There is lots more to know about Sam Myres than was included in Sandra Myres’ monograph she self-published in 1961; not least that Sandra was a Myres because she married Sam’s great-nephew Charles on the very day Sam died in 1953.

Sandra’s monograph is very, very good. It does have some information worth upgrading, such as there being no evidence that Sam’s second wife Eva had tuberculosis as stated; instead she was a heroin addict and died accordingly (her death certificate).

In support of these comments, several pages of an appendix have been added to the back of this particular copy Sandra’s monograph, setting out in chronological order the findings in her work and the learnings that followed.

She could not know, for example, what would happen after 1961 to her and to Sam’s company including its several owners into the present day (his nephew Dace Myres took it on at Sam’s death in ’53, his son Bill Myres at Dace’s death in 1964, a saddler named Harlan Webb took it on at Bill’s request in ’65, Webb sold it on to Col. James Spurrier [Ret] in ’75 who handed it on in ’76 to Frank La Croix who sold the Myres hard assets to Robert McNellis in ’78 and only the name to David Duclos who holds it today).

The appendix is as complete and accurate as it could be made in October of 2019 after many years of research.

Red Nichols, 'The Holstorian', Queensland, Australia 2019

S.D. MYRES: SADDLEMAKER

by

SANDRA L. MYRES

Privately printed

KERRVILLE, TEXAS
1961

[Handwritten signature: Sandra L. Myres]
[Handwritten note: Property of Richard "Red" Mitchell]
To "Tic" Sam who said,

"Whatever you write about me,
I've probably done something worse."
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Appreciation is gratefully acknowledged to Professor S. V. Connor for his direction of this thesis and to the other members of my committee, Professors Ernest Wallace and James E. Kuntz. For their cooperation in obtaining information and materials, gratitude is expressed to the following: E. R. Myres; Mrs. Jack Hilburn; Annie Myres Elliott; Raymond Elliott; E. Q. Daniel; and the S. D. Myres Saddle Company and its staff, Dace Myres, William J. Myres, and Mrs. Otto Meyer. I should also like to acknowledge the help of the staff of the County Clerk's Office, and the District Clerk's Office, Nolan County, Texas, and the staff of the Probate Clerk, El Paso County Court, El Paso, Texas. I am deeply indebted to Mrs. Richard Snyder of Lubbock for the drawings used in Chapter IV and to Charles E. Myres for the photographic work.
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INTRODUCTION

Since Frederick Jackson Turner proposed his thesis of the importance of the frontier in American history, many articles and books have been written on the American west. Some have been popular in style; others have chronicled the history of the west, its geography, culture, and economy. The wealth of available material has provided details for the historian of many facets of western life. One of the fields most widely exploited by both popular writers and historians has been the cattle and ranching industry. A collection of all the materials dealing with ranches, cattle, cattle drives, and the American cowboy and his life would fill a large library. Yet, despite the wide variety of works on the cattle kingdom and its operation, almost nothing has been written about the equipment used by the cow country people in their daily work. The more exciting parts of the equipage of the cowboy such as the horse and "six-shooter" have received some attention, but what is a horse without a saddle or a pistol without a holster? Of these more prosaic items little is mentioned.

Just as it was necessary for the farmers to make changes in their methods of operation and equipment to adapt to the plains, so was it necessary for the stockmen to change many of their practices as they left the cow pens and small stock farms of the east and entered into large scale grazing operations on the vast grasslands of the west. Much of the equipment and many of the methods of the first Texas cowboys, the Mexican vaqueros, were adopted by the Anglo-Americans,
and from Texas these ways spread throughout the ranch country. The lariat, chaps, and so-called western saddle evolved from the equipment used by the vaqueros.

The saddles which are used in the western United States and northern Mexico differ in many respects from the small English saddles used in the east. The western or stock saddle has evolved from the saddles used by the Spanish conquistadores, and is adapted to the particular needs of the cattle country. The saddle used on the range weighs from thirty to forty pounds, the weight being necessary to prevent a roped steer or calf from tearing the saddle apart. The pommel and horn serve as an anchor post for the lariat, enabling the horse to hold down a large steer by keeping a constant tautness in the rope while the cowboy dismounts to tie the animal's feet. The shallow seat of the eastern saddle is completely useless in ranch work, but the high cantle or back bow of the western saddle gives a firmness to the seat of the rider who sits well down in the saddle rather than precariously upon the top. Because of the long hours he spends in the saddle the cowboy requires a more comfortable and less tiring means of riding than that afforded by the eastern saddle. The stock saddle forks low down over the pony's back so that the saddle rests firmly in place and cannot easily be pulled off. The broad cinches bind saddle and pony together in a way that for all practical purposes make them one piece. The long and heavy wooden stirrups are admirably suited to the requirements of range work. The strong wooden house to the stirrup not only protects the foot from being crushed when riding through the herd but prevents the pony from biting the boot which he
sometimes tries to do.\footnote{The development of the western saddle is traced in Chapter IV.}

The saddle plays an important part in the work of the cowboy and his pony as they rope and brand cattle, ride the fences, or jog along over long distances in search of strays. Although the cowboy's saddle may be plain and worn, it is usually of durable quality and built by a good saddlemaker. The old expression, "on a ten dollar horse and a forty dollar saddle" is not without truth. The cowboy's love of his saddle is one of the traditions of the Southwest. This attachment is quite natural, for the saddle is not only the cowboy's workbench by day but his pillow by night. The saddle is also part of the cowboy's recreation, for it is used in many of the events of the rodeo. Broke or flush, a cowpuncher will usually manage to hold on to his saddle. The old time cowboy who parted with his saddle immediately lost caste. This was not only an indication of abject poverty, but absolute and overwhelming degradation.

Not to be overlooked is the highly ornamented saddle. The Anglo-American cowmen seem to have borrowed from their Latin neighbors to the south a love for ornate and elaborately decorated saddles. Although not essential as working equipment, the decorations on many saddles indicate the cowboy's sense of pride in his equipment and his artistic sense and love of design. Even the poorly paid cowpuncher takes pride in a good saddle, and those not thrifty enough to satisfy the urge for a fine, carved, and silver mounted saddle frequently decorate their saddles with snake skins, secured by their natural adhesives to the saddle in fantastic shapes and curious patterns.
On the other hand, some cowmen, that is, owners of cattle, have saddles that cost as much as ten thousand dollars. There is practically no difference between these expensive saddles and the less costly variety used by the cowboy except in the matter of ornamentation. Large amounts of money are often invested in gold, silver, and precious stones for the decoration of prized saddles.

Like the farmers and stockmen, the eastern saddlemakers had to learn new methods for plying their trade in the west. Harnessmakers and saddlemakers learned from Mexican workmen the art of cutting and fitting the many pieces of the western saddle. Although Mexican artisans probably did most of the elaborate carving and decoration on the first stock saddles, the Anglos gradually took over the field. It is interesting to note, however, that many Latin Americans still work in the leather industry today, principally in carving or other decorative work. The importance of the saddle to ranch work made the saddlery one of the most important businesses in western towns. Like the automobile dealer of today, the saddlemaker was an important man in the economy of the area, for like his modern counterpart he furnished part of the means of transportation as well as equipment vital to the operation of the ranches. Among the isolated homes and settlements of the American west the horse furnished the chief means of transportation, and the saddle was an essential accoutrement. The saddlery not only supplied the saddle itself but also provided many other necessary items—chaps, rope, harness, blankets, holsters, and occasionally firearms. Some shops also carried a stock of work clothes, Levis, shirts, slickers, hats, and gloves, as well as boots. Thus, the saddlery and
its employees, men experienced in providing the leather goods required by the cattle industry, played an important role in the economic life of the cattle kingdom. This important and extensive industry has been largely bypassed in the story of the west.

Much has been written of the complete use of the buffalo by the Plains Indians. Equally fascinating is the use of cattle in the ranching industry. The leather produced from the hides of slaughtered cattle was in turn used to create the tools for rounding up and driving the cattle to market—saddles, chaps, belts, holsters, and boots. When the automobile and truck replaced the necessity for the horse, the leather industry declined, and the saddlemaker began to disappear from the western scene. Yet his contributions to the way of life in the cattle kingdom helped to write part of the romance of the west. In an attempt to bring the leather industry into perspective this paper will trace the life of a well known saddlemaker, Samuel Dale Myres, and the company which he founded.
CHAPTER I

FAMILY AND EARLY LIFE

Samuel Dale Myres, the businessman, was a product of the time and region in which he grew up. His parents were sturdy farm folk who migrated to Texas after the Civil War and took up land near the frontier. Sam's early life on a small, hilly Texas farm and his parents' independent spirit left indelible marks on his character. His life reflected the ever-changing scenes in the development of the west. When the frontier moved farther west, he moved with it, and changed to meet its demands.

Sam's father, David Rittenhouse Myres, was born in Washington County, Pennsylvania, on April 24, 1839. An adventurous young man, David left his farm home to see the country. When the Civil War began, he was in Washington County, Texas, where he enlisted as a private in Company C, 10th Texas Infantry, C.S.A., on October 25, 1861. Although David had been reared in Pennsylvania and his family still lived there, his sympathies were with the South. Captured at the battle of Arkansas Post, exchanged and returned to his company, he later served in the Kentucky and Tennessee theatres of war including the battles of Jonesboro, Spring Hill, Franklin, and Nashville.

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2United States, National Archives, Index to Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers, microfilm copy, Archives, Texas State Library.
3Mamie Yeary, Reminiscences of the Boys in Grey (Dallas, 1912), p. 559.
During his Confederate service in Kentucky, David met Mary Jane Dale who lived with her parents on a farm near Lexington in Montgomery County. Though there was little time for courting during the period when his company was camped near the Dale farm, David managed to win young Mary Jane's heart. After the war, he returned to Kentucky where he and Mary Jane were married on December 24, 1866.\(^1\) It was not an auspicious time to begin a new life. Throughout the South there was turmoil and confusion; money was scarce, and the land was scarred and depleted after the long years of war. Not knowing where else to turn, David and Mary Jane went to Pennsylvania where David hoped to work on his father's farm. It was not a wise choice. Neither David’s stepbrothers and sisters nor their neighbors were prone to look kindly upon an ex-Rebel and his young Southern bride. By 1870, David and Mary Jane had decided to leave Pennsylvania. Hearing of the land opening up in Texas, they determined to go there and locate a homestead.

It is difficult to imagine the hardships of such a journey. Although little is known about their trip, it appears that the Myres traveled primarily by wagon. They probably went first to Kentucky and stopped for a while to visit the Dales before proceeding. Bad roads and unbridged streams made the trip difficult. It must have been a depressing journey through a land of ruined plantations and empty fields laid waste by war and its aftermath. Perhaps they traveled through the area where David had fought, past battlefields where

\(^1\)Mary Jane Dale Myres, Family notes in S. D. Myres' personal Bible, S. D. Myres Papers.
his comrades had fallen. To increase their suffering, their first child, a girl, was born prematurely during the journey but did not survive the first day of life.\textsuperscript{5}

Arriving in Texas, the Myres pushed on to the German community of Brenham. Here they rested briefly at the home of Mary Jane's sister, Mrs. W. C. Coney. In February 1871, the Myres joined the Coney's and the families of T. R. James, Doctor J. R. Keating, and Sam Keating for the journey to the frontier. The wagon train arrived in Cleburne, Johnson County, Texas, in March 1871.\textsuperscript{6} Perhaps David chose this area because he had served under generals Cleburne and Granbury during the Civil War, and many of the men from units under their command had settled in the region following the war.\textsuperscript{7}

Under the revised pre-emption law passed by the Texas Legislature on August 12, 1870, a married man could pre-empt 160 acres of land, live on it for a period of three years, and purchase it for one dollar an acre.\textsuperscript{8} Anxious to find a place before fall, David began a search for land available for pre-emption. According to a family story, David was out seeking a suitable location when he saw a rancher

\textsuperscript{5}This.

\textsuperscript{6}Undated newspaper clipping, "Coney Family Moves Here in 1871." Clipping in possession of Annie Myres Elliott, George's Creek, Texas.

\textsuperscript{7}There is a legend in the family that David was one of the men who found the bodies of Generals Cleburne and Granbury after the battle of Franklin, Tennessee. This has never been substantiated although it is known that David served at the battle of Franklin.

\textsuperscript{8}H. P. N. Gammel (comp.), \textit{The Laws of Texas 1822-1897} (10 vols., Austin, 1898), VI, p. 918.
leaning against a fence and stopped to inquire about land in the area. The rancher was Matt Graham, owner of what is now the McClung ranch, and David's companion during the war. The two men quickly renewed their friendship, and Graham helped Myres locate acreage on the Brazos River near the small communities of Fort Spunky and George's Creek. The Myres settled on the land in July 1871, and built a log cabin. On November 22, 1871, their first son, Samuel Dale, was born. Five other children were to be born to the couple: Morris Carlos in 1874, Fannie Rose in 1878, Annie Earl in 1881, William in 1884, and Charley Clifton in 1887. (See Figure 2, page 20.) The land which David and Mary Jane selected for their home lay near the great Cordova Bend of the Brazos River. Most of their neighbors were ranchers or small stockmen although there were some other farmers in the area. The land was not exceedingly rich, but it offered a far better chance to make a living than the place from which they had come. The country lay just within the eastern edge of the western Cross Timbers. Although there were dry years, many small streams and creeks in the area provided a fairly good water supply for farming. The gently rolling prairies were well suited to ranching and somewhat

9 Myres family gravestone, George's Creek Cemetery near Cleburne, Texas (see Figure 1, p. 20). Although the Myres settled in Johnson County in 1871, David did not file on the land until August 7, 1890. See Texas General Land Office, Abstract of all Original Texas Land Titles Comprising Grants and Locations to August 31, 1941 (3 vols., Austin, 1941), II, p. 465.

10 Mary Jane Dale Myres, Family notes in S. D. Myres' personal Bible, S. D. Myres Papers.

11 Ibid.
less suited to cultivation. David planted primarily cotton, but he also raised some corn and vegetables, and kept a small flock of sheep and a few cattle and horses. The Johnson County region had been settled during the early 1850's by a group of hardy frontiersmen. It now lay behind the frontier line, but not within the densely populated section of the state. Indian raids in the counties to the north and west were frequent during the post-war period, but the immediate area had recorded its last raid in 1869. Still, the country retained its frontier atmosphere. Game was available, though not plentiful; much of the land had to be cleared of scrub timber before it could be cultivated. There were many ranchers in the area, but there was little conflict between them and the new farm settlers. Cooperation in clearing and taming a new country was necessary, and the older residents welcomed the help of the newcomers. Cattlemen and farmers helped each other in putting up fences and working the land. More settlers lessened the chance of Indian attack and made possible the organization of a large force to defend the communities if the need arose.

The Myres were well liked by their neighbors. David's sheep crossed cattle pastures on their way to water without any complaint from the cattlemen. Some of the men knew David from the war, and they respected him. He had a reputation as an honest and fair man. Many

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12Thomas T. Ewell, History of Hood County (Granbury, 1895; reprint, Granbury, 1956), pp. 4, 6. Among these early settlers were Charles Barnard, the well known Indian trader, and Robert and Elizabeth Crockett, surviving family of David Crockett.

of the residents of the George's Creek community who remember David Myres have said that they would rather have his word on a transaction than all of the signed legal papers available. David was a leader in the community, one of the founders of the local church, and Sunday school superintendent for many years. The George's Creek Church, like many others in sparsely settled areas, was made up of members of several denominations. No one group was large enough to support a separate religious program, but by banding together the people were able to provide a building, furniture, and other essentials. The denominational groups took turns providing a minister. One Sunday a Methodist minister would preach, the next Sunday a Baptist, the next Sunday a Presbyterian. One of Myres' sons recalled, "I'm a Presbyterian but the man that 'sprinkled' me wore a Methodist frock tail coat!" The Sunday school was also an inter-denominational endeavor in which the program was largely determined by the superintendent.\[^{14}\]

The country surrounding the Myres farm remains very much today as it was in 1870. Roads have been constructed, there are a few more houses, but essentially the land is the same. The original cabin was on a small rise, and the house which now stands there was built in 1937 on approximately the same site. From the house the land drops away beyond the plowed and cultivated fields to a series of cedar brakes, dense pockets of junipers, which obscure the broken and rocky countryside. From the brakes, steep limestone cliffs form the drop to the Brazos River. In the cliffs are several small caves, reputed to have

\[^{14}\text{Interview, (Mrs.) Annie Myres Elliott to Raymond Elliott, December 26, 1959.}\]
been used by Comanche Indians. Young people of today still enjoy exploring these caves just as the Myres children did. West of the house Comanche Peak is visible in the distance, and to the southwest Barnard and Berry Knobs rise like sentinel posts guarding the surrounding land. Descendants of David and Mary Jane still occupy the original home farm.

Young Sam and his brothers and sisters grew up on the land, helping their father and his neighbors in planting and harvesting crops. The boys also helped out on the neighboring ranches, riding, roping, branding, and stringing fences. Near Berry Knob a small waterfall formed a deep clear pool. Here the local ranchers and farmers brought their young horses to be broken. The young men would bridle the animal, take it into the pool and climb aboard. As the horse thrashed about in the cold, clear water, he quickly became tired and gentled and could then be ridden out of the pool and worked in a small corral area. As one of Sam’s brothers later remarked, “It was a darned sight easier than breakin’ the colts in a hot, dusty corral, and we enjoyed a swim at the same time.”

Sam grew up with the feel of a horse between his knees and the sting of horse sweat on his skin as he rode through the brakes and river bottoms and across the prairie sod of frontier Texas. The boys of that day rarely used saddles. A blanket strapped on with surcingle and a rope jacinilla (hackmore) for a bridle provided the necessary equipment for riding. After the chores were done the Myres boys enjoyed

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15 Ibid. The quotation was supplied by Mrs. Elliott.
hunting, fishing, and long rides over the surrounding countryside. Describing Sam later, his friend, western writer Eugene Cunningham wrote: "At fifteen he was so skilled a frontiersman, knew his country for miles roundabout so well, that he often served as scout and guide for mover-families hunting land."16

If Sam's education in the school of frontier experience and nature was great, his formal schooling was correspondingly small. He attended school a total of only three terms. When he grew up he would often say, with a twinkle in his eye, "When I was nine the school house burned down and I was a grown man before they rebuilt it." Although Myres made this comment jokingly, it revealed some of the difficulty in acquiring an education in the rural areas of Texas during the 1870's and 80's. Sam first attended a school near his home taught by Miss Nannie Shipley. He later went to Fort Spunky and then to a school near Berry Falls. The teacher at Berry Falls, Miss Lorenda Temple, suggested that Sam go to Falls Creek where the teacher was better qualified than she in arithmetic. Sam was anxious to attend the Falls Creek school, but the distance and expense involved made it doubtful whether the Myres would be able to let him go. One afternoon Sam was supposed to be plowing when his father, passing by the field, saw the horse and plow standing at the end of a row unattended. Going to investigate, David found his eldest son, sitting in back of the plow working arithmetic sums on the soles of his shoes, using a sharp rock as a pencil. It was shortly after this incident that Sam was sent to

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Falls Creek. The new school was larger than the others Sam had attended, and he soon made many new friends. Among them was Drusa Rogers who was later to become his wife. The two became close companions, and Sam helped Drusa with her arithmetic while Drusa aided Sam with his spelling.  

Sam liked school and wished to remain at his studies. The exigencies of farm life during the post-Civil war period made it impossible for him to complete his education, however. David needed help on the farm. Mary Jane's health was failing, and the large family of younger children soon made it necessary for Sam to quit school and help out at home. Although unable to attend formal lessons, Sam continued to study. He had learned to read well, and this was all he needed to enable him to proceed. Throughout his lifetime, he retained an avid interest in mathematics and history and spent much of his leisure pursuing these avocations. As Sam often remarked, schooling is the easiest way to acquire an education, but it is not the only way.

