheriff Prince, after so many years in office, may have started to tire. By 1951, a portion of his attention was drawn elsewhere when he was elected secretary-treasurer of the Utah State Association of County Officials, a situation that became more acute in 1952 and 1953 after he was elected vice president and then president of the association, but there was one last important case to be handled.

The case had its roots in Mormon and state history. Although in the early twentieth century the church disavowed its doctrine of polygamy and strictly forbade the practice, a number of people continued to practice plural marriage. In 1933 the church began putting increased pressure on its members to cease the practice, and in 1935 the Utah State Legislature passed an act “Making Unlawful Cohabitation a Felony, and Providing That All Persons Except the Defendant Must Testify in Proceedings Thereof.”⁴⁹

A small town of polygamists called Short Creek (now the twin towns of Colorado City and Hilldale), which in 1935 consisted of twenty houses and a combination store and gas station, had been established on the Utah-Arizona border in Washington County. As the 1935 act elevated “unlawful cohabitation” from a misdemeanor to a felony, the location of Short Creek became very attractive to polygamists, who could cross back and forth over the state line to avoid arrest. In 1939 the State of Utah began cracking down on individual polygamists rather than on the settlement, and on August 30 and September 1, probably acting on orders from the state, Sheriff Antone Prince arrested Cleve LeBaron and brothers Richard and Fred Jessop.⁵⁰

LeBaron was a Short Creek fundamentalist, but the Jessops were from New Harmony, Antone’s hometown, and were living about a quarter of a mile south of town on the old James E. Taylor ranch. The brothers’ houses were about forty yards apart on the property, and two women lived with each brother.⁵¹ While LeBaron and Fred Jessop never were tried, Richard Jessop’s trial took place rather quickly and lasted just one day. he was found guilty and sentenced to five years in the state prison.⁵² Fundamentalist leader Joseph W. Musser and his associates were alarmed at the verdict, which they believed showed that Sheriff Prince, District Attorney Orval Hafen, and Judge Will Hoyt, all Mormons, were acting in concert “to stamp out polygamy.”⁵³

Richard Jessop never served a day in prison, however. He appealed his verdict to the Utah Supreme Court, making an important point. The law stated, “If any person cohabits with more than one person of the opposite sex, such person is guilty of a felony.” But what, asked Jessop’s attorney, defined cohabitation? Was simply sharing the same house against the law? The court agreed with Barnes’s argument, stating, “That the parties may have been seen living in the same house does not by itself prove a prima facie case.” Ruling that the evidence was insufficient to prove cohabitation, the court overturned the verdict, and Jessop was set free.⁵⁴

It is doubtful that Sheriff Prince had any emotional stake in the case. He was a faithful Mormon, to be sure, but the law was his

primary concern. Asked if the accused harbored any ill feelings toward the sheriff, Vivian Prince, Antone's nephew and a very close friend of the Jessops while they lived in New Harmony, said, "No, they didn't, they were friendly to uncle Tone. They never had any ill will. They knew that he was just upholding his job."⁵⁵

A few years passed during which the polygamists were left in peace, which is all that they desired, but on March 7, 1944, a massive raid coordinated by the executive branch of the Utah state government, FBI agents, and U.S. federal marshals served warrants throughout the region for the arrest of those accused of "unlawful cohabitation."⁵⁶ Called into duty once again, Sheriff Prince arrested Fred and Edson Jessop of Short Creek.

The arrest records for both brothers, which Antone wrote in longhand on 3 x 4 index cards, incorrectly but rather humorously, stated the charge to be "Illegal Cohabiting with more than one Person of the opposite sect." Though many of those arrested were found guilty in verdicts that were upheld by the United States Supreme Court, the cases against Fred and Edson Jessop were dismissed by Judge Will Hoyt of the Fifth District Court in St. George, the same judge who five years earlier had found Richard Jessop guilty of the same charge.⁵⁷

