

Pender Denton, born in a bordello. His mother taught him to steal. Johnnie Sweetwater, Shoshone. Stolen from his village as a child and robbed of his heritage. They lived together, loved each other, and robbed and killed together.

Pender Denton--Outlaw

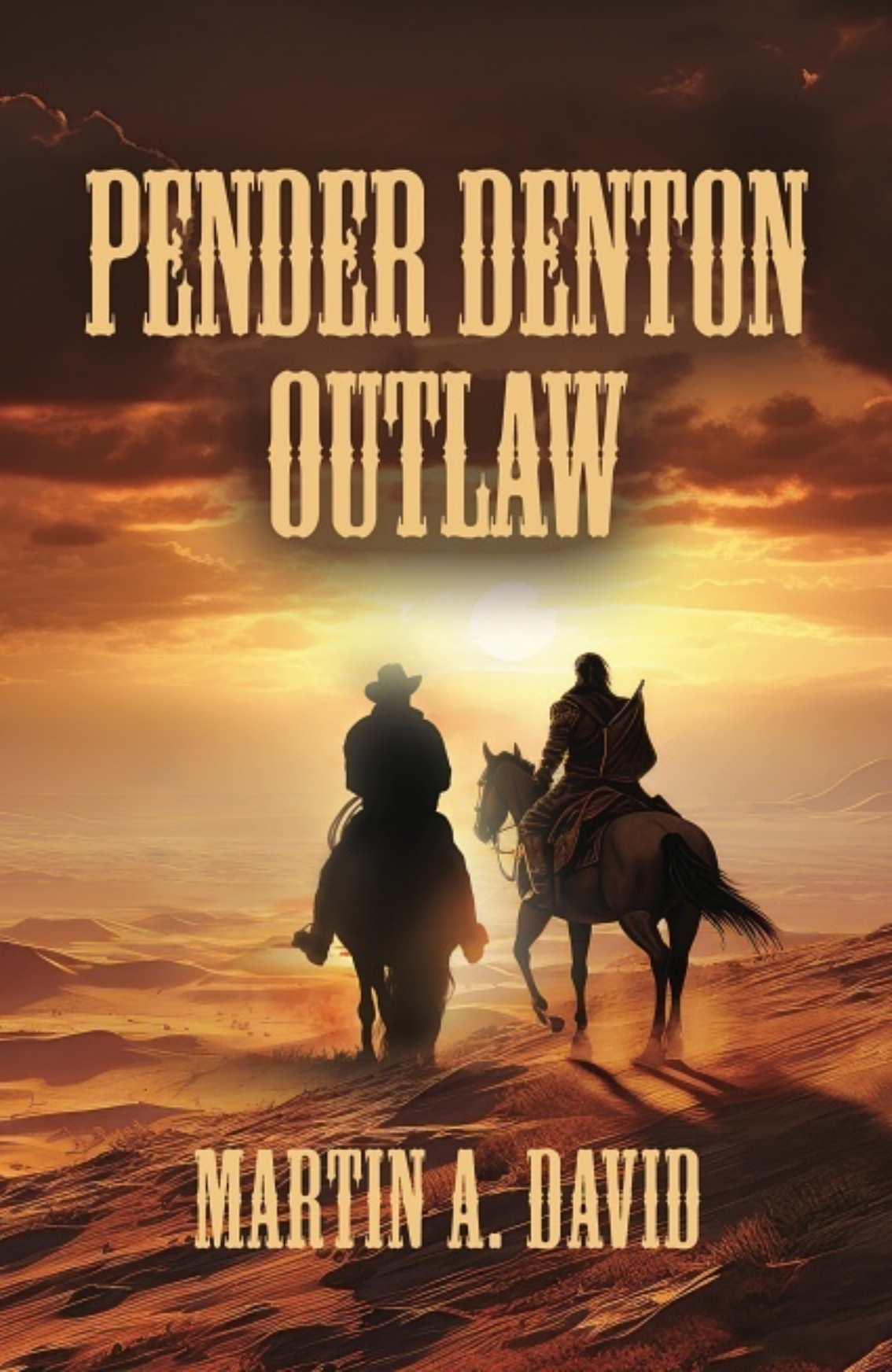
By Martin A. David

Order the book from the publisher Booklocker.com

<https://www.booklocker.com/p/books/13211.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**

PENDER DENTON OUTLAW

The background of the cover is a dramatic sunset over a desert landscape. Two figures are silhouetted against the bright sun, riding horses away from the viewer. The rider on the left is wearing a cowboy hat, while the rider on the right is wearing a long coat and a wide-brimmed hat. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a strong glow and casting long shadows across the desert dunes.

