

Bruce E. Zachary

Bruce Zachary was born in Knoxville, Tennessee, and moved west with his parents in a covered wagon while still a boy. Their family settled in the Bridger area after their arrival in Montana.

As a young man Zachary first made a living as a cowboy riding the range. He later became interested in the law and went to work as a deputy sheriff in Carbon County around Bridger, then later as the City Marshal in Bridger.

He married Stella Benton in 1900 around the same time that he came to Billings. He joined the Billings Police Department officially in 1911, after a year of filling in as needed. In 1913, he combined his experience on the range with his experience with the law and became a stock inspector for the state.

His first year as a stock inspector included arresting an escaped prisoner who was wanted in Nevada. The man had been convicted for holding up and robbing a miner. He was located in Laurel and was identified by a number of tattoos. A reward of \$250 was offered for his capture, and both Zachary and a Laurel constable were planning to split the prize between them. The next year, Zachary ran for sheriff, but was unsuccessful.

Zachary developed a reputation for being a stickler for the stock laws. He was back in Laurel later that year to arrest a suspected horse thief. He arrested a man in Custer in early 1915 for killing a steer that was not his. A few months later, he arrested three men in Red Lodge for moving stock across the state line to Wyoming without inspection; his Wyoming counterpart charged them with violating a quarantine in that state. In the fall, he arrested a man in Billings for renting a horse from a livery stable, then selling it to someone else. The next year included cases of theft of steers, helping local police on an opium raid, and a long chase of a horse thief some 2000 miles back and forth through Montana and Wyoming. In more typical duties, he arrested a butcher for not reporting brands on animals he slaughtered, and a rancher for shipping horses without having them inspected. He served as a state stock inspector through 1919.

During this time, Zachary was active with the local Masonic lodge, holding a variety of offices. These included the most senior local office, that of Worshipful Master.

Zachary moved to California for a time. When he returned to Billings in 1925, he rejoined the police force temporarily before being appointed a deputy sheriff for Yellowstone County. With Prohibition in full force, many of his most exciting arrests were for bootleggers at this time.

In April 1934, Zachary was standing next to a truck on the bridge over the Yellowstone when he was hit by a car and injured. Fortunately, it was not debilitating, and he was able to return to his duties afterward. Zachary's wife Stella passed away in November of that year.



Three years later, Zachary remarried to Millie Slocum Sample. He then operated a small neighborhood grocery store with his daughter Edith and her husband Jacob Blend. He passed away in 1943.

Sources:

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- *Billings Gazette*, "New Policeman", April 7, 1911
- *Billings Gazette*, "Officer is Struck by Car at Bridge", A
- *Billings Gazette*, "Politics are Warming Up", June 19, 1914
- *Billings Gazette*, "Services are Held for Former Officer", July 12, 1943
- *Billings Gazette*, "Stock Inspectors Are After Cattle Trailers", May 29, 1915
- *Billings Gazette*, "Zachary Ends Long Man Hunt", July 26, 1916
- *Billings Gazette*, "Zachary Named Deputy Sheriff", August 16, 1925

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