Sheriff Prince doubtlessly would have been happy never to be involved in another polygamist raid, but unfortunately the 1944 Boyden Raid (named after one of its architects, U.S. Attorney John S. Boyden) was a mere hint of what was to come. Arizona governor Howard Pyle, elected in 1950, became concerned that the community of Short Creek made welfare demands on Mohave County while its citizens were paying no taxes. Alarmed by an apparent misuse of tax funds for private purposes as well as by the burgeoning polygamist population, which was doubling each decade and by 1953 included thirty-nine men, eighty-six women, and 263 children, Pyle orchestrated a surprise assault on the town.⁵⁸

The massive raid took place on July 26, 1953, and involved 200 law officers, mostly from Arizona, though Pyle managed to secure the participation of Utah officers lest polygamists simply walk

across the border to avoid arrest. In defending the raid, Pyle stated that an investigation “had proved that every maturing girl child was forced into the bondage of multiple wifhood” and recalled that the population, just sixteen years before, was two men and a half dozen wives. “It is easy to see,” he said, “that in another 10 years the population of Short Creek would be in the thousands, and an army would not be sufficient to end the greater insurrection and defiance of all that is right.”⁵⁹

The invasion from both sides of the state line was set to coincide with an eclipse of the moon at 4:30 a.m. The Arizona force was accompanied by National Guardsmen, the Arizona attorney general, judges, policewomen, nurses, twenty-five carloads of newspaper reporters, and twelve liquor control agents, while the much smaller Utah force consisted mainly of Sheriff Antone Prince, his deputy Israel Wade, a few men deputized for the mission, Judge Will Hoyt, District Attorney Pat Fenton, and County Attorney Pershing Nelson.⁶⁰ What was supposed to be a secret raid turned out to be no surprise at all, however, for the polygamists had been tipped off the day before. Instead of being asleep in their beds, most of the populace stood around the city flagpole singing “America” while hoisting the American flag.

It is impossible to tell where the sheriff’s sympathies lay, but he was all business. On July 29 he arrested five women on Arizona warrants, but he released them the next day to return to care for their children.⁶¹ No sooner were the women returned than 125 married women and children attempted to flee the town, only to be turned back by Washington County deputy sheriffs while Prince and Israel Wade searched the steep cliffs for any stragglers.⁶²

The raid turned out to be a dismal failure and was certainly the low point of Antone’s career. Though all 263 children were seized, within three years all had been returned to their families in what had become an expensive and unpopular public embarrassment and a public relations nightmare. After the raid, the luster of being sheriff was gone, and Antone was getting tired. As the 1954 election approached, he told Democratic officials that he would not run, but they put him on the ticket despite his objection. “I never campaigned

a bit,” he claimed, “only wherever I went I told ‘em what a good man Roy Renouf was and to elect him.”⁶³ Antone’s memory may have been a bit selective, since the *Washington County News* reported that “Both candidates had conducted vigorous campaigns;” still, there is no doubt that he was tired of the office.⁶⁴

Renouf won the election, but out of nearly 3,500 ballots his margin of victory was only sixty votes, an extremely close race considering that Antone ran as a Democrat when the Republicans, led by President Eisenhower, had taken control. Prince’s reign was over, and he was openly relieved. Now fifty-eight years old, he had served for eighteen and a half years. During that time he was the law in Washington County, and he had become a most memorable sheriff.

Endnotes

- 1 Will Brooks, *Uncle Will Brooks Tells His Story*, as recorded by Juanita Brooks (Salt Lake City: Taggart, 1970), 219.
- 2 Antone Prince, interview with Gregory Prince, St. George, Utah, 21 September 1971. Transcript copies of all interviews cited in this paper are in possession of the author.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Sheriff Prince kept his arrest records on simple 3 x 4 indexcards; for many years these records were in the Washington County sheriff's office but they are now in possession of the author.
- 5 Antone Prince, interview with Delmar Gott, St. George, Utah, 22 April 1975. In the interview, Prince was clear in stating that Hunt was in the car because he was "scared to death."
- 6 Ibid. Bosshardt later said that after a dance, while he was mounting his horse at the Malans' corral, Malan approached and attacked him while drunk. In self-defense, Bosshardt had hit his friend with an iron bar. Eva Malan's brother, George Schaefer, helped Bosshardt take the body to the well and dispose of it. Schaefer stated that he did not think Bosshardt had been paying attention to his sister at the dance and that he did not know how the fight started. See *Salt Lake Tribune*, 18 and 19 November 1937.
- 7 *Washington County News*, 18 November 1937.
- 8 *Salt Lake Tribune*, 20 November 1937; *Seattle Times*, 21 November 1937.
- 9 Antone Prince interview with Delmar Gott.
- 10 *Washington County News*, 27 January 1938.
- 11 Orval Hafen, "Journal of Orval Hafen," 20 November 1937, in possession of grandson, Jason David Archibald.
- 12 Antone Prince interview with Delmar Gott.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 *Washington County News*, 17 November 1938. Gordon admitted his guilt to Judge Will L. Hoyt on the very day he was arrested, and he was sentenced immediately to from five years to life in the Utah State Prison.

