Who Was Harlingen's First Police Chief?

A photograph hanging in the Harlingen Police Department has Robert H. Johnson captioned as Harlingen's first police chief. Technically he was though the following will offer some reason to conclude otherwise.

In the 1960 Harlingen Golden Anniversary booklet written by Mrs. Verna Jackson McKenna, longtime Harlingen librarian and historian, she writes: "Appointments at the Second City Commission Meeting Held May 10, 1910: E. W. Anglin, city marshal at the salary of $50 per month. As such, he became the first officer of the law in Harlingen other than Texas Rangers and the Mounted Custom Patrol." The bold lettering is hers.

10/1907  Mr. and Mrs. Elmer W. Anglin arrive in Harlingen with their four small children. They come from Alpine, Texas, where they have resided for seven years. They were married on 3/8/1898 in Gonzales. They reside near the Hill complex until building a two story home north of the City Lake. On 1/2/18 they move into the new two-story wooden frame house they have constructed at 201 East Madison Street. The building is currently occupied by a law firm. The area to the west of them across the street is a campsite for tourists and homeseekers though overgrown with mesquite and brush. It will later become Bowie Park. Anglin takes over the management of properties and business ventures for Lon C. Hill. He manages the plantation in particular, so Gordon and Lon Jr. can go off to school in Austin. It may have been that the Hill family resided in this city from 1907 to 1913 while the children attended school there. Anglin is deeply involved in civic affairs for many years. He served on the school board, City Commission, was the city's first marshal, a deputy sheriff for more than 20 years, and performs as chief of police for 16 years. From 1939 through 1959 he is a justice of the peace. As a sideline over the years Anglin is a popular fiddler playing entirely by ear. Later making his home at 209 W. Buchanan with wife Olive, Lawson A. Anglin also arrives here this year. He will later go into the general insurance business.

4/15/10  This date marks the official founding of Harlingen. The oath of office is administered to I.B. "Ike" McFarland--Mayor, and Commissioners John D. Hill and Homer N. Morrow. Newspaper publisher Marion M. Osborn is appointed city clerk, assessor-collector, and treasurer of the Commission. The city's first marshal is E.W. Anglin, who is compensated $50 per month. City marshals following Anglin are O. B. "Bird" Lockhart, Osco Morris, and R.H. (Bob) Johnson. Dr. A.M. Letzerich is appointed (1/24/10) as the town's first health officer but he resigns by July. The history writer Minnie Gilbert says that registered voters at this time with Spanish surnames included the Lozanos, Francisco Alvarez, J. Villareal, D. Ramirez, Pancho Garcia, C.C. Rodriguez, and Joe Abrego. McFarland, who came to Harlingen in 1908, met his wife-to-be here when she journeyed to the area to see a bull fight. They returned to Houston in 1913.

1926  R.H. (Bob) Johnson (8/30/80-10/26/46) is appointed Harlingen's first police chief. This former Texas Ranger has served since 1920 as city marshal. He will continue in this position until E.W. Anglin takes the job in 1931. Upon his death in 1946 he is survived
by his wife Sarah (Betty) Elizabeth (9/10/81-7/5/61). Both are interred in the Harlingen Cemetery.

1/1/31  E.W. Anglin returns to the position of Chief of Police, a name changed in 1926 from City Marshal. Serving in the department at the time are W.H. McMinn (Uncle Mack), Wes Fonville, L.M. "Mackie" Chaudoin, Cage Johnson, and Julian Villareal. All would be deceased by April 1960. Later Anglin will be replaced by a succession of men who will each serve two terms. They are Virge Lockhart, Osco Morris, and Bob Johnson. When Anglin took on the job again in 1931 the department commenced the thorough keeping of statistics and records. Anglin will again return to the position until he resigns on 3/1/46 and Captain Harold Crossett is elevated to the chief's job. Among other things Crossett had served in the department as "burglar specialist." At his point the department has a force of 14 men and five patrol cars. Crossett will serve until 1948 at which time he reigns to take a position with the FBI office in McAllen.