As Sam worked with his father and brothers he decided that farming was not the life for him. Cotton prices had dropped since the war, and despite the bountiful crops being produced there was little security or opportunity for advancement in agriculture. Although the farmers in the west had the advantages of virgin soil which did not

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17 Interview, (Mrs.) Annie Myres Elliott to Raymond Elliott, December 26, 1959.

18 Charles W. Ransdell, "The Southern Heritage" in W. T. Couch (ed.) Culture in the South (Chapel Hill, 1935), pp. 11-12. Dr. Ransdell observes that although by 1878 cotton production equalled pre-war levels: "By that time prices were again low; and as the yield increased thereafter they declined still further and profits vanished."
require large amounts of fertilizer and a more diversified economy than their less fortunate brothers in the southeast, still it was apparent to many of the young men, including Sam, that the land did not offer the opportunities they sought. Sam, unlike his brothers Carlos and Clifton, wanted more from life than the quiet existence of the farm.

Further, Sam and his father were too much alike to get along well in the same neighborhood. Both were small in stature with quick, fiery tempers. Each was independent and stubborn with a strong sense of personal pride. It was rumored, but never confirmed, that the Myres left Pennsylvania because of a duel in which David shot a man for making derogatory remarks about his southern sentiments. Both father and son had too strong a character to agree quietly on either large or small issues, and they often found themselves at odds with one another. Sam realized that he would never be free or independent of his father's control as long as he remained at home. He would always be "the Myres boy," never Mr. Sam Myres. David understood his son's desire to make a name for himself. He did not object, therefore, when Sam began to look around for work which would take him from the farm for each understood and respected the other. The other children referred to their father as "Pa." Sam always addressed him as "Father." When David died in 1920, it was Sam who stopped the hands of the clock and penciled on its face, "Father left us at 8:30 p.m. the 7th month, 8th day, 1920."19

With his father's agreement that he should decide on a place for

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19The clock with its inscription still intact is in the possession of E. R. Myres, Fort Worth, Texas.
himself, Sam began his search for a vocation. Like his father before him, and like many other young men of his own day, Sam's eyes turned toward the vast lands of opportunity to the west. When Sam decided to go west the cattle boom of the early 1880's was in full swing. As Walter Prescott Webb described it: "To be a cowboy was adventure; to be a ranchman was to be a king. The land was being taken up; soon it would be too late to 'get in' on this good thing."\(^{20}\)

Sam was preparing to "take out" on his own when tragedy struck. As he rode through the Brazos River bottoms on his way to Falls Creek, his horse was frightened, shied, and bolted.\(^{21}\) Sam lost one stirrup, his right foot hung in the other, and he was dragged for some distance, which resulted in a permanent injury to his left knee and a temporary head injury. He was taken to the nearby home of W. R. Massey in Falls Creek where he remained for several days. As he recovered, Sam began to re-examine his talents and ambitions. His shattered knee would prevent his spending the long hours in the saddle required in working cattle. The boom in Texas beef had collapsed, and the future for a young cattleman with no capital and no cattle did not look bright. With no training in a trade other than stock raising and farming, he followed a natural inclination—his love for horses—in choosing a new vocation. As soon as he was able to work, Sam apprenticed as a "saddle cub" to T. R. James and Sons, Saddlers, in Cleburne.


\(^{21}\)Various articles and stories state that Myres was thrown while roping a steer or riding a bronc. Annie Myres Elliott, who was eight or nine at the time of the accident, remembers the details vividly and relates them as they are stated above.
During his three-year apprenticeship Sam served as janitor, errand boy, and general help as he learned about leather, harness, and the mechanics of leatherwork. During this time Sam developed craftsmanship with knife and leather stamping tools. He also studied history and mathematics from books he was able to borrow. David Myres and T. R. James were old friends, having come from Brenham to Cleburne in the same wagon train, and Sam was treated as a member of the family. One of the James' boys, William, was near Sam's own age, and the two young men quickly became friends, a companionship that was to last throughout their lives.

Despite the long hours of work and study, Sam found time for fun. His gregarious nature and quick wit made him a favorite among the young men. He was a member of the Cleburne Volunteer Hook and Ladder Brigade which served as a social organization and in addition provided fire protection for the community. Sam also sang what he termed "coyote tenor" in a community "singing class." At the James shop there was a spirit of fun and camaraderie between the James' and their employees. Among Myres' papers is the following letter, carefully preserved as a reminder of his apprenticeship:

Cleburne, Texas, Aug 28-91
To Whom it may Concern

This is to certify that Sam D. Myres is granted leave of absence from Cleburne from 12am Saturday Aug 29th to 7oclock am Monday morning following. We

22 Interview, (Mrs.) Annie Myres Elliott to Raymond Elliott, December 26, 1959.

will also add That he is harmless and if found wandering around any neighborhood The inhabitants need have no fears of him. Should he be found loose after 7 oclock am Monday morning finder will please return him to T. R. James and Sons Saddlers South Main Street Cleburne Texas and receive suitable Reward. 24

So with much work and some fun the years of apprenticeship quickly passed. During the three years Sam had received his board and room. With his journeyman's certificate he received a suit of clothes and one hundred dollars. 25 Part of this money was invested in one of Sam's lifelong dreams—he became a member of the Masonic Lodge.

For several years after he left James, Sam traveled around, doing piecework, at Ladonia in Fannin County and possibly in Cisco and Dallas. In 1893, he went to Weatherford and began work in a shop owned by M. B. "Doc" Kouns. 26 There Sam began to develop his talent for drawing and carving his own designs. He also became interested in making holsters and in adapting the holster to the particular needs of its owner. A good man with a gun himself, Sam worked on all sorts of gun-rigging, belts, and holsters as a hobby. Soon the customers of the shop were coming to his bench with their requirements for a holster that would give a faster draw or smoother handling. He began to acquire a reputation for holster work as well as a modest name as a saddlemaker.

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24 Unsigned paper, S. D. Myres Papers.

25 Interview, (Mrs.) Annie Myres Elliott to Raymond Elliott, December 26, 1959.

26 Ibid.
In 1894, Sam married his boyhood sweetheart, Drusa Rogers, and the young couple set up housekeeping in Weatherford. Sam was anxious to have a shop of his own. He sought business opportunities which would enable him to raise sufficient capital. With his former employers, T. R. and William James, he entered into a partnership to establish a tannery. The business was located in Fort Worth, which proved an unwise choice. Climatic conditions were unsuited to the successful tanning of leather, and the enterprise soon failed.\(^{27}\)

Despite the loss, by December 1896, Sam was ready to establish his own business. With Drusa, he returned to Johnson County, where he spent the winter months with his parents while searching for a suitable location for his shop. In selecting a site, Myres demonstrated his developing business acumen. He recognized the disadvantages of the Fort Worth and Dallas area. Not only was this section of the state rapidly becoming an agricultural area where the demand for saddlery would decrease, but several large companies including Padgitt Brothers in Dallas and Edelbrock in Fort Worth controlled a large volume of the trade. Realizing that he could not compete with these established shops, Myres sought a new area where the demand for leather goods was high and the supply short. He looked westward, toward the areas where ranching was still the primary industry. In Sweetwater, Sam found the opportunity he was seeking.

\(^{27}\)Interview, William J. Myres to Sandra Myres, November 27, 1959.
Fig. 1.—Myres Family Gravestone, George’s Creek Cemetery, near Cleburne, Texas.

Fig. 2.—The David R. Myres Family. Left to right, back row: Fannie, Carlos, Sam, Annie; front row: David R. Myres, William, Clifton, Mary Jane Dale Myres.
CHAPTER II

SAM MYRES: BUSINESSMAN

On a rainy evening in March, 1897, a young man, short in stature, with a pronounced limp, sparkling black eyes, and a ruddy complexion climbed down from a train and viewed the town of Sweetwater, Texas. In later years, Samuel Dale Myres was to describe his first view of Sweetwater thus:

Sweetwater at that time had about six or seven hundred people, mostly ranchers, and was the dirtiest little place I ever saw except Eskota. The streets were practically trails, where a few had been at some time plowed and graded, but most had never been disturbed since the Great Creator had put the finishing touches to this earthly creation. The ranchers did not care much for streets and other modern improvements as they were trained by experience to use other ways to go from one place to another, and practically speaking, that is all streets and roads are for anyway. Such sidewalks as in use was made out of boards, which was well worn and sun warped. There was not any concrete sidewalks in the place and nobody seemed to care—one small school took care of the school and two teachers only were required to do the teaching.¹

Despite Sweetwater's unpretentious appearance, it had many advantages for Myres. Located in the ranching country of West Texas, it could be employed as a center for the distribution of saddles and other ranching needs. The town was served by the Texas and Pacific railroad which provided an avenue for receiving materials and sending merchandise to market. Myres liked the town and its people, and he seemed to sense a spirit of growth and progress within the citizenry:

¹S. D. Myres, undated manuscript B., S. D. Myres Papers.
Whatever these people may have been short in modern improvements, they were giants in other respects, and THE BEST I HAVE EVER KNOWN, TRUE TO GOD, TRUE TO NATURE, AND TRUE TO THEMSELVES.²

Here was the opportunity Myres was seeking—a new land, a young town, and a chance to prosper and make a name for himself.

Although Myres arrived in Sweetwater in the spring of 1897, he did not immediately find the business opportunity he was seeking. It was not until the fall of 1898, a year and a half after his arrival, that he completed negotiations for the purchase of a saddlery and harness business owned by James K. Polk. What occupied him in the interim is not known. In his recollections, Myres does not mention leaving Sweetwater after 1897. Since he did not possess any large amount of capital or other financial resources, it would seem likely that he found a job utilizing his skill as a saddlemaker and leather worker. Perhaps he worked in Polk's shop under an agreement to apply part of his earnings toward the purchase of the business. Myres may even have managed the shop in return for a share of the profits to be similarly applied.

On August 12, 1898, Polk sold the saddlery to Myres. The price of $1,461.29 included:

... any and all saddlery and harness, manufactured or otherwise, all saddlery and harness hardware, all tables, brackets, shop and bench tools, stitching, sewing and other machines; all leather, saddle trees and other unmanufactured articles pertaining to said business; all robes, pads, dusters, whips, one office safe and any and

²Ibid.
all office and stock shelving and fixtures of whatsoever kind and nature pertaining to said business.³

In a supplementary agreement signed on August 20, 1898, Myres agreed to assume accounts and debts of the saddlery in the amount of $880.31. It has been suggested that these accounts were debited against the purchase price, making the actual cost of the plant $580.91, ⁴ but no written evidence of such an arrangement can be found in the available records. Furthermore, the Bill of Sale clearly states "That, I James K. Polk ... for and in consideration of the sum of One Thousand Four Hundred and Sixty One and 29/100 Dollars to me in hand paid by S. D. Myres ... ."⁵ This amount plus the $880.31 in accounts payable would make a total cost of $2,341.67, not an unreasonable price for the purchase of the business.

Whatever his previous arrangements with Polk may have been, Myres did not have sufficient savings to make the initial cash payment, and he was forced to borrow part of the money for the purchase. Undoubtedly, a large part of the necessary financing came from the James family. No papers were signed; no collateral was necessary. A spoken agreement for repayment and a handshake secured the loan. Myres' father provided the additional funds necessary to set up the business.⁶

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⁴Interview, William J. Myres to Sandra Myres, November 27, 1959.


⁶Interview, (Mrs.) Annie Myres Elliott to Raymond Elliott, December 26, 1959.
From the time he first opened his shop, Myres dreamed of building a large manufacturing concern for the production of quality saddles. He hoped to develop methods of shop management which would enable him to provide, at relatively low cost, saddles of custom quality and durability. Further, he realized that a large volume of trade would be necessary to support the type of operation he contemplated. From the beginning, he demonstrated a real sense of business judgement. He knew that expanding sales would not come from the superiority of his saddles alone; he seemed to have an innate and skillful sense of promotion and advertising. Not only inserting notices of the "Myres Saddle" in trade papers and ranching journals, he began the practice of attending cattlemen's conventions regularly. There he found, in an accessible group, hundreds of potential customers for his wares. He made friends easily; he talked the cowmen's language; and he knew how to explain the merits of his saddles. His business seems to have grown rapidly, and by 1901 he had built up sufficient trade to justify expansion.

In December 1901, Myres was still leasing the building on the north side of the square which had been occupied by Polk, 7 but he had already begun plans for the construction of a building of his own. In February 1900, he had purchased the south half of a lot on the west side of the square between lots owned by J. A. J. Bradford and J. F. Newman. 8 In February 1902, Myres entered into a preliminary contract

7 Lease, J. T. Douthet to S. D. Myres, December 30, 1901, S. D. Myres Papers.

with Bradford to share in the construction of a brick and stone wall along their common property line. In May 1902, a similar agreement was negotiated between Myres and Newman, owner of the property north of Myres, for construction of a rock wall on their adjoining property. The work was completed in August 1902. Myres' south wall, owned jointly with Bradford, was thirty-three feet high, twenty inches thick, and one hundred feet long. The north wall was of the same length and about the same thickness and height. With characteristic optimism, Myres was already planning future expansion. In his final contract with Bradford, Myres agreed to pay $350.00 for half interest in the lower story of the Bradford wall and $167.05 at any time Myres should desire to add an additional floor and thus use the remainder of the wall. To Newman, Myres paid $333.62 for the use of the lower story of the Newman wall with an agreement that Myres might later purchase use of the second story.

Conway-Leeper Company of Sweetwater, a construction and building supply firm, provided both the materials and money for completing the Myres building. A loan of $1,750.00 was negotiated, payable over a six year period. Payments were arranged in one installment of $250.00


and five installments of $300.00 each plus 10% annual interest. Myres was able to repay the loan by June 5, 1906, saving two years interest payments.  

With his new building completed, Myres expanded his work force and made a careful study of organization and operation. He combined the methods of the handcraftsman with newer ideas in shop management, assembly production, and advertising. Retaining sole ownership and control of the company, he continued to regard saddlemaking as a craft and the carving and decoration of leather an art. In this sense, Myres functioned much like the guild master of a much earlier day. Apprentices were taken into the business to learn the trade as Myres had learned from James. Except for carving and stamping, each saddle was made by an individual craftsman. Not until the First World War was assembly line production employed in making saddles, and even then only the McClellan saddles made for the government were assembled by line production methods. Myres was determined that the saddles sold by his company would be recognized as examples of the finest of the saddlemaker's art. He had no use for shoddy workmanship or inferior ornamentation. He personally did the designing and some of the carving on special orders.

Most of Myres' ideas were sound. His business methods and production techniques began to pay. By 1909, he was able to expand his operations again. The second story of the shop was completed under the

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terms of the previous contracts with Bradford and Newman.\textsuperscript{14} The entire lower floor of the expanded building was devoted to sales, showroom, storage and office space. The upper floor served as a shop, and Myres again increased his work force. An opening in the upper story floor allowed rolls of leather and other heavy equipment to be raised from below on a pulley and also provided for lowering the completed saddles to the sales area downstairs. (See Figures 3 and 4, page 38.) Money for the expansion was obtained from the Harris Banking Company in Harris, Missouri. The loan of $1,500.00 was negotiated for Myres by the Sweetwater bankers, R. L. McCaulley and Thomas Trammell.\textsuperscript{15}

By 1914, Myres' dreams for his company had begun to materialize. The shop employed ten saddlemakers, two of whom were "saddle cubs," apprentices learning the trade under Myres' careful tutelage. Clyde Taylor completed his apprenticeship in 1914, shortly after Sam's nephew, Ernest Myres, came to Sweetwater to learn the trade. The apprentices received their room and board and a salary of $2.50 a week. The regular saddlemakers were A. A. Prince, whose small business Myres bought about 1900, Mike Rogers, John Kemp, Herbert Camel, "Shorty" Saylor, Earl Massey, Bob Flinn, and Joe Merino who also did some stamping work. Alex Cole was employed as harness maker. In addition to the saddlemakers, Myres usually had one or two stampers. Johnny Ratton did most of the special work which Myres could not do himself, and from time to

\textsuperscript{14} According to these contracts, and receipts found among Myres' papers, Bradford received $167.05 and Newman $176.12.

\textsuperscript{15} Note, S. D. Myres to Harris Banking Company, December 10, 1908, S. D. Myres Papers.
time another stamper was hired when the volume of business justified the additional help. Saddlemakers earned from eighteen to twenty-five dollars a week; stampers were paid on a piece-work basis. The shop was under the direction of a foreman, Charlie Rogers.  

The organization of the company was simple but effective. Myres handled the promotion and advertising, and did most of the office work and buying for the shop. Rogers was in charge of store sales in addition to his duties as shop foreman. Myres kept his own work schedule flexible, enabling him to spend most of his time "on the road" attending cattlemen's conventions and other rancher's meetings and visiting prospective customers. Among Myres' papers are several books containing notes in his own hand concerning orders and prospective customers, these notes probably being made at conventions. A typical entry follows:

See S. Z. Williams
Old Friend
Robb. Hurt
Capitan N. M.
16 Myres Sp. 12" Fork
Hand Carved Front and seat
Cut crease and swell finish
Brass Rings
Heavy saddle as 216
Wide seat
2 1/4 stirrups
No flank straps
By May 1st 17

Other pages of this notebook list names and addresses to which

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17 Notebook, entry dated March 24, 1913, S. D. Myres Papers.
catalogs were to be sent, orders for chaps, scabbards, blankets, and other saddles. Each saddle order, like the one cited above, gives the catalog number of the saddle and special instructions for the size of the tree and stirrups, carving, type of seat, and the kind of leather to be used. When Myres returned from a trip he gave the orders he had received to Rogers who scheduled the work load for each saddlemaker and turned the specifications for the saddles over to the man who was to make up the order. Special problems of design were Myres' particular interest. He enjoyed working out the problems of saddle construction and comfort. Special rigging for a particular job, the broad withers and barrel of the quarter horse, a man with one leg shorter than the other—all presented a challenge to Myres' imagination and ingenuity. "If you have a mole on your sittin' down place and want a hole in the saddle to fit it--I'll make it!" bragged Sam, and he did.\(^{18}\)

Although Myres relished attacking the special problems in construction and design which came to his shop, promotion and selling were his forte. He enjoyed the contacts with people and the chance to visit new towns and cities which his selling trips afforded. His success in organizing his business also made it possible for him to devote time to civic affairs. During the years from 1906 to 1911 he was mayor of Sweetwater, and during 1914 and 1915 he served on the school board.\(^{19}\)

These activities took time from the business, but they also enabled him to make many contacts with men who were able to help him in building his reputation and clientele.

\(^{18}\)Interview, E. R. Myres to Sandra Myres, March 13, 1960.

\(^{19}\)Myres' civic endeavors are discussed in Chapter III.
Myres was determined to make his trade-mark "S. D. Myres, Sweetwater, Texas" known throughout the west as the symbol of the finest saddles. He relied on satisfied customers and personal contacts for much of his advertising, but he also employed other methods. He printed a catalog picturing saddles, holsters, belts, and other leather goods made at the Sweetwater shop as well as the ropes, blankets, Neet's foot oil, and other necessities retailed by the company. He placed ads in ranching and trade magazines and in newspapers. He also had postcards printed bearing pictures of saddles made by the shop. In 1917, Myres ventured into a rather unique advertising program by sponsoring an unusual contest. He sent out postcards and handbills publicizing the contest and the prize: "This handsome Silver and Gold mounted Astride Saddle will be given away to the Rider who sends the most orders between June first, 1917 and December first, 1918 by S. D. MYRES, Saddlery, Sweetwater, Texas." How much interest was aroused in the contest is not known, but the cowhands at the King Ranch must have become the best equipped cowboys in Texas, for the prize trophy was awarded to the foreman of the Kleburg's famous spread.

