Let me start at the end, then fill in details about this Harlingen pioneer. Following are three newspaper articles detailing (sometimes erroneously) highlights in the life and the death of Osco Morris.

"Brownsville Herald 10/2/31

**Harlingen Man Drops Dead in Courthouse**

Osco Morris Drops Dead in Court Room

Sudden Attack Takes Harlingen Pioneer This Afternoon

Osco Morris, age about 52, for twenty years city secretary and tax assessor of Harlingen, dropped dead in district civil court room of the Cameron county courthouse here shortly after 2 o'clock this afternoon.

Morris was sitting in the court talking to Wm. S. West, Brownsville attorney, when he slumped over unconscious.

Dr. B.L. Cole, court physician, was called and pronounced him dead. However, the Brownsville fire department started work with a pulmotor in an effort to revive Mr. Morris. Dr. B.O. Works was also called.

**Was Harlingen Pioneer**

Mr. Morris was one of the best known Harlingen residents having come to the city about the time it was laid out around 1907. He came to the Valley from Central Texas, being a native Texan.

He took a position as city secretary, and tax assessor and collector of Harlingen shortly after the city was incorporated, and resigned in the spring of this year after holding the position continually since then. He engaged in the real estate business and had extensive real estate holdings in Harlingen.

Mr. Morris is survived by his widow, the only relative in the Valley.

The body was to be taken this afternoon to Harlingen, where funeral arrangements were to be made.

**Efforts Abandoned**

He had complained earlier in the day of not feeling well, according to Osce Fristoe, Harlingen attorney, who was also at the courthouse here. He testified in a civil case at the courthouse today, but there was no particular excitement during the case, courthouse attaches said.

Several times during the day he complained of feeling badly, Mr. Fristoe said.

At 2:45 this afternoon efforts to revive Mr. Morris were abandoned. Dr. Works said death was caused by heart disease.

*Brownsville Herald* October 4, 1931

**Morris Rites Will Be Held Sunday P.M.**

Funeral services will be held at 3:30 o'clock Sunday from the Catholic church for Osco Morris, Valley pioneer who dropped dead in this courthouse at about 2:30 O'clock Friday afternoon. Father Lewis and Father Jose of Brownsville will conduct the services, and interment will be in the Harlingen cemetery. Thompson's Mortuary is in charge of arrangements.
Mr. Morris had been suffering from heart disease and complained of feeling badly Friday. When he requested that a friend William McElwain take him to Brownsville so that he would not have to drive his own car.

**First City Marshal**

Mr. Morris was born in White County, Arkansas August 17, 1881 and lived in Edwards County, Texas, and then Alice, Texas, coming to Harlingen his twenty-third birthday when there were only two families at this place. He was the first town marshal when the city was incorporated in 1910 and was the first chief of police later. He became tax assessor and collector about 1920 and served until several months ago when he resigned. He at one time drove a stage from Kingsville to Brownsville, and many Valley pioneers first came into this section in his stages. Besides his widow he is survived by three bothers A.G. and Guy Morris, Harlingen, and J.A. Morris of San Benito; two sisters Mrs. Stella Cassidy of near Stamford and Mrs. Querto Nix of Stamford.

**Pallbearers Named**


The body will be at 322 W. Buchanan until the funeral. *Brownsville Herald* 10/6/31 (by staff correspondent)

**Morris Rites**

Harlingen, Oct. 6—Over 250 automobiles occupied by mourners followed the body of Osco Morris to his last resting place in the Harlingen Cemetery Sunday afternoon following services in the Catholic church.

The Valley's pioneer's passing was mourned by hundreds who knew him from Rio Grande City to Brownsville and many of them were represented in the funeral procession. Mr Morris died suddenly Friday afternoon in Brownsville. He was Harlingen's first city marshal and later served for years as tax assessor and collector."

For whatever reasons, perhaps not to slight anyone's ego, the family in its obituary notes a lengthy list of honorary pallbearers. The list constitutes a who's who of Anglo Valley pioneers but especially those of Harlingen.

He may not have Texas-born, but as the expression goes "got here as soon as he could." Born in Searcy, AK on August 17,1881 Morris was educated in "common" schools. He
was a descendent of John F. Morris, a Tennessean who took up farming in Arkansas. Osco's mother, Emily S. Morris, is from Arkansas and will have had two children before Oscar is born and five more to follow. When and why he took on the sobriquet Osco is unknown.

An early arrival to the fledgling town of Harlingen is Osco Morris. He comes one month, August 1904, after the first through train. What he does for a living in these times is unknown, but by 1910 he is tending bar in one of August Weller's saloons. We know this because he was witness to and participant in a scene straight out of a movie western.

