

Oldest Grand Jury Bailiff Dies; Was Civil War Veteran

Thomas Holgate, 83, said to be the longest serving grand jury bailiff in the history of El Paso, and possibly of the state, today was dead.

He was found in his room at 411 South Campbell street at 5 p. m. Tuesday. Coroner R. B. Rawlins, who conducted an inquest, believes he died sometime Monday night from old age.

He was lying peacefully in bed as though he might have died during sleep. Dozens of Mexican children clustered around his door when they learned the news.

Estranged from his own family, Mr. Holgate seemed to seek the love that was denied him by a family life in being friends to the children of his neighborhood. He seldom went home without a bag of candy for his small Mexican friends.

Mr. Holgate has served as grand jury bailiff in 34th district court for 14 years. Court officials today call him one of the most conscientious men that ever held the grand jury bailiff's job.

He made it his job while on duty before the grand jury door to protect court house furniture. Luckless reporters who sat around the door waiting for the jury to report, frequently got a calling down by Mr. Holgate for putting their feet upon the benches.

"That is public property, young fellow," Mr. Holgate would say. "It's against the law to deface public property. Your heels will scar up this nice furniture." Mr. Holgate once made a district judge put his feet on the floor.

Mr. Holgate has been in El Paso for about 28 years. For about 12 years he has lived among the Mexicans in his little room on South Campbell street. Though able to afford a better place of living he preferred to stay among his "friends."

Mr. Holgate was a civil war veteran having the distinction of being both a Confederate and Union soldier. He was in Texas when the war broke out. He was only 17 years old. He enlisted in the Confederate army but ties of the north where he was born, were too strong, so he deserted and went north and joined the Union army. He was twice captured by the rebels and each time he escaped. He was shot in the leg in one battle and walked with a limp all his life.

H. G. Van Haselen, 64, who applied for his job as bailiff today and was promised the position by judge W. D. Howe, knew the old man well. Mr. Van Haselen served with him as bailiff years ago.

Spanish American War Veterans today offered to take charge of his funeral. The son, Claud E. Holgate, wired district attorney Vowell and asked if his father left a will saying where he wanted to be buried. "There is room in the family plot here if he did not make other requests," the son wired from Newark. He asked if his father left any money. Mr. Vowell is searching for a will. The body is at Hartford mortuary.