

Denver Justice

By Suzy Hopkins

Law and order consisted of Common Law prior to the establishment of Denver in 1859. Vigilante style enforcement of laws before that was funded by citizens and merchants. Denver's first city marshal, Wilson Sisty, was elected in December of 1859. The penalties for breaking the laws were fines, flogging, banishment or hanging. There was a city jail but men were not kept there long because the needs were too great. May 22, 1882 Doc Holliday was arrested in downtown Denver for the murder of Frank Stilwell at the O.K. Corral shootout. Another famous case was when Bat Masterson had a shootout with the Denver Police on April 6, 1897.

The first policewoman was Mrs. Sarah (Sadie) Likens in 1886. She was part of the Women's Christian Temperance Union that stopped alcohol sales and pushed for the creation of laws protecting women and children. As the jail matron she worked patiently and ceaselessly to protect women inmates and keep peace on the streets of Denver. There is a monument to this brave and caring cop across from the capital in Denver honoring her years of service.