

HELENA'S END

It sounds like a story straight out of *Death Valley Days*.

Wait! It is a story that once appeared on that old TV show!

The story of how one man killed a town: Colonel William Butler and Helena, Texas.

In the 1880s, Helena was a thriving town of around 300 people, the county seat of Karnes County, enriched by traffic of wagon freight running between San Antonio and Victoria and by the whiskey money expended at its 13 saloons. On the day after Christmas in 1884, Colonel Butler's son, Emmett, was shot; some say he was holding a bottle for a target, but the pistol-wielding drunk missed. No one could—or would—identify the killer, so Colonel Butler vowed to kill the town.

He gave right of way on his ranch to the San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railway, which then bypassed Helena in 1886. Eight years later in a hotly contested election, Helena lost the county seat to Karnes City, and people and businesses began moving away. The courthouse became a school; the school closed in 1945, the post office in 1956, and today only visitors and ghosts wander the creaking old, empty buildings in Helena.

"Helena, Texas." The Handbook of Texas Online.

www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/view/HH/hnh18.html>

[Accessed Wed., Sept. 6, 12:09:35 US/Central 2000].

Karnes City Junior High School student Web site on the Alamo-La Bahía Corridor:

<http://206.76.136.3/cfair/corridor.html>

Wolff, Henry, Jr. "Area Colonel's Story Featured on 'Death Valley Days,'" *The Victoria Advocate*, June 27, 1997, p. 3A.

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