- 17 Interview with Clayton Prince by Stephen Prince, St. George, Utah, 29-30 August 1998.
- 18 Antone Prince interview with Gregory Prince, 21 September 1974.
- 19 *Washington County News*, 10 November 1938.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 In 1954, former CCC employee Stanley Julius Dzwiacien of Ohio confessed to the 1938 murder of a fellow CCC worker, whose death at the time was ruled a drowning. See *Washington County News*, 14 January 1954.
- 22 *Iron County Record*, 4 December 1941.
- 23 *Salt Lake Tribune*, 26 November 1941.
- 24 *Washington County News*, 14 January 1942.
- 25 Douglas D. Alder and Karl F. Brooks, *A History of Washington County* (Salt Lake City: Utah State Historical Society, 1996), 351.
- 26 Antone Prince interview with Gregory Prince, 1974.
- 27 James Prince interview with Stephen Prince, 25 March 2000.
- 28 Grant B. Harris, *Shanley: Pennies Wise – Dollars Foolish*, (New York/Washington/Atlanta/Los Angeles/Chicago: Vantage Press, 1980).
- 29 *Washington County News*, 8 May 1941.
- 30 Antone Prince interview with Delmar Gott.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 *Washington County News*, 7 May 1942.
- 33 Antone Prince interview.
- 34 *Washington County News*, 13 August 1942.
- 35 Clayton Prince interview.
- 36 Everard Cox, interview with Stephen Prince, 10 May 1999.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 Lewis Kunz interview with Stephen Prince, 8 May 1999.
- 39 *Washington County News*, 28 September 1944.
- 40 FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin, 14 (June 1945): 10.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 *Washington County News*, 5 October 1944.

- 43 Letter of J. Edgar Hoover to Antone Prince, October 1944.
- 44 Paul Seegmiller, "History," in possession of Fayonne Whitehead, New Harmony, Utah.
- 45 *Washington County News*, 30 September 1943.
- 46 Charlie Pickett interview with Stephen Prince, 5 December 1999.
- 47 Clayton Prince, *Go Stick It in the Ditch: An Autobiography* (St. George: privately published, 1999), 22.
- 48 Antone Prince arrest records, 1936-1954.
- 49 Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy: A History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1986), 195.
- 50 Antone Prince arrest records. Neither the arrest nor court records indicate that Fred Jessop nor LeBaron were prosecuted.
- 51 Vivian Prince interview with Stephen Prince, 29 August 1998.
- 52 State of Utah v. Richard Jessop. Criminal 268, 20 September 1939. Court records repose at Washington County Courthouse, St. George, Utah.
- 53 Joseph Musser, "Journal," September 1939. LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City.
- 54 State of Utah v. Richard Jessop, No. 6193, 6 May 1940. Court records repose at Washington County Courthouse, St. George, Utah.
- 55 Vivian Prince interview.
- 56 Martha Sonntag Bradley, *Kidnapped from That Land: The Government Raids on the Short Creek Polygamists* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1993), 68.
- 57 Antone Prince arrest records.
- 58 Bradley, op. cit., 112-123.
- 59 *Washington County News*, 30 July 1953.
- 60 *Washington County News*, 13 August, 1953.
- 61 *Salt Lake Tribune*, 30 July 1953.
- 62 *Salt Lake Tribune*, 31 July 1953.
- 63 Antone Prince interview with Gregory Prince.
- 64 *Washington County News*, 3 November 1954.