In an attempt to obtain the best materials available for his saddles, Myres dealt with well known firms throughout the country. Leather was bought from Eberhard Tanning Company, Santa Clara,

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20Postcards, S. D. Myres Saddle Company, Sweetwater, Texas. Some of these cards are in the Southwest Collection, Texas Technological College, Lubbock, Texas.


22Interview, E. R. Myres to Sandra Myres, December 12, 1959.
California; trees were purchased from T. E. Menea of Denver, Colorado; and most of the special metal work was done by Chicago Art Metal Works, Chicago, Illinois.\textsuperscript{23} Spurs, bits and stirrups, and harness hardware were purchased from Kelly Brothers of El Paso in later years,\textsuperscript{24} but whether this company supplied the Sweetwater firm is not known. Neither is anyone certain what company supplied the saddle blankets, saddle pads, and similar accessories and wearing apparel which were sold by the Sweetwater store. Articles connected with the business such as harness, martingales, and bridles were made at the shop. Myres also took orders for holsters, rifle scabbards, and gun belts. The main product of the company, however, was saddles—plain or fancy, large or small, expensive or inexpensive. Each was made under Myres' guidance, and each must be exactly made and of good quality before the Myres trademark was stamped into the fenders.

Anxious to keep his shop modern and efficient, Myres tried to keep abreast of new developments in machinery. During 1914, a stitching machine was installed. This "little wonder" was powered by a gasoline motor and, according to the Sweetwater paper which carried an article concerning the equipment, was "the only one of its kind west of Fort Worth."\textsuperscript{25} In 1919, Myres leased a lock stitch Wax Thread Sewing Machine from Campbell Bosworth Machinery Company of Boston,

\textsuperscript{23}Tbid. The Menea company was sold to Bloomquist and Sons and later to Kuwart. It was the same business under different ownership.

\textsuperscript{24}Catalog, S. L. Myres Saddle Company, El Paso, Texas, 1954. Copy, Southwest Collection, Texas Technological College.

\textsuperscript{25}Weekly Review (Sweetwater, Texas), April 3, 1914.
This equipment featured a small gas burner to soften the wax which the thread was passed through before being used to stitch the leather. This was a considerable improvement over the old method of hand waxing.

Most saddles made during the period from 1900 to 1919 sold for forty to seventy dollars, the difference in price depending on the size of the saddle, amount of carving and special ornamentation, or other "extras." Notations from Myres' notebooks in 1914 give the following price quotations: a No. 230 saddle without buck seat—$42.50; the popular No. 301 saddle with 16\frac{1}{2}-1\frac{1}{4} inch tree, full hand carved, leather conchos, covered stirrups with tapaderos—$65.00; No. 301 saddle similar to the one above on a 11\frac{1}{2}-1\frac{1}{4} inch tree with carved front and seat—$55.00; the No. 301 saddle with no stamping or quilted seat—$41.00. It is interesting to note the changing prices of saddles over the years. An early El Paso catalog published by Myres about 1930 lists the No. 301 saddle on a 11\frac{1}{2}-1\frac{1}{4} inch tree, full hand carved at $97.50. A similar saddle pictured in the 1954 Myres catalog is priced at $227.50. The day of the forty dollar saddle is past—but then so is

26 Lease, Campbell Bosworth Machinery Company to S. D. Myres, May 31, 1919; S. D. Myres Papers. This machine rented for four dollars a month plus a royalty of two cents for each one thousand stitches made by the machine, such royalties to "amount to at least Twelve Dollars, the equivalent of six thousand stitches, in each calendar year."

27 S. D. Myres, Order Book "A," p. 85; Order Book "B," unnumbered pages headed A. M. Ellis and Sam Preston, S. D. Myres Papers. For an explanation of the different sizes and types of trees for saddles see Chapter IV.

the ten dollar horse!

Myres occasionally took old saddles in trade for new ones. An early El Paso catalog advertised: "We are pleased to state that we will use your old saddle at the very best market price."29 An entry from a Myres order book shows a $35.00 trade-in on a $75.00 order with the notation "old saddle to be sent on delivery of new one."

Myres' papers include a bank book which shows deposits and expenditures for a six-month period from February 1, 1913, to August 2, 1913.30 This record reflects a volume of business for the six-month period of $17,074.90. Weekly deposits are shown for each month. The average monthly deposit is $2,845.81, and the average monthly withdrawal $2,783.55. Deposits were lowest in February ($1,572.58) and highest in June ($1,294.34). Expenditures for April were only $1,685.63; for July they were at a peak for the period, $3,594.14. The company catered especially to the needs of the cattle industry, and the reason for these seasonal fluctuations lies in the nature of the cattle business. Following the spring roundup cowmen and their hands had money in their "jeans" and were anxious to spend it. Equipment damaged during the roundup was replaced or brought in to be repaired. By June these post-roundup sales reached their peak; then, sales fell off until November and December when the fall roundup was completed. In the same

29Catalog, S. D. Myres Company, El Paso, no date, p. 5.
31Bank Book, Thomas Trammell and Company, Sweetwater, Texas, in account with S. D. Myres, February 1, 1913, to August 2, 1913, S. D. Myres Papers.
manner, Myres' expenditures were highest in July and January when it was necessary to buy materials to replace depleted stocks.

Average monthly profits (as shown by monthly balances) amounted to $922.71, although the balance as of July 31 was only $104.41.\textsuperscript{32} It is difficult to make many generalizations on so few figures. Projecting the available accounts, however, reveals a total yearly deposit of approximately $34,000.00 and total yearly expenditures of $33,100.00.

It seems reasonable to assume that the expenditures reflect both business and personal expenses since Myres was sole owner of the company and probably did not keep separate banking accounts for his business and personal expenses.

Although Myres devoted most of his resources and energy to his saddlery, he sought other avenues for investment and profits. Like many other Texans, he had a deep seated love for the land. Buildings could be destroyed and business enterprises could be wrecked by financial fluctuations, but the land always remained. With a heritage of belief in the lasting value and security of land and a resolute determination that his future lay in the growth and development of West Texas, Myres included real estate in his investments. Soon after his arrival in Sweetwater he bought two lots from T. E. and Ed. Garlic.\textsuperscript{33} In 1899, he purchased two lots adjoining the Garlic property from John L. Miller of Navarro County.\textsuperscript{34} The Garlic and Miller holdings, within walking

\textsuperscript{32}Tbid.

\textsuperscript{33}Deed, T. E. and Ed. Garlic to S. D. Myres, April 28, 1897, Nolan County Deed Records, Book K, pp. 120-121.

\textsuperscript{34}Deed, John L. Miller to S. D. Myres, February 2, 1899, Tbid., Book D, p. 560. The seeming discrepancy in the series order is due to
distance of town, but in a good residential area, became the Myres' home site. Myres also owned several lots in the East Addition to Sweetwater deeded to him by William James in 1897.35

Between 1900 and 1910 Myres' investments were limited to building and expanding the saddle company, and his time was occupied with civic affairs. In 1910 he again turned his excess profits into real estate, and purchased additional town property and a 438 acre farm.36 Included in these transactions were two lots purchased from Mrs. B. V. Cardwell. Under the terms of an agreement between Myres and Mrs. Cardwell, he was to pay $1,500.00 at the time the contract was signed, and the balance of the purchase price of $4,000.00 was to be paid over a three year period.37 The agreement further stipulated that Mrs. Cardwell was to deliver a clear title to the lots, but apparently she failed to do so and Myres withheld payment. When Mrs. Cardwell died the balance due was still unpaid, and the administrator of the Cardwell estate, A. B. Yantis, sued for payment.38 Myres steadfastly refused to pay until clear and sufficient title to the property was

the fact that the Nolan County Deed Records are contained in both manuscript and typed books. The written books filled up more quickly than the typed ones.

35 Deed, William James to S. D. Myres, October 18, 1897, Ibid., Book D, p. 528. Certified copies of this deed and the two preceding instruments are in the S. D. Myres Papers.


37 Agreement, Mrs. B. V. Cardwell and S. D. Myres, February 8, 1910, S. D. Myres Papers.

38 A. B. Yantis, Administrator of the Estate of Mrs. B. Cardwell, Deceased, vs S. D. Myres, District Court of Nolan County, Texas, Civil Minutes of the District Court, Book 4, pp. 476-480.
provided. Not until 1916 did the courts settle the matter. Myres paid the debt and received a quit-claim deed to the property from the Cardwell heirs.\textsuperscript{39}

Like many successful businessmen, Myres enjoyed gambling and speculation. He was particularly interested in townsite promotions and invested in several of these ventures. In 1907, he purchased a lot in the town of Slaughter in Midland County;\textsuperscript{40} in 1910, he bought property in Roby from the Tom Polk Company.\textsuperscript{41} Myres also joined other Sweetwater businessmen, including R. C. Crane and E. Q. Daniel, in several real estate developments. This group speculated in townsites along the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe route, and formed the Home Realty Company to promote and develop the Orient Addition in Sweetwater.\textsuperscript{42}

A shrewd businessman in his own field, Myres was not always astute in judging investments offered by others. He expended several thousand dollars on worthless mining and construction company stock and similar doubtful ventures. He was able, however, to realize a small profit from gas and oil royalties which he purchased in 1919.\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{39}Deed, R. A. Musgrove et ux. to S. D. Myres, October 25, 1916, Nolan County Deed Records, Book 26, p. 270.

\textsuperscript{40}Bill of Sale, R. L. Slaughter to S. D. Myres, July 27, 1907, S. D. Myres Papers.

\textsuperscript{41}Letter, Charles W. Rogers for Tom Polk Company to S. D. Myres, April 11, 1910, S. D. Myres Papers.

\textsuperscript{42}Interview, E. Q. Daniel to Sandra Myres, December 28, 1959.

\textsuperscript{43}Royalty Sale, Ben F. Montgomery to S. D. Myres, August 16, 1919, Nolan County Deed Records, Book 30, pp. 615-616.
On first acquaintance Myres reminded many people of a little banty rooster, but they soon discovered him to be more like a fighting cock—prideful and a little foolish but a dangerous and skillful adversary in competition. His small frame and boastful manner often led the unwary into believing that he could be easily bested in any transaction, but they soon found, to their sorrow, that it was they who had been "taken." If Myres had an Achilles heel, it was his immense pride and stubbornness, but only rarely did he allow it to overcome his better judgement. And if he was proud, had he not every right to be? Over a period of twenty-three years he had built a large saddle company with a wide reputation. He had risen from an itinerant saddle-maker to a property owner and well known businessman and civic leader, for during the time he was engaged in building his personal fortunes he had also found time to help build Sweetwater.
Fig. 3.--Sales Area and Showroom of S. D. Myres Company, Sweetwater, Texas.

Fig. 4.--Shop of S. D. Myres Company, Sweetwater, Texas.
CHAPTER III
S. D. MYRES: CITIZEN

The decade from 1900 to 1910 was a busy and exciting one for the little hamlet of Sweetwater. During this period the town faced, with varying degrees of success, the problems which were confronting the entire area of West Texas. New railway service came to Sweetwater bringing an avenue of expanding markets; the town successfully waged a battle to retain its status as county seat of Nolan County; through the efforts of her citizens the age old survival problem of the West Texas town—adequate water supply—was solved. The era of progressivism touched even this small plains village, and the growing and expanding economy of the nation influenced the character of its growth. As Sweetwater changed from a frontier settlement to a progressive city, water and electric works were built, public transportation was improved, new laws controlling the mores and morals of society were passed. Into the feverish activity which marked the period, Sam Myres threw his energies and resources as a businessman. Later as a civic-minded citizen, community builder, and mayor he struggled to bring profit and comfort to the citizens of the town as well as to himself.

Myres and other leading Sweetwater businessmen, realizing the importance of adequate transportation facilities to the town's future, sought to promote Sweetwater as a major shipping point. The vast distances of the plains, which lacked water routes or freight roads, necessitated railroads to tie the region to markets in the eastern part of the state and the rest of the nation. Just as the people of the east and
midwest had been willing to donate land and money as inducements to railroad builders during the 1870's and 80's, so were the people of West Texas ready to sacrifice much to bring steel highways of commerce to their communities. For a major railroad to bypass a West Texas town meant almost certain death to the community, for its citizens soon moved their businesses and homes to other locations where rail transportation was available. No new businesses or settlers were likely to be attracted to a town where there was no chance for rail facilities.

In the early 1900's, there was considerable rivalry between West Texas communities in attracting railroad builders. Perhaps the bitterest dispute erupted over the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe's "cutoff" line. What Texas towns lacked in size they made up for in fighting spirit, and the Santa Fe officials soon found themselves besieged by delegations from rival communities, each seeking the route of the new line. The purpose of the cutoff was to connect the Santa Fe's southwest line with the mainline across New Mexico and Arizona to the Pacific Coast. The first part of the connecting line, from Belen to Texico, New Mexico, was completed and turned over to the operating department of the Santa Fe in 1908.\footnote{L. L. Waters, Steel Trails to Santa Fe (Lawrence, Kansas, 1950), p. 354.} The next step was to connect the lines of the Gulf, Colorado, and Santa Fe with the new transcontinental line opened by the Belen cutoff. Such a connecting link would, in effect, secure a short line for traffic between Texas and the Pacific coast. At the time traffic from the Texas Gulf coast region had to be sent north into Kansas and then southwest over the mainline. This roundabout
course was slow and precluded effective competition with the Santa Fe's chief rivals, the Texas and Pacific and the Southern Pacific. Another strong inducement to build was the comparative lack of railroad facilities in the general region where the new line would be built. Three routes for the proposed short line were considered: one from Coleman to Texico; the other two far to the south, from San Angelo to Roswell, or Ballinger to Hagerman. By 1907, the Santa Fe officials were ready to begin surveying routes for the connecting line. Almost immediately they found themselves embroiled in the sharp rivalry between the towns of the region—each determined to secure, by hook or crook, the route which loomed as the key to prosperity for the successful contestants.

In the spring of 1907, rumors of the Santa Fe's intentions to build through the region had reached Sweetwater and other surrounding communities. Sweetwater businessmen quickly got together to propose schemes for inducing the Santa Fe to build through Sweetwater. Myres, along with R. C. Crane, E. Q. Daniel, Thomas Trammel, R. L. McCaulley, R. A. Ragland, and other citizens plunged into the work of securing the Santa Fe route for Sweetwater. Crane states:

At that time S. D. Myres was a very loyal citizen of Sweetwater... Myres had become very much interested in the location of the line on which the Santa Fe was to build.3

As a preliminary step, Myres contacted Avery Turner, vice president

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2 Ibid., p. 350.
3 R. C. Crane, "Railroads and Community Rivalries, Chapters from the Inside Story of the Orient and Santa Fe in West Texas," West Texas Historical Association Yearbook, XIX (October, 1943), p. 22.
and general manager of the Pecos Valley Lines, part of the Santa Fe system, concerning the Sweetwater route. On May 4, 1907, Turner replied:

Nothing definite has been decided as to location of the proposed line as yet or when it will be built. I shall be glad to remember your offer and give your proposition due consideration.4

It was generally believed that the chief engineer of the Santa Fe, a man named Dun, favored a route through Abilene. Nonetheless, Sweetwater citizens were determined to do everything in their power to change his mind. In the summer of 1907, the Santa Fe sent F. Meredith Jones, who had laid out the Belen-Texico route, to survey possible locations for the connecting line. Jones, a taciturn man, went quietly about his business, surveying proposed routes through both Abilene and Sweetwater. While Jones worked the townspeople speculated and plotted on the best way to convince the Santa Fe representative of the merits of their own favorite route. When Jones arrived in Sweetwater, Myres began an intensive campaign to sell Jones on the Sweetwater route:

He (Myres) had become well acquainted with Mr. Jones and in fact, all the members of his party. On one visit to the camp he remained for supper and had the very unusual experience of getting drunk on nothing stronger than strong coffee.5

After looking over the Sweetwater route, Jones and his crew moved to the Abilene area. Anxious to find out what Jones' recommenda-
tions concerning the opposing routes might be, Myres decided to pay a visit to the surveying camp near Abilene. He persuaded R. C. Crane to accompany him, and the two men set out in a rented buggy for the camp which was located on a ranch in Garza County. The horses which Myres and Crane had rented proved to be difficult to manage as well as slow; the travelers lost their way on the prairie and were forced to break into a farmhouse and telephone for directions. Despite these misadventures, the trip proved successful. Although Jones was reticent about the results of his survey, he was impressed with the marked advantages of the Coleman-Sweetwater route to Texico over the one through Abilene. The other members of the crew were less reluctant than Jones to discuss their findings, and according to Crane the Sweetwater men were given checks to purchase lots in Sweetwater for the crew members. "We had an idea that this furnished something in the nature of evidence, persuasive if not conclusive, that the Santa Fe railroad was going to build through the town of Sweetwater." 6

The intervention of the panic of 1907 and anti-railroad legislation in Texas deferred further action by the Santa Fe for nearly two years. Little was heard from the railroad concerning its proposed route although citizens of the rival towns continued to advertise and promote the desirability of the various routes. Then, in March 1909, Myres received a letter from Jones:

Possibly if I should tell you what I knew, it would be no news, but I am not authorized to talk. But I will say this

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6Tbd., p. 24.
much. It is up to you people of Sweetwater to get the Santa Fe Coleman-Texico line. It is now time to act.\textsuperscript{7}

This cryptic message caused a renewed spirit of optimism among the Sweetwater boosters. Thus, when a man by the name of Addison Eby arrived in Sweetwater in April and told the citizens that the Santa Fe was "disposed to build through Sweetwater if its citizens would furnish the right of way through the county and the town, and furnish depot grounds in the town,"\textsuperscript{8} the people were ready to act. A letter was immediately drafted by Crane, Myres, and other interested businessmen and sent to W. B. Storey, chief engineer of the Santa Fe, assuring him that Sweetwater's citizens would do all they could to provide the needed facilities.\textsuperscript{9}

Abilene leaders, unwilling to admit defeat, continued to lobby for the route. When Storey and other company officials visited the area they were greeted by committees from the rival towns. Abilene went so far as to send a delegation to Chicago to see Santa Fe president E. P. Ripley. They were frankly told that the location of the route was not for sale and that construction would follow the most practical line.\textsuperscript{10} The Santa Fe had, in fact, already determined to build via Coleman, Sweetwater, Snyder, and Lubbock, a more economical and easily built line than the Abilene route.

\textsuperscript{7}Letter, F. Meredith Jones to S. D. Myres, March 28, 1909, S. D. Myres Papers.
\textsuperscript{8}Crane, "Railroads and Community Rivalries," p. 24.
\textsuperscript{9}Ibid., p. 25.
\textsuperscript{10}Waters, Steel Trails to Santa Fe, p. 360.
Abilene now turned to political maneuvering and enlisted the aid of Texas governor, Tom Campbell. Several wealthy Abilene boosters incorporated and built a short line, the Roscoe, Snyder, and Pacific Railroad, from Roscoe to Fluvara. The plan was to preempt a portion of the line staked by the Santa Fe, and thus make the Abilene route preferable or at least force the Santa Fe to pay costs for the upstart road. The Santa Fe did neither, but relocated its line between Hermleigh and Snyder paralleling the short line Roscoe, Snyder, and Pacific. Indignant at this latest frustration of their plans, the Abilene contingent and the governor prepared to call a special session of the legislature to procure the passage of a law to prevent parallelism of short line railroads, thus forcing the Santa Fe to change its line, and, in all probability, build through Abilene. Delegations from Sweetwater and other interested communities were able to disuade the governor, however, and the threatened session was never called.

