

**ZOE AGNES  
STRATTON  
TILGHMAN**  
**1880-1964**



**MARSHAL  
OF THE  
LAST  
FRONTIER**

When she was 22, schoolteacher Zoe Stratton married legendary lawman Bill Tilghman. She later wrote his biography, a colorful history of the last days of the Western frontier. It's also the story of a woman, desperate to hold onto her family and honor the life of the man she loved so dearly.

Bill Tilghman, born in July 1854, was a soft-spoken, tee-totaling lawman. He married Flora Kendall in 1877 and was hired as Bat Masterson's deputy sheriff in Dodge City in 1878. They moved to Oklahoma Territory after the 1889 Land Run but Flora didn't enjoy life there. After contracting tuberculosis in 1897, Flora divorced Bill due to his philandering and returned to Dodge City where she died in October 1900 at age 39.

Zoe Agnes Stratton was born in November 1880 in Greenwood County, Kansas. In 1887 the Stratton family moved to Osage County, where they lived until 1893 when they moved to a Cherokee Outlet claim. She completed some education in public schools in Arkansas City, Kansas. She began at the University of Oklahoma in 1897.

She met US Marshal Bill Tilghman through her father in 1902 and married him in July 1903 at age 23. He was more than twenty years older than Zoe. Her experiences with him and her exposure to the outlaw culture were important influences on her early writings. During her marriage to Bill, she developed a romantic image of lawmen that she was determined to protect.

In 1924, while city marshal of Cromwell, Tilghman was killed by drunken corrupt agent Wiley Lynn who was later acquitted. After his death, Zoe wrote "Outlaw Days: A True History of Early Day Oklahoma Characters", which focused on some of the most infamous gangs of Oklahoma.

From 1925 to 1934 she was the literary editor of Harlow's Weekly, an Oklahoma City newspaper. She then served as assistant director for the troubled Federal Writers' Project in Oklahoma during the Depression. Authors such as Louis L'Amour contacted Zoe asking for her literary advice.

She also wrote a comprehensive biography titled "Marshal of the Last Frontier: Life and Services of William Matthew (Bill) Tilghman, for Fifty Years One of the Greatest Peace Officers of the West" that helped to enhance his image as a hero – and omitted any negative facts.

In 1939, Zoe sued a newspaper for \$100,000 because they ran an article claiming that the U. S. Marshals were cowards. In truth, Bill was involved in the capture of many notorious gangs and individuals such as the Dalton Gang, Bill Doolin, Cattle Annie and Little Britches, and Al Jennings.

Zoe was contacted by a Hollywood movie producer in the late 1950s who was interested in using a scene from her book "Marshal of the Last Frontier". Additionally, she worked as a consultant on the television show "Death Valley Days", appearing in the prologue and epilogue of the episode "The Wedding Dress".

Through her long and illustrious career, Zoe wrote numerous books based on her own life experiences. Her marriage to Bill Tilghman influenced many of her early works by exposing her to the wild outlaw culture of territorial Oklahoma. Zoe Tilghman zealously scrubbed Bill's reputation until she died in June 1964 at age 83.