MARTIN A. DAVID

Copyright © 2024 Martin A. David

Print ISBN: 978-1-958891-56-8

Ebook ISBN: 979-8-88531-636-1

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., Trenton, Georgia.

Pender Denton—Outlaw is a work of fiction. However, some of the characters herein actually did exist. They are all dead and therefore they would overlook and forgive the author for inserting them into situations similar to those they faced in life. The rest of the characters in the book have all been born in the musty chambers of the author's imagination. If they resemble persons living, dead, or in between, it is just because of the author's skill and ability.

Mardav Books

Reno, Nevada

writer@mardavbooks.com

Cover images: © AdobeStock.com.

Table of Contents

1—Brothel Brats	1
2—Sunday Service	9
3—A Place to Think About Life	13
4—Wandering.....	19
5—Joining the other side	23
6—A Friend and a Partner	33
7—A Friendship Changes.....	39
8—Expanding the Family Business.....	43
9—Retirement?.....	51
10—A Neighbor in Need.....	57
11—Swept in the River of History	61
12—Enough Moss	69
13—Odd Three	75
14—Where There’s Smoke	83
15—The Desert Provides.....	89
16—A Magnet	91
17—A City and a Farewell	95
18—A Search Begins	101
19—Lost Girl Found.....	107
20—One Last Job	123
21—Valley of the Dead.....	127
22—Sheriff of Hell	133
23—No Choice	151

Martin A. David

24—Back on the Road	159
25—New Place—New Dreams	169
26—Old Men	175
Also by Martin A. David	177

*Judging a person by his origin is
like getting off a train
before the conductor even says,
“All Aboard.”*

Ezekiel Henraker

1—Brothel Brats

There were worse things that could happen to a child in the so-called Old West than to be born in a Kansas whorehouse. In the first place, there were always a number of other little “accidents” running around who, at least in spirit, were your sisters and brothers. You also had more than one mother to come running to when you fell and skinned your knee—just in case your regular mother was busy. In addition, some of the gentlemen who were your mom’s clients occasionally gave you a piece of candy or a shiny five-cent piece when they visited.

There are those who want to see Pender Denton as a romantic and heroic figure, an old west Robin Hood who gave part of his loot to charity, *et cetera*, but he was, frankly spoken, a law breaker, a brigand, a robber, and a felon. He was Pender Denton—Outlaw.

His papa, he was told, had been the central guest at a civic ceremony and had passed away when part of the stage collapsed. In other words, he was hanged for one of his more nefarious deeds before Pender was born. Mama’s income source was her skill as a sex worker in a world where lustful men outnumbered available women by an impressive ratio. Papa’s last name had been Dalton, but Annabella, Pender’s mother, supposedly misheard it as Denton during the alcohol-fueled night of their relationship. The name Pender was emblazoned on the enameled bottom of the chamber pot that rested under the bed in her place of employment. She thought it sounded noble and she gave it to her son.

Where does a life of crime begin? How does one learn adamant disdain for the laws and norms of one's society? The answers are as plenteous and diverse as the number of bandits, brigands, and politicians whose lives reflect that societal contempt. In Pender's case, he learned it from his mother. She taught him how to crawl noiselessly through her bedroom while she was engaging in her profession and extract bits of cash from the clothing of her clients. Of course, he did not think of the game as lawless, but rather as an entertaining diversion he and his maternal parent shared for their amusement.

In any case, Pender grew up steeped in the opinion that much of the world was made up of Johns and chumps. He felt it was his right and duty to collect stray objects in a time and place where few folks locked their doors or brought tools and equipment indoors for the night. He had been shot at, but not hit, twice and gotten a nasty dog bite on his leg during his nighttime treasure hunts before he reached his teenage years.

