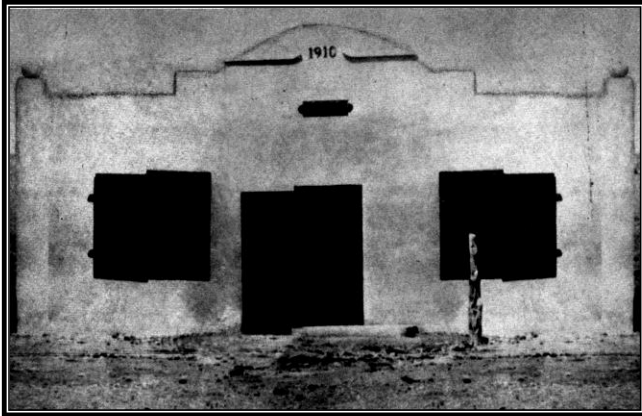


# GLEESON ARIZONA

Laws and Lawmen



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Much of the material on Deputy Cates was obtained from various publications and interview notes from Dan Woods, whose work appeared in many publications, including the *Casa Grande Dispatch* and the magazine *Frontier Times*. Some of his work is also found in the archives of the Pinal County Historical Society in Florence. Thanks, Chris!

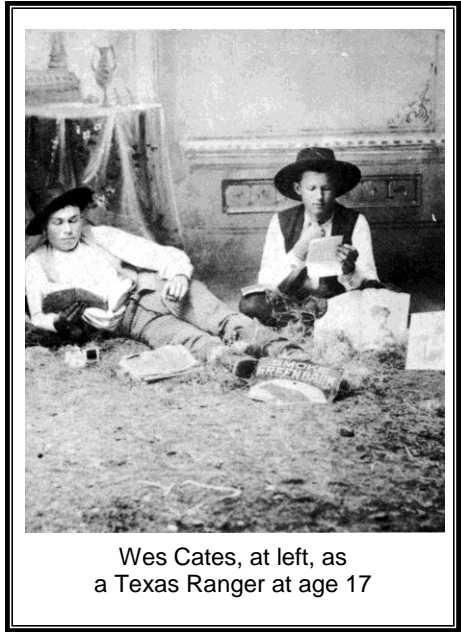
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Cover photograph: Gleeson Jail, 1910 (digitally restored).

Wesley Wooten Cates was the first deputy sheriff and constable of the Gleeson jail. It was a significant and notable step on a long trail of law-enforcement pursuits for deputy Cates. Wes Cates, or W.W. Cates, as he was commonly known, was born in Round Rock, Texas, which at the time was a small town just north of Austin. His mother died giving birth to him, and his father was a circuit-riding Methodist preacher. His father remarried, but Wes was just a child when his father also died, leaving him with nothing that felt like home and nobody who felt like family. After a while in his step-mother's home, he loaded all his belongings into a flour sack and left Round Rock on his father's grey mare. Two days later, he sold the mare for two broncs and a bed roll.

Moving from town to town, young Wes worked wherever he could, eventually landing a position as a helping hand at a horse outfit near the Texas-New Mexico border. It was there, at the LFD Ranch, that Wes learned to break young colts and horses, working through his early teen years as ranch hand and horse trainer.

There is a note about the actual date of Cates' birth. He needed to be 18 in order to join the Texas Rangers, and at the time of his induction, he *said* that he was born in July of 1874. However, his mother died giving birth to Wesley, and her tombstone lists February 22, 1876 as the date of her death. Apparently, Wes joined the Rangers just shy of his real 17<sup>th</sup> birthday, and since he had no parents to contradict him, he was accepted into the Rangers.



Wes Cates, at left, as  
a Texas Ranger at age 17

He served from January 24, 1893 until January 23, 1894. During his one-year stint, he served in the Frontier Battalion, Company B,

under the command of Captain Bill McDonald, one of the most famous of the Rangers. The short duration of his service was not due to his inability to do the job (although the reality of his youth may have played some part). After one year of service, his courage and integrity impressed Captain McDonald so much that he recommended Cates to the people of Amarillo Texas, and in January of 1894, just shy of his real 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, Wes became the first (and youngest) city marshal of Amarillo.

While in Amarillo, Wes married Florence Margaret Allen in late December of 1895. It was the Allen connection which eventually brought the Cates' family to Gleeson Arizona. Florence (known as Pearl) was daughter to Margaret M. Allen who lived in Pearce and Courtland. After a stay in Roswell New Mexico, where Wes briefly tried his hand at ranching, they moved to Pearce, and finally to Gleeson, where Wes was named deputy sheriff in 1904. From 1904 until 1912, Cates served as the town's lawman under Cochise County Sheriff Scott White.