The Santa Fe had suffered in the rivalry between the towns. In July 1909, W. B. Storey wrote to Myres:

We regret extremely that our choice of route should have aroused the animosity of communities in your section, as we would prefer to be on good terms with all your Texas people. It is manifestly impossible for us to go through every town in West Texas. . . . I am sincerely hoping that the same people in the communities not touched by us will

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11 Ibid., p. 361.
12 Crane, "Railroads and Community Rivalries," pp. 32-34.
13 It is interesting to note that the Roscoe, Snyder, and Pacific is still an operating railroad. It is the most profitable short line in Texas, and is the only short line with commercial representatives in other cities. S. G. Reed, "Roscoe, Snyder, and Pacific Railway Company," in W. P. Webb (ed.) The Handbook of Texas (Austin, 1952), II, pp. 502-503.
ultimately see the justness of our position, and that the resentment against us will die out.  

In the summer of 1909, work was begun on the Coleman-Texico line. The beginning of construction was the occasion for great rejoicing on the part of Sweetwater's citizens. The townspeople gathered at the site north of town to hear speeches by prominent citizens.

After the speeches, Miss Nell Hord was accompanied to the big plow to which eight big mules were hitched, and while the band played proceeded to turn the first dirt on what is to be a big transcontinental line.  

During the period of construction, Myres was mayor of Sweetwater. He and other Sweetwater businessmen worked in every way possible to help the railroad in securing the right of way through the county giving "time and money to ease the way." The line was completed and service through Sweetwater commenced on January 29, 1911.  

As if the efforts of Sweetwater citizens to procure the Santa Fe railroad were not a large enough undertaking for so small a community (according to the 1900 census Sweetwater had a population of 670), Sweetwater had earlier launched a fight against the Kansas City, Mexico, and Orient Railroad Company. The Orient road had a long and complicated

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15 Reporter (Sweetwater, Texas), June 21, 1909.

16 Waters, Steel Trails to Santa Fe, p. 362.

17 Crane, "Railroad and Community Rivalries," p. 34.

history. The original plan of the builder and promoter, Arthur Stillwell, was to construct a railroad from Kansas City to Topolobampo, Mexico, a distance of 1,600 miles. At the time Stillwell was considering various routes through Texas, Sweetwater found itself with a small railroad, the Colorado Valley Railroad Company, in which local citizens had invested heavily. The promoter of the Colorado Valley, Irving Wheatcroft, was unable to complete construction of the road, and the assets --seven miles of track and some equipment--reverted to the stockholders. Anxious to realize some monetary return on their investment, the Colorado Valley stockholders reorganized the railroad as the Panhandle and Gulf Railway Company and authorized Thomas Trammell and R. L. McCaulley of Sweetwater to find someone willing either to operate or to buy their white elephant. Trammel and McCaulley contacted Stillwell, and he agreed to consider taking over the Panhandle and Gulf road and make it a part of his proposed transcontinental line. Sweetwater citizens were enthusiastic over such a possibility. In fact, they were too eager. Townspeople bought stock in Stillwell construction companies, "just to get construction started in Sweetwater instead of somewhere else in Texas." The railroad promoters also agreed to place terminals, machine shops, and general offices in Sweetwater in return for a bonus


\[20\] Crane, "Railroads and Community Rivalries," pp. 3-7.

\[21\] Ibid., p. 7. Myres bought ten shares of stock in one of these companies, The International Construction Company, for $450.00. Most of Sweetwater citizens purchased stock in an attempt to help the town secure the railroad line.
of land and money furnished by the town:

This the Orient railroad company stated many times they would do both by word of mouth from their higher officials, as well as public speeches, and in prospectives and other writing released by the general offices of the company. This was common and accepted knowledge known to everyone in Sweetwater.  

The Orient was having financial difficulties, however, and being offered a considerable sum of money to move their offices and shops to San Angelo, the directors of the company decided to make this move in 1907, the year the Santa Fe survey was being made.  

Word of the proposed move came to the ears of several prominent citizens in Sweetwater. (Probably Trammel and McCulley received this information first.) One afternoon in December 1907, Myres, Crane, and Judge R. A. Ragland gathered in the law offices of Crane and Ragland to discuss the situation. One of the lawyers brought up a case in which the city of Tyler had successfully prevented a similar move by a railroad on grounds of breach of contract.  

Later Judge J. H. Beall and other citizens were taken into conference and they all agreed that Sweetwater had a case almost identical with the Tyler case and plans must be laid to protect Sweetwater's interests against the threatened breach by the Orient of those interests.

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22 S. D. Myres, undated manuscript B., S. D. Myres Papers.


24 S. D. Myres, undated manuscript B., S. D. Myres Papers.

25 City of Tyler vs. St. Louis and Southwestern Railway Company, 91 Southwest Reporter 1.

26 S. D. Myres, undated manuscript B., S. D. Myres Papers.
Myres was anxious for Sweetwater to take immediate action, and as a consequence of the meeting an injunction was obtained on January 17, 1908, restraining the Orient from moving its shops and offices from the city of Sweetwater. The city then filed suit against the Orient, and the case dragged on in the courts for several years. Although the city won the case in the lower courts, the final decision was in favor of the railroad.\(^{27}\) By this time, however, the Santa Fe had placed its line through the city, and the loss to Sweetwater was not as important.

When the city of Sweetwater decided to carry on the fight against the Orient Railroad, the mayor of the city was William M. Bradford, who was elected in March 1907.\(^{28}\) In April 1908, Bradford resigned his position. Myres, Crane, and E. Q. Daniel have intimated that Bradford had associations which conflicted with the Orient suit.\(^{29}\) A new election was held, and R. L. McCaulley was elected but did not take office. McCaulley was the Texas agent for the Orient Railroad and probably felt that his interests conflicted with those of the city.\(^{30}\) Dr. B. F. Archer was appointed mayor pro-tem on June 2, 1908, and he and Bradford alternated in heading the city council meetings until a third election was held on August 1, 1908.\(^{31}\) The returns of the election

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\(^{27}\) City of Sweetwater vs. Kansas City, Mexico, and Orient Railroad Company, 131 Southwest Reporter 251; Crane, "Railroads and Community Rivalries," p. 12.

\(^{28}\) Minutes of the City Council, Sweetwater, Texas, April 2, 1907.

\(^{29}\) S. D. Myres, undated manuscript B., S. D. Myres Papers; Interview, E. Q. Daniel to Sandra Myres, December 18, 1959.

\(^{30}\) Ibid.

\(^{31}\) Minutes of the City Council, June, July, and August, 1908.
were canvassed on August 28, 1908, and S. D. Myres, the sole candidate for the post, was declared the victor with a total of sixty-three votes. H. D. Hughes administered the oath of office to Myres on August 28, 1908. In later years, Myres was to recall:

The position or office of mayor was not attractive under any circumstances, as the office did not then pay but $25.00 per month, and all kinds of . . . problems had to be met. . . . Under these circumstances no one wanted the OFFICE--and such was the state of matters when the writer (Myres) was elected to that place, and it is needless to say without opposition. . . .

Despite the disadvantages of his office, Myres enjoyed his work as mayor. He turned his talents as an organizer, promoter, and salesman to the new job.

In September 1908, William Myres, Sam's brother and a rising young attorney, was selected to act as the city attorney at a salary of $10.00 per month. William helped in drawing up the suit against the Orient Railroad Company and also represented the city in other actions.

In the spring of 1909 a new problem faced the people of Sweetwater and their mayor. On May 19, a petition for a county seat election was heard by the Commissioners Court of Nolan County to determine whether the county seat would remain in Sweetwater or be moved to Maryneal, fifteen miles to the southwest. Thus, in addition to their

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32 Ibid., August 28, 1908.
33 S. D. Myres, undated manuscript B., S. D. Myres Papers.
34 Minutes of the City Council, September 15, 1908.
35 Minutes of the Commissioner's Court, Nolan County, Book 4, p. 633.
attempts to help obtain right of way for the Santa Fe and their fight with the Orient, Sweetwater's citizens were forced into a fight for the retention of the county seat which "was thought to be vital, under all of the circumstances, to the very life of Sweetwater."\textsuperscript{36} Ostensibly the reason for moving the county seat was that Maryneal was more centrally located than Sweetwater. Actually, the Abilene citizens, disconsolate over the loss of the Santa Fe line, had agreed to put Maryneal on the line of the Roscoe, Snyder, and Pacific if Maryneal became the county seat.\textsuperscript{37} Myres, Crane, Trammell, and other citizens waged a successful fight to retain Sweetwater's position. The final vote was 496 for removal of the county seat to 781 against removal. Another crisis had been met and solved.\textsuperscript{38}

With the dream of transcontinental railroad service close to realization and the county seat assured, Sweetwater embarked on new projects for growth and modernization. Among other actions during Myres' first term, several subdivisions, including the western part of the Orient Addition, were annexed to the city; a "gassolene motor street roller" was purchased at a price of $2500 from Austin Western Company Limited of Chicago for use in street maintenance; bond issues were approved for $20,000 for street improvements and $10,000 for construction of a city hall and fire station; a new telephone franchise

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\textsuperscript{36}Crane, "Railroads and Community Rivalries," p. 33.
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\textsuperscript{37}Louise Bradford, "History of Nolan County, Texas" (Master's thesis, University of Texas, 1934), p. 53.
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\textsuperscript{38}Crane, "Railroads and Community Rivalries," p. 33.
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was granted to the Western Telephone Company (May 1909); and an ordinance was passed forbidding open privies inside the city limits of the town.\(^{39}\)

Contracts for the city hall and fire station were let in late November 1909. The contract for the city hall was awarded to Lamb and Ramsey Construction Company for $6500 for construction of a concrete block building. The mayor objected to this type of building material, and vetoed the awarding of the contract. Bids were resubmitted and, "The Mayor gave notice of protest of the strongest form against the erection of said building out of concrete block."\(^{40}\) Despite Myres' objections, the Lamb and Ramsey bid was again accepted after the company agreed to post a bond of $13,000 against defects in the building. When the building was completed, the committee appointed to inspect and accept the building found a large crack had developed over the front arch, and the foundation had to be deepened and other repairs made. One can well imagine that the fiery little mayor happily told the council, "I told you so!"\(^{41}\)

Myres was re-elected mayor in 1909 and served until 1911. During his second term fire hydrants were installed, new fire ordinances were adopted, and franchises for a street railway, a light, heat, and power company, and extended telephone service were granted.\(^{42}\) The

\(^{39}\) Minutes of the City Council, March 29, 1909; May 18, 1909; November 10, 1909; September 29, 1908.

\(^{40}\) Ibid., November 10, 1909.

\(^{41}\) Ibid., November, December 1909; January, February, 1910.

\(^{42}\) Ibid., January 20, 1910; February 19, 1910; May 6, 1910; June 23, 1910.
sidewalks were widened, gutters and curbing were installed, city ordinances were gathered into book form, and an official map of the city was adopted.143

The city's water supply had never been adequate. Earlier attempts to enlarge the city water system had met with difficulty, and the situation became acute in the summer of 1910. The long drought forced the council to issue an ordinance preventing the use of city water for any but domestic purposes. A water and ice company was formed by a group of citizens headed by Crane, Trammel, and Daniel, and this corporation managed to supply Sweetwater with water until it was finally taken over by the city many years later.144

All of the ordinances passed during Myres's two terms as mayor were not as important as those cited above but many were interesting, to say the least. A $2.00 per head tax was placed on all dogs in the city; stock was prohibited from running at large, and a pound was established.145 An ordinance prohibiting the selling of meat on the streets was passed in 1909, but had to be repealed in a few months because the city attorney and city marshall could not enforce it.146 Despite improvements, Sweetwater clung to a few old habits.

In later years, Myres claimed he kept a nudist colony out of Sweetwater during his term as mayor, but on this incident the facts are

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143 Ibid., September, 1910.
144 Ibid., September, 1910; S. D. Myres, undated manuscript B., S. D. Myres Papers.
145 Minutes of the City Council, August, 1910.
146 Ibid., November and December, 1909.
almost as bare as the alleged nudists. Sam was a crusader for decency though. During 1910, an ordinance was passed forbidding the showing of pictures of "prize fights and other lewd and obscene pictures" within the city.\(^47\) In 1911, an ordinance was passed fining prostitutes who appeared upon the streets of the city, unless in the company of a gentleman friend, in which case the fine was levied against the gentleman involved.\(^48\)

The drought in 1910 was followed by an outbreak of diphtheria in December of that year.\(^49\) Mayor Myres took the lead in securing a safe source of water, closing public places, and administering to the sick. In 1911, a contract was let to Al Roy for the paving of the city streets.\(^50\) Roy, the city marshall, resigned to oversee the work which was begun before Myres retired as mayor in April 1911.

During his four years in the mayor's office, Myres served without pay. When he first took the job:

The city had no credit, city script was worthless, the mayor's office payed, when the city had the money $25.00 per month, each alderman received $2.00 each regular meeting, and they likewise received their pay when the city had the same. . . . At the very first meeting of the city council, the mayor, together with the city aldermen, decided that they would not serve for the price that the city was able to pay, but that they would serve without price, and for the good of the city, and so they did.\(^51\)

\(^{47}\) Ibid., September, 1910.
\(^{48}\) Ibid., March, 1911.
\(^{49}\) Ibid., December 1910.
\(^{50}\) Ibid., March, 1911.
\(^{51}\) S. D. Myres, undated manuscript B., S. D. Myres Papers.
Sam was voted a salary of $20.00 per month in 1909, but the city records show that he never entered a bill for the salary due him and served without pay during the entire time he was mayor.

In addition to other civic endeavors, Myres took an interest in public education. Perhaps his own meager schooling was responsible for his concern for the education of others. On his arrival in Sweetwater in 1897, he had noted:

These strange people had a high conception of school requirements and employed the best teaching body that they could get. It was reported that the Principle held a Ph.D. degree. And may I not here say that possibly this policy accounts in part at least for some notable students being trained in the high school of Sweetwater.52

During Sam's term as mayor, he was instrumental in persuading the Parent Teacher's Association to hold their statewide meeting in Sweetwater in 1909.53 After retiring as mayor, Myres began taking a larger part in school affairs. In 1914, he ran for the school board, receiving 180 votes in the election. He served the board during 1914 as vice-president and chairman of the Finance Committee.54 During 1915, Myres was on the Finance Committee and the Committee on Buildings and Grounds.55

When the movement to gain an agricultural and mechanical college for West Texas was proposed, Myres worked actively on this project and

52 Ibid.
53 Minutes of the City Council, March 1909.
54 Weekly Review (Sweetwater, Texas), May 8, 1914.
55 Weekly Reporter (Sweetwater, Texas), August 24, 1915.
headed the local committee to present Sweetwater's proposal to locate the school in that town. Even after Myres left Sweetwater he remained interested in the project and corresponded with Crane about the plans for the school.\(^\text{56}\)

Myres' interest in better schools was increased by his own expanding family. He was anxious that his children receive a better education than had been available to him. Drusa and Sam now had three children: Samuel Dale, Junior (Ted), born in 1899; William James, born in 1903; and Melrose, born in 1906. In 1914, the Myres moved from their first Sweetwater home, on northwest Third Street, to the A. H. Herring home in Highland Heights.\(^\text{57}\) They remained in the Herring house for nearly a year while the original home was being renovated and redecorated. The family was active in the Presbyterian Church and took part in the "Forty Two Parties," musicales, and various entertainments which made up the social life of the town.

A charter member of the Commercial Club (Chamber of Commerce), Myres participated in the programs and projects of the organization.\(^\text{58}\) During 1915 and 1916, he helped in the campaign for road improvement and visited many nearby cities and towns "where the importance of GOOD roads was explained--the people had to be taught their importance."\(^\text{59}\)

Myres was very proud of his contributions to the growth of

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\(^{56}\) Letters, S. D. Myres to R. C. Crane, S. D. Myres Papers.

\(^{57}\) *Weekly Review* (Sweetwater, Texas), March 27, 1914.


\(^{59}\) S. D. Myres, undated manuscript B., S. D. Myres Papers.
Sweetwater. He had given unselfishly of his time and money, and in later years he could recall with pride:

Many things of real worth and interest were associated with the development of Sweetwater, and the change from a small Western country town into one of the most modern little cities of the country.... I have never met such men as those who were active in the development of Sweetwater--Truly each and all were worthy to be nominated members of THE OLD GUARD. 60

60 Ibid.
CHAPTER IV

SADDLES AND SADDLEMAKERS

The history of the saddle, like that of the horse, is one of evolution. Just as the relationship between man and the horse goes back to Asia, so too can the origin of the saddle be traced to the Asiatic cradles of civilization. Although the first record of riding equipment resembling a saddle dates from the 4th century A. D., evidence of the use of other equipment such as the bit has been found among Stone Age artifacts. Illustrations on monuments and tombs record the use of bits, bridles, and saddle cloths by ancient Greeks and Romans as well as the Egyptians and Assyrians. The actual saddle, however, seems to have come to Europe principally from Asia where the Chinese and Mongols had used this type of riding equipment for many centuries.\(^1\) Saddles with stirrups were used in Europe only after Attila and his Huns invaded the continent, and more widely after the Mongol hordes of Genghis Khan penetrated eastern Europe. The Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans used stirrup saddles long before the Europeans, and until the middle of the nineteenth century, these oriental saddles underwent few changes in design.\(^2\)

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The evolution of the western stock saddle may be traced from the Spanish conquest of Mexico when the saddle was first introduced on the American continent by Cortez and the conquistadores. The equipment used by the Spanish conquerors resembled the European medieval saddles, and was usually called an Andalusian saddle. It had a high pommel which curved forward, often ending in a carved figure of some sort, frequently a horse's head. The cantle or back part of the saddle was also high and curved backward. This Andalusian saddle might be termed the first American ancestor of the present western stock saddle, although modern saddles bear little resemblance to their earlier progenitor. From the Andalusian saddle developed the Spanish-American, California, Texas iron horn, and finally, the western stock saddle. Each of these saddles featured new developments in horn, cantle, or other parts. Therefore, the evolution of each part of the saddle will be traced.

Today's western saddle consists of approximately fifty-nine separate pieces, carefully fitted over a wooden frame called the tree.³ The main parts of the saddle are the cantle or back bow, the pommel terminating in the horn, skirts, fenders, jockeys, stirrups, and cinches. These parts are identified in Figure 5, page 60. The most important part of any saddle is the tree. Trees are of various sizes, depending upon the size saddle desired and the shape, and may vary according to the use to which the saddle is to be put. The size of the pommel and horn, the height of the cantle and the fork are all dependent upon the

³Interview, E. R. Myres to Sandra Myres, December 12, 1959.
construction of the tree. Modern trees are constructed of several pieces of soft wood, usually pine or spruce, covered with wet rawhide which shrinks as it dries to form a tight, hard surface. Older trees were of one solid piece, and were often made from hard woods. A few of these old trees were not covered with rawhide, but were inlaid with various colored woods and highly polished "like a fine piece of furniture." The hard wood tree is not used today, for trees constructed of soft wood are lighter and more pliable and thus easier to work. Not until the early nineteenth century did saddlemakers begin using a tree made of several pieces. This development started in California. The horn and fork were made of metal and bolted into the tree. The grand-father, so to speak, of the modern saddle was the Texas iron horn tree.
The horn, fork, and cantle were lower than those on the Spanish saddle, and the tree was made of four pieces of soft pine with an iron horn, as implied by its name. For a short time the steel fork or Sam Stagg tree enjoyed popularity. This tree featured a horn and fork made in one piece and riveted to the side of the tree. This style of fork often worked loose during roping and therefore was soon discarded. Most modern trees are adaptations of the well-known Visalia and Ladesma trees which were popular in the 1890's. These trees had high steel horns and a concave cantle. Minor innovations and changes are made on the different types of trees to adapt the saddle for various uses.