School was not an option for the "brothel brats," as they were known in the community. There was a time when kids from the two local pleasure houses had walked with their peers to the local two-room schoolhouse and studied the intricacies of reading, writing, and arithmetic. However, that opportunity crashed to a halt when a committee of sexually repressed "fine ladies" of the town began a fire-breathing campaign to protect the other children of the town from the sinful stain of the bordello residents. They succeeded in having Pender and his friends banned from the halls of education. A young pastor from the Baptist Church volunteered thereafter as a weekly teacher to the boys of the houses. Pastor Mueller had never attended the establishments of ill-repute as a customer. However, he was faithful in his self-appointed teaching duties and was happy to sit with a hand on a knee or a thigh as he dispensed knowledge.

Pender was also still a pre-teen when he learned to handle, aim, and fire a six-shot revolver. His mentor in this skill was a gruff man who visited the pleasure house where Pender was conceived with such frequency that a number of the youngsters there referred to him as

“Uncle Bart.” When the man was being entertained by Pender’s mother, he handed one of his guns to Pender and gave him a shiny dime.

“You stand by this door until I come out and don’t let nobody come in. If someone tries to get past you I want you to aim for his willie and shoot the damned thing off. I’ll come out when I hear the noise and finish the job.”

This uncle, whose real name might or might not have been Bart, had numerous enemies on both sides of the law and he didn’t want any of them to intrude on his interludes of pleasure. It was while on this sporadic assignment that twelve-year-old Pender killed his first man.

Pender heard someone on the building’s back steps. The back steps led to a door in the alleyway. It was the staircase that the mayor, judges, and other “fine” menfolk used coming and going when they visited the bordello. A figure appeared at the end of the hallway and walked towards him.

“Get out of the way, boy. I’m goin’ in there to talk to a friend of mine.”

The man looked like something that had crawled out of a swamp. He was disheveled and reeked of alcohol, sweat, tobacco, and cattle. He held a six barreled “peppercot” derringer in his hand. Pender stared into the six dangerous looking openings in the small but deadly gun. He pointed Bart’s revolver at the man and said, “You can’t go in there.”

“That’s a mighty big gun for such a little boy, but this here little pistol will kill you just as fast. Now step aside before I put a hole in your little head.”

Pender stood his ground. He raised Uncle Bart’s gun and aimed right where he was told to aim. The intended intruder reached for it and tried to take it away. Pender’s finger was on the trigger and the weapon fired once. The bullet entered the man’s body at a point much higher than his private parts. In fact, it tore through the man’s heart.

The stranger died with a look of shock on his face. He had never expected to be killed by a mere child.

The door flung open and Bart, dressed in grey long-johns and brandishing a Colt revolver, leaped into the hallway. He looked down at the dead man and prodded him with a bare foot.

“Pete Johnson. Well that’s one less cheating horse thief in the world...and one more ugly rattlesnake off my trail. You did a good job there young feller. Since he had a gun in hand we can tell the sheriff it was a clean killing.”

Pender felt neither joy nor remorse. The loud gunshot and the red hole in the dead man’s shirt all seemed very distant from him and any action he had performed.

“You just stay guarding this door and when your mama and I finish our private conversation I’ll come out and give you a whole dollar.”

The shot had reverberated through the whole building. A few of the women came out of their rooms to look at the deceased. Peggy Cassidy, the owner and manager of the enterprise came up the front stairs and looked over the scene.

“Are you gonna send for the sheriff, Peggy?” Pender asked her.

“Oh he’ll be out here in a while,” she told him. “He’s in room number seven with Kathy Mae.”

The sheriff, of course, agreed with Bart that the shooting was a result of a fair gunfight. In fact, he remarked privately that Pender should be commended, and perhaps rewarded, for getting rid of Johnson.

“That rotten piece of meat has been a general plague all over the county and I ain’t sad he’s dead.”

