

### Personal account

Below is an excerpt from the newspaper article "A Year of Death", which appeared in the Beaumont Sunday *Enterprise-Journal*, Section C, September 15, 1974. It details the recollections of Seab Rogers about the Grabow riot of July 7, 1912. Rogers was 79 years old at the time of the article.

The International Workers of the World [sic] was organizing sawmill workers and every non-union mill was (a) target. A.L. Emerson was the organizer making the sawmill rounds and speaking on this particular Sunday.

Rogers picks up the story as an eyewitness: "We had been to Merryville, Singer, Newlin and Carson and were headed for Bon Ami. Before we could get there someone came up and warned that Bon Ami was filled with gunmen and that we'd certainly be killed if we went there.

"There was 15 wagon-loads of us. Most of the men were armed. We headed for Grabow instead. I was driving the lead wagon, a brand new one pulled by a span of mules. Emerson was in my wagon.

"Somewhere along the way Emerson traded hats and coats with Decatur Hall. It was about 3:30 in the afternoon when we pulled up before the Grabow office and the shooting started right off.

"Three men were killed in my wagon. "Kate" Hall went down first, I guess they figured he was Emerson, what with him having Emerson's hat and coat on. Then a fellow named Martin was shot and another whose name I don't recall right off went down with him."

### Leather Britches Smith

Charles Smith, nicknamed "Leather Britches", wore a pistol on each hip and carried a rifle everywhere he went. He was reportedly brought in as a hired gun by Arthur L. Emerson, then president of the Timber Workers. Some considered him a hero and benefactor of the timber workers.

The legend varies. Some thought him to be a good man unless he drank, when a different side of him would emerge. Rill (Loftin) Grantham stated that Leather Britches saved her future husband from hanging shortly after the Grabow riot.<sup>[7]</sup> Many just avoided him and some stories portray him less favourably.

### A different man

Smith was also Ben Myatt of Robertson County, Texas. Arrested for the torture and vicious murder of his wife, he was brought before Judge J.C. Scott, with Frank A. Woods as prosecutor. The judge, on his own motion, ordered the trial moved to Falls County, in Marlin, Texas. Tom Connally was the prosecutor, together with Woods.

Evidence was also provided that Myatt had shot and killed a neighbor named John Cook and left him lying in a field. After he was convicted of murdering his wife in 1910 and sentenced to hang, he was transferred to Navarro County jail in Corsicana, Texas, to be tried for Cook's murder, but he escaped to Louisiana before his trial.<sup>[8]</sup>

### The community of Graybow