

The Sam Bass Story

In historic Round Rock, a little over 100 years ago, one of the most notorious Texas outlaws met his end at the hands of the Texas Rangers. This is the tale of Sam Bass and the Great Round Rock Shootout.

The Road to Crime

Sam Bass came to Texas from Indiana in 1870 and worked for a while in a sheriff's office. He was industrious and in a few years he bought a "little sorrel mare," the fastest horse in Texas.

When the fame of his mare was such that no one would bet against him, Sam helped drive a herd of stolen cattle to Nebraska where he stayed for nearly a year. Sam used his ill-gotten money to buy a saloon but he was soon restless. On a whim, he sold the saloon and bought a gold mine that went broke almost immediately. He took up robbing stage coaches and fell in with some men with grander plans.

The Big Heist

On September 17, 1877, Sam and five others held up a train at Fort Bend, Nebraska. Every detail had been carefully planned; on board was \$60,000 in new twenty-dollar gold pieces fresh from the mint.

In disguise and \$10,000 richer, Sam headed straight for Texas on a wagon, audaciously giving a ride to some of the lawmen that were hunting him.

Back in Texas

Within weeks of the hold up, three of the bandits were dead and two others had disappeared. That left only Sam Bass against the skillful and tenacious Texas Rangers.

Sam returned to his adopted home of Denton, Texas boasting of a Black Hills gold strike to explain his sudden wealth. He spent lavishly on his friends and on those who helped him hide out in the woods, constantly eluding the law. From his base, near Dallas, Sam and his new gang began an unprecedented string of train robberies – four hold-ups in less than two months.

Round Rock

Sam spent his money so fast that in spite of his success, he was nearly broke by July of 1878. He and three others, Jim Murphy, Frank Jackson and Seaborn Barnes, traveled to Round Rock, intending to rob a bank. Unbeknownst to Sam, Jim Murphy had betrayed him to the Texas Rangers.

When the gang arrived in Round Rock, Major Jones and a company of Rangers were waiting. Jim Murphy stopped at a store on Chisholm Trail while the others went on to case the local bank.

Here is the story of that fateful afternoon, Friday, July 19, 1878.



Photo courtesy Robert G. McCubbin, Jr.

The only authenticated photo of Sam Bass. L-R: Sam Bass, Joe Collins, John E. Gardner, Joel Collins.

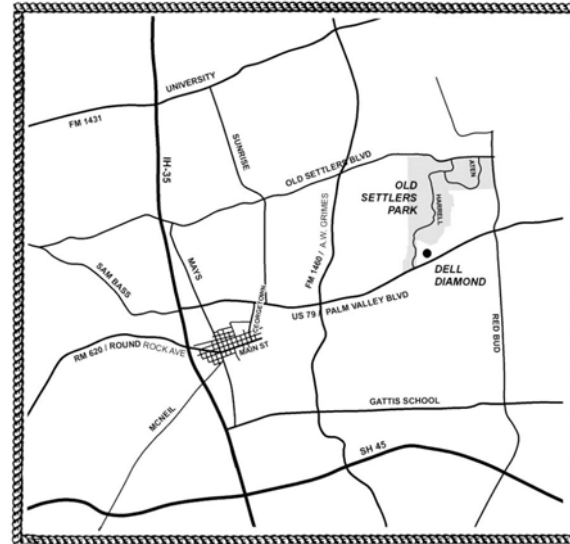
Sam Bass Shootout Re-enactments

at the

July 4 Frontier Days Celebration

Old Settlers Park, 3300 E. Palm Valley Blvd.

The Great Sam Bass Shootout of 1878 has been reenacted during Round Rock's Frontier Days since 1965. The Celebration is held each July 4, and is free and open to the public.



For More Information, Contact the Historic Preservation Office

www.roundrocktexas.gov/historicpreservation

Planning & Development Services Dept.
City of Round Rock, Texas

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Photo courtesy of Robert G. McCubbins, Jr.

DEAD or ALIVE

Sam Bass

and the

Great Round Rock Shootout

of

July 19, 1878

Tourist Guide & Walking Tour

Walking Guide to the Great Round Rock Shootout



The Shootout

1 The three outlaws tie up their horses and walk to Koppel's store (Map #4). None of the Texas Rangers waiting in the buildings recognize Sam Bass.

2 Deputy Sheriff Morris Moore, standing in front of Highsmith's Livery Stable, first observes the strangers and thinks that they are carrying guns.