The killing also elevated Pender’s standing among the six juveniles who resided in that particular palace of ill repute. Some might say it turned him into a swaggering bully. He already had developed his skills as a petty thief and was quite accomplished as a liar. Having blood on his hands just reinforced his anti-social pathway.

Two of his fellow “brothel brats” were lounging on the front steps of the cat house when Pender strolled up.

“Get out of my way,” Pender growled.

There was not a soul in his way. His two playmates were sitting far apart on the stairway.

“Plenty of room here for a body to pass,” drawled Alvin Hackert, a tall, skinny boy about Pender’s age.

Pender’s fist flew without warning and two of Alvin’s front teeth shattered with the force. He fell over sideways and rolled off the steps. The other boy, James Smithton jumped down to help Alvin. Pender walked up to the porch and into the building with a mean smirk on his face.

The incident ruffled some feathers in Peggy’s Palace, as the house was sometimes called. However, the place was accustomed to conflicts, clashes, screaming squabbles, and even downright drunken brawls, so it all blew over quickly. Besides, Pender swore the other boy had attacked him first and Jim Smithton was too scared to contradict him.

The screaming squabble that led to the then 15-year-old Pender Denton leaving the palace for good took place between two of the employees of the house. It escalated to the point where knives were drawn. Pender’s mother, one of the combatants received a nasty cut on her arm and her opponent survived with a large bump on her head.

It all started over the loss of Pender’s virginity. Kathy Mae in room number seven took a liking—or was it a lusting—to the swaggering boy and invited him into her room. She shared a couple of shots of liquor with him and took him, with no resistance on his part, to bed. For some reason, suddenly awakened motherly sentiments or some such thing, Annabella was furious. She called Kathy Mae a no-good whore, which, under the circumstances, was the height of irony. She threw the famous Pender Porcelain chamber pot at her co-worker. Fortunately, she had just come from emptying it at the time. The altercation took place in the back yard of the house and after the first

few punches both ladies drew knives from their waistbands. It ended with Annabella and Kathy Mae both wounded and apologetic.

Peggy was irritated but she was reluctant to lose either one of her good employees. She had considered giving both of them the heave-ho but settled on ordering Pender to “Get the hell out of my house and never come back here again—not even as a paying customer.”

It was a prudent ruling and one that Annabella, motherly or not, was secretly relieved by. Pender had grown to be too much for her to deal with and was a disturbing influence on the peaceful life of her place of employment. Pender stole a horse and rode out of the town of Twin River, and out of Barton County, Kansas. He did come back to the palace one last time when word reached him that Annabella had died of syphilis. Her son, disguised and standing in the shadows, was there when they laid her body in the ground.

Pender was on his own, but he was no helpless orphan. He had reached his full height of about six feet by the time he was a teenager. He was broad-shouldered and strong. His dark eyes and dark, scraggly hair were assets when it came to dealing with the ladies he met. The world he travelled through was teaching him how useless his quick temper was and he was working on disposing of that part of himself. He was still able to win the scuffles and fistfights he was drawn into; in fact, more easily when he substituted thinking for acting out of rage.

The horse he rode out on was the first of many illicit equine acquisitions. Pender usually worked alone and he worked at night so he was never in the limelight of suspicion. He had made an arrangement with a rancher two counties away and everything went smoothly.

“Here’s five dollars for the gray mare, but I can only give you three for the palomino. He’s too recognizable and besides he looks a bit lame.”

“He ain’t lame. I just been herding him over some rough ground half the night.”

“That’s the way I sees it. You can take it or leave it.”

Pender took it.

Once he came closer to public notice than he cared to when a bullet ripped his shirt and tore a bloody crease in his shoulder as he accompanied two stallions to their new home. That was the incident that temporarily convinced Pender that the profit gained from his horse relocation service might not be worth the risk involved.

Pender drifted. The Civil War had ended a while back and drifting seemed to be one of the new national pastimes. A few petty holdups kept him supplied with booze, grub, and the other pleasures of life. His growing arrogance and swagger might have gotten him killed, but fortunately a chance encounter momentarily deflated him to a safer level. It happened in a nondescript town on the Texas-Mexico border. The establishment he visited to quench his thirst was Mexican enough to be called a cantina rather than a saloon.