When he began his service in Gleeson, the "jail" was a large oak tree in the wash. The tree had a cable wrapped around it, and prisoners were chained by their right hand to the cable and served their sentence there, whether it was one day or thirty. When it rained, the runoff would flow down the wash and clean out "the jail." After a couple of years, Wes



prevailed upon the county to build a more conventional jail, albeit made of wood. This "interim" jail was build of 2x6's laid flat one on another, with a steel grate for a door and a tin roof. It stood in the area just in front of the current jail building. In 1910, several inmates attempted to escape their confines by tearing out the tin roof. By late April 1910, the new Gleeson jail was built of reinforced concrete at a cost of \$1778. The interim wooden jail was sold at auction for \$25 and was hauled away in May 1910.

Several incidents of some interest and excitement happened during Cates' time in Gleeson. Very early on the morning of March 16 1911, Cates went with John Gleeson and B. A. Taylor (two of the biggest names in Gleeson) in Taylor's car down to Douglas to be spectators at the battle just across the border between the revolutionaries and the Mexican Federales. They returned later in the day, disappointed that the battle did not take place "as scheduled". The film canisters which the rebel general Pancho Villa had ordered for his movie cameras had not arrived, which meant that he could not film the battle. Consequently, he decided to postpone his attack to a later date so that he could be immortalized in his movies.

In May of 1912, two 14-year old girls, Lupa Madril and Rosa Olivas, were reported as having been spirited away by Angel Valderaros and David Martinez. Deputy Cates and some helpers canvassed the area, but did not find the group. The couples had rented a buggy and horse in Courtland the previous day and headed for Douglas, but the horse and buggy returned by themselves to Gleeson. After some investigation, the foursome were found in a hotel in Douglas and were brought back to Gleeson. Deputy Cates interceded with their parents who agreed to let the two couples marry, which had been their plan.

Less than a month later, Cates and Sheriff Wheeler of Tombstone were out on the roads with bloodhounds, trying to find David Martinez. It seems that Martinez got angry with Rosa Olivas, put a handgun to her chest and pulled the trigger. The bullet went just above her heart and was lodged in her back, next to the spine. Unable to find Martinez with the bloodhounds, they set up watch on the residence of a "loose woman" in the tenderloin district of Courtland, with whom Martinez was known to spend some time on a regular basis, but he never showed up there either. The young girl died of her wounds, and Governor Hunt posted a \$200 reward for the capture of Martinez, but it was feared that he had made his way to Mexico and would never be seen again.

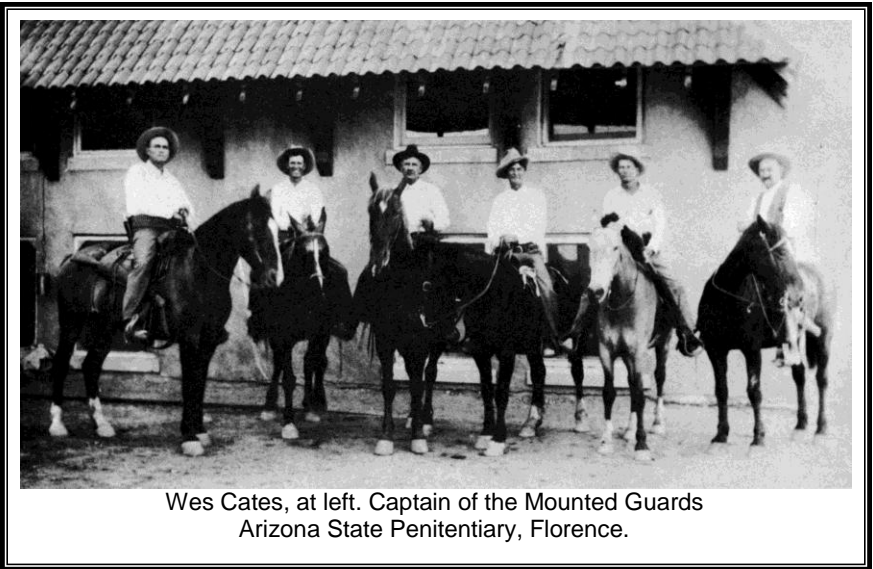
Martinez was apprehended within days by the Mexican authorities near Nacozari, about 75 miles south of the border at Douglas. Martinez was transported to Agua Prieta, just across the border

from Douglas) and was then extradited back into the United States. He admitted shooting his wife, but claimed that he had caught her with another man and was therefore justified in killing her as “a matter of honor.” The editor of the Courtland Arizonan offered the opinion that

*To the people of this vicinity, who know how he had conducted himself between the time of his marriage and the killing of his wife, the fact that he was possessed of any sense of honor comes as a surprise.*

Martinez pleaded guilty to the charge of murder, and was sentenced to the state penitentiary for the rest of his life.

