

# CHEYENNE BEGAN AS A VIOLENT CITY

## #1 The Shootouts

By Richard T. Ammon

The classic television-western, face-to-face shootout in the streets of Old Cheyenne was very uncommon. Only a handful were reported. The Magic City wanted to become a high-class town unlike most others in the Wild West. By ordinance, pistols and rifles were not allowed to be carried on the streets. One incident in 1868 resulted in each man inflicting only superficial wounds upon the other and both became best of friends after their ruckus on Eddy Street (now Pioneer) near Sixteenth.

In another incident, according to the Cheyenne *Leader* newspaper, in March of 1877, two men got into an exchange inside Shingle and Locke's saloon. A gambler from St. Louis, C. H. "Charley" Harrison, known for his skills with a pistol, insulted another gambler, Jim Levy, by stating he hated Irishmen. Levy, being Irish, took offense. He was a feisty fellow known for killing a couple of men in previous gunfights. They moved outside onto Sixteenth Street near today's Carey Avenue.

As they began quarrelling, Levy pulled a gun. Unarmed, Harrison ducked into the Senate Saloon, where Marv's Place is today, and grabbed a revolver. He walked back onto the snow-covered street while onlookers placed bets with Harrison being the favorite. The two began trading pistol shots as they moved west on Sixteenth, concluding a few minutes later around the corner on Eddy Street. Levy, referred to by the *Leader* as a "pistoliferous gambler", got the better of the argument as Harrison was eventually struck in the left side of his chest. Harrison fell onto the snowy street, but they continued to shoot at each other as Levy ran across the street and fired his last round into Harrison's abdomen. By-standers carried Harrison into his hotel room at the Dyer Hotel, just north of today's Dinneen's building, where his wife and daughter waited. Even though he was given a favorable prognosis, Harrison died in his hotel bed a week later.

The *Leader* estimated his funeral was attended by "a majority of the sporting fraternity, with their wives, and other females". No charges were filed against the winning shooter, because it was deemed a fair fight.

The entire fracas was witnessed by Bat Masterson, famous lawman of West, who wrote about it in his New York City newspaper expose' in 1907. He noted in that article that the only reason Levy won the shootout was because "he looked through the sights of his pistol, which is a very essential thing to do when shooting at an adversary who is returning your fire". Masterson was working as a banker in downtown Cheyenne for over a year.

However, a better example of true violence typical in early Cheyenne was illustrated in the story of Pat Mallally. He was the proprietor of two of Cheyenne's increasing number of saloons and brothels, part of a rapidly growing tent town. Just three months after Cheyenne was founded, the City Council in October of 1867 determined Mallally was not managing his businesses within the standards as dictated by the new city charter and his establishments were shut down. Mallally appealed to the Council and, after agreeing to changes, his businesses were reinstated and he was allowed to sell spirits again.

Several of his former female employees had testified against him at the initial council hearing. Later that night, after he got his businesses back, he sought out those he blamed for the initial closures and his loss of income. He knew they were at a brothel on Ferguson (Carey Avenue today) between 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Streets, where the multilevel, city parking garage now stands.

About nine-thirty on the night of October 4<sup>th</sup>, Mallally and a friend, known only as "Limber Jim", paid the house a visit. Mallally got off his horse and walked to the door while Limber Jim stayed on his mount in front of the two-story building. After a lot of pounding on the door and an exchange of unpleasant words with someone inside, a patron also attempted to enter the house. It was then that Mallally finally forced his way into the brothel.

Only seconds passed before there was an explosive blast from a shotgun that lit up inside the building! Mallally hadn't gone in with a shotgun. Only another moment passed before there was a loud shot from the shadows outside the brothel. The bullet from a large caliber pistol took the unsuspecting Limber Jim right off his horse!

After a brief investigation of the two murders, the Sheriff emptied the building for the night. But during the darkest hours of the next morning, according to the Cheyenne *Leader* newspaper, "the house in which Mallally was killed was burned to the ground, together with all the furniture, wearing apparel, and, it is said, a considerable amount in greenbacks" in an upstairs bedroom.

No one was ever accused of the double murder that night and likely, except for the law, none of the townspeople even cared. It was a sign of more bad things to come to early Cheyenne.

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