There are, for example, in Myres' catalogs, the "Myres Astride Tree," built with a "swell" (wide) fork for riding comfort; the "Denver Tree," also a riding saddle; the "Myres Special Roper"; and the "Mexican Chihuahua Tree," with gourd horn and high cantle.¹

The pommel, or as it is more commonly called in the west, the fork, is the front part of the saddle. The early saddles had a very narrow, straight fork similar to the one pictured in Figure 6, page 62. The bronc riders of the northwest began tying a slicker across the fork to act as a bumper and leg hold for the rider, and also to prevent the rider from being thrown over the front of the saddle. This innovation was used by many riders and soon other types of padding were adopted which could be tied to the fork. The use of padding led to the making of the "swell fork." The first of the swell forks were simply widened out and rounded surfaces without an undercut. In rapid succession thereafter many different styles with oddly shaped bulges were developed.

The most extreme were the "bear-trap" forks which were often twenty inches in width and deeply undercut, allowing the rider to get his legs well in under the fork and making it nigh impossible to be thrown. Old cowhands would not ride these saddles for to have been caught riding one of them would have ruined the man's reputation as a "clean sitter." The bear trap was popular, however, with amateur cowhands and riders. The craze for wide swell forks reached its zenith about 1920, and since then the swell has gradually been reduced to an average of fourteen and a half inches.5

![Fig. 6.--Development of the Fork](image)

The fork (or pommel) terminates in the horn. The horn of the Andalusian saddle has been previously described; from this the gourd horn, a rounded piece with a flat surface, evolved. This type of horn is still used on many Mexican saddles today. About the same time the gourd horn was making its appearance, a horn with a low flat top was developed in California. The next major step in the development of the horn was the use of metal. The first metal was used in the old iron horn Texas saddle. The head was about four inches in diameter with a short thick neck. Modern saddle horns are usually of steel or nickel.

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alloys; the head is about two inches in diameter and the neck is small and well proportioned. The steel horns are usually covered with rawhide or wrapped with leather. Expensive "show" saddles often have elaborate horns of gunmetal set with precious stones.\(^6\)

![Fig. 7.--Development of the Horn.](image)

The cantle of the Andalusian saddle was a high, uncomfortable piece which curved backward from the rear of the saddle. It is easy to see why the Spaniards rode straight and tall—they had to in order to prevent being injured by the cantle! Gradually the shape of the cantle changed. Beginning in California, the cantle became thinner and the curve of the surface was gradually changed to that of the modern concave backbow designed to provide both comfort and support to the rider.\(^7\)

The California saddles were probably the first to use saddle skirts or bastos as they were called. The Spanish-American saddle was covered with one piece of leather split at both ends to fit around the horn and cantle. This cover was called a mochila (Americanized by the cowhand to macheer). The Texas iron horn saddle was covered with roll

\(^6\)Ibid., pp. 211-213.

\(^7\)Ibid., pp. 194-196.
type binding, and the entire cantle was covered. Protective pads
called jockeys were added to the front, rear, and sides. Each jockey
was a separate piece, fastened to the saddle with screws and two short
strings. The typical Texas saddle of the 1890's had a seat and side
jockeys made in one piece. Fenders were added to the stirrup leathers,
and the skirts were longer and deeper than the earlier saddles giving
additional protection to both horse and rider. Modern saddles are sim-
lar to this although the size of the skirts and fenders will vary ac-
cording to the purpose of the saddle and the whims of the rider. 8

Stirrups have changed with the saddle. This important accessory
consists of a roller, bolt, metal binds, and tread. (These parts are
identified in Figure 8, page 65.) Stirrups are often covered with raw-
hide to prevent the metal binding from breaking and the tread from
wearing out. The Spanish used both metal and wooden stirrups, and var-
ious adaptations of these early models have been popular throughout the
years. The most widely used one today is a Visalia stirrup made of
wood and bound with metal strips. It is leather covered and has an
average tread width of two inches. Wood stirrups are far more popular
than the metal because they are lighter and less likely to cause abra-
sions and contusions on a rider's shins when the stirrup bumps against
them. 9

A tapadero or "tap" is sometimes added to the stirrup assembly.
The "taps" consist of pointed pieces of leather covering the stirrups

8 Ibid.
9 Ibid., pp. 220-222.
on all sides except the back. They are frequently used in brush country and in the colder climates as protective devices. The tap also prevents the pony from biting the rider's foot as he sometimes tries to do.10

![Diagram of Stirrup and Tapadero]

Fig. 8.--Stirrup and Tapadero

The term "rigging" is a commonly misused phrase. The words "rig" and "rigging" have various meanings which may be confusing. These terms usually refer to the style of saddle or more specifically "rigging" refers to the cinches, the manner in which they are attached to the saddle, and how they are placed. The three most common rigs are the single, three-quarter, and double rigs. The other types are adaptations of these basic cinch arrangements. The single rig utilizes only one cinch, usually of the centerfire type, in which the cinch ring is placed in the center of the tree. This rig is very popular on the west coast and is generally called a California rig. A saddle made in this manner sets forward on the horse's back, and is considered easier to ride than other types of saddles. A saddle with this equipment will not set down on a horse's back like a double rigged saddle, however, and thus the single

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10 Ibid., pp. 223-224; Interview, E. R. Myres to Sandra Myres, December 12, 1959.
rig permits a saddle to rock on a bucking horse. The three-quarter single rig is a favorite in the northwest and is also used by many bronc riders. Only one cinch is used, but the stirrup leather underneath is run through the rigging ring. The three-quarter double rig has a flank ring attached so that a flank cinch can be used if the rider wishes. The double rig utilizes two cinches, and is generally called the Texas or square rig. This type of saddle is used for roping work and is the type most frequently found in the Southwest. The double and three-quarter double rig are the most popular for working cattle. Most of Myres' saddles were of these latter types. Although Myres would rig a saddle to suit the rider, like most Southwestern saddlemakers he disliked the single rig and rarely made one.\textsuperscript{11}

In addition to the many innovations and adaptations discussed above, other changes may be made in the basic design of a saddle. Saddles used by barrel racers, for example, are usually of a different construction than stock saddles and are lighter in weight with a very low horn, short rounded skirts, and low cantle. Roping saddles are built in various ways depending on what the rider wishes. Some are even made by bolting the fenders to the tree in such a manner as to allow the entire stirrup assembly to swing forward and backward.

Saddles are constructed according to the size of the horse and rider. The height of the horn is measured from the top of the fork to the front edge of the head, and the length of the seat from the top of the inside edge of the cantle to the back of the fork. The height of

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., pp. 216-217. Interview, E. R. Myres to Sandra Myres, December 12, 1959.
the cantle is the distance from the top of the side bar to the top of the cantle. The fork is measured across the front or back from the extreme outside edges of the fork. Saddles are ordinarily ordered by fork and seat size. Thus, a 1\(\frac{1}{4}\)-1\(\frac{1}{2}\) inch saddle will have a fork fourteen inches across and a seat fourteen and a half inches long. The slope of the cantle and horn may vary according to the specifications of the rider. Horns are generally one-half; medium or full slope. A high straight cantle is usually five to six inches high, a medium height and slope would be four to five inches. The full slope low cantles are used on roping saddles and are generally about two and a half inches high.\(^{12}\)

The history of saddlemaking is as long as that of the saddle itself. Feudal estates in Europe had harness and saddlemakers just as they had blacksmiths and swordmakers. By the thirteenth century saddlery was established as a separate trade in England when the London Saddler's Company received a charter from Edward I.\(^{13}\) The Spanish settlers in Texas brought saddles with them from Mexico and Spain. Those who could not afford a saddle usually rode bareback. The Anglo settlers in Texas solved their needs for saddlery with typical ingenuity—they made them. Dick Halliday, who has made a study of early homemade Texas saddles reports: "In the early days . . . those who wanted a saddle had to make it."\(^{14}\) The steps in accomplishing this feat depended

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\(^{13}\) Weatherly, "Saddlery and Harness," p. 807.

upon selection of just the right tree. A "Y" fork was selected and cut to form the horn and fork of the saddle. Then additional pieces of wood were used to carve out the cantle and two sideboards. The next step was called mortising and consisted of cutting slots in the sideboards into which the cantle and fork could be fitted. Next holes were drilled at strategic points to carry the homemade wooden pegs which were used to hold the primitive saddle tree together. These pegs were dipped in a glue made of sinew and gristle and driven home. The tree was then rasped smooth and covered with wet rawhide. Rawhide was also used to rig these saddles in a manner known as Spanish rigging which was roughly similar to the modern three-quarter double rig. Two strips of rawhide, one on each side of the fork, were run through the fork, and the rigging rings fastened to them.  

The art of saddlemaking has changed remarkably little over the years. New methods and machines for making the task easier have been developed, but saddlemaking remains largely an individual labor. Although some large factories employ assembly line machine methods, most of the saddles sold in the United States are still made by hand by master craftsmen whose work proceeds in the following manner. Beginning with a tree chosen to produce the desired size, shape, and type, the modern saddlemaker next selects a hide from which to cut his "stock." Patterns for each piece of the saddle are traced onto the leather hide and cut out. The nine or so pieces of the groundwork are wet in a tub of warm water. A specially cut piece of tin is fitted

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15 Ibid., pp. 132-134.
into the seat area for added strength and covered with three to four pieces of leather which are cut to exactly the shape desired. The other pieces of the groundwork are then tacked to the tree at various stress points. Next the saddle proper is measured and cut; first the front, then the seat, one skirt, and the front jockeys. The other skirt is cut, followed by the fenders and cantle binding. If the saddle is to be stamped, the stamp stock goes to the stamper.\textsuperscript{16} While these parts of the saddle are being stamped, the saddlemaker fashions the rigging and strapwork.

When the stamped stock is returned, the pieces are fitted to the saddle beginning with the front. The pieces are removed and the edges and seams are stitched—some by hand, others on a machine designed for this purpose. Part of the hand stitching is done on a stitching tree, which holds the pieces in place so that the workman has both hands free. The pieces of leather to be stitched are fastened securely into the stitching tree, holes are punched in the leather with an awl, and a beeswax thread with a needle at each end is employed to make a running stitch very similar to that which is produced by the modern sewing machine.\textsuperscript{17}

Each piece of the saddle proper is again fitted to the tree and glued in place with dextereine paste (a mixture of cane pumice, senneca, and flour). Between each step the leather must be wet and time allowed

\textsuperscript{16}Stamped (i.e., carved) saddles are popular in the west, and the stamping will increase the wearing power of the leather as much as fifty per cent.

\textsuperscript{17}The design of the stitching tree has changed very little in the past 150 years. Some trees over one hundred years old are still in use.
for leather and paste to dry before the next section can be fitted. The straight pieces of leather are shaped to the saddle by the use of the stretching rack which holds the leather in the desired position while it dries into its final shape. When the front, seat, and jockeys have been fitted and glued the skirts are lined with sheep skin, the back housing is completed, and the various parts are assembled. Latigo "strings" are put in through the tree, housing, and skirts, brought through the rosettes and tied securely. The back housing is laced, the cantle binding is hand stitched in place and the finished saddle is washed and oiled.\(^{18}\) (See Figure 9, page 71.)

HALLIDAY believes that the first tree and saddle manufacturer in Texas was near Indianola and New Braunfels.\(^{19}\) Germans in the New Braunfels area also began tanning, and as leather became available a few small saddle shops opened. One old time Texas saddlemaker recalled cowboys in the early days making their own trees and bringing them to his shop to be covered and rigged.\(^{20}\) Leather was never in plentiful supply in Texas until after the Civil War. The large amounts of bark necessary for tanning were difficult to find in Texas, and although there was "leather on the hoof" in abundance, cured and tanned hides were shipped to Texas from St. Louis, Chicago, and other northern points, or imported from Mexico. Thus, the pre-War saddlemaker in Texas

\(^{18}\) The author is indebted to E. R. Myres of Fort Worth for the description of modern saddlemaking. Myres, who has been a saddlemaker for nearly fifty years, learned his trade from S. D. Myres in Sweetwater.

\(^{19}\) Halliday, "Early Day Saddles," p. 134.

Tree and Groundwork

Cutting the "Stock"

Washing and Oiling

Fig. 9.--Making a Western Saddle
found himself faced with the problem of plenty of customers and the wood for making saddle trees, but no material for completing a finished product. Early Texans with substantial means could, of course, order saddles from the east or north, or buy Mexican saddles which usually cost from $150.00 to $200.00.21 After the Civil War shipments of leather into Texas began to increase. By 1900, Texas was reported as the fifth largest producer of saddlery and harness in the United States.22 It is interesting to note that despite this record in saddle and harness production, Texas reported no manufacture of saddlery hardware, and only eleven establishments for the manufacture of tanned, curried, and/or finished leather.23 Myres, in choosing a site for his shop, was well aware of the necessity for obtaining raw materials from outside the state, and it was not only a matter of civic pride and responsibility but of business necessity which caused him to work so long and diligently to bring the transcontinental Santa Fe connections to Sweetwater.

During the early part of the twentieth century, leather goods were extensively manufactured at several points in Texas, notably at Dallas, Waco, and San Antonio. In 1904, the Texas Almanac proudly declared: "Dallas manufactures and sells more saddlery and harness than any other place in the United States."24 Among the largest firms in

23 Ibid., pp. 382-383.
Texas were the Padgitt saddleries in Dallas and Waco and Strauss-Frank in San Antonio. Pueblo, Colorado, was another center of saddle production. Two large Pueblo firms, the Gallup Saddlery and the Frazier Saddle Company, were known throughout the west. These firms were serious competitors for the Myres Saddle Company. California and Wyoming also had a large number of saddleries, but these areas were far enough distant to preclude their being real competition for Myres. A number of small custom shops were located in Texas, and several of these, including Edelbrock, Schöllkopf, and Schweitzer, were well known for the production of quality saddles.

The making of a fine saddle is an art which is vanishing from the Western scene. The saddlemaker, besides being a craftsman of the highest order, must possess the highly developed sense of pictorial values demanded of the artist. He must also have a knowledge of mechanics and engineering if the final product is to stand the test of weather, use, and time. Saddlemaking, insofar as the carving of the leather and ornamentation is concerned, is a fine art, and the real experts in this line are few and the demand for their services great. The Myres saddles were famous for the elaborate and fine carving which ornamented them, and the designs worked out by Myres for his saddles are well known throughout the industry. Many young men, entering the saddle business, learned to carve and stamp leather by copying designs out of a Myres catalog.

A saddlemaker was often known by the show saddles he made. Competition to obtain contracts for fancy saddles for rodeos and wild-west shows was, and continues to be, keen. Not only did such orders bring
the manufacturer a good profit, but they also were worth a great deal
in free advertising. Much of Myres' reputation as a saddlemaker was
based on several famous saddles which were made in either the Sweet-
water or El Paso shops.

Perhaps the finest saddle ever produced in this country was made
by Myres in 1914 for J. C. Miller of the 101 Ranch Show. According to
Myres, Miller had viewed a saddle belonging to Napoleon Bonaparte, and
was told it was the world's most expensive saddle. Miller told the
guard at the exhibit: "In six months you can't say that."25 Family
legend says that while the 101 Ranch Show was passing through Sweet-
water by train, Miller left the cars during a stopover, went to Myres'
shop, and asked him to make a saddle that would cost $10,000. Miller
agreed to buy and send to Myres the gold, silver, and precious stones
that would be needed. The saddle was completed in the spring of 1914.
A specially built Ladesma tree was used, and the leather employed for
the saddle was selected by the owners of Eberhard Tanning Company in
Santa Clara, California. Myres designed all of the patterns for the
skirts, fenders, shields, and stamping, and also originated the designs
of the silver trimmings which were executed by Chicago Art Metal works.
The fenders were particularly beautiful, stamped by Myres with butter-
flies, gold bugs, and large Texas Longhorn steer heads. The rest of
the saddle was handstamped with scroll and flower patterns. The horn
was of gun metal, decorated with silver and crowned with seventy dia-
monds set in a horseshoe design. The corners of the housing and jockeys

25Myres told this story many times. It has been related to the
author by several members of the family.
were surmounted with silver wreaths decorated with diamonds, garnets, and sapphires. The wreaths on the skirts bore gold steer's heads with diamond eyes and ruby nostrils. The stirrups, fork, and cantle bindings were solid silver with the 101 in gold. The back of the cantle also bore the 101 with a diamond and ruby star in the center of the "O." The saddle contained one hundred and sixty-six diamonds, one hundred and twenty sapphires, seventeen rubies, four garnets, and fifteen pounds of gold and silver.26 Widely publicized in Texas and Oklahoma,27 descriptions of beauty appeared in newspapers as far away as California and New York.28 (See Figure 10, page 76.)

When the 101 Ranch Show went broke in later years the jewels were chipped out and sold to help pay off the Millers' debts. The hull of the saddle was reported to repose in many places. Then, years later, Zach Miller, last of the four brothers, found what was left of the saddle and talked to Myres about restoring it. The conversation was reported, in part, as follows: "Sam, you've got to rebuild her just like she was when Joe tightened the cinch the first time." "I'll do it," Sam replied, his eyes sparkling, "I'll do all the leather carving myself." Before the work could begin, however, Myres died, and nothing more was ever said about the matter. Perhaps Miller felt that no one else should work on what was truly "The Saddle" Myres built.29

26 The Morning News (Dallas, Texas), March 8, 1914.

27 Ibid.; Record (Fort Worth, Texas), March 16, 1916; Oklahoma News (Oklahoma City, Oklahoma), March 8, 1914.

28 The Journal (Santa Clara, California), May 2, 1914; Leslie's Illustrated Weekly Newspaper (New York), April 16, 1914.

29 Interview, William J. Myres to Sandra Myres, November 27, 1959;
Fig. 10.--The Miller $10,000 Saddle
Sometime during the period between 1912 and 1916, Myres made a saddle or saddles for the infamous Mexican bandido and revolutionist, Pancho Villa. No records of the order and delivery of this saddle are to be found among Myres' business papers. The saddle catalogs which he published in El Paso, however, show a picture of the saddle Myres said he made for Villa. Villa was in the West Texas area during this period, and it seems at least possible that he, or one of his men, ordered the saddle from Myres.

During World War I, the Myres company, as well as other Texas saddleries, turned to war production. In 1920, the Sweetwater paper announced:

During the war the saddlery plant was turned over to the government and all production went without profit to the owner. Every effort was made to produce in the largest quantities possible and at the same time keep up the standard. That this was done is known by the fact that the Myres Saddle Co. was one of the few concerns turning out 100% war products.

While many of the Texas saddle manufacturers made pack saddles, the Myres company was concerned with making the McClellan saddles used by the cavalry. During 1918, the walls of the shop were extended another fifty feet to the alley behind the building, and a number of

Standard Times (San Angelo, Texas), January 26, 1947. The saddle is now in the Frank Phillips Museum, Bartlesville, Oklahoma.


31Daily Reporter (Sweetwater, Texas), February 19, 1920.

women and girls from Sweetwater were hired as extra help. All work was done on an assembly line method. Two government contracts were awarded—one for $20,000 and another for $120,000. In a letter to Myres in January 1919, Newton D. Baker, Secretary of War, wrote:

Will you not express to your employees my appreciation for their devoted and continuous service to the nation's cause and accept for yourself this expression of the Department's pleasure in the cooperation which you have extended.

In 1920, Myres received a Certificate of Merit and a Citation from the government for the services he had rendered during the war. The citation from the Director of Purchase read:

Tendered his services and his plant to the Government, stating that same were available without profit to himself for use in winning the war. The saddles produced by this contractor were of such good quality and workmanship that inspection was only a matter of form.

These documents were a source of much pride to Myres, and they occupied an honored place on the wall of his office where they still hang today.

In 1936, Myres completed a $2,500.00 saddle for Jack Hoxie, well known cowboy movie star. The saddle featured "cowboy paintings by Charles Russell" skillfully copied by Myres in hand tooled leather.