3 Moore meets up with Deputy Sheriff Grimes and together they cross over to Koppel's Store.

4 Moore remains outside while Grimes enters and confronts Bass and his gang, demanding to know if they are armed. The outlaws reply with gunfire, killing Grimes instantly.

5 As the gang flees from the store, Moore gives chase and is shot in the chest.

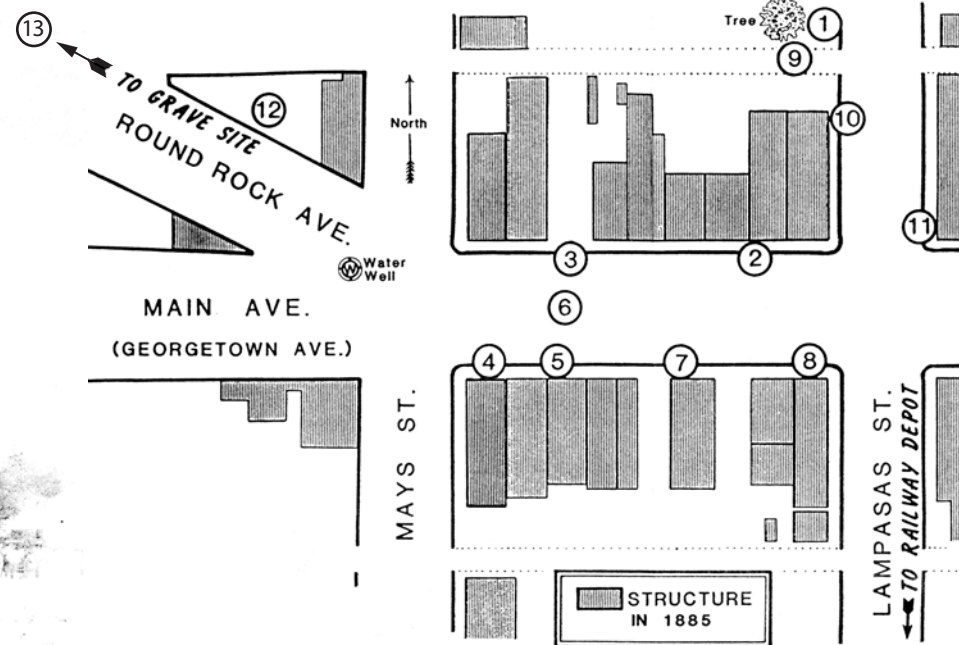
6 Texas Rangers and Round Rock citizens fire at the retreating bandits, wounding Bass in the hand.

7 Ranger Dick Ware, drawn by the gunfire, explodes out of the barber shop, his face still lathered, and fires at the fleeing desperados.

8 Major John B. Jones, commander of the Texas Rangers, returns from the railroad telegraph office and fires on the Bass gang. The outlaws return his fire, leaving bullets in the stone wall above his head.

9 Seaborn Barnes is shot in the head and killed by Ranger Dick Ware.

10 & 11 Rangers Dick Ware and George Harold fire on the gang. According to the official report, Harold inflicted the mortal wound on Bass, but other Rangers and Bass himself later claimed that Ware administered the fatal shot.



The Escape

Jackson helps the wounded Bass onto his horse and together they escape from the lawmen. After stopping by their camp, the two hunted bandits ride north up Chisholm Trail. Bass soon realizes that he is unable to continue, and convinces the ever-faithful Jackson to go on without him. Bass is left under a tree, where the Rangers discover him the following morning, and take him back to Round Rock for interrogation.

12 The next day, Sunday, July 21, 1878, Bass dies in a small wooden shack without betraying a single member of his gang. A Texas Historical Marker, commemorating the shootout is located across the street from this shootout plaque.

13 The graves of Bass, Barnes and Grimes can be seen today in the Round Rock Cemetery, located 0.4 miles west of Interstate 35 on Sam Bass Road. Bass'



Photo courtesy of Earl Palmer

and Barnes' graves are located at the northwest corner of the cemetery near the Slave Cemetery; Grimes' grave is at the northeast corner and features a Masonic emblem on the gravestone.

More About Sam Bass

The Story of Sam Bass

<http://roundrocktexas.gov/sambass>

Sam Bass the Infamous Outlaw

Williamson County Historical Commission
http://www.williamson-county-historical-commission.org/The_Infamous_Sam_Bass.html

Sam Bass Resources

Round Rock Library Genealogy & Local History
<http://roundrocktexas.gov/home/index.asp?page=185>