Years after the incident occurred, retired Ranger Gus Jones will relate the story of Bill Whitley, a cousin and best friend of Henry Lawrence, a deputy sheriff who was ambushed and killed south of San Benito in July 1910. Whitley and Lawrence had punched cattle together and were inseparable. Whitley came to Harlingen in hopes of filling a Ranger vacancy should one arise. According to Jones:

Bill came to the place of the ambush with a posse from Harlingen and when he gazed into the dead face of Henry Lawrence he exclaimed, "I'll spend the rest of my life finding out who was responsible for this and when I do I'll shoot him down like a dog."

Weeks went by and a web began to tighten around one Pedro Balle, whose father owned a small ranch on the Arroyo Colorado near Harlingen. Balle was known as a bad man and on more than one occasion had been disarmed by Rangers while riding the street of Harlingen with a Winchester in his saddle and a six-shooter in his saddle pocket. Each time he resented it deeply and was known to have remarked that some day he would "kill himself a Ranger." Balle knew the treats that had been made by Whitley and he also knew that he was suspected of having participated in the ambush.

Old man's Weller's saloon was diagonally across from the depot at Harlingen and was off the beaten path. It was a hang out for all the boys due to their friendship for old man Weller and Osco Morris, his bartender. Bill Whitley was a great friend of Morris and on the day Pancho Balle died was in the saloon talking to Osco. In his short sleeves and apparently unarmed, Bill was slouched over the bar with his back toward the front door. He was facing the mirror back of the bar and had a clear view of the road passing in front of the saloon.

A man on horseback cantered past the front door and Osco remarked, "There goes your friend Pancho Balle." "Yes, I see him," replied Whitley without turning. Never taking his eyes from the mirror, Whitley quickly unbuttoned the front of his shirt. Balle had seen Whitley alone in his shirt sleeves as he rode by the door. As soon as he had cleared the front of the building Balle dismounted, and, as he stealthily approached the door, he raised a six-shooter that rested in the waist band of his trousers under his vest. As he darkened the door with his pistol half drawn, Whitley whirled around and placed two bullets in the vicinity of his heart exclaiming, "That's for Henry, you murdering S.B."

Realizing that his number was up Balle had decided to leave the country, but he could not withstand this perfect setup, and on the spur of the moment decided to wipe out one more enemy before making his ride to the river, from across which he could figuratively thumb his nose at Officers on the American side. Whitley was not prosecuted. A majority of the good citizens knew that it was a clear case of self-defense. They also had a strong feeling that Balle had been a rider of one of the shod horse at the scene of the river road ambush and that he got just what was coming to him.

Getting in on the ground floor, so to speak, Oscar buys his first two Harlingen Township subdivision lots on 10/31/08, another on 11/31/08, and a fourth on 8/10/11. This apparently is his introduction to the Harlingen area real estate business. These are busy years for him. He is to marry Lula Fay Lillard on 9/1/10. This resident of McMullen County, Texas is ten or eleven years younger than Osco and prefers the given name Fay. They will have no children in their marriage.

He becomes city marshal in April 1911 and serves in this capacity for 13 years. In the election of 4/3/16 two complete tickets were in the field. The Citizens' ticket headed by M.V. Pendleton, candidate for mayor, overwhelmingly defeated the Peoples' ticket.
Pendleton received 124 votes versus 13 for Thompson. Other results were: alderman (3 to be elected) Benton 123, Gibbs, 121, Weller 124, Cliff 13, Johnson 15, Berser 14; city secretary Seago 125, Dorough 12; city marshal Osco Morris 124, Largent 5, Bullard 8. Pendleton would serve into 1918.

During WWI Morris assists in Liberty Bond drives. In the 1920s he is involved in real estate and farming and is, for nearly a decade, elected and re-elected as tax assessor and collector for the city. He is president of and a partner with T.P. Roberts and S.F. Ewing in the Harlingen Development Co., which is trying to dispose of over 1000 lots.

In 1926 and for the next two the city moves forward with street paving and the installation of sidewalks and curbs. Lot owners are assessed most of the costs for these activities. Major lot owners are Osco Morris, J.M. Green, A.E. and A.L. Benoist, A.L. Brooks and the Harlingen Development Co.

When Mrs. Morris dies, she is buried besides her husband in the Harlingen Cemetery. She is listed as a widow and a salesman for Wadkin Products in the 1946 telephone directory but is gone by the 1948 one.