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33 Interview, E. R. Myres to Sandra Myres, December 12, 1959.
34 Invoices, 1917-1918, S. D. Myres Papers.
36 Letter and citation, Director of Purchase to S. D. Myres, February 19, 1920, S. D. Myres Papers.
37 Herald Post (El Paso, Texas), December 2, 1936.
In the same year, Myres placed on display in the Ranger's Headquarters at the Texas Centennial in Dallas ten new saddles made for Colonel W. Tom Johnson's use in his internationally known rodeo. A $1,500.00 saddle with finely engraved silver trimming ridden by Captain John R. Hughes of the Rangers, was also featured in the display. In 1939, Myres made a fine $1,500.00 saddle for Sam Lard of Hillsboro, New Mexico. Like the Hoxie saddle, it featured copies of Russell paintings including a cowpuncher roping a calf and a number of pictures of small animals cunningly worked into the elaborate scroll carving.

The designs stamped or carved into fine leather work are as individual as a signature. Those who know leather and are familiar with many carvers can recognize almost immediately the artisan who has created a piece of leather work. One of the most distinctive features of Myres' work is the oak leaf pattern, copied from the leaves of the scrub oak in the Brazos River country near Cleburne. Another clue to a Myres saddle is the representations of western scenes copied from Charles Russell paintings or patterned after Russell's work. Such carving is readily seen in the Hoxie and Lard saddles. Other saddles portray bucking broncs, fighting steers, or roping and branding operations. Lovely cowgirls mounted on white stallions (the color is achieved by dyeing the leather) are sometimes depicted on the saddles. No matter how plain or fancy, or how expensive a saddle, Myres insisted that every product of his company be of the best material and workmanship: "Porque no," said Sam, "Craftsmen who don't put master work into

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38 Newspaper clipping, May 27, 1936 (World News), S. D. Myres Papers.
39 Herald Post (El Paso, Texas), August 7, 1939.
a thirty-dollar saddle, they'll have a mightily puny chance of ever building a twenty thousand dollar hull.⁴⁰ Proof that Myres made durable saddles may be found in the many old Myres saddles still used today. A saddle made by Myres in 1898 was recently presented to the West Texas Museum in Lubbock. Although well used, this plain and inexpensive saddle is in excellent condition.

For twenty-two years, from 1898 to 1920, Myres worked to build his reputation as a saddlemaker without peer. Then, during the 1920's and 30's came a giant upheaval which ruined his business, and forced him to forsake saddles as his chief line of work.

CHAPTER V
THE DARK YEARS

To Sam Myres, as well as to many other citizens of the United States, the year 1920 seemed to usher in a new decade of prosperity. The "war to end war" had been won; the country was returning to normal. To all but the most astute observers a new day of national and personal affluence appeared to be dawning. If a few recognized the golden rays were those of a setting rather than a rising sun, their voices were lost amid the blare of jazz trombones, thriving industrial plants, and the constant clatter of the ticker tape. For Myres, the twenties opened in a blaze of fire and ended in a crash which almost cost him the business he had worked so hard to build.

In May 1919, Myres left Sweetwater on an extended business trip. During his absence a fire of unknown origin gutted the saddlery. When Myres received the news of his loss, he quickly took action. He telephoned his nephew, Ernest Myres, in Sweetwater: "Tell the boys to stay right there. I'm going to Dallas to gather up some more tools and then I'll be home." ¹ Myres purchased enough equipment to reopen the shop and boarded a train for Sweetwater. A hasty survey of the damage convinced him it would take some time to rebuild even a portion of his plant. Realizing that his employees would be forced to take new positions before he could reopen, he contacted his friend, R. A. Ragland, attorney for Don Clayton, owner of the Luella building half a block from

¹Interview, E. R. Myres to Sandra Myres, June 1, 1961.

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Myres' burned Factory. For a cash payment of $16,000.00 and a note for the balance of $9,000.00, Myres was able to move into the Luella building. Employees of the shop had managed to salvage a number of trees, some leather, and other materials. Within two weeks after the fire, S. D. Myres Saddle Company was back in business.

Fortunately, Myres was well insured. From his papers, he seems to have carried policies with many different companies. Some of these policies were on the building, others were on the stock and machinery. Despite the efforts of Myres' employees and the fire department Myres suffered an almost total loss. Insured for $30,000.00, he collected a total of nearly $20,000.00 from various companies.

Although the company was soon doing "business as usual" Myres appeared to take little interest in its operations after getting it reestablished. He had met a young woman, Eva Folkner, who was suffering from tuberculosis. Myres took her into his home and cared for her for several months. When she was well enough to be up, he found lodgings for her and gave her a job in the office of the shop. His wife, Drusa, objected, justifiably, to his continued attentions to the young lady. The misunderstanding between Sam and Drusa continued to grow, and in October 1919, Myres obtained a divorce. He wished to begin a new life for himself and Eva, and as a first step, he started looking for a location for a new saddlery. After investigating several possible

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3Interview, E. R. Myres to Sandra Myres, June 1, 1961.

4Statement, Insurance and Apportionment, S. D. Myres Papers.
sites, Myres decided on El Paso. His reasons were several. He thought the city to be "one of the most progressive cities in many respects in the State of Texas." There was little saddlemaking being done in El Paso at that time, and Myres felt, "This . . . could be cared for easily as the surrounding territory is unusually inviting, and with a factory making uptodate stuff, this trade could unquestionably be easily controlled." Myres also felt that there was "plenty of market in the country surrounding El Paso" for harness, and he had talked with several businessmen in the city who had encouraged him to locate there.  

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Myres began making preparations for the move. On March 6, 1920, he signed a contract with Gus Momsen of El Paso for the lease of a building to be constructed at 526 Overland Street in that city. Under the terms of the agreement the building was to have a ground floor and basement thirty-five by eighty feet and a second story which would extend into an adjacent building and be seventy by eighty feet. The building was to be ready for occupancy by July 1. The lease was for a five year period; the rent, $300.00 per month.  

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With preparations underway in El Paso, Myres returned to Sweetwater to settle his affairs there. A divorce was obtained quietly. In order to provide for Drusa and the three children he gave his wife


their home, several adjacent lots, and a $7,500.00 cash settlement.\footnote{8}{Interview, E. R. Myres to Sandra Myres, June 1, 1961; Divorce decree, D. A. Myres vs. S. D. Myres, October 4, 1919, Civil Minutes of the District Court, Nolan County, Book 5, pp. 105-106.} Myres wished to continue operating the Sweetwater business as a retail outlet for his leather goods. He therefore closed the factory portion of the shop except for minor repair work, but kept the salesroom open. He left Bob Shaffer in charge of the Sweetwater store and moved the equipment and most of the employees to El Paso. One of Myres' last instructions to Shaffer before leaving was to see that A. A. Prince, an employee of the shop since 1898, continued to receive his fifteen dollars per week salary whether Prince worked or not. Myres wished to be sure that his longtime employee, who was in poor health, should not be in need of food and clothing.\footnote{9}{Interview, E. R. Myres to Sandra Myres, December 12, 1959.}

By December 1920, Myres had established himself in El Paso. Despite the agricultural depression which began in early 1920, he had a total sales and income for the year of $103,368.45. The establishment of a new business, however, had been expensive. By taking all possible deductions, he was able to claim a business loss of $5,318.04 on his tax return for 1920.\footnote{10}{Income Tax Return, S. D. Myres Company, December 31, 1920, S. D. Myres Papers.} In spite of the loss, prospects for business seemed good, and Myres looked forward to the coming years. He had announced that the El Paso saddlery would ultimately represent an investment of $100,000.00 and employ twenty to thirty workmen, and he
intended to achieve this goal.\textsuperscript{11} Unfortunately, Myres had made a bad business judgement, extending operations at a time when he should have been cutting back. The horse was being replaced by the Model T and the tractor for pleasure and work. The market for horse equipment and harness dropped alarmingly throughout the 1920's. Instead of investing several hundred dollars in a new custom made saddle, the rancher spent $290.00 in 1924 for a Model T.\textsuperscript{12} In 1921, Myres' net loss was nearly $9,000.00.\textsuperscript{13} By 1923, however, there was a slight recovery, and losses amounted to only $6,132.63.\textsuperscript{14} Despite the business slump Myres remained optimistic. In addition to the salary he paid himself he had a modest income from rents, royalties, and bonds. He felt he would have sufficient capital to keep his business going until the market improved. He did, however, reduce production somewhat. The Sweetwater store was losing money, and Myres decided to replace Shaffer with a new manager. Charlie Roberts therefore took over the branch store and operated it until it was closed in 1937.\textsuperscript{15}

The recovery of business and agriculture in 1923 and 1924 brought fresh hope to the leather industry. In April 1923, William James wrote Myres:

\textsuperscript{11}Unidentified newspaper clipping, July 1, 1920, S. D. Myres Papers.


\textsuperscript{13}Income Tax Return, S. D. Myres Company, December 31, 1921, S. D. Myres Papers.

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., December 31, 1923.

\textsuperscript{15}Interview, William J. Myres to Sandra Myres, June 15, 1961.
I further know that much of the pessimistic feeling of the Trade that the harness business was on the blink, running on its last legs, has given way to a saner feeling and that the bigger Trade feel that the harness business is on a safer and saner basis today than it was ten years ago and has a far better future.\textsuperscript{16}

Myres shared James' optimism. Like many others in the leather trade he refused to believe, or simply could not comprehend, that the day of large sales in farm and ranch equipment was gone. Despite Myres' hopes, the strain of operating businesses in both El Paso and Sweetwater, the cost of his divorce, and the large amount of doctor and drug bills necessary for Eva, whom he married in 1920, made deep inroads in Myres' capital. On January 1, 1923, he had an indebtedness of over $11,000.00.\textsuperscript{17} His chief creditors were the banks, from which he had secured loans for the purchase of the Luella building in Sweetwater as well as for the establishment of the El Paso business, and the Eberhard Tanning Company in Santa Clara, California. Myres seems to have seriously considered forming an incorporation at this time to draw new capital for the support of his business. His brother, William Myres, and William and T. R. James made an effort to find investors for him. In January William James wrote: "The more I have thought about this matter, the more urgent to me has become the necessity of your incorporation and the securing of additional capital, which I believe is

\textsuperscript{16}\textit{Letter}, William James to S. D. Myres, April 17, 1923, S. D. Myres Papers.

\textsuperscript{17}\textit{Letter}, O. M. Eberhard to S. D. Myres, May 8, 1923, S. D. Myres Papers.
the only way you can do it at this time." For some unknown reason, however, the matter was dropped. Either Myres managed to acquire enough funds to pay off part of his debts, or he could not find sufficient backers interested in investing in a dying industry.

Conditions in the leather industry fluctuated during the remainder of the 1920's. Some years seemed to bring slight improvement, others brought new lows. Many manufacturers had overextended themselves just as Myres had. When the crash came in 1929, it found them ill prepared. Perhaps, like other businessmen, the leather producers and manufacturers had been blinded by the phenomenal increase in their industry over the years since the Civil War. In Texas alone the number of saddlery and harness establishments had risen from 138 in 1870 to 359 in 1900. After the census of 1899 small custom shops were excluded from the reports, but nonetheless over 1,000 firms for the production of saddlery and harness were operating in the United States in 1910. Of these, 67 were in Texas where the shops employed 1,012 people and handled products with a value of four and a half million dollars per year. The impact of mechanization in farming and ranching on the leather industry is portrayed even more clearly in the percentages of increase and decrease of business reported in the census of 1929. From


1899 to 1909 the number of establishments for the production of leather increased 54.3%; between 1909 and 1919 production increased 35.3%; between 1919 and 1929 production decreased 85.7%. Value of products increased from 1899 to 1909 by 60.9%; from 1909 to 1919 product value increased by 54.4%; from 1919 to 1929 product value decreased 72.1%. 21

In the years from 1919 to 1929 the number of saddle and harness shops in Texas decreased from sixty-eight to twenty. When the depression came the leather industry was already faltering and many shop owners were on the verge of bankruptcy.

Myres found himself in serious straits by 1929. He had paid little attention to business during the last years of the decade. His beloved Eva had not recovered her health as he had hoped, and her death in 1928 left him ill and heartsick. He withdrew from contacts with others; and he made little effort to do more than just hang on to the business.

In 1930, after the crash, Myres came to a gradual realization that his business as well as his personal life was falling apart around him. In addition to his large debts to the banks and to Eberhard Tanning Company, he had a number of smaller accounts which were past due. He contacted his longtime business associate and friend, Oscar M. Eberhard, and arranged a renewal of his note to the tanners. Eberhard also agreed to loan Myres additional money to pay some of his other debts. In this way he was able to reduce his interest payments substantially, and to consolidate most of his financial obligations into one note.

for $25,000.00.\textsuperscript{22} Eberhard understood better than Myres that the depression would not be a short term one as had been the recession of the early twenties. He counseled Myres to reduce his stock in harness and other leather goods immediately, to sell as much of his stock as he possibly could, and to concentrate on saddle sales and mail order business. Eberhard also advised Myres to sell as much of his real estate as possible, discharge most of his work force, and move to small quarters in El Paso in order to reduce overhead: "Your trade understands your position and they would honor you more by using your personality more in selling them saddles than trying to show them that you are trying to run a business the size of Straus Franks Co. at a loss and possibly worse."\textsuperscript{23}

Despite the good advise from all sides, Myres remained lethargic. He seemed to have lost all the drive and ambition of former years. He reduced his work force slightly and disposed of some of his stock, but he never made a big enough effort to cut down his operating expenses sufficiently to enable him to show a profit on his operations. Just how bad conditions were throughout the industry was revealed in a letter from Eberhard to Myres in 1932:

We have been tanning only what hides we actually need to replace the leather we are selling which is not a great deal as you will realize. Unfortunately the harness trade that uses our branded sides has not materialized

\textsuperscript{22}Note, S. D. Myres to Eberhard Tanning Company, June 25, 1930, S. D. Myres Papers.

\textsuperscript{23}Letter, O. M. Eberhard to S. D. Myres, July 7, 1930, S. D. Myres Papers.
and we have accumulated a large number of these butt branded No. 3 sides that has tied up our capital to the extent we cannot buy all the hides we would like to keep our plant going sufficient to pay our expenses. . . . 21

Myres was unable to pay anything on the principal of his note to Eberhard, so the tanners negotiated a loan for themselves using Myres' note as security for their loan. For the next several years all managed to keep out of bankruptcy by borrowing on each other's promises to pay. Myres would borrow from Eberhard who would use Myres' note as collateral for a renewal of his note at the bank. Myres would pay enough of the interest due on his note to Eberhard to keep the bank from writing it off as a bad debt. Since both Myres and Eberhard had operating companies, the bank was able to justify loaning the money.

Finally, Myres realized that some drastic steps had to be taken. Conditions were not improving, the harness business was gone, the saddle trade was not good, and he was continuing to lose money. He stubbornly refused to take Eberhard's advice, liquidate most of his stock, and move to smaller quarters. In late 1934, Myres' son, William, joined him in business, and in 1936, Dave Myres, a nephew, came into the firm. The three men set to work to revamp the plant and reorganize the business. They decided upon a bold step—rather than further reducing the business they would expand into new fields! First, however, it was necessary to clear up old debts and rid themselves of the burden of interest and taxes which had accumulated through the previous years. The Sweetwater shop was closed in 1937 and the building sold. Other property

21 Ibid., September 9, 1932, S. D. Myres Papers.
was sold to pay back taxes and debts.25 Myres used most of his remaining property as collateral to secure a loan from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation.26 The harness trade was disbanded, and in its place the company turned to volume production of holsters and gunbelts.27 Dace Myres instituted a trade in Stetson hats, boots, and western clothing as another sideline. In December 1939, William and Dace Myres and Melrose Taylor, Sam's daughter, formed a partnership to retail western clothes and "stockmen's supplies" as a part of the business. They began to make a small profit on this venture which helped make up the loss on the leather goods. By 1941, the retrenchment had put the entire business back on a firm basis. Sales for the year 1941 were $149,261.72 with a gross profit of $13,853.02 and a net gain for the year of $2,220.61.28

During the depression a number of the old, well-established saddlery firms folded and were forced to close their doors.29 Large scale production of holsters and gunbelts and the boot and clothing business had saved the Myres company. Ever since he had worked at the Kouns saddlery in Weatherford, Myres had been interested in gun


"rigging." The Sweetwater shop catered to special orders for gunbelts and holsters as well as saddles. Thus, over the years, Myres had established a reputation as a fine craftsman in producing custom made and individually designed gun carrying equipment. Lawmen and gunfighters came to him with their ideas for improving the design of their holsters. "It was a simple process of elimination. If a gunman designed a holster and then was too slow on the draw, you might as well forget the pattern." 30 Jeff Milton, Tom Threepersons, and Captain John R. Hughes, all well known lawmen, were only a few of the many "gunmen" who frequented the Sweetwater, and later the El Paso, store. Hughes was responsible for the design of the Buscadero belt, a famous Myres product. A short strap with a buckle was stitched diagonally on a leather belt. This strap slipped through the top of the holster and was buckled. The holster was made in such a way as to cant the pistol butt forward, and thus permit a fast, smooth draw. 31 (See Figure 11, page 94.) Tom Threepersons, a former Canadian "Mounty" and deputy marshall in El Paso, designed a holster which is still popular today. Adaptable to both gun belt and shoulder rigging, the Threepersons was designed to allow the trigger of the weapon to set high for easy and fast drawing. 32 (See Figure 12, page 94.)

In 1936, a Border Patrolman came to the Myres shop with a request

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30 The Chronicle (Houston, Texas), June 2, 1957.


32 Interview, William J. Myres to Sandra Myres, June 15, 1961; Eugene Cunningham, Famous in the West (El Paso, 1926), pp. 22-25.
for a new type of holster. He had utilized an old gun rig and a tomato can to make a prototype of what he wanted. Using the Patrolman’s model, Myres and his son, William, were able to design a first class holster. The final product was so unique and seemed so satisfactory for law enforcement work that the design was patented, and the shop went into production of the "Myres Border Patrol and Police Holster." (See Figure 13, page 94.) This rig was adopted by the United States Department of Justice as their uniform Border Patrol service holster. Soon police departments over the nation began sending orders for this equipment, and business boomed. By 1940, the firm was filling orders for several thousand holsters each year. In the early 1940’s, Senior Border Patrol Inspector William H. Jordon and the Myres worked out several improvements on the Border Patrol holster. The Jordon holster, as it came to be known, featured an exposed trigger guard and an added plug behind the trigger guard to throw the butt of the gun further from the body.