Wesley Wooten Cates departed the town of Gleeson in 1912, and moved with his family up to Casa Grande, where he was the first marshal of that city. He held that position until 1927, when after a brief hiatus, he became Captain of the mounted guards at



the Arizona State Penitentiary at Florence. He later moved to Tucson and was recruited to be a Pima County deputy and border patrolman. Cates’ final position was working for the U.S. Marshal’s office in Tucson transporting prisoners. He worked that job until he was 78 years old, and died peacefully at the age of 80.

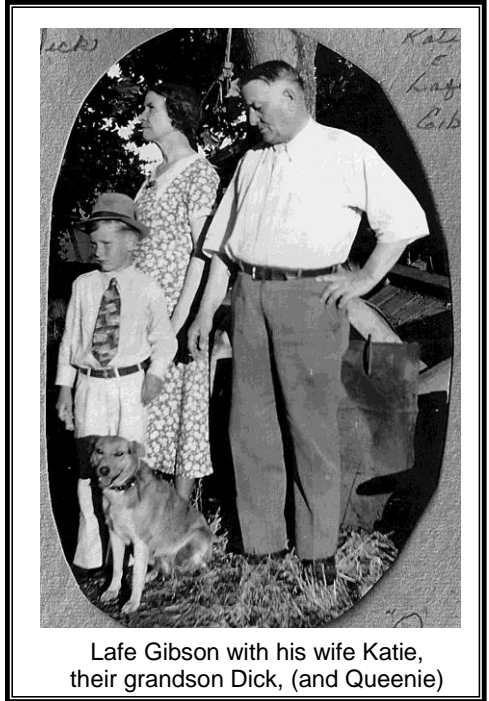
## Robert Lafayette “Lafe” Gibson

Lafe Gibson was named deputy sheriff and constable of Gleeson to replace Wes Cates in 1912. His appointment was a political one, as Lafe did not live in Gleeson prior to his posting. In fact, Gibson and his family lived in the Tombstone precinct and he traveled to Gleeson every day from his homestead. Lafe was not a professional lawman, but listed his profession as barber in the 1910 census. This was hardly surprising, as the income for being a deputy sheriff was not enough to support a single man, let alone an entire family. Most deputies before World War I had some other job as their primary employment, be it miner, rancher, well driller (as in the case of Wesley Cates), or a score of other time-flexible jobs.

Lafe was born in 1878 in Utah, and came to Tombstone, where he married Katie Scranton in 1906. He was 34 when he replaced Cates at Gleeson. His family had a homestead between Tombstone and Gleeson, and when he was a barber he would ride west from the homestead to Tombstone for work. After he got the job in 1912, he simply rode the other direction east into Gleeson and made his office at the jail.

If he was not a lawman when he began the job at Gleeson, he certainly became one by experience. But it was a time of transition between the “Old West” and the “New West.” It was a

time that called for less gun fighting and more negotiation. It also called for greater “networking,” making (and using) connections both technological and personal. And Lafe Gibson was well equipped for the job. As a barber in Tombstone, he knew most eve-



Lafe Gibson with his wife Katie, their grandson Dick, (and Queenie)

rybody in town. In fact, since Tombstone was the county seat and drew people in from all over Cochise County, Lafe knew, or knew of, most everyone in the whole county. He also had an ability to talk and to connect with people, again a legacy of his days as a barber. His friendliness and his sociability became a valuable tool in law enforcement for him at Gleeson.

When the escaped murderer Luther Price decided to turn himself in, it was to Lafe Gibson that he surrendered. Lafe rode across the Sulphur Springs Valley to the foothills of the Chiricahuas to arrest Luther. He brought him back to Gleeson overnight on the way back to Tombstone and ultimately the state prison in Florence.

In 1915, the voters of Arizona decided to go “dry.” They enacted the Arizona Prohibition Amendment, which provided that:

*Ardent spirits, ale, beer, wine, or intoxicating liquor or liquors of whatever kind shall not be manufactured in, or introduced into the State of Arizona under any pretense.*

From that time, the sheriff and deputies of Cochise County spent a good deal of their time and energy in an effort to stem the tide of bootlegging in the state. Both Mexico and New Mexico were not dry (until New Mexico went dry with the passage of the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment), and both were steady suppliers of booze on the borders of Arizona.

Many times Lafe and Sheriff Wheeler of Tombstone would travel across the county chasing bootleggers and confiscating their illegal cargo. In one incident, a gang of Mexican bootleggers attacked Wheeler and Gibson when they tried to apprehend them. The leader of the gang, Santiago Garcia, was later captured and jailed in Tombstone. When asked why the gang had started shooting at Wheeler and Gibson, Garcia said that they thought their cargo of booze was being hijacked again, and so they started shooting. When they discovered it was the lawmen shooting at them, they stopped shooting and ran into the hills.

Lafe Gibson left Gleeson in 1918, (that's another story!) and returned to the life of a barber, moving to Colorado, then Oregon, then back to Colorado, where he died in 1952 at the age of 74.