“Do y’all know who that is, stranger?” a grizzled drunk asked him. When Pender received the answer to that semi-rhetorical question he decided to go talk to the celebrity.

“Hey, I wonder if you was planning to buy drinks for the crowd.”

“No, I was not. Now get away from me.”

That’s when Pender Denton made the potentially fatal error of putting his hand on his weapon in the presence of Jesse James. Jesse’s brother Frank stepped up and pushed the barrel of his revolver against Pender’s ribs so hard it left a bruise.

The brothers’ erstwhile friend Robert Ford stepped behind Pender and growled, “Hey, I wonder if you was planning to leave this town forever.”

Pender decided that was a very good plan and was on his horse even before the three men’s laughter died down.

“That was Pender Denton. He’s a damn fool,” one of the cantina attendees told the assembly. “I worked with him transporting some horses about six months back. That boy ain’t never had no sense.”

If they understood that “transporting” actually translated to “stealing” they all kept that knowledge to themselves.

The humiliating encounter with three members of the James Gang brought him down a notch, but it didn't last long. As he rode out of town, the self-aggrandizing arrogance returned and wrapped itself in an abrasive cloak of anger. Pender's wrath was not solely aimed at the James brothers who had snubbed what he thought was a friendly attempt to start a conversation. It was not directed at Bob Ford, the cowardly gang member who protected Jesse's back in the cantina and would much later kill Jesse by shooting him in the back. Pender was not foolish enough to join the ranks of dead men who held, and tried to act upon, a grudge against those hardened killers. Pender felt mistreated by, and seethed with the desire for revenge upon, the world at large.

Everything up to that moment might be considered a kind of preface. Pender Denton had been a petty crook, a sneak thief, and a member of the annoying scourge of scoundrels that exasperated the more law-abiding populace at that time. On that ride Pender Denton the outlaw was born. It was as if a massive sluice gate on a dam had been pried open and a dormant stream of callous homicidal instincts gushed free.

Also by Martin A. David

About Two Families

- A novel about a journey to America

Survivor Without a Tattoo

- He lived through the Holocaust from a distance

Voice Versa

- A lifetime of poetry

Shtetl in My Mind

- Stories of a long-gone time

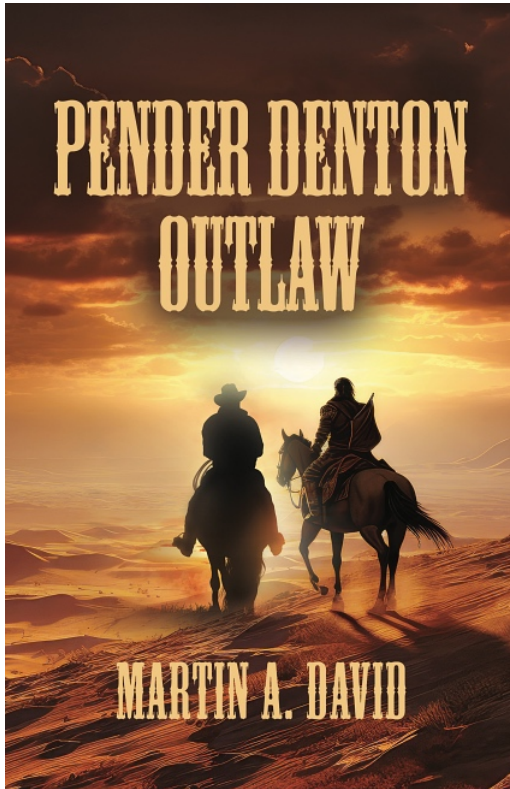
A Short Journey

- An abstract literary exploration

Wisdom of the Stranger

- Inspirational tales

Available through all online booksellers



Pender Denton, born in a bordello. His mother taught him to steal. Johnnie Sweetwater, Shoshone. Stolen from his village as a child and robbed of his heritage. They lived together, loved each other, and robbed and killed together.

Pender Denton--Outlaw

By Martin A. David

Order the book from the publisher Booklocker.com

<https://www.booklocker.com/p/books/13211.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**