The fame of the Myres holsters quickly spread. Catalogs of the company were mailed to police departments and well known law enforcement officers, trick shooters, and fast draw artists. An occasional present of a belt and holster was made to familiar figures in the

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33 Interview, William J. Myres to Sandra Myres, June 15, 1961.
35 Herald Post (El Paso, Texas), September 14, 1936.
37 Ibid.
Fig. 11.--The "Buscadero" Belt

Fig. 12.--The Lyres Border Patrol Holster

Fig. 13.--The Tom Threepersons Holster
government service or famous shooters. These gifts were charged off to advertising and usually brought orders for additional equipment not only from the recipient but from his friends as well. In 1938, Myres attended the "United States Championship" rifle and pistol matches at Camp Perry, Ohio. Armed with catalogs, sample cases, and a letter of introduction from H. O. Horsley, chief border patrol inspector ("The bearer of this letter... is a rip snorting bad man down in this country... He is the best saddle, holster, and belt manufacturer in the United States... ") 38 Myres made many new friends and customers for his business. Annual excursions to Camp Perry replaced Myres' former trips to cattlemen's conventions. He often included a visit to the Smith and Wesson Company in Springfield, Massachusetts in his itinerary, and the shop began to feature holsters made especially for Smith and Wesson revolvers. Not only were the Border Patrol and many police officers carrying Myres equipment, but many Federal law enforcement agents began using an adaptation of the Tom Threepersons holster. A well-known Federal agent, D. A. (Jelly) Bryce, tried the Myres holsters, and proclaimed their excellence wherever he went. Letters began pouring into the shop from all over the world praising the equipment made by Myres and ordering more. A letter from California read: "Several years ago one of your holsters, the Tom Threepersons, was responsible for saving my life and I have been an enthusiastic customer since


that time." Another letter came from Wisconsin: "I have one of your 'Jordon' holsters on your Sam Browne belt and it is the finest example of good leather craft I have ever had."\textsuperscript{40} A Myres holster was presented to the King of Iraq during his visit to this country. General George S. Patton's famous holsters which he carried through World War II bear the trademark "S. D. Myres--El Paso, Texas."\textsuperscript{41} From far and wide the acclaim rose. A letter came from a State Department agent in Southeast Asia: "Your workmanship will certainly be a fine advertisement for your firm and will be seen from now on in the remotest corners of South Vietnam."\textsuperscript{42}

The dark years were over. The debts of the company were gradually paid off, and the business began showing a profit. Many firms had failed during the depression years, but S. D. Myres Company had weathered the storm. Because Myres was able to change his methods of operation, and to realize that a new era in saddlery and leather was coming, he had been able, with the help of his son and nephew, to withstand the forces which wrecked the industry. Hard work, sacrifice, and widespread advertising had saved the business just as the same characteristics of its owner had built the Sweetwater shop. In 1950, S. D. Myres Saddle Company moved to new quarters on Alameda Boulevard and opened its doors as "Cowboy Headquarters for the Southwest."

\textsuperscript{40} Letter, R. E. Lemmer to S. D. Myres Company, September 25, 1960, S. D. Myres Papers.

\textsuperscript{41} These holsters and the General's pearl handled revolvers are now in the West Point Museum, West Point, New York.

CHAPTER VI

COWBOY HEADQUARTERS

The epithet "Cowboy Headquarters for the Southwest" was a culmination of a reputation that had been built over the years since 1898. Perhaps "Headquarters" would, by itself have been a more fitting name, for others than cowboys made the Myres company a regular stop. Myres' many friends came from all walks of life, from all age groups. After Eva's death, Myres moved his living quarters to the second floor of the shop on Overland Street. When the company went into new quarters on Alameda Boulevard he stayed at the nearby Del Camino Hotel or slept in his office at the store. Throughout the day and on into the evening friends and acquaintances dropped by to visit. Professors and teachers came in to talk about history or mathematics; elders and laymen of Myres' Mormon faith dropped by to discuss a new church building or read with Sam from the "Book of Mormon." Movie "stars" and show business personalities who used Myres saddles and holsters stopped in to make purchases and pose for pictures with the store's owner. From Fort Bliss came the men of the army--privates, sergeants, captains, and generals. Each was received warmly and cordially no matter what his rank or the size of his bankroll. Tourists and sightseers made the shop a "must" on their tours of El Paso and Juarez. Perhaps the most loved of all were the children whom Myres welcomed and regaled with stories, both true and fictional, of the days of the "Old West."

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The store was, and still is, headquarters for many movie personalities, including Gene Autry, John Wayne, and Keenan Wynn. Among the pictures which hang in the Myres office are those of cowboy stars of yesterday and today. Early players of the silent screen had come to the Sweetwater shop for saddles and riding equipment. William S. Hart the immortal "Hopalong Cassidy," Hoot Gibson; Wallace Berry Jr.; and Tom Mix were all customers of S. D. Myres, Sweetwater, Texas. During the dark years of the depression these men and their successors in the "talkies" helped keep the business from sinking. At a time when ranchers and farmers had no funds, the western stars still had money, and saddle orders from Hollywood paid many bills. Tom Mix and Myres were especially good friends. On Mix's last visit to El Paso he went to the Overland Street store, purchased Stetsons for all the members of his party, and went upstairs for a long visit with Myres. Throughout the afternoon Mix seemed preoccupied. As he left the store he said: "Well Sam, I guess I won't be seeing you this side of the river again. I'll keep a place for you over on the other side." Two days later Mix was killed when his car overturned on the road between Lordsburg and Deming, New Mexico.¹

Through his selling and advertising endeavors, Myres met many of the business and civic leaders in El Paso. After Eva's death he began taking a part in church and community activities. He was genuinely fond of people, and enjoyed taking part in the projects of service clubs and charitable organizations.

¹Interview, Dace Myres to Sandra Myres, June 15, 1961.
Among Myres' favorite activities was participation in his church—Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints, or as it is better known, Mormonism. Soon after their marriage both Eva and Sam were baptized and confirmed in the Mormon Church.² According to an article in a church magazine, Myres was converted to the Mormon faith by Elder Rey L. Pratt and an Elder Reese from the Mexican Mission in El Paso:

The Elder [Reese] was a college man with a keen mind, capable of wise and impartial analysis. To Myres, Elder Reese was the ideal missionary. Together they discussed religion at great length. Together they gave Mormonism the acid test of all the knowledge that two studious men had accumulated through the years.³

Myres was an eager convert; he began teaching Bible classes and tried to bring others to his adopted religion. He described himself as a converted "Philistine," anxious to carry the Gospel to those who were non-believers. In January 1928, he was ordained a High Priest in the Melchizedek priesthood in the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints, a missionary brotherhood within the church.⁴ Myres served on the building committee of the El Paso Ward chapel which was completed in 1931. On this committee "his time and money were pledged without restriction to see that the project was carried to successful completion."⁵ As a further service to his church in 1936 he was called as a

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²Baptismal Certificates, July 30, 1924, S. D. Myres Papers.

³Conrey Bryson, "Ambassador to the Philistines," The Improvement Era, XLI (September, 1938), p. 569.


missionary in the St. Joseph Stake of Zion in El Paso, and served
the stake faithfully in this office until his release in 1938.6

Myres mixed religion and mysticism. He recalled dreams and
visions in which he had seen Brigham Young and the Angel Moroni.
After Eva's death, he frequently consulted a "medium" to bring him
messages from the "other world." Despite his eccentricities, Myres
received much comfort from his adopted religion. A practical man as
well as a mystic, his approach to teaching the gospel was simple and
direct:

If a man tells me he's a hunter, I say, 'How many scalps
have you got?' If he says he's a doctor, I ask him if
his patients are getting well or if they all died off.
Now, if I tell you this is the true Church of God, what
you want to know is, 'How does it work?' 7

In addition to his church activities, Myres enjoyed working with
the Kids' Rodeo of El Paso. This annual event was begun in 1933 during
the depression. Wallace Perry, editor of the El Paso Herald Post,
dreamed up the rodeo as a promotion stunt to introduce a new adventure
strip, "Young Buffalo Bill." He went to Myres' shop to buy a saddle
as a prize for the best performer: "He (Tio Myres) straightened and
turned on his stool, a mischievous glint in his squinting grey eyes.
'I won't sell you one, son,' he crackled; 'but I'll donate this prize
saddle--make one special.'" Myres introduced Perry to Johnnie Mullins,
a rancher from New Mexico, who had been putting on rodeos all over the

6Missionary call, November 10, 1936; Missionary Release, Febru-
ary 15, 1938, S. D. Myres Papers

west. Mullins had been a rider with the 101 Ranch Show, a rodeo performer, and assistant to promoter Tex Rickard of the Madison Square Garden rodeo. Mullins agreed to help plan and stage a show for Perry. The first performance of the Kids' Rodeo brought sixty entries and five thousand spectators who paid ten cents a piece to watch a program of calf roping, stake races, burro races, and wild cow milking. The first championship saddle went to Bobby Boyce, a thirteen year old from Ruidoso, New Mexico, who rode horseback from his mountain home to compete. The idea was so successful that it became an annual event. By 1953, the rodeo had moved into El Paso Coliseum and was under the joint sponsorship of the Herald Post and the El Paso Sheriff's Posse. The attendance grew to more than fifteen thousand and the entries, despite a system of fees to limit competition, grew to nearly four hundred. Except for a three year recess during World War II, the Kid's Rodeo has been held on Labor Day each year, and each year the championship saddle has been donated by S. D. Myres Company.

Among Myres' treasured possessions were the pictures made with the rodeo winners and their saddles. In fact, Myres' trunk is filled with pictures of children--Mexican babies, American babies, little girls in costume for dance recitals, boys posing proudly with athletic trophies, young men and women in wedding apparel and soon, pictures of their children. Among Myres' papers is a letter to D. A. Bryce regarding a belt Myres sent to the Bryce's boy which reveals something of the

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old man's love for children:

We are just glad to have him wear something that Tio made personally. For him—you can tell him when Tio has gone to help Saint Peter check mavericks, that the belt was from his Texas uncle, and the uncle sent his Texas blessing for him to be a great chief like his father.9

"Cowboy Headquarters" also became a sort of "second command post" for the soldiers and officers of Fort Bliss and Biggs Air Force Base. Many men went overseas or to new assignments "stateside" proudly carrying a Myres holster. General George S. Patton, while still a colonel, purchased Myres equipment; General Terry Allen, of the famous "Timberwolf Division," was a frequent customer. Among Myres' friends was Charley Askins, twice National Champion pistol shot and a lieutenant colonel in the Army Ordnance Corps. Askins wrote a testimonial for the Myres catalogs:

For ten years I carried a Myres holster in the Border Patrol—it never let me down. I packed a Myres specially made holster throughout the entire African campaign and again during the Sicilian show, and my gun was always ready. Going overseas again I am taking another Myres scabbard with me, I have every confidence in this superb equipment.10... To choose one of these rigs is to get THE BEST.10

Myres was a frequent guest at Fort Bliss and later at Biggs Air Force Base Library.11 The Fort Bliss newspaper featured an article on the


10Catalog, S. D. Myres Company, undated, El Paso, Texas.

shop, and the Armed Forces News carried his picture and his maxim for Americanism:

There is no other nation in the world or among men that has the privileges, the liberties and opportunities as our nation. When clouds arrive and our liberties are jeopardized, we should consider it a privilege to cooperate in every way to the end that those who come after may have the same country that we have, and that we will pass to posterity that which has come to us.¹³

Myres believed that every citizen should take an active part in his government. Although, aside from his terms as mayor and his school board service in Sweetwater, he did not seek public office, he took a vigorous part in many city and state election campaigns. A Democrat throughout the years, he nonetheless believed that the man was more important than any party label. He was a strong supporter of both Jim Ferguson and his wife, Miriam, and carried on a correspondence with them and other governors of Texas.¹⁴ He frequently wrote United States Senators and Representatives on subjects ranging from CPA to the tidelands questions, and on one occasion advised the War Department on methods for national defense.¹⁵

Myres had long been an advocate of a vigorous Chamber of

¹²Fort Bliss News (El Paso, Texas), February 1, 1945.
¹³Armed Forces News (El Paso, Texas), February, 1952.
Commerce and a campaign to publicize El Paso:

To achieve prosperity and national renown El Paso should simply be herself. If instead of trying to ape the Easterner, we should only be natural, we could produce an atmosphere that would become world famous. We have the chance to be a first class western town, but we are trying to develop a third class artificial city.¹⁶

Myres incorporated the promotion of El Paso into his own advertising and became known as an active city booster. Soon after the beginning of World War II he let his beard and hair grow long. He continued to wear wing collars and string ties, and often added a Navy cape or buckskin jacket to his apparel. Seen on the streets of El Paso or at the Camp Perry Rifle Matches, he was a walking advertisement for both the city and his own company. The striking similarity between the old man with the long white hair and goatee soon led to comparisons between him and the pictures of Uncle Sam on recruiting posters. Before long he was known throughout El Paso as "Tio" (Spanish for "uncle") Sam. The name stuck and from the early 1940's until his death in 1953, he was "Tio" to relatives, friends, and strangers. In the fall of 1946, Tio's civic accomplishments and his long career as a "one man El Paso Chamber of Commerce" were recognized when he was named Grand Marshal for the Sun Carnival Parade to be held January 1, 1947. The theme for the parade was "Glamour of the Southwest," and Myres seemed a natural choice to emphasize the romantic and colorful history of the region.¹⁷

¹⁶Evening News (El Paso, Texas), January 27, 1928.
¹⁷Herald Post (El Paso, Texas), October 29, 1946.
As the years progressed, Myres turned more and more of the actual operation of the company over to his son, William, and his nephew, Dace Myres. Clyde Taylor (no relation) who had been with Myres since 1914, was shop foreman. While William ran the factory and took care of the mail order business in holsters and saddles, Dace Myres was in charge of the clothing business and salesroom. "Tio" spent most of his time in promotion and advertising, leaving the details of the everyday operation up to the younger members of the business. In order to give his children and nephew a larger part in the company, Myres agreed to an incorporation in 1953. The charter for the "S. D. Myres Saddle Company" provided for a private corporation with a capital stock of $80,000.00 divided into 800 equal shares. Myres; his son, William; his daughter, Melrose Taylor; and his nephew, Dace Myres; composed the Board of Directors. Myres retained seventy-five percent of the stock, and the rest was distributed equally among the other three directors.

Perhaps at the time of the incorporation Myres knew that he would not live much longer. He had been troubled for several years with arteriosclerosis and cardiac insufficiency. On July 2, 1953: "S. D. (Tio Sam) Myres, 81, one of the last of the fabulous figures of the days of the Old West, died . . . in an El Paso hospital."20

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19 Interview, Dace Myres to Sandra Myres, June 15, 1961.

20 Times (El Paso, Texas), July 3, 1953.
His passing was mourned by all who knew him. The honorary pallbearers at his funeral came from all sections of the country and from all walks of life: Oscar Eberhard, Myres long time business friend, Santa Clara, California; R. C. Crane and R. L. Shaffer, Sweetwater, Texas; Johnnie Mullins, rodeo promoter and rancher, Seligman, Arizona; Captain J. E. Vaughn, Texas Ranger, Marfa, Texas; D. A. (Jelly) Bryce, FBI agent, Albuquerque, New Mexico; Homer Garrison, Director of Public Safety for the State of Texas; Ed McGivern, author and famous gun expert, Lewiston, Montana; Eugene Cunningham, western writer, San Francisco, California; Walter Sanborn and Harold O. Austin, from the Smith and Wesson Company, Springfield, Massachusetts; and many others.21 "Tio" would have liked the memorial written by his friend Franklin Reynolds, "El Paso will never be the same again. He was much of a man and a friend of man. Those who knew him are better men themselves just for that."22 Tio Sam was buried in Evergreen Cemetery in El Paso. His headstone is one he might have selected himself, for it pictures a horse with an empty saddle and the reins dragging, waiting for a rider. (See Figure 14, page 108.)

Myres left no will, and his estate was accordingly divided among his three children. Even after his debts and expenses were deducted Myres left nearly fifty thousand dollars in real estate, stocks and bonds, and cash including his interest in S. D. Myres Saddle Company.23 How

21 Ibid., July 6, 1953.
22 Daily Herald (Big Spring, Texas), July 7, 1953.
did this man who started as a poor farm boy and itinerant saddlemaker manage to build, over a period of fifty-five years, a nationally known business and a reputation as one of the grand old men of the west? Perhaps, it was because he always tried to follow his motto—"Believe in God, in your country, and in yourself, then go ahead."

Since Myres death the company has continued to operate under the name S. D. Myres Saddle Company. S. D. Myres, Junior, Myres' oldest son, and Melrose Taylor, have sold their interest in the business which is now owned by William J. Myres and Dace Myres. In recent years Mrs. Otto Meyer has purchased stock in the company, and opened a branch store, S. D. Myres Western Wear, in the Chelmont Center in El Paso. "Cowboy Headquarters" is still "open for business"—a fitting memorial to its founder, S. D. Myres. (See Figure 15, page 108.)
Fig. 14.—"Cowboy Headquarters," El Paso, Texas.

Fig. 15.—S. D. Myres Gravestone, Evergreen Cemetery, El Paso, Texas.
CHAPTER VII

TIO SAM--THE LEGEND

But what of Sam Myres, the man? Civic leader, businessman, husband, father--Sam Myres was all these. But Myres was more; he was also a legend. The broad mantle of myth and folklore which surrounded so many of Myres' customers fell upon his shoulders as well. When Myres let his beard and hair grow and donned his long Navy cape he became Tio Sam, a part of the legend of the West. As he walked the streets of El Paso or rode at the head of the Sun Bowl parade he was, to many, the personification of all the western stories they had read or heard. Myres did nothing to dispel the growing store of legend which came to surround him; he added to it. To the Mexican children of El Paso he was Tio Sam--the living representation of "Uncle Sam," symbol of the United States. The name spread from the Mexican quarter of El Paso to the Anglo sections of the city, and Myres incorporated the pseudonym into his advertising. Throughout the ranch and cattle areas of the country he became known as Tio Sam, The Saddle Man, who boasted of having been a partner of Annie Oakley--"She shot on the inside of the target, I shot on the outside."

As the legend grew, Tio changed some of the facts of his already full and exciting life to fit the romantic picture being drawn of him. His father's rank in the Confederate army rose rapidly from private to captain in Myres' imagination; the wild game he had hunted near his home became savage Kiowas and Comanches; his injured leg the result of being thrown from a spirited "bucking bronc." Yet behind
the glittering facade there was the man—not all good or all bad. Some called him a reincarnation of St. Peter, others the devil's advocate. A person not always wise and kind but one with most of the human frailties who could, therefore, recognize and forgive his own weaknesses in others. Myres, the businessman, could best a competitor in a sharp business deal then be taken in by a swindler's game and purchase large amounts of worthless mining stock. As a husband he could leave one wife and go to another, yet hold still the love of the first, who until the day she died remained devoted to his memory. Here was a father who gave little of himself to his own children yet was a loving and devoted foster father to untold numbers of children in El Paso's poor sections.

Sam Myres was a man with great self-pride who relished the fame and attention which came to him. He was also a humble man. Shrewd, naive; flamboyant, quiet; vain-glorious, humble; Sam Myres was all these things. He was above all an individualist, a man of strong emotions and solid character, who believed in every man's right to think and act for himself. Sam Myres respected the opinions of others, but he did not adopt others' ideas as his own until he had examined and tested them and made them part of himself. He believed in freedom of thought and action for himself and for others.

So the fact and the myth of Sam Myres blended together and the legend grew. It becomes increasingly difficult to separate fact and fiction in relating the events of Myres' life. Much of this thesis has been devoted to the facts of Myres' business and civic endeavors. The chronicle is not complete, however, without some of the legend and stories which have been told about Myres for these are also a part of
the man and his history. Thus, the remaining pages are dedicated to Tio Sam, the legend.

If one enters the S. D. Myres Saddle Company in El Paso today and passes through the salesrooms and offices to the small room in the back where Tio lived and worked, he finds himself surrounded by Tio's personality and philosophy. Although the room is now used by William J. Myres, Tio's son, it is still "Tio's office." The walls are covered with pictures of Tio's friends and customers, most autographed by the sender--"To Tio--Please Hang Me on Your Wall" reads an inscription from Keenon Wynne. "To Tio Sam from John R. Hughes, the Old Texas Ranger"; "With Fondest Regards--Charlie Adkins"; "To my friend Sam D. Myres with best wishes, Homer Garrison"; read others. Above the door hangs a citation from the government for Myres' work in making government saddles during the First World War. On a rack above the desk hang Tio's gloves and Stetson. Across the room, his boots sit atop a long bookshelf filled with Myres' excellent collection of western literature and many books on history and mathematics. Despite his short years of formal schooling Myres was a well educated man. He loved his country and took a deep interest in American history, especially western America. Tio was a familiar sight in the used book stalls of El Paso where he spent many afternoons leafing through old and dusty volumes looking for material to add to his library.

When one of the Myres boys was in college he came home in November with a failing mark in calculus. Tio was outraged when his son blamed the poor grade on, "that professor at school who can't teach."

"Son," said Tio, "You can learn from anyone if you have a mind
to. You know how much schooling I've had. You bring home your mid-
term exam in that course and I shall show you want a man can learn if
he wants to." Tio's next step was to visit a used book store where he
purchased several old calculus texts, one of which had been used at
West Point before the Civil War. For the next two months, Tio spent
several hours each evening reading and studying. When the boy arrived
home between semesters he brought a copy of his final examination and
a promise from the professor to grade the paper. Under his son's
watchful eyes, Tio completed the test and mailed it to the professor
who soon returned it marked 85%--B+. Needless to say Tio's son re-
turned to college a wiser young man and under the same professor suc-
cessfully completed the calculus course. The textbooks Tio used re-
main on the shelf in his office today--a reminder to those who have
heard the story of the truth of Tio's educational philosophy.

Tio's religious ideals are also encompassed in the books and
appointments in his office. He had become a devout Mormon and was a
long-time active member of the Masonic Lodge. He believed in prac-
ticing religious tolerance and found many ideas in other religions
which he incorporated into his own. On one occasion a visitor ques-
tioned Tio about the large crucifix hanging on the wall. "Tio, I
thought you were a Mormon, why the Catholic crucifix?"

Tio grinned, "Yep, there's a crucifix." he said and then began
pulling several books from the shelf. "Here's a King James Bible,
here the Book of Mormon. Over there is a Jewish prayer book and here
an English translation of the Mohammedan Koran." Noting his guest's
surprise Tio continued, "When you get to be as old as I am son, you
can't afford to take any chances."
Tio was often teased about his Mormon affiliation. A friend once asked him in a joking way, "Say Tio, I just found out you're a Mormon. How many wives do you have?"

Tio's eyes twinkled as he leaned close and whispered into the young man's ear, "Confidentially something less than forty-two!"

Tio's dry sense of humor was well known in El Paso. A visitor at the shop once asked Myres' age. With a serious demeanor Tio solemnly replied, "Now let me see. If I live 'til next 31st of February I'll be 185." Then with a wink he walked off.

Sitting outside the shop one hot afternoon, a nephew who was annoyed by the flies noticed Tio didn't seem to be bothered by the little insects. When queried about this Tio replied, "Well, I'll tell you, me and the flies have an agreement--I don't bother them and they don't bother me."

Myres also enjoyed practical jokes. He once tried to develop a foam rubber lining for a saddle "to ease the load on the horse." The experiment was a failure for the foam rubber caused the rider to bounce about in the saddle like a ship tossing on a stormy sea. Tio kept the saddle with other tack at the sherriff's posse stable and was fond of inviting friends and visitors to try it out. As the hapless rider went jouncing and bouncing about the corral Tio would throw back his head and roar with laughter.

Despite his penchant for practical jokes, Tio had a great love of people, and he showed understanding sympathy for those who were persecuted unjustly. He was a familiar figure in the Mexican sections of El Paso where he often dispensed candy and coins to small urchins or
aided a widowed mother and her family with gifts of food and money. In Juarez, he was honored in the Chinese community of the town where he was recognized as a friend and benefactor. He went occasionally to a Chinese restaurant in Juarez but was never given a bill for his meal. According to the legend, he had helped defend an elderly Chinese man who was arrested for cattle rustling. To the authorities Tio had pleaded in the man's behalf, "Heck fire, boys, this fellow can't speak English. He doesn't even know what you're talking about. Probably he can't tell a cow from a horse. Get off your chairs and go find the fellows that took those cows and stop trying to blame it off on an innocent old man." Partially through Tio's intervention, the man was released, and in gratitude the Juarez Chinese made Tio a sort of "honorary Chinese mandarin."

Tio judged men not by their religion or color but on the merits of their character and accomplishments. Rich and poor, Indian and white, Latin and Anglo, priests and sinners, great men and small, all were his friends. Like most men, Tio had many prejudices, but he was able to overlook a man's faults and see the better side of his character. When one of his employees was injured in an automobile accident and missed several weeks of work, Tio wrote a relative, "If he hadn't been drinking he wouldn't have had the wreck. But, on the other hand, if he hadn't been drunk, it would have killed him."

Despite his years in the city, Tio retained many of the ways of the open range country. The passerby was always invited to "get down and set a spell." In the evenings, Tio often sat in front of the shop, inviting any who came by to "come in and look around." One evening
after such a late customer had left, Tio was chided by his nephew for letting the man in. "He looked like a mean character, Tio. He might have robbed or killed you." Tio grinned and pulled out the revolver concealed beneath his coat, "I was ready in case he wanted to take more than he could pay for. The Lord will take care of those who take care of themselves."

Tio is remembered in different ways by different people. Frank Hamer, the Texas Ranger, remembered Tio during the Sweetwater days. Hamer was visiting Ranger posts throughout the state and had stopped in Sweetwater for the night. During an argument in a saloon Hamer, in self-defense, shot and killed another Ranger, well known in the Sweetwater area. Despite Hamer's reputation, a group of townspeople were determined to "string up that fellow who shot our Ranger." Tio and the city marshall, Buck Johnson, quickly stopped the lynch mob. "If you want him," said Tio, "go get him. He's down to the jail and the door's not locked. But I ought to warn you fellows he has a 30-30 and a sawed off shotgun and a case of ammunition for each of 'em. Buck and me are going home to bed." The mob quickly decided to go home, too. Tio enjoyed this story and would add, after it was recounted, "I told them folks a lie. Frank didn't have but one box of shells for that shotgun."

A friend remembers Tio at the carving bench stropping knives on a long piece of leather. "Tio, why do you spend so much time stropping those knives?" The reply has become part of this man's philosophy, "Son, if you spend half your time keeping your tools sharp, you'll get through twice as fast." Many people remember Tio
riding at the head of a Sun Bowl parade, sitting straight and tall in
the saddle, his long white hair flowing over his shoulders, doffing
his hat to the right and left, taking the honors and cheering of the
crowd as his just due. But a nephew remembers an humble Tio as he
found him before the parade practicing his bows in front of a mirror
in his office. "I want to do the job right," said Tio. "I don't
want to make them ashamed they asked me to lead the parade."

Fame and honor have come to Tio. His name is known throughout
the west as a saddlemaker, town builder, and civic leader—a living
flamboyant reminder of an earlier, more exciting time. Yet those
who knew him best remember his quiet, gentle nature, his many un-
publicized kindnesses. Most of all they remember Tio at his carving
bench, his hands shaking with palsy until the knife touched the lea-
ther and then, all signs of palsy vanished, carving into the leather
with firm, sure strokes, the patterns and pictures of the west that
were Tio's legacy to the future. That is the way those who knew him
best remember Tio, and Tio would have liked it that way.
Fig. 16.-"Tio Sam"
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Unpublished Materials


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Myres, S. D. Papers. A collection of letters, business records, manuscripts, and personal papers of S. D. Myres. Part of these records are in the files of the S. D. Myres Saddle Company, El Paso, Texas, but the largest part of the collection has been assembled and sorted into file folders and is in the possession of the author. Reference to specific items in this collection has been made in the citations.

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Myres family gravestone, George's Creek Cemetery, near Cleburne, Texas.

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Myres apprentices to T.R. James & Sons, Cleburne TX for 3 years from 1888. See Sandra Myres. Later uses this as his founding year (sic, 1898).

Sam Myres earns his Journeyman's certificate and $100 from T.R. James & Sons 1891 after three years' apprenticeship; joins Masons. See Sandra Myres

Myres works for M.B. 'Doc' Kouns, Weatherford TX from 1893 and remains to 1897. See Old Cowboy Saddles & Spurs, Sandra Myres

Myres m. Drusa Rogers 1894, Weatherford TX. Attempts a tannery with T.R. James and fails. See Sandra Myres

Eva T. Myres' 1895-1928, BillionGravesIndex. Year of birth (reported variously) and death are on her headstone. 2nd wife S.D. Myres

Evangeline Myres (born Forkner)". MyHeritage.com, retr. Jun 2017. B. St. Louis MO. (as Jan 1901 and elsewhere as Jan 1895 and Jan 1898)

Sam Myres purchases the saddlery of J.K. Polk in Sweetwater TX (near Abilene) 12 Aug 1898, on credit. See S. Myres, also West Texan

Samuel Dale Myres, Jr" b. 16 Apr 1899. Son of Sam is known both as Ted Myres and as Dale Myres. See West Texan.

Eva Forkner". U.S. Census 1900. St. Louis MO. Child age 5 b. Jan 1895. Father a carpenter (later a cabinet maker)

S D Myres". U.S. Census 1900. Sweetwater TX.


Miss Zitz Surprised'. Society page, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 24 Jun 1906. Surprise party invitees include Miss Eva Forkner. Still in St. Louis, w/b age 11

Maker of the Celebrated Sweetwater Saddles". Catalog S.D. Myres, Sweetwater TX. 1907 is only known Sweetwater catalog; 1 pp gunleather

Eva T. Forkner", U.S. Census 1910. Oklahoma City OK age 15, father William

Sam D. Myres", U.S. Census 1910. Sweetwater TX. Saddler own shop. Full family complement and a servant MX

William A. Lamoreaux is "Buzz Barton". B. 03 Sep 1913 MO d. 20 Nov 1980 CA. Film and rodeo star. IMDB. Myres names holster Barton Special

Myres takes delivery of first stitching machine". Weekly Review (TX), 03 Apr 1914 (see Sandra Myres). Gasoline powered (Randall?)
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<td>6 6</td>
<td>Ranger Force*. State of Texas appointment. Private S.D. Myres, 06 Jun 1918, Sweetwater TX. Age 46 years and 8 months, 5'8&quot; (RF formed 1901 until 1935) (avoids WWI?)</td>
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<td>191 9</td>
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<td>Sam Myres takes up with Eva Forkner, date calc. from their 1920 census appearances. See S. Myres stating Eva has tuberculosis (but not on death certificate)</td>
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<td>191 9</td>
<td>S 3</td>
<td>Myres' Sweetwater factory burns down (03) May 1919. See S. Myres; the day is imputed from Sam's correspondence with Randall</td>
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<td>The J.D. Randall Co.&quot;. Letter of 05 May 1919 responding to Sam's 03 May telegram regarding his fire. Replacement stitcher is $550 (same as a Model T)</td>
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<td>191 9</td>
<td>S 1 3</td>
<td>I have a Randall high arm machine which went through the fire*. Sam Myres letter to J.D. Randall Machine Co. 13 May 1919 prior to receiving Randall letter of 05 May</td>
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<td>S 3 1</td>
<td>Lease for Campbell-Bosworth Co. stitcher of 31 May 1919. Sam chooses to lease a Campbell stitcher vs buying a replacement for his Randall. See S. Myres</td>
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<td>192 0</td>
<td>C 1</td>
<td>Eva T. Forkner*, U.S. Census 1920. Long Beach CA. Age 24 b. 1896 (est). Buyer for leather manufacturing company, father is cabinetmaker at shipyard there</td>
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<td>192 0</td>
<td>C 1</td>
<td>Sam D. Myres*, U.S. Census 1920. Sweetwater TX. Divorced homeowner w/ mortgage, living alone. Manager of a saddle shop.</td>
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<td>192 0</td>
<td>9 2 5</td>
<td>Be Happy, Use Myres Saddles and Harness*. Advertisement. El Paso Herald, 25 Sep 1920. Typical Myres newspaper ad throughout 1920s. No gunleather</td>
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<td>192 0</td>
<td>1 2</td>
<td>S.D. Myres shifts his operations after Sweetwater fire to El Paso Dec 1920. See Sandra Myres (leases there on Alameda for 30 years until 1950, see Own Store)</td>
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<td>192 1</td>
<td>M 3 2 6</td>
<td>Eva Theresa Forkner*. Texas, County Marriage Index, 1837-1977. To S. Dale Myres 26 Mar 1921, El Paso</td>
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<td>192 1</td>
<td>M 3 2 6</td>
<td>S. Dale Myres*. Marriage License State of TX. To Eva Theresa Forkner b. 05 Jan 1898.</td>
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<td>192 1</td>
<td>1 1 0</td>
<td>M S of D says careful of all things connected with Tess reference to their health*. Telegram to Sam 10 Nov 1921 ('Tess' is Teresa, 'M S of D' is partner M.S. Taylor of Denver)</td>
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<td>1923</td>
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<td>Saddles Shipped From Here Over the World™, El Paso Herald, 12 May 1923. S.D. Myres company mention.</td>
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<td>1925</td>
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<td>Carved Leather Begun by Moors™. El Paso Herald, 05 Jun 1925. S.D. Myres gives a history lesson</td>
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<td>1928</td>
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<td>Too Ill to Face Charges™, El Paso Evening Post, 31 Jan 1928. Mrs. S.D. Myres holding 210 grains heroin (see U.S. v. Behrman, also NCBI for typical doses)</td>
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<td>1928</td>
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<td>Eva T. Myres™ 1895-1928, BillionGravesindex. Year of birth and death are on her headstone; appears to be her child buried with her</td>
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<td>1928</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>Evangeline Teresa Myers (sic, Myres)™. Death Certificate. B. 05 Jan 1901 D. 04 Feb 1928 morphinism 5 years, no secondary cause e.g., TB (withdrawal symptoms similar to TB)</td>
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<td>1929</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Arno Brill is said to be at S.D. Myres for 1929, see Vintagegunleather. See also Austin city directory &quot;traveling&quot;. Likely to create gunleather line</td>
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<td>1930</td>
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<td>Officers Equipment™. Myres catalog introduces 'Tom Threepersons Style Holsters' and the No. 5 Border Patrol holster, includes May 1930 letter by Tom</td>
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<td>1930</td>
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<td>El Paso's Payroll Builders™. El Paso Evening Post, 06 Oct 1930. No. 23 is about S.D. Myres, which employs 12 men</td>
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<td>1933</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>Myres, Sandra L.™ b. 17 May 1933 d. 16 Oct 1991. Great niece of Myres by marriage. See her biography</td>
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<td>1934</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>Son Bill Myres joins Sam's business in 'late 1934', see S. Myres. Date calc.</td>
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<td>1935</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>Arms Company Official Visits E.P.™, El Paso Herald Post, 02 Nov 1935. Major D.B. Wesson appears at Myres (Sam's new S&amp;W 357 has his name engraved)</td>
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<td>1936</td>
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<td>Nephew Dace Myres joins Sam's business in 1936; a Border Patrolman (likely Askins) brings the 'tomato can' holster (see S. Myres but Border holster exists since '31)</td>
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<td>1937</td>
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<td><em>James R. Spurrier</em>&quot;</td>
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<td>Holster* 2092222 patent to W.J. Myres filed 01 Oct 1936 Issues 07 Sep 1937 (famed 'tomato can' holster). 1 of 3 patents. See Sandra Myres</td>
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<td>Harlan O. Webb*&quot;</td>
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<td><em>James Ray Spurrier</em>&quot;</td>
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<td>Sam D. Myres*&quot;</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Holster*&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Uncle Sam Myres Shoots Only for Fun of it*&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>James R. Spurrier*&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Side-Bar Remarks*&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>It gives me a great deal of pleasure*&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Natural Draw Holster*2443397 to W.J. Myres 15 Jun 1948. USPTO. Shoulder holster. 3 of 3 patents (his obituary claims 50!)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Myres 'Cowboy Headquarters' opens 30 Aug 1950. Building is owned by Sam and Bill, see West Texan. Prior location was rented/leased, see Own Store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>S.D. Myres Saddle Company incorporates 1953 prior to Sam's heart attack in June. See Sandra Myres, also West Texan. 50% Sam, 25% Bill, Dace 12.5%, (12.5% Taylor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sam Myres III After Heart Attack*&quot;</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Samuel D. Myres*&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Month</td>
<td>Day</td>
<td>Event</td>
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<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sandra L. Swickard™. Marries C.E. Myres, 02 Jul 1953, great-nephew of Sam Myres. See Texas Marriages/Divorces (Sam dies that very day)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Ted Myres (aka Dale Myres aka S.D. Myres, Jr.) returns to brother Bill, cousin Dace 'early summer 1954'. Dace advises no future there, see West Texan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>The Agreement of Lease™. State of Texas; by and between the officers and the corporation. 01 Jan 1955 for three years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>University Professor with String of Degrees Turns Saddle Maker™. El Paso Herald-Post, 15 Mar 1955. S.D. Myres Jr. returns (this is Ted Myres aka Dale Myres, see West Texan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Dale Myres aka Ted est. Talabarteria Fronteriza 27 Jun 1956 in Juarez and forms Dale Myres Co. sales co. Sales 'boom' until 1959 when fast draw dies out. See West Texan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ted/Dale/Sam Jr. Myres' operation including gunleather, saddlery and boots, is sold Mar 1961. See West Texan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>The Birth of the Buscadero™, H. Braddy. Guns, Dec 1962. A review of the name's origin is more thorough than of the belt itself. Mentions sons Bill and Dale but not Dace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Team Captain Named™. The Baltimore Sun, 24 Feb 1962. (Cavalry officer) Col. J.R. Spurrer of OK is on the U.S. polo team, Mrs. J.F.K. is in the audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Leslie Dace Myres™. B. 29 Apr 1905 d. 07 Jun 1964. FindAGrave.com. (One of two owners, with Bill Myres, see Sandra Myres)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Leslie Dace Myres™. Death Certificate TX. B. 29 Apr 1905 d. 07 Jun 1964 ventricular fibrillation due to myocardial infarction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Dace Myres Taken by Death™, El Paso Herald-Post, 08 Jun 1964. S.D. Myres' nephew was active in business</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Title</td>
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<td>1964</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>A Part of the West</em>, S. Myres (as Mrs C.E. Myres). The Western Horseman, Nov 1964. A compact telling of Sandra's biographical book about Sam Myres (Died in Jun)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Harlan O'Dell Webb takes over S.D. Myres Saddlery 1965 (see Obituary) after Dace Myres' death; for ten years until 1975 (see Oral History)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
<td>Teresa Myres, Bill Myres' wife, dies 1970. See Bill's obituary</td>
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<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>1972</td>
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<tr>
<td>197</td>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>S.D. Myres Saddle Co</strong>&quot; since 1897. Catalog no. 80 (1977). IFC is a letter by Frank F. La Croix. Date calc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>197</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Dave Duclos bought Myres from La Croix sometime in the late '70s&quot;. SWForum.com post 24 Feb 2009. (1978 date is calc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>197</td>
<td>8</td>
<td><strong>Duclos Collection&quot;.</strong> U of North Texas Libraries, Portal to Texas History, Pioneer City County Museum Sweetwater TX. His El Paso materials all are 1978</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>198</td>
<td>2</td>
<td><strong>Mr. David C. Duclos&quot;.</strong> S.D. Myres Saddle Co., Reading MA, letter and envelope from UK is postmarked 21 Dec 1982.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>198</td>
<td>6</td>
<td><strong>Duclos of Reading (MA)&quot;</strong> Francis G. The Boston Globe, 01 May 1986. Father of David C. Duclos of Reading dies 28 Apr 1986</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>199</td>
<td>6</td>
<td><strong>Myres, Samuel Dale&quot;.</strong> Old Cowboy Saddles &amp; Spurs 6th Ed. Company history</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>200</td>
<td>6</td>
<td><strong>S.D. Myres&quot;.</strong> Forum thread. The High Road, 01 Mar 2006. Includes posts by S.D. Myres descendants and one about encountering Bill Myres in El Paso (circa 1972)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201</td>
<td>6</td>
<td><strong>David C. Duclos aka D. Duclos&quot;.</strong> Associated businesses - S.D. Myres Saddle Co. TX, MA, and ME latest. Age 59 (his age in 2016, retr. 2018). M. Margarita M.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>